



## WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Isiah Leggett  
*County Executive*

Ana L. van Balen  
*Director*

February 22, 2012

The Honorable Roger Berliner  
Montgomery County Council President  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Berliner:

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) strongly supports the Wheaton Redevelopment Program (No. 150401) contained in the FY 13-18 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget. WUDAC members represent a diverse cross-section of Wheaton, including small business, large business and residents, and it is our collective opinion that redevelopment must proceed without delay. We believe that redevelopment in Wheaton has many benefits for our community including helping the existing businesses grow, drawing new establishments to the area, and bringing new residents to the community, adding to the already unique character and diverse population of the neighborhood. Yet there are three primary reasons the Council should invest in Wheaton and the Wheaton Redevelopment Program outlined in the CIP today.

**Wheaton redevelopment has been in the works since 2000.** Plans to revitalize Wheaton have been talked about for over 12 years. During that time the urban areas of Silver Spring, Rockville, and Bethesda have all undergone some form of redevelopment and have realized the economic impact and benefits of their revitalized communities. In all three instances, the Council approved the necessary funds and backing to spur these changes. While private investment to plan and design a new Wheaton has occurred along with the groundbreaking of some projects, redevelopment continues to face resistance in public investment that prevents Wheaton from moving forward like its neighbors. Furthermore, these other communities continue to receive backing for new redevelopment projects while Wheaton continues to wait and falls behind. WUDAC believes that the time is now to move Wheaton forward. We do not want to see another 15-20 years pass before the Council takes serious consideration to this matter.



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**Supporting the Wheaton Redevelopment Program will be the catalyst for economic activity in the area.** The economic benefits of a redeveloped Wheaton will be felt immediately with approval of the CIP. Wheaton is in the initial phase of a transformation that promises to bring a newly designed downtown area to the community. Developers are also breaking ground for development and construction of what will be one of Montgomery County's tallest buildings, the Patriot Realty/Safeway Project. Without the Council's support of the Wheaton Redevelopment Program, these and other projects are in grave jeopardy. Support will provide small- and large-scale developers the confidence necessary to invest in Wheaton.

A lack of immediate funds for Wheaton's redevelopment could bring an equal and opposite reaction from the development community. The resulting instability could create a poor business environment for current owners in the area while new businesses hesitate to invest in Wheaton. We fear also that developers with projects in planning phases could back out or that they might propose projects on a smaller scale. Wheaton can no longer afford to be held back. The economic activity brought on by redevelopment will benefit both the community and the County as a whole. WUDAC believes that any delays will most definitely impede this growth.

**The Wheaton Redevelopment Program is relatively inexpensive compared to other projects.** The projected cost for the construction of the platform outlined in the CIP is approximately \$42 million over six years. This cost is much less than the over \$100 million spent on other redevelopment projects in White Flint and Silver Spring. The \$42 million is also less than previous proposals and plans submitted for Wheaton redevelopment projects. WUDAC believes that the funds budgeted for the Wheaton Redevelopment Program are a wise investment that will yield returns over and beyond the total cost of the platform. As stated previously, investment in the platform and the Town Center will generate further economic activity in Wheaton in the form of additional residents and establishments that bring additional dollars to the area and County. Rejecting or delaying funding towards redevelopment in Wheaton threatens to increase the cost of projects and further delay any economic impact brought on by redevelopment. WUDAC asks that the Council consider these facts when deliberating the CIP.

Wheaton is on the cusp of a rebirth; in fact, this Council voted to support major revitalization efforts by approving the Wheaton Sector Plan. The Wheaton area now has the interest from developers to create a large-scale, public transit-oriented development that will benefit all Montgomery County citizens. Funding the Wheaton Redevelopment Program is vital to continue the momentum made in this revitalization effort. Hence, WUDAC asks the Council to support the CIP budget and continue to work with the Wheaton community to ensure that all benefit from this vital community project. The members of WUDAC look forward to working with the Council to strengthen Wheaton and appreciate your continued support of the Wheaton Redevelopment Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeannette Feldner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Jeannette Feldner, Chair  
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

CC: County Councilmembers