

WHEATON DOWNTOWN STUDY



Description

Staff will present a briefing on the Wheaton Downtown Study and request that the Planning Board approve submittal to the County Council for a briefing.



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STUDY INFORMATION

Document

Wheaton Downtown Study

Report Date

February 10, 2023

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Planning Board Information

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SUMMARY

The Wheaton Downtown Study seeks to advance implementation of the 2012 *Wheaton Central Business District and Vicinity Sector Plan*. It explores how to further Wheaton's economic diversity by strategically leveraging new investment and economic benefits created by large scale redevelopment, while fostering the successful and entrepreneurial nature of the existing small property owners and businesses interested in evolving and adapting. The Study establishes near-, mid-, and long-term strategies to create a cohesive downtown that integrates recent development with Wheaton's small-scale character while meeting the needs and aspirations of small businesses, property owners, and residents of the Wheaton Central Business District.

The strategies are based on staff-led research and analysis, community input, and consultant expertise and are aimed at progressively enhancing the area to support existing businesses and improve the public realm to attract future investment. The strategies are organized by the districts established in the 2012 Plan and include prioritized actions in the following categories:

- Strengthen Wheaton's Character and Support Revitalization
- Enhance Existing and Create New Public Use Space
- Improve Connectivity
- Incentivize Potential Development

To develop the Study, staff researched and documented development implemented in the last decade, catalogued recent and anticipated public infrastructure investments, and examined individual properties to identify ownership patterns and opportunities. Consultants for economic analysis (Partners for Economic Solutions) and architectural development (Hord Coplan Macht Architects) were also engaged to work with property owners to evaluate redevelopment potential at jointly owned properties of various sizes. Staff also engaged property owners, agency partners, community members, and other stakeholders to evaluate the potential for furthering the vision of the 2012 Plan. Outreach included:

- Interviews with property owners and stakeholders active in the Wheaton area, including the Art and Walkability Project and One Montgomery Green.
- Coordination with public agencies including the Montgomery County Department of Housing and Community Affairs, Montgomery County Department of Transportation, and the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration.
- Coordination with the Mid-County Regional Services Center, Wheaton Urban District, and Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee.
- Discussions with groups offering support to businesses such as the Latino Economic Development Center, the County Executive's Small Business Navigator Office, and the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation.

- Conversations with the community through events and initiatives, including in-person and virtual open houses, an online questionnaire, and participation in the Taste of Wheaton and the Wheaton Arts Parade and Festival.

Staff requests that the Planning Board receive a briefing on the Wheaton Downtown Study and approve submittal to the County Council for a briefing.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Wheaton Downtown Study

Attachment B: Wheaton Market Overview and Financial Feasibility