

MONTGOMERY NEWSLETTER

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Wal-Mart Idea Keeps Returning

Plans for a Wal-Mart at the former Vitro property in Aspen Hill may yet spring back to life.

Last week, the Planning Board looked to resuscitate Lee Development Group's (LDG) application to put the Connecticut Avenue property up for a 'minor master plan amendment,' or a concentrated effort to convert the present office zoning to retail. As things stand, the old Vitro offices are 230,000 square feet of glorious obsolescence.

But the recommendation, heavy with all the political baggage that Wal-Mart manages to generate in this county, must still clear the County Council, which takes it up soon.

The minor master plan process has proven not so minor after all, as the Council tries to fit it into an already-full work program. But acting planning director Rose Krasnow said the agency advanced the Vitro idea after realizing 'there is no benefit to having an empty building there for years.' There is little prospect of filling the building with another office tenant, and moreover, the Wal-Mart proposal has drawn a lot of community support.

Meanwhile, the prospects for new apartments at Pooks Hill also improved. Were the Board's new amendment schedule to pass, a review of Quadrangle's plan to locate multi-family next to the Pooks Hill Marriott would move on a faster schedule.