

Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee – **Approved Minutes**
February 16, 2010
Mid-County Regional Services – 2424 Reddie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902

Members Present: Ciliny Alce, Maureen Carrington, Eleanor Duckett, Regina Dull, Jonathan Fink, Chelsea Johnson, Larysa Kurylas, Sara Lappano, Christopher Lindsay, Diane Lynne, Thomas Martin, James Mensah, Patrick Naehu, Susan Petersen, Fran Ware

Members Absent: Gregory Baker, Melissa Brown, Manuel Hidalgo, Zoe Lefkowitz, Leslie McDermott, Erin Roberts, Stewart Tsao, David Taghipour

County Staff: Rob Klein and Pete McGinnity for Wheaton Redevelopment; Director, Natalie Cantor for Mid County Regional Services Center

Guests: Ed Murtaugh for Green Wheaton; Taylor Brown, for Wheaton Patch; Dana Davidson for Chesapeake Public Strategies; Steve Simon for Simon Public Relations; Alison Bryant, The Gazette; Susan DeFord, Mid-County United Ministries (MUM); Sylvia Didone, Kensington View; MJ Jardaneh, Glenmont Forest Civic Association; Robert Wulff for B.F. Saul and Mr. Agliata for Westfield Wheaton

Meeting Called to Order by the Chair, Mr. Baker, at 7:03 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION to correct the spelling of Ciliny Alce’s name in the January minutes and to approve the minutes as corrected. The motion was made by Mr. Martin and seconded by Ms. Dull. All were in favor and minutes were approved as amended.

Redevelopment Report – Rob Klein

Wheaton Sector Plan – The Planning Board has scheduled several worksessions:

- *February 17* - to discuss modifications to Commercial-Residential (C-R) Zoning that would establish “Neighborhood” and “Town” zoning categories. These could affect Wheaton’s transitional neighborhoods;
- *February 24* – will be the 6th worksession. Discussion topics include CR zoning, WTOP site zoning, Westfield zoning, and design guidelines. The staff packet for this worksession is to be posted February 17.
- *March 3* - the Planning Board will review public testimony, staff recommendations and Planning Board actions on each issue and decide on any other remaining issues to finalize the draft zoning text amendments to the C-R Zone.
- *March 10* - the Planning Board reviews the final draft of the CR ZTA and approves it for transmittal to the County Council.
- *March 17* - the Planning Board anticipates approval of the Draft Sector Plan for transmittal to the County Council.
- *April 15* – the Planning Board anticipates formal submission to the Council.

Parking Policy Study - Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) jointly commissioned a parking policy study to identify best practices and to establish a framework to update zoning codes. MCDOT and M-NCPPC presented a preview of the Consultant's recommendations on January 20, to a group of stakeholders from the Wheaton, Silver Spring and Bethesda Parking Districts to gather their feedback. Once the study is finalized, MCDOT and M-NCPPC will brief the County Council, and the Consultant's study will be made public.

Patriot/Safeway Project – Patriot now owns the Safeway land in downtown Wheaton. Patriot Realty has bought the underlying ground. Patriot financed the acquisition with a loan from First American Exchange, and additional funding from Foulger Pratt Capital management. Patriot officials say that building permit drawings have been submitted, and an early summer groundbreaking is possible. The store will open first, sometime in the middle of 2012, followed by the apartments a year later.

The Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) - assists businesses and communities in creating safe and vibrant places to socialize, recognizing nightlife as an economic driver. Through cooperative efforts between the Redevelopment Program, the Urban District and the County's Department of Liquor Control, Wheaton has been selected as one of 3 localities in the D.C. Metro area to participate in a study measuring the economic cost and value of nightlife and sociability. For more information on RHI visit: <http://www.rhiweb.org/>

Costco – is proceeding with a Special Exception application for a fueling station as part of its Westfield Mall operation. At the January 18, County Executive's Budget Forum, Mr. Leggett reiterated his commitment to Costco and its importance in supporting Wheaton's downtown redevelopment.

Pedestrian Safety –WRAC and WUDAC have agreed to issue a joint letter to the County Executive concerning median treatments on Reddie Drive and Georgia Avenue. The letter will request County Executive support for continuity in design and aesthetics for both the State and County portions of the project. The letter is being finalized for review by both committees.

BB&T Bank – On Feb. 3, 2011, The Office of Zoning & Administrative Hearings (OZAH) issued a recommendation for approval of BB&T Bank's Development Plan Amendment. The County Council, sitting as District Council, will make a final decision on whether the project, the construction of a BB&T Bank branch at Valley View Ave. and University Blvd., can proceed.

Avalon Bay is putting their parcel back on the market. This will create a nice opportunity with Parking Lot 14 for another possible development project.

Westfield's Long-Term Vision by Mr. Agliata for Westfield Wheaton

Mr. Agliata, Senior VP for Development, presented a PowerPoint showing possible mixed-use, high-density development that would augment redevelopment as being proposed by B.F. Saul's project and supported by proposed zoning in the new Sector Plan. Westfield's vision entails the following design principals: coordination with CBD redevelopment; enhance the retail environment by adding specialty uses; accommodate parking, retail and open space amenities; and create flexible streets with offices, residential, retail and hospitality uses. Key highlights include a proposed new Grand Entrance/Main Gateway at Reddie Dr. This will include a theater complex, enhanced food court, big atrium, etc. (new Entertainment Sector/Nighttime Economic

Zone). The second connection is at the North Tower. The upper north zone would include office-oriented use with more “green space” and underground parking. The third connection would be at a proposed residential sector at the south end. The residential sector would be separated from the entertainment sector with a green buffer. The PPT discussed the building height distribution (highest at the office sector) to decreasing to the height to the residential sector and the natural grade issues (the upper office sector is 20 feet higher than the lower residential sector).

The residential sector would be located where the Bally’s and commercial/office space is currently located. The Mall would like WMATA to remove the garage ramp entrance to open the space up. Parking was discussed. The Mall does not anticipate significantly reducing the number of parking spaces on the Mall grounds. Mr. Agliata noted the Planning Board would like to see a lot of the parking reduced, but he noted there are a number of issues including lease agreements with the Department Stores that specify parking spaces. There would, therefore, only be a very modest reduction in parking spaces. Mr. Agliata showed a map with proposed pedestrian connections to the surrounding communities. Mr. Agliata provided an update on what is happening right now. He noted that a Panera Restaurant is being built in a back zone of the Mall. The goal is to transform the blank wall into a restaurant row. The Mall is looking to add up to 3.8 million square-feet if all goes well with growth in Wheaton. The Mall has already spent \$160 million while little has been spent elsewhere in the Wheaton CBD to date. Mr. Agliata noted that others would have to start investing in Wheaton before the Mall starts implementing their new vision.

B.F. Saul Update by Mr. Wulff

Mr. Wulff provided an update on the B.F. Saul redevelopment effort. He first focused on Parking Lot 13 as it is a simpler site compared with the WMATA bus bay site. B.F. Saul is looking at creating two zones on the parking lot site. The bottom third of the site closest to the metro would be the “town square” site, which has not been designed as yet. The square would likely be publicly owned, but B.F. Saul would like to retain the programming rights. A mixed retail/restaurant/ luxury residential would be on the upper 2/3rds of the site. Lower levels would be retail/restaurants while the upper 4 floors would be residential rental apartments. The town square portion will expand the current green space up to the Moby Dick restaurant.

An important piece of this site would be the connection of Price Avenue with Ennalls on the north end of the site. This would most likely be a County project that would require the removal of some existing buildings. This project would provide a northern access to the site and would help relieve traffic on Reedy Drive. Mr. Wulff noted that while this would enhance the project, the northern access project is not required to develop the Lot 13 site. Mr. Wulff expects the town square element will draw the most interest and the most complaints. Everyone will have a vision of a town square, and all will be different. B. F. Saul will form an Ad Hoc Advisory Group (reps from WRAC, Parks, Planning Board, LEDC, Chamber of Commerce and GreenWheaton). The group will most likely meet twice; once to voice visions and second to comment on the concept plan following the first meeting.

The town square concept includes making Triangle Lane and Grandview more pedestrian friendly. B.F. Saul is considering including a restaurant row along Grandview that would face the row of restaurants on the other side of the road.

Mr. Wulff noted that parking is an important issue. It is expensive, ugly and it is important for redevelopment. B.F. Saul is considering putting two levels of parking under Lot 13. B.F. Saul will provide photos of other sites to give citizens a context of what they are considering. The issue of B.F. Saul programming rights and what that will mean was discussed.

Mr. Wulff noted the WMATA site proposed last month has been radically changed following meetings with their GSA Lease Broker. The site will need Class A office space and a business class hotel to be successful. A major government tenant must first commit before redevelopment begins and B.F. Saul still believes that a government tenant is the “first move” which will bring other tenants later. The County is talking about moving some offices there too. Mr. Wulff noted he would be working very close with Mr. Bob Peck the GSA Commissioner of Public Buildings. GSA has indicated the proposed WMATA site plan had two serious problems. First, the corner office building/tower (at the tip of Georgia Avenue and Veirs Mill) was not suitable for efficient space utilization, (spear shape building). Second, the office zone was too far from the metro entrance. Following this feedback from GSA, the office zone (two towers) is being moved to what was the proposed residential zone. The residential zone has now been removed from the WMATA site. Mr. Wulff noted that the pedestal over the Bus Bays would need to be built first at a cost of approximately \$25 million. Since it will have to be built before a tenant is in place, this is a risk to B.F. Saul.

B.F. Saul is working to come up with a concept for the Georgia Avenue/Veirs Mill Road tip on their site. This will become the gateway to Wheaton and they want this to look appealing. They are considering a parking garage with a nice interesting cover. B.F. Saul considered underground parking under the WMATA Bus Bays, but that was not feasible.

Cornell University selected the Wheaton Downtown Redevelopment Project as part of their Masters Degree Program in Real Estate for study during their spring 2011 semester. The course is a 2-year full-time course. During the course, the students act as the developer for this project and bring back to B.F. Saul several concepts for completing this project.

Update on County Executive Annual Meeting by Mr. Fink

The County Executive held the Annual Boards, Committees and Commission meeting on February 10. Mr. Leggett talked about the three hundred million dollar budget deficit, the need for budget cuts and how hard it will be to fund various programs. Individuals were given the opportunity to talk about their concerns regarding the budget cuts and the lack of funding for various programs of importance to them. The meeting was well attended to include many youth members.

Subcommittee Reports

Planning & Visioning – Mr. Martin reported the subcommittee met on February 7 and discussed further testimony for the County Council meeting in April on the Sector Plan. The March

meeting will be dedicated to that as well. Mr. Martin distributed the subcommittees Wheaton Sector Plan Working Draft Supplemental Testimony to the WRAC members for their review and comment. He encouraged WRAC members to attend the March 7th Planning and Visioning Subcommittee meeting to provide their input.

Project Review – Ms. Petersen reported due to snow, they did not meet in January. Their next meeting will be February 24. They will work on editing and condensing the framework they have been working on.

Economic Development – Mr. Fink reported they met on February 1 and discussed some edits and additions to the civic and homeowner association’s contact lists. The lists will be finalized at the next meeting on March 1. They discussed the possibility of doing a residential and a business survey to learn their thoughts about Wheaton in light of redevelopment. The subcommittee will coordinate with B. F. Saul. They will also coordinate with LEDC as they are doing a small business survey as well. Subcommittee members reviewed the questions asked in the last survey that was taken in 2005. That information will be used to develop the new survey. The surveys will be finalized at the March meeting.

Green Wheaton – Mr. Murtagh reported that Delegate Al Carr attended their January meeting and discussed “dark sky” lighting. The dark sky lighting systems are more energy efficient and focus lighting on the ground instead of the sky, which reduces light pollution. Legislation has been introduced. GreenWheaton will track the legislation. They are looking at green and open space issues in the zoning that need to be updated. They continue discussions on their non-profit status. Their next meeting will be February 22.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Please note: your name will become public information, recorded in the minutes of this WRAC Committee meeting, which may be photocopied and disseminated to various groups, and may appear on the internet and become retrievable by internet search engines.”