



# HERMITAGE PENNSYLVANIA

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## **Hickory Fields Project Begins**

The Hermitage Planning Commission approved subdivision and land development plans for the initial phase of the Hickory Fields Project today marking the beginning of the redevelopment of the former Shenango Valley Mall property and the development of a City Center along the northern edge of the mall property and adjacent land. These plans will now be reviewed by the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission and will be considered by the Hermitage Board of Commissioners at a future public meeting.

Robert T. Abramovich, Executive Vice President of Flicore LLC, developer of the mall property, presented a Sketch Plan delineating 11 parcels on the 54-acre mall property and detailing interconnections for safe travel of pedestrians and vehicles, special landscaping features and open space areas. Mr. Abramovich also presented four Land Development Plans for the initial development phase which were approved by the Hermitage Planning Commission.

The land development plans reveal the construction of buildings of approximately 128,660 sq. ft., 4,997 sq. ft., 5,161 sq. ft., and 5,780 sq. ft. Additional building construction and tenants are expected in future phases of the project.

The overall project delivers on the #1 Core Value of the Hermitage 2030 Comprehensive Plan which is the creation of a Vibrant City Center. The City of Hermitage will develop a City Center to include outdoor community gathering and natural space with a variety of amenities and mixed-use opportunities. The city engaged SmithGroup, a national, award-winning design firm, to assist in visioning the City Center and to create a conceptual rendering. Michelle L. Johnson, Associate, Urban Design and Waterfronts Senior Strategist for SmithGroup, presented the conceptual rendering at the Hermitage Planning Commission Meeting, for informational purposes. The City Center planning process, to date, has involved numerous city staff and a Stakeholders Group of Hermitage residents and business owners representing a cross section of the community. A multi-year development process is expected which will include additional public input.

The Hickory Fields announcement marks a turning point in the history of the Shenango Valley Mall property. The once thriving mall suffered from consumer trends that have swept across the nation and which led to the loss of mall anchors like Macy's and Sears, which closed in 2016. This led to disinvestment in the mall building, the loss of nearly \$250,000 in annual property tax revenues for local taxing bodies, and a significant decline in retail and hospitality jobs in the community. The Hickory

Fields project will not only reestablish the tax base, but it will also involve private investments in the tens of millions of dollars in the property and the creation of hundreds of new jobs in the retail and hospitality sectors.

“We are excited to kick off the Hickory Fields Project and welcome national brands like Chick-fil-A, Chili’s and Longhorn, along with a big box national retailer, to our community,” remarked Duane Piccirilli, President, Hermitage Board of Commissioners. “These brands will satisfy the demands of customers from across the region while providing significant job opportunities for area residents and stabilizing the tax base in our community.”

The project was spurred by \$5.5 million in Commonwealth of Pennsylvania investments providing funds for demolition of the mall building, site preparation and the construction of road and pedestrian infrastructure. The state investment was an integral part in attracting Flicore to pursue redevelopment of the property and the investment of tens of millions of private dollars. Hermitage City Manager, Gary Hinkson thanked local legislators for their part in spurring the development. “We are grateful to State Senator Michele Brooks who was instrumental in securing the state funding needed to realize this project and to State Representative Parke Wentling for his strong support of the project,” Hinkson commented. “In the absence of their involvement and support we would not be here today to kick off the Hickory Fields project.”

“I’m happy to see plans for the initial phase of the Hermitage Fields Project unveiled,” stated State Senator Michele Brooks. “It is a prime example of how state funds can leverage a large private investment that will transform our community through a mixed-use development that will provide jobs for our residents and dining, shopping and entertainment that will work to attract new families and businesses to the area.”

“I am excited for the launch of the Hickory Fields Project,” said State Representative Parke Wentling. “This project will not only provide shopping and dining opportunities that our community has long desired but will ultimately lead to the development of a walkable City Center that will provide amenities for the enjoyment of people of all ages and accommodate a variety of gathering opportunities.”

The Hickory Fields Project will include future phases involving the development of the remaining seven parcels as well as the City Center. “Hickory Fields is a multi-year project, and we expect construction on the initial four parcels to begin later this year with store openings occurring sometime in 2026,” Hinkson stated. “Future phases will follow our announcement today and we look forward to the continued buildout of the Hickory Fields Project in the future,” Hinkson concluded.

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