

[print](#)

## Alpharetta breaks ground on City Center

---

by [Rachel Kellogg](#)

04.24.13 - 12:00 pm

Alpharetta officials and community leaders gathered Monday morning for the ceremonial ground breaking of the long-awaited City Center downtown redevelopment project — kicking off 16 months of construction that will transform Downtown Alpharetta.

Contractors will begin demolition of existing structures on the 25-acre site around city hall this week.

The city plans to complete the civic components of the \$31-million project in August of 2014. This will include a new 50,000-square-foot city hall, a town plaza, a five-acre park, a 450-space structured parking facility and connecting avenues and sidewalks.

Later in 2014, Fulton County plans to open a new public library on the three-acre site the city donated for that purpose.

Alpharetta Mayor David Belle Isle said the City Center is a generational project that will serve as a catalyst to attract private development.

“We really want to create a place where friends and family come and do life together,” he said at the ceremony.

Belle Isle said Alpharetta has always been a great place to live but it has lacked one ingredient — a vibrant downtown.

District 49 State Rep. Chuck Martin, R-Alpharetta, a former Alpharetta mayor, also spoke at the ceremony, explaining that plans to create a downtown have been about 20 years in the making.

“Downtown needed to decide what it wants to be,” he said, adding that the city’s downtown has now made its decision to be a “hometown for a lot of people.”

Martin thanked past and current city council members for their dedication to getting public feedback on the project.

“They wanted Alpharetta to be what the people wanted it to be,” he said. “I’m thankful it can be our kids’ hometown for many years to come.”

The final project components, four parcels that can support approximately 175,000 square feet of private development, have not yet been fully programmed.

City officials plan to attract one or more interests to the table who will develop retail, restaurant and other uses on the site.

Alpharetta will begin introducing those opportunities to the development community this summer.

That will be followed by the release of a request for qualifications in the fall that will seek to identify a field of potential developers from which proposals will be sought.

The city is nearing completion on a set of design standards that will establish the overall tone for the site — the final step before marketing to the private sector begins.

City Center has been an active goal for the city of Alpharetta since 2005 when officials first put forward a plan for spurring business and development activity in the community's downtown district by leveraging city-owned property.

Discussions first centered on a three-acre tract and included only a small expansion of city hall and the creation of a central public plaza fronting Main Street.

By 2006 the city was pursuing partnerships with private sector interests to expand the footprint and scope of the project, expanding its vision to include 10 acres that would be home to the plaza and city hall expansion as well as a five-acre park and commercial development opportunities.

In 2011, after the third iteration of the project stalled, the city began acquiring additional property so that it could control the destiny of the project.

Within months, Alpharetta had struck a deal to bring the new branch of the Fulton County Public Library to the project and saw 73 percent of its citizens vote to finance the project using \$29 million in general obligation bonds.

---

© neighbornewspapers.com 2013