



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item # 9
11/19/09

November 6, 2009

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Acting Chief, Vision Division *GK*
Khalid Afzal, Team Leader, East Transit Corridor Team, Vision Division *KA*

FROM: Sandy Tallant, Planner Coordinator (301.495.1329) *ST*
East Transit Corridor Team, Vision Division

SUBJECT: Wheaton Central Business District (CBD) and Vicinity Sector Plan Amendment Preliminary Recommendations

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Discuss preliminary recommendations and provide guidance to staff.

The attached document contains staff's preliminary recommendations for the Wheaton Central Business District (CBD) and Vicinity Sector Plan Amendment. Staff seeks direction from the Planning Board on the overall approach to the Plan as well as some of the specific recommendations. Following the November 19 meeting with the Board and with the Board's approval, staff will prepare a draft Sector Plan for the Board's review in mid January 2010. We anticipate a public hearing in March 2010.

Staff would like to highlight the following specific items:

1. Removal of the Wheaton Retail Overlay Zone;
2. Rezoning of the Westfield Mall site from the current C-2 Zone to a mixed-use zone;
3. University Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit route alignment;
4. Provision of a new library in the CBD; and
5. Need for a new elementary school in Wheaton.

Removal of Wheaton's Retail Preservation Overlay Zone

The Wheaton Overlay Zone was created to implement the recommendations of the 1990 Wheaton Sector Plan. It was intended to retain the existing low scale of development for a portion of the CBD in order to preserve existing businesses in the CBD. A primary purpose of the Overlay Zone was to protect the Wheaton CBD from massive redevelopment that could transform downtown Wheaton into a large-scale urban center with primary emphasis on office development displacing most of the "mom-and-pop" retail in the area. In addition to the urban design oriented controls, the Overlay Zone prohibited optional method of development essentially limiting all developments in the overlay zone area to a maximum of 65-foot building height, and required a site plan for standard method development projects.

The level of growth anticipated at the time of the adoption of the 1990 Sector Plan, especially the office development, never occurred. The site plan requirement became an issue and a point of controversy for the few small projects that did occur in the Overlay Zone. In the property owners' view, the Overlay Zone became associated with the complicated zoning regulations and a disincentive for redevelopment in Wheaton. In 2006 the Overlay Zone was amended to eliminate the prohibition on the use of the optional method of development, exempt buildings of less than 20,000 square feet from site plan, increase building height in some areas, and add requirements for floor area set aside for small businesses. There has been no development using the optional method in the Overlay Zone since these changes were adopted.

It is hard to determine whether the Overlay Zone was an onerous tool to protect existing small businesses since not much development occurred inside or outside the Overlay Zone to assess the effectiveness of the Overlay Zone. In fact, no optional method development has occurred in Wheaton.

It is unclear whether Wheaton can ever achieve the amount of office space that was anticipated at the time the Overlay Zone was enacted. Interviews with the development community and the results of a market study for Wheaton indicate that Wheaton is primarily a retail and residential market, and at least in the foreseeable future it will not be a major office market. The amount of small retail space for mom-and-pop businesses is abundant in Wheaton today. As new development occurs, some space for small emerging retail businesses could decrease, but unlikely to the degree or speed envisioned in 1990 because of land assemblage issues and market constraints.

Staff believes that given the current economic conditions and the future growth projections for Wheaton it is appropriate to remove the Overlay Zone and use other mechanisms to preserve and support the small businesses in Wheaton. In addition to allowing the transfer of density from small properties to larger redevelopment sites in the CBD, which could help small properties to capture value while retaining their current buildings, staff is exploring two other options to support small retailers in Wheaton at this time:

1. Amend the CBD zones to include a requirement for some street level retail for use by small mom-and-pop retail stores if specified in a Master Plan or Sector Plan; or
2. Explore developing a Moderately Priced Retail Units (MPRU) program in the County (similar to the County's successful MPDU program) to ensure that there is moderately priced retail space available in new developments for mom-and-pop stores.

Proposed Rezoning of the Westfield Wheaton Site

The Westfield representatives have expressed concerns regarding the possibility of losing any approval they already have for the property under the current C-2 Zone if the property is rezoned to another zone, which may also complicate their current contractual relationships with their anchor tenants. Westfield is concerned that any negotiations with

the Planning Board under Site Plan review that might be imposed under rezoning would be difficult, complicated and lead to a greater expenditure of resources and could be rejected by a controlling retail entity. Following are rezoning options for the mall property staff has explored to date:

Option A

Retain the current C-2 zone on the property and defer any rezoning of the property until the next master plan update.

Option B

Rezone the entire property to one or more CR zones. Any current approvals will be grandfathered depending upon the type of approval, but any new additions/improvements would be subject to the requirements of the new zones.

Option C

Rezone the frontage of the Westfield property along Veirs Mill Road and parts of University Boulevard to a CR zone while retaining the C-2 zone on interior of the property containing the mall and the associated parking.

University Boulevard Bus Rapid Transit Route Alignment

University Boulevard is one of the routes in a Countywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) study. After evaluating numerous conceptual options for alignment of BRT in the Wheaton Sector Plan area, staff feels that the most viable path to a stop at the Wheaton Metro Station is along existing bus routes (from the east, this would follow University Boulevard, to Amherst Avenue, Reddie Drive, Georgia Avenue and Veirs Mill Road into the existing bus lot). Due to the ongoing WMATA Wheaton Metro Station study and County Request for Qualifications for development proposals adjacent to and including the Metrobus area, the final alignment of the BRT on University Boulevard may be determined later during the Board's worksessions on the draft Plan.

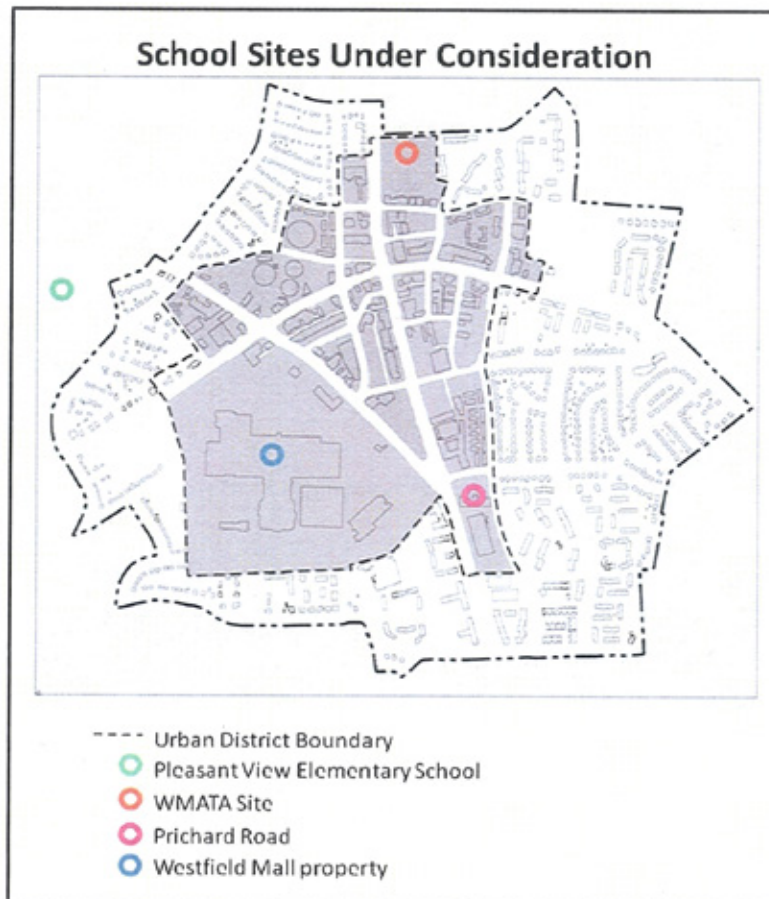
A New Library in the Core

Communities surrounding the existing Wheaton Library on Georgia Avenue near Arcola Avenue expressed strong opposition to the idea of moving the current library to a site within the CBD. Relocating the library was first discussed during a community meeting conducted by the International Downtown Association (IDA) panel in March 2008. Although Wheaton's CBD would be a more central location for the library, some believe that the current library serves the community well, particularly those living to the north and east of the CBD, and moving the library to the CBD would make it less convenient for these communities. The County has scheduled a visioning session this month to explore what a state-of-the-art library system might look like for the County, which will include consideration of the Wheaton community. The planning staff will participate in this process. Staff recommends delaying any decision about locating a library in Wheaton's CBD until the County's library visioning process is complete.

New Elementary School Site for Wheaton

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) staff has analyzed the growth projected in the low scenario and has identified a need for an elementary school in the area. Planning staff is recommending retaining the closed Pleasant View Elementary School, currently leased to the non-profit Crossways Community, in public ownership for a future elementary school if needed. This site is located just outside the Sector Plan area.

MCPS would like to have a site identified within the Sector Plan area. There are three sites within the planning area that could be considered: the WMATA site on Georgia Avenue at the northern boundary of the Wheaton Sector Plan area, a commercially zoned site at the southern Sector Plan boundary on the east side of Georgia Avenue at Prichard Road, and on the Wheaton Mall property should this mall ever redevelop. However, these sites are zoned for commercial or mixed-use development and could be prohibitively expensive.



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Attachment: Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan Amendment Preliminary Recommendations



Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan Amendment Preliminary Recommendations

November 19, 2009
Planning Board Meeting

WHEATON TODAY

The Wheaton Sector Plan area includes the Wheaton Urban District and one of the four Central Business Districts (CBDs) in the County. Located on the eastern leg of the Metro Red Line, it is connected to the rest of the County and the region by three major roads that define the center of Wheaton: Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Veirs Mill Road. Wheaton is noted for its ethnic restaurants and stores including some specialty stores such as Chuck Levin's Washington Music Center, which caters to musicians all over the country. There are more than 400 businesses in Wheaton, a majority of them located in low-rise commercial developments made up of mostly older building stock. The Westfield Wheaton Mall, the largest shopping center in the County with 1.4 million square feet of commercial space on a 58-acre property, adjoins the CBD across Veirs Mill Road from the Metro station. The commercial center of Wheaton is surrounded by single-family detached housing with some townhouses and garden apartments.

Demographics

According to the 2008 Census Update Survey, approximately 4,600 people live in 2,300 households in the Wheaton Sector Plan area. As the County's minority population continues to approach half of the population (46 percent), Wheaton's population has already reached minority majority status (52 percent). In the next thirty years, Wheaton's population is forecasted to increase by 68 percent. Almost all of the anticipated population and household growth (95 percent) is expected to occur in multifamily housing.

Wheaton is characterized by a substantial block of 18 to 44 year olds who are typically single or young families without children. Almost half of Wheaton's households (47 percent) are either living alone or are unrelated individuals (73 percent of County households are families).

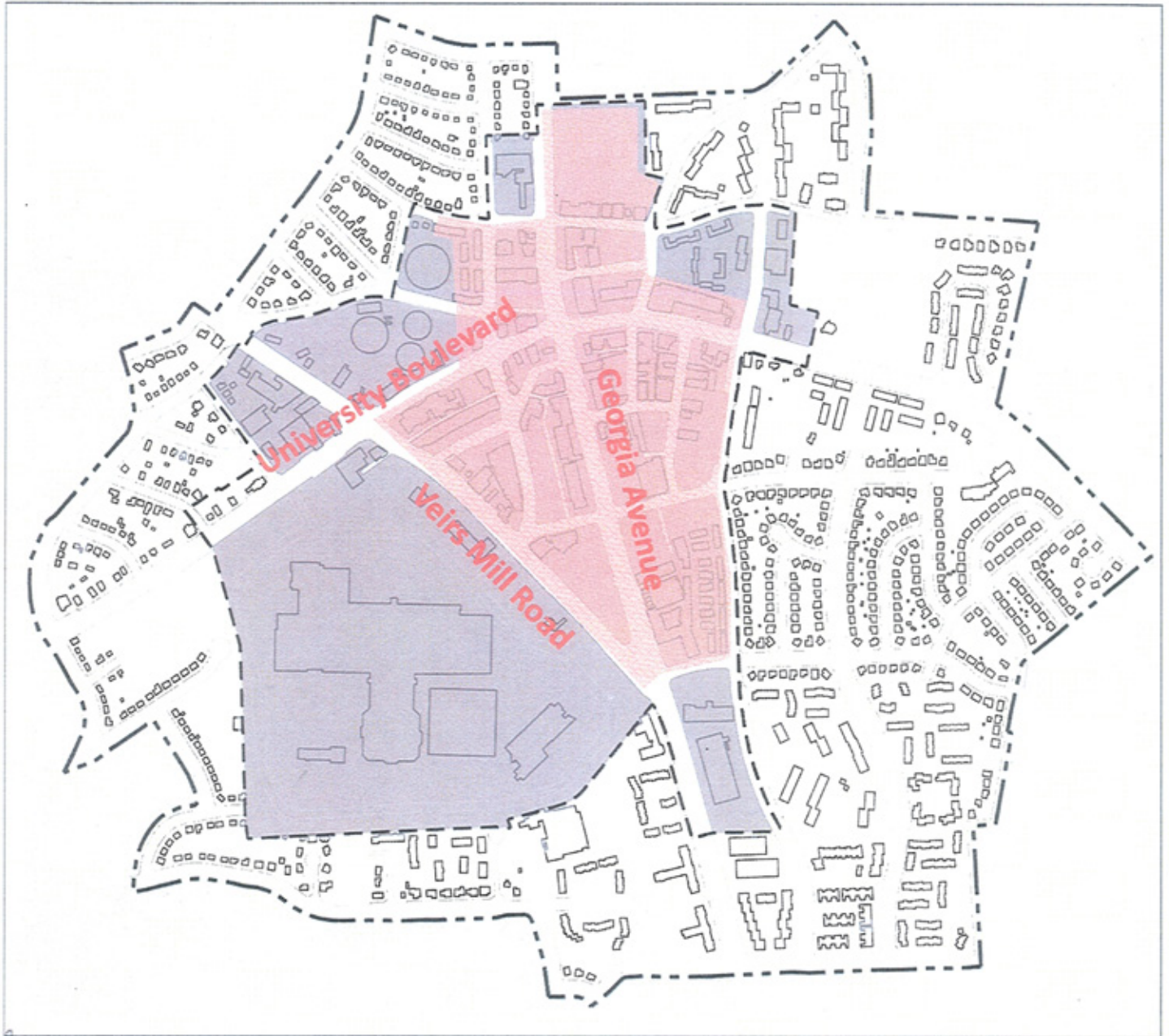
Wheaton's estimated 2007 median household income of \$62,405 (the County's median is \$96,475) is attributed to a high percentage of single householders who are well educated but young and just beginning careers. The median income in Wheaton varies by structure type: single-family households at \$108,590, multifamily units at \$42,015. Over half of the rental households in Wheaton are spending more than 30 percent of their income on housing costs compared to one-third of all renters in the County.

Over half of employed Wheaton residents work in the District compared to less than one-quarter of all employed residents in the County. Fifty-two percent of workers living in Wheaton commute by public transit, which is almost three times the typical rate for employed County residents.

Jobs and Housing

Today, there are approximately 10,200 jobs and 2,300 households within the Sector Plan area, which translates into a jobs/household (J/HH) ratio of 4.43. Wheaton is intended to be one of the job centers in the eastern part of the County to help achieve the goal of a balanced overall J/HH goal of 1.6 in the County. The Council of Governments' (COG) Round 7.1 year 2030 forecast is 11,000 jobs and 5,600 dwelling units in Wheaton (J/HH ratio of 1.96).

Boundaries



----- Urban District Boundary



Central Business District Boundary

ANALYSIS

Strengths and Weaknesses

There has been very little development since the adoption of the 1990 Sector Plan, most of it since 2000 in three locations: 43 townhouses on the old Wheaton Lumber site near Grandview and Blueridge Avenues; close to five hundred units in a mix of condominiums, rental units, and townhouses on the east side of Georgia Avenue between Prichard Road and Reddie Drive; and 189 new housing units by Centex located just north of the planning area on the old Good Counsel High School site. In addition to these residential developments, there have been a few scattered commercial developments of one to two-story retail stores in the CBD. The Westfield Mall property, however, saw a substantial investment after it was acquired in 1997 by the Westfield Group.

The small amount of development in Wheaton during the last real estate boom could be attributed to:

- A lack of an established market of Class A office space
- Few privately owned parcels large enough for redevelopment
- A predominance of small property owners who do not have the resources for redevelopment
- Lack of incentive for property owners to redevelop due to a number of market and economic reasons
- Isolation of the Westfield Mall from the CBD
- Perceptions of crime and unsafe conditions in Wheaton
- Availability of other more attractive development options in the region.

Transit plays a key role in Wheaton now and will play an even greater role in the future. In addition to being a Metro Station area, Wheaton also has a number of major bus routes that pass through or terminate at Wheaton. Around 5,000 people board Metrorail at the Wheaton Red Line station on a typical weekday. About 25 percent of those walk to the station and another 15 percent arrive by bus. For comparison, approximately 50 percent of Metrorail boarding passengers at the Silver Spring and Takoma Park stations walk to Metro and 30 percent arrive by bus – about double the rate of Wheaton. Between 2000 and 2007, the traffic volumes on the state highways in Wheaton actually decreased somewhat while the Metro ridership at the Glenmont, Wheaton, and Forest Glen stations grew between two percent to three percent annually. The long range travel forecasts and WMATA's Station Access and Capacity Study indicate that there will be sufficient capacity on the Red Line to accommodate the anticipated future growth.

Despite Wheaton's success in maintaining low vacancy rates and competitive retail rents, the physical environment of Wheaton lacks the attributes necessary for it to be competitive with other centers in the County and the region. There is a limited availability of easily developable sites that can contribute to Wheaton's revitalization. However, there is a significant amount of County-owned surface parking that can be leveraged to provide opportunities for public/private partnerships to spur revitalization and create an attractive urban place. In the long term, the Mall's surface parking could be transformed into mixed-use development.

Wheaton faces additional challenges in its retail environment. Between 2007 and 2008 vacancy rates were low (.47 percent and 1.15 percent respectively). Rents were relatively competitive with the rest of the County in 2008 when demand was high and landlords felt that demand was strong enough to raise rents. How the recession will affect these rates over the next couple of years is unknown. According to the Wheaton Redevelopment Office, approximately 42 percent of the businesses in Wheaton have been in existence for 10 years or more. Problems being experienced by small businesses include:

- Low success rate of start-up businesses
- Lack of sophistication of business operation and strategy leads to under capitalization
- Loss of market share due to inability for some small mature businesses to adapt to changing trends in the market
- Decline of Wheaton's physical environment, perception of crime, and demographic changes have contributed to a reduced market share because some customers do not feel comfortable coming to Wheaton anymore.

Summary of Market Study by Bay Area Economics

A detailed examination of development potential was conducted in an October 2009 preliminary draft market study for Wheaton by Bay Area Economics (BAE). Wheaton is recognized for its diversity, affordability, and an eclectic mix of ethnic restaurants and retail offerings. Wheaton's location and excellent transportation access by Metro, a major bus transfer point, and excellent automobile access provided by three main thoroughfares to I-495 are seen as key strengths. These strengths have contributed to Wheaton's recent success in attracting new residential development, and will help position Wheaton to capture a healthy share of the County's and the region's projected household growth in the future.

The BAE study also underscores Wheaton's limitations going forward and the need for public intervention to spur greater commercial revitalization. Wheaton's new developments have been primarily lower density, multifamily housing positioned as a value alternative to competitive products in the nearby urban centers of Silver Spring, Bethesda, and other locations in the region. The success of this type of housing in Wheaton provides a proven path for redevelopment, but both high-rise housing and new office development would be considered pioneering given current achievable rents/pricing.

New development in Wheaton faces the additional challenges presented by the current economic downturn. Available vacant space around the County and region will compete aggressively for new demand in the short term, and a looming crisis in financing commercial development will hinder new office opportunities even in the strongest office submarkets. Longer term, the strength of the Washington metropolitan region will create the demand for new construction, but Wheaton will need to compete against a plentiful supply of transit-supported office development in attractive locations around the County and region.

The local residential market offers good opportunities for certain types of retail because higher density market rate housing will capture a more affluent segment of households. However, the retail environment in Wheaton suffers from a lack of long term focus and organization among the many owners of retail space. Furthermore, a revitalization strategy will need to confront the challenges presented by an existing retail environment that does not make it easy for customers to browse and enjoy a walk through a shopping district. Instead, retail is oriented towards quick stops to one store by customers in cars. Duplication in the types of retail offered and the presence of multiple landlords creates further challenges to a unified retail environment and does not support the vision or marketing of Wheaton as a destination except for the mall.

Revitalization Efforts

While the Planning Department is preparing this Plan, the County's Wheaton Redevelopment Office is working in several areas to revitalize Wheaton. A Request for Qualifications is being issued to seek developer interest in developing all (or a portion) of the more than 11 acres of property currently owned by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), the Parks Department, and the County. Much of this property is currently being used for parking.

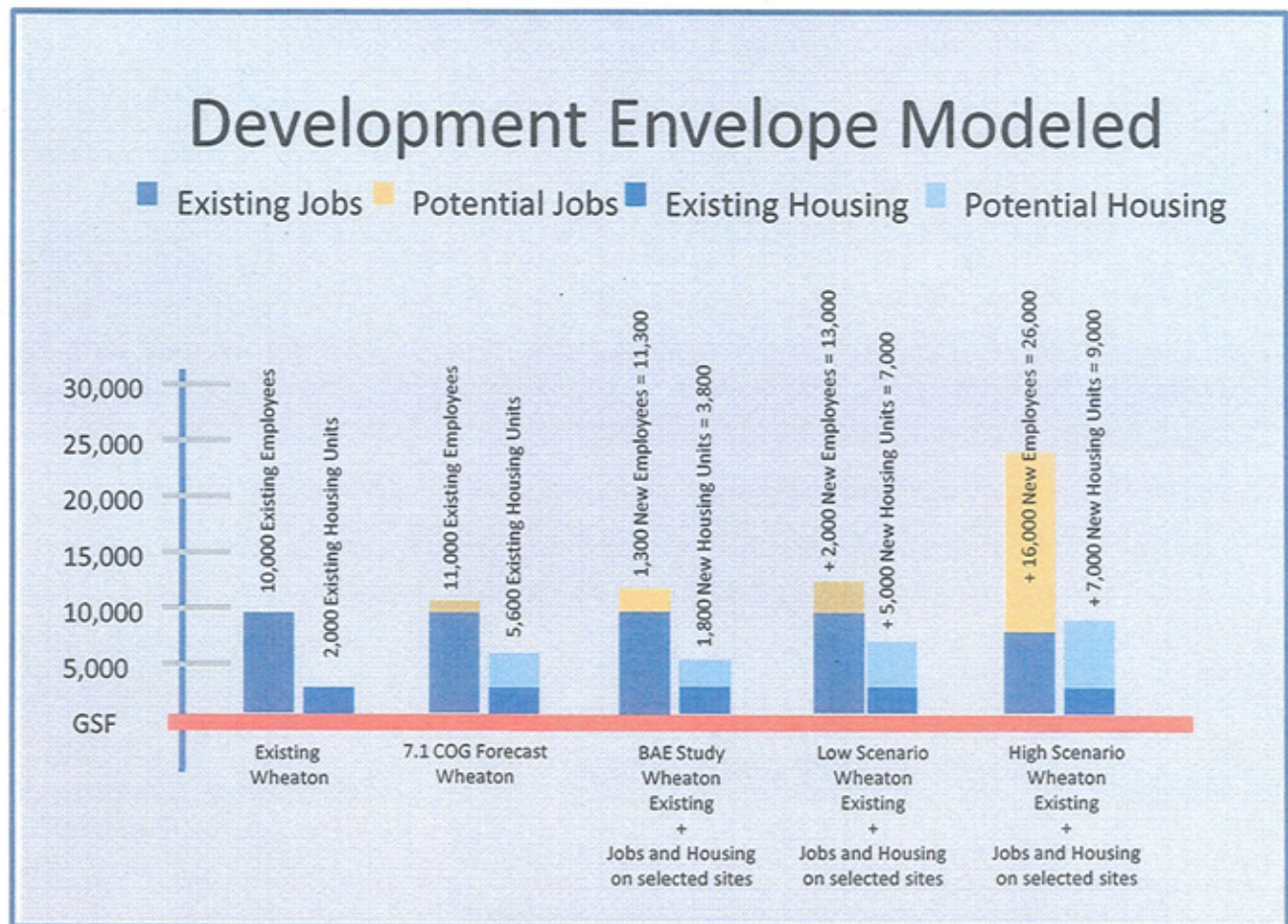
Wheaton is one of the County's Urban Districts, a County Parking Lot District, Arts and Entertainment District, and a State Enterprise Zone. The County also offers numerous educational programs and incentives to support small businesses including mentorship, coaching, and training, as well as tax incentives and loan programs.

Transportation Modeling

Staff conducted transportation modeling of existing conditions and three development scenarios: the 7.1 COG Forecast; a low scenario of 13,200 jobs and 6,600 dwelling units; and a high scenario of 26,300 jobs and 9,400 dwelling units. The purpose of this exercise was to determine the adequacy of the existing infrastructure for future growth in Wheaton and to explore the possible options to remedy any inadequacy, if needed.

The low scenario reflected an estimated amount of development Wheaton might capture over the next 15-20 years. It was based on information staff collected from meetings with the development community, and the development capacity allowed under existing zoning on easily developable properties. The high scenario was staff's aggressive estimate of what might happen if most of the properties were assembled and redeveloped to their maximum development potential under current zoning. Although unlikely to happen in the near to mid-term future, the high scenario was meant to test the limit of the current infrastructure and plan for additional infrastructure if needed for long-term future growth.

Scenarios



Total Today	10,200 Jobs	2,300 Households
COG 2030 Forecast	11,000 Jobs	5,600 Households
BAE Study	11,300 Jobs	3,800 Households
Total Low Scenario	13,200 Jobs	6,600 Households
Total High Scenario	26,300 Jobs	9,400 Households

Staff's assumption that their low scenario best represents the level of development Wheaton might capture over the next 15-20 years was later supported in BAE's October 2009 preliminary draft market study for Wheaton. The staff's low scenario exceeds BAE's projections (1,200-1,300 additional jobs; 1,400-1,800 additional residential units; 70-76 hotel rooms; and 55,000-68,000 square feet of additional retail) for near to mid-term future growth in Wheaton. BAE's baseline future total projections recognize Wheaton's strength and potential for residential growth, with office job growth adjusted to reflect the amount that Wheaton would need to add in order to keep its current share of the County's office employment. Assuming that these market projections hold true over the life of the Plan, the low scenario holds sufficient capacity to meet market demand over the next 20 years.

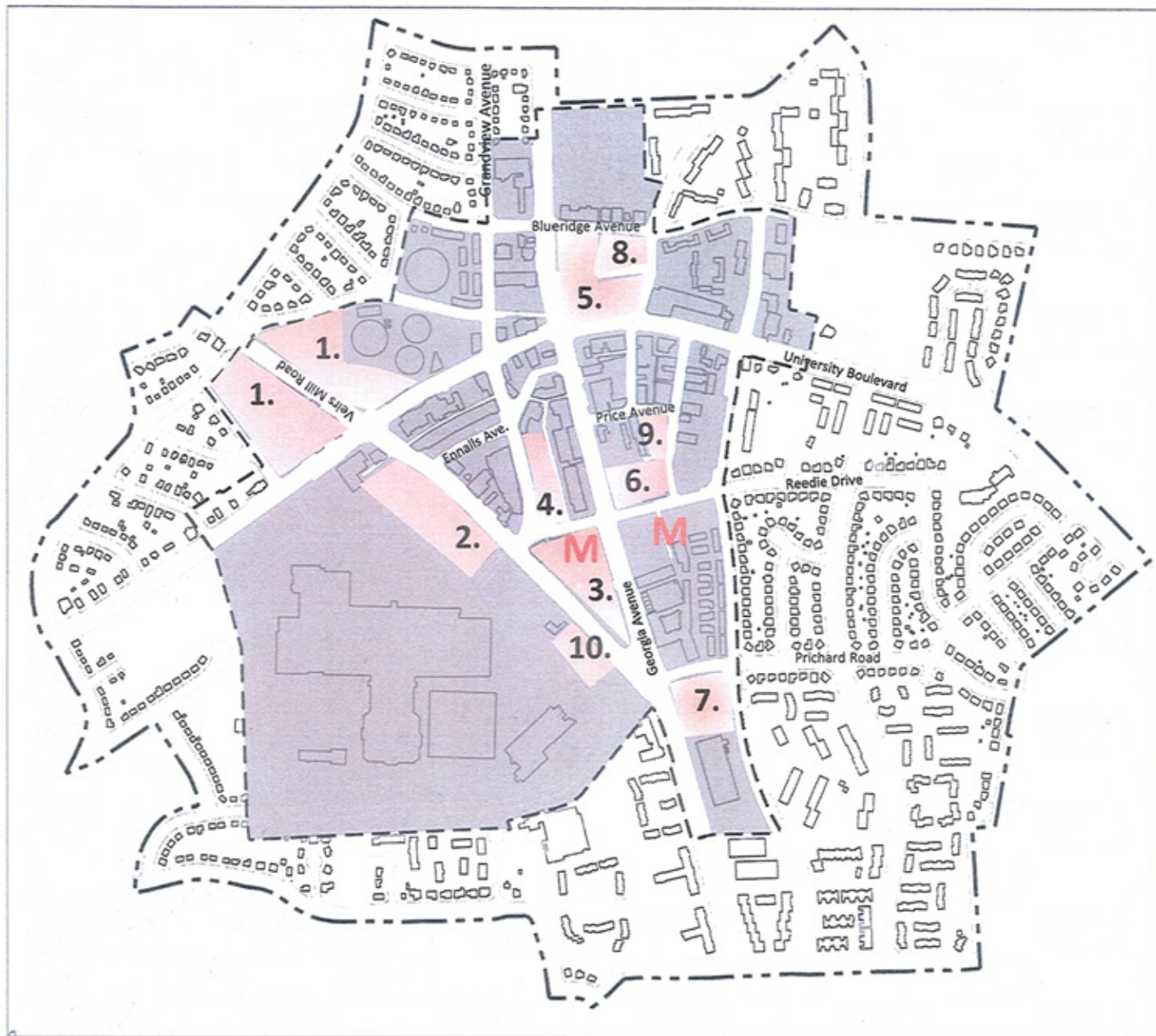
The results of modeling the two scenarios for traffic impacts indicated that existing transportation infrastructure (assuming 30 percent non-auto mode share) is sufficient to accommodate even the high scenario. Only the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Plyers Mill Road failed under the high scenario. The intersection of Georgia and Arcola Avenues is already failing, and continues to do so in either scenario.

WHEATON TOMORROW

The overall vision for Wheaton reflects input from the development community, the consultant's assessment, the Wheaton land owners, local businesses, and the residential community. Wheaton is envisioned as a compact, mixed-use residential and retail community with an ethnic flavor and significant retail, entertainment, and services. The greatest activity occurs in a dense, transit-oriented environment in the immediate environs of the station (within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile and to a lesser extent, within $\frac{1}{2}$ mile) so that walking eventually becomes the predominant access mode for Metrorail. Increasing the commercial and residential density around the station and improving pedestrian connectivity and facilities are central to achieving this goal. The Core (bordered by Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Veirs Mill Road), is envisioned as a compact, high-density area with a variety of building heights, meeting and performance space, art galleries and artist studios, restaurants, retail, and entertainment venues. The civic focus of the community will be a major public space on Parking Lot #13.

The zoning should allow it to evolve as a jobs center in the future, but for the life of this master plan all indications are that the focus of this Plan should be on place making. New projects on key sites can provide economic stimulus in Wheaton to help support the small mom-and-pop retail stores and other businesses. The Plan focuses on improving the physical environment of Wheaton by recommending redevelopment of key sites, an open space system, attractive streets and sidewalks, civic functions in the Core, and increased vegetation through the planting of street trees, ground cover and landscaping.

Although Wheaton's existing transportation infrastructure is sufficient to accommodate the expected growth in the next couple of decades, we should plan to reduce auto dominance and improve connectivity for pedestrian and bike traffic. Wheaton should build upon its walkable street network with a multi-modal mobility that capitalizes on the increasing countywide importance of Wheaton's bus/Metrorail station and expands the connectivity of the urban grid within Wheaton.



Key Opportunity Sites

1. North of University including Lindsay Ford, HOC Housing, and others
2. Westfield Property
3. WMATA Site
4. Parking Lot #13
5. Aronson Property
6. Safeway
7. Car Dealership
8. Parking Lot #14
9. Parking Lot #17
10. Westfield Property

Auto dependence can be reduced through: residential development that increases the non-auto share mode; bus rapid transit on the three major roads passing through Wheaton; appropriate bus feeder routes; and a circulator shuttle for the CBD. Connectivity for pedestrian and bike traffic can be improved by building streets to shorten blocks and better connect the mall to the CBD.

PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are the staff's major recommendations, some of which need further analysis and study before they can be finalized and included in the Plan.

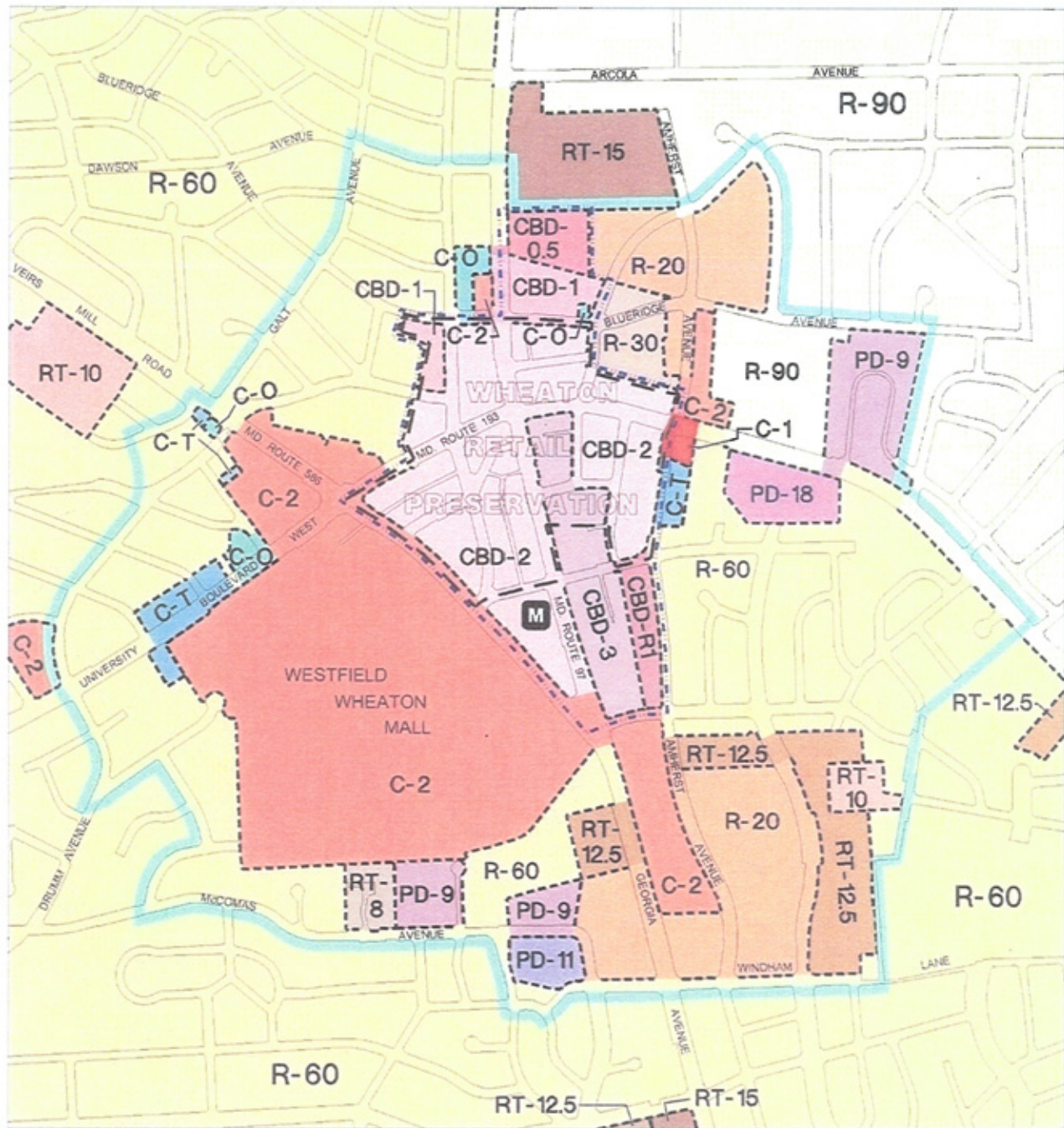
Overall Land Use and Zoning

1. Confirm the existing CBD zones (CBD-1, CBD-2, CBD-3, and CBD-R1) in the Wheaton CBD.
2. Retain and confirm the residential land use and zoning for the existing single-family zoning in the Sector Plan area.
3. Remove the existing Retail Overlay Zone.
4. Allow the transfer of density from small properties in the CBD to larger properties within the CBD, to allow the small properties to capture value while continuing to be a key part of the fabric of Wheaton.
5. Rezone existing commercial properties (C-2, C-O, C-T) outside the existing Central Business District to mixed-use zones (CR).
6. Place the tallest building heights, up to 200 feet, along Georgia Avenue on both sides of the street between Prichard Road and University Boulevard (including the entire WMATA site at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Veirs Mill Road. Other parts of CBD zoned area should be limited to 143 feet. Building heights at the edge of the commercial area adjoining existing single-family residential zones should be limited to 45 feet.

Public Realm

1. Transform Georgia Avenue, University Boulevard, and Veirs Mill Road into urban boulevards with enhanced medians and crosswalks, street parking during off-peak hours if possible, street trees, and street-oriented retail where appropriate.
2. Establish a network of "pedestrian priority" streets in the CBD by improving the walking experience (e.g., by reducing traffic speeds, and other improvements such as special paving, plantings, flush curbs with bollards, and innovative stormwater management features). The width of the sidewalk should accommodate outdoor dining and retail activity from the neighborhood serving retail. Allow for local street closures on the weekends to accommodate open air markets, and outdoor dining and to provide event space for special occasions or festivals.

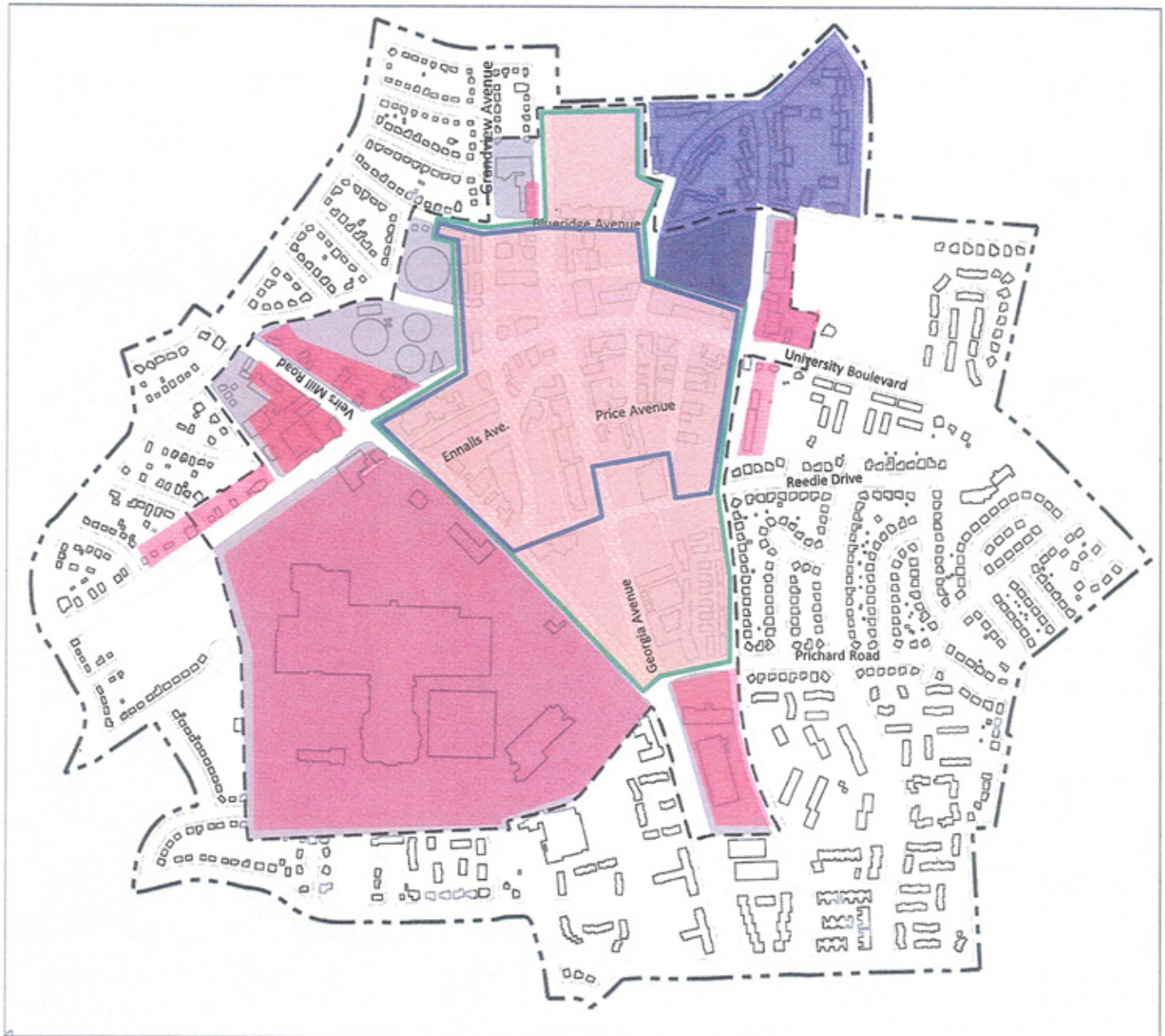
EXISTING ZONING



- SECTOR PLAN BOUNDARY
- - - - - CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT BOUNDARY
- WHEATON RETAIL PRESERVATION OVERLAY ZONE BOUNDARY
- - - - - ZONE BOUNDARY
- M WHEATON METRO STATION

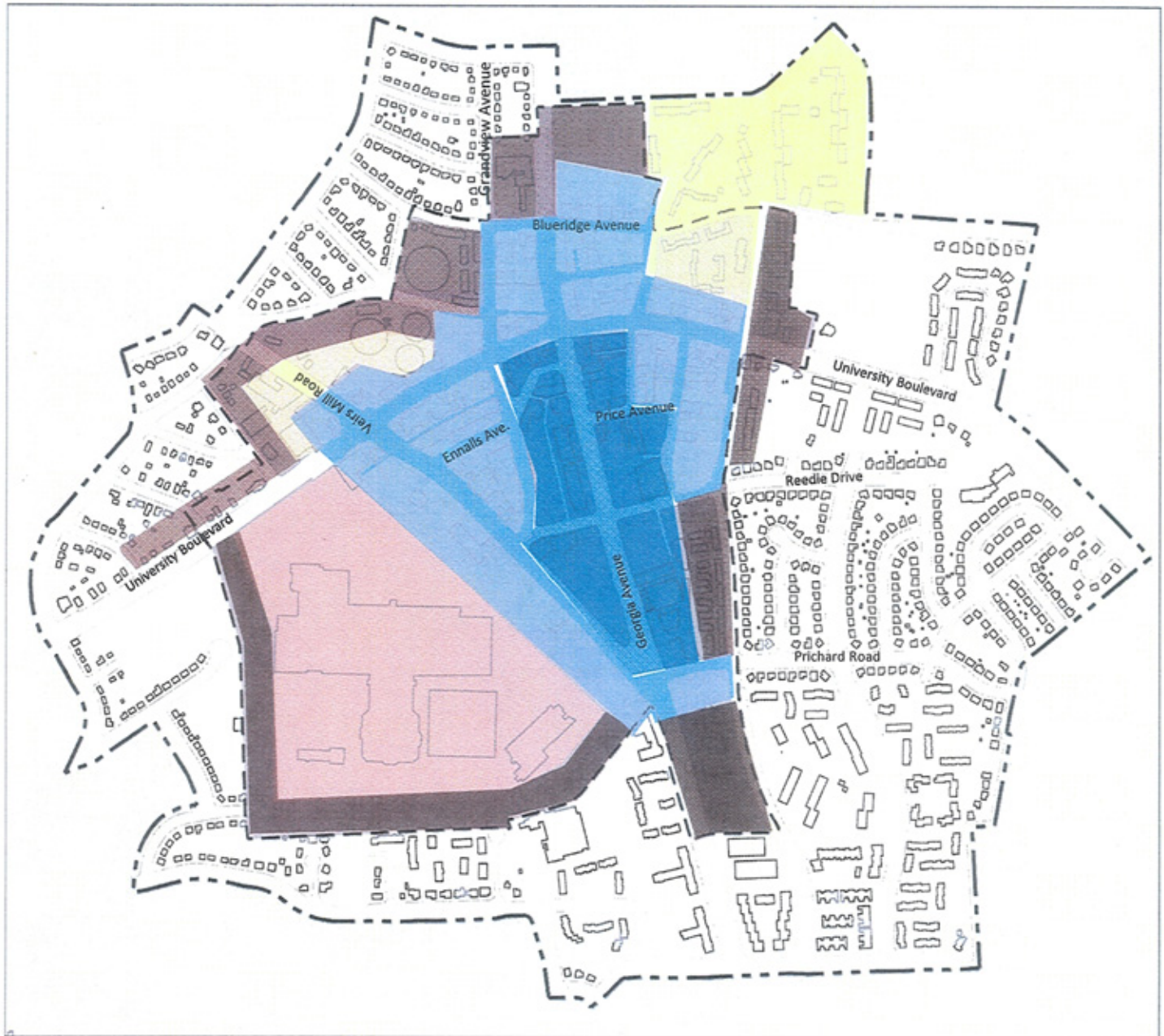


Properties Considered for Rezoning



- Urban District Boundary
- CBD Boundary
- Confirm existing CBD Zones
- Remove the existing Retail Overlay Zone
- Rezone from commercial to mixed-use zones (CR)
- Rezone current multi-family to mixed-use zones (CR)

Proposed Building Heights



- Maximum building height 200'
- Maximum building height 143'
- Transition from 143' to 45'
- Transition from 90' to 45'
- Maximum building height 45'

- a. Hickerson Drive
 - b. Fern Street
 - c. Price Avenue
 - d. Elkin Street
- 3. Redevelop a portion of Parking Lot #13 into Wheaton's most prominent open space and civic focal point for the community. The open space should be at least 1 to 1½ acres in size and designed to accommodate major community events, outdoor activities, gatherings, and celebrations. Integrate art and multi-property stormwater management into its design. A significant portion of the open space should be landscaped.
- 4. Support the creation of an indoor public covered market in the Core.
- 5. Discourage land solely dedicated to parking. Develop shared parking strategies for parking lots and garages through the Parking Lot District and in new development projects to ensure that businesses, stores and residents have adequate parking.
- 6. Where possible permit on-street parking on all streets to moderate speeds, separate pedestrians from traffic, and contribute to street activity.
- 7. Design sidewalks to accommodate uses besides walking such as: dining, street entertainment, vendors and kiosks, and people watching.
- 8. Provide through-block connections where appropriate and feasible on the following blocks:
 - a. Georgia Avenue to Fern Street between Reddie Drive and Price Avenue
 - b. University Boulevard to Hickerson Drive between Georgia Avenue and Elkin Street
 - c. Georgia Avenue to Grandview Avenue between Ennalls Avenue and Reddie Drive
 - d. Veirs Mill Road to East Avenue between University Boulevard and Kensington Boulevard.
 - e. Veirs Mill Road to Kensington Boulevard between University Boulevard and Kensington Boulevard.

Connectivity/Mobility

- 1. Develop high quality (frequent, limited stop, low-floor) Bus Rapid Transit on Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard to further enhance east-west travel options.
- 2. Establish a 30 percent non-auto driver mode share goal for employees in the Sector Plan area.
- 3. Target speeds should be reduced to 30 miles per hour on University Boulevard, Veirs Mill Road and Georgia Avenue (consistent with the County's Road Code) in order to make it easier for pedestrians from the surrounding neighborhoods to access the Core.

4. Disconnected street segments throughout the Sector Plan area that serve as bicycle and pedestrian links should be enhanced and clearly marked.
5. Improve connectivity from the planning area to nearby regional parks and trails such as Wheaton Regional Park and Sligo Creek Stream Valley Park and Trail. Improve signage on streets that lead to trail connectors as well as on the trails themselves. Improve visibility of Wheaton Regional Park by providing entry features where roadways lead to the park.
6. Designate the Wheaton Sector Plan area as a *Bicycle and Pedestrian Priority Area*. This official State designation will facilitate the allocation of funds for bicycle and pedestrian improvements on State roads.
7. Create a shared bikeway on Veirs Mill Road.
8. Align Ennalls Avenue between Grandview and Georgia Avenues to connect with Price Avenue east of Georgia Avenue.
9. Georgia Avenue, Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard should continue to have a master planned right-of-way of 120 feet with six lanes with parking accommodated in the off peak hours in wide outside lanes. Bus Rapid Transit should function in the outside lane during peak hours, and middle lane during off peak hours. Bicycles will share the bus lanes during peak hours and ride in the outside lane space adjacent to parked cars in the off peak.

Environment

1. Increase tree canopy in the Urban District using native plants and creating habitat for appropriate urban wildlife in parks and open spaces. Incorporate trees into stormwater Best Management Practices, and roof and terrace plantings. Establish a minimum of 30 percent tree canopy cover for surface parking.
2. Target unused right-of-way and publicly owned areas for increased plantings by the County government.
3. Reduce runoff from all impervious surfaces, including roofs, terraces, and paving through the new County stormwater regulations.
4. Protect existing remnant streams.
5. Encourage the use of vegetated roofs to minimize runoff and conserve energy.
6. Energy consumption should be reduced through site and building design techniques.
7. Protect and restore existing stream and stream valley buffer maximizing tree cover on the Board of Education property on McComas Avenue.

Community Facilities

1. Retain the closed Pleasant View Elementary School on Upton Drive, which is leased to the non-profit Crossways Community, in public ownership for a possible elementary school if needed for the projected future growth in Wheaton.
2. Provide Metro accessible community facilities in the CBD area through a combination of public and private efforts as the need for new facilities arises with new development in the Core.
3. Support constructing a satellite or replacement for the Wheaton Regional Library in the Wheaton CBD to help spur revitalization by attracting people to Wheaton on a regular basis. Make library services more accessible to the greater Wheaton community by locating a facility near Metro and the WMATA bus station.
4. Support the location of an indoor pool in Wheaton's CBD, near transit, to better serve the existing and future Wheaton community including the planned residential growth in downtown, if the Recreation Department's *Comprehensive Recreation Facilities and Services Development Plan* for 2010-2030 identifies a need for one.

Specific Areas

Blueridge Avenue District

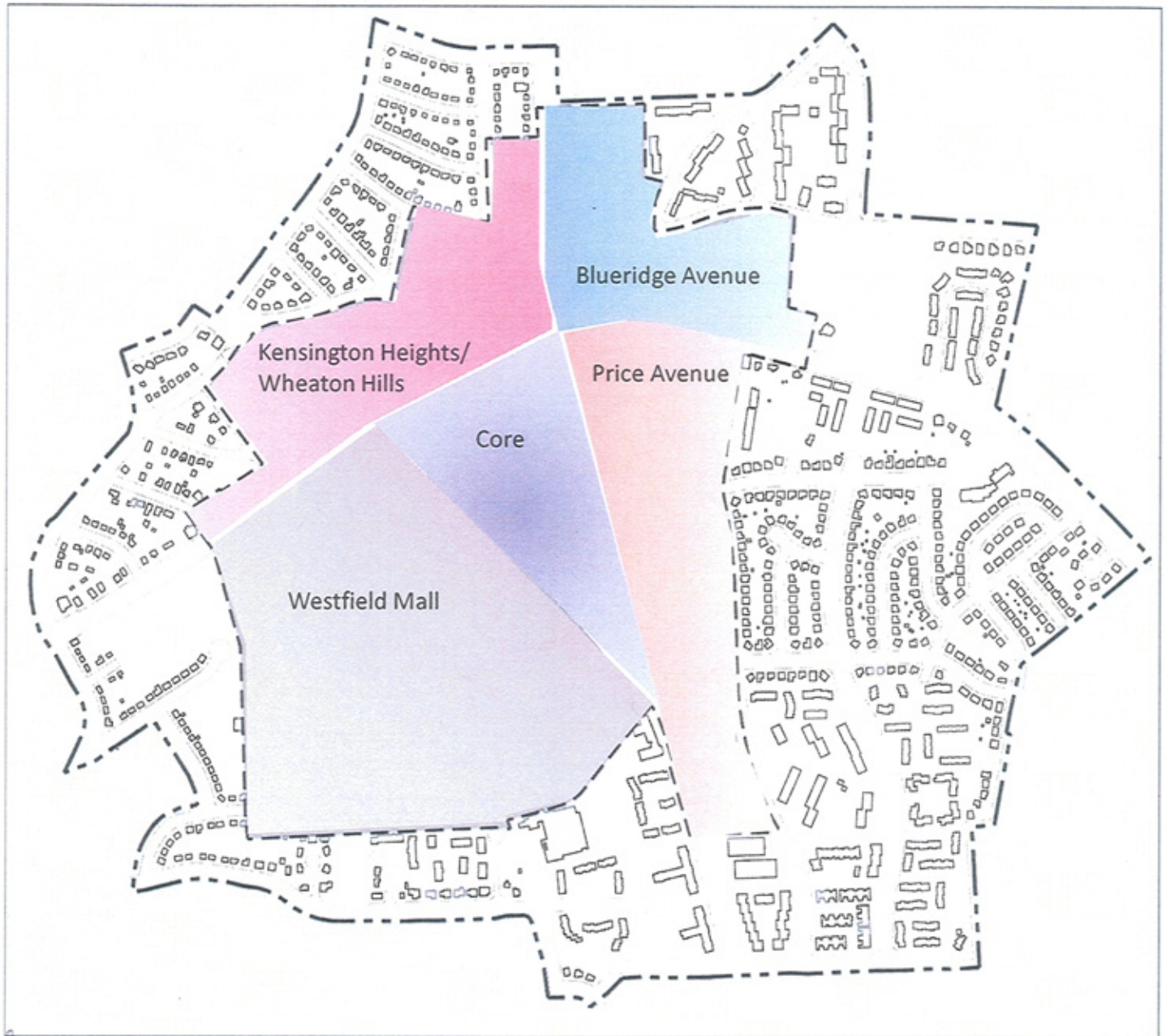
The Blueridge Avenue area is envisioned to be primarily a residential neighborhood, with street-oriented businesses in residential buildings with small neighborhood serving retail on the ground floor and residential and some office above. A central green space providing residents a place to gather for coffee, picnic, and passive recreation is envisioned on the existing Parking Lot #14.

1. Rezone the existing Montgomery Housing Partnership and other properties zoned R-20 and R-30 at Elkin Street, Blueridge Avenue, and Amherst Avenue to allow redevelopment of these older garden apartments into mixed-use residential developments with up to 80 units per acre and structured parking. Maximum building height should be 90 feet near the CBD edge tapering down to 45 feet at the edges abutting single-family zones.
2. Create a centrally located neighborhood green space for local gathering and play on all or a portion of Parking Lot #14.
3. Any future development must be compatible with the existing WTOP structure. Consider using a portion of the WTOP property for park and recreation space should this property redevelop.

Kensington Heights/Wheaton Hills District

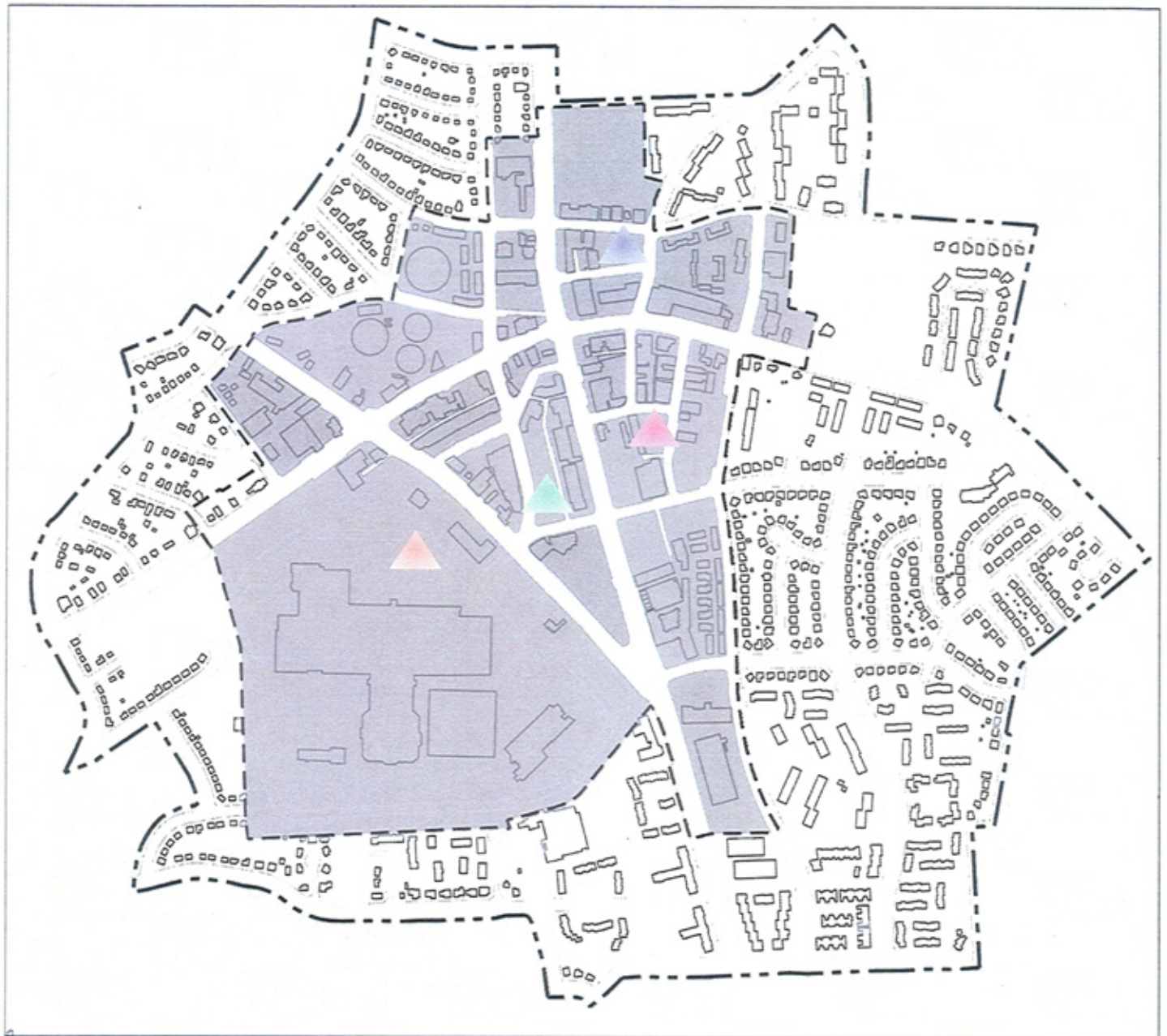
This area will continue to be primarily residential with new housing and some professional office and retail located nearest the intersection of the University Boulevard and Veirs Mill Road.


Districts



----- Urban District Boundary

Proposed Open Space



- Urban District Boundary
-  Parking Lot # 13
-  Parking Lot # 14
-  Parking Lot # 17
-  Westfield

Rezone the area around the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard to a mixed-use zone with a maximum building height between 90-143 feet with the tallest height at the corner of University Boulevard and Veirs Mill Road.

1. Limit the maximum building height to 45 feet near existing neighborhoods along the north side of East Avenue, and along University Boulevard between Valley View Avenue and East Avenue.
2. Incorporate a small neighborhood green space (approximately .25 acres) into any future development of the surface parking lots on any redevelopment of blocks 26 and 30 along Veirs Mill Road.
3. Create smaller blocks on blocks 26 and 30, which are located at the northeast and west corners of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard, by adding new pedestrian scaled streets that enhance the walking experience and have reduced traffic speeds.
4. Extend Kensington Boulevard through the Lindsay property to Veirs Mill Road.

Price Avenue District

1. Extend Price Avenue between Fern Street and Amherst Avenue.
2. Rezone the C-2 parcels south of the Urban District boundary bounded by Prichard Road, Amherst Avenue, and Georgia Avenue, and an R-20 zoned parcel along Windham Lane to CR zone.
3. Create a centrally located urban square on all or a portion of Parking Lot #17, located at the corner of Price Avenue and Fern Street. Include both hard and vegetative surfaces, and landscaping in the design of this open space.

Westfield Mall

Although there are no current plans to develop the Westfield property for uses other than retail, the Plan should encourage the mall property to transition into an urban-style, mixed-use shopping center over the long term. High-rise office, housing, hotel and retail uses could be developed along portions of Veirs Mill Road integrating the mall property into the overall fabric of downtown; mid-rise office, mid to low-rise housing, and neighborhood serving retail could be integrated into the southern and western portions of Westfield's property over the long term. Community open space and passive recreation should be integrated into any future redevelopment of the mall property.

1. Rezone the portion of Westfield's property along Veirs Mill Road from C-2 to the CR zone with a maximum height of 143 feet.
2. Rezone the middle portion of the mall's property from C-2 to the CR zone with a maximum height of 143 feet.
3. Rezone the edges of the property to a CR zone to a maximum height of 45 feet.

4. This site represents a major opportunity for environmental improvement due to the size of the property, location at the head of two subwatersheds (Kensington Heights and Wheaton Branch), and the significant amount of paving and roof cover on this site. Redevelopment of this property should:
 - a. Preserve the woods and shrub area along the slopes of the southern and western edges to continue providing a buffer for existing residential neighborhoods.
 - b. Make extensive use of Environmental Site Design as required by the County code to create natural areas of infiltration woven into the open space network described below.
 - c. Incorporate innovative energy conservation and on-site generation strategies.
 - d. Provide tree canopy coverage over a minimum of 30 percent of the site.
 - e. Create a pattern of small urban blocks and local streets that align with existing streets across Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard.
 - f. Provide open spaces such as neighborhood greens and active recreation nodes to serve nearby residents, workers and patrons.
 - g. Extend Ennalls Avenue into the Westfield property. Establish improved intersections at Ennalls Avenue and Veirs Mill Road and at Reddie Drive and Veirs Mill Road.
 - h. Provide direct pedestrian and bike connections through the Westfield site that link existing neighborhoods to the mall, and through the mall to the Metro and the Core.

Implementation

Achieving the recommendations in this Plan will require the coordinated efforts of a variety of participants including: Local, state and federal governments, land owners, developers, investors, non-governmental organizations, local business owners, and residential communities. Each of these groups affects various aspects of the master plan implementation. Following are the major implementation strategies.

1. Implement zoning through the Sectional Map Amendment (Planning Board and County Council).
2. Provide incentives to support small mom-and-pop businesses in Wheaton, (Department of Economic Development).
3. Use the County's Capital Improvements Program or the Amenity Fund to build quality public spaces in areas of the Central Business District where optional method development is unlikely to occur due to parcel size and ownership patterns (County agencies).

4. Achieve amenities and facilities through the development review process (Optional Method of Development Projects). Create new public spaces in Wheaton (Department of Parks, private development).
5. Attract new development to Wheaton through marketing and promotion (County, Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC), and Chamber of Commerce).

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