

Metro Centre at Owings Mills

LAI Baltimore Chapter – October, 2016 meeting

On October 19th, Lynn Abeshouse of Abeshouse Partners visited the Baltimore Chapter of LAI to present an overview of the only Baltimore County transit oriented development (TOD) known as Metro Centre at Owings Mills.

Lynn began her presentation by taking us back to 1984, which is when Baltimore County promulgated a new Master Plan designating Owings Mills and White Marsh as the two major growth areas of the County. This designation enabled the flow of Federal and State transportation dollars to build I-795, Red Run Blvd, and other transportation infrastructure within Owings Mills. And following the flow of transportation dollars, The Rouse Company developed the Owings Mills Mall and 2 high-rise office buildings, whose anchor tenant was Alexander & Alexander. Thus began a wave of commercial and residential development within Owings Mills that is still ongoing. Thousands of housing units and millions of SF of office and industrial space has been developed in the decades that followed Owings Mills' designation as a growth area of Baltimore County, but the "Town Center", now known as Metro Centre, didn't begin to be developed until "about 5 years ago", according to Lynn.

"About 5 years ago, Willard Hackerman (renowned local businessman who started Whiting Turner Construction, and who passed away in 2015), called Howard Brown with an offer to joint venture" the development of the Town Center. Howard accepted the invitation, and together he and Mr. Hackerman developed the initial component of Metro Centre, which consisted of a structured parking garage capable of accommodating just under 3,000 cars. Today Howard Brown has sole control of Metro Centre and is steadily developing this huge project.

Metro Centre consists of 45 acres of land at the intersection of I-795 and Painters Mill Road, directly adjacent to the Owings Mills Metro Station. Below is the master site plan for Metro Centre:

Site Plan OVERVIEW

Office:
Over 1.2 Million Square Feet

Residential:
1700 Apartments

Retail & Restaurants:
300,000 square feet

Public Library:
40,000 square feet

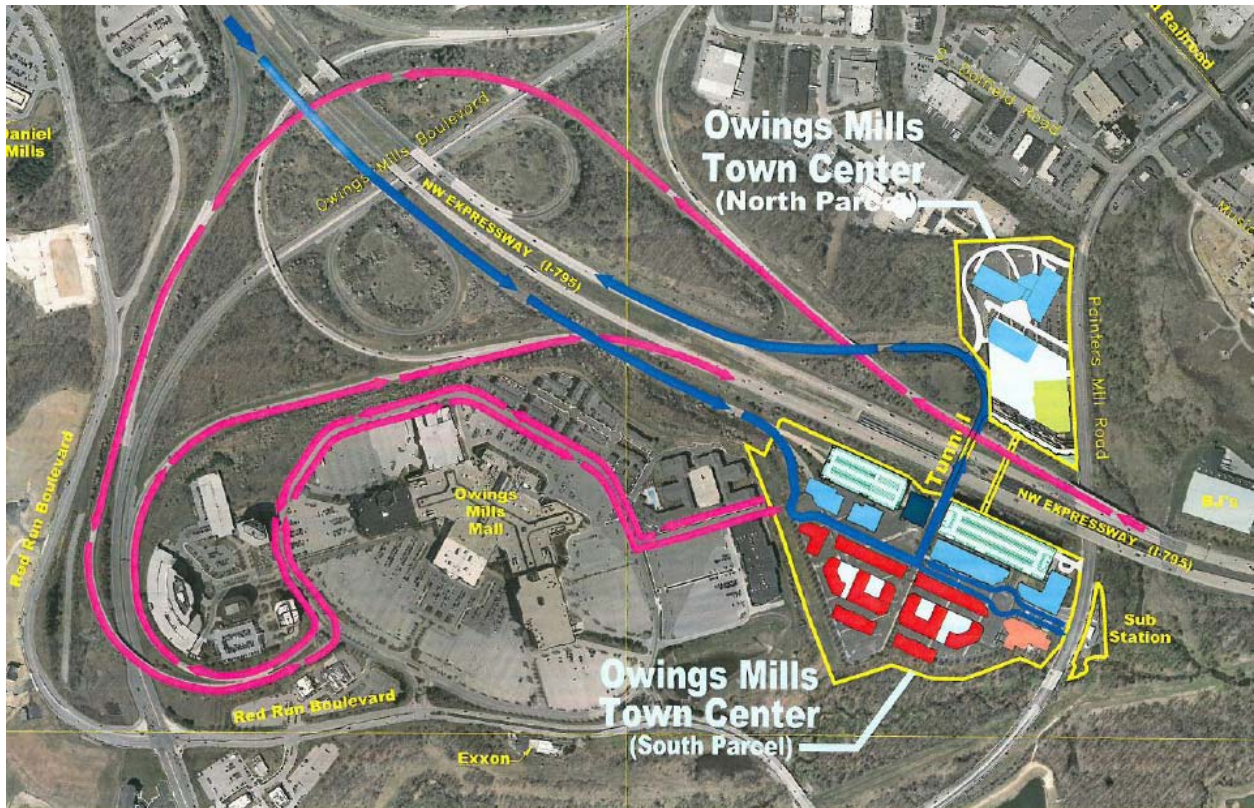
Community College:
80,000 square feet

Hotel:
235 Rooms, Full Service

Total Parking:
Over 11,000 spaces
5 parking garages



To date, phase 1 includes (i) the Baltimore County Community College and Library building of 120,000 sf; (ii) 232 one and two bedroom apartments in two buildings with 56,000 SF of 1st floor retail; (iii) a 143,000 SF office building with 47,000 SF of 1st floor retail; and (iv) two structured parking garages with just under 5,000 parking spaces. In addition, a 235 room hotel will break down in early 2017 in a JV with David Hillman of Southern Management. “Howard’s philosophy is to build on spec”, so that tenants can “kick the tires” and not have to rely on their own imaginations to envision what it would be like to lease an apartment or an office space within Metro Centre. Interestingly, the road systems leading into Metro Centre allow cars to exit I-795, in both northbound and southbound directions, and arrive on the project’s main avenue (Grand Central Avenue) without being inconvenienced by a traffic light, as highlighted in this overview:



With just its current development to date, Metro Centre attracts 50,000 visitors per month to the College and Library, 5,000 Metro commuters park each day, and more than 1M people each year commute from Owings Mills into Baltimore City using the Metro. With the bulk of Metro Centre yet to be developed, those already impressive numbers will likely skyrocket over the coming decades. In fact, all development to date has been confined to Metro Centre’s “South Campus”. The “North Campus” will add approx. 650,000 additional SF of office space, serviced by a 3,200 space parking garage, and a 46,000 SF upscale grocery store.

With an already sizable foundation of prominent corporate businesses located within Owings Mills (T. Rowe Price, Carefirst, Toyota, and ADP to name a few), the emergence of a true walkable, TOD town center will greatly enhance the appeal of Owings Mills as a live/work/play environment.

As Lynn completed her overview of Metro Centre, a question arose regarding a sizable new retail development nearby, known as Foundry Row. How will this new retail development, with its “hot” anchor tenant, Wegmans, affect the prospects and viability of Metro Centre? Lynn opined that the addition of such high quality retail in close proximity to Metro Centre will be good for all of Owings Mills. However, the attendant increase in auto traffic is of significant concern, considering that nearby Reisterstown Road is already overcrowded. Lynn further opined that these likely overcrowded traffic conditions will push people towards Metro Centre. Her implication was clear: It’s good to be a sexy TOD in this increasingly crowded world.