

College Square Mall

30 YEARS

COLLEGE SQUARE MALL ANNIVERSARY

BY LYNDSEY SORAH
Tribune Staff Writer

It's no secret that the average shopping mall has fallen upon hard time in recent years. With many retailers facing financial difficulties or going out of business and the shift to online shopping, physical shopping centers often struggle to make ends meet.

However, Morristown's own College Square Mall is approaching its 30th anniversary and seems to be thriving — something general manager Mike Kaufman credits to its status as a middle market and the work of its forward-thinking owners.

"I personally think that a big part of it is our market and the fact that Morristown is in a real growth spurt right now, economically," he said. "Morristown has become a dot on the radar screen to retailers who are looking at middle markets as an alternative to the saturated larger markets."

Kaufman said retailers focused on value are a target for

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Mike Kaufman
College Square Mall general manager

Morristown's demographics, as opposed to high price point retailers, which often struggle in middle market malls.

A second factor he said leads to struggling malls is the closure of anchor stores.

Often, smaller stores will sign a co-tenancy agreement, stating they will only stay in the mall as long as a particular anchor store stays open. If that anchor closes, the mall loses rent from multiple tenants for as long as it takes to find a new tenant.

College Square Mall opened with four anchor stores — Wal-Mart, J. C. Penney, Sears and Proffitt's — none of which is open today. So why was the mall not affected by these anchor closures?

Kaufman said the former ownership group had the foresight to negotiate deals with new anchors before old ones closed.

The company had a deal with TJMaxx before asking Sears to leave, found Dick's Sporting Goods and negotiated that deal before J. C. Penney's vacated and settled a deal with Belk when Wal-Mart began plans to open a superstore at a different location.

"They were trying to be proactive in letting go of some of these retailers that weren't really bringing energy to the property anymore," Leslie Westmorland, specialty leasing and marketing manager, said.

Belk moved into a portion of the old Wal-Mart and sublet the rest of the area to Dixie Pottery for five years. Kaufman said after Dixie Pottery closed and Belk had been using the space for storage, CBL approached its owners asking to buy the space back in order to allow Planet Fitness to open.

He said the Proffitt's changeover stemmed from Belk's purchase of Saks, which owned Proffitt's. Since Belk did not need two store spaces, it sold the Proffitt's store to Kohl's in 2006.

Overall, Kaufman said the mall has been lucky to have a good mix of tenants for the past 30 years.

"It's a number of factors that have really helped us thrive in the past five or six years, and that separates us from a lot of the issues that you're seeing in malls these days," he said.



As other malls have struggles with the changing retail times, College Square Mall has thrived, replacing early anchor stores J.C. Penney, Sears and Proffitts with Dick's, T.J. Maxx and Kohl's respectively.





Above: The shell for College Square Mall is in place in this October 1987 photo. Below: Clockwise from top, a sign indicating the future location of a Third National Bank branch at College Square Mall. A giant helicopter delivers a 1,700 heating and air unit to the College Square Mall site in January of 1988. A team of graders prepare the future site of College Square Mall in this 1986 photo.

LOOKING BACK

College Square Mall builds a regional impact

BY LYNDSY SORAH
Tribune Staff Writer

College Square Mall opened on Feb. 3, 1988 with a 12-day grand opening extravaganza, including entertainment from clowns, mimes, jugglers, comedians, puppets and choirs and special appearances from that year's Miss Tennessee Reggie Athnos and Miss America Kay Lani Ray.

The excitement was the culmination of over three years of anticipation while the Lakeway Area's first regional shopping mall was being planned and built.

After the work of members of the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce led to an agreement with CBL & Associates to build a mall on 50 acres of land on the east end of Morristown, two years passed before site work began. By that time, three national department stores had announced their plans to locate in College Square Mall.

James L. "Bucky" Wolford, executive vice president and associate of CBL & Associates at the time, announced the news and said in an August 1986 press release College Square would be the largest and newest mall in the area.

"It will truly be a regional mall due to the department stores we are including and the location we have selected at the strategic intersection of U.S. Highway 25E

and U.S. 11E, two highways that serve the total trade area," he said.

The trade area Wolford mentioned included eight counties — Hamblen, Hawkins, Greene, Cocke, Jefferson, Grainger, Claiborne and Hancock.

Mike Kaufman, general manager of College Square Mall since 1995, said he agreed with Wolford's statement.

"CBL did a great job early on in choosing a location for this mall from a transportation standpoint," he said. "For ease of access and convenience, it's second to none from out outlying counties."

As construction began and time passed, announcements continued to roll in about stores slated to open within the mall, a final anchor store and groundbreaking and ribbon cutting ceremonies. The company was diligent to build up the public's excitement.

College Square Mall would include popular retailers, such as Wal-Mart, J. C. Penney, Sears, Proffitt's and Goody's, in addition to a projected 70 additional stores and a movie theater.

The growth College Square Mall would bring to the east end of town was immediate.

McDonald's and Long John Silver's restaurants opened around the same time as the mall and have remained in business to



this day. Other businesses opened across Morris Blvd and in the eventual Crocket Square development across U.S. Highway 25E.

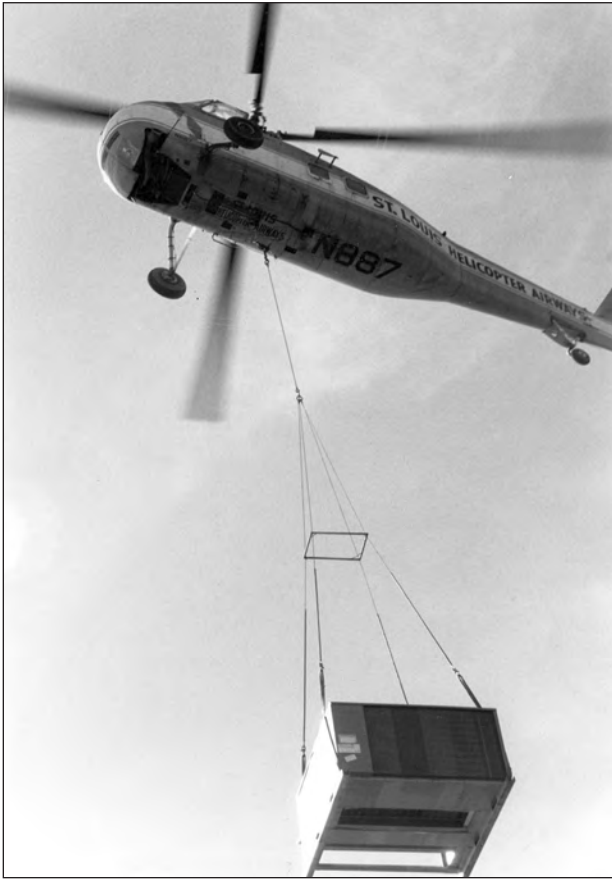
"I think the mall was a catalyst for retail development at this crossroads," Kaufman said. "Other retailers realized this was a

prime location for access, availability and ease of transportation. The mall did bring development to this area of Morristown."

The mall has been through several changes over the years, both in tenants and policies, as well as major renovations in 1999 and 2008. Its anchor stores have all changed since the 1988 opening, and the movie theater moved to a new location in 2008.

Most recently, College Square Mall has felt the change of new ownership and management — a change Kaufman said has been positive for the mall.

CBL & Associates continued adding properties



until it reached nearly 90 malls. Kaufman said with the changes malls have faced in the past few years, CBL's business model began to change, and it evolved into a company that wanted to focus on more high-end markets.

With this decision, Kaufman said CBL singled out around 20 middle-

market malls to sell. College Square and Foothills Mall in Maryville were the last two to be sold in May 2017, and they were sold as a package deal to Time Equities Inc., which handles its management and leasing through Urban Retail Properties.

Kaufman said new management brought the challenges of adjusting to internal change, but from a staffing perspective especially, they were better off.

"We're coming up on our one-year anniversary with TEL, and things have been going well," he said. "We were very fortunate that they opted to retain all the staff and added a former employee who had been laid off by CBL."

Leslie Westmorland, specialty leasing and marketing manager, said the new owners have created a marketing budget and are focused on being involved in the community.



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The Olive Garden, which is scheduled to open at College Square Mall in February, will be the second Darden restaurant on site, joining LongHorn Steakhouse.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

With impending openings and proactive planning, College Square Mall’s future looks as bright today as it did in 1988

BY LYNDSLEY SORAH
Tribune Staff Writer

Thirty years may seem like a long time; but for the management team at College Square Mall, it’s just the beginning. The mall has two major openings scheduled in just over a month and Mike Kaufman, general manager, said Urban Retail Properties is actively seeking out new tenants for the few vacant spaces

currently available. Five Below, a retail store featuring items price \$5 or less, is projected to open Feb. 9 at the front entrance of the mall next to Kohl’s. It takes the place of Toro restaurant, which recently moved to a location beside the movie theater. Soon afterward, the much-anticipated opening of Olive Garden is projected to take place Feb. 12. “I think that we’re getting ready to witness an

event that will be pretty incredible with the opening of Olive Garden,” Kaufman said. “Olive Garden has always been the No. 1 restaurant choice for the Morristown area.” He said Darden Restaurants, which owns both Olive Garden and Longhorn Steakhouse, prefers to place its restaurants in the same area of a town. After the company had

See FUTURE page E-7



Above and Below: Construction in 1991 on the Parkway Substation which was built to give the mall greater reliability.

It’s Electric

As College Square Mall created growth on East end, MUS grew to fill the need

BY LYNDSLEY SORAH
Tribune Staff Writer

In all, 6,864 cubic yards of concrete, 137,381 concrete blocks, 154,968 square yards of asphalt, 9,350 tons of crushed rock and over 754 tons of structural steel went into building the Lakeway Area’s first regional shopping mall. The 508,168 square-foot College Square Mall, completed in February of 1988, contained 75 store spaces, four major department stores and a multi-screen movie theatre — all of which required electricity and water services. Jody Wigington, general manager and chief executive officer of Morristown Utility Systems, said the power feed to the mall was originally off East Morris Blvd., but in 1991 MUS constructed the Parkway Substation to allow a dedicated circuit to the mall for greater reliability. Dennis Peterson, power system manager at that time, engineered the original



substation, which lies in between College Square Mall and the current Crockett Square. Wigington said MUS purchased most of the substation materials as surplus from a U.S. Air Force base in Louisiana. “The station had to be designed from scratch,” he said. “MUS engineered the station incorporating our own spare equipment to have one power transformer and two breakers.” MUS workers performed all the con-

See MUS page E-7



Above: The retail store Five Below is coming to College Square Mall in Spring of 2018. The store, which caters to teens, pre-teens and their parents, carries an ever-evolving assortment items that are \$5 and below. Left: AMC theatres acquired the AMC College Square Mall 12 location in 2017.

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THROUGH THE YEARS

May 1986
Road improvements discussed

November 1986
CBL and Associates pays \$1,333,297 for 50 acres of land, containing 11 lots and six homes

Special to the Citizen Tribune
James L. 'Bucky' Wolford, executive vice president and associate of CBL & Associates, announces site plans for College Square Mall.



October 1984
Plans for a regional shopping mall announced

July 1986
Wal-Mart announces it will move to the mall

Feb. 3, 1988
College Square Mall, J. C. Penney and Sears open

Feb. 17, 1988
Wal-Mart opens

June 1995
Carmike Cinema expands and renovates


April 1999
Goody's expands and remodels August 1999 College Square completes mall renovations, parking lot updates and exterior lighting

March 8, 2002
Belk opens

October 15, 2006
Kohl's opens June 2008 College Square completes flooring and restroom renovation

March 14, 2014
Shoe Dept. Encore opens

April 24, 2014
TJMaxx opens



Special to the Citizen Tribune
A rendering of the future site of College Square Mall.

April 1985
Groundbreaking announced

Aug. 12, 1986
Site Plan for College Square Mall announced at a press conference

February 1987
Goody's announces plans to locate in the mall

Feb. 13, 1987
Opening announced as Feb. 5, 1987 and Sears release store details

Jan. 31, 1988
Store details and grand opening schedules announced

Oct. 8, 1993
Proffitt's opens

Special to the Citizen Tribune
Joan Cox and David Rose review the plans and artistic renderings of College Square Mall.

Dec. 17, 2008
Carmike Cinema 12 opens

April 14, 2014
Longhorn Steakhouse opens

March 2017
Carmike Cinema 12 becomes AMC College Square 12

May 2017
College Square Mall changes ownership

June 1986
"Future Site of College Square Mall" goes up

Dec. 16, 1986
Site work begins

Feb. 12, 1987
Groundbreaking ceremony

January 1988
Four new merchants announced (Fashion Bug, Sidney's, Radio Shack and Belden Jewelers), Byrd's announced store details

April 2009
YEP Policy implemented

Nov. 1, 2016
Dick's Sporting Goods and Ulta Beauty open

April 1, 2017
Planet Fitness opens

March 2018
Five Below and Olive Garden projected to open



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ALWAYS EVOLVING

A look at the stores that called College Square Mall home when it opened in 1988, and those that reside there now

1988


- Sears
J. C. Penney
Wal-Mart
Proffitt's
- Vacant
Everything's a Dollar
Acme Sports
Original Cookie Co.
Regis
Vacant
General Nutrition
LeRoy's Jewelers
Afterthoughts
Sidney's
Cindy's Cinnamon Rolls
Mastercuts
CPI Photo Finish
Lennox Optical
Bonanza
East Tenn. Travel
Belden Jewelers
Fashion Bug
Fashion Bug Plus
Holmes Shoes
Maryville Jewelers
Claire's Boutique
Corn Dog 7
Empty
Royal Optical
Byrd's
Empty
Shoe Show
Goodies
Cozzoli's Pizza
G.A.F.Y.
Radio Shack
Camelot Music
Footlocker
Limited
Intrigue
Coach House
Lerner
Vacant
Vacant
Maurice's (The Closet)
Kinney Shoe
Circus World Toys
Bookland
Tilt

2018

- TJ Maxx
Dick's Sporting Goods/Ultla Beauty
Belk/Planet Fitness
Kohl's
- Carousel Pets
It's All about Sleep
Sports Fever & More
Trendy Trenz
Vacant
Game Stop
GNC
Kay Jewelers
Verizon Wireless
F.Y.E.
Great American Cookies
Mastercuts
CM Games
CM Games
Five Below
Omm Eyebrow Threading
Sprint
BAM (Books-a-Million)
The Children's Place
American Eagle Outfitters
Diamond Gallery
Claire's
Breux Deux Café
Villa Pizza
Garden Express
Hibbett Sports
Ledford's
AT&T
Vacant
Vacant
Subway
Family Wellness Massage
Bath & Body Works
Vacant (old Carmike Cinema)
Vacant (old Carmike Cinema)
Journey's
Aeropostale
Rue 21
Auntie Anne's Pretzels
Christopher & Banks
Maurice's
Shoe Dept. Encore
Shoe Dept. Encore
Shoe Dept. Encore
Shoe Dept. Encore

Then

Now





Circus World Toys opened with the mall in 1988, eventually becoming KB Toys. The space, and others, are now occupied by the Shoe Dept. Encore.

Special to the Citizen Tribune

Then

Now



Maurice's, called The Closet at that time, remains today. LeRoy's Jewelers was in the space where Kay Jewelers is today.

Special to the Citizen Tribune

Then

Now



The original Everything's a Dollar store is currently occupied by a mattress store called It's All about Sleep.

Special to the Citizen Tribune

Then

Now



The current Trendy Trenz store, selling luggage and other bags, was once the Original Cookie Company.

Special to the Citizen Tribune

Then

Now



The original Sears became TJMaxx in 2014.

Special to the Citizen Tribune

Then

Now



This 1988 picture of Lerner's shows manager Karen Hobbs assisting customer Shelby Wilder with a purchase. The current picture of Rue 21 shows manager Chelsi Robinson assisting customer Cheyenne Woods.

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Daniel Munson/Citizen Tribune

The site location next to US Highway 25E was perfect for College Square Mall, allowing the mall to become a regional retail hub and giving it the necessary demographics to thrive even as many malls around the country have struggled.

WHAT HAPPENED IN VEGAS

How two local businessmen changed Morristown’s future with a last-second trip to Las Vegas

BY LYNDSLEY SORAH
Tribune Staff Writer

It all started with a dream and the commitment to make it a reality. It was 1984, and the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce had just wrapped up its yearly long-range planning retreat, including around 20 members who take some time to discuss future endeavors for community growth.

Tom Strate was not a part of this retreat, but was approached soon afterwards by the chairman of the board at that time, John Cahill, to head up the commercial development committee. The committee was given the task to address what members at the retreat had named the No. 1 need of the community — a regional shopping mall. Chamber members had discussed the impact a shop-

ping mall would have on the community, saying it would bring in significant tax revenue and change the town. Strate said he began working immediately with Steve Holt, executive vice president at the chamber, to determine where they should even begin with this project. “The only thing we had in those days was a large paper directory of retailers, a telephone and letterhead,” he said. “No internet, no web-

sites, no Google searches, nothing.” He said they sat in Holt’s office for a few hours every morning for a few days, going through the directory and calling developers and construction companies specializing in shopping malls. “Every time we called somebody, the answer was, ‘No, they’re out of town,’” he said. “So we finally started



Special to the Citizen Tribune

Miss America and Miss Tennessee attended the Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting for the College Square Mall.

See VEGAS page E-7

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Meet the Management team



Members of the management team at College Square Mall work to make sure the mall has a pleasant and safe atmosphere. From left are Chief of Security Scott Carpenter, Marketing Manager Leslie Westmorland, Office Manager Debra Cutice, Director of Operations Jonathan Henderson and General Manager Mike Kaufman.



A huge crowd turned out for the Morristown Area Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting for College Square Mall in February of 1988.

Vegas

(Continued from page E-6)

asking, ‘Where are they?’”

It turned out the executives from all these companies were in Las Vegas for an international shopping mall developers convention.

“Steve hung up the phone and said, ‘I think we need to be in Las Vegas,’” Strate said.

The pair decided to take a one-day trip to catch the end of the convention in Las Vegas, procured guest passes and flew out the next day.

“It was all set up in a grid, and these aisle ways were numbered and lettered, all separated into categories of construction, merchandisers and developers,” Strate said. “The whole industry was in this huge convention center, and I remember looking at Steve and saying, ‘Where do we start?’”

They split up, each tackling an aisle in the developers section handing out packets of information about Morristown. He said their presence was causing some confusion among the developers.

“We were walking up to these booths introducing ourselves as a community representative of Morristown, Tennessee — of which nobody had ever heard,” he said. “We were literally fishing in the ocean.”

Finally, he said they came across a developer who sug-

gested they talk to CBL & Associates, a developer based in Chattanooga. They found the booth and told the developers what they were looking for, and Strate said the developers were shocked.

“They could not believe we were here saying we needed a mall in Morristown, Tennessee,” he said. “But they told us to come back an hour later for a meeting.”

He said the developers were impressed that they had flown to Las Vegas, and they called a few weeks later to arrange a visit to Morristown to choose a site.

Strate and Holt had already talked about where they thought the mall should be located. They liked the site where the Merchant’s Greene Shopping Center is located, but Strate said CBL did not like the location.

CBL chose a site which Strate said was entirely farmland and hills, with several homes on it. However, it was near U.S. Route 25E, running directly into Kentucky.

“It just didn’t look like a site,” he said. “And they said this is where they wanted to put it. We thought it was nuts.”

The site became the current home of College Square Mall, a \$30-million project which opened just a few years later, despite the extensive excavating and grading

developers had to complete.

“From the point that we were in Las Vegas, it was about three or four years before we did the ribbon cutting,” Strate said. “People in Morristown make it happen. They don’t sit around and wait for some developer to come to them. This town works toward whatever that goal is.”



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Special to the Citizen Tribune
In 2016, MUS completed a \$2.5 million upgrade at the Parkway Substation.

MUS

(Continued from page E-3)

struction on what Wigington said is still a state-of-the-art station.

“Interestingly enough, the station was our first station to use solid-state relaying, and that was something uncommon in the power industry at that stage,” he said.

Wigington said the station also became the primary feed for Walters State Community College and Crockett Square. Because of the increasing electric loads for Parkway Substation, MUS became concerned the station was not as reliable as it once was, especially in extreme temperatures.

“In 2016, MUS completed a \$2.5 million investment to upgrade the substation,” he said. “Parkway now has two power transformers and capability of eight circuits, providing considerably more flexibility and increased reliability.”

In addition, College Square Mall and MUS Fiber-Net partnered in September 2017 to add free customer Wi-Fi access in all mall common areas. This too was a massive undertaking, involving 20 wireless access points and 144 hours of work.

Future

(Continued from page E-3)

record-breaking numbers for the Longhorn opening, it was very interested in locating another restaurant near the mall— a feat he said took some crunching in order to create an outparcel location near the front of the property.

College Square Mall is also anticipating a future tenant for the 7,000 square-foot space between Dick’s Sporting Goods and TJMaxx. Kaufman said it will either be one tenant in the entire space or split between two.

A second space is also available at the location of the former Goody’s store. Kaufman said it has been vacant since around the end of 2016, and Urban Properties has been diligently looking for a new tenant.

Kaufman is also optimistic about continuing growth in the area surrounding the mall despite focus on the west end of town in recent years. He said he would like to see more retail development and improvements to the area.

“There’s definitely a future in this area,” he said. “We’re glad we are here. From the perspective of our customers in surrounding counties, this is still a prime spot.”


He said he was pleased with the growth Morristown has been seeing citywide because it was in the benefit of the entire county.

“The more people we retain to shop in Morristown, the more benefit to local government, school systems and everybody involved,” he said.

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