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Sports Business

Sports complex and arena planned to be part of Sunrise Mall redevelopment



Image: Sacramento Business Journal

Redevelopment of aging Sunrise Mall in Citrus Heights now appears to be taking a step forward, with the developers of a planned sports complex, including a 4,000-seat arena, announcing Friday they're moving the project to part of the mall's footprint instead.

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By [Ben van der Meer](#) – Senior Reporter, Sacramento Business Journal
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Story Highlights

- Mettle Shop could build a 4,000-seat sports complex at Sunrise Mall in Citrus Heights.
- The Sunrise Sports Center is projected to generate 352 full-time jobs and \$26.2 million in annual economic output.
- Construction could begin this year, with the facility opening for events by early 2028.

A pending new owner for Sunrise Mall will bring a linchpin toward the aging mall's redevelopment: a [sports complex](#) previously planned for Folsom.

Mettle Shop, [the development team](#) behind the complex that would include a 4,000-seat arena, announced Friday that planning for the project is underway with the city of Citrus Heights.

"We evaluated numerous sites along the way, but Citrus Heights stood out," said Joe Wagoner, [Mettle Shop's CEO and a co-founder more than a decade ago](#) of soccer club Sacramento Republic FC. "It accelerates the timeline, which is a major factor."

The sports complex, which will also include a 126,000-square-foot covered turf field, and bar and restaurant overlooking an indoor ice sheet and additional outdoor turf space, will take up a portion of the 50.4 acres of the mall currently owned by Namdar Realty Group.

San Diego-based Tallen Capital Partners LLC is expected to acquire the northern portion of the mall from Namdar and then sell 11 acres to Mettle Shop for Sunrise Sports Center's development, according to the city of Citrus Heights.

Company founder and CEO Terrence Tallen said Thursday he didn't want to speak ahead of the formal announcement. Four years ago, his firm completed [adaptive reuse](#) of a former credit union branch at 5499 Sunrise Blvd., not far south of Sunrise Mall, into a regional headquarters and retail site for See's Candies.

Wagoner said the goal is to break ground as soon as this year on the project, now being called Sunrise Sports Center. A [website](#) for the project was scheduled to launch Friday.

With a projected timeline of 12 to 15 months for construction, Wagoner said, Sunrise Sports Center could begin hosting events as soon as early 2028. Such

projects typically have a price tag of \$125 million to \$150 million, he said.

"The programming is identical to what we've discussed before, and why change it?" Wagoner said. The arena is planned to host sporting events, concerts and more.

Sunrise Sports Center is expected to generate 352 full-time jobs and \$26.2 million in annual economic output, according to an independent study from University of San Francisco sports economics professor Daniel Rascher.

In 2021, the Citrus Heights City Council [adopted Sunrise Tomorrow](#), a redevelopment plan for the mall at 6041 Sunrise Blvd. The plan would include housing, hospitality, "main street"-style retail and other uses. A sports complex wasn't in those plans.

Since then, city officials have pushed for progress toward the project, which Namdar didn't oppose but didn't commit to carry out. Last April, the city [rejected a proposal](#) by real estate investor Ethan Conrad to add more retail to the southern half of the mall, which he owns. In August, the city began [eminent domain](#) proceedings to acquire Namdar Realty's part of the mall.

Conrad, who has both pursued plans on a smaller scale for his end of the mall and also put it on the market, said in an email he didn't know enough about the new plans to comment.

Last June, Namdar Realty also began quietly marketing [its part of the mall for sale](#). City officials said earlier this year they were [getting an appraisal](#) of the mall property's value, a necessary step in an eminent domain proceeding.

Current mall occupancy is less than 35%, with [JCPenney](#), which owns its store property and parking, the only remaining anchor store still open.

Mettle Shop, which includes former executives from franchises such as the [Sacramento Kings](#), Sac Republic FC and the Oakland A's, first announced the sports complex in 2022. Wagoner said one of the principal motivations was to add more options for fans of sports like ice hockey in the Sacramento region.

The complex was previously planned for about 18 acres on the northwest corner of Folsom Ranch, on Prairie City Road.

Wagoner said moving the project to Citrus Heights gives it the advantage of dropping into a developed, flat area with existing infrastructure.

"This is the furthest we've ever got, and the timing couldn't be better," he said, noting the gold-medal winning U.S. men's and women's hockey teams at the recently concluded Winter Olympics in Italy drew new attention to the sport. "We want to be in front of the city council as soon as possible."