



Station Area Advisory Committees

# VISION PLAN

## Highlandtown/Greektown



# INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the first phase of the Station Area Advisory Committees (SAAC). The SAAC process is part of the Red Line's public involvement program.

## What role did the SAACs fulfill?

SAACs are advisory to the MTA. Each SAAC was extremely helpful and provided input about their community and how the proposed station location would "behave" in their community. The SAACs functioned as a focus group. The SAACs have three major responsibilities:

- Vision Planning
- Station Design and Goals
- Sharing Information

This document summarizes the SAAC's activities regarding Vision Planning and Station Location. The Vision Plans for each SAAC summarize the first half of the SAAC efforts. The second half of the effort will focus on Station Design and Goals. The meetings for this effort started in October of 2010 and concluded in early spring of 2011. The documentation of the Station Design and Goals efforts will be an addendum to the Vision Plans.



*Light Rail Rendering*

During the Vision Planning process, each SAAC decided on their station area's boundaries; examined the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their areas; and reviewed the connectivity elements for the proposed station locations. The SAACs not only examined what existed, but also thought about the potential for their areas. They also reviewed the station locations in relation to the Vision Plan for their station area. In some of the SAAC areas, it was confirmed that the station location was in keeping with the community goals and in other instances station locations were modified. Each Vision Plan explains the elements of the Visioning Process and the Station Location.

Once the SAACs completed their Vision Plan and confirmed their desired Station Location, Open Houses were held for the general public. These Open Houses were extensively advertised and over 400 citizens attended. There were four Open House sessions; each one focused on a different portion of the Red Line corridor. The areas were West – Baltimore County, Route 40 West, Downtown and the Eastside. At these Open Houses, the draft Vision Plans were discussed with the community and feedback was obtained. After this public feedback, the SAAC members revisited their Vision Plans to ensure, "Did we get it right?" The Vision Plans are the result of this effort.



# STATION AREA VISION PLAN

## Station Area Defined (analysis):

## What do we see? What do we know? What is our Vision Area?

### Analysis

The Station Area Advisory Committee (SAAC) began its work by looking at three maps: an aerial view, physical features, and neighborhoods. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3.)

#### a) Physical Boundaries

The boundary of the overall Vision Area is slightly larger than a ½ mile radius from the station location and encompasses the significant features that help define the Highlandtown and Greektown neighborhoods, such as Patterson Park, Bayview Medical Center, and the industrial areas that divide the two neighborhoods. *Figure 4: Stability/Change* shows the boundaries of the Vision Area.

The SAAC selected these boundaries for several reasons. It wanted to include the areas considered part of the Highlandtown and Greektown neighborhoods, those features that people felt had influence on the neighborhoods (for example, Patterson Park and Bayview Medical Center), and the large industrial parcels between the two neighborhoods.



Southeast Anchor Library

#### b) Existing Conditions/Context

Although the immediate station area is industrial, the Highlandtown area west of the station is a traditional Baltimore rowhouse neighborhood. East of the railroad overpass is Greektown, a small residential area between the industrial areas to the west and I-895 (the access road to the Baltimore Harbor Tunnel). A number of ethnic restaurants in Greektown attract city and regional residents and tourists, as does Patterson Park, Bayview Medical Center, Creative Alliance, Southeast Anchor Library, and Baltimore Medical Systems.

In the last five years, both the Highlandtown and Greektown communities have seen significant improvements in their real estate markets, vacancy rates, and infrastructure.

The area between the two neighborhoods is an industrial corridor, including a vital truck route on Haven Street, which connects the Port of Baltimore to industrial areas and rail yards to the north.

All streets within this area have sidewalks of fair to good quality. The pedestrian volume is significant due to the residential communities, local businesses, recreational facilities, and educational institutions in the area. The station area is served by five bus lines: 10, 20, 22, 25, and 40.

The Eastern Avenue corridor in both neighborhoods creates a retail spine through the communities. The shops create traditional Baltimore main streets, with smaller shops creating an urban edge along the sidewalk. Both Highlandtown and Greektown have community development corporations (CDCs) and active merchants associations.

Sustainability is becoming an important issue to residents. Tree planting programs have been undertaken by residents, and new buildings have included sustainable principles.



Highlandtown shops

### **c) Stabilization Area vs. Redevelopment Area**

The Highlandtown/Greektown station area is generally stable. However, the SAAC identified the existing industrial areas and Eastern Avenue as areas where it would like to see Red Line bring positive change to the area. Please see *Figure 4: Stability/Change*, which shows the areas the SAAC identified as staying the same and those it would like to see changed.

## Station Area Vision: What changes? What stays the same? What do we value?

### **Values**

The SAAC members are very supportive of the Red Line. When asked about their hopes and fears about the Red Line coming to Highlandtown/Greektown, most of the comments were positive and their fears focused on the project not being constructed or not connecting with the rest of the transit network. The SAACs' hopes and fears are summarized below.

#### **Hopes:**

- Energize the community
- Stimulate new investment
- Make area more walkable
- Create opportunities for real Transit-Oriented Developments (TODs)
- Eliminate/minimize the need to use a car
- Turn under-used real estate into opportunities
- Create connectivity with the rest of the Baltimore rail network
- Make Highlandtown/Greektown a "destination"
- Provide travel opportunities throughout Baltimore
- Make Highlandtown/Greektown a place you do not have to, or want to, leave
- Include multi-modal bike-to-rail
- Transform the national perception of Baltimore
- Create opportunities for robust development



**Fears:**

- Does not get built
- Is not funded
- Becomes the last of Baltimore's rail lines
- Does not connect to rest of system and becomes another independent rail system
- Stands alone
- Does not get used
- Does not bring growth
- Does not create integrated commercial development/redevelopment
- Becomes an unwise use of money

## Goals : What are our Vision Area Goals? What do we want to see for the future?

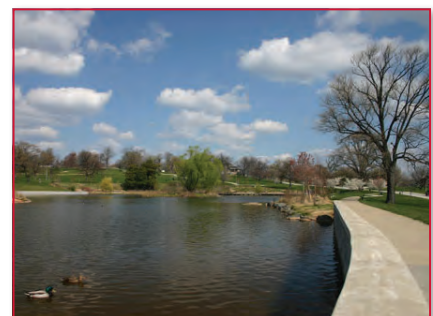
The Highlandtown/Greektown station is a walkup station; there is no automobile parking proposed for the station. Bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and access are the primary design considerations. Strengthening pedestrian and bicycle connections between Highlandtown and Greektown, which are separated by railroad tracks and industrial properties, is a key desired outcome. Improving the pedestrian and bicycle crossing at Haven Street and Eastern Avenue, which separates the station from Highlandtown, is also seen as very important to the success of the station.

The station area type is neighborhood TOD. The area is primarily residential with a main street core along Eastern Avenue, which includes a variety of neighborhood-service businesses and regional attractions. As described in the SAACs' guiding principles and vision statement, "The SAAC would like to see Highlandtown and Greektown become more vibrant, livable places attracting new residents and additional visitors."

In July 2009, the Southeast CDC and the Greektown CDC conducted a TOD charrette. Its purpose was to develop a plan and identify strategies to "maximize the potential community and economic benefits of the proposed Red Line transit station" and unlock Highlandtown's and Greektown's potential to be Baltimore City's "next great address." The SAACs reviewed the charrette report and, in general, agreed with the report's key findings and principles:

- Use the Red Line to create a vibrant TOD
- Revitalize Eastern Avenue "Main Street"
- Maximize opportunities for new residential and other infill development
- Enhance connection between Greektown and Hopkins-Bayview
- Connect to the waterfront
- Enhance multi-modal travel options

The report recommends that a "new neighborhood" be created between Highlandtown and Greektown (specifically in the currently industrial areas between the two neighborhoods) that knits the two communities together. In order to support existing and expanded retail along Eastern Avenue, the report suggests that 3,000 new dwelling units need to be constructed. The SAAC took the report's findings into account when it created its Guiding Principles and Vision Statement.



*Patterson Park*

## Guiding Principles

The Highlandtown/Greektown SAAC created the following Guiding Principles to help guide the Red Line process and future development of the area.

### We want our station to:

- Have a Safe and Welcoming Atmosphere!
  - Include a visually attractive entrance
  - Be safe and easy to get to
- Connect our Neighborhoods!
  - Have easy access for cyclists, pedestrians, and other transit connections (for example, buses)
  - Enhance walkability between Highlandtown and Greektown
- Be Environmentally Friendly!
  - Help reduce pollution and energy use
  - Include GREEN features in and around the station (trees, plants, etc.)
- Share the Culture and Diversity of our Neighborhoods!
  - Think about language, art, and culture while developing the station



*Greektown community sign*

### We believe a well-designed station will:

- Encourage Business
  - Bring new businesses to the area
  - Develop vacant properties
- Increase Use of Existing Businesses
  - Increase use of community resources
  - Provide connections to Patterson Park, Bayview Medical Center, Creative Alliance, Southeast Anchor Library, Baltimore Medical Systems, etc.
- Bring More People
  - Attract visitors
  - Encourage new residents
- Create Better Neighborhood Connections
  - Improve connections with Patterson Park, Bayview, and waterfront neighborhoods

## Vision Statement

The SAAC created the following Vision Statement to describe the positive change they see the Red Line bringing to their neighborhoods.

***“We KNOW Highlandtown and Greektown are strong and growing neighborhoods!”***

We see our neighborhoods as being a VIBRANT PLACE with stores, restaurants, and other activities that serve our residents, bring new residents, and encourage people to visit! We want to be a model for a sustainable community.

We believe that the Red Line station can help Highlandtown and Greektown achieve this vision.



# STATION CONCEPT

## Station Location

### Platform Location/Behavior

The Red Line will travel through Highlandtown/Greektown within a disused freight railroad right-of-way that runs parallel to, and east of, Haven Street. The Highlandtown/Greektown SAAC looked at three platform locations for the station: directly north of Eastern Avenue, over Eastern Avenue, and directly south of Eastern Avenue. (Figures 5 and 6 show the Over Eastern Avenue and South of Eastern Avenue configurations.) The over Eastern Avenue option was the SAAC's preferred station location, with south of Eastern Avenue as its second choice. However, the over Eastern Avenue option is dependent upon replacing the existing railroad bridge. If the bridge is not replaced the station cannot be on it, and structural analysis has indicated that the bridge does not need to be replaced. However, it was indicated that a sidewalk along the bridge – whether it was replaced or not – could be included in the final station access design. A goal of the SAAC is to reopen (at least to pedestrians) Old Eastern Avenue and make it a gateway to the station area.



Greektown storefront

The SAAC preferred the over Eastern Avenue location because it felt that having the station on the bridge would provide more comfort and safety to passengers, as the bridge location would offer increased visibility from drivers traveling on Eastern Avenue. It also felt that putting the station over Eastern Avenue would allow the areas north and south of Eastern Avenue to have equal access to the station. While it was suggested that the over Eastern Avenue location could create a signature structure for the Red Line, the SAAC felt that the gateway should be at Old Eastern rather than over Eastern Avenue.



Creative Alliance

Locating the station south of Eastern Avenue was the SAAC's second choice. Because the station would be at Old Eastern (the original alignment of Eastern Avenue), the SAAC felt that this would be a very visible location from Highlandtown as it keeps the station within the sightlines of Eastern Avenue. Also, there is more density in Greektown on the south side of Eastern Avenue so it would be easier to get Greektown passengers to a south side station than to a north side station. Finally, a south side station, which would be in the original Eastern Avenue alignment, would provide an opportunity to create a signature landmark at the station. However, the SAAC pointed out that the platform must be properly located. That is, it should not block or hinder passage along Old Eastern Avenue nor should it be pushed too far south in such a way that the station feels "hemmed in" by industrial buildings.

Locating the station north of Eastern Avenue was proposed in the Highlandtown/Greektown TOD charrette. That process placed the station on the north side because it was felt that the north side had the greatest development potential (in that it is a larger area) and the station would generate development interest and opportunity. However, most SAAC members felt that the north side location lacked visibility and many raised concerns about the short-term (5-to-10 years) success of the station if it were located in an industrial area that had not yet been developed. In addition, the SAAC members wondered how a station on the north side would be accessed within the current street layout. That is, it would be very difficult to get to the station today because of current ownership patterns. SAAC members felt that longer term

potential development of the north side did not supersede their desire to create a successful station location today. In addition, the SAAC members were assured that an attractive and safe connection between the north side and station would be undertaken should the north side be developed, or see development interest.

## Platform Type

The SAAC recommends that a center platform be constructed at the Highlandtown/Greektown station. They felt that the center platform style would provide passengers with more safety and security, reduce rider confusion, and produce platform amenity efficiencies (e.g., seating, trashcans, ticket machines, etc). Because the alignment is within a disused railroad right-of-way, the SAAC did not need to consider issues associated with whether the platform would be located next to a sidewalk or next to traffic.

## Alignment Issues



*St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church*

The primary alignment issue with the Highlandtown/Greektown station is that it is a walkup station surrounded by barriers. (Please see *Figure 7: Connect the Dots.*)

Ensuring that Red Line passengers can get to and from the station safely and conveniently from both Highlandtown and Greektown will be critical to the station's success. Because the alignment travels through a disused railroad right-of-way, it is currently not very visible and is difficult to get to. Access to the station from Highlandtown is fairly straightforward; cross Haven Street at Eastern Avenue. Access from Greektown is more problematic. Old Eastern Avenue, which would be the natural path to the station from Greektown, no longer provides through

access. An addition to the Crown Cork and Seal building constructed in the 1930s in the street right-of-way and an active freight rail line crossing the road prevent people from getting through today.

Along the Eastern Avenue underpass there are elevated sidewalks on the north and south sides. The sidewalk on the south side, which would presumably be the side of choice as the station is proposed to be on the south side and the majority of Greektown's residences are on the south side, is narrow and dirty. It is not wide enough for two wheelchairs to pass each other and there are no pull outs. If this is to be the primary access route to the station from Greektown, the SAAC assumes that improvements would need to be made to the sidewalk.

An unanticipated alignment issue is that the disused right-of-way provides some of the neighborhoods' only green space. Admittedly, it is scrubby, overgrown, low-quality green space, but green space nonetheless and provides welcome color and visual interest to the area. The SAAC expressed a desire to somehow keep the best of the green "feel" in the area while removing the less desirable aspects.





## Station Performance & Station Image – Neighborhood Identity

This document summarizes the Vision Plan and Station Location efforts of the SAAC. This concludes the first phase of the SAAC efforts.

The second phase of the efforts begins in October 2011 and is anticipated to run through early Spring of 2012. During this second phase, the SAACs will focus on Station Performance and Station Image. The discussions will include elements such as:

- **Urban Design and Site Planning:** This will cover the functional relationship of the station to the neighborhood. The SAAC will review station orientation, accessibility, landscape/hardscape opportunities, and visual and physical connectivity (pedestrian, bicycle and auto – intermodal).
- **Station Programming:** This will include discussions on system-wide standard elements and elements that may become “customized” per neighborhood station.
- **Station Image-Neighborhood Identity:** The SAAC will discuss special neighborhood features, art in transit and recommend station names.



*Highlandtown farmers market*

**The outcome of the second phase of SAAC efforts will be documented as an addendum to the Vision Plan.**



*Bayview Campus from Greektown*



Fig. 1



AERIAL VIEW  
Highlandtown /  
Greentown Station

September 2010



**LEGEND**

- 1/2 Mile Radius (Approx. 10 Minute Walk)
- Red Line Surface Alignment
- Red Line Aerial Alignment
- Approx. Station Location

Scale 1"=200'



Fig. 2



**LEGEND**

- 1/2 Mile Radius (Approx. 10 Minute Walk)
- Red Line Surface Alignment
- Red Line Aerial Alignment
- Approx. Station Location
- Tree Canopy
- Streams/Water Bodies
- 100-Year Floodplain
- Baltimore City Critical Area
- 10' Contour

Scale 1"=200'



Fig. 3

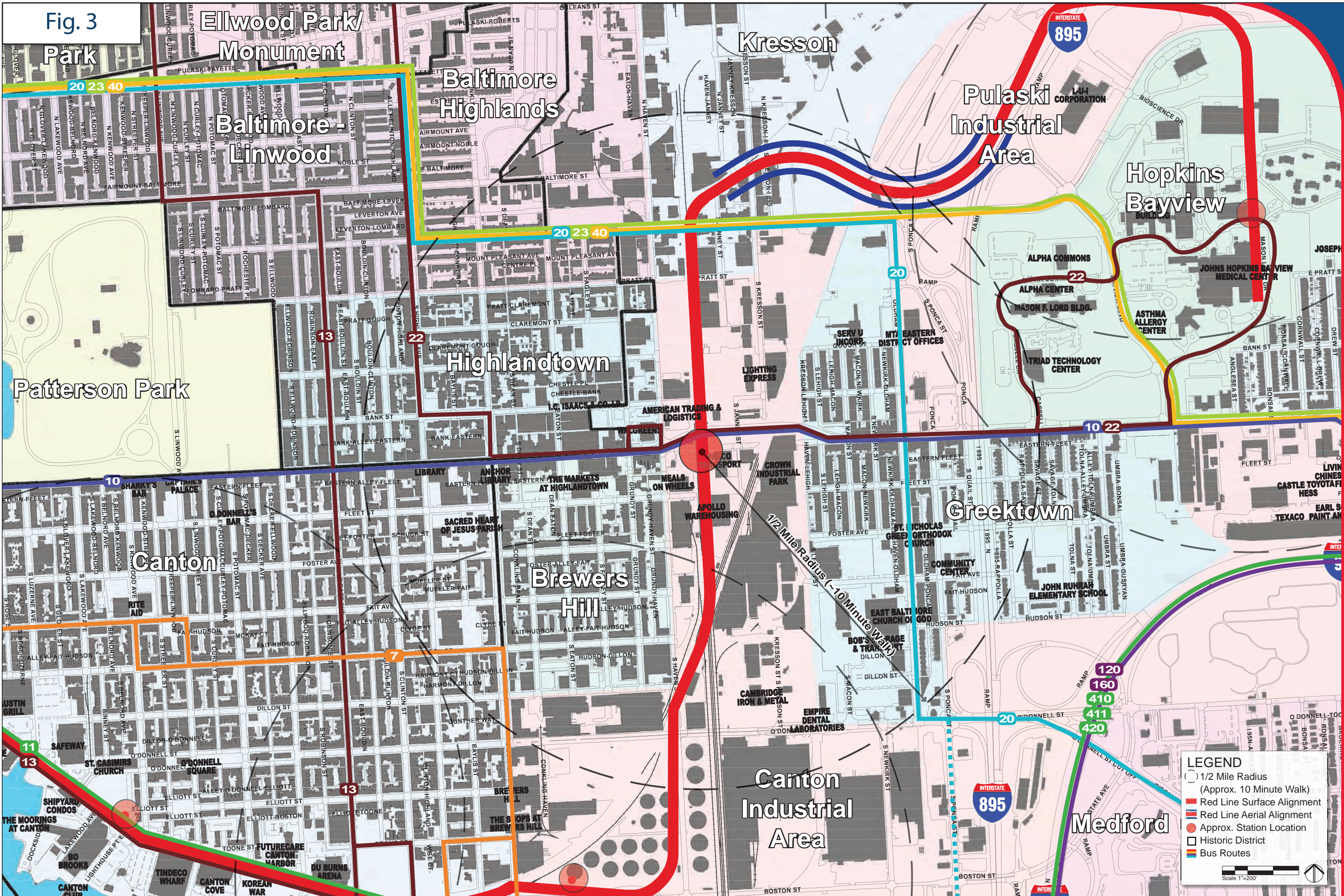
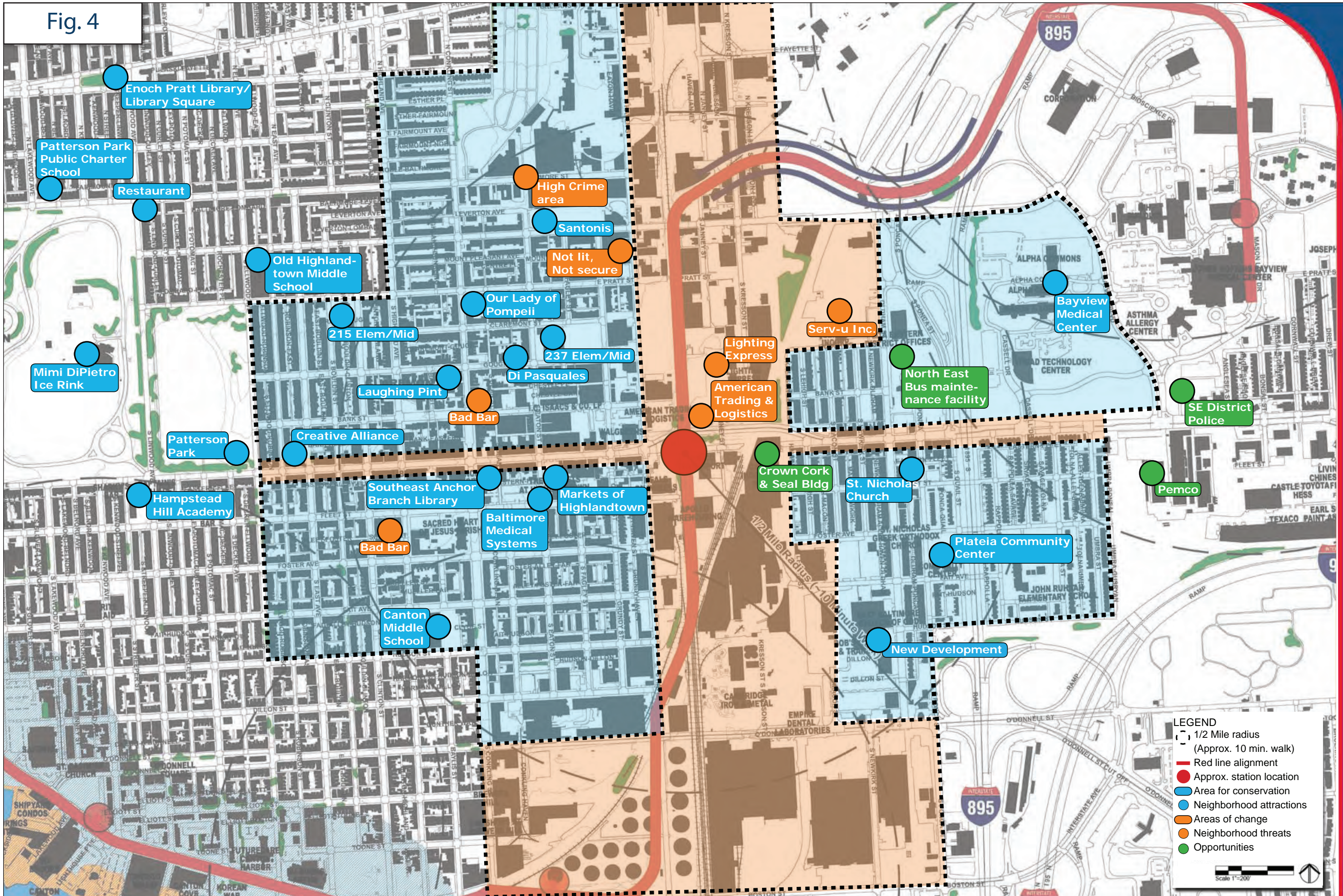




Fig. 4



- LEGEND**
- 1/2 Mile radius (Approx. 10 min. walk)
  - Red line alignment
  - Approx. station location
  - Area for conservation
  - Neighborhood attractions
  - Areas of change
  - Neighborhood threats
  - Opportunities
- Scale 1"=200'



Fig. 5



ADVANCED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN  
HIGHLANDTOWN-GREEKTOWN - ON BRIDGE

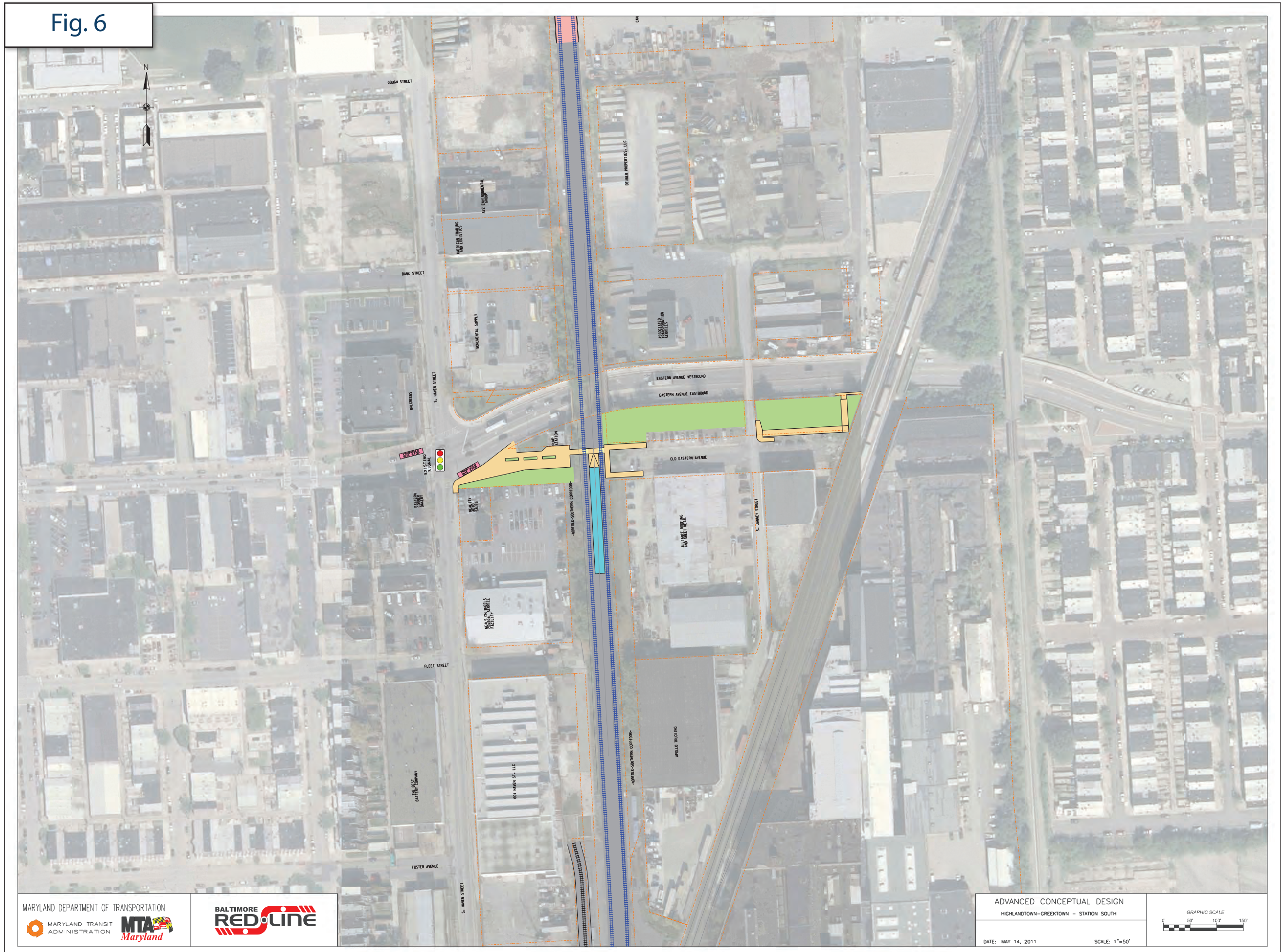
DATE: MAY 14, 2011

SCALE: 1"=50'





Fig. 6



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
MARYLAND TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION  
**MTA**  
Maryland

BALTIMORE  
**RED LINE**

ADVANCED CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

HIGHLANDTOWN-GREENTOWN - STATION SOUTH

DATE: MAY 14, 2011

SCALE: 1"=50'

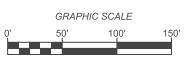
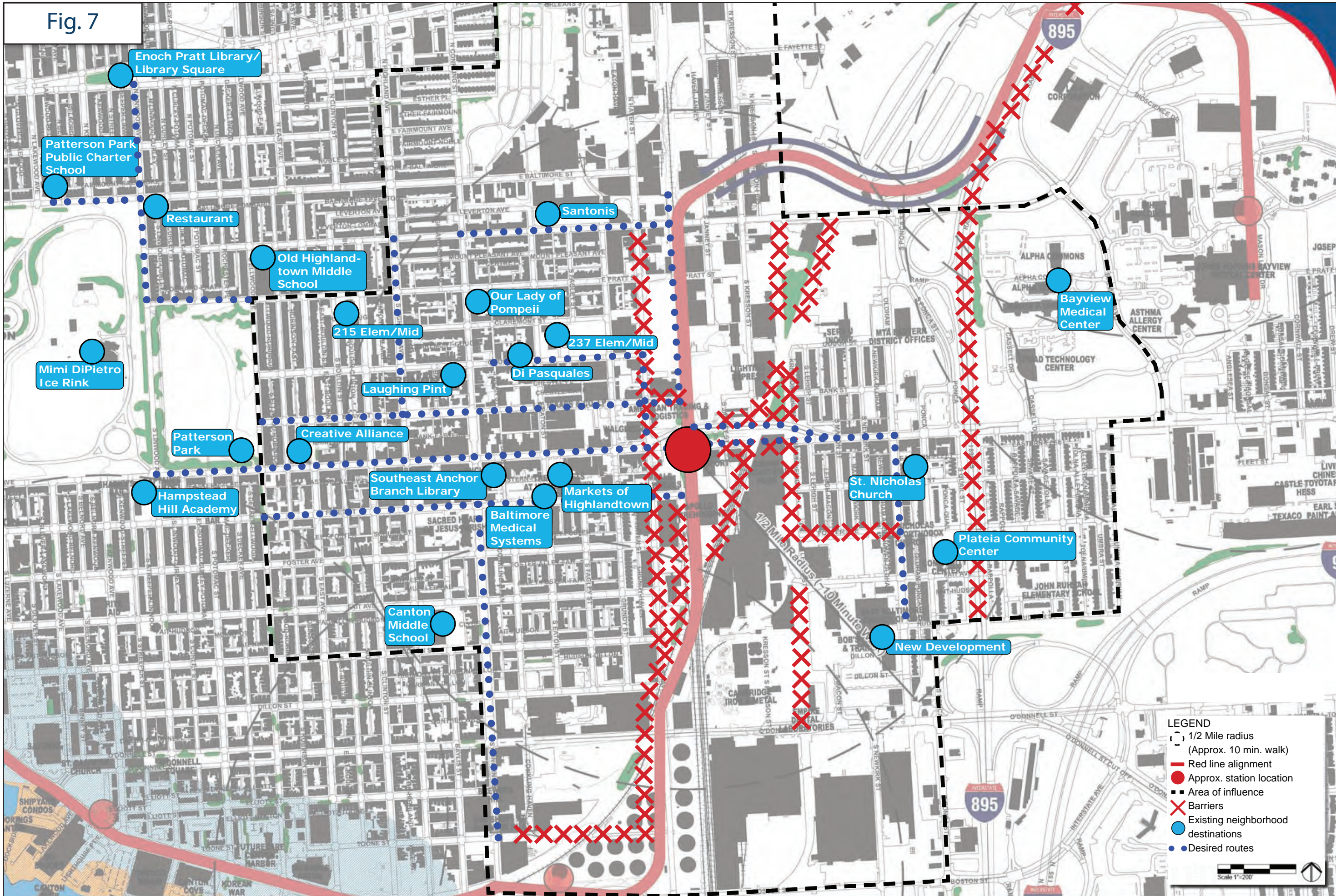




Fig. 7



Enoch Pratt Library/  
Library Square

Patterson Park  
Public Charter  
School

Restaurant

Old Highland-  
town Middle  
School

Santonis

Our Lady of  
Pompeii

215 Elem/Mid

237 Elem/Mid

Di Pasquales

Laughing Pint

Mimi DiPietro  
Ice Rink

Patterson  
Park

Creative Alliance

Southeast Anchor  
Branch Library

Markets of  
Highlandtown

Hampstead  
Hill Academy

Baltimore  
Medical  
Systems

St. Nicholas  
Church

Plateia Community  
Center

Canton  
Middle  
School

New Development

Bayview  
Medical  
Center