

## revitalization strategy

Both short- and long-term public strategies will be needed to reawaken interest in redevelopment and pave the way for investment. The County and WMATA own a significant amount of land in the Wheaton CBD, which should be used to spur redevelopment activity.

### Public Use Space as a Catalyst

An important element in creating the perception of desirability, which is essential to expand an office or residential market, is to have active public use spaces in the right locations. Wheaton is fortunate to have parking lots and other publicly owned land that can provide short-term, low-cost space for outdoor community activity. Inexpensive improvements could establish interim open spaces on publically owned land to enliven Wheaton for public gatherings and other active uses until permanent open spaces are created through redevelopment and public/private partnerships.

- Use public properties in the Core, Blueridge, and Price Districts (Parking Lots 13, 14, and 17) to create temporary spaces for festivals, art exhibitions, outdoor movie theaters, outdoor cafes and eating areas, dances, and musical performances.

### Encouraging Street Level Activity

Street level retail activates sidewalks and promotes community interaction. The Plan recommends that if new mixed-use development occurs along designated Priority Retail Streets, the street level uses should be a variety of retail types to create active streets. The County's Wheaton Redevelopment Office and Department of Economic Development should work with property owners to attract a variety of retailers to the CBD and the Westfield Wheaton Mall.



Because retail is dynamic, the Wheaton Redevelopment Office should review and refresh County policies and incentives for small retailers in Wheaton to stay current.

Existing programs should consider:

- initiating an action plan, with property and business owners, that provides strategies and recommendations to attract and retain retail businesses
- forming a Wheaton merchants, small business, and property owners association to implement the retail action plan
- launching an advertising campaign developed jointly by the County, small businesses, Westfield Wheaton Mall, and the Wheaton-Kensington Chamber of Commerce
- working with landlords on guidelines for the upkeep and appearance of retail storefronts and restaurants extending streetscaping through the development review process and the County's Capital Improvements Program
- creating a community development corporation to help implement revitalization strategies, including a small retail business incubator, such as a covered food market.

### **Developing a Nighttime Economy**

A well-managed nighttime economy is critical to revitalization. Popular restaurants and nightlife can lead revitalization and create the initial foot traffic that will support expanded shopping hours and reduce crime. Nighttime venues also create jobs and enhance quality of life. The development community has identified housing near transit for young professionals and empty-nesters, and urban amenities such as ethnic restaurants and entertainment, as assets. Expanding these aspects of downtown Wheaton requires cooperation between businesses, the residential community, and County government to ensure a lively and safe atmosphere.

- Expand the Urban District's program to include coordinating music and entertainment in downtown Wheaton:
  - improve communication and cooperation between musicians, venues, residents, and the County
  - promote public services, public safety and policies, and efficiency in regulatory, licensing, and permitting procedures
  - enhance promotion for performances and culturally-themed events
  - locate funding sources for local, independent, non-profit organizations, and other groups that support music interests
  - develop a "good neighbor agreement" that establishes standards and expectations for late-night establishments, to maintain a high quality of life for nearby residents and businesses
  - mediate conflicts between the operators of nighttime establishments and those affected by them
  - support marketing efforts that bring residents and visitors to the Wheaton CBD for culture and food.
- Evaluate and amend County codes and regulations to ensure that eating and drinking establishments can serve on sidewalks in the public right-of-way.
- Use the Urban District to provide maintenance and other services.
- Support community policing to maintain public safety.
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) reviews should be incorporated into redevelopment efforts.

## **County Redevelopment Program and Private Investment**

The Wheaton Redevelopment Office is the lead public entity tasked with revitalizing the Wheaton CBD. Wheaton has 10 publicly-owned properties (see page 26) with development potential held by Montgomery County, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The sites total 11.70 acres and are all within a 1,200-foot radius of the Metro station.

The County is pursuing development opportunities through partnerships with private developers to create mixed-use developments on County-owned properties in Wheaton to spur revitalization. Public/private development projects on Parking Lots 13, 14, and 17 should include permanent public use space somewhere within the projects. The exact location of public use spaces will be determined during the development review process.

If the public parking lots are redeveloped, the County must be reimbursed for the land value and current and future parking needs must be met. Land value could be captured through a variety of mechanisms including equity in a public/private partnership, bond reimbursement, or selling air rights. Structured parking anticipated as part of any redevelopment will meet parking needs

New development resulting from public-private partnerships should be consistent with Plan objectives and should:

- contribute to the overall economic and environmental sustainability of Wheaton
- create mixed-use development to achieve a better balance of residential and commercial uses in the CBD
- in the Core District, include a mix of office, retail, and some residential uses
- significantly improve the CBD's public realm
- provide better pedestrian connectivity and support safe, secure, and appealing street level activity
- ensure quality public use spaces benefiting the whole community
- integrate and connect Westfield Wheaton Mall with the center of the CBD
- provide a housing mix that includes moderate-income housing, workforce housing, and live-work units such as artist studios
- create opportunities to help retain and grow local small businesses
- encourage new businesses including nighttime entertainment, restaurants, and a variety of boutique retail establishments
- employ smart growth principles and construct LEED-certified buildings.



## **Map 7 Proposed Public/Private Partnership Properties**



## **Establishing Public Use Spaces**

The recommended CR Zones allow contributions for public parks and public use space projects in lieu of on-site provisions (see Implementation). In Wheaton, contributions should be used to help provide public use spaces that will generate the most public benefit, consolidating smaller spaces into larger ones in the most desirable locations.

Redevelopment of Parking Lots 13, 14, and 17 offers opportunities to create public use spaces with locations to be determined during the development review process. In addition to the Plan's recommended parks and public use spaces (see map 8, page 28), other public use spaces, required to meet zoning standards, will be provided as redevelopment occurs.

- Create a major civic space for community-wide events in the vicinity of Parking Lot 13.
  - Responsibility for owning, managing, and operating the Parking Lot 13 space should be determined during the development review process. Ownership by the Department of Parks should be considered. If the Department of Parks owns the space, it should be acquired as a capital improvement project or dedicated through a turn-key arrangement, as part of a public/private partnership.
- Create a public use space in the vicinity of Parking Lot 14 in the Blueridge District.
- Create a public use space in the vicinity of Parking Lot 17 in the Price District.

**Map 8 Urban Design Concept**

