



10400 Detrick Avenue
Kensington, Maryland 20895-2484
(301) 929-6700

March 29, 2005

The Honorable Derick P. Berlage, Chairman
and Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Sliver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: Wheaton Forest Preliminary Plan No. 1-05021

Dear Chairman Berlage and Members of the Board:

The Housing Opportunities Commission has been working with Bozzuto Development to produce a high quality, mixed-income rental development at the Wheaton Metro Kiss and Ride site for six years. We appreciate the opportunity to present the project to the Planning Board.

Opportunities to create mixed-income housing in the County are rare. The chance to provide a large number of units affordable to low and very low income residents at a Metro stop is even rarer. It is vitally important that the County not lose this opportunity.

1. Background

The Wheaton Metro development will consist of 173 rental units, with a structured garage that includes replacement facilities for the Metro Kiss and Ride parking lot and parking for the residential housing. A full 30 percent of the project will be affordable, with 20 percent reserved for families earning less than 50 percent of the area median income and 10 percent reserved for families earning less than 30% of the area median.

The Metro facilities have proven to be exceptionally problematic, as the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) is necessarily concerned with its operations during and after development. Negotiations with WMATA were protracted and the project must absorb a number of costs that would not be required on another site.

The Wheaton Metro will be a class A property that completes redevelopment of the block. Amenities include a fitness center, business center and club room, along with special features for the lower income residents. Plans include a linear park that will create a connection to the Metro entrance for the existing neighborhood and new apartments and townhomes on the block. A large portion of the Georgia Avenue frontage extending around to Reddie Drive will be devoted to retail uses. The building will rise four and a half stories above Georgia Avenue, tapering to three stories along Amherst Avenue to blend in with the townhouses under construction just south of the site and the single family homes across the street.



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Development plans are proceeding under the standard method as the optional method cannot be supported by project income. While greater density at the site would be desirable, it is not economically feasible. Any such project in the future would find it difficult to provide the level of affordability that is being proposed today.

2. Affordable Housing in Montgomery County

As you are well aware, the County is continuing to experience a housing shortage and an affordable housing crisis. The statistics are well documented and appear in any number of reports produced by government agencies. The spate of recent news stories on home prices and tax assessments makes it clear that homeownership is out of reach for most moderate income families. Even the MPDU qualifying income limit for purchasing a home is above 70 percent of the area median, leaving many public and private sector service workers without a purchase option.

As a result, the rental market is also pressured. One out of every 11 or 12 people in the County is poor and is paying too much for rent. HOC's Housing Choice Voucher waiting list contains over 10,000 names. Between 50 or 100 will be called in the coming year. The problem is particularly severe near Metro stops, where demand is high due to easy access to public transportation. Average rents within one quarter mile of Metro are over 12 percent higher than rents outside these areas. The fair market rent in 2004 for a two-bedroom apartment was \$1,187 per month. To be affordable, this requires an income of \$22.83 per hour, or over \$45,600 per year. Again, this is out of reach for many low and moderate income County families.

Plans to reduce the crisis have been offered by many, including the Montgomery County Planning Board. These plans almost universally call for affordable housing to be a high priority and for more flexibility when affordable housing is at stake. Flexibility was one of the hallmarks of the recent changes to the County's MPDU ordinance. In order to compensate for the difficulties in even creating MPDUs, less stringent standards sometimes need to apply.

As the County's only agency devoted exclusively to providing housing for low and moderate income residents, HOC strives to obtain as much affordable rental housing as possible in each of its developments. For new construction projects, typically 30 percent of the units are set aside for tenants with incomes below 60 percent of the median income or less. While unable to solve the housing shortage by itself, HOC has clearly been the most important provider of affordable housing in the County. Of all 11,000 rental MPDUs produced since the program's inception, over one-third of the remaining units are owned by HOC. The Commission currently owns over 6,500 units throughout the County.

3. Affordable Housing Program at Wheaton Metro

The low and moderate income program that is planned at the Wheaton Metro is very ambitious. Over thirty percent of the 173 apartments, 53 units, will be rented to lower income families. Of these, 35 units will be reserved for residents earning less than 50 percent of the area median and 18 units will be set aside for families that qualify for the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. These HCV families are allowed to earn up to 30 percent of the area median, but

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program. These HCV families are allowed to earn up to 30 percent of the area median, but typically earn far less. Currently, 50 percent of the area median for a family of three is \$39,150 per year, which is in the neighborhood of starting salaries for many public service workers. Other similar HOC developments such as the Metropolitan and Strathmore Court have had the same percentage of affordable units, but have not served families with the very low income levels that will have an opportunity to live at Wheaton Metro. Alexander House, a mixed-income high-rise development built in pre-revitalized Silver Spring, sets aside 40 percent of its units for lower income residents, but allows families with incomes of up to 60 percent of the area median.

These projects, if not carefully underwritten, can run into financial difficulties as well. Alexander House experienced large deficits in the early 1990s and had to be refinanced within a few years of completion.

The income levels that will be served at Wheaton Metro are well below the MPDU rates, which are currently in excess of 60 percent of area median. The housing shortage in the County hits lower income residents substantially harder than those with higher incomes. In any view of the need, the largest number of people and the most severe problems are at the lower end of the income spectrum, generally under 60 percent of median. The worst problems are faced by those earning less than 30 percent of the median.

The Wheaton Metro has the additional benefit of providing its homes literally atop the Metro station. The easy access to public transit allows lower income families to reduce driving and the cost of maintaining a car, thereby stretching their scarce transportation dollars. HOC has also promised to dedicate ten free parking spaces to lower income tenants in the building.

Unlike any of HOC's other new construction mixed-income properties, the Wheaton Metro development is designed to include dedicated community space for the low income families, with staff funded in the budget to provide services. There will be an after school program for the project's children run in the facility, with computers available for homework, and a staff member on site. Other adult-oriented programs will be provided in-house as well, including nutrition and financial management classes. Staff will be tasked with linking services available at the nearby Mid-County Service Center to the property. Recognizing the importance of the tenant services, the County's Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) committed funding for staffing the program.

The HCV funding in the project has allowed another benefit only rarely seen. Six of the Housing Choice Vouchers will be linked to six fully accessible units in the project. In the typical affordable housing project, the owner is required to include a specified number of accessible apartments. Almost invariably, these units are made available to disabled residents for a short period of time and then rented to non-disabled residents. Because the vast majority of low-income disabled renters are very low income, they cannot afford even the reduced rents at an affordable housing development. It takes the subsidy of a Housing Choice Voucher to allow an individual on Supplemental Security Income (SSI), which provides under \$7,000 of support annually, to rent an accessible apartment. By coupling the HCVs and the accessible units, and

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by working with advocacy groups for the disabled, HOC will be able to provide meaningful assistance for this underserved population.

Taken together, the plans for the number of affordable units, the depth of subsidy, the services, and the accessible units make for a comprehensive program of affordable housing that is beyond any similar project in the County. HOC staff is justifiably proud of its efforts in this area, particularly when the market rate facilities are considered. Because the lower income residents will be sharing the facility with tenants paying top dollar, they will have access to the fitness room, club room and business center that are available on the site. Unlike many MPDU projects, they will also have units that are comparable in square footage, number of bedrooms, and finishes to the market rate units.

4. Project Constraints

The Wheaton Metro Kiss and Ride has not been an easy site to develop. Bozzuto Development, HOC's partner in the effort, has been working on the project since 1999. In addition to the inherent difficulties of working with WMATA, the Metro facility and the site have imposed their own issues.

The team has been required by WMATA to permanently replace the Kiss and Ride parking, including van drop-off, and taxi, handicapped, and motorcycle spaces, and provide these same services during construction, when the site will be completely inaccessible. The planning for this work has taken many months, frequent meetings with WMATA, the County, and the State Highway Administration, and extra time in the development process. WMATA has also demanded that the developer move the existing generator and cooling tower that serve the station. This too is a costly and time-consuming venture.

Since HOC is buying the site and will own it in fee simple, the permanent Kiss and Ride lot will be on HOC property. This public use space has proven to be extremely expensive both in cost of construction, and in cost of planning. The fire code issues arising from the connection of the building, garage, and Metro station are complex and have resulted in the need for additional consultants and design changes. WMATA's construction standards are high, increasing expenses for materials.

The WMATA escalator from the station's mezzanine to the platform runs under the site, along the Georgia Avenue facade. Because of its structure, heavy construction cannot sit atop the tunnel without very costly piers and other shoring mechanisms. As a result, to keep total costs in line, the development team placed all public space, including retail, in other areas of the building. To create a retail front along the southern portion of Georgia Avenue would add an unacceptable price to the building.

The site is also hampered by its infill nature and steep slope. There is a 30 foot difference in grade from Georgia Avenue down to Amherst. When added to the need to lower the roof line at the Amherst end, the building had to be created in a number of pieces that step down from west to east. The result is a very complex project that squeezes as many residential units as possible given the various constraints.

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5. Project Financing

The biggest single constraint for the development is its affordable nature. The lower rents provide less income for debt and equity. Conventional financing cannot be used since the returns expected by lenders and investors cannot be met. Private equity is only brought in through the federal low income housing tax credit program. Soft money, funds that only need to be repaid if cash flow is available, is often used to fill financial gaps.

DHCA has generously pledged to provide \$3.5 million toward development costs. HOC has applied to the State for nine percent tax credits, a resource that is quite scarce. In the State's competition for these credits, only one out of every three or four projects is funded. HOC will also provide bond financing. Nonetheless, the project still has a gap, currently estimated at \$1.2 million but likely to grow.

There is no ready source to fill this gap. While HOC will find the money, it will be from some scarce public source. The public investment in the Wheaton Metro is already quite large, well in excess on a per unit basis of typical investments. Although this investment reflects the importance that the County has placed on the project, it is not unlimited. Any additional cost increases to the project can only be covered by public funds. Any loss of rental units that reduces the amount that can be borrowed will have the same affect, and cause a gap that can only be filled by public funds.

In downtown Bethesda, HOC built the Metropolitan – a high rise with affordable housing. Unfortunately, the rents that can be charged in Wheaton are not adequate to support this type of development with its high-priced construction cost. The Metropolitan also was built atop an existing garage, reducing costs, while at Wheaton HOC must build the garage and include the WMATA facilities. Alexander House in Silver Spring is another HOC high-rise with affordable units. As noted above, however, it was not economically viable when built. Only declining interest rates saved a significant loss on the property.

If high-rise construction were economically feasible in Wheaton, HOC and Bozzuto would have pursued it. HOC believes in denser development. At this time, however, more rental units cannot be created on the site. While condominium development might be supportable in a high-rise building, it was not when WMATA put the property out to bid. Condominiums would also not produce any quantity of affordable housing. The MPDUs, which serve people with incomes of about 70 percent of median, might have been built, but would never reach the families with the greatest need.

6. Planning Issues

In February of 2004, the County Council staff published a report that appraised the results of the MPDU program and suggested changes to the law. Over the course of the year, these suggestions and others were debated and eventually enacted. One of the conclusions of the Council in passing its amendments was that planning flexibility was absolutely necessary if more affordable housing was to be produced. Specifically, the report noted that:

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...another factor, MPDU development standards, appears to be as important as density bonuses in maintaining the program's "win-win" character. The Zoning Ordinance contains MPDU development standards that provide more flexibility and options than would be permitted under the base zone without an MPDU requirement. ... Since 1989, the Planning Board has approved 67 site plans for subdivisions with MPDUs. More than half of the approved site plans were for subdivisions with no (or extremely minimal) density bonuses. ... Developers of these projects took advantage of the flexibility provided by the MPDU development standards....

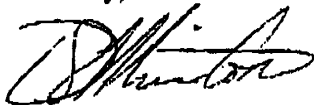
If more affordable housing is to be created, especially in transportation friendly sites like Wheaton, additional flexibility must be allowed. Affordable housing cannot come in second to all other issues or the current situation will continue.

HOC has worked with the Planning staff for over seven months to resolve the issues it has raised. We have discussed the affordable housing program, the financing limitations, the design, and have submitted written material on these topics. Over the last month we have more than tripled the amount of retail space, shaved a corner of the building for public access, and redesigned the public plaza. While this has caused the loss of four residential units, Planning staff felt that the changes were necessary.

Given the constraints on the site and the funding, and given the efforts that have been made to meet the planning requirements, HOC is asking for approval of the preliminary plan in order to allow the project to proceed. This development should be approved because it is a well designed solution to the issues in the area. It should also be approved because it provides more, deeper subsidized, and better quality affordable housing than will be built with any other configuration of the lot.

Thank you for your consideration of the Wheaton Metro development. We appreciate the chance to present the project to you and look forward to a successful hearing on April 7th.

Sincerely,



D. Scott Minton
Executive Director

cc: Charles Loehr
Rose Krasnow
John Carter

CORRESPONDENCE

March 4, 2005

6 pages

To: Cathy Conlon

fax: 301-495-1306

From: Shirley Lynne, President
Wheaton Forest Civic Asso.
301-949-6583

RE: R04-5, Proposed Changes to the Wheaton Metro

Hi Cathy,

Attached is a copy of the letters that should be in the Park and Planning files for Docket Number R04-5.

Another issue that could be addressed through Park and Planning is the repeated muggings that are occurring on the pedestrian bridge between the metro and the Westfield parking garage. Three muggings between Jan, 2005 and Feb. 15, 2005 are only a fraction of the number of incidents happening on that bridge. The Montgomery County police say it is up to metro police to address this since it is their jurisdiction. Metro is reported to have said that they have no money to install deterrents like cameras, or a two-way radio panic button. In the meantime, the muggings continue....

I hope that metro can be required to address this serious problem, and fund whatever is necessary to make the bridge a safe crossover.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

November 30, 2004

Ms. Shirley S. Lynn, President
Wheaton Forest Civic Association
2014 Glenhaven Place
Silver Spring, Maryland 20902

Dear Ms. ^{Shirley}Lynn:

Thank you for your letter of November 12, 2004, concerning the residential project proposed by the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC), located at the site of the existing Wheaton Metro Station-Kiss-and-Ride lot. As you know, the authority for the review and approval of subdivision plans in Montgomery County rests with the Montgomery County Planning Board of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. I am forwarding your letter stating your Association's concerns to Derick Berlage, Planning Board Chairman, so that the Board may consider your issues and concerns as part of its review and action on the application.

In your letter, you identify a number of issues relating to the temporary relocation of the Kiss-and-Ride facilities during the construction period. Staffs of the Wheaton Redevelopment Program and the Department of Public Works and Transportation are working with staffs of the State Highway Administration and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority to seek reasonable and effective solutions for the temporary relocation of the Kiss-and-Ride facilities. Working with HOC and Bozzuto, they have identified solutions for temporary replacement of most of the facilities and work continues to resolve the remaining issues. We are all concerned that that the replacement facilities must be appropriate and that they will not adversely affect the surrounding area.

If you have further questions concerning this project, please contact Joe Davis, Director of the Wheaton Redevelopment Program. He is closely monitoring the project as part of the Wheaton Redevelopment program. Joe can be reached by telephone at 240-777-8125.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

DMD:gar

cc/enc: Derick Berlage, M-NCPPC



Wheaton Forest Civic Association

2014 Glenhaven Place
Silver Spring, MD 20902
301-949-6583

Office of the President

The Honorable Douglas Duncan
County Executive
101 Monroe Street
Rockville, MD 20850

November 12, 2004

RE: Docket Number R04-5: Proposed Replacement of Kiss & Ride, Handicapped Parking, Taxi Stand, and Related Station Facilities in Conjunction with Proposed HOC Rental Apartment Building Over the Wheaton Metro

Dear Mr. Duncan,

As per your suggestion, I am forwarding to you my concerns regarding the proposed construction by Bozzuto over the Wheaton Metro air rights. As President of the Wheaton Forest Civic Association (WFCA), I respectfully request that the proposal to build 180 apartments above the Wheaton metro be significantly modified. The Executive Committee of the WFCA discussed HOC's plan and we have serious concerns about it.

First, the density proposed is unacceptable. The entire block surrounding the metro is being converted to apartment buildings and townhomes. We are concerned that the plans already in motion do not provide for adequate parking. The streets surrounding the proposed development are narrow with no room for expansion. There is no place to add additional streets. During rush hour, Reedic Drive is a congested street with an endless stream of cars, trucks, and buses. After the current construction is completed, it will be a virtual parking lot. Adding an additional 180 apartments will greatly diminish the quality of life for Wheaton Forest residents.

The proposed traffic pattern of preventing cars that exit the Metro Station's East side from turning left onto Reedic drive for access to Georgia Avenue, diverts that traffic onto residential Amherst Avenue. Cars will circle the block through Amherst for the most immediate access to Georgia Ave. Similarly, the proposed traffic pattern that prevents turning left into the metro facility from Reedic Drive also diverts traffic onto Amherst Avenue.

The additional noise, traffic, congestion, and pollution generated from this project could at least be mitigated by retention of the current berm at the corner of Amherst and Reedic. This

berm and the mature pine trees that soar above it have protected our residents from some of the noise and fumes associated with increased traffic around metro. With the rest of Amherst Avenue turning into a block of brick and cement, this corner of nature is particularly desirable. We urge you to maintain this small area of greenery.

The subject property is currently zoned for 200' height on Georgia Avenue, 145' height in the middle of the block, and 35' height for 75' from the curb on Amherst Ave. If Mr. Bozzuto were to build upward on Georgia Avenue, over the existing parking, it would be unnecessary to relocate the kiss and ride, handicap parking, and taxi stand. Then, the beautiful, green oasis on the corner of Amherst Avenue could be enhanced with a fountain as nice as the one at the Metropolitan in Bethesda, another HOC/Bozzuto property. In Bethesda they build for beauty. In Wheaton they build for profit, with no apparent concern for the existing community. Montgomery County has a law requiring builders to replace any tree removed during construction. If Mr. Bozzuto is unwilling to alter his current plan, I propose that he consult with the Wheaton Forest Civic Association to develop a plan of tree replacement that will benefit the Wheaton community.

Apartment buildings all over the county are experiencing high vacancy rates. With demand waning, and so many apartments available, we think the HOC proposal is a bad plan. If HOC anticipates a 70% rental at market rates, that is unlikely to happen. As for the remaining 30% of proposed low cost housing, this is also questionable. Wheaton has a preponderance of low cost rental units. Within two blocks of HOCs proposed site, the Housing Partnership manages several apartment buildings. Wheaton is also the site of several specialized low cost rental apartment buildings, including the former Howard Johnson hotel, Inwood House, and Crossway Community Center. The revitalization of Wheaton has sought to balance the existing low cost housing with new up-scale development. Those up-scale projects are being completed and will transform Wheaton to a more even mix of low cost and upscale residences. If the proposed development was one of ownership rather than rental, that would meet the market demand and be better aligned with the goals of Wheaton's revitalization.

We are concerned about the proposed changes to the Wheaton metro's kiss and ride, handicapped parking, and existing taxi stand. If I understand the plan presented at the June 3, 2004, WMATA hearing, it now appears that a kiss and ride, the 22 handicapped spaces, some metered spaces, and the taxi stand will all be located on the main level of the metro station entrance, where the station manager and the fare machines are located. I believe WMATA refers to this as the "Metro Mezzanine." Handicapped drivers and passengers will be able to directly walk into the station as they currently do from their cars. This is a very important safety consideration because the taxi stand and the kiss and ride provide a constant presence for handicap drivers who enter and exit their cars in view of metro staff, making crime less likely. We really would like to view a model of what is currently being proposed. It is very difficult to figure out what the proposed plan will really look like from viewing a flat drawing. I urge Park & Planning to require an architectural model that we can view as soon as possible. We still have concerns about proper venting for carbon monoxide on both the Mezzanine Level and the Kiss and Ride Entry Level above it. This issue was not addressed at the hearing, and we would like to know how that problem will be resolved.

During the 18 month construction period, how will wheelchair users enter metro? A new stairway is proposed at the East side of Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive for all users.

Since residents in the proposed HOC project will be required to pay for their parking, we wonder how you plan to maintain the metro handicap spaces for metro users. If handicap apartment dwellers choose to park for free in the metro spaces, commuters will lose this necessity. The number of handicap spaces is currently inadequate for the usage. Extra space requirements should be a required addition to the metro lot.

We are very concerned that East side pedestrian access to the Kiss & Ride Entry Level and the Mezzanine level from Reddie Drive is proposed as 2 elevators and a stairwell. The current stairwell is 30 steps on two landings and currently doubles as a public urinal. Very few people use this stairway for metro access. Instead, most people walk up the sidewalk alongside the taxi stand, as well as throughout the kiss and ride area. The proposal to funnel the steady stream of commuters into 2 elevators and stairs, is a prescription for a bottleneck. You must have an up and a down escalator in lieu of the proposed stairs.

The WMATA presentation mentioned that during the construction period, Parking Lot 13 would be used to accommodate additional metro parkers. This lot is often filled to capacity by customers of the surrounding businesses. The businesses that rely on this lot will not welcome it's conversion to metro usage.

The goal of the Wheaton Forest Civic Association is to protect and preserve the quality and character of single family residential homes in this community. The HOC proposal, as it is currently envisioned, will negatively impact the homes in Wheaton Forest. I hope that both HOC and Metro will work cooperatively with the WFCA and other interested civic groups to refine and scale back the proposal, preserve scarce green space, and explore better ways of integrating the project with current community metro usage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this information. I look forward to your response to the concerns I have outlined above. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Shirley S. Lynne
President



WHEATON URBAN DISTRICT

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

November 24, 2004

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Natalie Cantor
Director

The Honorable Derick P. Berlage
Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Re: Recommendation Concerning Preliminary Plan No.
1-05021 (Wheaton Forest)

Dear Chairman Berlage:

At the November regular meeting of the Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee, the members voted to express our strong support for the approval of Preliminary Plan 1-05021. This application involves the site of the Wheaton Metro Station Kiss-and-Ride facility. The applicant is the Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) who is proposing a development consisting of 175 multi-family housing units with a small amount of street level retail. The project will include 70 percent market rate housing and 30 percent affordable housing. The affordable housing component is significant and it represents a strong commitment by HOC to provide more affordable housing at an urban location, close to a major public transit facility.

The Committee has worked with the applicant to address two significant issues. The first is the need to assure continued pedestrian access to the Wheaton Metro Station. Committee members were very concerned that thousands of transit users would be forced to cross Georgia Avenue to gain access to the station during the 18 month construction period. The applicant, in cooperation with staff of the Wheaton Redevelopment Program, worked with WMATA to find a solution to this problem. The applicant will construct a temporary staircase, near the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Reddie Drive, to provide direct pedestrian access to the station without having to cross a major six-lane highway.

The Committee was concerned that any additional tree planting requirements resulting from adherence to the forest conservation law should be done in downtown Wheaton and not at a remote location within the larger watershed. The applicant has reported that they can meet their forest conservation requirements with on-site tree plantings including street trees required as part of the Wheaton CBD streetscape that is administered by the Department of Permitting Services.

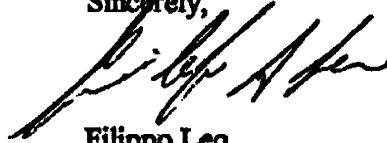
Mid-County Services Center

2424 Reddie Drive • Wheaton, Maryland 20902-4669
240/777-8100, TDD 240/777-8112, FAX 240/777-8110 or 240/777-8111
At Wheaton Metro Station

The overall size and scale of the project fits nicely with the other development now located on the same block. The development shown on the plan is also compatible with the lower density, one-family neighborhood located east of Amherst Avenue. The project proposes to relocate all of the current Kiss-and-Ride facilities on the site into the lower two levels of the proposed garage, accessible and visible from Reddie Drive. This represents a significant cost that is necessary to assure that the Metro Station facilities are not diminished. The applicant has worked hard to assure that pedestrian access to the station from the east side of Georgia Avenue is maintained; and we note that most of the public use space for the project is devoted to public access to the Metro Station.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this application and hope that the Planning Board will approve this preliminary plan of subdivision which proposes to provide more housing at an important urban location. This project represents an important step in the County's efforts to revitalize downtown Wheaton. We strongly encourage the Planning Board to approve the applicant's plan.

Sincerely,



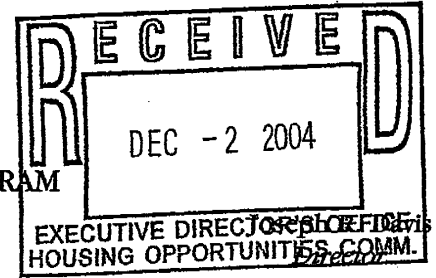
Filippo Leo
Chairman

FL:jrd

cc: Natalie Cantor, Director, Mid-County Service Area
Scott Minton, Executive Director, HOC



WHEATON REDEVELOPMENT PROGRAM



Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

November 29, 2004

The Honorable Derick P. Berlage
Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: Wheaton Forest – Preliminary Plan No. 1-05021
HOC/Bozzuto Project

Dear Chairman Berlage:

At the last meeting of the Wheaton Redevelopment Steering Committee (WRSC) held on November 17, 2004, the Committee voted to support the approval of the preliminary plan of subdivision for the HOC/Bozzuto project proposed to be developed on the site of the Wheaton Metro Station kiss-and-ride lot. The Committee's support for this standard method project is based on the fact that HOC will provide a significant portion of the housing (30 percent) as affordable housing. The Committee believes that new housing in downtown Wheaton should be available to various income levels.

While the Committee would prefer to see higher density housing at this location, we note that the high costs associated with constructing replacement facilities for the kiss and ride functions; the higher costs associated with steel and concrete construction to support increased density; and the desire to provide a large component of affordable housing work against a rental housing project that can remain within current market rental rates. Also, the current project is of comparable size to the new buildings on the block.

The WRSC is pleased that the applicant has been able to find a solution to the problem of maintaining access to the east entrance to the Metro Station during the lengthy construction period anticipated for the project. We were quite concerned that closure of the entrance would require pedestrians from the Amherst Avenue area to cross Georgia Avenue to gain access to the station. A temporary stair from the sidewalk on the east side of Georgia Avenue to the station will resolve this issue. We note also that the applicant has worked hard with various public agencies and departments to provide temporary replacement facilities for the various kiss-and-ride functions including handicapped parking and access to the station.



*A collaborative effort of the Offices of the County Executive, the Mid-County Regional Services Center
and the Department of Housing and Community Affairs*

2424 Reedie Drive • Wheaton, Maryland 20902 • 240/777-8121 • FAX 240/777-8130

The WRSC is also pleased that the public use space required for this project will provide wider community accessibility to the Metro Station. In 2002, Bozzuto and Eakin/Youngtob received a \$500,000 Smart Growth Grant from the State to provide pedestrian enhancements through their project to the Metro Station. These internal and external improvements will provide an attractive pedestrian route through the adjoining Bozzuto and Eakin/Youngtob projects to Metro. The HOC/Bozzuto project also proposes attractive pedestrian access to the Metro station that will tie into the adjoining projects and benefit the adjacent single-family neighborhood.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to you on this important project. Your approval of the preliminary plan will greatly assist the County's efforts to revitalize downtown Wheaton and provide much needed housing adjacent to the transit station.

Sincerely,



Clifford Moy
Co-Chairman



Patricia Murphy
Co-Chairman

cc: Natalie Cantor
Scott Minton
Artie Harris