

**MEMORANDUM**

September 22, 2011

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Marlene Michaelson, <sup>MM</sup> Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan

This is the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee's first worksession on the Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan. This worksession will present an overview of the Sector Plan and cover transportation issues, cross-cutting land use issues, and property specific land use issues for 5 of the six districts. (Transportation issues are addressed in a separate memorandum from Glenn Orlin.) Issues related to the transitions to residential neighborhoods, the Kensington View/Wheaton Hills District, environmental issues, Design Guidelines, and public facility/public open space issues will be discussed at a future worksession.

**Committee Members should bring a copy of the Sector Plan to the meeting for reference.**

Attached on © 1 to 9 are the Executive's comments on the Sector Plan. The Appendix of the Sector Plan, which was not published in hard copy, is available for viewing at <http://www.montgomeryplanning.org/community/wheaton/appendix.shtm>. The Appendix includes additional information on Demographics; Housing; Transportation Analysis; Park, Trail and Recreational Facilities; Community Facilities; Historic Preservation; Environmental Conditions; and Economic Analyses.

Staff notes that some of the comments submitted to the Council in testimony on the Sector Plan were on the amendments to the Commercial/Residential (CR) and Commercial/Residential Neighborhood (CRN) zones, rather than the Sector Plan. The CR and CRN zones have been reviewed by the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee and are about to be considered by the Council. Issues related to the zones are addressed in Staff reports on the CR and CRN zones and are not addressed here.

## Overview of Sector Plan Recommendations

Planning Department staff will provide a brief overview of the Sector Plan recommendations, to refresh the Committee's memory. Some highlights from the Sector Plan are described below.

The Plan makes recommendations based on four overarching principles described on pages 9-10 of the Plan:

- Wheaton's **diversity** is unique among County business centers, with housing, businesses, and people that reflect diverse incomes and cultures.
- Improving **connectivity** within and beyond the Plan area will allow Wheaton to maximize its potential as a downtown.
- **Design** is critical to create active and safe public spaces and to enhance Wheaton's sense of place.
- The natural and built **environments** can be improved with development via reduced energy consumption, better stormwater management, greater tree canopy, and walkable streets.

The Plan includes five goals for zoning on page 31:

- Encourage Class A office development at the Metro Station.
- Allow for retail in the center of the CBD and along the three main roads.
- Increase housing mixed with some retail surrounding the center of the CBD.
- Place highest densities and building heights in the center of the CBD.
- Protect existing residential neighborhoods.

To achieve these goals, the Plan recommends rezoning a large portion of the Planning area to the CR or CRN zones, with great flexibility to develop as commercial or residential. It also recommends removing the Retail Preservation Overlay Zone, which was adopted after the 1990 Sector Plan and prohibited optional method, large-scale redevelopment that might have a negative impact on smaller businesses. The strategy in the new Sector Plan is to allow significant new large scale development, while still attempting to preserve local businesses where possible.

## MAJOR AND CROSS-CUTTING LAND USE ISSUES

This section covers major and cross-cutting land use issues.

### Jobs Versus Housing

The new Sector Plan, if built out as estimated, would result in a 2 to 1 jobs to housing ratio which would be less than the existing development (5.1 to 1) or the amount estimated in the 1990 Plan (4.2 to 1). As noted in the testimony from the Sierra Club, the 2001 Transportation Policy Report established a goal of decreasing the jobs to housing ratio in the western part of the County by increasing housing and increasing the jobs to housing ratio in the eastern part of the County by increasing jobs. The intended impact was to reduce the east-west transportation problems by allowing more residents to work close to home. While there does not appear to be an office market at this time, the Sierra Club recommends that the County have a strategy to provide incentives for additional office development, both through zoning and aggressive economic development efforts.

If the Council's primary objective is to ensure increased office space in Wheaton, it could reduce the amount of residential development allowed by the CR zone and maximize the amount of commercial development on every property. If however, the primary objective is to provide incentives to spur the redevelopment of Wheaton, then providing flexibility in the combination of commercial and residential densities allows property owners to respond to market trends. Regardless of the zoning strategy, the existing and approved development limits the opportunity for significant increases in office development.

The zoning for most properties recommended for CR allows the owner to develop each property primarily residential or commercial (except the Kensington View/Wheaton Hills District, where properties adjacent to established residential communities are recommended for primarily residential zoning). The table on page 10 of the Plan estimates likely amounts of commercial and residential development, based on market trends. If, however, owners of undeveloped property maximized the amount of commercial space instead of residential allowed under the Plan, this could result in approximately 25,000 jobs (12,800 more than estimated in the Sector Plan) and a jobs/housing ratio of 4.2 to 1.

Staff believes that the best way to both encourage office development and provide flexibility is to adopt the zoning recommended in the Sector Plan, while at the same time developing economic development strategies to encourage office development. The language in the Plan on page 11 should be revised to articulate a goal of encouraging office space whenever possible. In addition, Staff believes that long-term redevelopment of the Wheaton Mall could provide the opportunity for a significant increase in office space (discussed further below).

### **Use of Publicly Owned Property**

Wheaton has 10 publicly owned properties with development potential held by Montgomery County, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) (see pages 23-25 of the Sector Plan). These properties provide unique opportunities to achieve County goals to help stimulate redevelopment in Wheaton while providing appropriate public open spaces and redevelop with small business and affordable housing. The County has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for a development partner for the design, construction, and financing of transit-oriented development on these properties and has selected a partner for the redevelopment of Wheaton Triangle. (Diagrams of the proposal for this site is attached at © 10 to 13 and County Government staff will be prepared to make a brief presentation on the proposed redevelopment, should the Committee wish.)

### **Accessory Apartments**

Page 55 of the Sector Plan includes the following language:

- Houses located within the existing residential neighborhoods surrounding Wheaton's downtown should be considered for accessory apartments.

The Council received testimony from individuals and groups opposing the recommendation for accessory apartments. If the Committee believes that there should be changes to County policies related to accessory apartments, this issue should be addressed in the context of the Zoning Ordinance, not an

individual Sector Plan. It would be inappropriate to imply, as this language does, that there would be different requirements for accessory apartments in Wheaton as compared to the rest of the County.

## **PROPERTY SPECIFIC ISSUES**

The Plan identifies 6 different districts as a means of grouping the Sector Plan recommendations. The Districts are shown in a map on page 39 of the Plan and include the following areas:

- The Core
- Price
- Blueridge
- Westfield
- Kensington View/Wheaton Hills
- Existing Neighborhoods

Each of the Districts, with the exception of Kensington View/Wheaton Hills (which will be discussed at the next worksession), is addressed below.

### **The Core**

The Core District is the approximately 40-acre triangle bounded by Georgia Avenue, Veirs Mills Road, and University Boulevard. It is discussed on pages 40 to 41 of the Plan. The Sector Plan recommends that the core contain new office space and a defined civic presence and have the highest densities and heights (up to 6.0 floor area ratio (FAR) and 250 feet in height). The Sector Plan recommends that the entire Core District be rezoned to the CR zone (see the zoning map on page 41). Publicly owned property is proposed to be the site of a public-private partnership to create a major mixed-use project.

The Council received testimony in favor of the recommendation for the Core from B.F. Saul.

**Staff recommends** that the Committee support the Sector Plan recommendations for the Core.

### **Price District**

The Price District is the area east of Georgia Avenue and south of University Boulevard. It is discussed on pages 42 to 45 of the Plan. The Plan recommends maximum densities of CR 6.0 with a height of 200 feet at the southeast intersection of Georgia Avenue and University Boulevard. The Sector Plan recommends that the entire Price District be rezoned to the CR zone (see the zoning map on page 43). While the zoning provides great flexibility to develop as commercial or residential, existing and approved development makes it likely that this District may be predominantly residential, with some office space along Georgia Avenue.

The Council received testimony from Standard Properties in support of the Sector Plan recommendations.

The Council also received testimony from **Lowe Enterprises**, owner of a portion of Block 2 recommended for CR 5.0, C 4.5, R 4.5, H 150. The current zoning on the property is CBD 3, which

would allow an FAR of 8. The property owner has requested changing the zoning to CR 6.0, C 5.5, R 5.5, H 200, consistent with the zoning recommended for the northern portion of Block 2. Planning Department staff indicate that they recommended the zoning in the Plan based on an assumption that there was no further development potential, but they do not have a problem with the property owner’s request. They note that “the requested FAR and additional height would be compatible with the Draft Plan’s recommendations for the surrounding properties, and the proposed renovation of this property with additional square footage would add to the revitalization of Wheaton, and will be consistent with the goals of the Draft Plan.”

**Staff supports** changing the zoning as recommended by the property owner for Block 2 and supports the rest of the Sector Plan zoning recommendations for the Price District.

**Blueridge District**

The Blueridge District is the northeast portion of the Planning Area, north of University Boulevard and East of Georgia Avenue. It is discussed on pages 45 to 47 of the Plan. The Plan indicates that it has been evolving into a residential neighborhood with small, neighborhood-serving retail on the ground floor and some office uses. A portion of this area was the subject of a Limited Wheaton Central Business District and Vicinity Amendment to the Sector Plan approved by the Council in 2008.

**Weinberg Property**

The Council received testimony from Harold Weinberg, the owner of a property at 2401 Blueridge Ave (Parcel 8 – see discussion on page 45 and map on page 47). The Sector Plan recommends rezoning this property from C-O to CR 4.0, C 3.5, R 3.5, H 100. Mr. Weinberg requests that the Council change the FAR for commercial and residential to 4.0, noting that a 0.13 acre property could not accommodate a mix of commercial and residential.

This property was considered during the Council’s review of the 2008 Limited Amendment to the Sector Plan. Although the adjacent properties were being rezoned to the CBD 1 zone (FAR of 3.0), the Council retained C-O zoning on the property so as not to make the existing building non-conforming. The existing structure, which is approximately 3.5 FAR, was grandfathered at the time the C-O zone was amended in 1978 to limit maximum density to 3.0 FAR. While the property “may be continued, structurally altered, repaired or reconstructed, so long as it is not increased, extended or enlarged beyond the dimensions which existed on the above date”, redevelopment would limit the FAR to 3.0 under the C-O zone and require site plan.

<b>Weinberg Property (2401 Blueridge Avenue)</b>	
Lot size	5595 sf
Year built	1963
Building coverage	85 percent
FAR	3.56
Building height	About 45 feet

If the Council were to grant Mr. Weinberg’s request, the property would have a different zoning than the rest of the parcels on the block. The ideal situation would be the assemblage of the properties, rather

than having a single use development on this small parcel, with mixed-use development on the rest of the site. To provide the incentive for assemblage, Staff believes the Sector Plan was correct to allow higher density for mixed-use than single use development. Should Mr. Weinberg prefer to develop independently, he can still achieve a 3.5 FAR with a single use.

Staff notes that only a very small number of CR zoned properties are allowed to achieve full build out as a single use (e.g., the Wheaton Triangle) and the Council has turned down every other similar request to allow a property owner to achieve full density with a single use (unless it was recommended in a master plan).

### **Aronson Property**

The Council also received testimony on behalf of the **Aronson Family** related to the treatment of the Wheaton Shopping Center, the treatment of Hickerson Drive, the Sector Plan's recommendations regarding the public use space, and the CR zone. The Wheaton Shopping Center is addressed here and the other issues are addressed in other staff memoranda or will be addressed at the next meeting.<sup>1</sup>

The Aronson property is recommended for CR 5.0, C 4.5, R 4.5, H 150 and the Plan indicates that it should become part of "vibrant retail corridor". The property owner supports both the zoning recommendation and the reference to retail. They are concerned about the land use map on page 29 that shows the northern three-fourths of the Aronson property as "Mixed-Use Residential Emphasis", which they are concerned could be interpreted to require more residential development than commercial. They note that the confronting block of land on the west side of Georgia Avenue is classified as "Mixed-Use Commercial Emphasis" and ask that the entire block bounded by Georgia Avenue, University, Elkin Street, and Blueridge Avenue be designated as "Mixed-use Commercial".

The zoning for this property allows for either predominantly residential or commercial development, and Staff believes that the zoning, not the land use map, will dictate the mix of uses but, nonetheless, **Staff does not object to the change recommended by the property owner.**

### **Westfield District**

The Westfield District contains the 76-acre Wheaton Mall, the eastern County's regional shopping center, located west of Veirs Mill Road and south of University Boulevard. It is discussed on page 48 to 49 of the Plan. The Sector Plan recommends retaining the existing C-2 zoning on the western two-thirds of the site where the mall is located and rezoning the eastern one-third to the CR 6 zone to allow for new office and mixed-use development. The Planning Department considered and rejected making the entire property CR because a traditional shopping mall would be nonconforming under the CR zone. The Sector Plan also recommends new connections between the mall and rest of the Core area.

Westfield submitted testimony in support of the Sector Plan recommendations. The Executive submitted testimony questioning whether the Plan provides adequate incentives for the Mall property to redevelop in the long run. His written comments recommended working out the technical issues and applying "high-density, mixed-use zoning to the entire Westfield Wheaton site with appropriate

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<sup>1</sup> The treatment of Hickerson Drive is addressed in Glenn Orlin's memorandum, CR zone issues are addressed in the memorandum from Jeff Zyontz and public use space issues will be addressed at the next Committee meeting.

transition controls on the edges to protect adjacent neighborhoods”, but at the public hearing the Executive was supportive of retaining the C-2 zoning and including language with a longer term vision of mixed-use zoning.

While Staff understands the impetus for retaining the C-2 zoning at this time, Staff concurs with the Executive that it would be useful to include potential options for long term redevelopment of the mall property. This site could provide a major opportunity to increase office space in Wheaton, particularly on the portions of the site closest to the Core area (while retaining residential and transitional uses in areas closer to existing residential communities). It could also provide the opportunity for improvements to the transportation network in this area. Staff recommends that the Plan be revised to identify potential long term options.

### **Existing Neighborhoods District**

The Existing Neighborhoods surround the other districts and are discussed on page 55 of the Plan. No changes in zoning are proposed and the Plan recommends confirming the existing R-60, R-20, RT, and PD zones. Although some of these zones may be eliminated as part of the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite, the replacement zones have not yet been finalized and cannot be applied at this time.

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OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE  
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850  
MEMORANDUM

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Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

June 20, 2011

To: Valerie Ervin, Council President  
From: Isiah Leggett, County Executive *Isiah Leggett*  
Subject: Planning Board Draft Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan

I am pleased to provide the County Council with my comments and the fiscal impact analysis for the Wheaton Sector Plan. Also, attached to this memorandum are technical comments from the various County departments.

I commend the Planning Board and its staff on their vision, public outreach and close coordination with the County's Redevelopment Program. I support the overall vision of the plan, making Wheaton a high density, mixed-use urban center while protecting surrounding neighborhoods. This plan with its application of new zoning, improvements to the street network, and the removal of the over-lay zone, provides the framework and encouragement for needed redevelopment. While Wheaton is not currently an office market, appropriate zoning can set the stage and enable the County to partner with developers to encourage a better mix of residential, office and retail for Wheaton.

However, despite prior efforts, we have not had the success we wanted for Wheaton. Zoning and planning are merely rungs in the ladder in Wheaton's climb to success. Wheaton is an Enterprise Zone and an Arts and Entertainment District, both of which, with the updated plan can serve as a springboard to redevelopment and investment. Yet, more is needed. I am committed to continuing the work I have begun with the Council to devote resources to helping Wheaton re-establish itself as a thriving urban mixed-use environment that will attract a variety of jobs and housing types.

Westfield Wheaton Mall is the largest employer, economic driver and physical presence in Wheaton. Its 80 acres account for some 40% of Wheaton's Urban District. The Mall supports 1.6 million sq. ft. of commercial space, making it the 4<sup>th</sup> largest mall in the Washington region. Retailing is the greatest employer in Wheaton, responsible for some 28% of the jobs in the Wheaton Sector Plan study area. Suburban malls, once the bellwether of commercial projects, are giving way around the country to town centers and more integrated mixed use development. Thus, the mall in Wheaton presents a challenge for long range planning given current demands, market realities and community needs. As contemporary planning moves away from auto-oriented suburban

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Valerie Ervin, Council President  
June 20, 2011  
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shopping malls, the County is faced with the challenge of integrating Wheaton Mall, the longstanding icon and hub of Wheaton economic activity, into a town center that is knit into the surrounding communities.

I support the major steps the Plan takes to facilitate a town center and strive for a better housing/office/retail balance. And, I recognize the mall is not likely to redevelop in the near term; however, given the long range view of our master plans, I question whether the plan provides adequate incentives for the Wheaton Mall parcel to redevelop in the long-term. The future of the mall plays a significant role in the future of Wheaton. We need a strategy of vibrant tenanting in the present and a long range vision for redevelopment of the mall. Such redevelopment would provide opportunities for greatly enhanced connectivity with the rest of Wheaton. I propose that rather than approving the Plan with its current C-2 zoning, that technical issues be resolved now and high density, mixed-use zoning be applied to the entire Westfield Wheaton site with appropriate transition controls on the edges to protect adjacent neighborhoods.

Currently the pedestrian bridge over Veirs Mill Road between the WMATA garage and the WMATA bus bay area is the principal and safest pedestrian connection between Metro and Westfield Mall. This connection goes among multiple rows of parked vehicles and along a switch back, narrow ramp. The connection is both challenging and uninviting. If feasible, a park (perhaps on top of parking) above Veirs Mill Road connecting the future redevelopment of the Veirs Mill/Georgia/Ennalls block with the WMATA garage would greatly enhance connectivity and provide needed open space. I recommend that the Plan acknowledge the desirability of such connectivity.

I concur with the Plan recommendation to create public use spaces in the vicinity of parking lots 13, 14, and 17; these being the urban core. In making such conversions, any loss of Parking Lot District property must be compensated at fair market value. Related to these suggestions and provided it can be done in a manner that provides a better and lasting tribute to our veterans, I support the possible relocation of Veterans Park as part of redevelopment. The current location has grade and design challenges that help to account for its under utilization. Rather than identify a specific site for Veterans Park as suggested in the Plan, I suggest that the Plan recommend that a new, more vibrant park could be at the Town Square, in the vicinity of Parking Lot 17, or other location that will heighten its availability, use and vibrancy. The Parking Lot 17 location offers the benefit of proximity to the existing Veterans Park and adjacency to VFW and American Legion post locations. If the park is relocated, the existing site should be available for redevelopment with appropriate sensitivity to surrounding neighbors. Regardless of the exact location for a possible Veterans Park relocation, any new site must provide lasting and appropriate homage to veterans in a superior setting than the existing site.

public use spaces

Vote now speak

I also concur with the Planning Board in its recommendation for the Ennalls Avenue – Price Avenue connection. Smart Growth includes multi-modal connectivity. Wheaton, as with most of Montgomery County, was planned with few

Valerie Ervin, Council President

June 20, 2011

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inter-connected streets. To permit better access, smart growth calls for closer spacing of streets that provide for pedestrians, bicycles and cars. A closer net grid of roadways improves access, which is critical to encouraging pedestrian activity. University Boulevard provides not only the trunk access for east-west movement, but is the only east-west connection in the urban core. As the Plan recommends, Ennalls Avenue would start at the Westfield Mall Ring Road, pass north of Park Lot 13, connect with Price Avenue, and extend to Amherst Avenue. This new east-west connection and extension would provide critical access to a redevelopment, to Westfield Mall and to small businesses along Ennalls Avenue, Grandview Avenue, Triangle Lane, and Price Avenue. I agree with the Planning Board's determination that such connectivity would be acceptable either as a public or private street.

The proposed Plan shows a robust system of bikeways and bicycle lanes. Improving bicycle accessibility is critical to a multi-modal urban area and to shifting the focus from autos. I heartily support the Plan's recommendation for a bike station at the Wheaton Metro Station.

The application of the CR Zone in the White Flint area has so far not produced any affordable housing incentive density (either MPDU or Workforce Housing) under the optional method of development, due to the availability of a menu of competing public benefits that have proven to be more attractive to developers in that area. As the council considers changes to the CR zones, I urge the Council to look closely at the interplay between the CR zones and our need to incentivize affordable and workforce housing. Including a Plan section on housing will better identify the housing recommendations in the Plan.

To enhance street connectivity, the Plan should permit a local street connection from Blueridge Avenue through Parcels C and 920 to the existing Leesborough development. Currently, Map 18 on page 59 of the Draft Plan indicates this connectivity from Blueridge Avenue to the Leesborough development as a pedestrian connection. The Leesborough Site Plan approval provides for roadway connectivity to the south. Making such a roadway connection would provide additional access and be in the interest of the County as it follows Smart Growth principals and is in accord with earlier Planning Board decisions.

In summary, the pending Sector Plan for the Wheaton CBD is a very positive stride towards improving the economic health and future for the Wheaton area. Comments from Executive Branch departments are attached as is the fiscal impact analysis. Executive staff will be available to assist the Council as needed as the County Council deliberates on this important Sector Plan.

IL:dsj

Attachment

cc: Françoise Carrier, Planning Board Chair

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## Department of General Services

### General Comments

- DGS commends the Planning Board for the Smart Growth vision of high density, quality mixed-use development tapering down from the Metro Station to adjoining residential neighborhoods. In developing this vision, the Planning Board and staff diligently reached out to both the Executive Branch and the Wheaton community.
- DGS supports the application of the C-R zone with its highest densities and heights to areas closest to the Metro Station.
- *Overlay zone* DGS supports the removal of the Retail Preservation Overlay Zone. This zone has affectively impeded redevelopment. Once supported by the community as a means of controlling the adverse consequences of redevelopment, this Overlay Zone has lost its support as the community has shifted its outlook to generally and enthusiastically supporting redevelopment.
- DGS anticipates seeking a development partner that will permit the County to create a superior Veterans Park at the site of the current Parking Lot 17. To fund this park shift, the existing Veterans Park needs to be available for redevelopment. Such development would need to be sensitive to the adjacent neighborhood.
- DGS supports the Plan inclusion of an Ennalls-Price connection and extensions. By starting this proposed street at the Mall Ring Road, connecting Ennalls Avenue to Price Avenue, and possibly extending on to Amherst Avenue, the Plan creates additional Mall access and a local parallel road to University Boulevard. Without this through road, the capacity for Reedie Drive to handle future Mall and redevelopment access needs is problematic.

### Specific Comments

- Page 13, under The Wheaton Community, 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph, 4<sup>th</sup> line – change 52 percent to 51 percent.
- Page 21, under “Encouraging Street Level Activities, 3<sup>rd</sup> line - change Office of Economic Development to Department of Economic Development.
- Page 22, under “Existing programs should consider”, 3<sup>rd</sup> bullet - change Kensington-Wheaton Chamber of Commerce to Wheaton Kensington Chamber of Commerce.
- Page 25, 1<sup>st</sup> bullet - change “major civic space” to “signature civic space”. Analysis of town squares through the Wheaton’s New Downtown development project has determined that a civic space of approximately 28,000 sq ft has been determined as desirable and that size is in line with the Rockville Town Square.
- Page 59, Map 18, Existing and Proposed Street and Pedestrian Network, indicates a pedestrian connection through what are Parcels C and 920 - DGS recommends that this connection be considered as a local road, thus provide for more of a grid network with better local access.

## Department of Housing and Community Affairs

### General Comments

- DHCA supports the Sector Plan's proposals for significant numbers of additional housing units, including MPDUs and Workforce Housing Units, in Wheaton. DHCA notes, however, that application of the CR Zone in the White Flint area has so far not produced any affordable housing incentive density (either MPDU or Workforce Housing) under the optional method of development, due to the availability of a menu of competing public benefits that have proven to be more attractive to developers in that area. Given the great need for affordable housing, DHCA recommends that the Sector Plan include a recommendation that projects in CR Zones provide significantly more MPDUs than the minimum required 12.5 percent and utilize any available density bonus. Such a recommendation would be consistent with the recently adopted Housing Element of the General Plan (Policy 4.11, which reads: "Ensure that all master plan and sector plan amendments address the need for housing for low, moderate, and middle income households and promote specific strategies to meet that need including height and density incentives and flexibility.")
- The recommendations of the Sector Plan appear to support the recommendations of the Montgomery County Affordable Housing Task Force, including increasing affordable housing; creating a more attractive planning and economic environment for the development of affordable housing; and, reducing parking requirements for housing developments in order to reduce homeowner costs, encourage use of mass transit and promote more environmentally friendly patterns of development. However, the recommendations concerning housing are currently not well identified in the Sector Plan. DHCA recommends that the Sector Plan include a Housing section, similar to the current sections on Mobility, Environment, and Community Facilities. The availability and location of housing for all populations is a top priority, and is a key factor in supporting sustainable development.

## Department of Public Libraries Recreation Department

### General Comments

The Wheaton Library is not physically located in the sector plan area covered by the April 2011 draft Wheaton Central Business District and Vicinity document, but there are places in the Plan which reference the Wheaton Library facility and for which Libraries and due to the future co-located Library/Recreation Center, the Department of Public Libraries and the Recreation Department have comments.

### Specific Comments

- Page 80, line 3 - change library introduction statement from “possibly in combination with the Wheaton Community Center” to say “currently planned as a joint library/community recreation center on the land occupied by the Wheaton Library and the Wheaton Community Center”.
- Appendix 4 – Park, Trail, and Recreation, page 6, the Public Libraries and Recreation Departments support the Plan recommendation in, to *Improve connectivity to community recreation centers, Wheaton Library, regional parks, and trails near the CBD.* The design of the new joint Library/Recreation Center should include sidewalk paving and directional signage that continues the streetscape signage and paving design from the sector plan area onto the library/recreation center property, thus providing inherent connectivity to not only the CBD, but the parks and trails in the area. The library and recreation facility are not far outside the CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan and should be “tied in” where possible to draw visitors from the CBD north to the two County properties at Arcola, Hermitage, and Georgia Avenue.
- Appendix 5 – Community Facilities page 1 to 3, the Public Libraries and Recreation Departments support the Plan recommendation in to *create an overall plan for the four community facilities just outside the sector plan area to the north. The Wheaton Rescue Squad, Wheaton Regional Library, and the County Recreation Center sites should be connected across Arcola Avenue with shared parking and internal pedestrian paths and seating areas.* This recommendation should not result in the downgrading or elimination of elements in the program of requirements; nor in the service needs for the library. Given the traffic on Arcola and the V/C ratio for the Arcola/Georgia Avenue intersection shown on page 39 of Appendix 3, which exceeds the LATR standard for the future, Libraries is concerned about moving pedestrians across Georgia or Arcola safely in order to meet this goal.

Team 11/12

## Department of Transportation

### General Concerns

- WMATA just completed a draft Study that examined the number of bus bays needed to accommodate the existing bus network plus potential BRT corridors. The Plan must recognize the critical importance and role of the extensive bus network including its focal point, the Wheaton Metrorail Station.
- The Draft envisions an abandonment and realignment of Ennalls Avenue within the Core District of the Wheaton Triangle. Preliminary Engineering assessment of this new alignment has shown that the road would have severe impacts on adjacent land uses if it were to be built to public road standards. MCDOT can support a public street, if the land use impacts are recognized. Otherwise, this segment of Ennalls Avenue should be planned as a private street.
- The Draft calls for certain segments of Hickerson Drive and Elkin Street to be closed to vehicular traffic on weekends and holidays for certain special uses. This is totally an operational issue outside the purview of a master plan for these public streets. MCDOT has a process in place to accomplish this type of function. It is incorrect for a master plan with a twenty to thirty year time horizon to deal with this type of issue and the text should be deleted.
- Bikeway G-G' (as shown in the *Kensington Wheaton Master Plan*) is not shown on this plan draft; either show it on Map 17 and add it to Table 3, or add some text formally deleting it so there is no future confusion as to its status.
- The Historic Resources Section contains an inconsistency. While the text clearly states that "the environmental setting for this historic resource [31/12 WTOP Radio Transmitter] is 1.4 acres", Map 22 shows the entire 12.31 acre parcel as the "Designated Historic Site". This erroneous mapping needs to be corrected.
- The Draft does not contain some elements of a comprehensive plan required under State law.
- The Draft does not contain certain "Visions" required under State law.

### Specific Comments

- Page 2 - this Plan amends additional functional and countywide plans other than those currently listed in the Abstract; a list of all amended functional and countywide plans needs to be included.
- Page 9 - revise the first sentence of the second paragraph under "Wheaton's Role in the County to state, "A significant amount of traffic moves ~~west~~ through Wheaton to and from the I-270 Corridor, . . .
- Page 10 - correct Table 1 to show the 1990 Plan Estimate J-H Ratio as 4.3:1
- Page 20 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 6
- Page 22 - add a final bullet under Developing a Nighttime Economy stating, "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Reviews should be incorporated into redevelopment efforts"

- Page 24 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 7
- Page 26 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 8
- Page 28 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 9
- Page 29 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 10
- Page 34 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 12
- Page 35 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 13
- Page 37 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 15
- Page 38 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 16
- Page 39 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on Map 17
- Page 40 - this section on the Core District needs to add text pertaining to the abandonment of existing Ennalls Avenue, the proposed relocation of Ennalls Avenue, the impact of the relocation on existing businesses, and the impact of both on the proposed zoning
- Page 41 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on the Proposed Zoning map in Figure 1
- Page 43 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on the Proposed Zoning map in Figure 2
- Page 47 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on the Proposed Zoning map in Figure 3
- Page 49 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on the Proposed Zoning map in Figure 4
- Page 51 - show the proposed (not existing) street network on the Proposed Zoning map in Figure 5
- Page 55 - revise the last sentence in the first paragraph under Existing Neighborhoods Surrounding the Districts to state, “Redevelopment in these neighborhoods under existing zoning should maintain existing scale and character ~~blend with existing conditions~~ and should not introduce mixed-use zoning.”
- Page 57 - revise the second sentence in the first paragraph under Approach and Network Integrity to state, “Carefully . . . in the CBD where design, safety, environmental, and community objectives require a multifaceted approach to placemaking.”
- Page 60 - in the second bullet, reevaluate the minimum master planned right-of-way widths for all Major Highways segments, given their BRT and bikeway potentials, as 150’
  - delete the fifth bullet under The Street Network; Target Speeds are an engineering, not planning, issue
- Page 63 - delete the second bullet under Pedestrian Circulation (see General Concerns)
- Page 64 - revise Table 3 in accordance with all comments on Map 19 (p. 65)
- Page 65 - extend symbol for Dual Bikeway on MD 193 from Amherst Av. to MD 97 for consistency with *Countywide Bikeways Functional Master Plan*
  - designate MD 193 from MD 97 to Drumm Av. as a bikeway similar to the designation in the pending *Town of Kensington and Vicinity Sector Plan*
  - either delete PB-8 on Franwall Avenue, or add a listing for it to Table 3

- add an SR-20 designation to Amherst Avenue south of Reddie Dr.
- correct the alignment of PB-7 to show it going via Douglas Avenue
- either delete PB-30 from McComas Ave., or add a listing for it to Table 3
- either delete PB-33 from MD 586, or add a listing for it to Table 3
- add a bikeway from East Ave. to MD 586 via College View Dr.
- add a bikeway from Galt Ave. to Grandview Ave. via Dawson Ave.
- add a bikeway from Fennimore Rd to MD 586 via Galt Ave.
- add a bikeway from Blueridge Ave. to Arcola Ave. via Nairn Rd.
- designate the entire Wheaton Plaza Ring Road as a shared road bikeway
- continue Bikeway SR-20 east to MD 193 via Reddie Dr.
- continue Bikeway SP-77 west to Dawson Ave. via Blueridge Ave.
- show the Sector Plan boundary on Map 19.
- Page 66 - revise the third bullet under Bikeway Network to comprehensively deal with bikeway issues on University Boulevard (MD 193)
  - with respect to the fifth bullet, the County has no authority to develop a bike station at the Wheaton Metro Station and bike stations are costly to construct; therefore, a specified land area should be identified in the Plan for the bike station. The Plan should show how it is feasible to incorporate such a facility into the Metro Station area, or show an alternative facility on nearby land dedicated for this purpose.
- Page 75 - delete the fourth, fifth, and eleventh bullets under Health; these appear to have nothing to do with master-planning
- Page 76 - show the former elementary school site on Upton Drive
  - label the names of the existing parks
  - reduce the shaded area on the WTOP parcel to only show the 1.4 acre historic Environmental Setting, not the entire 12.31 acre parcel
- Page 81 - revise the last bullet on the page to state, “Any redevelopment of the **12.31 acre** WTOP site must . . .”

#### **DOT Division of Traffic Engineering and Operations - Additional Comments**

##### **General Comments**

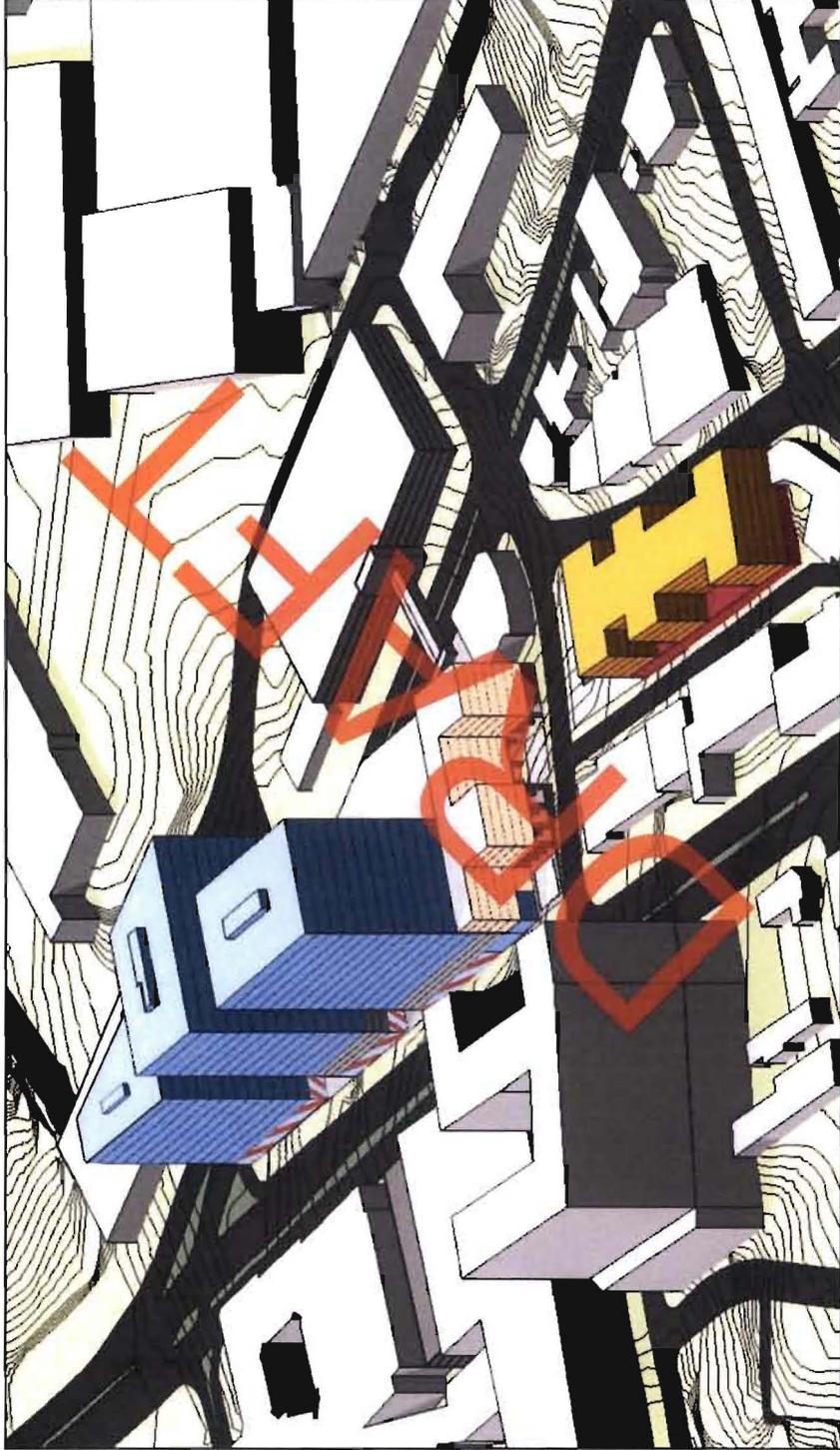
- Any modifications at signalized intersections will need to be coordinated with MCDOT’s Transportation Systems Engineering Team.
- Any traffic calming or pedestrian safety improvements will need to be coordinated with MCDOT’s Traffic Engineering Studies Section.

##### **Specific Comments**

- Page 22, 3rd bullet from bottom (using sidewalk for café seating) - add “with executive branch’s approval where feasible subject to permit and ADA requirements”.
- Page 27 - Connectivity paragraph: would utilizing Georgia Ave, University Blvd and Veirs Mill Road as boulevards be appropriate? (MSHA issue).
- Page 57, 4<sup>th</sup> line from bottom - unfamiliar with the concept of RAM.

# WHEATON'S NEW DOWNTOWN

## AERIAL VIEW LOOKING SOUTH

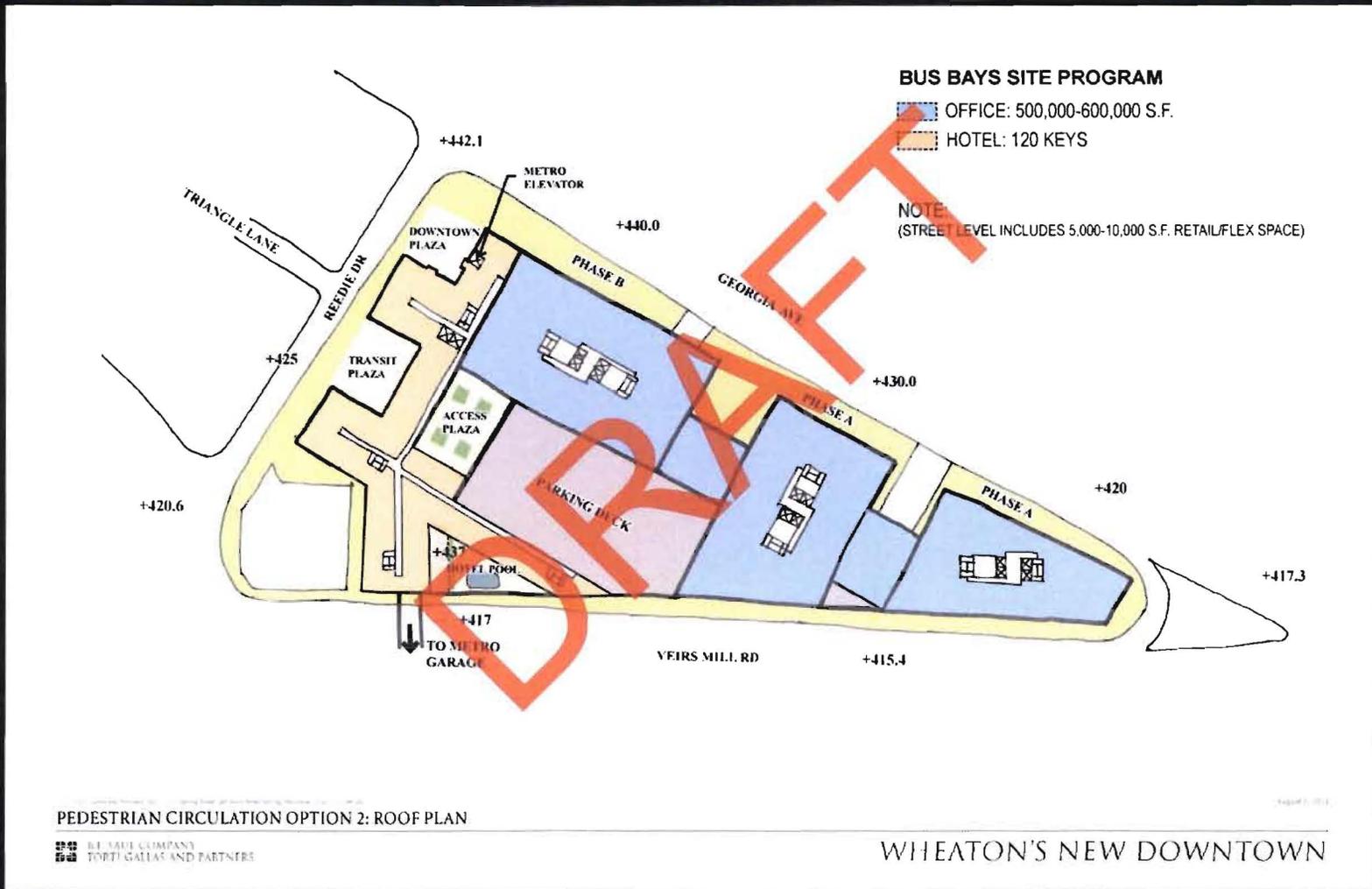


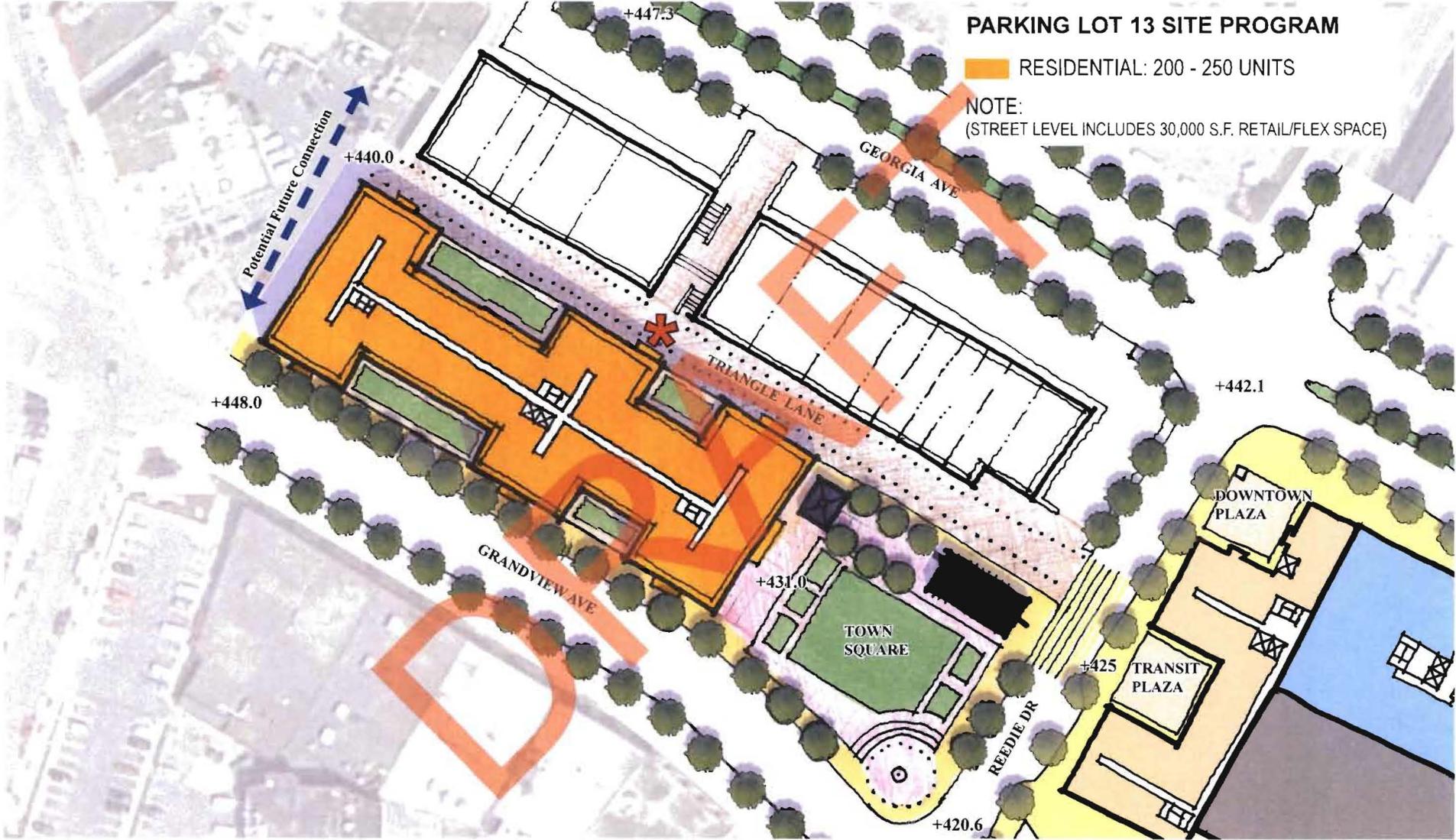
OVERALL SITE AERIAL VIEW LOOKING SOUTH  
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WHEATON'S NEW DOWNTOWN

# WHEATON'S NEW DOWNTOWN

## PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION OPTION 2: ROOF PLAN





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PARKING LOT 13 SITE - PLAN

0 100' ← March 11, 2011

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wheaton's  
downtown

WHEATON'S NEW DOWNTOWN

12

# WHEATON'S NEW DOWNTOWN

## PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION

### PROGRAM DISTRIBUTION

PROGRAM	BUS BAYS SITE			PARKING LOT 13			
	USE	TOTAL AREA	NO. OF FLOORS	PARKING REQUIRED	TOTAL AREA	NO. OF FLOORS	PARKING REQUIRED
OFFICE	100K (County) 500K (Spec/GSA)	18 (includes 3 levels of parking over Ground Floor)	10 750				
OFFICE (HQ)	150K	13	20				
HOTEL	120 Keys	5	30				
RESIDENTIAL				200 - 250 UNITS	5 - 6	200 - 250	
RETAIL / FLEX	10K	First Floor Only	21	30K	First Floor Only	60	
REPLACEMENT PARKING							164 Public Spaces 47 Private Spaces
<b>TOTAL PARKING REQUIRED</b>			<b>820</b>				<b>471</b>

**PARKING ASSUMPTIONS**  
**OFFICE: 1.5 CARS / 1000 SF**  
**HOTEL: .25 CARS / KEY**  
**RESIDENTIAL: 1 CAR / UNIT**  
**RETAIL / FLEX: 2 CARS / 1000 SF**

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