

background

Thumbnail History

Wheaton, a rural community until after World War II, became a suburban community when new neighborhoods, such as Monterey Village, Wheaton Hills, Wheaton Crest, and Wheaton Forest, offered affordable houses on curving, tree-lined streets to post-war families. The opening of Montgomery County's first shopping mall, Wheaton Plaza, in 1957 was evidence that Wheaton had fully flowered as a 20th century suburban community.

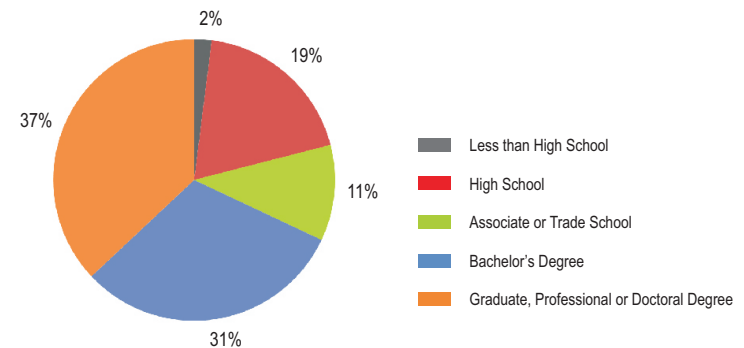
The population grew to approximately 66,000 by 1970. After the 1970s, however, the growth slowed and buildings, constructed in the 1950s and 1960s, began to show their age. The 1978 Sector Plan, undertaken to evaluate the impact of a new Metro station, recommended CBD zoning to spur growth. The 1990 Sector Plan recommended a Retail Preservation Overlay Zone on a portion of the CBD to manage the effects of potential growth on the small retail businesses that are so central to Wheaton's character.

The Wheaton Community

Wheaton's diversity is reflected in its people and businesses. Over one-third of Wheaton's population is foreign born. Wheaton's most prominent race and ethnic groups are African American (25 percent), Hispanic (14 percent), and Asian (12 percent). Together, these groups make up 51 percent of Wheaton's population. Foreign-born residents have come from Ethiopia, Nigeria, Ghana, China, Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Korea, India, Pakistan, Lebanon, Mexico, El Salvador, Peru, Brazil, and the West Indies, among others. Asian and Latino restaurants and grocery stores stand alongside long-standing businesses, such as Marchone's Italian Deli and Little Bitts, a baking supply store.

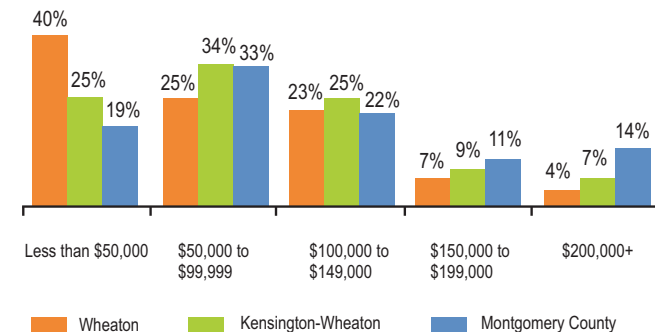
Many residents of Wheaton's multifamily buildings are young and educated. Almost 70 percent of the population over the age of 25 has at least a bachelor's degree, which is a higher concentration than found Countywide. A substantial block (45 percent) of adults aged 18-44, who are typically single or young families without children, live in Wheaton. They spend more of their disposable income on shopping, eating out, and entertainment than families with children. At the same time, the area's senior population is declining. Wheaton has a higher proportion of low-income residents than the County as a whole, and a much higher proportion that use transit rather than driving.

Educational Attainment
Wheaton Household Population
Age 25 and Over









Source: M-NCPPC 2008 Census Update Survey

2007 Household Income Distribution



Source: M-NCPPC 2008 Census Update Survey

Issues

-  Wheaton Metro Station
-  Central Business District
-  Wheaton Retail Preservation Overlay Zone
-  Poor Pedestrian Access
-  Parking Garages
-  Major Road



Even in periods of regional economic growth, Wheaton has been stagnant.

- a weak local office market
- property ownership patterns that discourage assemblage
- competition at other Metro stations in the region

Usefulness of the Overlay Zone

- CBD zone constrains infill development
- Retail Preservation Overlay Zone seen as impediment to revitalization

Physical Environment

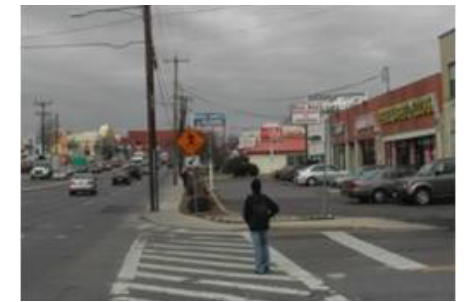
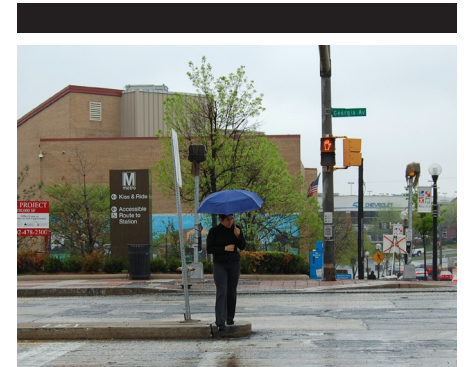
- Poor quality public realm (streets, sidewalks, open space, and architecture)
- Gaps in the street edge and buildings
- Many buildings need upgrading
- Inadequate pedestrian connections
- Auto-oriented layout
- Mall site not designed for pedestrian access
- No well-designed, centrally located public spaces

Marketing Identity







- Merchants organizations have not focused on Wheaton's small businesses
- Office market lacks signature buildings and large tenants

Parking

- Short-term public parking discourages one-stop shopping
- Lack of conveniently located parking garages



Opportunities

-  Wheaton Metro Station
-  Ride On
-  WMATA
-  County-Owned Parcels
 - 1. Mid-County Regional Services Center
 - 2. Parking Lot 13
 - 3. Parking Lot 34
 - 4. Parking Lot 33
 - 5. Parking Lot 14
 - 6. Parking Lot 17
 - 7. Parking Garage 45
-  M-NCPPC-Owned Parcel
 - 8. Wheaton Veterans Urban Park
-  WMATA-Owned Parcels
 - 9. Bus Bays
 - 10. WMATA Garage



Regional and Specialty Retail

- Regional draws, e.g., Westfield Wheaton Mall
- Specialty retail, e.g., Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center
- Mix of ethnic restaurants and retail
- Space for small businesses

Transportation Connections

- Metro Red Line
- Ride On and WMATA bus routes

Affordability

- Land prices lower than other CBDs
- Retail rents lower than other CBDs

Public and Private Revitalization Potential

- 11 acres of publicly owned properties
- Lot 13—centrally located
- Key private properties

Revitalization Programs

- Wheaton Redevelopment Program
- Wheaton Urban District
- Small business assistance
- Arts and Entertainment District
- State Enterprise Zone



Map 2 Urban District



Urban District

Wheaton Urban District is a special taxing district that enables the County to provide services including security, streetscape maintenance, tree maintenance, sidewalk repairs, marketing, and event programming. The Urban District maintains Wheaton in a clean, safe and attractive manner to promote a vibrant social and business environment and long-term economic viability and vitality. It is a mechanism already in place to achieve some of the Plan's recommendations.

Map 3 Parking Lot District



Parking Lot District

Wheaton's Parking Lot District (PLD) provides public surface, on-street, and structured parking throughout downtown Wheaton. Property owners in the district pay an ad valorem tax (rates based on property value) to the PLD. The existence of the PLD facilitates the Plan's recommendation for reduced or shared parking in new development.

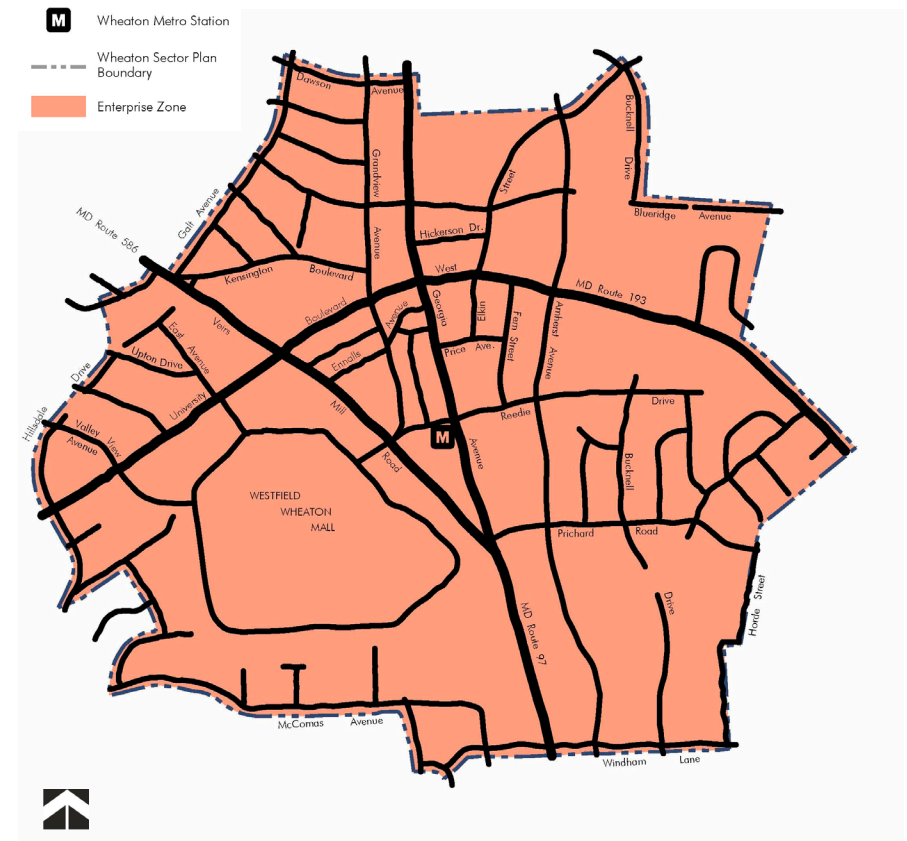
Map 4 Arts and Entertainment District



Arts and Entertainment District

Wheaton's State-designated Arts and Entertainment District offers a ten-year tax credit that reduces the increase in County property tax when properties are reassessed after new construction or renovation. The credit applies to manufacturing, commercial, or industrial buildings built or renovated for a qualifying residency artist, or for an arts and entertainment business including live-work space for artists.

Map 5 Enterprise Zone



Enterprise Zone

The entire Plan area is an Enterprise Zone, a State economic development program that provides tax incentives to eligible businesses locating or expanding in designated zones. Program benefits include school and transportation impact tax waivers, real estate property tax credits, income tax credits for new job creation, and an exemption from Washington Sanitary Sewer Commission (WSSC) systems development charges.

Map 6 Proposed Priority Retail Streets

