



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

# News Release

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## Capacity crowd attends ‘What’s Next for Wheaton’ forum hosted by Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) to address thoughts for community’s future

*Follow-up on forum issues will take place at next WUDAC meeting on Tuesday, September 11*

A capacity crowd of more than 125 came to the Ana G. Mendez University on July 18 for the community forum entitled, “What’s Next for Wheaton,” that was hosted by the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC). The forum included community insights and priorities from a panel of experts, elected officials and community members who shared their respective visions for Wheaton redevelopment in the coming years.

WUDAC consists of 11 members—residents and business representatives—who were appointed by County Executive Ike Leggett and approved by the County Council. The committee provides guidance and advice on matters affecting the Wheaton Urban District and it has been closely monitoring the [Wheaton Revitalization Project](#). Bill Jelen, the new WUDAC chair, moderated the forum.

Topics discussed at the forum included the future of the business community, the impact of the government office building now under construction, the possibility of creating a [cultural arts facility](#) and traffic. Those issues will be reviewed at the next WUDAC meeting, which is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 11, in the upstairs meeting room of the interim Wheaton Library. The interim library is located above the Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad building at 2400 Arcola Road.

In preparation for the forum, WUDAC collected input on issues through surveys and focus groups. The survey has received more than 370 responses.

The featured panel included County Councilmember Nancy Navarro, whose Council district includes Wheaton; Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Director Gwen Wright; Westfield Wheaton Vice President for Development Jim Agliata; and Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation Director David Petr. County Council President Hans Riemer and Councilmembers Marc Elrich, Nancy Floreen and George Leventhal were in attendance, as were many heads of County departments.

Wheaton is a diverse, transit-accessible community undergoing significant changes as part of the Wheaton Revitalization Project. The County is constructing a 14-story government office building that is scheduled for completion in 2020. In addition to the office building, the project will provide 397 below ground parking spaces, first floor retail space and a new town square. Most significantly impacted during construction is the Wheaton Triangle area between Veirs Mill Road and Georgia Avenue. The local roads that form the Triangle area include Grandview Avenue, Reddie Drive and Triangle Lane.

The main occupant of the new building will be the relocated Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, which is now in Downtown Silver Spring. The 308,000 square-foot, LEED platinum certified Wheaton office building also will be home to several County departments including Permitting Services,

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Environmental Protection, Health and Human Services, Recreation and Community Use of Public Facilities. In addition, relocating to the new building will be the Wheaton Urban District and the Mid-County Regional Services Center.

Construction of the office building, which is being overseen by the County Department of Transportation, and town square are seen as the start of revitalizing the area.

There are other major projects underway in Wheaton, including construction of a new Wheaton Public Library and Community Recreation Center. A new fire station opened recently.

Discussions at the forum included the desire to have an arts and cultural facility as part of Wheaton revitalization. In addition, the evening addressed how to build a better link between the Westfield Wheaton mall and the nearby downtown district of small businesses.

Improving transportation routes for vehicles and bicycles, and adding more sidewalks for pedestrians, were a constant theme of the forum.

Planning Director Wright offered a solution she said might work in Wheaton. She said the community would be a great location for “a woonerf.” The name is derived from the Netherlands, where woonerfs are “living streets” with mixed-use equal priorities for cars, bikes and pedestrians.

For more information about the Wheaton Revitalization Project, go to [wheatonproject.com](http://wheatonproject.com).

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