

## Shopping without the drive: New St. Johns stores could impact Duval

“This has a big potential of impacting The Avenues mall,” Jacksonville City Council member Danny Becton says.

By Jay Schlichter  
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Residents of northern St. Johns County are accustomed to the drive.

With no large retail centers with big-box stores, restaurants and retailers, residents often must travel north into Duval County for shopping, dining and entertainment.

That’s about to change.

Plans show that northern St. Johns County will gain three large shopping centers totaling at least 4.5 million square feet of retail space.

### THE PAVILION AT DURBIN PARK

Here’s what’s been announced so far at The Pavilion at Durbin Park in northern St. Johns County. Gate Petroleum Co. also will open a convenience store-gas station and a Gate Express Carwash. Plans for the second phase of the development include office space, multifamily homes and hotel rooms.

#### Cell phones

- AT&T
- Sprint
- T-Mobile
- Verizon

#### Services

- Baptist Primary Care
- CareSpot Urgent Care
- Chase Bank
- Great Clips

#### Hair Cuttery

- Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa
- Heartland Dental
- Korial Cleaners
- Lee Nails

#### Entertainment

- Cinemark 12-screen movie theater

#### Stores

- Burlington
- Dollar Tree
- Five Below
- Mattress Firm
- Petco
- The Home Depot
- Walmart

#### Restaurants

- Asian Fusion
- Firehouse Subs

- Jana Japanese Steakhouse
- Kazu Sushi
- Keke’s Breakfast Cafe
- Salsas Mexican Restaurant
- Smoothie King
- Tropical Smoothie
- Your Pie

Those comprise:

- Up to 2.4 million square feet in The Pavilion at Durbin Park.
- 1.7 million square feet in SilverLeaf.
- 450,000 square feet in Beachwalk.

The Pavilion will be the first to open. Walmart, its first anchor, scheduled its grand opening Wednesday.

It will be followed by other anchors like Home Depot, restaurants like Keke's Breakfast Cafe and entertainment options like Cinemark, a 12-screen movie theater.

Durbin Park, which will be built in four phases, will be developed on 1,600 acres south of Race Track Road and adjacent to the recently completed Florida 9B extension.

The first phase will comprise about 650,000 square feet of retail space, followed by more than 1 million square feet in phase two, to be anchored by Bass Pro Shops.

The second phase plans also call for hotels, office space, multifamily residential units.

Retail space isn't all that will be developed. The project was granted entitlements to build up to 2.8 million square feet of office space.

Site plans outlining the third and fourth phases show an office park on the eastern edge of the development, adjacent to Interstate 95, with corporate office and neighborhood professional office spaces.

The project is being developed through a joint venture between Gate Petroleum Co. and Gatlin Development Co. Inc. A news release from the partners refers to the project as a "super-regional, mixed-used development."

In addition, smaller neighborhood shopping centers are planning to open near Durbin Park, in Nocatee and in other areas of northern St. Johns County.

There have not been announcements about stores interested in SilverLeaf and Beachwalk. St. Johns County shoppers seem to welcome the retail.

"I think our residents are really excited to see Durbin Park come online. They have had limited options for entertainment and retail experiences. This gives them the ability to be able to shop in their own community," said Melissa Glasgow, St. Johns County's director of economic development. That also means shoppers might not travel into Duval County.

"This has a big potential of impacting The Avenues mall," said Jacksonville City Council member Danny Becton, whose district includes the center and abuts St. Johns County.

The Avenues mall is the southernmost regional shopping center in Duval County.

Becton said St. Johns residents likely will choose to stay and shop within a short distance instead of driving into Duval and fighting traffic.

He said that could be positive for some Duval shopping centers like St. Johns Town Center, which he said often is congested.

He is not the only one who thinks that.

“You will absolutely see people (from St. Johns County) electing convenience over having more choice options. If they go all the way up to The Avenues, they have more options, but they have to drive 30 minutes to get there,” said Kate Clifford, the owner and broker of Strategic Sites, which represents retail and commercial real estate clients in Northeast Florida.

If Durbin Park’s developers are successful in building out the allowable square footage, the retail space alone will be larger than St. Johns Town Center, which has 1.4 million square feet of retail space.

Shopping centers developed near the Town Center generated hundreds of thousands of additional square feet of stores and restaurants.

“What competition sometimes does is it actually helps everybody as it relieves some of that pressure on other stores,” Becton said.

“We do need traffic relief in the southern end of (Duval), so those (St. Johns) residents can benefit from having their own neighborhood retail.”