

# **Building a Place for All People: A Community-Centered Vision for the New Northgate Mall**

**Walltown Community Association +  
Northgate Mall Neighborhood  
Council**

**April 24, 2021**

# A Spirit of Self-Determination: Project Overview

At the end of 2018, the Walltown Community Association started organizing neighbors soon after Northgate Mall was acquired by Northwood Investors, a global real estate investment firm.

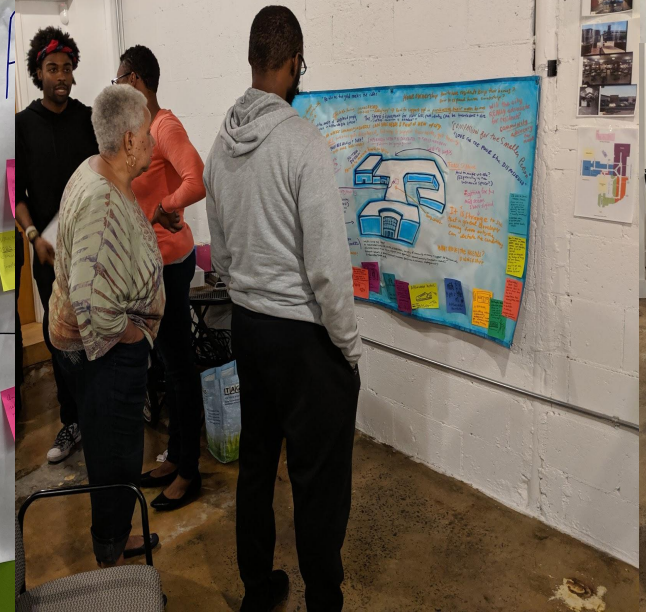
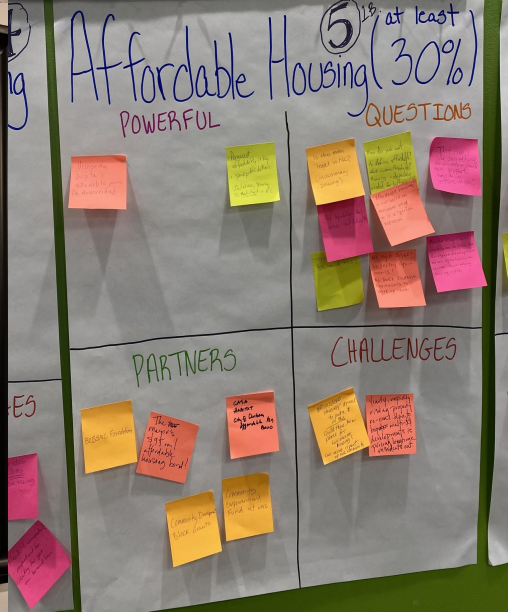
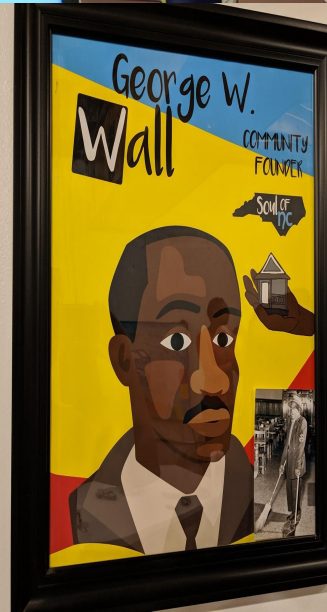
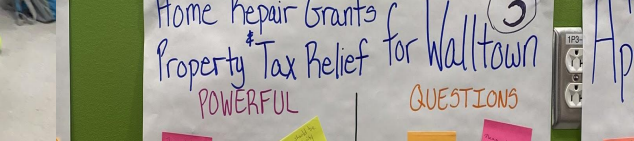
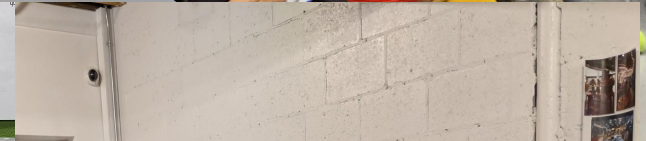
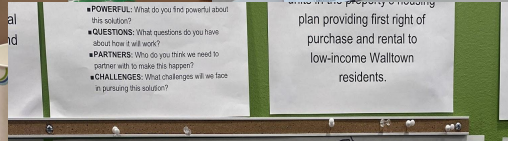
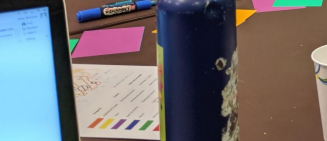
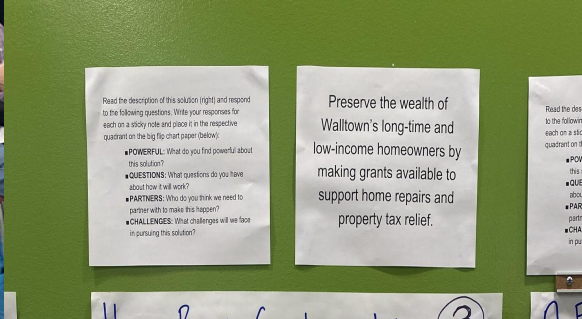
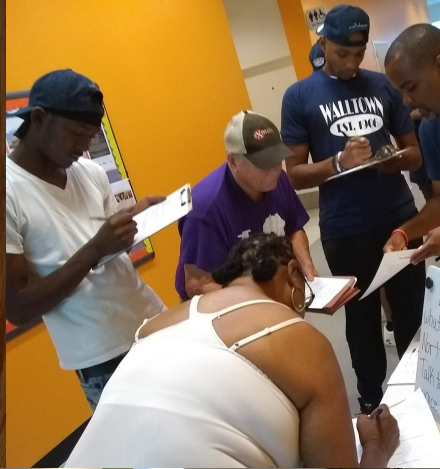


## Community Engagement Activities

- Walltown Canvassing (250+ surveys from residents, mall tenants, shoppers)
- 3 Focus Groups (51 Walltown residents)
- WCA Strategic Vision Reveal with over 100 people in attendance
- Formation of Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council (7 communities)
- Northgate Mall Design Charrette
- Northgate Mall Redevelopment Survey (386 responses from around Durham)
- Ongoing engagement with property owners (Northwood Investors and Duke University)

# WALLTOWN Community Meeting

APRIL 15, 7pm.  
Walltown Rec Center, 1308 W Club  
Join us to talk about:  
• Northgate Mall updates



# Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council (NMNC)

In July 2020, the Walltown Community Association organized with other Durham residents to form the **Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council (NMNC)**, which includes a total of 12 residents representing seven neighborhoods: Walltown, Northgate Park, Duke Park, Trinity Park, Trinity Heights, Watts Hospital Hillandale, and Old West Durham. The **purpose of the NMNC was to spatialize a collective community vision**--centered around Walltown's strategic goals--for the redevelopment of the mall property. We accomplished this goal **through a design charrette** held on September 18-19 where, assisted by a design team from the Coalition for Affordable Housing & Transit and NC State University, we **produced three alternative designs** for the new Northgate.



On Saturday, September 12th, members of the NMNC walked the Walltown Park and Northgate Mall properties with staff from the Ellerbe Creek Watershed Association in order to get a feel for the space and learn about environmental sustainability considerations before engaging in the design charrette.

# Six Guiding Principles for Northgate Redesign

The Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council used the following **six goals from Walltown's strategic vision** to guide the development of alternative designs for the new Northgate:

- 1.** Establish a significant portion (at least 30%) of **AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS** in the property's housing plan providing first right of purchase and rental to low-income Walltown residents.
- 2.** Create spaces for **AFFORDABLE RETAIL**, including a cooperative grocery store (opportunity for community ownership), so that residents can have nearby access to healthy food and other items needed for work, school, and home.
- 3.** Design and enhance the built environment with consideration for **PEDESTRIAN SAFETY, ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**, and **ACCESSIBILITY** for seniors, families with children, people with disabilities, and people of diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

# Six Guiding Principles for Northgate Redesign

The Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council used the following **six goals from Walltown's strategic vision** to guide the development of alternative designs for the new Northgate:

- 4.** Foster **COMMUNITY GATHERING** and **CULTURAL ENRICHMENT** spaces, such as, the Durham Arts Council clay studio, a satellite library branch, and an interactive Walltown history exhibit.
- 5.** Develop a section of the property as a **TRANSPORTATION HUB** for buses and bike riders, including a Park-and-Ride serving nearby universities, hospitals, and downtown Durham.
- 6.** Provide space for a **COMMUNITY ADVOCACY RESOURCE CENTER**, which can serve as a hub for neighborhood residents about city and county services, access to homeownership and renters rights, and other information based on the interests and needs of the community.

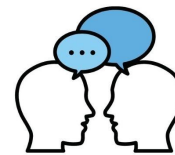
# Northgate Mall Redevelopment Survey

To gather feedback on its alternative designs, the Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council surveyed Durham residents between November 2020 and February 2021. **This report summarizes the data from 386 responses, which will be used to refine Walltown's strategic vision and inform the Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council's (NMNC) ongoing engagement with Northwood Investors, Duke University and the City and County of Durham.**

The writing and data processing for this report were supported by staff at DataWorks NC, the Coalition for Affordable Housing & Transit, and a faculty and graduate student design team from NC State's NC State's Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning.

## NORTHGATE REDEVELOPMENT SURVEY

**WALLTOWN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION IS SEEKING INPUT ON THREE ALTERNATIVE MAP DESIGNS FOR THE NEW NORTHGATE**



**DATE: NOVEMBER 14, 2020**

**TIME: 10AM - 12PM**

**LOCATION: WALLTOWN PARK  
BASEBALL FIELD**



**\*\*\*MASKS REQUIRED\*\*\*  
SOCIALLY DISTANCED**

**TAKE SURVEY UNTIL JANUARY 16, 2021 ONLINE AT LINK BELOW**

<http://bit.ly/northgatedesignsurvey>

# Overarching Theme: Connection to the Community

In hearing from Northgate's most proximate neighbors, and from those around the city, it is clear that an equitable redevelopment of the mall property must create connection to the community. Connection is created by an inviting and welcoming space (*affordable* living, shopping, and entertainment; *open and accessible* physical environment) *for all* Durham residents.

## 1. Affordable Housing

- Advocating for affordable units to be priced for people at or below Walltown median income

## 2. Affordable Retail

- Advocating for a grocery store and set asides for non-chain local businesses

## 3. Accessible Community-centered Design

- Advocating for community park and green space to open up along Guess Rd
- Advocating for dedicated community space, such as, a Durham County library branch with a Walltown history hub

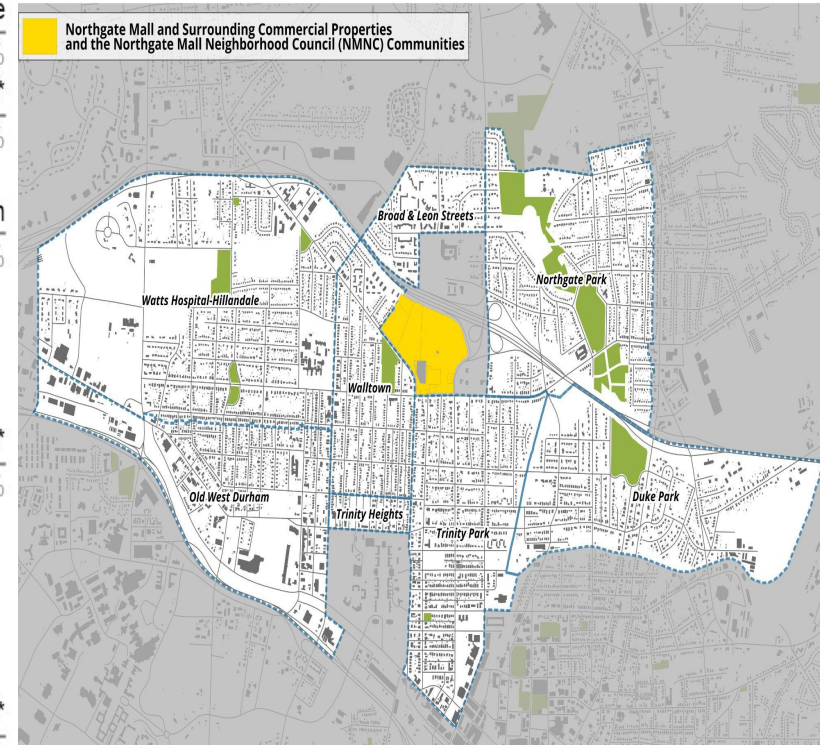
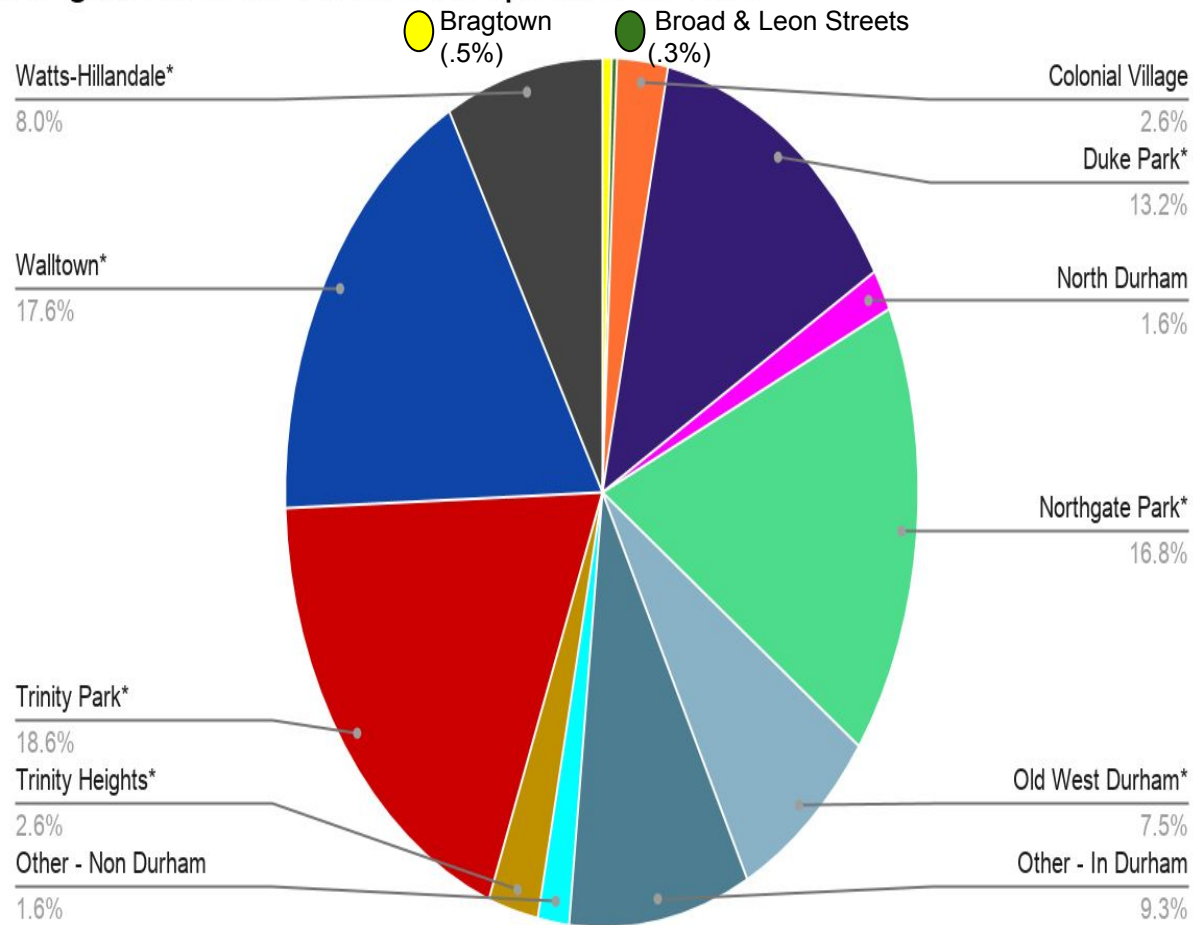
## 4. Environmental Sustainability

- Advocating for measures to reduce stormwater runoff and excessive flooding



# Who Participated in the Survey?

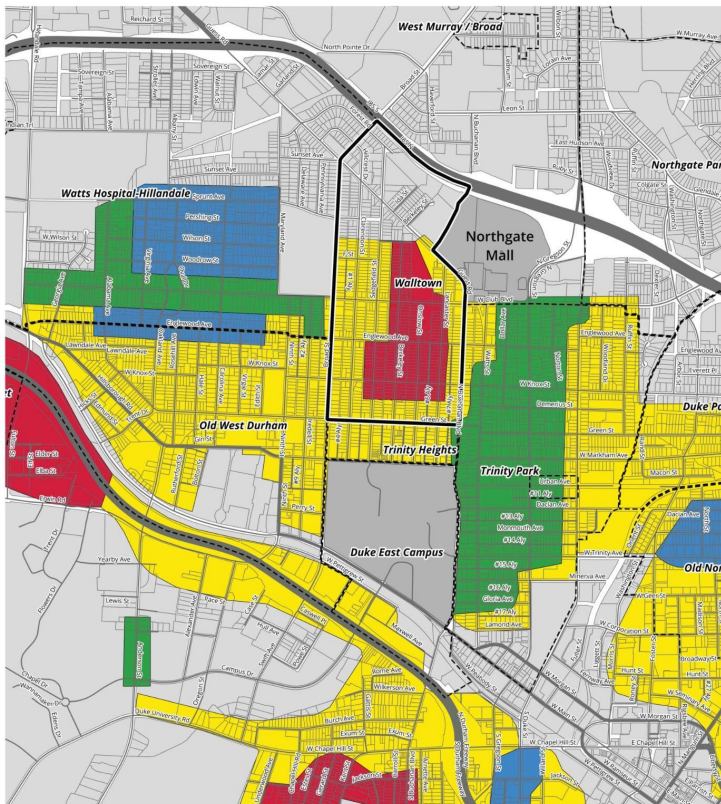
## Neighborhoods Where Respondents Live



**Note:** 286 of the 386 respondents live in the Northgate Mall Neighborhood Council communities: Walltown, Northgate Park, Trinity Park, Trinity Heights, Duke Park, Watts Hospital-Hillandale, and Old West Durham.

# Brief History of Housing in Walltown (part 1)

Risk designations made by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1937 - often referred to as “redlining” - **drove racial segregation and racial wealth gaps for generations**. The heart of Walltown was classified in group D - “Hazardous”. Today, the **impact of redlining and underinvestment in Walltown**, which paved the way for gentrification, can be seen in the **extreme rise in property tax values**, which have a major impact on low or fixed-income households.



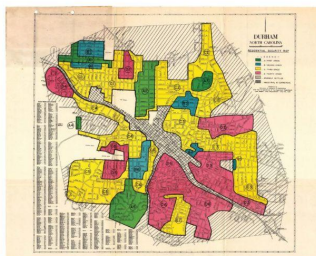
## 1937 Housing Policy in Northgate Mall Neighborhoods

The Homeowners Loan Corporation (HOLC) produced maps like the one below for hundreds of American cities, effectively preventing investment in homes in red- and yellow-lined areas for generations to come. Redlined areas were commonly designated as such based on prevalence or “infiltration” of Black Americans, ethnic minorities and physical conditions that might restrict land uses.

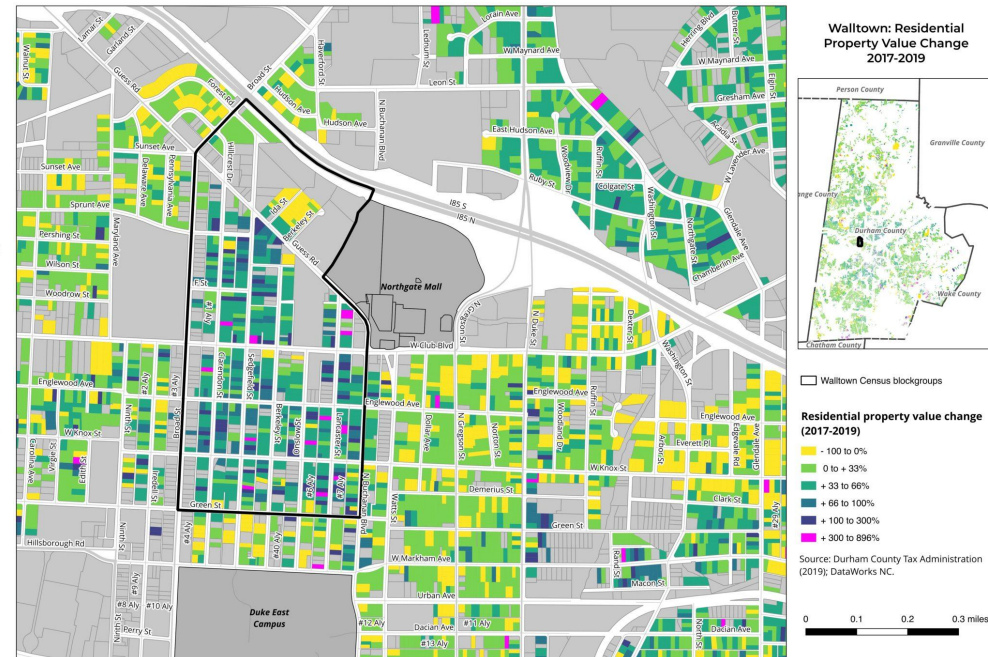
To learn more about this visit Uneven Ground at: [https://www.bulcity150.org/uneven\\_ground/](https://www.bulcity150.org/uneven_ground/)

Redlining boundaries sourced from Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., “Mapping Inequality,” American Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers.

- Walltown
- Other Walltown-adjacent neighborhoods
- 1937 HOLC classifications
- A - 'Best'
- B - 'Still desirable'
- C - 'Definitely declining'
- D - 'Hazardous'

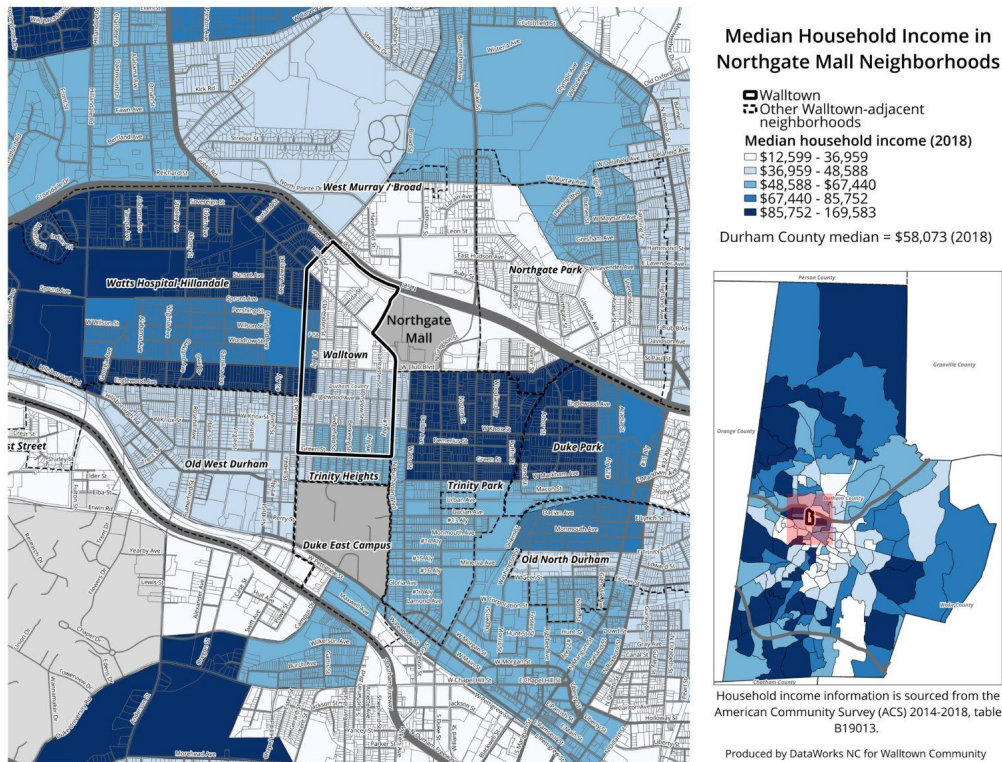


The original HOLC map for Durham, North Carolina (1937). Produced by DataWorks NC for Walltown Community

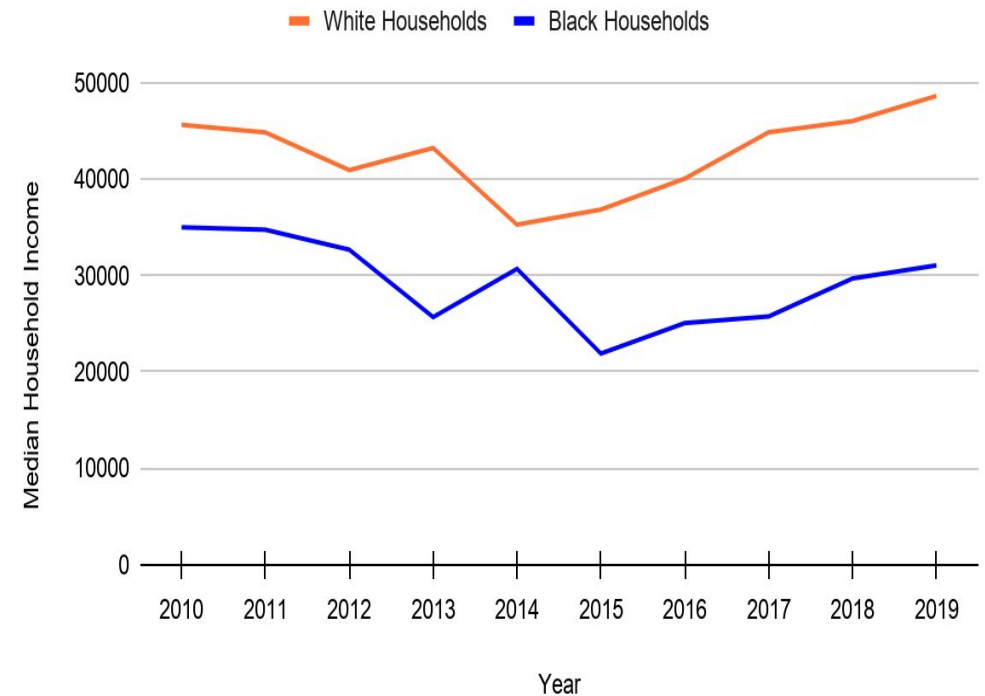


# Brief History of Housing in Walltown (part 2)

**Who is most impacted by rising property tax increases?** The neighborhood's long standing Black population has had consistently lower median household incomes than the White population in Walltown. Higher income families moving into Walltown and purchasing homes at higher prices are driving the property taxes up, making it difficult for families who have lived there for decades (many for generations) to keep up.



## Walltown Median Household Incomes by Race



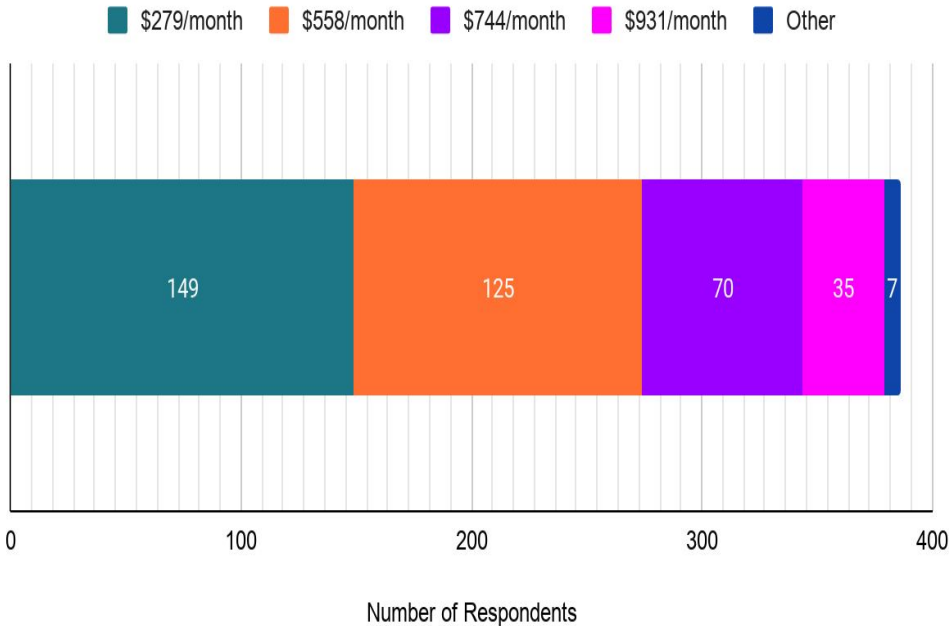
## Median Sale Prices of Single-Family Homes in Walltown

2000: \$50,000  
2010: \$114,000  
2019: \$261,500

U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2018 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table B19013; generated by John Killeen & Libby McClure; using [data.census.gov](https://data.census.gov); <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>; (April 2021).

# Affordable Housing at the New Northgate

Based on Durham and Walltown median incomes, respondents selected a desired monthly cost for affordable rental units



**Note:** The first seven (7) respondents, denoted by "Other," were asked to tell us what percentage of the total affordable housing units should be at each of the four monthly housing cost options.

**Correction:** An earlier version of the "Affordable Housing For Whom?" chart reported Durham County monthly incomes (under Walltown) with Walltown affordable monthly housing costs. The monthly income column has been updated to reflect Walltown numbers.

## Affordable Housing For Whom?

% of Median Income	DURHAM-CHAPEL HILL - \$90,900 (HUD Area Median Income)		WALLTOWN - \$37,222 (Neighborhood Median Income)	
	Monthly Income	Affordable Monthly Housing Costs	Monthly Income	Affordable Monthly Housing Costs
100%	\$7,575	\$2,273	\$3,102	\$931
80%	\$6,060	\$1,818	\$2,481	\$744
60%	\$4,545	\$1,364	\$1,861	\$558
30%	\$2,273	\$682	\$931	\$279

\* HUD AMI cited here rely on ACS 2013-2017 estimates, as do the Durham and Walltown median incomes.

\* Affordable here means all housing costs being no more than "30% of monthly income".

\* HUD AMI is for a 4-person household.

[https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2020/select\\_Geography.odn](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2020/select_Geography.odn)

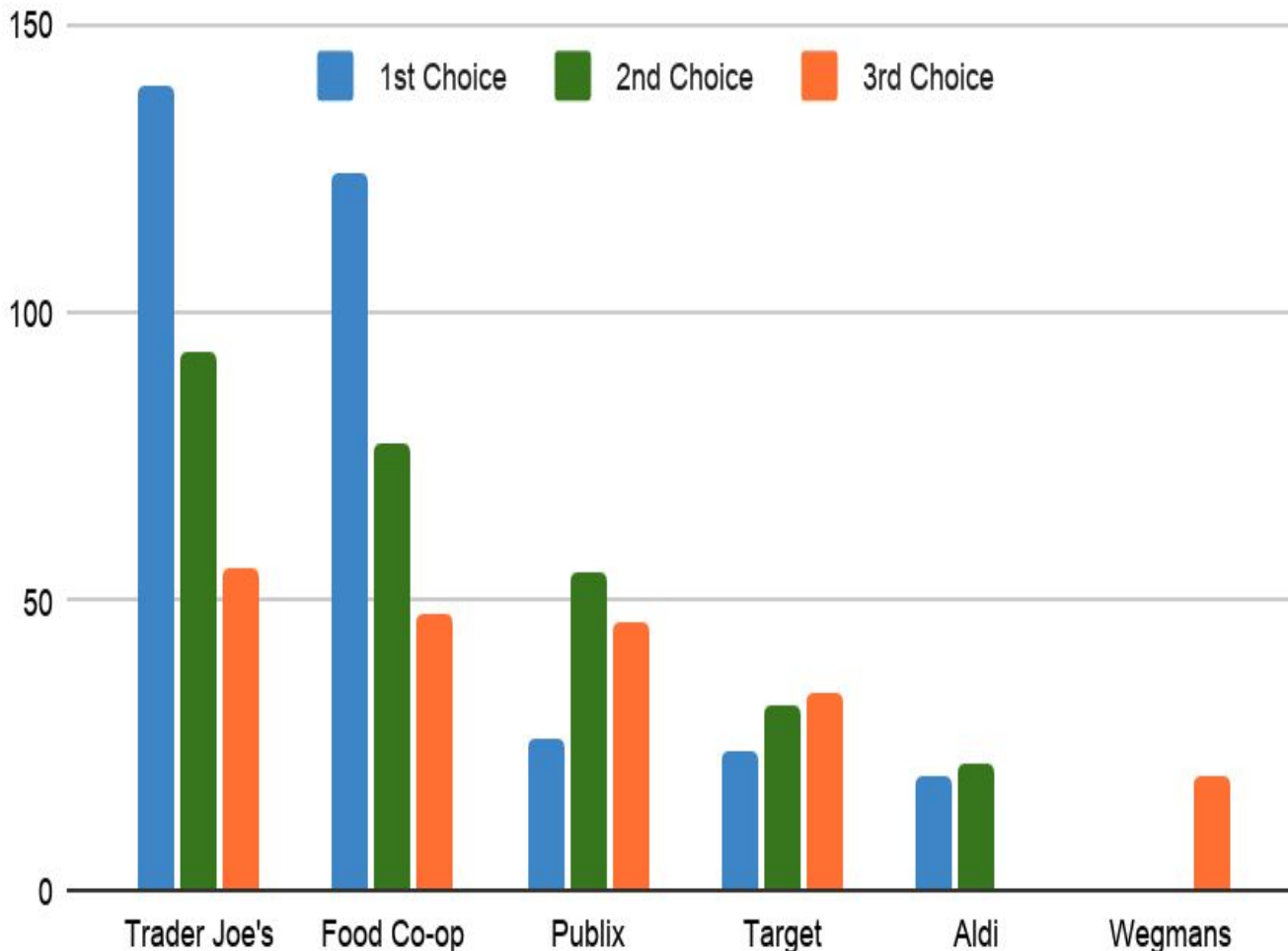
## How Much Money Do You Need to Make for Northwood Ravin Apartments to Be Affordable?

Bedrooms	Average listed rent at Northwood properties in Durham*	Annual rent costs	Full-time hourly wage required
0 (studio)	\$1,372.80	\$16,473.60	\$26.40
1	\$1,572.16	\$18,865.89	\$30.23
2	\$1,998.95	\$23,987.35	\$38.44
3	\$2,931.53	\$35,178.40	\$56.38

\* Rental listings from DataWorks NC rentscraper, 4/2017 - 11/2020, including Trinity Commons, Van Alen, and Palladian Place. Affordable = 30% of income. Full-time = 40 hrs/week 52 weeks/year.

# Affordable Groceries at the New Northgate

We asked respondents to prioritize their top 3 grocery store options:



Many people who wanted a co-op specified that it should be affordable and equitably accessible to neighbors of all incomes:

"I think we have enough fancy grocery stores with 'membership' options for slight discounts but no co-op with a labor buy-in requirement so that all members earn bulk prices."

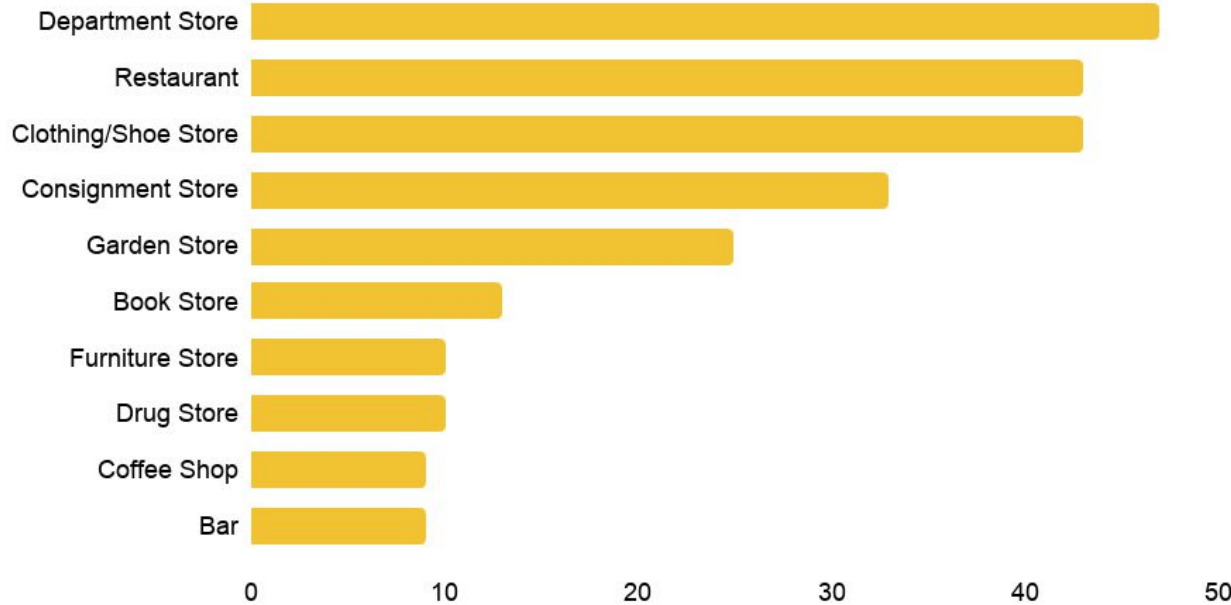
It should also center the workers by paying a living wage and supporting unions...

...and most importantly, collaborate with the Walltown community:

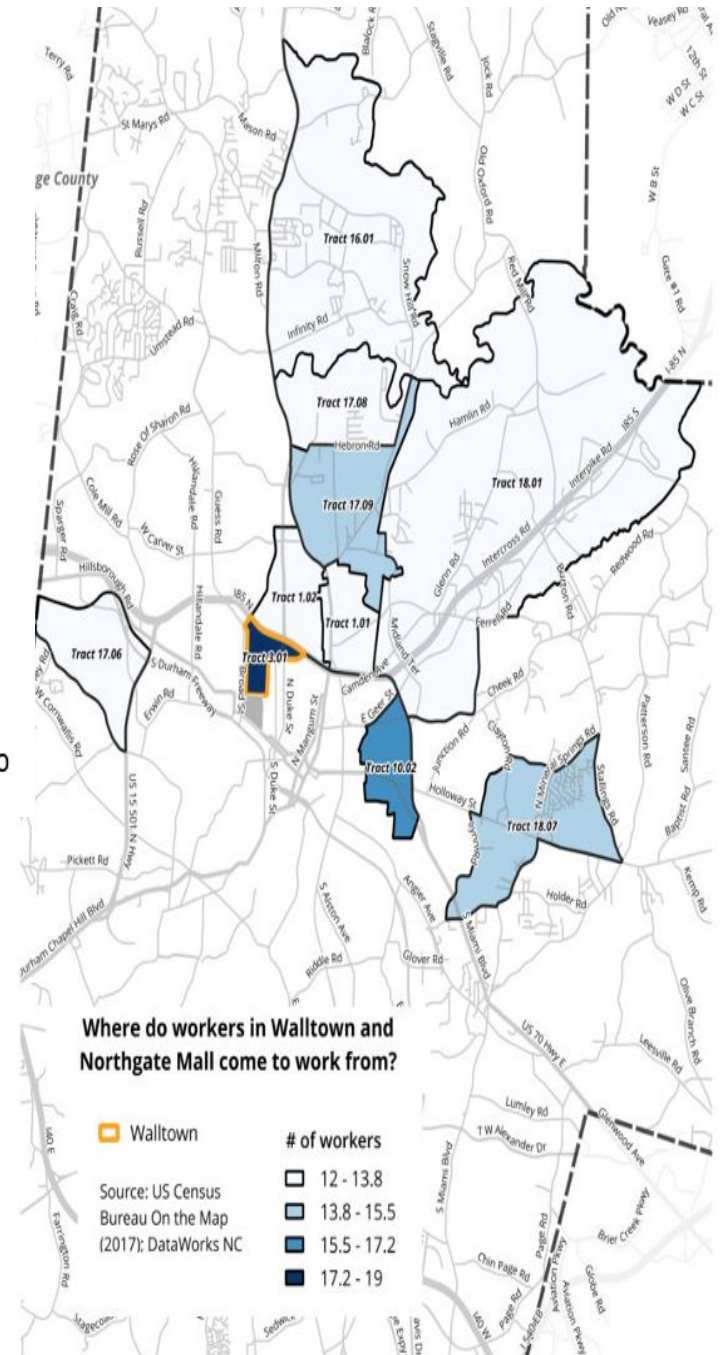
"Local and grassroots...work with stakeholders to develop a viable model. A collaborative approach with a good financial aid model akin to what the Durham Co-op Market did in partnership with Self-Help at their location, maybe needed to realize this objective especially in the current economic environment."

# Affordable Retail at the New Northgate

What kind of retail do respondents want?



Several respondents affirmed that the retail should be affordable for Walltown residents and **31%** of respondents ask for locally-owned businesses



# NMNC Spatial Design Priorities



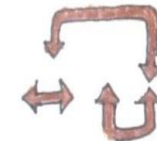
1. Affordable housing is highest priority



2. Community open space extends from Northgate to Walltown Neighborhood and Park



3. Safe pedestrian and bike connections made to/from neighborhoods across busy streets



4. Walking trail from neighborhoods around periphery of Northgate site



5. Safe, direct interior street pattern with street parking for retail and community space



6. Affordable retail accessible to neighborhoods



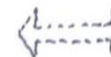
7. Dedicated community space for job training, history, arts, etc.



8. Small green buffers



9. Safe and attractive transit stops with weather protection



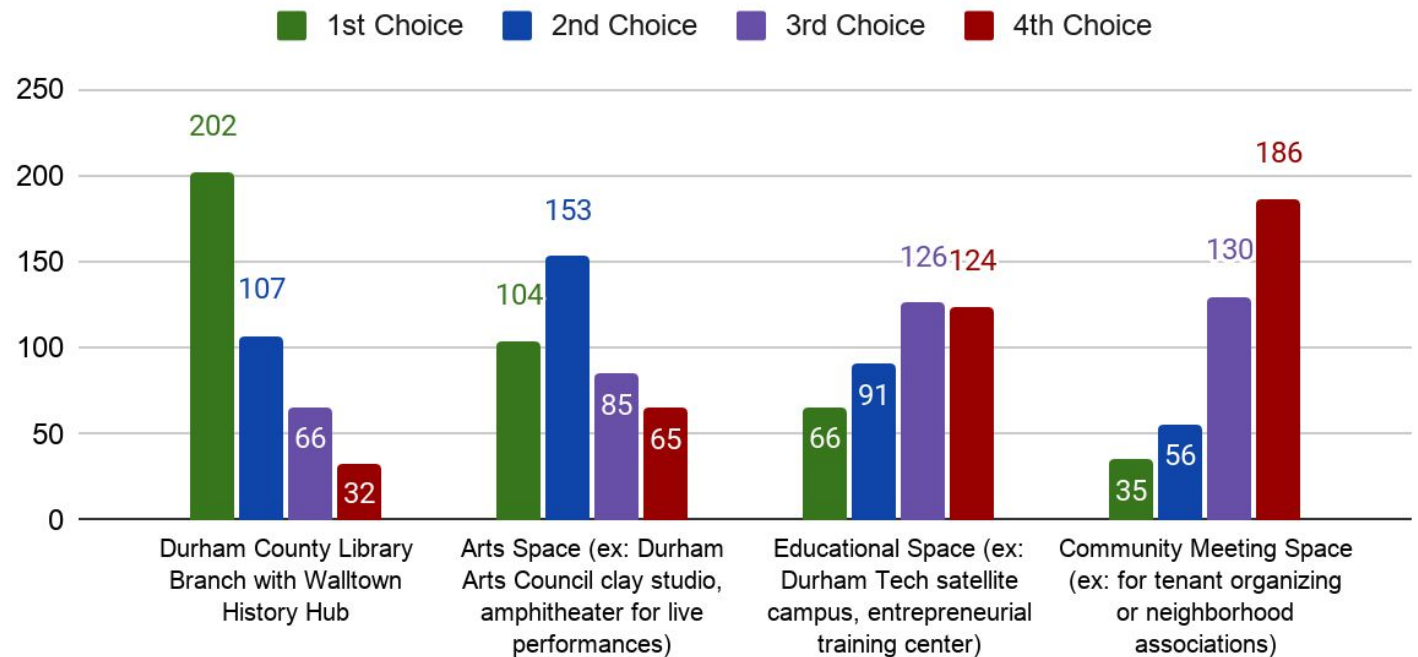
10. Future green connection to Ellerbe Creek

# Specific Features Desired by Durham Residents

**99%** of respondents support a plan that aims to reduce excessive stormwater runoff and harmful flooding downstream by retrofitting the site with nature-based stormwater management

**94%** said the design should include a community park or green space that extends and connects Walltown Park across Guess Road into the Northgate property

Here is how respondents want to prioritize the use of community space in the redeveloped Northgate property:



**72%** think the redeveloped Northgate Mall property should serve as a hub for public transportation



# Community Advocacy Resource Center

We asked respondents what kind of assistance they want from city and county systems:

**57%** of respondents said **social services**

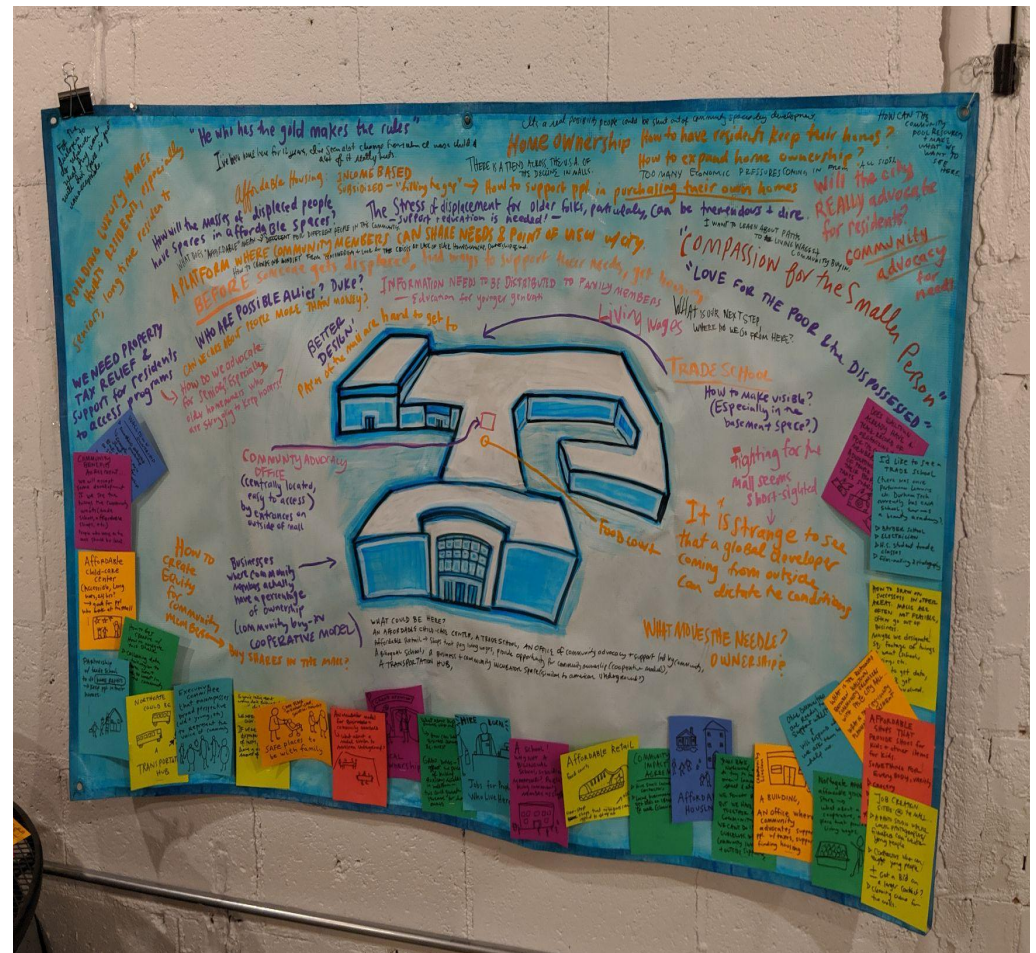
**55%** said **education**

**46%** said **housing**

**44%** said **employment**

**8%** said something else, including:

- DMV
- Voting
- Transportation
- Bill pay assistance
- Services for the elderly
- Participatory city budgeting



Walltown vision casting diagram for the redevelopment of Northgate Mall, including a centrally-located community advocacy resource center (October 2019)

# Engaging Durham Residents with NMNC Alternative Designs

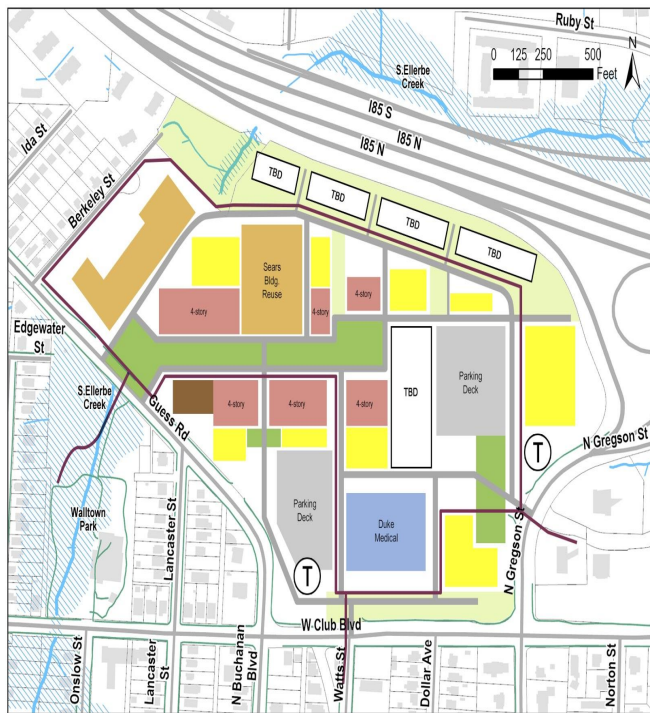
In Walltown (November 14 + January 16) and Watts Hospital Hillandale + Old West Durham (November 21), we held outdoor, socially-distanced community meetings to share our designs with residents, property stakeholders, and city officials.



# Elevating Design Features: NMNC Alternative #1

What features are people **MOST** and **LEAST EXCITED** about?

NMNC Alternative #1

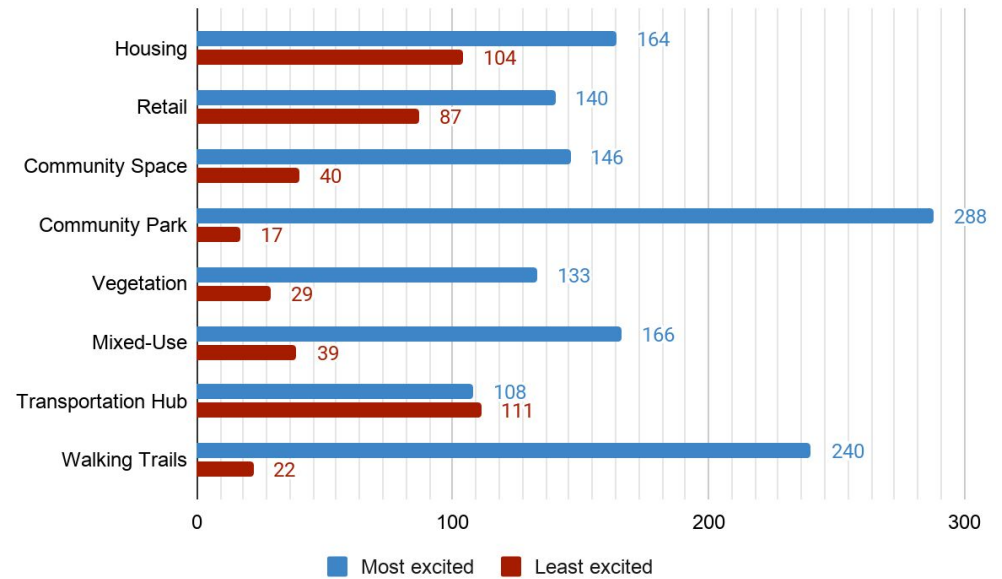


**Description**

- Creates a lot of housing but with no explicit spatial strategy for how to accomplish 30% affordable at Walltown AMI.
- Extends significant green space/corridor from the center of the site all the way to Guess Road to make a strong, gateway connection to Walltown, and to create a public amenity.
- Anchors the green with two large green spaces: one on Guess Road and one in the center of the site
- Provides each housing cluster with a nearby green amenity.
- Reuses the Sears Building for artist space, Durham Tech satellite campus, and additional uses.
- Calls for a community space on Guess Road.
- Provides two transit stops: one off Gregson, one at the corner of Club and Guess.
- Creates a perimeter walking trail.

**Key**

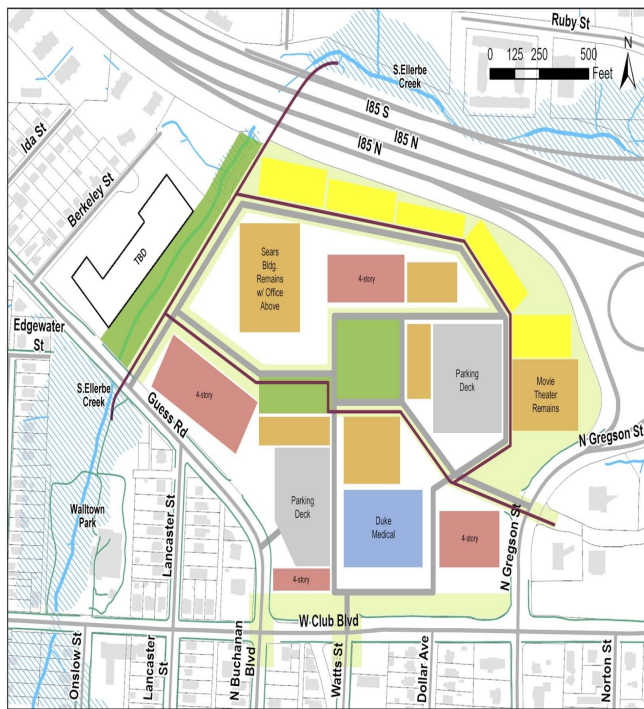
- Housing
- Retail
- Community space
- Community park
- Vegetation
- Mixed-use (Housing w/ ground floor retail)
- Transportation hub
- Walking trails
- Office
- Hotel
- To be determined programs



# Elevating Design Features: NMNC Alternative #2

What features are people **MOST** and **LEAST EXCITED** about?

## NMNC Alternative #2

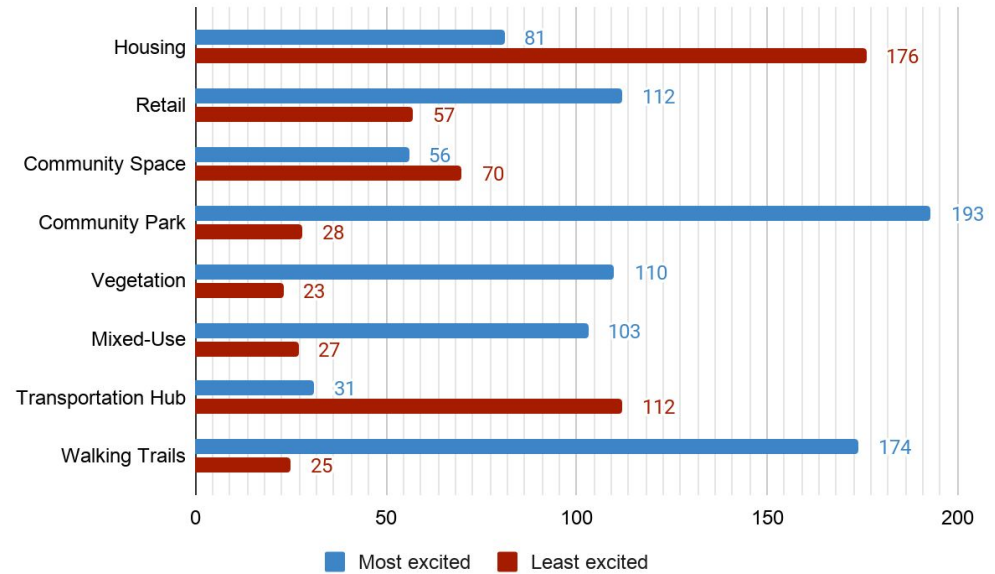


### Description

- Creates a lot of housing but with no explicit spatial strategy for how to accomplish affordable housing.
- Vegetation functions as green infrastructure system.
- Area where creek is currently underground is made into significant green space. If creek is daylighted, "Randy's Pizza building" may be affected thus identified as TBD on plan.
- Establishes a walking path north-south in the location of the creek and a loop trail to the movie theater east-west through the site across to Gregson. Path connects to the neighborhoods to the south and east. A trail under I-85 is contemplated, or possibly a pedestrian/bike overpass.
- Reuses the Sears building for grocery store with office above.

### Key

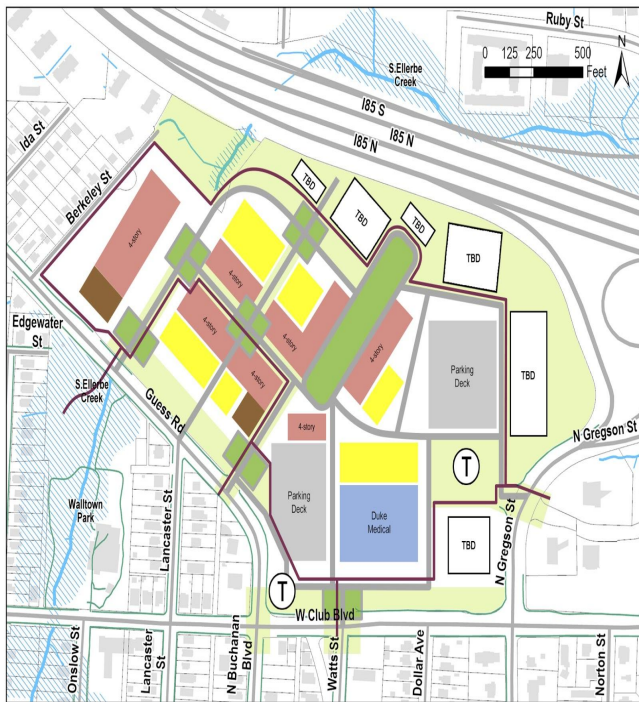
- Housing
- Retail
- Community space
- Community park
- Vegetation
- Mixed-use (Housing w/ ground floor retail)
- T Transportation hub
- Walking trails
- Office
- Hotel
- TBD To be determined programs



# Elevating Design Features: NMNC Alternative #3

What features are people **MOST** and **LEAST EXCITED** about?

NMNC Alternative #3

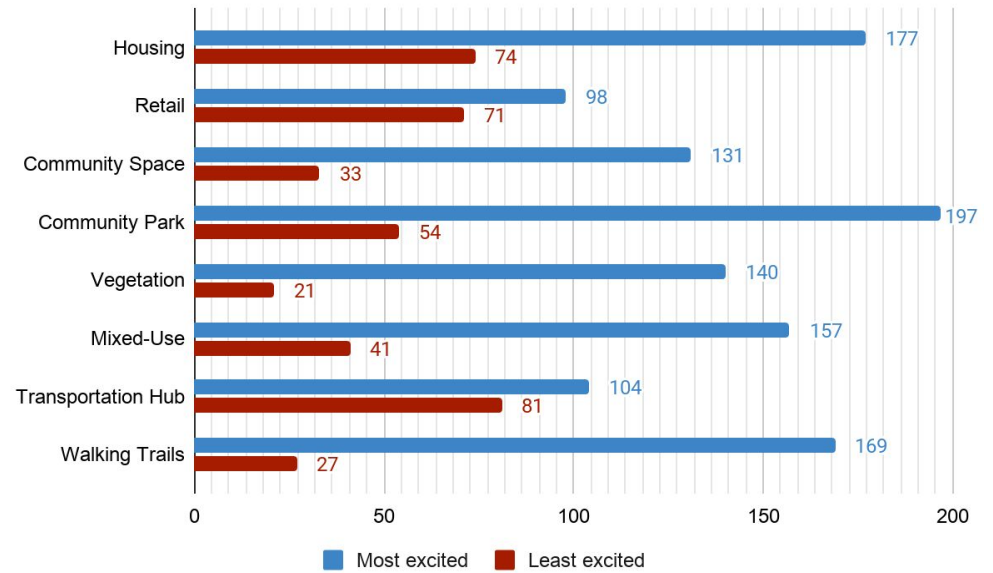


**Description**

- The parcel in the northwest corner (with "Randy's Pizza building") is sold to an affordable housing developer. Then it is redeveloped with affordable housing over ground-floor affordable retail and community space.
- Reorients primary green space north-south to maximize the value as amenity for retail over housing.
- Creates street circulation in keeping with nearby neighborhood street grid, with green commons at street intersections, distributing green space along a north-south east-west axes.
- Places mixed-use development (retail/housing mix) along interior streets and around green spaces.
- Includes additional community space in location of existing Sears Auto.
- Provides transit hubs: one inside the site off Gregson, one at the corner of Club and Guess.
- Has a walking trail.

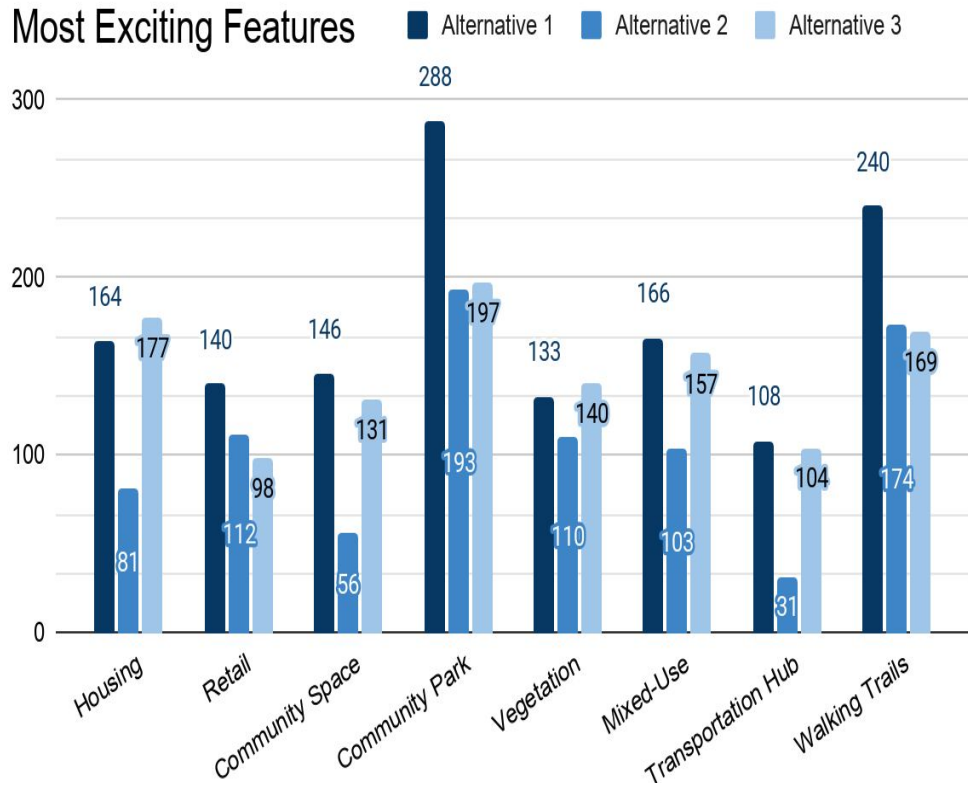
**Key**

- Housing
- Retail
- Community space
- Community park
- Vegetation
- Mixed-use (Housing w/ ground floor retail)
- Transportation hub
- Walking trails
- Office
- Hotel
- TBD To be determined programs

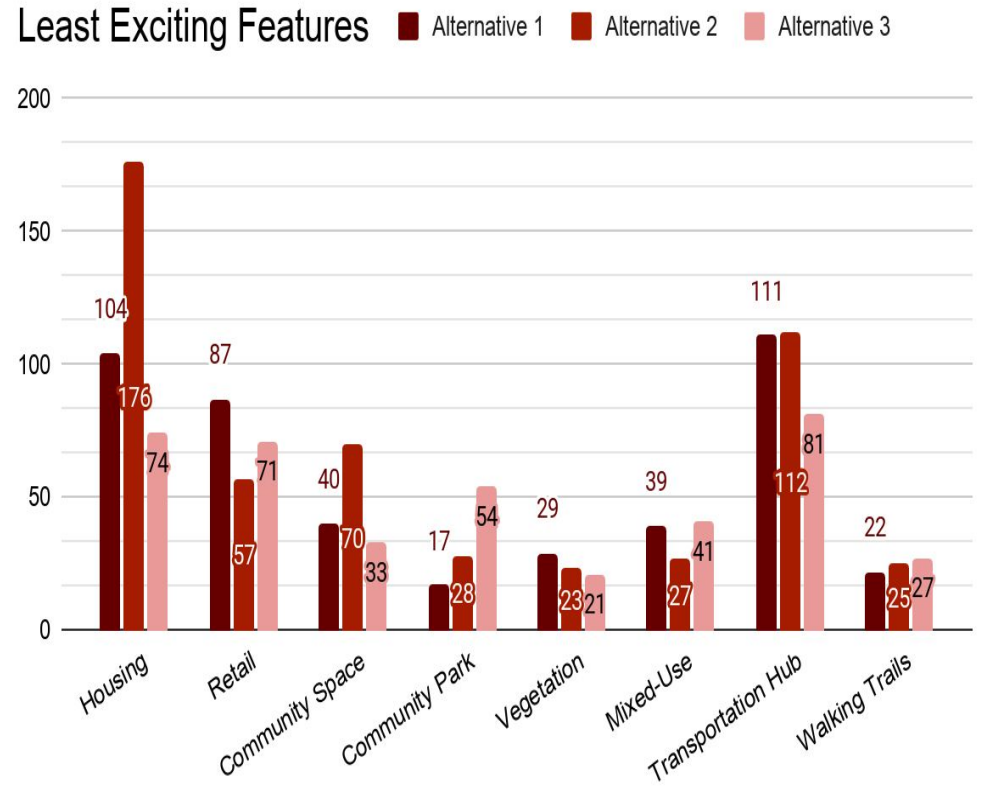


# Comparing the NMNC Alternatives

Most Exciting Features

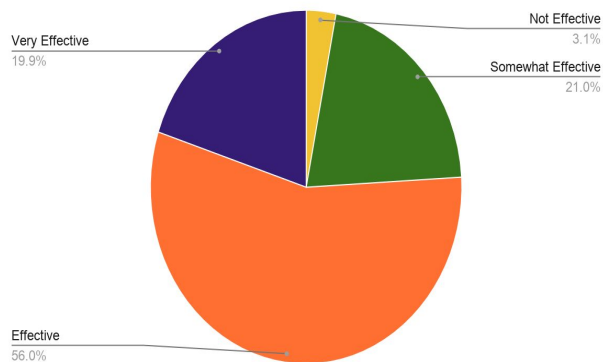


Least Exciting Features

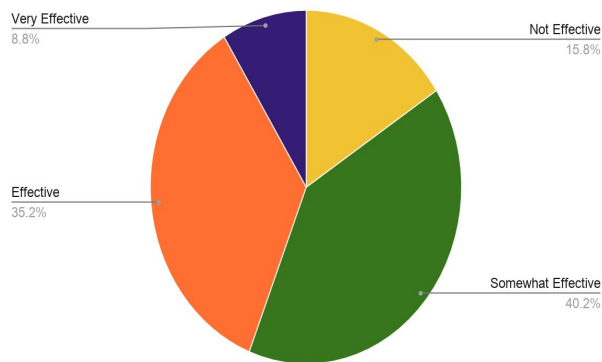


## How effectively did each alternative integrate the stated NMNC design goals?

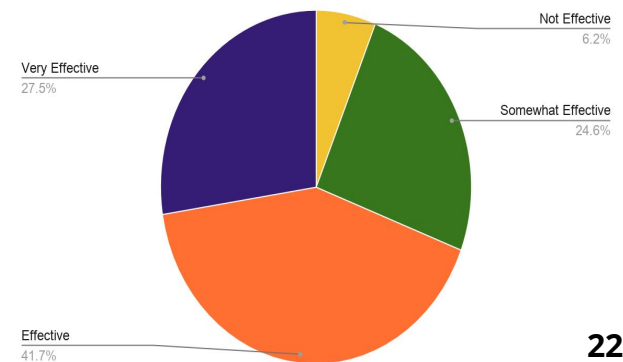
Alternative 1



Alternative 2



Alternative 3





# Northwood Investors' Redevelopment Proposal

In the survey, respondents were asked to evaluate the September 16, 2020, Northwood Investors' proposal and comment on things they thought might benefit the community as well as things that should be avoided in the redevelopment of the Northgate site. A snapshot summary of the 10,681 words' worth of response revealed the following:

While the possibility of a **PARK & GREENSPACE** and **NEW RETAIL** received the most positive reaction, an equal number **DID NOT LIKE IT AT ALL**.

Critiques of the plan focused on **LACK OF CONNECTION TO WALLTOWN PARK** and the neighborhoods, **NO AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN PHASE ONE** and **NO WALKING TRAIL**, how the layout **PRIVATIZED THE SITE**, and the proposed mix of land uses would **ACCELERATE GENTRIFICATION**.

Other things that were mentioned, not necessarily in large numbers:

- **Grocery store, transit hub, and community space** are needed; a hotel is not needed
- **Jobs and economic development** are important; a revitalized mall is better than dead space
- **Conflicting views about higher density, locating tall buildings by the highway, mixed use development, and the street layout.**

Northwood Proposal (spatialized)



#### Description

This is the Northwood proposal for Northgate Mall, presented at a public meeting on September 16, 2020. It is an approximation, redrawn so it can be compared to the NMNC Alternatives (the Northwood version was originally drawn as bubbles). It is in two phases. Phase One proposes 4-story mixed-use buildings (ground-floor retail with housing above) around a central "Community Park". There are also a few small office buildings and retail buildings on the site. The one-story retail building located at the northwest edge of the property (the "Randy's Pizza building") is kept and "re-skinned", and the Bank of America building stays. Both parking decks are reused. In Phase Two, taller (10-12 stories) buildings would be built close to I-85 and Gregson, likely office and hotel.

#### Positive things about the Northwood proposal

1. There is a lot of retail, some of which could meet community needs.
2. It contemplates a grocery store.
3. There is a significant amount of housing.
4. There is green space.

#### Objections to Northwood proposal

1. Open space labeled Community Park is isolated from the neighborhoods. As is, it communicates private, not community. It needs to extend to Guess Road with safe pedestrian crossing to Walltown Park.
2. The expectation is that all housing will be market rate, i.e. no affordable housing in Phase One.
3. If Northwood goes ahead with Phase One, building under 50 feet as is allowed, the density will be low for a site this size.
4. Office and hotel do not serve community needs per se.

#### Key

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Housing                                    | Transportation hub        |
| Retail                                     | Walking trails            |
| Community space                            | Office                    |
| Community park                             | Hotel                     |
| Vegetation                                 | To be determined programs |
| Mixed-use (Housing w/ ground floor retail) |                           |

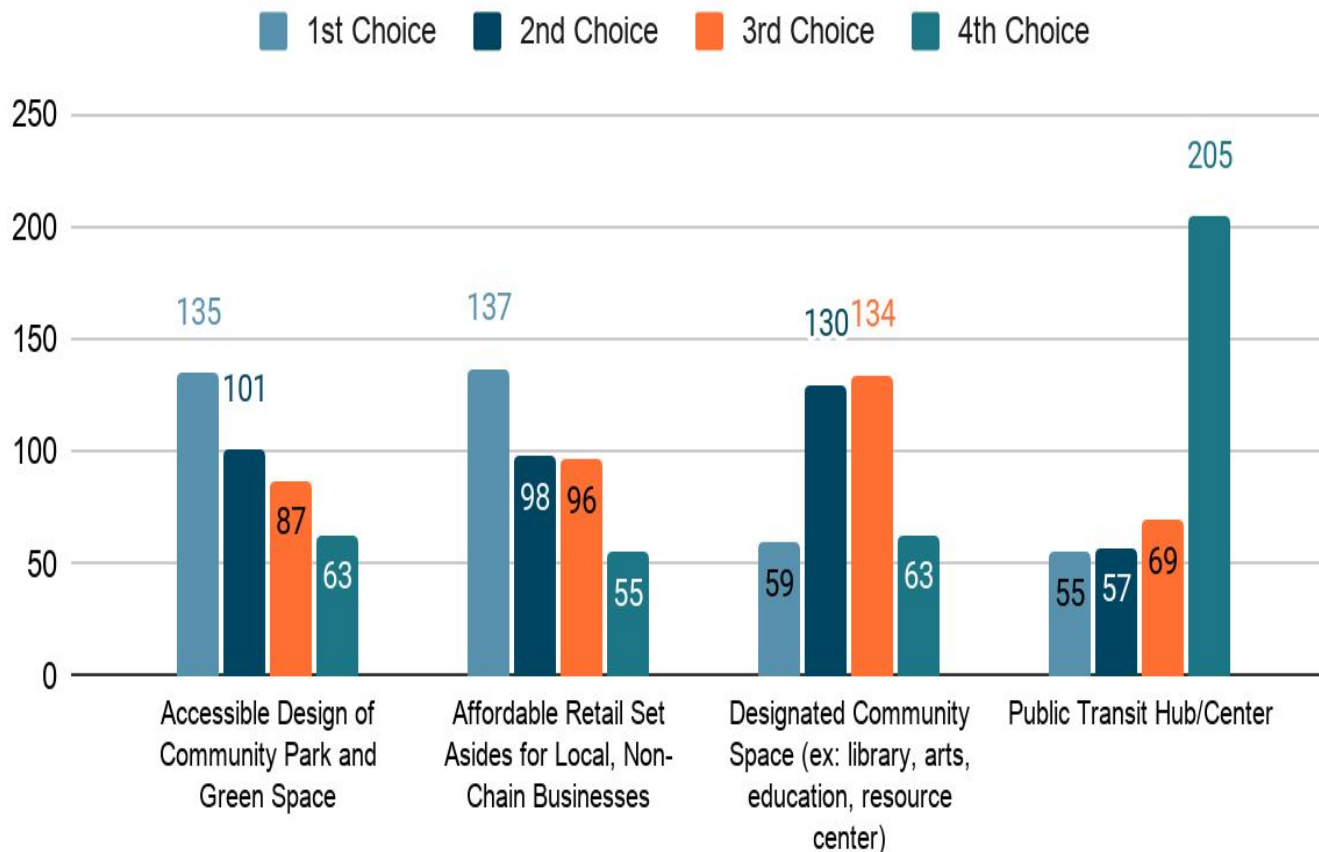
(redrawn to be in the same format as the NMNC alternatives)



# Priorities for Engaging with Northwood

**89%** of respondents said Northwood Investors should work with the NMNC to pursue **affordable housing** and other community benefits in **Phase One** of redevelopment.

If affordable housing isn't prioritized in Phase One, here are respondents' preferences for other priorities:



**Note:** Northwood's current proposed redevelopment process would occur in two phases. PHASE ONE includes several 4-story mixed-use buildings (ground-floor retail with housing above) around a central "community park". Due to a lack of density, they have stated there would be **NO AFFORDABLE HOUSING** in this phase.



**Walltown Community Association**  
Northgate Mall Committee

**Learn more about our work**

<https://www.walltown.net>

**Contact us at**

[walltownnorthgatecmte@gmail.com](mailto:walltownnorthgatecmte@gmail.com)

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**Thank You!!!**