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Asian superstore announces a second Gwinnett location

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DULUTH - A former Wal-Mart store, empty for four years, will house an indoor Asian mall this fall.

Assi Plaza will open its second Gwinnett location in Duluth, project manager Phillip Ahn said.

Ahn said Rhee Bros. has owned the lease on the Wal-Mart since 2003, but had to finish its Sugarloaf store on Old Peachtree Road before it could move forward with the Pleasant Hill project.

Special Photo

Assi Plaza will open its second Gwinnett location in Duluth at a former Wal-Mart store, which has stood empty for four years.

The company has a 99-year lease on the store, which is being expanded to more than 140,000 square feet. Ahn said it will have 40 stores selling food, cosmetics, clothing and other merchandise.

"We try to focus not only on Asian customers, but on local customers," Ahn said.

The Korean business is coming at a time when other, similar stores are making their mark in the Gwinnett Place area. Joe Allen, the director of the Community Improvement District, said Super H Mart has been successful further up the road.

The long-empty Macy's at Gwinnett Place Mall is being filled by the Korean Mega Mart, which is due to open in February.

"In a way, it's a symbol for the area," Allen said of the new Assi project. "On one level, we're kind of going back to what we've had. The retail environment is reflecting the demographic shifts. It's a microcosm of what's happening to the county as a whole."

County Chairman Charles Bannister said the empty Wal-Mart had become an eyesore, but that he was looking forward to again seeing it thrive. He encouraged the company to look for other locations in Gwinnett.

The Sugarloaf store has been open since 2005. Jim Maran, president of the Gwinnett Chamber of Commerce, said he often shops for seafood there and enjoys the freshness and variety of the selection.

Ahn said he expects the plaza to hire 300 employees and have about 12,000 customers weekly.

The addition will be a huge positive for the area, Bannister said.

"This is a new first step in the revitalization effort," he said. "I'm deeply honored that you chose Gwinnett County once again."

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