



**BALCONES HEIGHTS  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION (EDC)**



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**Balcones Heights to explore options for Wonderland of the Americas**

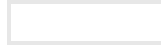
**As the property's ownership works to fill empty spaces, it also has its eye on potential long-term changes at the site.**



By [W. Scott Bailey](#) – Senior Reporter, San Antonio Business Journal

Roughly 20 months after [securing a significant ownership stake](#) in Wonderland of the Americas, the city of Balcones Heights is working to help fill abandoned space in the aging mall. At the same time, municipal leaders are exploring a potential transformation of the 36-acre site and the surrounding area.

As more retail activity has moved to the internet, malls across the U.S. have struggled to recruit and retain tenants. Since Balcones Heights acquired 46% ownership of Wonderland, the city's largest commercial property has lost multiple anchors, including a [Santikos movie theater](#) and a [Stein Mart](#) store.



The immediate priority is [locking in new tenants](#) to generate more revenue. One of the latest wins is WSS, a shoe retailer owned by Foot Locker that will lease roughly a third of the 38,000 square feet Stein Mart exited. Other prospects could fill the remaining space.

“There's still some retail vitality at this location,” said Lorenzo Nastasi, executive director of economic development for Balcones Heights.

The city had planned to take 15,000 square feet at Wonderland that became available when a linen retailer left for some of its municipal operations. It may look to free up that space for other retail.

### **Pursuing transformational change**

Further erosion of the brick-and-mortar marketplace and its impact on properties like Wonderland could pose more challenges for Balcones Heights and its broader redevelopment plans.

Nastasi said the city is pursuing transformational development that could reposition the city as an economic hub rather than simply one of San Antonio's bedroom communities. That could ultimately include the Wonderland site.

“All options are on the table,” Nastasi said, noting that reuse ideas for a vacant site across Fredericksburg Road from Wonderland could be part of those discussions. “As goes this property, so goes Balcones Heights. Keeping it positioned for adaptability, that's the key.”

“Wonderland's success has always been tied to the city's economic success,” Balcones Heights Mayor Suzanne De Leon said.

Newer retail leases will include some flexibility to allow for potential changes at Wonderland.

“The big challenge with any kind of big project like this is reaching consensus among all the different stakeholders, getting everybody on board. We're beginning that process,” Nastasi said.

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