

OLD GOUCHER

in charles village



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

Attention: Eric Tiso

October 14, 2013

Dear Mr. Tiso & the Site Plan Review Committee:

Please accept this statement on behalf of the Old Goucher community, regarding proposed design changes to the 25th Street Station project. (As we have noted, the review schedule did not allow us time to prepare a formal statement prior to the October 1 Site Plan Review Committee meeting.)

There have been a number of concerns raised by residents and business owners about 25th Street Station's new site plan. In particular, many residents feel that the new site plan is extremely suburban, unfriendly to pedestrians, and does not enhance fit into the urban fabric of our neighborhood. Additionally, a number of residents have raised concerns about the environmental impact of this project, which not only sits on a state-recognized brownfield site but fails to comply with current Maryland stormwater statutes.

The revised design is a major departure from what was originally approved and is a huge step backwards in terms of urbanism. Many community members are extremely upset that the approved 2010 design is about to be replaced with a suburban strip-mall type of site plan. This site plan does not reflect the characteristics that won conditional community support of the original design, described here on the developer's own website:

The project's overarching design principle is to create an urban mixed-use complex that is compatible with the scale and character of the surrounding neighborhoods and takes advantage of the unusual topography of the site, permitting multi-level construction. The development will utilize sustainable design principles creating a pedestrian friendly, lively environment for the community.

The architects behind this project are quite capable of designing buildings that *actually are* urban, pedestrian-friendly, and sustainable. Their four new Walmart projects currently being built in Washington, DC are integrated into the urban fabric and address environmental issues in a way that 25th Street Station was supposed to but no longer does.

Enclosed are some example resident-friendly site plans that would preserve the intent of the original, PUD approved designs and that suggest how community concerns could be addressed:

Questions for the Review Committee

- Could a **reorientation of the building** improve the pedestrian experience and the project's urban design while also preserving the historic church on the site?
- Since the project is located on a MDE, **state-recognized brownfield site**, does the site design and construction plan adequately remediate the hazardous waste found at the site?
- Why are the project's **site plan and stormwater management design already approved** by the Bureau of Water and Wastewater prior to the revised design being reviewed by either the SPRC or UDARP?
- Why has this project (which is being billed as a "green" development) permitted to **not comply with current Maryland stormwater laws**?

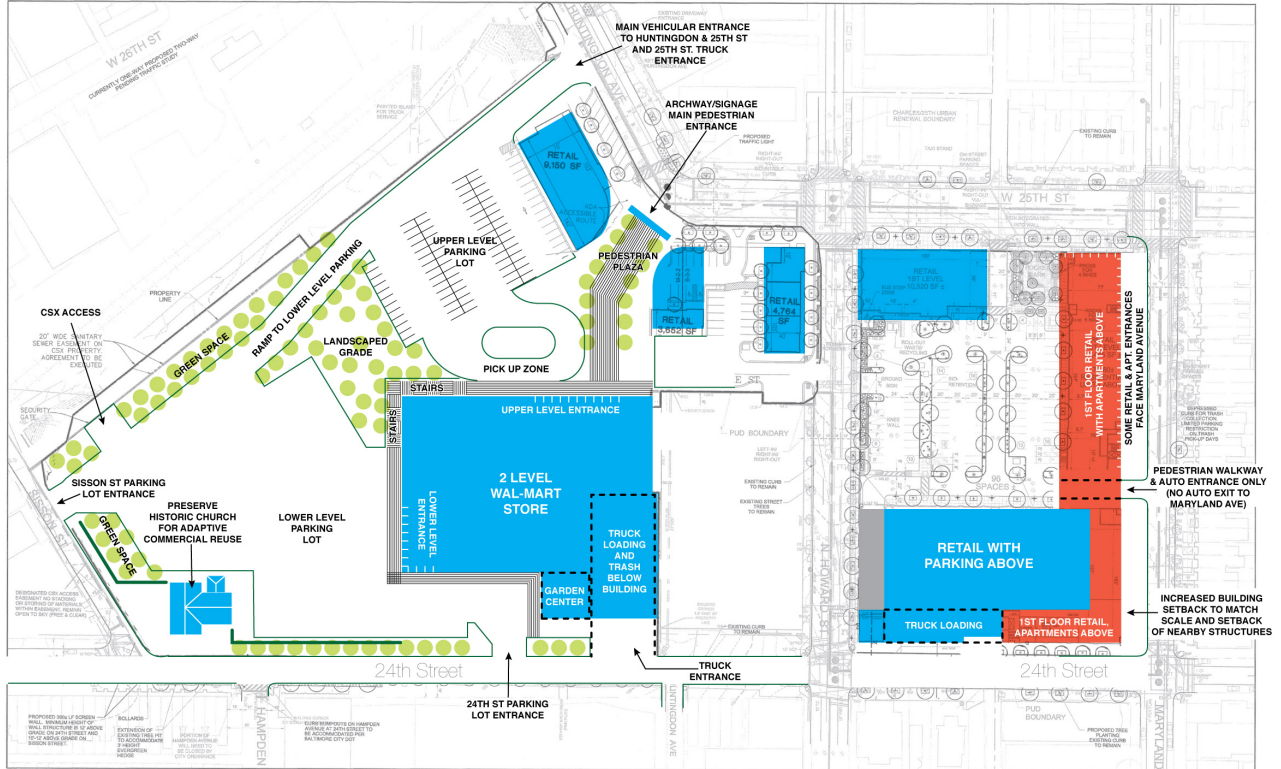
Specific Site Plan Recommendations from the Old Goucher Community

- **The plan should be more urban**, reflecting the scale and density of the surrounding neighborhoods.
- **A two-story Walmart store** (or a single story store with parking below/above) would be a much more urban design approach. The idea of a multi-level building was received very favorably by Old Goucher and Remington residents at our October 7 community meeting.
- **Preserve the historic Royers Chapel at 24th and Sisson** for adaptive reuse. The project is now 55% smaller, so there is certainly no reason to destroy the chapel just build Walmart's loading dock. This building could be saved and converted into offices, a restaurant, or even the Walmart garden center.
- **The revised designs should actively engage the street, neighborhood, and pedestrians.** These are neighborhoods of walkers. The current suburban-style design does not serve our communities.
- **A reorientation of the Walmart building and entrances** would make the building easier to access for pedestrians, most of whom will be coming from 25th Street. (see our Resident-Friendly Site plan) Pedestrians should not need to walk through a large parking lot or down a long, ugly, and uninviting path and staircase. The stairs and elevator in particular raise crime/safety concerns.
- **Improve pedestrian safety and experience** by placing entrances at street-level and close to public ways.
- **Move vehicular entrances away from the historic Fawcett neighborhood.** The 24th St. entrance should be further east as it was in the original PUD. Add a Sisson St. entrance so that Sisson St. traffic can access site without driving through the Fawcett community.
- **Move the main vehicular entrance/intersection north, from 25th Street** to the north edge of project on Huntingdon. (see Resident-Friendly Site plan) This would reduce traffic congestion and create a stronger, inviting street edge and pedestrian entrance.
- **Move truck loading areas and truck entrances** as far away as possible from residents on 24th Street. Reorienting the Walmart building could allow for loading areas in the southeast corner of the site.
- **Additional green space** should be added throughout the site. The 55% reduction in project size allows for ample greening and landscaping.

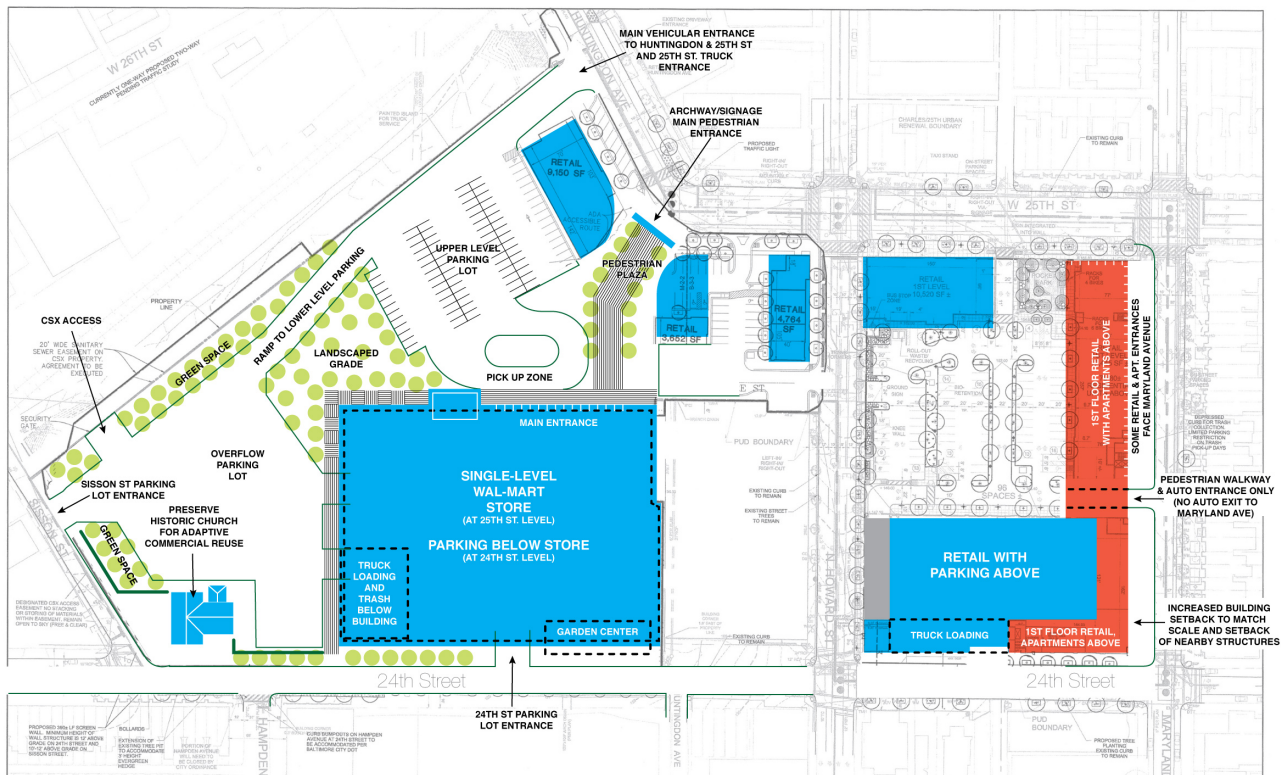
Example Resident-Friendly Site Plans

These sketches for revised site plans are a quick exercise, demonstrating that resident's priorities and the developer's original intentions could be accommodated with a little bit of creativity.

25th Street Station, Resident-Friendly Site Plan 2



25th Street Station, Resident-Friendly Site Plan 1



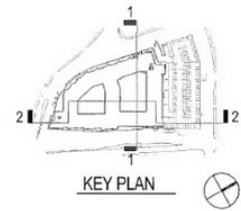
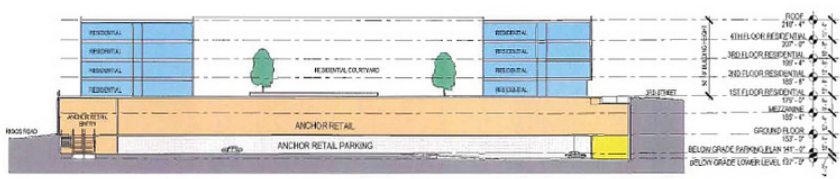
New Washington, DC Walmarts designed by MMA Architects

The new Walmarts in DC all are significantly better designs than the proposed 25th Street Station Walmart. The Georgia Ave. and Fort Totten sites are demographically and geographically similar to the Old Goucher area. We present these renderings to show that *Walmart and this architect are capable of doing much better*. Why can't they do so in Baltimore?

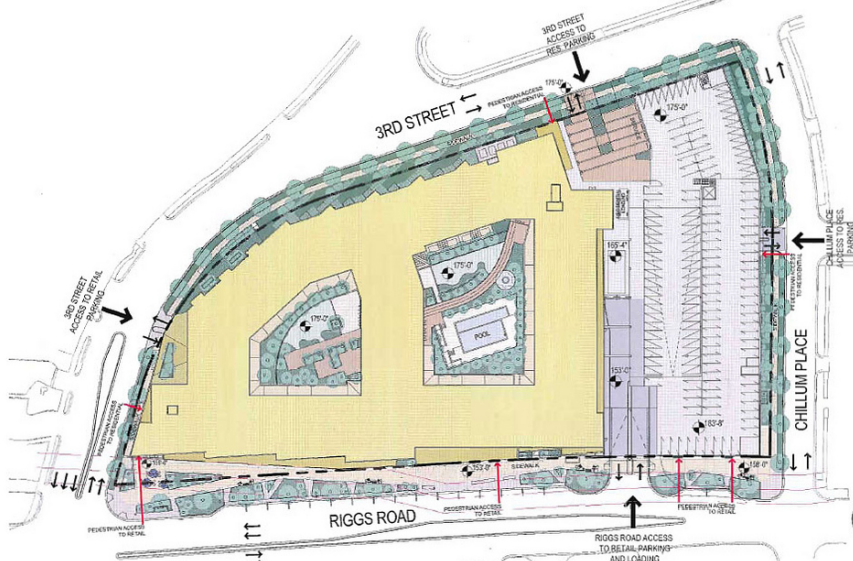
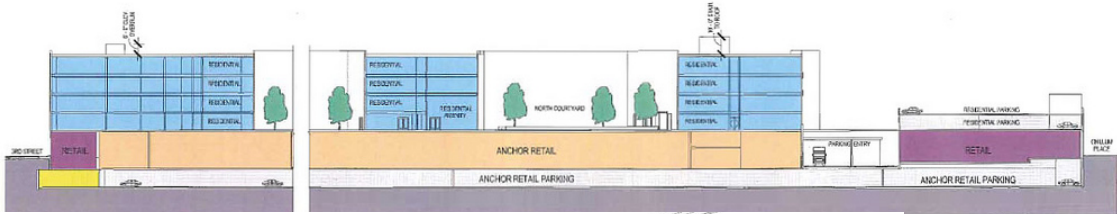
Video rendering: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dUf2Sa6dY>



Video rendering: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QcA3ujCO0rM>

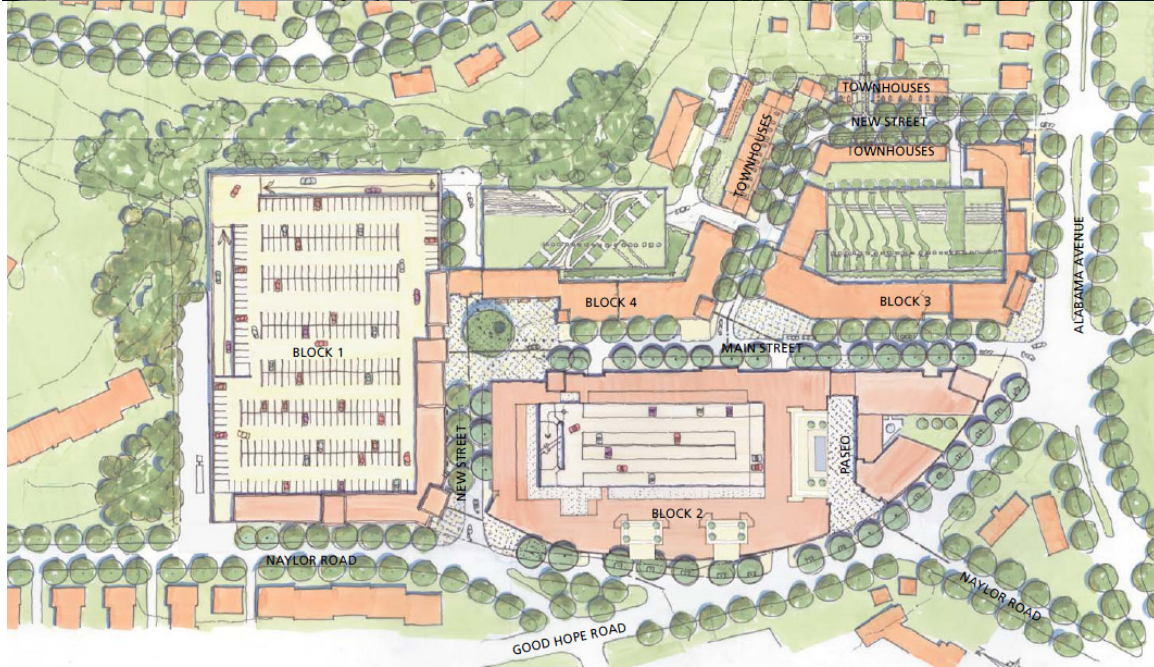


1 SECTION - EASTWEST
1" = 42'-0"



(For illustrative purposes only)

Skyland Town Center





Video rendering: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jGTCn9drhVE>

1st & H St (Gonzaga)



Thank you for your work and your attention to this letter.

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