



Wheaton

DOWNTOWN STUDY

Montgomery Planning | Mid-County Division



Scope of Work

Montgomery County Planning Board | 10.21.21

Wheaton Today

MNCPPC-HQ

Wheaton
Gateway

Westfield
Wheaton

WMATA

AVA Wheaton

The Exchange

The George

Solaire
Wheaton

- Several developments have been completed since sector plan adoption
- 1,200+ dwelling units constructed
- Potential for additional development exists in larger properties

Completed
Under Review
Potential

Wheaton Today

Socio-economically
diverse and
growing more so.

Businesses
Overwhelmingly Small. **84 percent**
has 9 or fewer employees. Average
business age is 12.4 years.

Demographics
Non-Hispanic White: 33 percent
Hispanic: 31 percent
African American: 20 percent
Asian: 12 percent

Small properties provide
affordable entry-level
space for diverse small
businesses.

Most small businesses in
the area **rent** space.

- Small structures are character defining to the area, many individually owned
- Home to many small and diverse businesses
- Potential to evolve and intensify over time

Purpose

The Wheaton Downtown Study will identify opportunities to create a cohesive downtown that integrates larger development with Wheaton's small-scale character while meeting the needs of small businesses, property owners, and residents building upon the vision of the *2012 Wheaton Central Business District (CBD) and Vicinity Sector Plan*.

The Study's purpose is to further Wheaton as a complete community characterized by a mixture of uses while promoting the area as a center of activity attractive for infill development that leverages existing amenities and accessibility.

Goals

- **Evaluate Development Progress**
- **Promote Complete Communities**
- **Improve Multimodal Safety**
- **Establish Fine-Grained Urban Design Vision for Wheaton**

Goal #1: Evaluate Progress

Evaluate development progress to date and identify challenges and/or opportunities, and lessons learned in furthering the 2012 Sector Plan's vision

- Engage commercial property owners to understand their near and long-term goals and plans.
- Explore ways to capitalize on public benefits from large development to support small business retention and community improvement goals.



Goal #2: Promote Complete Communities



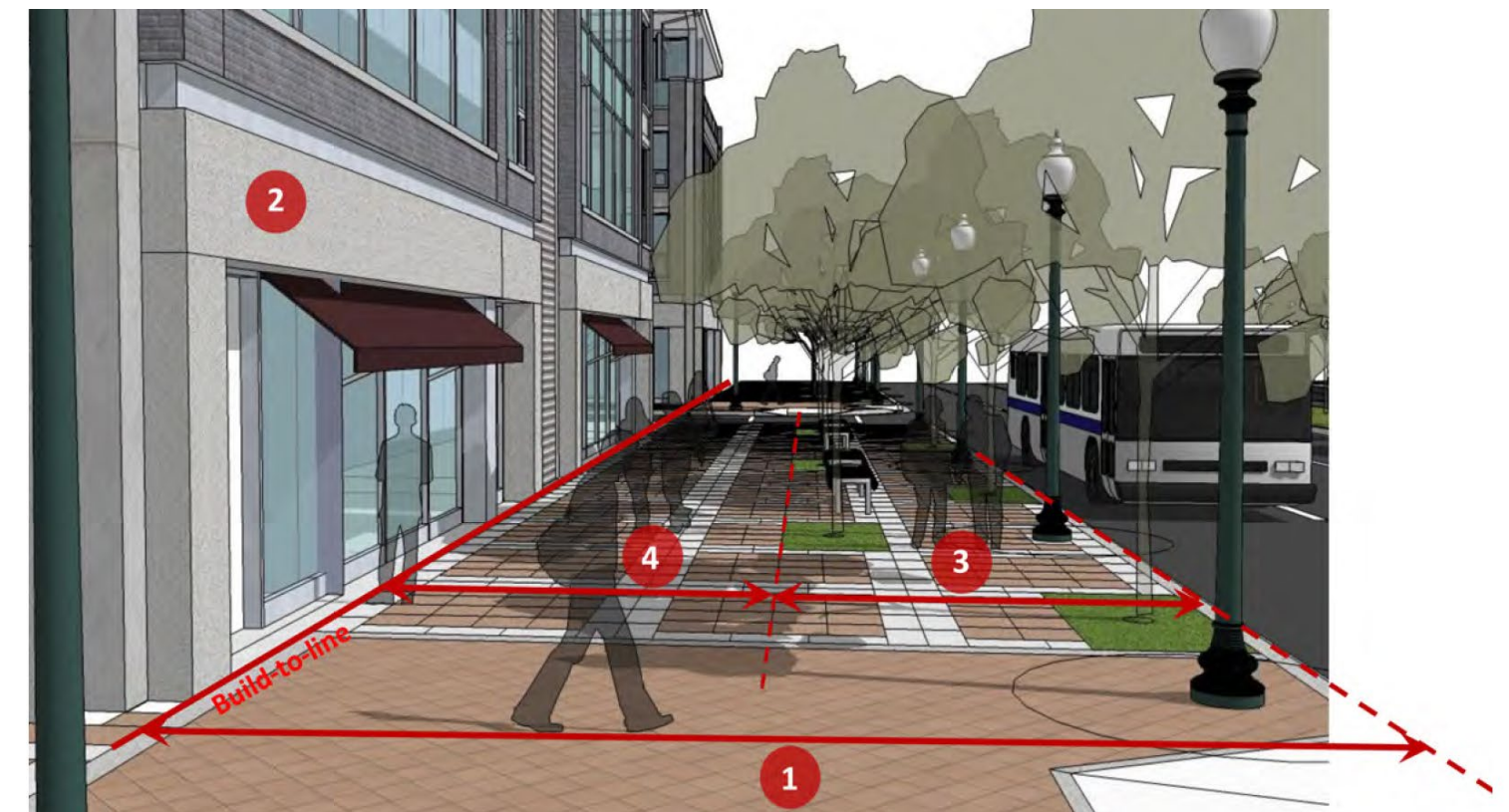
Explore the evolution and expansion of existing structures to promote existing small business preservation, local job retention and creation, and introduction of new uses.

- Staff will conduct a market assessment to determine the feasibility of small property redevelopment and explore strategies to promote reinvestment.
- Develop case studies to illustrate conceptual and cost-effective alternatives to reposition properties and identify development barriers.
- Explore ways to develop Cultural Mapping in Wheaton, to identify legacy businesses and promote local polices to support them.
- Support and promote the findings and recommendations of the *Retail in Diverse Communities Study*.

Goal #3: Improve Multimodal Safety

Update the Wheaton Streetscape Standards and establish goals that are compatible with actual redevelopment opportunities and Wheaton's unique character.

- Assess the area with a Vision Zero lens and coordinate with transportation agencies to identify and integrate future improvement projects.
- Evaluate alternatives to improve connectivity between Wheaton's core and surrounding communities and amenities.
- Develop a comprehensive and implementable update to the 2002 Wheaton Central Business District Streetscape Standards that builds on guidance from:
 - 2013 Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan
 - 2018 Bicycle Master Plan
 - Complete Streets Design Guide (ongoing)
 - Pedestrian Master Plan (ongoing)
 - County's Climate Action Plan
- Explore a potential update to the 2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan Design Guidelines*.



Goal #4: Urban Design Framework



Create an urban design development framework that builds on the relationship between redeveloped and adaptive reused properties and focuses on how small-scale development can help retain Wheaton's unique character.

- The framework will provide a strategic design vision for the physical development of Wheaton to assist in the creation of supportive local action plans and initiatives.
- A fine-grained framework will consider Wheaton's uniqueness and how the public realm can improve to reflect a mix of new development and adaptively reused existing structures, enhance pedestrian areas, and create accessible public open space.
- The process will include community consultation, research and analysis, and will produce sufficient detail and key principles to allow continuous review and assessment of the sector plan's design vision as the area evolves.

Outreach



Source: ihopwheaton.com

Building on Wheaton's strong organizational foundation to identify stakeholders, needs, and outline strategies, Staff will:

- Seek opportunities to meet with neighborhood leaders, civic groups, and connect with community advocates.
- Engage with the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, county stakeholders, advisory committees, major property owners, and residents to develop a cohesive design vision and framework.
- Build on the priorities identified by the 2018 **What's Next for Wheaton** effort.

Goals:

Organize longer-term partnerships between local groups and county stakeholders to promote the area, identify needs and implement solutions to position the area as a hub of economic activity while creating a positive image that showcases its unique characteristics.



Outreach

Stakeholder outreach will also include:

- Mid-County Regional Services Center
- Montgomery County Department of Transportation
- Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration
- Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee
- Wheaton Urban District
- Montgomery County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Latino Economic Development Center
- Wheaton Kensington Chamber of Commerce
- Input from the Broader Community



Equity

Consistent with Montgomery Planning's **Equity Agenda for Planning**, the study will apply an equity lens to promote and implement an equitable process, including engaging the Equity Peer Review Group and prioritizing engagement of small property owners and businesses.



Deliverables

1. Wheaton Downtown Study:
 - a) Development Progress Summary
 - b) Considerations for Adaptive Reuse / Expansion of Small Individually-Owned Properties (an effort which will include a market analysis as well as site-specific case studies)
 - c) Urban Design Framework
2. Streetscape Standards
3. Explore Cultural Mapping and Updated Design Guidelines

Staff Contacts

Luis Estrada, Planner Coordinator

301.495.4641

Luis.Estrada@montgomeryplanning.org

Jessica McVary, Master Plan Supervisor

301.495.4723

Jessica.McVary@montgomeryplanning.org