

wheaton's future

Wheaton is envisioned as a major mixed-use center for the Georgia Avenue corridor and eastern Montgomery County. It will have regional shopping, culturally diverse retail and entertainment, business and government services, and transit-oriented residential and office uses that serve a population with a broad range of incomes.

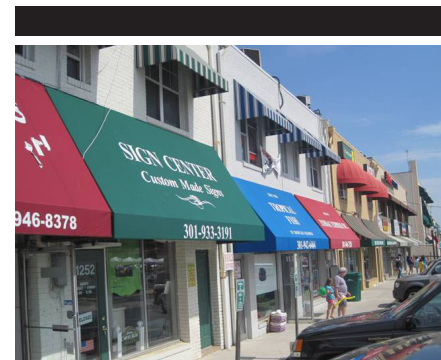
This Plan's task is to build on Wheaton's strengths and encourage investment while maintaining its special character. The Plan's recommendations capitalize on the role of Metro and Wheaton as a regional transit hub to promote high-density, high-quality growth and redevelopment in the business core. Wheaton will emerge as a mixed-use Central Business District (CBD) with new development that blends with existing small and family-owned businesses.

Another redevelopment goal should be to reduce energy consumption and make Wheaton a more green and sustainable place. For example, providing transportation alternatives can reduce vehicle miles traveled and the community's carbon footprint.

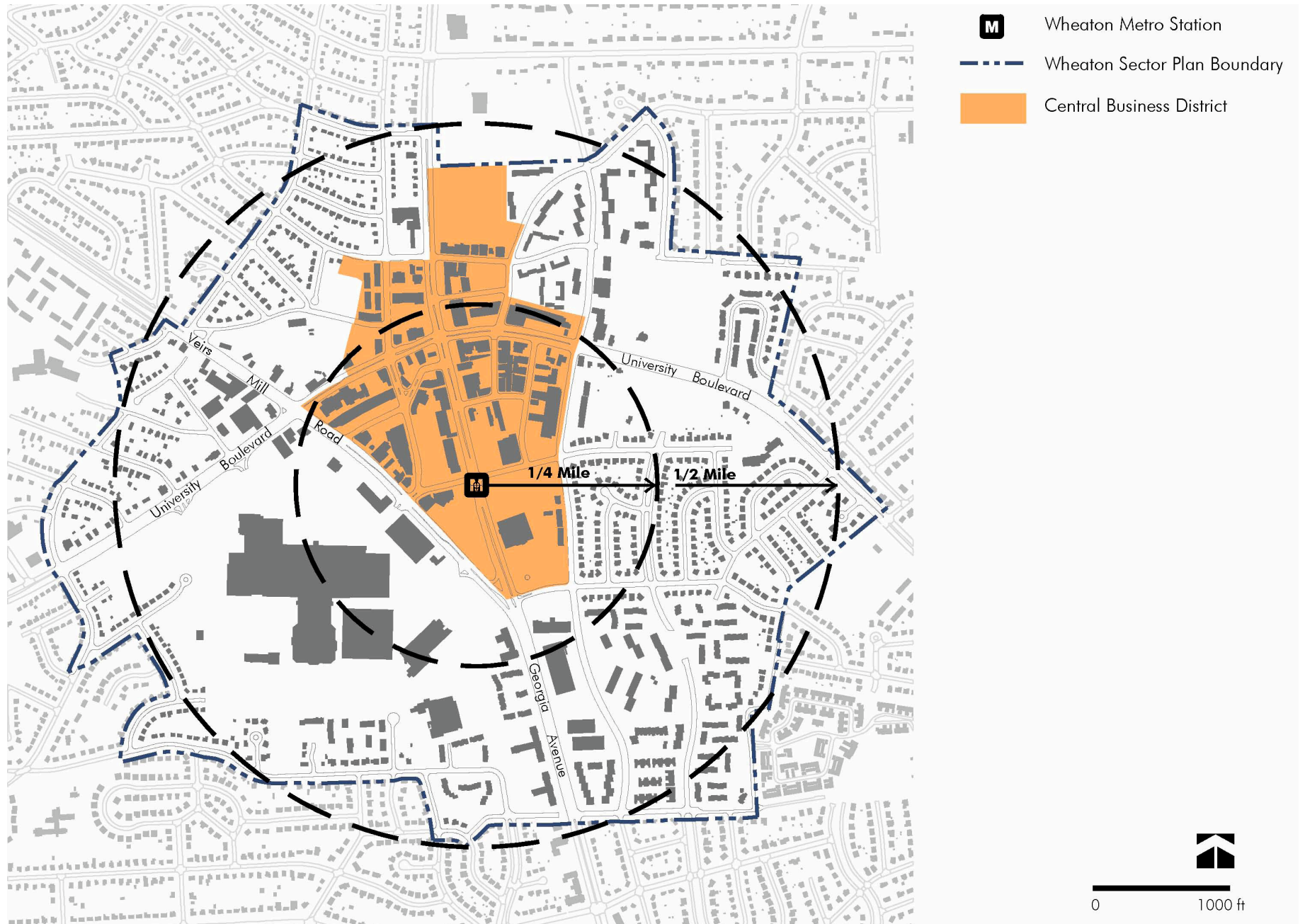
Wheaton's Role in the County

Wheaton has:

- varied local and specialty retail uses
- a regional mall
- proximity to Metro
- access to I-495 and the District of Columbia
- broad housing choices
- environmental features including portions of the Sligo Creek (of the Upper Anacostia) and Rock Creek watersheds.



Map 1 Sector Plan Area



Wheaton is a specialized urban center, serving local and regional retail demand. Its small, post-World War II housing makes it a draw for newcomers to the community. It is a transit hub and crossroads.

Wheaton is located at the intersection of three roads: University Boulevard West, a major east-west road; Georgia Avenue, a major north-south corridor; and Veirs Mill Road, which connects Wheaton to Rockville and MD 355. A significant amount of traffic moves through Wheaton to and from I-270, one of the County's employment corridors. Wheaton can capture work trips by providing more employment opportunities east of I-270. Wheaton of the future will provide a full set of services, employment, and housing opportunities for the eastern part of the County.

By creating a more diverse local economy and building on the existing diverse uses, Wheaton can enhance its role as a shopping destination that includes independent and national retailers, ethnic restaurants, and unique local small business offerings. By providing opportunities for increased density and expanding the connections between the CBD, the regional mall and surrounding residential communities, Wheaton is positioned to become a future growth area for the County.

To ensure a sustainable economy in Wheaton, new land uses must be balanced with the existing, predominantly retail uses to increase daytime population. New office space should be encouraged as it would attract different kinds of businesses and jobs. More employees and more residential development will provide customers for local services and businesses. Redevelopment may displace some existing businesses, but it will also create more demand for specialty retail and small businesses. This Plan encourages preservation of space for small businesses in new mixed-use developments.





This Plan makes recommendations based on four overarching principles.

- Wheaton’s **diversity** is unique among County business centers. Its housing stock, businesses, and people reflect diverse incomes and cultures. The Plan seeks to capitalize on this diversity by zoning for mixed-use development that will provide new customers to support the retail and service sector, the current mainstay of Wheaton’s economy.
- Improving **connectivity** within and beyond the Plan area with expanded pedestrian connections, a better street grid, and a bikeway network will allow Wheaton to maximize its potential as a downtown. They will link the Plan’s proposed network of flexible “activity-generating-people-places,” created in the short-term on publicly owned land and in the longer term through the development process. Better links will also connect the CBD with adjoining neighborhoods and the larger market area.
- **Design** is critical to create active and safe public spaces, including streets, to enhance Wheaton’s sense of place while adding value to the surrounding neighborhoods.
- The natural and built **environments** can be improved through development that reduces energy consumption, contributes to the restoration of Wheaton Branch of Sligo Creek and the Silver Creek tributary of Rock Creek, and that provides better stormwater management, greater tree canopy, and walkable streets.

Redevelopment Potential

Table 1 Estimated Development and Jobs-Housing Ratio				
	Existing (2008)	Existing plus Pipeline	1990 Plan estimate	Total estimated for the 2011 Draft Plan
Jobs	10,200	10,210	13,490	13,200
Housing	2,000	2,588	3,165	6,600
J-H Ratio	5.1:1	3.9:1	4.3:1	2.0:1

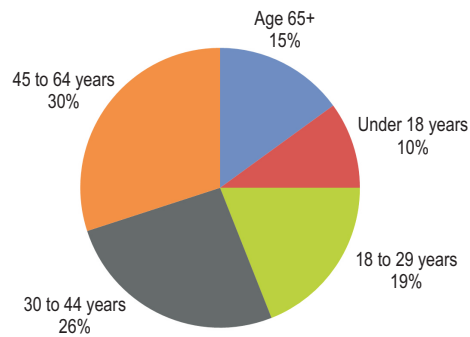
The Plan's estimated jobs-housing ratio of 2.0:1 is lower than the 1990 Plan's estimate of 4.3:1. This change can be attributed in part to a higher expectation for residential development in the current Plan and the fact that some sites proposed for office development in the 1990 Plan have been developed as residential uses. In addition, the remaining developable sites are considered less likely to be office development.

The most critical constraint on new office development in Wheaton is the lack of an established local office market. A limited supply of appropriately sized properties that can attract Class A office space, as well as competition from other County and regional locations, also limit the development of an office market in Wheaton (see Appendix 8, Economic Analyses).

The Plan encourages office development by increasing maximum permitted commercial FAR in the Core District, placing the highest commercial density on the WMATA Block, and substantially increasing the maximum commercial FAR on the Veirs Mill Road frontage of the Westfield Mall property. The proposed mixed-use zoning is flexible enough to respond to market demands. It does not restrict commercial development in the short or long term, and the transportation network can accommodate a significant amount of development beyond the estimated plan yield, as described in Appendix 3, Transportation Analysis. Economic development strategies should be developed to encourage office development wherever feasible.

Age Group

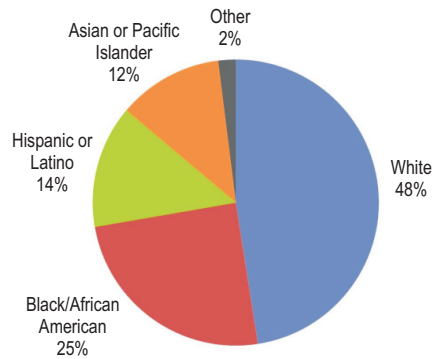
Wheaton Household Population



Source: M-NCPPC 2008 Census Update Survey

Race

Wheaton Household Population



Source: M-NCPPC 2008 Census Update Survey

Planning history

1940s

- Post-war suburban housing boom

1950s

- Wheaton Plaza opens
- 1959 Kensington-Wheaton Sector Plan envisions “more than merely a shopping district...a well-rounded Central Business District”

1960s

- Parking Lot District created

1970s

- Metro Station sited
- 1978 Sector Plan
- Central Business District (CBD) zoning applied

1980s

- County sponsors revitalization efforts
- New residential development at CBD edges

1990s

- Wheaton Metro Station opens
- 1990 Sector Plan
- Preservation Overlay Zone applied to part of the CBD

2000s

- County and M-NCPPC sponsor community charrette
- Wheaton Plaza (Westfield) adds stores and parking
- Overlay Zone amended
- Wheaton Redevelopment Advisory Committee develops mixed-use concept for Parking Lot 13
- 723 housing units built
- Pembridge Square Apartments renovated
- 500 planned housing units and a new Safeway grocery store approved
- County’s Request for Qualifications seeks public/private development