



WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
2424 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902

Isiah Leggett
County Executive

Ana L. van Balen
Director

March 21, 2012

The Montgomery County Council
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Council President Berliner and Montgomery County Councilmembers:

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) appreciates the Council's vocal support for Wheaton redevelopment; however, we strongly oppose the implementation of the Council Staff Recommendation.

WUDAC supports the comprehensive and cost-effective proposal for Wheaton redevelopment as included in the County Executive's FY13 – 18 CIP request. It is the result of over 10 years of collaborative planning by numerous parties, including Montgomery County, the private sector, and community participation. The Council Staff Recommendation disregards these years of careful planning and meaningful dialogue and presents a quick fix that will not benefit the County or the community in the long run. WUDAC requests Council to reach out to the respective voices in the community to ensure that its plans fall in line with the community vision.

In 2010-2011, the County, along with WMATA, made significant progress including the selection through the RFQ process of B.F. Saul to continue the influx of private money into Wheaton. For B.F. Saul, which owns 18 business class hotels and 17 office buildings, to select the space above the Wheaton Metro for its next major development is a strong indication that building the platform is a smart and profitable redevelopment proposal. The company would not invest millions of its own dollars above the total requested by the County Executive if it did not feel that the benefits outweighed the cost.

The B.F. Saul project should continue and be supported by the Council. While we do note that numerous letters were submitted to the Council in recent weeks, WUDAC is not aware of any letter requesting the Council to abandon the platform above the Wheaton Metro, and replace it with a down-scaled public project on Lot 13.¹

WUDAC requests the Council engage immediately in a true and open dialogue about the Council Staff Recommendation with members of the Wheaton community. At the recent March 12 PHED Committee meeting, we certainly heard Committee members say that they support Wheaton and its redevelopment. WUDAC appreciates this sentiment and we urge you to continue your strong support; however, if Staff Recommendation is implemented with zero regard to years of public collaboration and without any meaningful public input, the Council's words will ring hollow.

Sincerely,

Jeannette Feldner, Chair
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee

CC: County Councilmembers

¹ In response to fn. 1 on pg. 2 of the Council Analyst proposal where Mr. Filippo Leo expressed concern about lost parking, Mr. Leo notes that he does "support the redevelopment of Wheaton." Mr. Leo's letter encouraged the passage of Bill 6-12, the Small Business Assistance Program, which aims to alleviate lost profits associated with the platform development. The letter did not request abandonment of the platform project.