



WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Isiah Leggett  
*County Executive*

Ana L. van Balen  
*Director*

January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014

County Executive Isiah Leggett  
101 Monroe Street, 2nd Floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear County Executive Leggett,

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) is writing to reiterate its concerns regarding redevelopment of Lot 13 and the Regional Services Center (RSC) site. (See attached letter of October 15, 2013 to the Department of Transportation.) WUDAC appreciates the efforts that the Department of Transportation has made to meet with the public and to address their concerns.

However, there is one aspect of the current plan that runs counter to the community's vision for a viable town square and urban center and that is the proposed continued use of Reddie Drive for automobile traffic. WUDAC understands that plans call for Reddie Drive to be closed for special events, but we are concerned for the safety of the daily users of the town square who will walk by the hundreds from the Metro and bus bays to shops around the triangle and the new county office building. We also are concerned about the safety of families whose use of the town square will be jeopardized by a steady stream of cars passing from Georgia Avenue to Veirs Mill Rd.

The proposed plan will, in effect, create two small public spaces rather than the one continuous town square that has been promised by county officials for years, and these smaller spaces will be divided unpredictably by a wall of cars. County planners and the developers have not explained the benefit of allowing Reddie Dr. to cut through the town square especially when traffic will not be able to flow. Gridlock already can be observed where Reddie Dr. intersects Georgia Avenue and Grandview Avenue. This gridlock will get even worse if Reddie Dr. remains open as future traffic is certain to increase.

WUDAC requests that an alternative to the current plan be considered that preserves the integrity of the town square. For example, Reddie Drive could be closed between Triangle Lane and Grandview Avenue. Traffic on Reddie Dr. after it crosses Georgia Ave. would become one-way and then turn right on to Triangle Lane, which already is a one-way street. Cars would be able to park at shops along Triangle Lane or circumnavigate the new buildings to Grandview Avenue where they could turn left toward underground parking or right toward University Blvd.

WUDAC believes that the current plan needs to be revised to ensure the safety of pedestrians using the town square, Metro, and buses and to prevent a permanent traffic jam in the heart of Wheaton. WUDAC urges planners to reconsider the closure of Reddie Dr. and the

rerouting of traffic around the town square and new buildings. We respectfully request a written response to WUDAC's concerns about preserving the integrity of the town square and its recommendation that Reddie Dr. be closed between Triangle Lane and Grandview Avenue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henri St. Gerard". The signature is written in a cursive style with some stylized flourishes.

Henriot St. Gerard  
Chair  
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC)



WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

Ana L. van Balen  
Director

October 15, 2013

Al Roshdiah  
Deputy Director  
Department of Transportation  
101 Monroe Street  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear Mr. Roshdiah,

The Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC) is writing to submit the following letter and urge a timely and thorough consideration on our thoughts on the community's collective vision of Wheaton and the redevelopment of Lot 13 and the Regional Services Center (RSC) site. Specifically, WUDAC offers comments on: 1) the location and layout of the town square, 2) traffic, and 3) ensuring that the final product is a warm and thoughtful development that capitalizes on Lot 13's location as the heart of a redeveloped Wheaton.

WUDAC consists of a representative cross-section of the Wheaton community, including homeowners, small businesses, and large businesses. The story of the Wheaton redevelopment effort has extended for well over a decade. At the center of the community's redevelopment effort has been the push for a new town square on Lot 13. As the chapter with the B.F. Saul development closed in early 2012, the Wheaton community advocated for a commitment from the County to ensure that any future development provided for a vibrant town square on Lot 13. The Wheaton community received this commitment, evidenced in the 2012 Montgomery County's Wheaton Redevelopment Program CIP – N. 150401, which states that "the [Wheaton Redevelopment Program] provides for a town square on Parking Lot 13 that is at least 1/3 the area of the site." The May 2013 Amended Wheaton Redevelopment CIP also includes this commitment.

Throughout the redevelopment process, WUDAC has expressed continued concern with any proposal that creates a town square not located on Lot 13. During the September 18, 2013, presentation by StonebridgeCarras/Buzzuto, the developers explained that the elevation change of the RSC site made it difficult to utilize the area for the park and planning building. WUDAC feels that this is not a sufficient enough of an explanation to not have the town square on Lot 13. A town square on the RSC site will be surrounded by an active bus transit area to the south, the WMATA-owned land patch to the east, vehicular traffic on Reddie Drive to the north, and a garbage staging area to the west. This option is not in line with the look and feel of an attractive space for a town square. **WUDAC cannot endorse the current rendering and any other proposal that does not provide a comprehensive explanation as to why a town square on Lot 13 is not possible.**

Of equal concern is the current proposal's design to have Reddie Drive bisect the town square while remaining open to vehicular traffic. **WUDAC strongly advocates for a continuous town square that is uninterrupted by a street and vehicular traffic, regardless of its final location.** There are a number of advantageous reasons for a continuous town square, including pedestrian safety and the opportunity to connect the town square to the retail along Grandview and Triangle Lane. To this end,

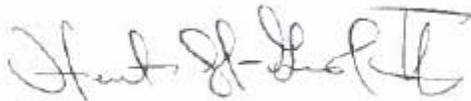
WUDAC urges developers to consider eliminating Reedie Drive between Grandview Avenue and Triangle Lane. Not only would this solve the issue of having a town square split by vehicular traffic, it could also generate creative ideas for the use of additional land space made available by removing this portion of Reedie Drive.<sup>1</sup> For example, one can consider construction of the Park and Planning building<sup>2</sup> on the RSC site that includes the additional land from Reedie Drive and parts of Lot 13, and placing the town square entirely on Lot 13 between the Park and Planning Building and the Buzzoto development.

WUDAC understands that this new chapter for Wheaton redevelopment is only beginning. We also know that the renderings presented to the community are not final. At the same time, the decisions made in the coming months will alter Wheaton's landscape for decades. WUDAC's message has been consistent throughout the entire process, and the comments above are not only reflective of WUDAC, but also come from the countless informal sessions and comments received from the community. In turn, WUDAC adds the following three requests:

- 1) That the Wheaton community continue to receive timely project updates;
- 2) Honest and thorough explanations on final decisions and the deliberation process with regards to all aspects of redevelopment; and
- 3) For the developers to sincerely engage the community to understand what components will make this project innovative and one that is true to Wheaton's character.

Community engagement in the redevelopment process has always been a top priority and WUDAC insists on continued and open dialogue. We encourage and urge developers to seriously take the suggestions outlined in this letter under consideration. We also invite you to utilize WUDAC to assist you with your outreach to the community. Please contact me or Ana Lopez van Balen if you have any questions or want to begin a dialogue with WUDAC. We also invite you to our monthly meetings on the second Tuesday of the month at 6pm. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Regards,



Henriot St. Gerard  
Chair  
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC)

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<sup>1</sup> Another intriguing option that was discussed was to close Reedie Drive between Grandview Ave and Triangle Lane, while simultaneously creating the underground garage access points at the terminus of the "new" Reedie Drive. This could help alleviate some of the traffic concerns with the current proposal's utilization of Grandview Avenue and Triangle Lane to access the new "alley" that would be created to access the underground garage.

<sup>2</sup> While much of this letter focuses on the town square, WUDAC also urges the Wheaton redevelopment team to ensure that this project serve as a catalyst for future private development. For example, many members of WUDAC have expressed concern that the park and planning building proposal has no additional commercial space that would house private firms that desire to be located next to park and planning.