



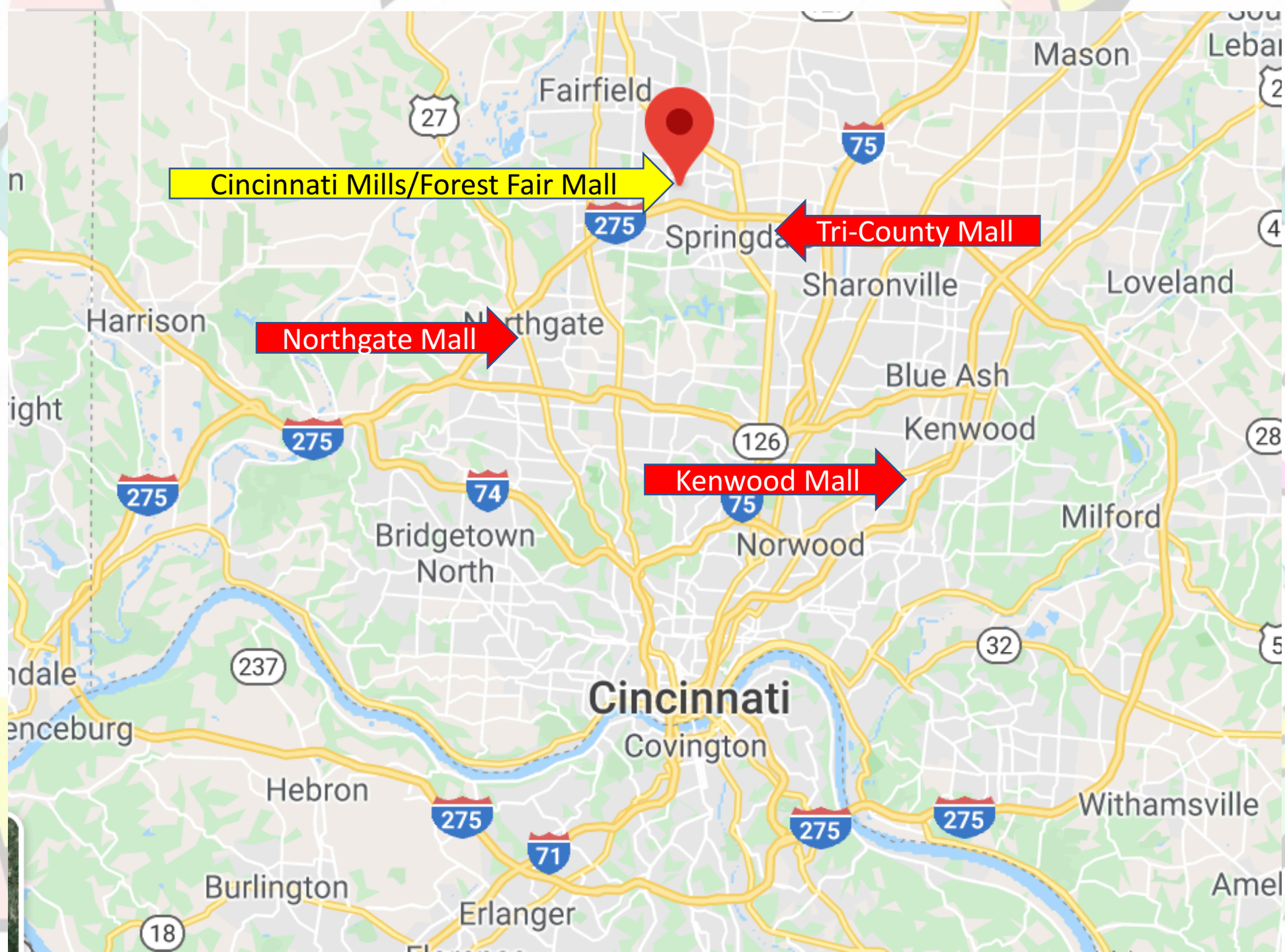
# The Cincinnati Mills Mall /Forest Fair Mall

Buildings That Make You Go Huh! Presentation  
April 17, 2020

# Quick facts about Cincinnati Mills

- ✓ Mall in the northern suburbs of Cincinnati, OH, between Fairfield and Forest Park on I-275
- ✓ Built in 1988 and 1989, originally named "Forest Fair Mall"
  - ✓ Goes through various name changes throughout its life
- ✓ Second-biggest mall in the state of Ohio (1,500,000 ft<sup>2</sup>)
  - ✓ Largest mall = SouthPark Mall outside Cle. (1,654,292 ft<sup>2</sup>)
  - ✓ Spaces for 250 stores
  - ✓ Takes 1.5 hrs to walk the perimeter of one floor of the mall
- ✓ Grand opening on July 11, 1988
- ✓ Troubled history





"Forest Fair Mall" was once "full and thriving"...



Forest Fair Mall logo, February, 1989



There was even a "beach" with real sand in the middle of the mall, February, 1989



“Forest Fair Mall” was once “full and thriving” ...



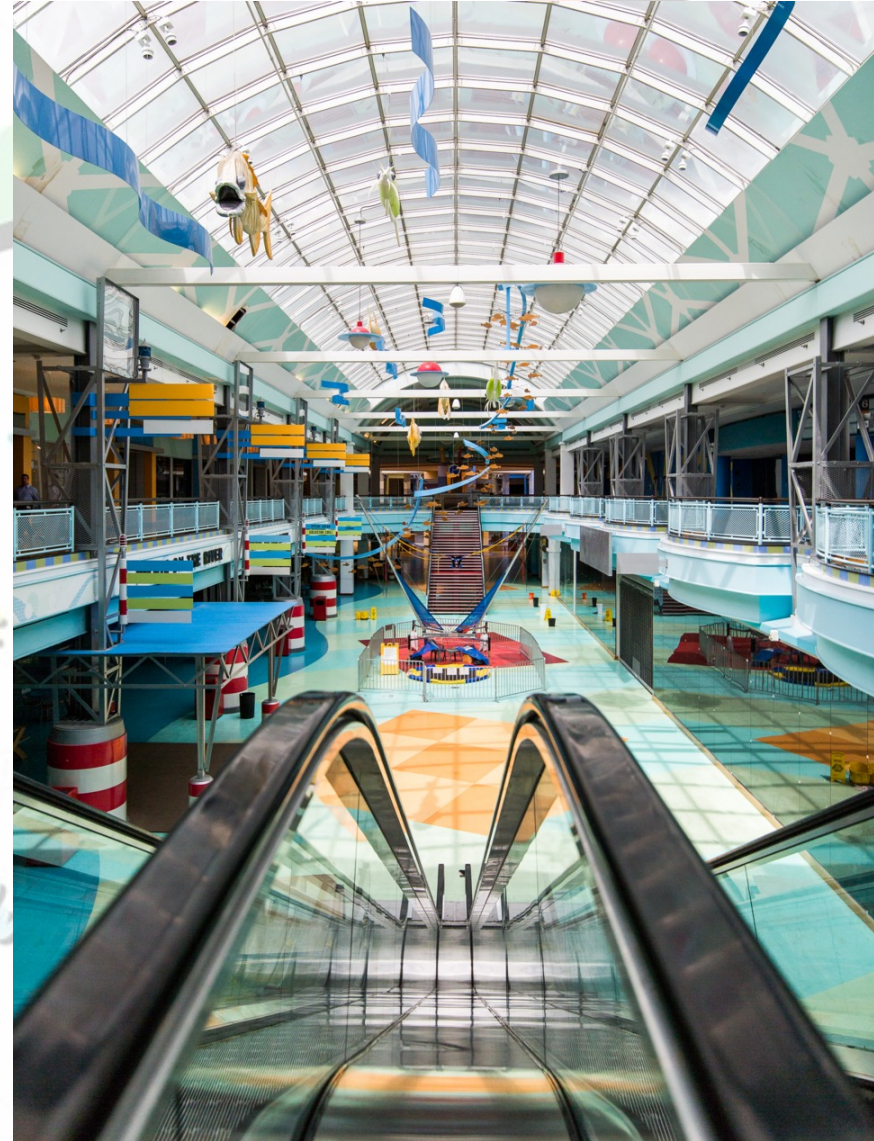
Carousel inside the mall February, 1989



Bigg's grand opening, July, 1988



... It has since joined the ranks of  
“deadmall-dom”





# A brief history... Phase 1: Forest Fair

- ✓ An Australian businessman named George Herscu decides to build an upscale mall in a blue-collar neighborhood in the mid 1980s
- ✓ Mall is constructed in 1988 and 1989
- ✓ Meanwhile, Kenwood Mall is opened in 1988- Cincinnati's upscale mall, just a short drive away from Cincinnati's wealthy neighborhoods
- ✓ Forest Fair ends up being a mix of value (Bigg's), mid-tier (Elder Beerman), and upscale shops (Bonwit Teller, Sakowitz)
- ✓ Incredibly ornate building



George Herscu, a man who dedicated his life to doing the devil's work (development)





Aerial view of the mall-  
notice the Y-shape





"Time out on the Court" amusement park





# A brief history... Phase 1: Forest Fair



- ✓ Three months after opening, Herscu files for bankruptcy protection, eventually goes to jail.
- ✓ Mall put up for sale
- ✓ In 2 years, mall's occupancy sinks to 50%
- ✓ Many reinventions of this iteration
  - ✓ But all attempts fail.

# Phase 2: Forest Fair

- ✓ Gator Corps. buys in 1996
- ✓ Bass Pro and Kohl's come to the store (they are both still around)
- ✓ Value stores (Burlington Coat Factory, Off 5<sup>th</sup>, KBToys Outlet, etc)
- ✓ Value movie theater (\$2 tickets)
- ✓ "Wonderpark" amusement park
  - ✓ Feat. an indoor roller coaster
  - ✓ Closes after pedophile sex scandal- manager payed minors to perform in sex videos
- ✓ Eventually this iteration also dies when Cincinnati Mills buys the mall and kicks out the independent retailers



# Phase 2: Forest Fair





# Phase 3: Cincinnati Mills Mall

- ✓ \$70 million renovation and name change when Cincinnati Mills buys the mall. Reopens in 2004
- ✓ 2 movie theaters - first-run and second-run





# Phase 3: Cincinnati Mills Mall

- ✓ Different themed-decor for each wing
  - ✓ "There's just enough quirkiness and out-of-the ordinary that makes people want to come back," said Steve Beatty, director of marketing.
  - ✓ Inflatable cows will "roam" through the "country" section of the mall, while fish suspended over the food court will "make you feel like you're underwater. You get a sense you're in the Ohio River - but in a good way," Beatty said.





# Phase 3: Cincinnati Mills Mall

- ✓ Mills has trouble getting name-brand tenants
  - ✓ Instead, they have stores like "Tool World"
- ✓ Ikea decides not to move into Cincinnati Mills, and moves to another location at the intersection of 275 and 75
  - ✓ This does Cincinnati Mills in.
- ✓ By 2007, there is a 1/3 occupancy



George Herscu dies in disgrace in 2013: bribery, fraud, billions in debt, legal battle with his own son



# Phase 4: A truly dead mall

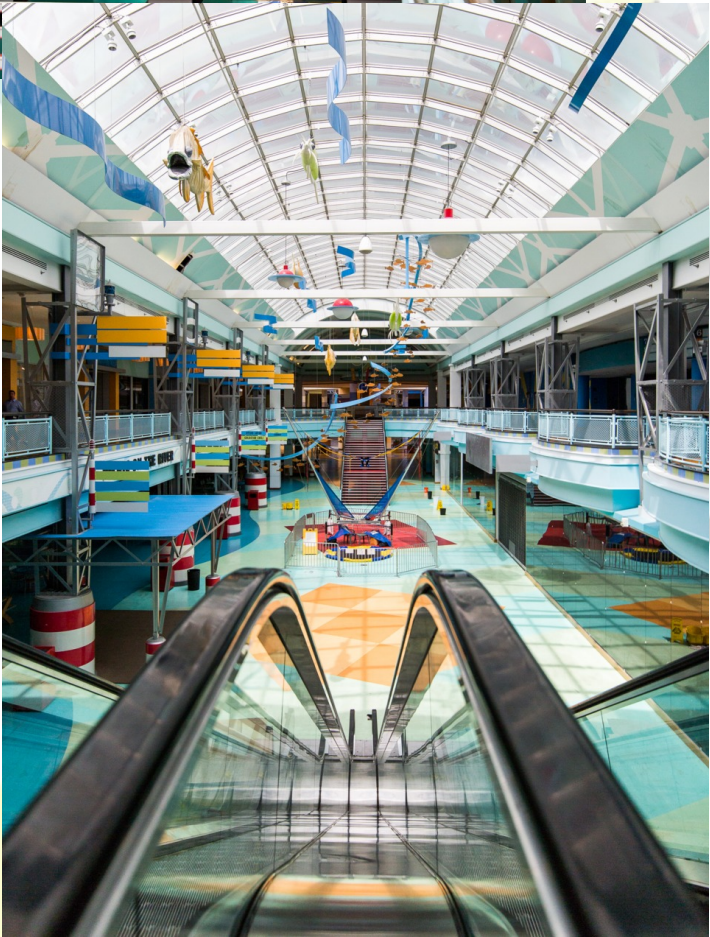
- ✓ Many plans to revamp, but none get off the ground
  - ✓ Extended stay hotel?
  - ✓ Ice rink?
  - ✓ Dining?
  - ✓ Sports complex?
  - ✓ Indoor mountain bike trail?
  - ✓ "agricultural" museum?
  - ✓ Office space?
- ✓ Name changes
  - ✓ Cincinnati Mills → Cincinnati Mall → Forest Fair Mall



# Phase 4: A truly dead mall

- ✓ Stores come and go
  - ✓ Last I was there, Babies R Us was closing up shop
- ✓ Current roster of stores:
  - ✓ Bass Pro Shop
  - ✓ An arcade
  - ✓ Kohl's
  - ✓ Cincinnati Hot Air Balloons
  - ✓ Bee Fit Health Club
- ✓ Mall cops still roam- "security" enforcement is sometimes very intense, other times lax
  - ✓ You can still visit!!!!!!







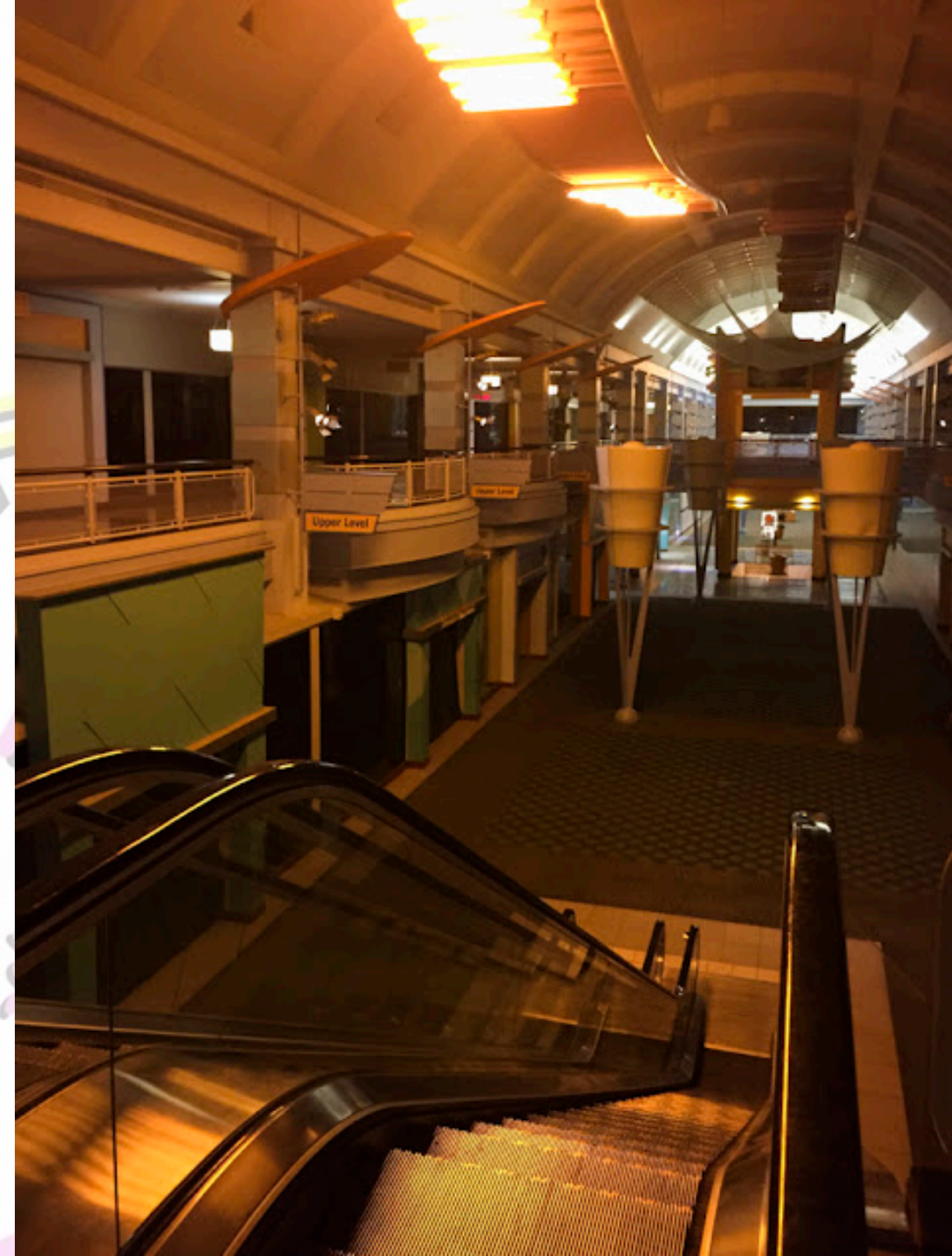






In high school I would come here to  
have picnics at the empty food  
court

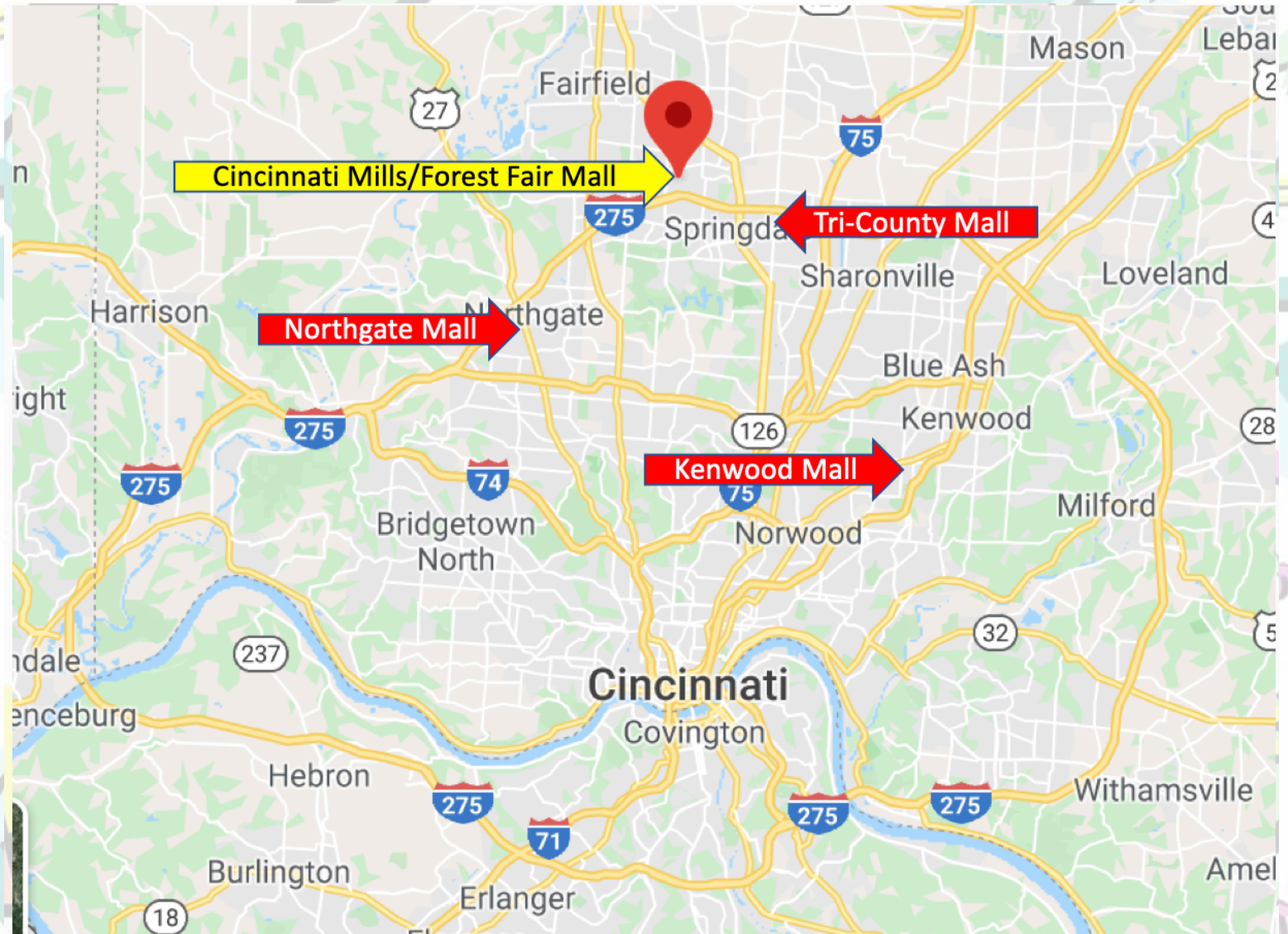






# So, what happened???

- ✓ Competition with other malls (TriCounty Mall, Northgate Mall, Kenwood)
- ✓ Bad choices (upscale mall in blue-collar neighborhood??)
- ✓ Online shopping trends
- ✓ Bad luck (Ikea moves into another location)





# Testimonials

- ✓ "I use to be in the mall every weekend as a kid growing up. Never in a million years would ever think this place could die! Omg it was so packed every weekend." - brandon jamison
- ✓ "I grew up about 5 minutes away from this mall, I spent a lot of time there growing up. My family used to do our grocery shopping at the Biggs and my grandmother used to take me on the ferris wheel, the carousel, and mini golfing. When they re-vamped it I was in middle school and everyone was very skeptical because none of the stores seemed like they'd stick around. And we were right. And now I'm depressed. :( " - R S



# Rumors & Legends

## ✓ "The Gang Wars" of 1992

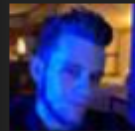
- ✓ During one of the mall's many low periods, two rival gangs moved into the mall for the winter.
- ✓ A violent gang war broke out that season, with shootings and robberies.



# Rumors & Legends

✓ FEMA camp??????????

✓ Just 7 weeks ago, a mysterious post was made on deadmalls.com about the Cincinnati Mills Mall...



**Jarrod Hahn**

I was there last night, stay  
tf away from this place, it's  
a fema camp. DONT  
FUCKING GO  
ALONE/UNARMED

Like · Reply · 7w



# Works Cited

- ✓ <https://www.journal-news.com/news/local/tbt-when-forest-fair-mall-was-full-and-thriving/YFMbuct6QIZhTKhmmMkMrN/>
- ✓ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vYoq1jT-PkE>
- ✓ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest\\_Fair\\_Village](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forest_Fair_Village)
- ✓ [http://www.deadmalls.com/malls/forest\\_fair\\_mall.html](http://www.deadmalls.com/malls/forest_fair_mall.html)
- ✓ <http://queencitydiscovery.blogspot.com/2015/12/black-friday-in-retail-purgatory.html>
- ✓ <https://www.wcpo.com/news/insider/for-sale-one-big-and-mostly-empty-forest-fair-mall>
- ✓ [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmGBUt\\_gTY&list=PLaQg88uYeFQJeXzj1q9NTgIS4zJADe8h-&index=17](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cmGBUt_gTY&list=PLaQg88uYeFQJeXzj1q9NTgIS4zJADe8h-&index=17)



