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Commercial Real Estate

# Chesterfield Mall demolition is only the beginning, developer says



The "Chesterfield Mall" sign at the main entrance to the mall, which closed Aug. 31, after being torn down at the start of demolition Tuesday, Oct. 15.

DILIP VISHWANAT | SLBJ



By [Gloria Lloyd](#) – Reporter, St. Louis Business Journal  
Oct 15, 2024



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The owner of Chesterfield Mall said at the start of the mall's demolition Tuesday that he will see the project that will replace it - Downtown Chesterfield - through to the end.

Michael Staenberg, whose development firm The Staenberg Group owns the 96-acre former mall property located at Clarkson Road, Chesterfield Parkway and Interstate 64, said that the \$2 billion mixed-use Downtown Chesterfield redevelopment will be a 10-year project. He made the comments at the event TSG held to celebrate the start of demolition, billed as a “demolition party.”

The teardown of the mall, which started Tuesday morning when equipment from contractor Spirtas Worldwide ripped down the “Chesterfield Mall” sign and awning at the mall's main entrance, will [take about six months](#). That will be followed by about a year of grading and adding future infrastructure for Downtown Chesterfield, such as utility lines, roads, sidewalks and bike paths, TSG has said.

Although the demolition party Tuesday was invitation-only, some 20 to 30 cars lined the road outside the mall's fence to view the start of the demolition process.

After the area near the mall's front entrance was torn down Tuesday, contractors will take another two weeks or so to finish removing items that can be salvaged or sold from the interior of the mall, and then move back to the outside, TSG officials said. Some of the equipment that powered the mall is outdated and no longer produced, but has a resale market to provide equipment to other 1970s or 1980s malls that might need replacement equipment and can't find it, an official said.

Staenberg got a mixed reaction from officials at the city of Chesterfield many years ago when he first approached them to ask what they would think of tearing down the mall, but the project was part of a long-term plan he had to turn Chesterfield, once a farm community, into a [retail shopping mecca](#), he told the crowd gathered Tuesday.

Although the [mall closed permanently Aug. 31](#), the plans started decades ago when fellow developer I.E. Millstone helped convince a major owner of property in Chesterfield Valley, Louis Sachs, to give Staenberg a chance to develop property next to the mall, Staenberg said.

That adjacent development, known as Chesterfield Commons, took business away from the mall and probably hastened its demise, although that wasn't the intention going in, Staenberg said. The pair of [dueling outlet malls](#) that opened around the same time in 2013 in Chesterfield also [contributed to lower sales at Chesterfield Mall](#), alongside other factors, Staenberg said.



Image: SLBJ

The demolition ceremony of Chesterfield Mall

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Once a number of factors converged to show the mall had already hit its peak, Staenberg said, he realized the best hope for the mall property to continue to contribute to Chesterfield was as a new development altogether. Separately, TSG [purchased the Taubman Prestige Outlets mall](#) in 2018 and over the next several years [converted it to an entertainment-themed retail center, The District](#). TSG [purchased the Sears store at Chesterfield Mall](#) in 2018 and later [purchased the mall itself](#) in February 2020.

The struggling mall had been [put up for sale in 2019 by owner NAI Global](#). The mall's prior owner, CBL Properties, had defaulted on its \$140 million loan.

Although Chesterfield city officials were skeptical at first, they eventually got on board with the plan and approved roughly \$300 million in tax increment financing for two projects next to each other with a combined [\\$3 billion in planned development](#), Downtown Chesterfield and a [neighboring \\$1 billion project from developer CRG, Wildhorse Village](#).

At the ceremony Tuesday before demolition, Chesterfield Mayor Bob Nation spoke in support of the project, noting that it is being proposed by a private developer and not the city. He ended with, "Mr. Staenberg, tear down this mall!"

Staenberg, 70, joked that he expects to live for 30.5 more years, and he plans to continue to watch Chesterfield grow during that time frame.

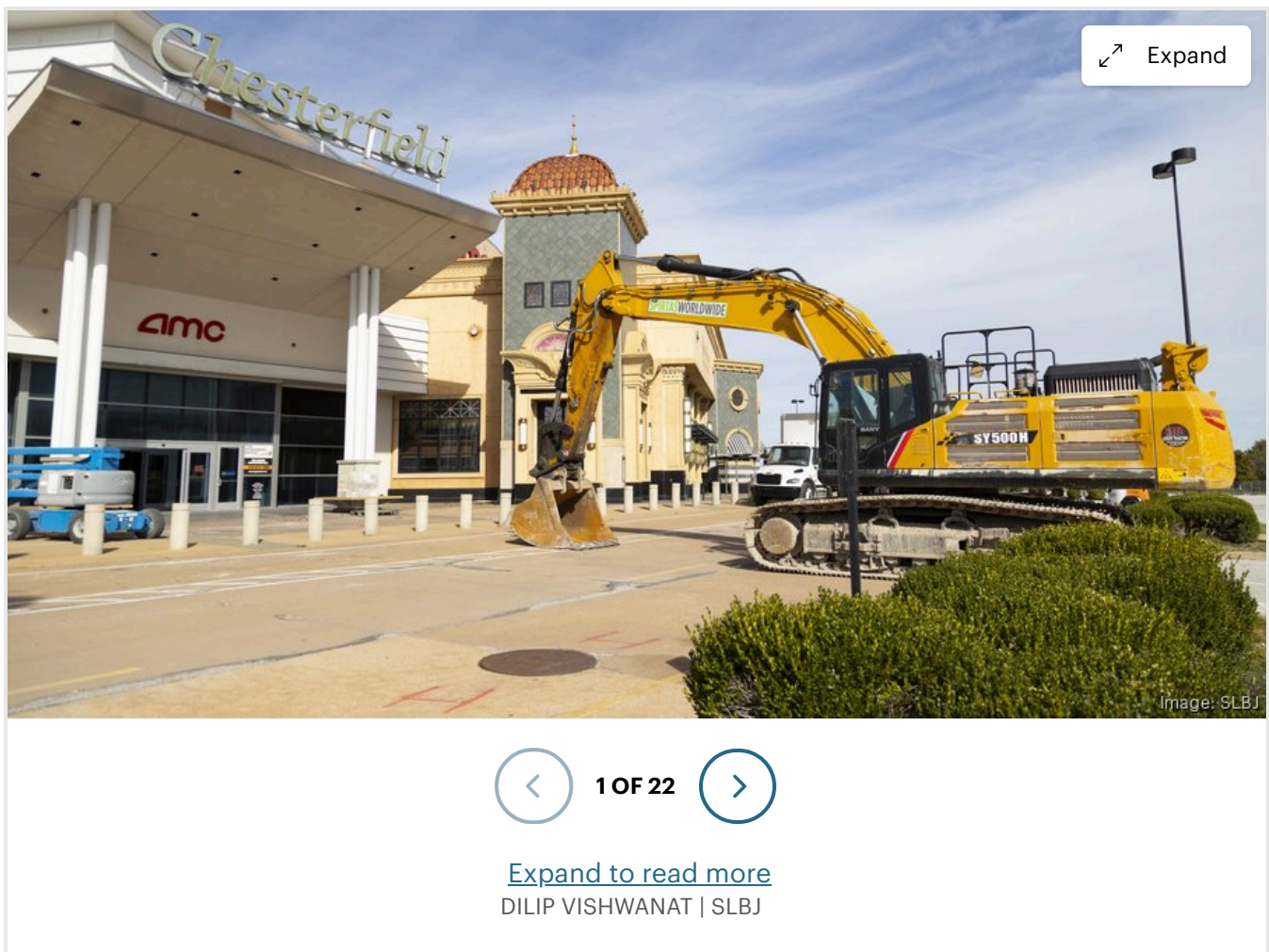
As to why the project is so important to him, Staenberg said, "I could live anywhere in the United States, and I choose to live in St. Louis, and I think it's important to make St. Louis a better place." He added that the mall property was about the same size as all of Clayton, and "this will be the next focal point of the St. Louis region. I'm really proud of that."

He added that "there will be nothing like it in the United States, I promise you."

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***See photos inside the Chesterfield Mall before it was demolished.***





The name of the new project, although self-explanatory, is also a tribute to Sachs, who “had ‘Downtown Chesterfield’ kind of shelved away,” Staenberg said.

Although Tuesday marked a milestone in the timeline toward Downtown Chesterfield, Staenberg noted that most of the work still lies ahead. He compared the situation to a football team that just got the ball, but then has to perform.

“I feel like I’m on the 10-yard line. We’ve got 90 yards to go,” he said. “I believe in sports metaphors. We’ve got 90 yards to go, but we will be successful.”

Although the future Downtown Chesterfield project has no confirmed tenants other than Dillards, which said it wants to reopen in its mall building that is still owned by the retailer, the first phase will focus on residential and filling the former Macy’s building with retail, office or other tenants, TSG officials said.



This rendering shows what some of the retail space at the Downtown Chesterfield development could look like.

TSG

A grocery store, office user, data center and hospital are currently interested in leasing space, Staenberg said.

One of the primary focuses will be adding thousands of new residents, who will help create demand for all the other downtown-style development that will happen in their neighborhood, Staenberg said. The project has approval for up to 2,500 new housing units.

“When you have over 5,000, 6,000 people within a mile, it’s a downtown, and we’re going to make sure that it’s walkable,” Staenberg said.

The project will have dog parks and amenities such as the Chesterfield Amphitheater across the street, he said.

