



CONFIDENTIAL

Feasibility Study

Indoor and outdoor conversion proposal
Orlando Fashion Square

5-6 November 2022



Introduction

The recent pandemic highlighted our dependence on the current food retail supply chain. Its sensitivity to interruptions is only worsened by inflation, war, and climate change. At the same time, our local dependence on dwindling retail jobs makes our population overly sensitive to recessions, discourages economic development, and holds us back from taking an active role in our future.

Fashion Square Mall represents an opportunity to kick our dependence on low-wage retail jobs and create a new way of thinking about food security. This proposal converts the nearly dead Fashion Square Mall in Orlando, Florida into a living vertical farming production site, throwing out the current corporate trash, and creating a business incubator environment that will attract entrepreneurs who want to grow, process, and then sell food products either wholesale or retail using vertical farming, land farming, aeroponics, hydroponics, and other technologies.

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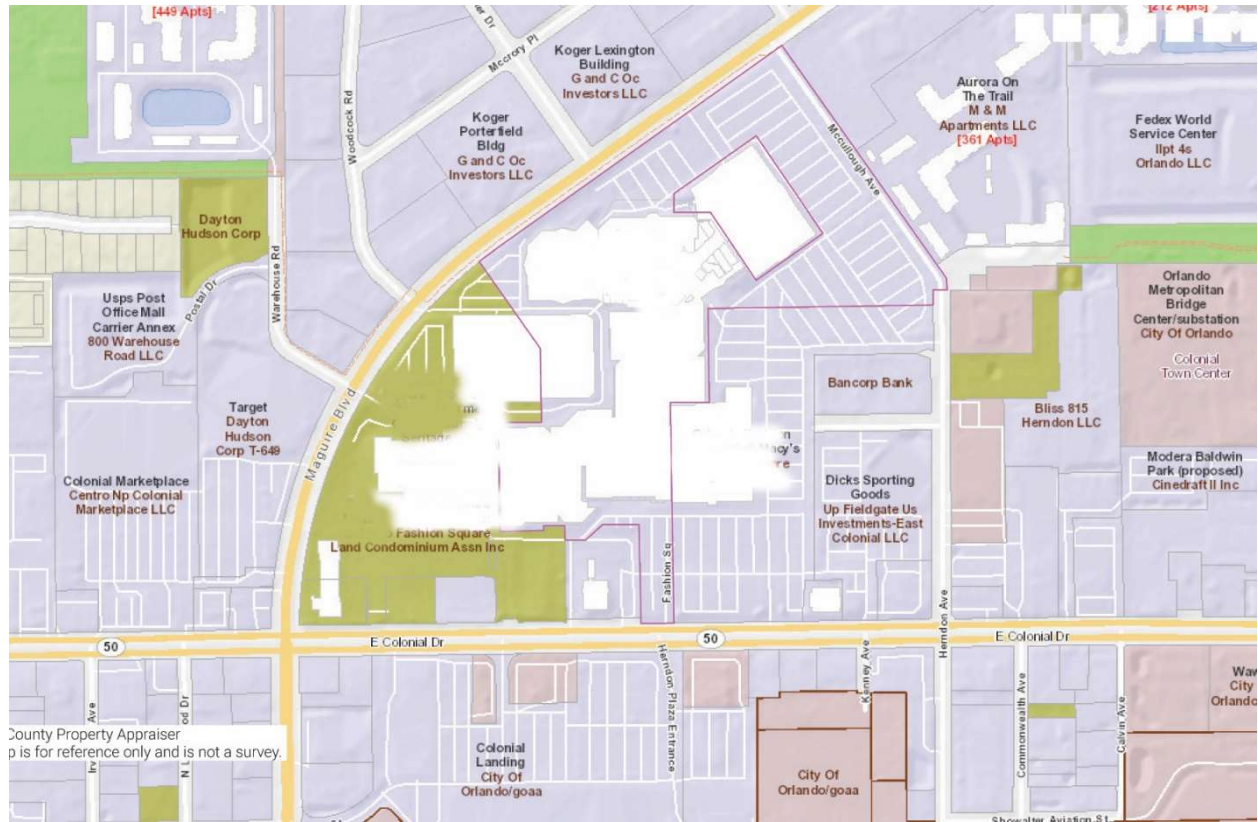
1. Executive Summary

Converting Fashion Square Mall into an advanced business incubator will pay back in 7-10 years depending on levels of investment. The least amount of investment will pay back in 7 years, with a higher level of investment including photovoltaic power (solar panels) and other power generator devices will pay back in 10 years.

The project will create dozens of high-paying jobs for scientists and professionals, dozens more entrepreneurial opportunities, build resilience in the community against future food scarcity and recessions, and convert an obsolete consumer wasteland into a high quality producer facility.

No other project offers an economic development opportunity of this magnitude for the relatively modest level of investment of \$55 million – less than the price of a new resort hotel, a SpaceX launch, or an unarmed F-35 fighter jet.

2. Land Use, Entitlements, and utilities



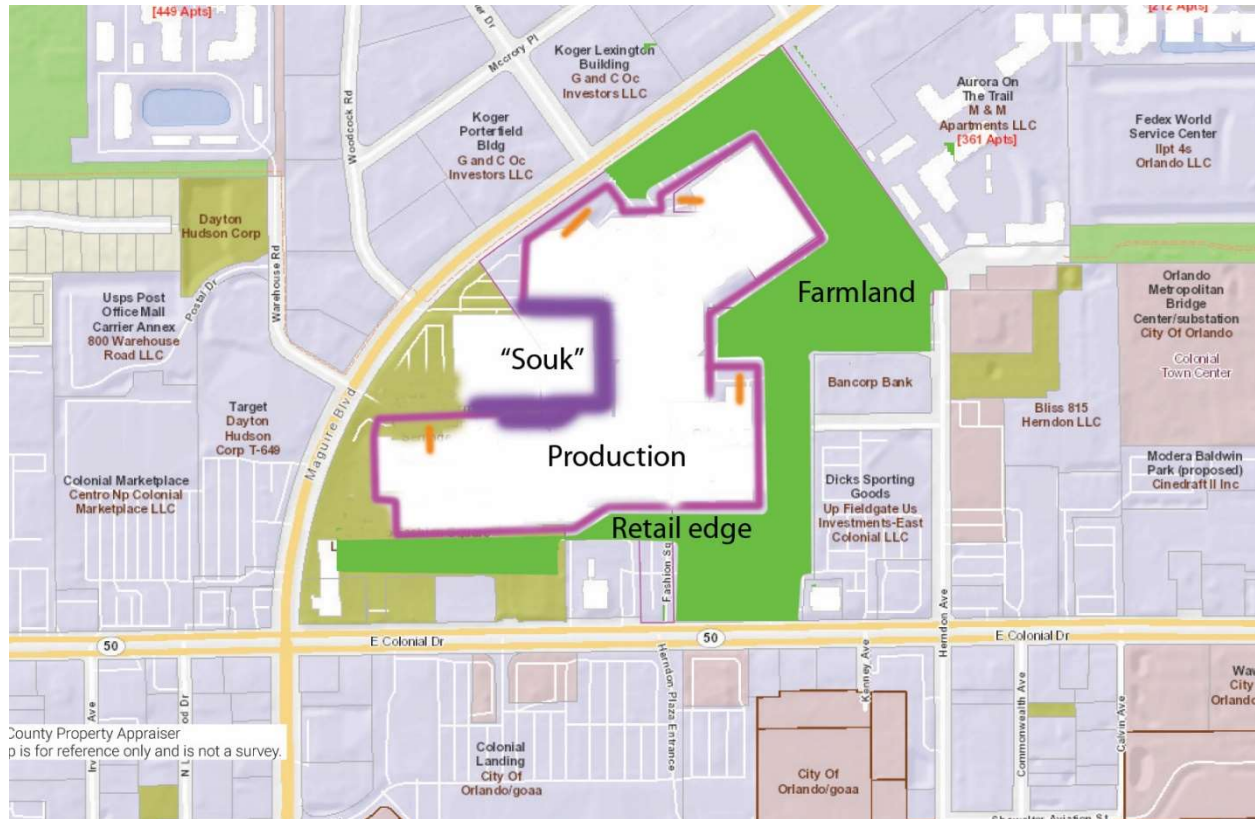
a. Parcels and Zoning

The existing 30+ acre site is severely underutilized with a decrepit mall, weedy parking, and feral cats policing the loading dock areas for vermin. The parcels are zoned AC-3 which is a typical City of Orlando commercial zoning designation which doesn't mean much of anything except you can't do housing.

At one time, Fashion Square Mall might have meant something but in today's world, it is unlucky in being in between Millenium Mall and Altamonte Mall. There isn't really any use for it anymore. Currently there's some kind of low-grade, mixed-use Baldwin-Parky thing in mind. Just what we need, right? Another unaffordable, HOA-riddled mess with franchise stores full of nothing, boring design, and traffic and parking hell. Excuse us while we look for a garbage can to throw up into.

Instead, our proposal might work if there is sufficient investment go through the regulatory change-of-use process, if it is even needed. This study proposes that the AC-3 zoning be kept and for use purposes it is primarily commercial/retail.

b. Proposed Land Use Conversion



Driveways will remain the same. However since the mall will be converted to a production space, less parking is required. The vast parking fields will be converted to grazing farmland with chicken, goats or sheep, an opportunity for dairy, wool, or other animal products.

The mall itself (see #3) will be turned inside out so that the pink retail shopping sidewalk will be ***along the exterior perimeter rather than the inside***. Food production will occur in the large, high-ceilinged interior of the mall with harvested produce brought through the old shop fronts, processed, packaged, and then sold retail out of the exterior of the mall. This exterior will be given a new canopy and facelift so it will be a pleasant shady experience to walk around.

The public will be able to park in small pockets around the perimeter but will mostly park in the existing parking garage. Between the garage and the mall there is an ideal pedestrian zone with great proportions that will become a popup market, constantly changing, and a low barrier to entry for entrepreneurs just starting out.



This cool little urban street is just crying out for a great popup market to happen.

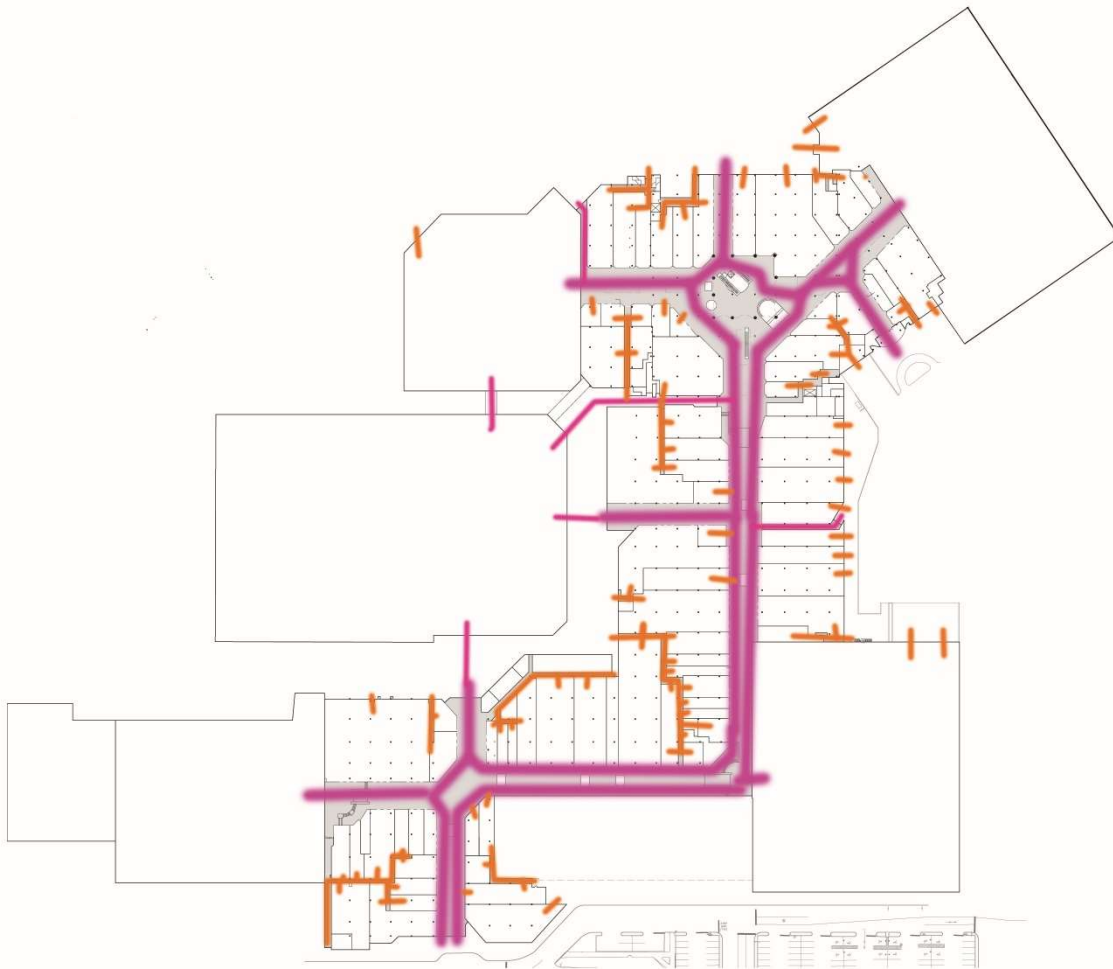


This was someone's fantasy of a hotel site. Good thing that never went. We have a better idea.

3. The Mall Itself

The following notes will provide guidance on how the conversion will work with the building itself.

a. Current plan



This is the current plan of the mall. Pink is the public circulation through the interior, while orange is the service pathways into the individual stores.

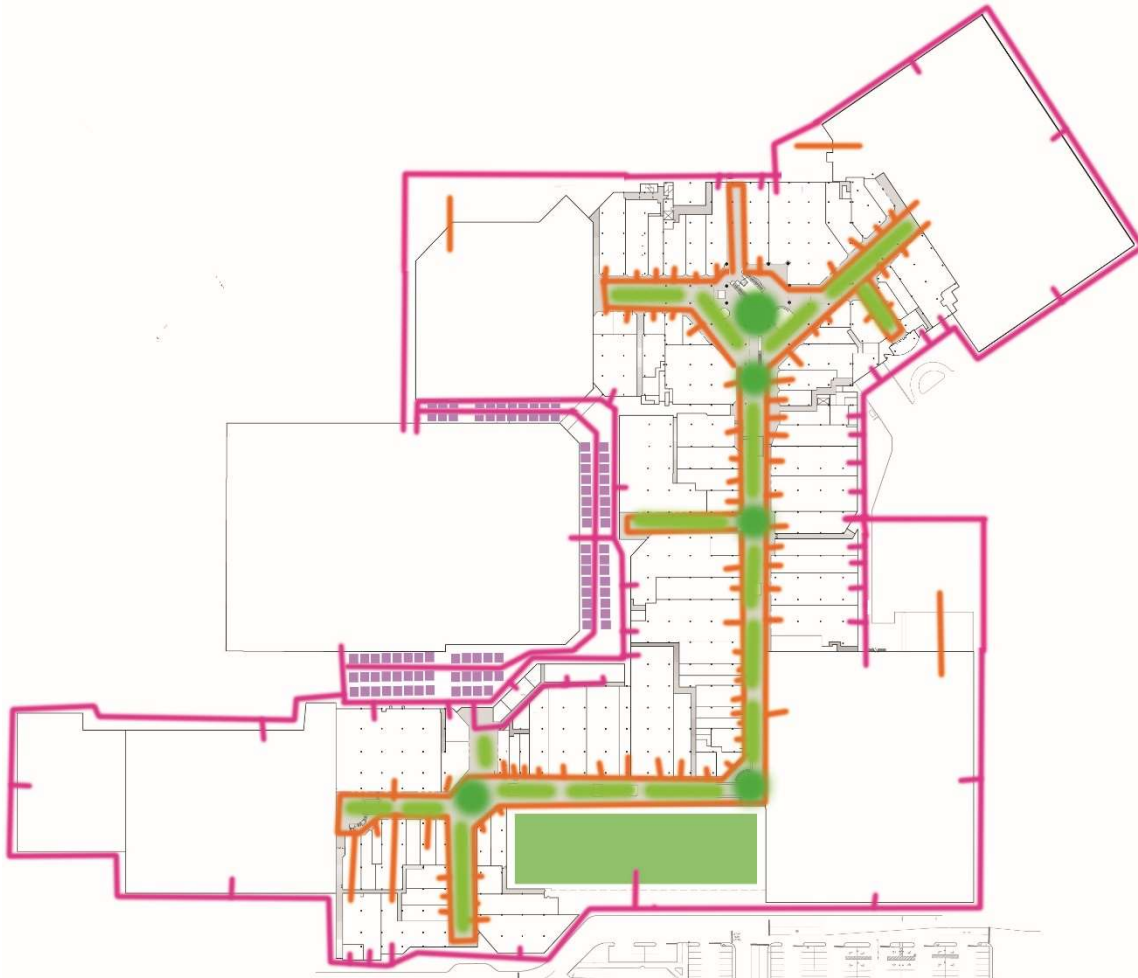
This is classic 1970s thinking: the public is safe inside a controlled environment that simulates Main Street, while the service workers bring goods in from the outside. It's an industrially efficient plan that is a perfect diagram of late 20th century consumerism, a fossilized form of suburban lifestyle that vanished three recessions ago and two internets ago.



Fashion Square just doesn't work anymore. No one cares about fuckin' old Main Street, no one wants to be inside this dreary dead zone of store clerks hiding among soulless fashion apparel and overpriced crap. It sucks. Get it out of here. We don't live like this anymore, do we?



b. Proposed Plan



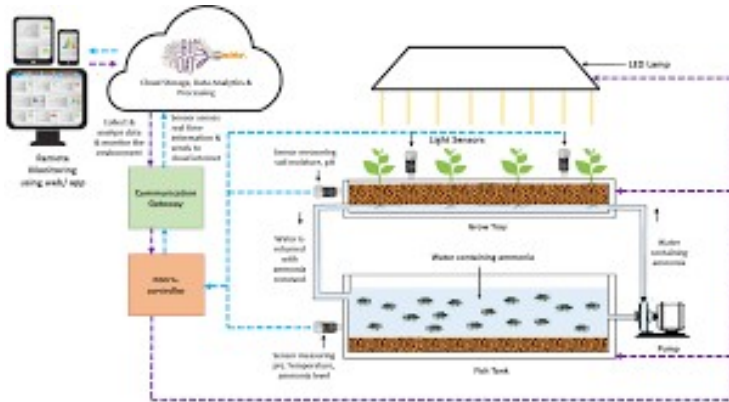
This is the proposed diagram which ***turns the mall inside out***. The pedestrian promenade is now an orange service area that will have high density aeroponics in the skylight zones (green dots), in between will have additional indoor farming under grow lights. Produce from these operations will be fed into the individual stores which are part of a collective.

The pink line shows the public circulation. People park in the garage, and then proceed through the pop up tent market (purple squares) and hug the perimeter of the mall in a continuous feast of food, drink, household goods, etc., restaurants with table service, all wrapping around the mall in the bright sunshine instead of the gloomy indoors.

Each store will be flipped around so that the traditional interior storefront will no longer be the public entry. It will be where the aeroponic harvest is brought into each individual's business unit.



Imagine you own a business in this abandoned shop. You will harvest – say fish, hemp, fruit or vegetables – from under the grow lights in the center of the mall, bring it through this portal into your space, and start processing it. Inspect, wash, strip off leaves, etc. You would then package it using packaging material created by another entrepreneur in this mall, either bottling it, wrapping it, or otherwise getting it customer-ready.



The collective will regulate by results, not adherence to codes, covenants or restrictions. The businesses may cooperate or not, but the more cooperation between businesses, the stronger the whole project becomes. The project works within the tenets of capitalism, with some incentives built in for sharing and cooperating.



- Tall skylit spaces are ideal for aeroponics.
- In these spaces the vertical farming will be tended by scientists and agricultural workers.



4. What about that big empty space in the front?



This space will be a world-class demonstration flower garden. Orlando lacks such an amenity and it would provide material for florists and floral designers, another entrepreneurial opportunity.



This is only an example, it is the Dubai Miracle Garden designed by Abdul Nasser Y. Rahal.

Why can't Orlando aspire to something grand and ambitious? We don't need an Airbus jet made out of flowers, of course, but it would be pretty cool.

5. The money

This is the easy part. MMM Lakewood Ltd. bought it in 2019 for \$23 million. It’s probably worth less today but offer them \$25 million for it. That’s the start.

Then, sink about \$2mm into design and permitting. This would include regulatory permitting, and if the AC-3 zoning is kept, would involve public hearings. Might be worth looking into creating a community development district (CDD) so the project can carve its own destiny.

Construction cost to convert this monster is going to be the big part – probably another \$20m. On top of all that, reserve about \$5mm for contingency and you’re talking \$50 - \$55 million to get the doors open.

In the meantime, the business structure will be an urban collective. This would be similar to a rural collective where farmers agree to share resources in return for seeking market prices for their harvest.

The businesses would range from actual farmers to food scientists to food processers and packagers. Entrepreneurs might want to create and sell unique packaging, testing marketing ideas, and would be encouraged to do business within the collective at a discount. If their idea for a new package works there, it might be offered to the broader market.

In the meantime, the pop up market would aim to create steady income. This market again should favor entrepreneurs who make products people really need rather than the discretionary stuff you typically see at pop up markets.

Here is a very rough proforma.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7
Expenses	\$25mm	\$2mm	\$20mm	\$5mm	\$1mm	\$1mm	\$1mm
Income	\$0	\$0.5mm	\$0.5mm	\$4mm	\$8mm	\$16mm	\$32mm
IRR	(\$25mm)	(26.5mm)	(\$44mm)	(\$42mm)	(\$35mm)	(\$25mm)	\$6mm

This anticipates that the pop-up market would generate \$500k cash in years 2 and 3, and then by year 4 a phase of the main project would be open. In Year 5, a second phase is open, and year 6 the whole thing is open. The project is mature and operational in Year 7.

If an energy producer status is a goal, then frankly the parking lot should be farming electrons, not goats. It will have to become a solar field and additional solar be placed on the rooftop. 30 acres of solar would probably generate enough megawatts to cover the energy use above what it would be as a mall, but this would come at a cost that would stretch payback another 3 years or so.

Conclusion

Instead of another milquetoast, unaffordable mixed-use complex, this study proposes a shift in thinking towards a decentralized, entrepreneurial future that boosts food security for the local population. It brings manufacturing back into the urban realm diversifying Orlando's economy, something we desperately need, and it revitalizes a failing asset.

While the final form of this project will look nothing like old Main Street, it will resemble this vital part of American history by creating a space wherein small businesses can get a start, focus on their product, and test their product directly with the public without middlemen. It creates a space where a collective of entrepreneurs can create a new web of interdependency instead of relying on our current supply chain which has proven to be sensitive to inflation, pandemic interruptions, and delivery issues. And finally it represents an economic future that would be modelled after a web or network of people working together rather than a hierarchy governed by remote investors.

Geographically, Fashion Square represents a unique opportunity by being on a major artery in Orlando, as well as adjacent to Orlando Executive Airport, a potential transportation hub. The 30+ acres of land allows both high-technology vertical farming and old-fashioned land farming to coexist, and is therefore a unique experimentation ground to compare species across the two environments. The facility could include fish farming, small animal husbandry, poultry, and traditional produce. It could further house grain mills, beverage distilleries, and more heavily processed food production.

The key to success is to maintain the core objective of food security and guide the redevelopment with a few simple rules, rather than discourage businesses with overly burdensome covenants and restrictions. Once the project is mature the collective can govern with leadership models suggested by Murray Bookchin to maintain a decentralized nonhierarchical format, keeping it agile and flexible to meet the demands of our future population.

This is an exciting opportunity to create food security, high-paying jobs, and a revitalized area of Orlando that will send the community in a new direction of participatory economics for the future.

End of report

Conversion Proposal – Fashion Square

By The Design Activist

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The Design Activist promotes ideas to encourage local participation in our future, based on the notion that many social and economic problems in today's world are, at their root, design problems.

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