

**SECTOR PLAN FOR THE  
WHEATON  
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT**

# SECTOR PLAN FOR THE WHEATON CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

## PLAN VISION

The vision statement sets forth the aspirations of this planning effort. In the future, this vision, along with the Plan's goals and objectives, should be used when the Plan is amended or interpreted. The vision statement is written in the present tense, as if the Plan were describing Wheaton today. The statement should be read as describing what we wish Wheaton to become in the next 20 years.

### **We Envision:**

#### ***Wheaton as one of the County's economic centers...***

Wheaton remains a Marketplace in the metropolitan area's economy. A wide diversity of activities flourish and provide shopping and employment opportunities. Here is found a community center for shopping, finance, services, and government activities. The area contains a strong retail center that offers one of the most diverse range of goods and services in Montgomery County.

#### ***and as one of the County's transportation centers...***

A diverse transportation system serves the County and supports Wheaton's growth but does not dominate the area. A regional bus and rail system links Wheaton with the surrounding metropolitan area. The CBD is not only a major destination, but also is a significant transfer point for transit passengers. Driving to and within Wheaton is pleasant, and parking is available for those needing to travel by car. Walking and bicycling are also pleasurable means of travel on attractive, convenient and safe routes which tie together the Central Business District and adjacent neighborhoods. Residential communities surrounding the Central Business District are protected from the noise and congestion of through traffic and commuter parking.

#### ***a place for people...***

Throughout Wheaton a human scale is maintained. Existing structures are surrounded by compatible new development. The skyline has grown. Around the Metro station a number of architecturally distinctive buildings have been added. Interesting buildings are found in the Marketplace area where designers have carefully reinforced the special identity and character of this part of Wheaton.

Wheaton is a vital, exciting, and active place which operates 18 hours a day. The Marketplace area sidewalks are lined with shops and are full of people. Office and residential buildings sit among plazas and streets lined with trees. Tree-lined walks reinforce a network of clean, green spaces. Open spaces offering an opportunity for rest and relaxation are found throughout the Central Business District. Streets, sidewalks, plazas, and parks are free from litter, richly planted, and well maintained.

***a good place to live...***

A wide choice of housing types and prices is available for a diversity of lifestyles and incomes. Residential development is clustered in neighborhoods where the needs of the residents for goods and services, including social services, can be met. Opportunities for socializing, recreation, quiet, and solitude are all close at hand, as are facilities and events which enrich the mind and spirit.

***where we work together...***

The public and private sectors work together pursuing the continued strengthening and growth of Wheaton's diverse employment base and activities. County government provides leadership in promoting and implementing public policy. Government is willing and able to respond quickly, creatively, and efficiently to provide ways to meet the challenges facing the community. The private sector actively helps in decision-making and adds its talent to help solve community problems.

Wheaton is a safe, secure environment for all its citizens. Cultural and ethnic diversity is celebrated and protected. County government encourages business, civic, and neighborhood organizations to participate in the decision-making process and in helping it evaluate the successes and failures of its planning.

***and above all, we envision a livable Wheaton!***

## THE CONCEPT PLAN

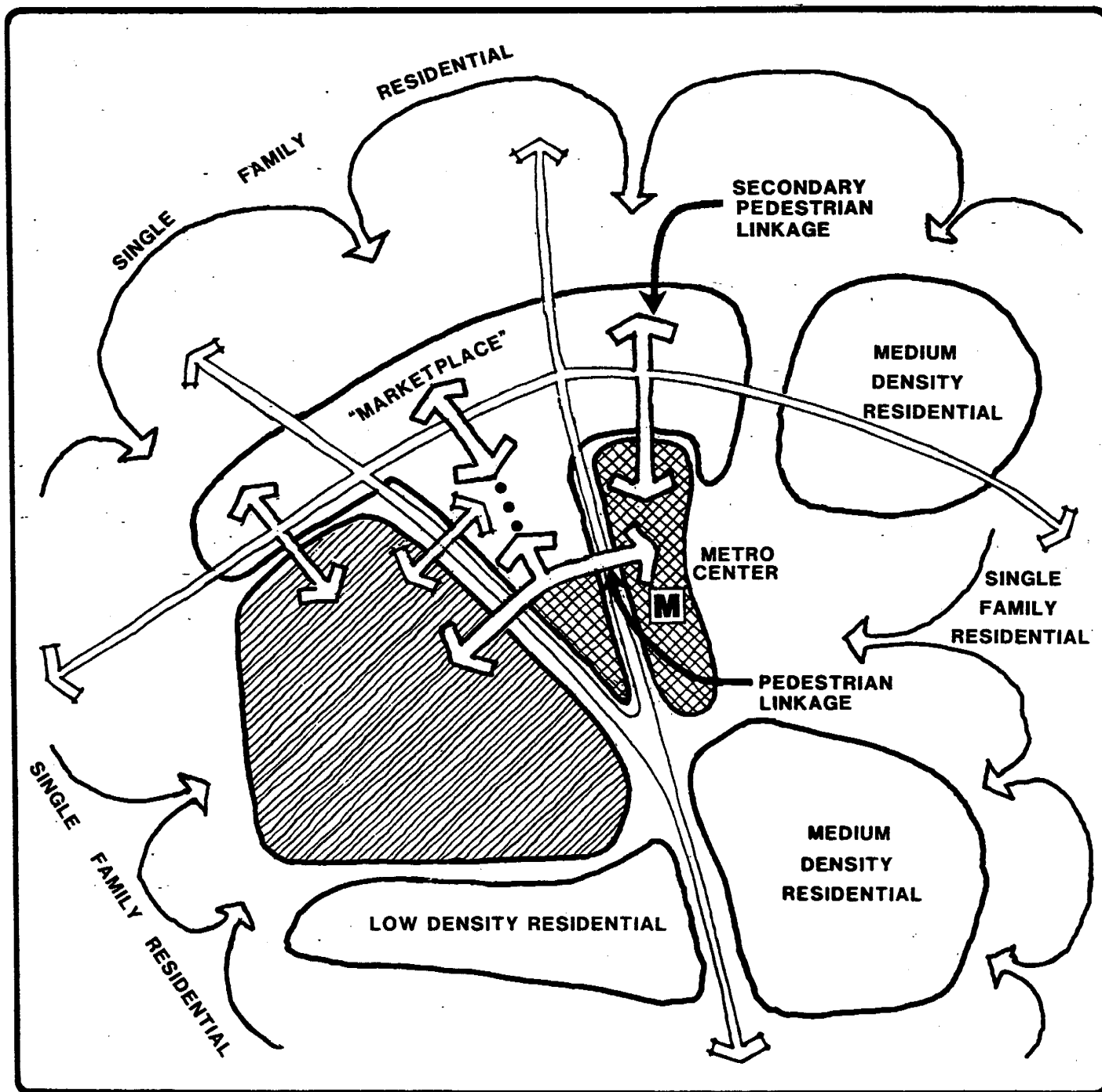
In November 1988, staff prepared an Issues and Alternative Paper for the Wheaton area. This paper provided an opportunity to identify and examine the major concerns expressed by the people who live, work, shop, and own property in the Wheaton business area. It also provided a means for discussing alternatives for the future of Wheaton.

The alternatives presented a range of development intensity that could be implemented to guide the future of Wheaton. The Suburban Retail Alternative represented the low development scale and consisted primarily of low intensity retail and single-family residential "infill." The mid-range was the Marketplace proposal which was an expanded office-retail "core" adjacent to the Metro station and an expansion of retail uses. The Urban Center Alternative represented the high-range option. This concept would encourage the redevelopment of a substantial part of Wheaton.

The alternatives discussed in the Issues and Alternatives Paper were not regarded as recommended solutions. Their purpose was to foster discussion and dialogue which took place in many meetings throughout the community. None of the alternatives presented in the paper, by itself, ultimately became the Sector Plan. Rather, parts of the Marketplace proposal were selected, refined, modified and ultimately formed the basis for the recommendations in the Plan.

The Concept Plan is intended to summarize the major elements of the Sector Plan. The Plan recognizes complementary concentrations for the organization of development in Wheaton. The area around the Metro station should develop with the highest intensity of new activities. This focus, or "Metro Center," would be an area of mixed uses, including high density residential and office activities, a range of services, and retail development scaled to serve the surrounding population. Linked to this new development is the Marketplace, the traditional retail area in Wheaton. This area is characterized by the existing scale of development and a variety of retail and service uses. Wheaton Plaza, a major regional retail center, should be strengthened as an integral part of the Wheaton business area. Wheaton Plaza provides a "magnet," or anchor, on the western end of Reedie Drive. The Metro station itself is an attraction on the eastern side of Georgia Avenue at Reedie Drive. In between are the shops and services in the Wheaton Triangle, or Marketplace. Major linkages should be created to tie together the Metro center area, the Marketplace, and the regionally-oriented Plaza. These linkages could include grade-separated or improved at-grade pedestrian walkways across Veirs Mill Road, Georgia Avenue and University Boulevard.

The County's Commercial Revitalization Program and Facade Easement Program would continue well into the future. These programs would continue to reinforce the retail function in Wheaton as an urban marketplace. The physical improvements already begun would be continued in other parts of the Marketplace. Public expenditures would focus on the development of amenities previously lacking and the undergrounding of utilities. Wheaton would continue to provide a variety of goods and services that cannot be found elsewhere in the eastern part of Montgomery County. Through public action the Marketplace would be encouraged to remain as a concentration of retail and service uses.



CONCEPT PLAN

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PLANNING AREA

The large vacant tracts of land on the fringes of the business areas should be developed with low and moderate density residential uses (single-family detached units, townhouses, and garden apartments). Community facilities and services would be developed, as needed, on scattered sites to serve both new and existing development.

The area to the east of the Metro station is an established low density residential community. This is a physically stable area and should be protected from traffic, noise, and other undesirable intrusions. New residential development adjacent to the community should be compatible with the scale and density of existing homes.

In a similar fashion, the area to the north and west of the business area is predominantly single-family residential. Parcels adjacent to University Boulevard and Georgia Avenue are under increasing pressure for various non-residential activities. These residential communities should be maintained and protected as residential communities.

The Metro rapid rail system will be part of an improved public transportation system designed to induce the use of public transit rather than private automobiles. The Wheaton Metro station will be provided with feeder and circulation bus service to serve low density residential neighborhoods adjacent to the Central Business District.

Through traffic will continue to be channeled into the main arterials which travel through the Central Business District. A local system will be designated to channel traffic directly to destinations or parking facilities. Convenient, adequate public parking should be provided to serve retail and service activities and Metro.

Programs and actions (both public and private) should continue to upgrade the physical environment of the business areas. In order to improve the vitality of the retail environment, revitalization efforts should focus on the creation and development of amenities now lacking, including street furniture, signing and lighting, continuity of walking areas, sitting and resting places, landscaping, and cleaner, safer sidewalks.

## GOALS

Foremost among the goals of the Plan is achieving a realistic balance between the development potential that exists in Wheaton and the traffic carrying capacity of both Metro and the street system which leads into and serves Wheaton. It is important to coordinate growth with public expenditures in order to maximize the effectiveness of new development and to prevent commercial encroachment and traffic spillover into adjacent neighborhoods, thus preserving them from deterioration.

This approach serves several purposes. It helps to ensure the economic success of the rapid transit system, in which a substantial public investment is being made, by linking closely the transit system with its potential users. Simultaneously, it provides the basis for establishing both an order and a reasonable limit to the development that will occur in the business area, ensuring that new growth is scaled to the facilities which exist to service it.

Several planning goals emerge from this approach. These goals will guide the development of the Wheaton Business District and protect the adjoining neighborhoods. These goals form the basic framework upon which this Sector Plan is built.

The goals of this Plan are to:

- Reinforce the Marketplace by preserving the existing scale of development and retaining as much of the mix of goods and services as possible.
- Provide additional new housing and a range of housing opportunities to serve a broad spectrum of the metropolitan population. A variety of housing types would help to satisfy a demand for housing that may not be available in other parts of the County. A combination of apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes can expand the age and family size mix in Wheaton. An increase in the local population base can generate greater support for retail establishments, entertainment and recreation facilities, restaurants, and the like. New residential development should be encouraged to ensure the viability of the business areas.
- Permit some growth without sacrificing the qualities of livability that give Wheaton its special character.
- 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. The Wheaton Metro station should be provided with circulation and parking improvements that would facilitate transit and auto access.
- Ensure that road improvements will facilitate access to and minimize disruption in the business area. The heavy volumes of through traffic should be separated, where possible, from local traffic movements.
- Provide convenient and adequate off-street parking with a maximum of shared use among different facilities. Parking should be located within a minimum walking distance to any desired destination. Massive paved areas should be avoided and, where feasible, parking should be developed in structure.
- Improve pedestrian access to the various parts of Wheaton.
- Protect the existing fabric of low density single-family homes adjoining the Wheaton business area.