

# OPINIONS 7-22-11

## Our Views

### A brighter future

#### Push Miracle City Mall project to spark Titusville revival

**A** symbol of economic pain for Titusville has a chance to become a symbol of rebirth.

Miracle City Mall off U.S. 1 south of the city's downtown could be reinvented thanks to a plan in the works by the Greater Titusville Renaissance campaign.

Spearheaded by Brevard County Commission Chairman Robin Fisher and Titusville Mayor Jim Tulley, the revitalization project would rely on money from private investors to transform the site into an open-air commercial and medical center along the lines of The Avenue Viera.

Turning around the once flourishing but now nearly empty mall won't be easy.

Several previous attempts have tanked, and the down economy, combined with massive job losses prompted by the retirement of the shuttle program, creates a daunting climate for success.

Nonetheless, synergies already at work bode well for the plan coming together.

What's shaping up:

- The Space Coast Economic Development Commission has locked in a purchase price of \$5.5 million for the property that's good until November, making it more marketable, according to Titusville economic development Director Matt Chesnut.



Tim Shortt, FLORIDA TODAY

**Moving forward.** Miracle City Mall, built in the late 1960s, would be reinvented through a plan by the Greater Titusville Renaissance campaign.

- A new store could be built for J.C. Penney, one of only four businesses remaining in the mall, followed by demolishing of the old mall.

Maintaining the anchor retailer makes sense to draw customers in an area that has few large department stores, and to attract investors. Fisher, Brevard and Titusville economic development officials should pull out the stops to get a long-term lease extension signed with J.C. Penney.

- Parrish Medical Center wants to consolidate its Titusville network of physician offices, diagnostic centers and testing labs into one building and is studying the viability of moving them to the Miracle Mall location.

It's an opportunity for Parrish to burnish its reputation for commitment to the community's well-being we think it should seize.

Meanwhile, Fisher is hunting for investors to back the project, including affluent individuals and local pension funds such as the Titusville Police Officers and Firefighters Pension Board.

They'll have to crunch the numbers carefully, but we hope enough investors get on board to jump-start the mall renewal project.

Because despite today's economic gloom, it's virtually certain better times lie ahead for North Brevard.

Encouraging signs for the future include recent movement on post-shuttle job creation, from Kennedy Space Center's selection for the International Space Station's national laboratory work to the possibility Boeing Co. could use a former shuttle hangar to build its manned space taxi, creating hundreds of jobs.

Then there's the Lake Nona Science and Technology Park under construction in eastern Orange County, which should play a major role in a brighter future for Titusville.

Called the Medical City, the project clusters the University of Central Florida College of Medicine, UCF School of Biomedical Sciences, Orlando Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Nemours Children's Hospital and other high-tech medical research facilities, and is expected to create as many as 30,000 jobs.

The short commute to Lake Nona from North Brevard opens the door to countless employment opportunities.

And a huge boost for the housing market if Space Coast cities and towns effectively sell themselves as attractive coastal settings to raise families to Medical City workers relocating from elsewhere.

Brevard leaders at all levels should leave no stone unturned creating job-growth links to Lake Nona, a strategy the Economic Development Commission of Florida's Space Coast is already pursuing.

Putting the miracle back in Titusville's reputation requires that and much more, and won't happen overnight.

But redeveloping the mall that symbolized the city's glory days is a fitting place to start.