

# OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS



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## RETAIL REVITALIZED



# 'The shining light'

Former Opelika shopping hub Midway Plaza makes comeback as Saugahatchee Square

PHOTOS BY TODD J. VAN EMST/OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS

Formerly Opelika's most-frequented shopping venue, Saugahatchee Square, first known as Midway Plaza has been rebounding under new ownership over the past three years.

BY KATHERINE HAAS  
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Before Tiger Town came to life as a retail giant in Opelika, there were trees, dirt and unoccupied earth. Before the Auburn Mall opened its doors, there was a dairy on the corner where the mall now stands and a nine-hole golf course behind it. And before Opelika's 14 downtown restaurants emerged, offering visitors to the historic district an overall culinary experience in addition to a meal, there were only two eateries in the whole town.

But before any of that, there was Midway Plaza.

"The shining light was Midway Plaza," said Opelika Mayor Gary Fuller. "At the time that it opened, it was a big, big deal."

Most of the 28,000 drivers that pass by the former Midway Plaza shopping center (now Saugahatchee Square) on Pepperell Parkway each day, according to the 2010 Census, do so naive of the fact that the 210,000-square-foot retail space was once the most popular shopping venue in town. It wasn't just the most popular place to shop, however.

"It was the only place," explained the Rev. Loren Sutton, a longtime Opelika resident



Saugahatchee Square has seen several aesthetic enhancements since owner Mike Fimiani of Fimiani Development Corp. bought the shopping center just less than three years ago.

and pastor of Opelika's Airview Church.

Serving as the only major shopping center in town after it opened in 1966, Midway Plaza once flourished, offering high-end major retailers such as Belk and J.C. Penney, a Carmike movie theater and Kroger grocery store, as well as a list of local shops.

But when other shopping options such as Auburn's indoor mall came into existence, many of Midway Plaza's big names jumped at the opportunity to occupy the newest retail venue available, causing the former

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## Legislature

# Looking at a special session on Ala. budget

The Associated Press

MONTGOMERY — Alabama legislators are heading to a special session sometime this summer after arriving at an impasse over the state's general fund budget.

The session ended with a vetoed spending plan and plenty of finger-pointing over who was to blame. Getting a budget this summer will depend on something in short supply this spring: agreement.



Bentley

"The Legislature was not ready to solve this in February. They were not ready. They have become more ready," Gov. Robert Bentley said.

Republicans control both the governor's office and a lopsided majority in both chambers of the Alabama Legislature. Being of the same party, however, did not shield state office holders from sharp disagreements on how to handle a \$200 million shortfall in the fiscal year that begins in October, and unfunded needs in prisons and Medicaid.

Bentley proposed \$541 million in new taxes, but his push was rejected by lawmakers. Senators one night debated a bill that would shift some funds from the better-funded education budget. However, senators said House members essentially killed the bill by adjourning early. House Republicans at one point backed a \$151 million tax package, but the bills didn't get a vote after

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## Opelika

# Trinity Presbyterian Church's new facility nears completion

BY LINDY OLLER  
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Trinity Presbyterian Church on India Road in Opelika will soon have a new home after the loss of the church's former building two years ago.

Chris Duncan, pastor at TPC, said the construction of the new facility is on schedule. Site prep work began on the new facility in July, according to Duncan.

"We have a target date of moving in

the first Sunday in September," he said. "Things are on budget. We're very thankful."

Duncan said the former building was hit by a lightning strike July 13, 2013.

"The lightning strike caused a fire that resulted in the loss of the church building and our facilities," Duncan said. "It will be two years we have been worshipping in a temporary location at the

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TODD J. VAN EMST/OPELIKA-AUBURN NEWS

Construction of the new Trinity Church in Opelika, shown Saturday, is on schedule, according to pastor Chris Duncan. The former church building was struck by lightning in July 2013.



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## Weather

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Sunny to partly cloudy

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