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Karen Bethea, pastor of Set the Captives Free, was on site of the Windsor Mill church's newly purchased property at Security Square Mall, which will house its sanctuary and outreach and education center.

Seoul Plaza at Security Square Mall Gets Unlikely New Owner

Set the Captives Free church to convert space to community outreach, worship and education center

As Security Square Mall waits for a possible development overhaul, the space that was formerly J.C. Penney, then Seoul Plaza, has been sold.

The new owner is not a prominent developer. It is a local church that is converting the space into an Outreach, Worship and Education (OWE) Center it hopes will increase the quality of life in the community,

Set the Captives Free, a 18-year-old church in Windsor Mill shepherded by senior pastors Karen and Linwood Bethea, purchased the long-neglected building.

Karen Bethea says the transaction

is the culmination of a journey that began from humble beginnings in a Comfort Inn conference room on Security Boulevard.

"It was a vision from God," said Bethea. "He spoke to me." After a five-year process, she got the keys to the 160,000-square-foot building on June 25.

Since then members have been landscaping, moving furniture, and making plans to move their administrative offices next month and fully open the doors to the OWE Center next spring.

"We were growing and growing

and are out of space," she said. The building that houses her sanctuary is up for sale and has been leasing a nearby location for the church's administrative offices and youth center. The church also has a day care center and food pantry.

The two-level space at one time housed the Penney department store, then the major tenant was an international grocery store and a banquet hall. The banquet hall remains, but most recently, more independent hair braiding salons, phone stores filled the space with more vacancies than shops.

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