



WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

Ana L. van Balen  
Director

May 4, 2012

Ms. Connie Latham  
Special Assistant to the County Executive  
Executive Office Building  
1010 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Ms. Latham,

As requested by the Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) via memorandum dated March 19, 2012, the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Board hereby submit our report outlining reasons why these advisory boards should continue. The six areas of inquiry provided by CERB and the WUDAC responses are provided below.

*1. A description of the work the advisory board does, citing the enabling legislation, the membership make-up of the board, and the subcommittee structure (if any).*

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) was created to advise the County Executive and County Council on matters affecting the revitalization and the economic and physical development of the Wheaton Urban District area. The Committee works closely with the Wheaton Urban District on activities and issues associated with the commercial business area. The Wheaton Urban District is funded through the Urban District Tax, Parking Lot District fees collected by the County, maintenance charges on optional method developments, transfers from the General Fund, and other miscellaneous revenue such as contributions and charges for services. Funds are used for the Urban District to complete the following tasks:

- Maintaining streetscape and streetscape amenities on public rights-of-way and any property used by the general public;
- Promoting and programming public interest activities that benefit both residential and commercial interests;
- Providing additional streetscape amenities and façade improvements as possible;
- Monitoring activities to enhance the safety and security of persons and property in public areas.

Hence, the purpose of this Committee is to advise the County on the public services and facilities necessary to implement the purposes of an Urban District. The WUDAC fulfills this purpose in various ways but not to be limited to the following:

- Advising the Director of the Mid-County Services Center of priorities and methods of tailoring services to meet the need of the urban district;
- Making recommendations and providing input into the planning and goal setting functions of the various Montgomery County government agencies and authorities working in the urban district;
- Collaborating with other government and community organizations and Advisory Boards;
- Being visible, accessible and accountable to the businesses in the urban district;
- Monitoring current legislative issues affecting the urban district and taking an active role in legislative advocacy where appropriate; and
- Monitoring the County budget process to assure that urban district needs are reflected and by communicating those needs to the Center Director, County Executive and County Council at appropriate and private forums.

There are eleven members of the WUDAC which include two members from the Wheaton Kensington Chamber of Commerce, two members who represent large businesses, two (2) members who represent small businesses, one member who represents the Mid-County Citizens Advisory Board and four members who represent the community. The WUDAC will be required to add additional members now that there are optional method developments in Wheaton.

Members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by County Council to serve for a term of three years and can apply for a second term of three years. WUDAC Members serve without compensation. The officers of the WUDAC consist of a Chair and a Vice Chair. The Chair presides over all meetings and, in his or her absence, the Vice Chair presides.

The Committee meets the second Tuesday of each month at the Mid-County Regional Center, 2424 Reedy Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902 at 5:00 p.m. This year, WUDAC established five (5) standing sub-committees including: Advocacy; Business Development; Communications/Promotion; Community Building; and Budget. Subcommittee goals include the following:

**Advocacy Committee** deals with issues that require policy to address. Some examples of this include: panhandling, the use of signs by businesses, mobile food trucks, etc.

**Business Development Committee** deals with issues related to doing business in the CBD. The committee seeks to bring groups together to help address matters that impact businesses. The committee also seeks to educate businesses on the resources that exist to improve their businesses and comply with permitting regulations.

**Communication/Promotion Committee** seeks to strengthen the Urban District's existing methods of communication to draw people into the Wheaton CBD. It works to accomplish this by creating a communications plan to organize existing efforts, maximize all possible resources including the other subcommittees as well as the media to disseminate positive information.

**Community Building Committee** seeks to build communication with the Wheaton community through existing neighborhood groups while working to create community through the development of events geared to resident interest.

**Budget Committee** seeks to prepare the Urban District with the resources needed to carry out the vision for the CBD.

*2. Justification why the advisory Committee should be continued. This may include a general statement concerning why the advisory committee was established and why its efforts are still needed.*

Members of the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) are pleased to submit a response to the Montgomery County Committee Evaluation and Review Board (CERB) explaining the purpose and significance of this Committee to the County Executive and the County Council.

The mission of WUDAC is to advise the County Executive on issues of public services and facilities needed on an ongoing basis to solve problems and enhance opportunities for improvements in the Urban District. Some of these services include providing feedback on parking, housing and business developments, traffic and transportation projects. To compliment these services, promotional and entertainment opportunities are provided to help showcase Wheaton's assets through community-wide events within the urban district.

The WUDAC is comprised of an applied group of stakeholders, residents and lay people alike, who volunteer and dedicate their time to the work of improving their neighborhood to keep it a viable, safe and productive place in which to live and work. Members are volunteers who are involved in the community because they care about their community.

Many of our members are also business owners who have lived and own property in the urban district for many years. Hence they are knowledgeable members of County government who monitor and provide input into the County budgets as well as legislative actions before the County Council in order to assure that the urban district's needs are adequately reflected.

Most of this work is completed at the monthly meetings, sub-committee meetings, and by serving on ad hoc task groups such as the Wheaton Sector Plan committee—one of our members served as co-chair for two years. Members attend County Council and Planning Board meetings and hearings, as needed, providing testimony to assure that the needs of the Urban District are made known to them.

WUDAC also works to promote Wheaton through events that are coordinated with other community and Government agencies. One example is the County-wide World of Montgomery Festival that is held in Wheaton each year. Members also assist in developing, promoting, and marketing the Taste of Wheaton, the Wheaton Sparkles 4<sup>th</sup> of July Fireworks, and the TGIF Concerts series every summer in July and August.

All of these efforts are becoming more essential given the new development of over 900 units of new housing and mixed use developments that are underway in downtown Wheaton. In addition, the Wheaton Capital Improvement Project budget will be approved this month supporting the development of an office tower, parking and a town square. WUDAC has been in the forefront working to get this funding approved for these developments.

For these reasons, WUDAC is needed to help promote the economic stability and growth during the next decade. WUDAC will be needed to assist in setting priorities and methods of tailoring services to meet the needs of the new Urban District. Lastly, it is important for WUDAC to monitor activities to enhance the safety and security of persons and property in public areas by working closely with our businesses, the Clean and Safe Team and the Montgomery County Police Department staff assigned to the Wheaton Urban District.

Since the WUDAC'S main role is to advise the County Executive, it is imperative that this mechanism remain in place to monitor and advice on these important matters as we move forward into the next decade. There is no other Committee that is mandated by law that can effectively do this work and advise the County Executive in an efficient manner.

*3. A list of accomplishment from the prior two years, including any direct service provided by volunteers to residents:*

Work activities of WUDAC members includes but is not limited to the following:

- Participated in the Wheaton Sector Plan Workgroup from 2007 to 2010. Member served as Co-Chair of the work group;
- Outreached to merchants and community groups regarding urban district activities;
- Participated in the planning of the World of Montgomery Festival which is help in Wheaton—WUDAC members have served on the planning committee for the last 3 years;
- Prepared testimony on issues relevant to the Urban District such as legislations, budgets, and planning, and appeared at public hearings before County Council, Park and Planning Commission and other organizations. More specifically, members have given testimony regarding the vicinity sector plan, bringing business into Wheaton and supporting budget enhancements to the Urban district;
- Conducted two (2) organizational retreats for WUDAC members;
- Assisted in the preparation for various studies regarding the urban district, such as transportation, safety and visioning;
- Listened to community concerns of residents and local business, advocating for their needs as required.

The activities listed above are general and ongoing. They cover many years of commitment to Wheaton's urban district, its residents and businesses. As WUDAC is comprised of Wheaton businesses owners and residents, this Committee serves as an open forum for local concerns which can lead to our advocacy on their behalf to the County Executive, County Council and other County agencies. We have invited elected officials and key players in Wheaton's redevelopment to come to our meetings so that we can educate ourselves as well as the community on what's happening in Wheaton and take steps to inform and advocate. And since Wheaton will be experiencing many changes as redevelopment impacts its core, it will be important for the Urban District and WUDAC to maintain ongoing communication with the community, businesses and residents to ensure a smooth transition for all.

*4. A statistical review of the advisory board member's workload. Include in the review a list of how many regular and sub-committee meetings are held per month/quarter, and the length of the meetings. In addition, list any other board or sub-committee activities. Finally, include a listing of materials produced by the board, such as research reports, newsletters, etc.*

WUDAC holds 11 meetings per year. Additionally, each subcommittee meets monthly in preparation for the larger committee meetings. Subcommittee meetings are approximately an hour each with the larger committee lasting up to an hour and a half. There are also additional ad-hoc meetings (i.e.: nominating, etc.) that Board members may attend. Hence, committee members are contributing over 40 hours per year to WUDAC official meetings not including time spent preparing for meetings, doing research on issues and policies and hence, attending special events hosted by the Urban District in Wheaton.

Some of the documents produced over the last two years include the following:

- **March 2010:** WUDAC wrote to Council in support of Costco coming to Wheaton.
- **October 10, 2010:** WUDAC wrote the Maryland National Capital Park & Planning Board to strongly endorse the Patriot Realty/Safeway project located at Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive.
- **March 1, 2011:** WUDAC joined with WRAC to support proposed pedestrian improvements to median treatment to portions of Reddie Drive and Georgia Avenue.
- **February 28, 2011:** WUDAC sent a letter of thanks to the Clean and Safe Team for excellent team work during the bad snow storms.
- **May 17, 2011:** WUDAC member served on the Roadside Solicitation Task Force for two years prior, culminating in a letter to Council urging them to ask the State to enact comprehensive enabling legislation so that Montgomery County can decide to ban or regulate roadside solicitation.
- **May 27, 2011:** WUDAC asked the County Executive to consider establishing a Task Force on Mobile Unit Operations (Food Truck Vendors) to study the situation in depth and recommend what, if anything, is needed to keep a healthy business community and a vibrant atmosphere in Wheaton.
- **December 15, 2011:** WUDAC sent comments to Council regarding Community Benefits Agreements (CBA) proposed legislation.
- **February 22, 2012:** WUDAC wrote to Council regarding the Council Staff Recommendations requesting support for the Wheaton redevelopment CIP proposal and requesting open communication with the Wheaton community.
- **March 21, 2012:** WUDAC wrote to Council to oppose the implementation of the Council Staff Recommendation on the Wheaton Redevelopment Project.

*5. As done in typical annual reports, provide a 2-year work program outlining planned activities and goals for the future:*

In October of 2011, WUDAC began to set goals to be handled through subcommittees. Through a retreat, the following goals were determined for the upcoming years:

#### **Advocacy Subcommittee**

1. Address specific issues impacting the CBD such as Panhandling, Mobile Food Trucks, etc.
2. Provide legislative review of bills.
3. Investigate – County Procedures – State laws
4. Conduct more one on one contact with council members/staff.

#### **Business Development Subcommittee**

1. Inform businesses on how WUDAC represents and wants to assist them in their development.
2. Act as a catalyst to convene groups working to assist business development in Wheaton.
3. Provide education to small businesses as appropriate.

#### **Communication/Promotion Subcommittee**

1. Strengthen existing methods of communication through our website, [www.wheatonmd.org](http://www.wheatonmd.org), Facebook, twitter, WUDAC blog.
2. Interact with each subcommittee to facilitate information sharing.
3. Work with the media to generate accurate and positive stories but also to share information.
4. Facilitate education to businesses and residents using current communication methods.

#### **Community Building Subcommittee**

1. Develop a list of Wheaton community associations, list serves, identifying point of contact.
2. Send regular communications.
3. Conduct a survey.
4. Provide speakers at community meetings.
5. Provide resource information at all Wheaton major events.
6. Use media for supporting efforts.

#### **Budget Subcommittee**

1. Create a 5-year budget.
2. Develop and recommend proposals for budgets and advocate to the County why the Urban District needs additional resources.
3. Analyze the operating budget for FY12.
4. Educate WUDAC about other county agencies and groups and how they affect Wheaton.
5. Review forecasts and make recommendations.

*6. A description of the amount of County government resources, including County employee staff time, currently being used. Include an outline of a plan to reduce the use of these resources. Note the “staff time” and “resources” includes preparing for and attending meetings, setting up meeting space, office supplies expended, photocopying, and any other monetary costs for equipment rental, parking, etc.*

WUDAC is supported by the Urban District Staff who currently help staff the subcommittees that pertain closest to their responsibilities. The Mid-County Regional Director attends all committee and subcommittee meetings and works with the chair to develop the agenda, contact guests, and prepare the necessary documentation. The Mid-County Regional Director also helps with logistical matters for meetings such as making copies, recording meetings, room set up and other minor tasks. Overall, Urban District Managers spend approximately 3 hours per month on subcommittee and committee work while the Regional Director spends approximately 10 hours per month supporting WUDAC. There are no additional costs spent on WUDAC besides printing as all correspondence is conducted by email.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeannette Feldner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "J".

Jeannette Feldner, Chair  
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee