

# OLD GOUCHER

in charles village



Baltimore City Department of Planning  
417 E. Fayette Street, 8th Floor  
Baltimore, MD 21202

Attn: Thomas Stosur, Eric Tiso, Anthony Cataldo  
Cc: Council Members Carl Stokes, Mary Pat Clarke, Nick Mosby

October 7, 2013

Dear Mr. Stosur, Mr. Cataldo, and Mr. Tiso:

On behalf of the Old Goucher Community Association and Old Goucher Business Alliance I would like to voice our alarm over the briefness of community input opportunities on the revised 25th Street Station designs. The speed with which this process is taking place has left our community little time to gather input from businesses and residents, especially given that these are unquestionably major changes to the design. Given the haste of the process and lack of adequate time for review, we were unable to provide a formal statement on behalf of Old Goucher ahead of last Wednesday's Site Plan Review hearing.

The compressed schedule gives the impression that the 25th Street Station project is being rushed through Planning to purposefully prevent adequate community input.

This is especially troubling since the developer has already shown total disregard for even our most fundamental (and repeatedly-voiced) priorities, such as incorporating safe and attractive pedestrian access to the site. The revised designs are a huge step backwards and do not reflect the vision of our community.

Our residents and businesses have severe concerns about the new design and site plan, and we insist that neighborhood input be taken into account before approving any designs or requesting further revisions. We are still gathering feedback from residents and we will send specific comments as quickly as possible.

## **A Major Amendment**

These revisions are *major changes* to a major development project that will have a huge and long-term impact on our neighborhood, and this process sets a precedent for future big-box developments that are likely to come to Baltimore. As such we insist that the review process should accommodate the views of residents and community organizations.

Additionally, the 25th Station PUD requires by law that the Department of Planning form a Design Review Committee, consisting of five representatives of the surrounding community organization. Comments must be solicited from this committee within five days of initial submission of plans. As of today (11 days after designs were submitted to Planning), this committee has not been formed or contacted.

To allow for the full input of the Old Goucher and Remington communities, we formally request that the Planning Department recognize that these revisions represent major changes to 25th Street Station and that accordingly they are classified as a Major Amendment to the original PUD.

Any significant change in gross square footage of a PUD should automatically trigger a major amendment. Since the project is drastically smaller and architecturally transfigured, we are mystified as to why this has been declared a minor amendment:

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- The **size of retail space** has dropped by more than 55%, from 255,000 square feet to 114,000 square feet.
- The **architectural design** of the building is completely changed from what was approved in the original PUD and that won the community's consent.
- The three-story parking deck, **one of two large structures on the site is missing completely**, and the second structure is now a single story building.
- There is now a **large surface parking lot**, which presents new environmental challenges (and opportunities).
- **Vehicular entrances** and truck loading locations are completely different. This will impact traffic and noise, especially for Fawcett residents. **Traffic** will also change with the new addition of a Super Walmart.
- **Pedestrian access** to the site is now different and does not accommodate the many shoppers who will access the site on foot.
- Critically, the proposed design has changed **from a denser semi-urban development** (multi-story structure, enclosed parking, etc) **to a low-density suburban strip-mall style layout**. This fact alone should trigger a Major Amendment.
- In the four years that have passed since the start of this project, the **conditions of the surrounding area have dramatically changed**. Old Goucher and Remington are witnessing numerous new developments, residents, and major infrastructure projects that are adjacent to or within a few blocks of the 25th Street Station site.

The original PUD was predicated on a certain set of conditions and design approach. Both of these have changed, so the PUD should be revisited as a Major Amendment.

The previous approval process yielded very constructive improvements to what was, by all accounts, a terrible first-round design. The new designs can also get much better (the UDARP panel would agree), and it is the right of the community to have a voice at the table and not be subjected to a bait-and-switch design process. In light of the massive changes to the project that are detailed above, we officially maintain that this is a Major Amendment to the PUD.

Sincerely,

Bruce Willen and Philip Lacombe  
on behalf of the Old Goucher Community Association and Old Goucher Business Alliance

Jeanne Knight  
President, Old Goucher Community Association

Ken Abrams  
President, Old Goucher Business Alliance