# Pell City's 3 Rs – Discover St. Clair

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**Rooftops, retail and restaurants**

Story by Carol Pappas
Staff and submitted photos

ecember took action residents around these parts have anticipated for years.

The Council made it official – Longhorn Steakhouse and Olive Garden – are coming to Pell City. Leases are signed, and infrastructure work is expected to begin in February. Owned by the same company, Darden, the restaurants will be located next to each other on Veterans Parkway near Walgreen's.

"It's supremely located," said City Manager Brian Muenger, noting that the sites are the last remaining quadrant along that section of interstate, which is prime property for developments like these.

To ensure that work moves at a good pace, the city invested $2.5 million in site preparation funding. The property had some challenges, requiring utilities to be relocated and other work to get it ready for construction.

The Council reasoned that the investment will yield dividends in tax revenue generation as well as being able to fulfill residents' 'wish list.' "We are aggressively pursuing things people tell us they want," Muenger said.

Outback is expected to open in February

City leaders are confident that the growth trend will continue based on the successes of other projects locating in the city. "These brands are thriving, and they will do exactly the same here," Muenger predicted. With names like Longhorn and Olive Garden, "more brands will look to locate here," he said. "We've demonstrated success, which gives green lights for other developments."

He has good reason to be confident. The announcement comes on the heels of the opening of Outback Steakhouse, just across the interstate near Pell City Square shopping center. Outback is expected to open in February.

The new shopping center saw over 1 million visitors over the past year. Wingstop just opened in the strip center anchored by The St. Clair, Tavern, Starbuck's and Jersey Mike's.

Just across the way, Whataburger opened on John Haynes Drive.

Kami Thai Sushi & Fusion has just announced that it, too, plans to make Pell City home, giving greater diversity to the restaurant scene. Its sights are set on the former Papa Murphy Pizza location near Publix.

"We're a growing area with growing demand," Muenger said. "It speaks to the area's needs. I'm glad to see business succeeding here."

Planet Fitness opened in January, and Mariott's TownSuites hotel may be open by summer.

“There has been a lot of investment in the (interstate) corridor,” Meunger added, “and we’re happy to be able to meet the demand. We’re excited to see people enjoying it.”

**Housing market continues upward trend**

He cited rising population and strong community support as factors in swinging the latest deals. Pell City is seeing sizable increases in the housing market year over year.

The newest residential development on Florida Road, Oak Village, has completed the preliminary phase of roads and infrastructure and permits for construction should follow quickly. There are over 200 lots in the development.

Sumter Landing and Dickey Drive are in the final phase of building out. Meadowbrook on Hardwick Road is nearing full build out, as has Horizons on Logan Martin Lake. The fourth phase within Morningside should be “going vertical” soon, said Muenger.

Pell City has averaged adding over 100 new residences per year, sometimes much higher, over the past five years. In 2024, Pell City saw the same level of new construction as it saw the previous year – even in a higher interest rate environment. “We’ve seen steady growth since 2018. We don’t think it will stop in the near future.”

There also are housing developments just outside the city limits that should have an impact on the area’s growth.

He noted, “There is a lot of demand for people wanting to get into the area,” and multifamily rental property is a need, too. The planning commission has just approved plans for a new set of apartments on 19$^{th}$ Street South. It has not gone to the council yet, but 60 units are planned in what is the first multifamily property planned since 2012.

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