**Forward Thinking: How a Film Studio Revitalized a Community.**

 **Union City, Georgia**

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**Overview**

Shannon Mall a 764,882 square foot retail property located in Union City was once a thriving commercial property. Occupied by over 95 retail businesses Shannon Mall helped to attract shoppers in South Fulton and nearby counties to Union City. Shannon Mall is attributed with helping to grow the economy and community of Union City. As a result of the economic recession, the buying habits of consumers in the area changed and many retailers found themselves closing or relocating. The developer of Shannon Mall made many attempts to rebrand the mall by adding entertainment features such as a bowling alley and arcade. However, the attempts were unsuccessful and Shannon Mall eventually closed its doors in 2010.

**Challenge**

Shannon Mall occupied a massive space of 764,882 square feet. Some of the challenges facing the City were how to redevelop such a massive space and what industry would be profitable enough to occupy the space. The citizens of Union City desired for a new retail complex, but the changing economy made the traditional mall concept no longer profitable. The citizens’ want brought about another challenge; how to change the hearts and minds of our citizens?

**Solution**

Forward thinking was the solution. The film industry in Metro Atlanta was beginning to grow and many communities began to see film studios popup in their neighborhoods. The film studios for those communities were a major attraction for business and economic growth. The forward vision of Union City’s Mayor and Councilmembers saw the growth of the film industry as an opportunity to revitalize a dilapidated property. Mayor and Council sought out many developers to bring their vision to fruition and 404 Studio Partners and Rooker were up to the challenge. The film studio needed to attract major film industry business. It needed to be more than just a studio it needed to be a game changer. 404 Studios, Rooker and Union City decided to do something that’s never been done before; design and build the largest purpose built sound stage in North America.

**Why it worked**

Thanks to the sustained leadership of Governor Deal and the Georgia General Assembly, the Georgia tax incentive is one of the most aggressive in the country and is a major benefit to the largest content creators in the world who consistently look to Georgia as prime location. Union City is considered a prime location for filming because of our relatively close location to the airport. 404 Studio Partners and Rooker worked with Union City to meet with community leaders and businesses to explain the benefits of having the film industry in our backyard.

**Results**

Atlanta Metro Studios opened its doors in 2016 and has had multiple productions filmed in Union City including ‘Pitch Perfect 2’, ‘Jumanji’ and ’24 Legacy’. The film studio has also helped attract other businesses to Union City such as DHL and Keurig. Atlanta Metro Studios is also working with the City to give back to the community by developing film academies in various elementary schools. The Film Academy program teaches students the basics of film creation in the areas of directing, writing, producing, and film editing. Metro Atlanta Studios is the product of visionary thinking from our Mayor, City Manager and Council. It has had an incredible impact in our community by attracting visitors from all over the world, increasing the economic growth of many businesses in the city and providing our great city with a unique market on which Union City can go to the next level of rebuilding, rebranding and revitalizing.

**Lessons Learned**

* The City is only as good as the vision of Mayor and Council.
* Learn what is special about your community.
* Ask not, have not. Work with more experienced partners to achieve goals.
* Forward thinking can make the difference.