

# Transformation starts at Mondawmin Mall

Former Target store gets torn down as revitalizing of West Baltimore begins



An exterior wall of the former Target at Mondawmin Mall is knocked down Thursday. Tim Regan, president and CEO of Whiting-Turner, bought the building and surrounding property in March. Kim Hairston/Baltimore Sun  
BY LORRAINE MIRABELLA

Demolition equipment tore down a chunk of the former Target at Mondawmin Mall on Thursday as community members and elected officials cheered, marking the start of a project expected to help revitalize West Baltimore.

The CEO of construction giant Whiting-Turner personally acquired the shuttered big-box store for \$1 million in March, when he announced plans to invest millions more and work with neighborhood leaders to transform it into a community hub.

Since buying the property in March, Tim Regan, also the Towson-based general contractor's president, has had a couple of "what have I done" moments, Regan said as work got underway Thursday.

"But I'm happy to report this morning I've never been more bullish and optimistic about this project and what it will do for the Mondawmin community than I am this morning," he told a crowd huddled under two tents in the cold rain during an event to celebrate the start of demolition.

Regan announced that the \$25 million development on more than 8 acres will be called "The Village at Mondawmin," and said the first occupant, a health center serving older patients, could move in toward the end of next year. Edenbridge Health said in July that it selected the Target site as the location for the federal Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly, or PACE, which offers care to people who qualify for nursing home placement but live in their own homes.

Others joining "The Village" project include TouchPoint Empowerment Center, which was developed and funded in 2016 by Whiting-Turner and BGE as a home for nonprofit organizations and a small office for Whiting-Turner, both likely coming in 2024. The hub also is expected to house services for health care, child care and job development, along with local food and retail entrepreneurs. Providers and businesses are in talks with Regan about committing to space.

Since March, Regan said he has had numerous community planning meetings with Greater Mondawmin Coordinating Council and other groups to guide the planning for the site.

He said he hopes to demonstrate that investing in historically underdeveloped communities such as Mondawmin is a "winning business proposition," and that "many others who have capital to deploy will sit up and take notice.

"Our goal is to demonstrate by action, not by words, that community is good for business and business is good for community," he said.

One of those working with Regan has been Jackie Caldwell, president of Whittier-Monroe Community Neighborhood Association, one of the nine affiliated groups of Greater Mondawmin.

"It's a blessing that he's putting his money where his mouth is," Caldwell said of Regan. "He gets it. He understands the need. He wants to be a part of the revitalization of the community."

Mayor Brandon Scott called the transformation of the long-vacant landmark critical for the city. Scott noted that the West Baltimore mall, located at a key

public transit hub, has for decades been patronized by workers, residents and students attending area high schools and colleges.

The “highly anticipated” transformation of the former Target comes amid more widespread community revitalization, he said, including JPMorgan Chase opening its first community center-format branch in the city at the mall earlier this month.

“Now, thanks to Tim and the vision that everyone has for this particular space, we are going to see a space that’s going to expand Mondawmin’s impact on Baltimore City,” the mayor said during Thursday’s event. “What is going on here in this neighborhood is a prime example of the renaissance that is underway in Baltimore. ... We are transforming this area.”

City and community leaders had viewed the national retailer’s 2018 departure as a heavy loss, coming three years after the unrest that started near the mall in the wake of the death of Freddie Gray from injuries suffered in police custody. When Target opened its first Baltimore store as part of a larger revitalization of the mall in 2008, it was seen as a vote of confidence in often overlooked neighborhoods.

Target filled a need in the community, and when it closed, residents lost access to a major source of goods and services, said City Council President Nick Mosby.

“This is a historic day, not just for Mondawmin, not just for West Baltimore, but for the city of Baltimore,” Mosby said during Thursday’s event. “This is an example that will provide the road map of how you take a loss and make it into a win.”

Adeline Hutchinson, president of the Greater Mondawmin Coordinating Council, called the project an exceptional asset for the community that “maximizes the potential of this neighborhood and its residents.”

City Councilman James Torrence also applauded Regan, especially for turning to community leaders for ideas.

“This is a hub where many communities meet,” Torrence said.