

PLAN SUMMARY

This Plan is a Comprehensive Amendment to the 1978 Sector Plan for the Wheaton Central Business District and Vicinity. This Plan Amendment specifically addresses the Wheaton Central Business District and certain areas directly adjacent to it. There are no proposed changes to the Central Business District boundary adopted in 1978. The Sector Plan boundary has been changed to add two blocks on the southeast side of Dayton Street adjacent to the Wheaton Forest Recreation Center. These two blocks, which are part of the Wheaton Forest community, were inadvertently left out of the 1978 Sector Plan.

The business core of Wheaton is, in the full sense of that term, one of the region's marketplaces. It is the retail center for a large urban area encompassing portions of Montgomery and Prince George's Counties in Maryland and a portion of the District of Columbia. It offers a range of shops and services which is among the largest and most diverse in the Washington area.

The business core can be thought of in three distinct components: the Marketplace, the Metro Center and Wheaton Plaza. Wheaton's marketplace is unique and valuable for a number of important reasons. It is smaller than other Central Business Districts and easier to understand and use. Its land uses, primarily retail and service oriented, are compact and well organized. It has been the center providing local shopping and services for nearly one-half century. Many of the businesses in Wheaton grew up there and have made a significant contribution to the valued traditions of the area. It has continued to flourish, even after its companion, Wheaton Plaza, began operations. It enjoys a tremendous advantage in being at the crossroads of Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Veirs Mill Road. It is a vital, active center, busy with shoppers making day-to-day purchases and patronizing the many unusual shops and fine restaurants.

The Metro Center area consists of three blocks including, and immediately adjacent to, the new bus terminal and Metrorail station. Transit-related uses will occupy large portions of the street-level activity in this area. Both existing and future conditions favor concentrating the limited redevelopment potential in Wheaton to the Metro Center.

Wheaton Plaza is an important element in the retail character of Wheaton. As a mall with strong regional attraction, Wheaton Plaza complements the predominantly local service retail establishments in the CBD. This Plan attempts to unify the retail components of Wheaton by creating linkage between the Marketplace and Wheaton Plaza.

Wheaton's business district is being given a host of opportunities, perhaps the most significant of which is the coming Metrorail transit system, which will link Wheaton to the rest of the Washington Metropolitan Area with new high speed public mass transportation. This system offers a great opportunity for expanding the vitality of the Wheaton Marketplace, the Metro Center, and

Wheaton Plaza and for building upon the new accessibility opportunities the rail transit system brings.

The goals of this Sector Plan are:

- to reinforce the Wheaton Marketplace by preserving the existing scale of development and retaining as much of the mix of goods and services as possible;
- to permit some growth -- redevelopment in the Metro Center area and moderate expansion of Wheaton Plaza and in the Marketplace -- without sacrificing the qualities of livability that give Wheaton its special character;
- to provide additional new housing to take advantage of improved accessibility brought about by the coming of Metrorail;
- to ensure that the Metro rapid rail transit line is part of an improved public transportation system designed to induce travelers to use public means rather than private automobiles for inter- and intra-County movements; and
- to preserve and protect the existing residential communities adjoining to the Wheaton business area.

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

Land Use and Zoning

This Plan:

- recommends use of an overlay zone to preserve the "Marketplace" and the existing scale of development by balancing new growth and retail retention;
- recommends policies and programs that would help to retain as many existing businesses as possible;
- encourages new residential and mixed-use development around the Metro station and in other areas of high transit accessibility;
- recommends the development of new housing adjacent to the Metro station and at other locations in the Sector Plan area;
- recommends that established residential communities be protected from traffic, noise, commuter parking, and other undesirable intrusions; and
- provides urban design guidelines that encourage the development of a safe, convenient, and attractive pedestrian environment and that strengthens circulation among activity centers.

Transportation Plan

This Plan:

- anticipates the arrival of Metrorail and the expansion of bus service in Wheaton;
- recommends roadway improvements that improve the flow of traffic to, within, and through Wheaton;

- recommends a system of public and private walkways for pedestrian movement; and
- recommends the protection of residential communities from autos, trucks, through traffic and commuter parking.

Community Facilities Plan

This Plan:

- encourages new development to provide attractive open spaces;
- recommends "Boulevards" and a pedestrian network that will tie the open spaces together;
- recommends the provision of child care facilities at appropriate locations; and
- encourages the provision of public services which meet the needs of the community.

Historic Preservation Plan

This Plan:

- recommends the WTOP Transmission Building for designation on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation with a reduced environmental setting.