

NEWS

Two-story retail building planned for former gas station site in the GrandCentralDistrict

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A Citgo gas station on the corner of Central Avenue and 28th Street is set to be redeveloped into a new retail destination.

Clearwater-based general contractor **Build America Luxury Homes** has submitted plans to demolish the 1957-built station and replace it with a two-story, 13,500-square-foot retail building at 2801 Central Avenue, next to **Cheeky's Fish & Raw Bar**.

"We are experienced in taking old, rundown, or neglected places and turning them into community assets," said Qemal Hasabelli, owner of Build America Luxury Homes and BAConstruction, in a conversation with *St. Pete Rising*.

Hasabelli purchased the 0.22-acre lot in December 2023 for \$1.75 million.

Designed by Oldsmar-based **ArchEvoke Studio LLC**, the building would accommodate multiple retailers and restaurants, bringing new business opportunities to this stretch of the GrandCentral District.



A FORMER CITGO GAS STATION ON THE CORNER OF CENTRAL AVENUE AND 28TH STREET IS SET TO BE REDEVELOPED INTO A NEW RETAIL DESTINATION | GOOGLE MAPS

The ground floor would include two 1,500-square-foot retail spaces on one side of a staircase entry, with a 3,000-square-foot corner unit on the other side reserved for a future restaurant with outdoor seating.

The upper floor includes two retail units, one with 2,400 square feet and 600 square feet of covered outdoor space and another with 2,300 square feet and 840 square feet of covered outdoor space.

The project was recently submitted for permitting, which is expected to take about three months.

Construction is anticipated to begin early next year and completed in 2027.

The development adds momentum to the wave of projects transforming the west end of St. Pete's Grand Central District.

Across the street, the 24-unit **GrandCentral Townhomes** opened in 2024. The 11-unit **Driftwood on Central** townhomes were also recently completed.

A few doors down, local investor RossiBonugli plans to build a **five-unit, 6,079-square-foot retail building** at 2730 Central Avenue.



THE PROPOSED RETAIL BUILDING WILL BE CONSTRUCTED AT 2801 CENTRAL AVENUE IN THE GRANDCENTRAL DISTRICT | GOOGLEMAPS

Meanwhile, the nearby Jim & Heather Gills YMCA is undergoing a major renovation as Greystar Real Estate Partners and St. Pete investor Blake Whitney Thompson prepare to add 380 apartments and 32,000 square feet of retail space to the east side of the YMCA campus. Construction on the apartments, named **The Henry at Whitney Village**, began in May.

"I hope that our building continues to encourage other builders to develop projects here," said Hasabelli, who also recently redeveloped a former lot near USF and Busch Gardens, once home to Good To Go Food Mart, into a BluSwan Express Carwash.

"People were happy to see something beautiful coming to the area, replacing this eyesore," he added, referring to the carwash, which opened earlier this year.

In addition to commercial projects, Hasabelli has also built and renovated luxury homes across Pinellas County.



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