

**MHP-AMHERST & WHEATON ARTS AND CULTURAL
CENTER
SKETCH PLAN NO. 320230030
MANDATORY REFERRAL NO. MR2023015**



A joint application for MHP-Amherst & the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center (“WACC”) for Sketch Plan No. 320230030 and Mandatory Referral No. MR2023015. The Sketch Plan requests to build two mixed use buildings and 39 townhouses; establishes the location of the future WACC on the site; creates new roads, open spaces and amenity areas; and shows the location of the future community park. The overall density is 1.61 FAR for a total of maximum density of up to 485,000 square feet. The Mandatory Referral shows the site selection of the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center and the corresponding disposition of the land at 11507 Georgia Avenue.

Nos. 320230030 & MR2023015

Completed: 11-17-2023

MCPB

Item No.

11-30-2023

Montgomery County

Planning Board

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Wheaton, MD 20902

Planning Staff



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LOCATION/ADDRESS

Wheaton Downtown, north of Blueridge Avenue, between Georgia Avenue and Elkin Street

MASTER PLAN

2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan*

ZONE

CR-2.0, C-1.5, R-1.5, H-75

PROPERTY SIZE

6.14 acres

APPLICANT

Mandatory Referral:

Department of General Services (DGS)

Sketch Plan:

Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP)

ACCEPTANCE DATE

August 15, 2023

REVIEW BASIS

Chapter 59 &

Mandatory Referral Review Uniform Standards

Summary:

- Staff recommends approval of MHP-Amherst, Sketch Plan No. 320230030
- Staff recommends that the Planning Board transmit comments to the Department of General Services for the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center Mandatory Referral No. MR2023015.
- The Applicant will be providing public benefit points for the following categories: Transit Proximity, Diversity of Uses and Activities, and Quality Building and Site Design.
- The Applicant proposes to replace the existing aging multifamily units with up to 320 new multifamily units and up to 39 townhouses, including a minimum of 25% MPDUs.
- Both a Site and Preliminary Plan application will be required in the future for the project.
- Staff has received community correspondence for the Subject Applications.

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SECTION 1: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Subject Applications, designated Mandatory Referral No. MR2023015 and Sketch Plan No. 320230030, propose the site selection, land disposition, and initial project review associated with the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center (WACC) and multifamily housing development. The County's Department of General Services (DGS) is the applicant for the Mandatory Referral and the Montgomery Housing Partnership (MHP) is for the applicant for the Sketch Plan.

Mandatory Referral

The Mandatory Referral covers the site selection and public land disposition associated with the WACC and multifamily project. The disposition of public land will allow for an agreed upon land exchange between MHP and the County and M-NCPPC Montgomery County Department of Parks (Montgomery Parks) in which MHP will receive the County titled parcel portion of the Subject Property in exchange for an MHP titled parcel east of Elkin Street. This land exchange will allow MHP to develop the Subject Property and provide the land for a new future public park in the Montgomery Parks system on the parcel east of Elkin Street. Details associated with the property disposition can be found in Attachment B. The future park design is not a part of the Subject Applications and will be handled through a future Montgomery Parks process. As part of the exchange agreement, MHP will remove the existing buildings on Parcel B and deliver it to Montgomery Parks in a ready to build condition. MHP will provide information about the project phasing, including tenant relocation, as part of subsequent development applications. Details regarding WACC building programming and interior features is not a part of this review and any questions regarding the details of the WACC should directed to DGS.

Sketch Plan

The Sketch Plan will cover the maximum density allocation, conceptual site layout, building footprints and other requirements per Section 59.7.3.3. of the Zoning Ordinance. The Sketch Plan is limited to a maximum of 485,000 square feet comprised of up to 423,000 square feet of residential uses and up to 62,000 square feet of non-residential uses. Non-residential uses on the site include up to 42,000 square feet for the arts and cultural center and up to 20,000 square feet of office space. The Project is expected to provide up to 320 multifamily units and up to 39 townhouse units, which includes a net increase of up to 234 mixed-income affordable housing units within one-half mile of the Wheaton Metro Station.

Planning Staff will continue to work with the Applicant, other Agencies, and members of the community to address outstanding items associated with the development application. A summary of items to focus on are as follows:

- Activation and design of open spaces.
- Location of stormwater management facilities.
- Frontage improvements along streetscapes.

- Architectural features for the Georgia Avenue façade.
- Future site connections and enhancements.

SECTION 2: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

MANDATORY REFERRAL MR2023015

Staff recommends approval of Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center Mandatory Referral No. MR2023015, site selection, for an arts and cultural center comprised of up to 42,000 square feet and the corresponding disposition of land at 11507 Georgia Avenue to the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (“M-NCPPC”), on 6.14 acres of land, zoned CR-2.0, C-1.5, R-1.5, H-75’.

SKETCH PLAN 320230030

Staff recommends approval of MHP-Amherst, Sketch Plan No. 320230030, for up to 485,000 square feet of density on 6.14 acres, zoned CR-2.0, C-1.5, R-1.5, H-75, in the 2012 *Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan*. The following site development elements shown on the latest electronic version of Sketch Plan No. 320230030, as of the date of this Staff Report submitted via ePlans to the M-NCPPC, are required except as modified by the conditions below.

1. Maximum density and height;
2. Approximate location of lots and public dedications;
3. General location and extent of public open space;
4. General location of vehicular access points; and
5. Public benefit schedule.

All other elements of the Sketch Plan are illustrative and subject to refinement at the time of Site Plan.

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

1. **Density**

The Sketch Plan is limited to a maximum of 485,000 square feet comprised of up to 423,000 square feet of residential uses and up to 62,000 square feet of non-residential uses. Non-residential uses on the site include up to 42,000 square feet for the arts and cultural center and up to 20,000 square feet of office space.

2. **Height**

The development is limited to a maximum average building height of 75 feet, as measured from the building height measuring point to be illustrated on the Certified Site Plan.

3. **Incentive Density**

The development must be constructed with the public benefits listed below unless modifications are made under Section 59.7.3.3.I. The project must provide a minimum of 20 percent MPDUs or it will be required to satisfy other benefit categories under Section 4.5.4.A.2 and Section 4.6.4.A.2, per Section 4.7.3. D.6.e. Final points will be established at Site Plan approval.

4. **Public Open Space**

The Applicant must provide a minimum of 20 percent of the Site Area (267,261 square feet) as Public Open Space and Common Open Space, totaling a minimum of 57,100 square feet of open space. Final open space type will be determined at Site Plan approval.

5. **Arts and Cultural Center**

The Applicant must provide up to 42,000 square feet of non-residential uses to Montgomery County Department of General Services for an arts and cultural center.

6. Moderately Priced Dwelling Units (MPDUs)

The development must provide a minimum of 25 percent MPDUs in accordance with Chapter 25A with the distribution of MPDUs subject to review and approval by the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) at Site Plan.

7. Future Coordination for the Site Plan

In addition to any other requirements for Site Plans under Chapter 59, the following must be addressed in the Site Plan application:

- a) Undergrounding of utilities along Elkin Street consistent with the requirements of the Wheaton Streetscape Standards.
- b) Provide methods for keeping non-emergency vehicles from accessing the central pedestrian walkway.
- c) Determine alignment of the pedestrian connection to the northern property line to align with the existing sidewalk on the property to the north.
- d) Determine the midblock connection design in coordination with the property located to the south.
- e) Provide appropriate pedestrian crossing facilities and locations across Elkin Street based on results of a speed study conducted as part of the required LATR study.
- f) The Applicant must submit and receive approval of a Preliminary/Final Forest Conservation Plan.
- g) The Applicant must submit and receive Stormwater Management concept approval consistent with Chapter 19 of the Montgomery County Code.
- h) Noise Analysis will also be required due to the proximity to Georgia Avenue.
- i) Provide Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (SHA) approval for access on to Georgia Avenue.
- j) Confirm hardscape along streetscape for Georgia Avenue.
- k) Confirm design and usability of all proposed open space.
- l) Confirm final design of pedestrian path/open space along southern property boundaries.
- m) Provide information about project phasing, including tenant relocation, as part of the future preliminary plan application.

8. Validity

A site plan must be submitted within 36 months after the resolution mailing date per Section 59.7.3.3.G.

SECTION 3: SITE DESCRIPTION

VICINITY

The Subject Property (“Subject Property” or “Property” shown in red in Figure 1 below) is located within the Wheaton Downtown Area, north of Blueridge Avenue, and extending from Georgia Avenue on the west to Elkin Street on the east. The Subject Property is surrounded by residential uses to its north, south and east.

To the north is the Leesborough community comprised of a combination of multifamily rental and condominiums, townhomes and single family residential units fronting Elkin Street (zoned RT-15); to the south is the 322-unit AVA Wheaton multifamily rental building (zoned CR-4.0, C-3.5, R-3.5, H-100’); and to the east is the remaining portion of Amherst Square and the Pembridge Square Apartments, also owned by MHP (zoned CR-2.0, C-1.5, R-1.5, H-75’). Across Georgia Avenue to the west are single family homes (zoned R-60); to the south along Georgia Avenue are a variety of commercial uses including an office building and an auto repair shop (zoned CR-3.0, C-2.5, R-2.5, H-75’). The Wheaton Library is located just over 1,600 feet to the north along Georgia Avenue and the Wheaton Metrorail Station is located approximately 2,300 feet to the south of the Property.

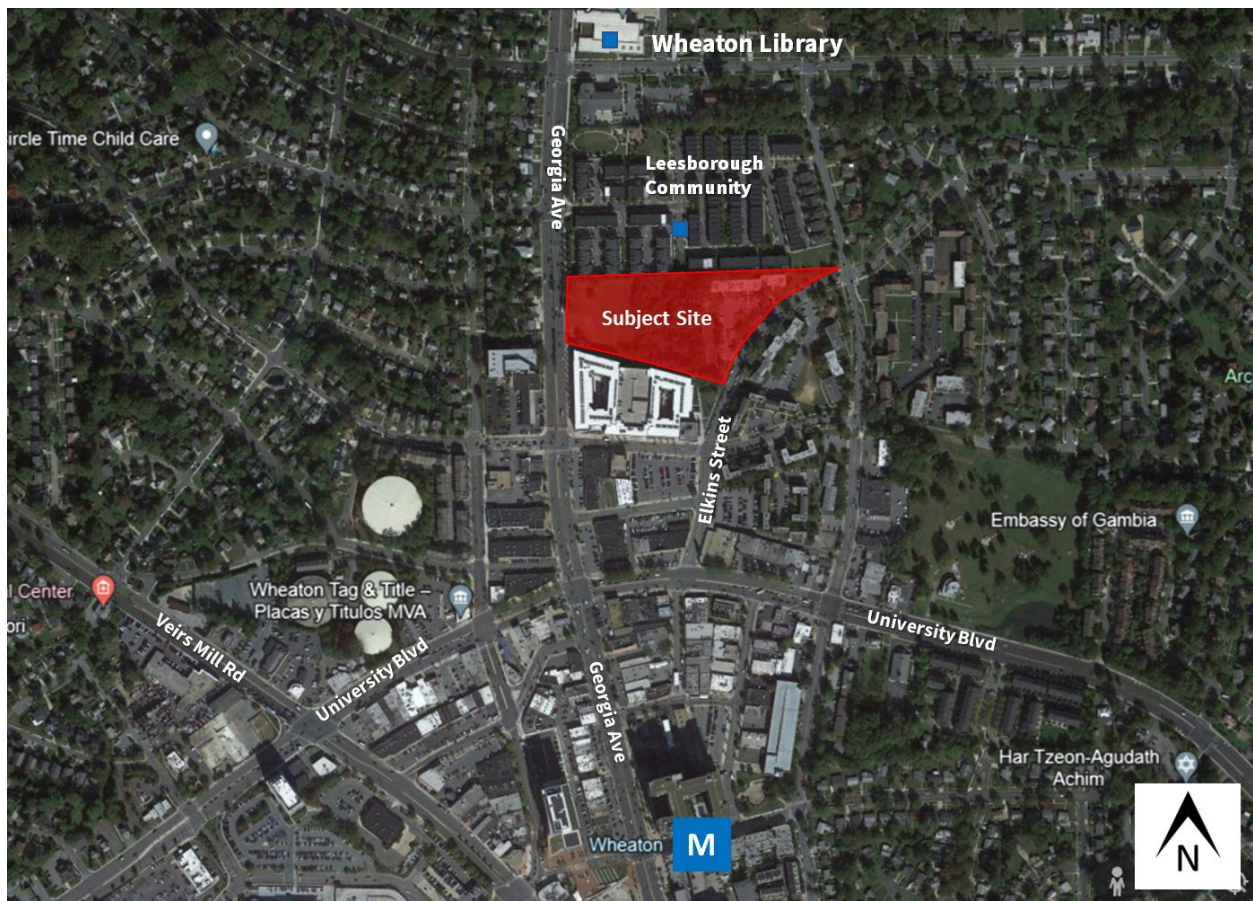


Figure 1 - Vicinity Map

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Subject Property includes two parcels: (1) “Parcel 920,” a 167,152-square foot (3.84-acre) parcel of land fronting Georgia Avenue, and (2) “Parcel A,” a 104,190-square foot (2.39-acre) parcel fronting on west side of Elkin Street.

Parcel B, which is a 143,864 square feet (3.3 acres) parcel located on the east side of Elkin Street, will be a part of the agreed upon land exchange and will become a new future public park in the Montgomery Parks system. Parcel B is not a part of the density calculations or development proposed through the Subject Applications.

The Subject Property has a total Tract Area of 300,917 square feet (6.91 acres) and a Site Area of 267,261 square feet (6.14 acres). The Subject Property is currently improved with approximately 50 affordable multifamily units located in two separate structures. These units, along with those located on Parcel B, are part of the Applicant’s Amherst Square project.

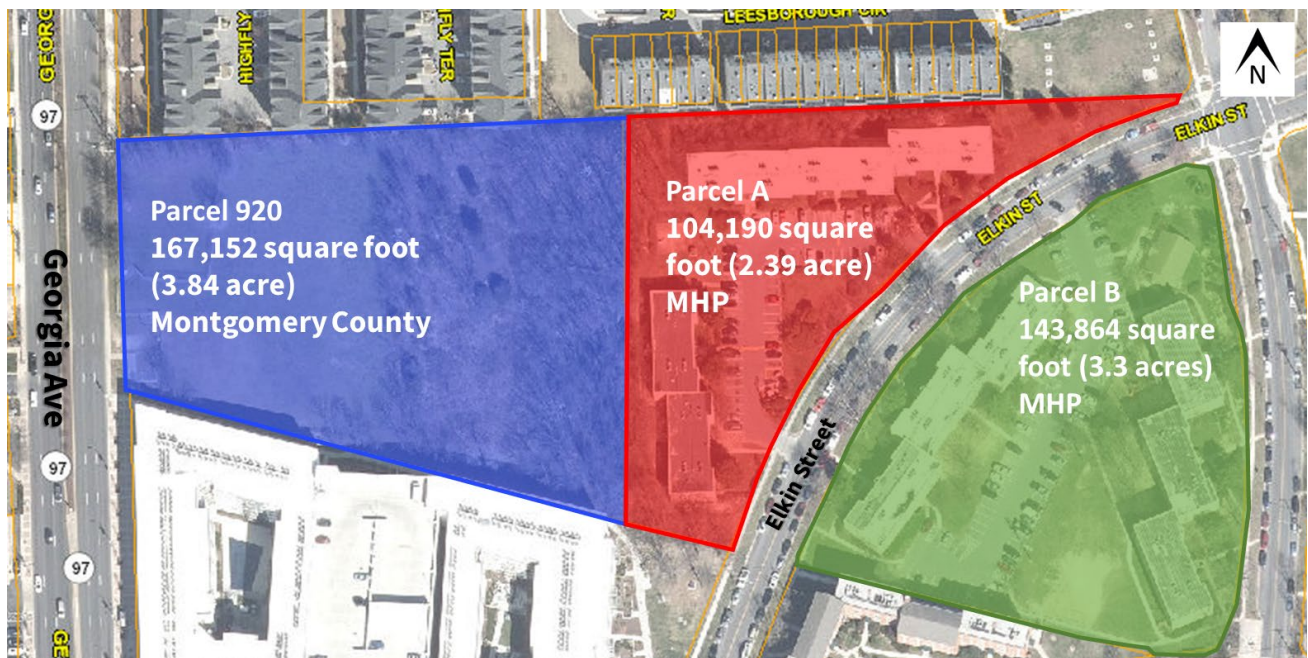


Figure 2 – Parcel Map



Figure 3 – Subject Property

SECTION 4: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

WHEATON ARTS AND CULTURAL CENTER MANDATORY REFERRAL NO. MR2023015

This Mandatory Referral includes the site selection of the WACC and the corresponding disposition of public land at 11507 Georgia Avenue (“Subject Property”). DGS is co-locating the WACC with the proposed affordable housing development by MHP at the Subject Property (“MHP-Amherst”) in the Wheaton Arts and Entertainment District. MHP will develop the Subject Property and the adjacent property MHP currently owns with affordable rental and for sale housing units, as well as a parking garage. The WACC will be included on the ground floor of MHP-Amherst Building 1, which will front on Georgia Avenue. The WACC is anticipated to include two performance spaces, classrooms, gallery space, back of house support space, and administrative offices. The MHP-Amherst multifamily building, which encompasses the WACC, is subject to Sketch Plan Application No. 320230030.

DISPOSITION OF THE LAND

The Subject Application includes review of the proposed disposition of 3.83 acres of public land at 11507 Georgia Avenue, Wheaton, Maryland, 20902 (Parcel 920). Parcel 920 that the County will dispose of is described in the Deed of Dedication recorded among the land records of Montgomery County at Book 60230, page 1. The Tax Account Number is 13-00964876; Tax Map JQ12; Parcel P920. Parcel 920 was acquired in 2020 from the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) by the County. While the Subject Property is titled to the County, it was expressly purchased at the request of Montgomery Parks for a new urban recreational park in Wheaton as part of a land exchange with MHP (see Attachment B).

LAND EXCHANGE SUMMARY

Parcel 920, previously owned by WMATA, is vacant and is now owned by the County. The County will be conveying Parcel 920 to MHP as part of a land exchange wherein the Applicant, in exchange for Parcel 920, will transfer to the County/M-NCPPC Parcel B (143,864 square feet (3.3 acres)) located on the east side of Elkin Street. The design and construction of Parcel B (future park) will occur as a separate process from the current applications and will be managed by Montgomery Parks.

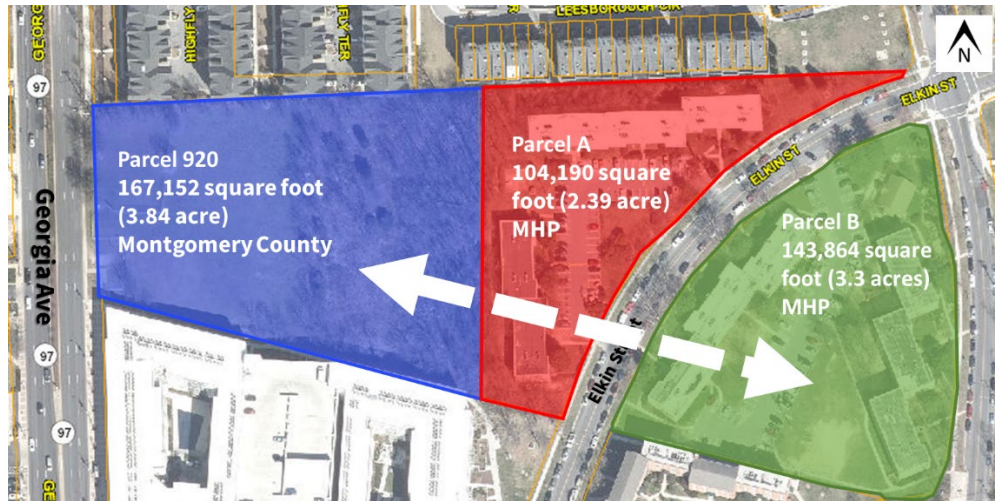


Figure 4 – Land Exchange Exhibit

Planning Staff is recommending the Planning Board issue comments in support of the site selection and disposition of public land.

MHP-AMHERST, SKETCH PLAN NO. 320230030

The Applicant proposes to demolish the existing Amherst Square apartment buildings along Elkin Street and clear the existing forested area on the Subject Property to build 485,000 square feet of total development (1.16 FAR). Which includes up to 420,000 square feet (1.40 FAR) of residential and up to 65,000 square feet (0.22 FAR) of non-residential development. The maximum height of the Project will be 75 feet. The project will include three different project elements, as described below.

- Project Element 1 is a mixed-use building located along Georgia Avenue and will contain the arts and cultural center located on the lower level (up to 42,000 square feet) and approximately 180 residential units within eight stories (a maximum height of 75 feet).
- Project Element 2 is a mixed-use “L” shaped building located central to the Site and is expected to include up to 140 multifamily residential units and up to 2,000 square feet of office space. The proposed office space will allow MHP to relocate its office from their current location in northern Silver Spring to this building.
- Project Element 3 will include up to 39 Townhouses on the northeast portion of the Property with frontage along Elkin Street. This part of the project will frame and activate both Elkin Street and the proposed internal private street.

The Project will provide one new private street from Georgia Avenue to Elkin Street and this will be the primary access to the Subject Property. This proposed structured parking garage will front on the private street and have a rear access drive from Elkin Street to the loading area. It will also have approximately 590 vehicle spaces and the total development is expected to have 673 vehicle spaces. The final number of parking spaces will be determined at Site Plan. The Project will provide a

minimum of 25% of MPDUs for the total development. The open space will exceed the 10% requirement by providing approximately 57,100 square feet (21%) of public and common open space. As mentioned, the land exchange between the Applicant and the County/M-NCPPC will result in a new future public park as well.

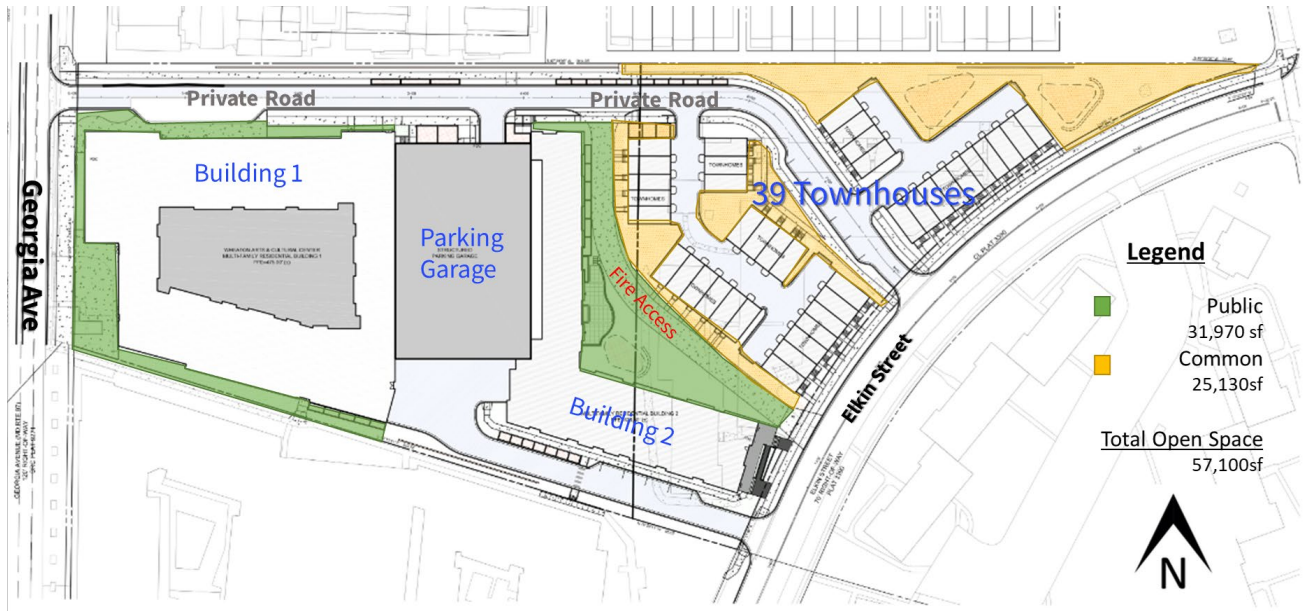


Figure 5: Sketch Plan

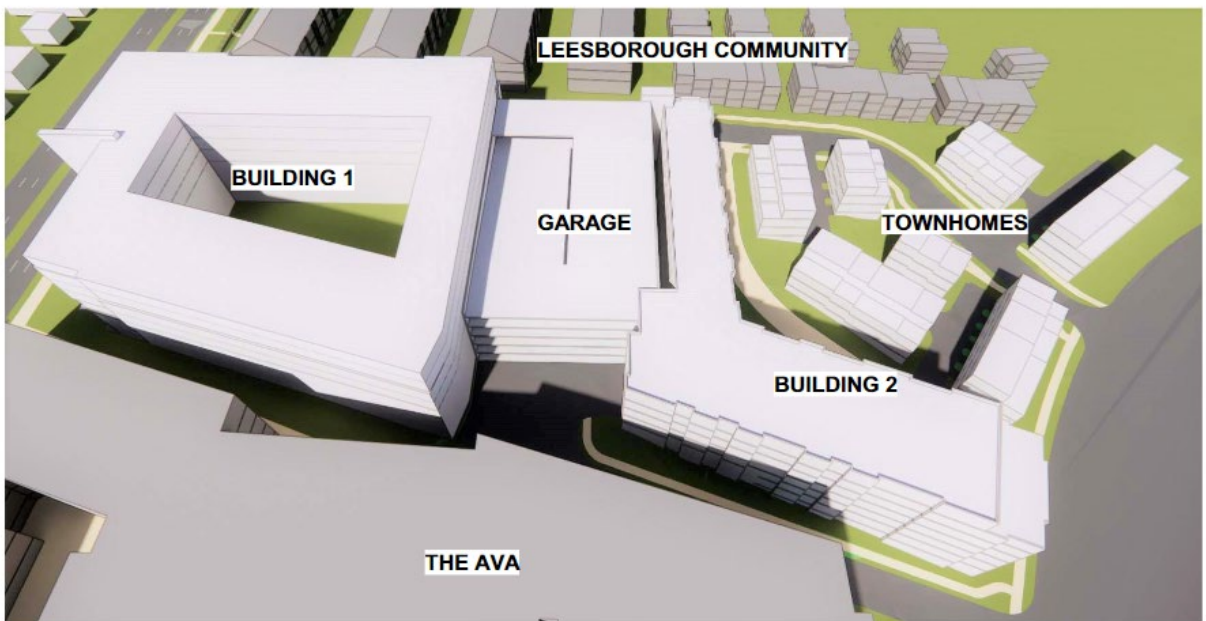


Figure 6: Sketch 3D View

HEIGHT COMPATIBILITY

The Subject Property abuts a property zoned RT-15 (Residential Townhouse) on the northern property line. Per Section 59.4.1.8.B. Height Compatibility, the proposed building must not protrude beyond a 45-degree angular plane projecting over the Subject Property, measured from a height equal to the height allowed for a detached house in the abutting zone at the setback line. The following illustration shows how the northern side elevation will comply with the height compatibility requirement of the Zoning Ordinance (Figure 7).

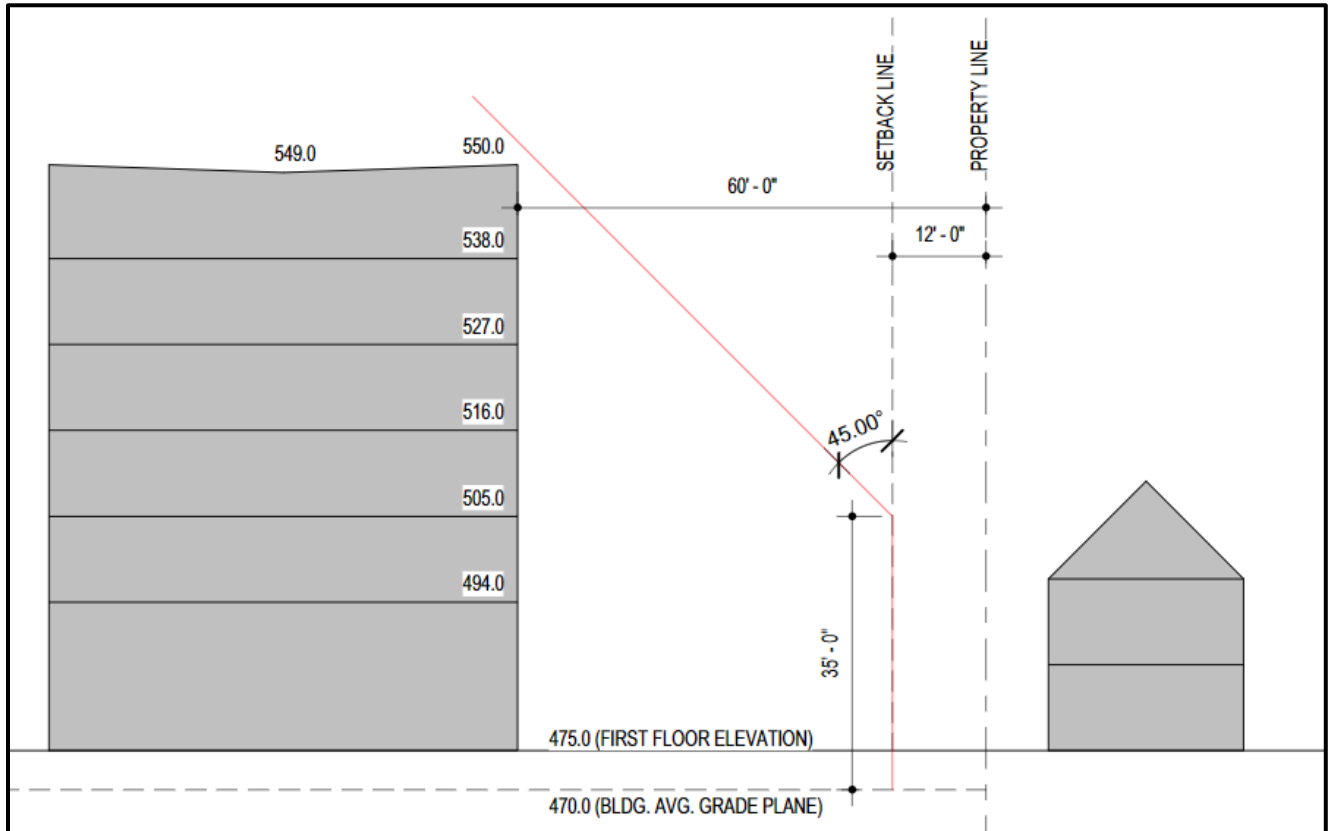


Figure 7: Height Compatibility

BUILDING/ARCHITECTURE

Building 1

Building 1 is a mixed-use building that will have the WACC's main entrance and drop-off area located along the proposed new private street. A public plaza and the main residential lobby are located along Georgia Avenue, which help activate this frontage. In addition, the transparent storefronts of the Arts and Cultural Center along Georgia Avenue create a welcoming and inviting streetscape along this major road.

As presented in the precedent images, a wrap-around canopy will help cover the main entrance to the arts and cultural center while also drawing attention to it around the corner on the private street. A drop-off area is in front of the main entrance with a curbsless condition and special pavements that accentuates the main entry. Planning Staff will work with the Applicant to finalize the façade design and proposed streetscape along Georgia Avenue. At this time, Planning Staff is satisfied with conceptual concept of the exterior façade and the location of the plaza. The final details of both items will be determined at Site Plan.



Figure 8: Sketch Plan Renderings Views from Georgia Avenue

Building 2

Building 2's "L" shaped configuration extends down to Elkin Street with a prominent main entrance. Building 2 is designed to line the eastern façade of the parking structure and then extend eastward toward Elkin Street, where the building will step down to seven stories to provide an appropriate transition to the townhouses to be located on the remaining portion of the Property. Building 2 is envisioned to complement Building 1 with similar materials and a similar color scheme. Storefronts and windows on the first floor along Elkin Street create a pedestrian-friendly environment as the Site transitions to the townhomes. Planning Staff will continue to work with the Applicant to determine where the units can access the open space and how the public open space is activated in this area.

Townhomes

The townhomes are expected to feature a similar material palette as Building 1 and 2 to make the Site read as a cohesive project. Planning Staff will continue to work with the Applicant on the exterior elevation design, materials and look for opportunities to activate the common open space.

OPEN SPACE

The Project will provide approximately 57,100 square feet (21%) of public and common open space. The two types of open space are due to the two building types associated with the development (public for the multifamily and common for the townhouses). At this time, Planning is satisfied with the locations of open spaces. However, how the spaces are designed and activated will be determined at Site Plan. Three areas of focus will be the streetscape and plaza along Georgia Avenue, the pedestrian experience along the south boundary of the property, and the internal courtyard with an emergency-only access lane between Building 2 and the townhouses.

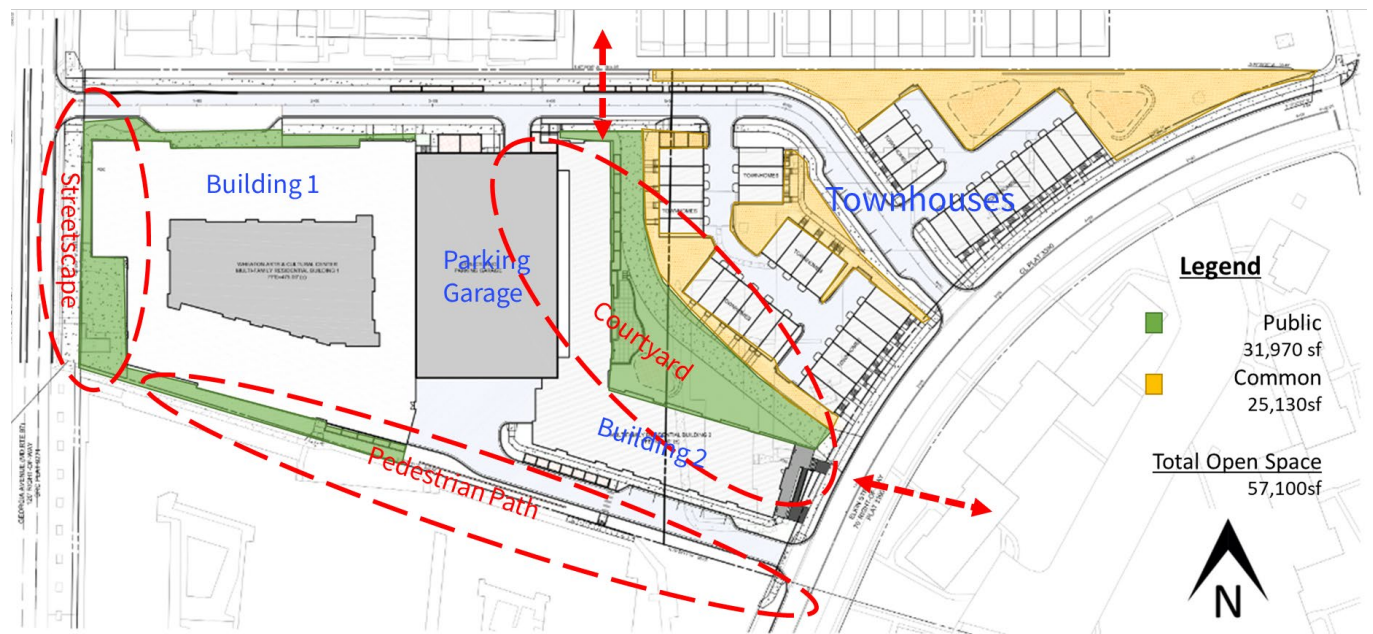


Figure 9: Open Space Exhibit

The streetscape and plaza along Georgia Avenue will need to provide a design that highlight the main entrance of WACC, relate to the main façade, and promote activity along Georgia Avenue.

The existing through-block pedestrian connection on the adjacent property (AVA Wheaton), along the southern boundary of the Subject Property, has presented issues for the community in its existing condition. Part of the challenge with this space is the grade change that occurs from Georgia Avenue to Elkin Street, which is approximately 50-to-62-feet. The Applicant team is working with the adjacent property owner to improve the pedestrian environment between the Subject Property and the property to the south, including removing the existing fence, providing new lighting, and providing new sidewalk connections between the two properties. Planning Staff will continue to work with this Applicant and the adjacent property, AVA Wheaton, to improve the dynamic of this space. Final design of any changes to this space will be determined at the time of Site Plan and may require a site plan amendment to the adjacent AVA Wheaton property.



Figure 10: Existing Through-Block Connection (Looking east from Georgia Avenue)

The most important open space for the Subject Property is the internal courtyard, which is located in the center of the property. This space will be framed by the future Building 2 and townhouse element. This open space should be designed in a way that promotes activation for the future residents and provides an opportunity for connections into both the Leesborough residential community to the north and the future community park located across Elkin Street. Planning Staff will continue to work with the Applicant to enhance all of these spaces at the future Preliminary Plan and Site Plan applications.

TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular Circulation

Vehicular access to the Property is proposed via Georgia Avenue (MD 97) and Elkin Street. Georgia Avenue is a north to south running roadway located on the property's western boundary and is classified as a Downtown Boulevard with six travel lanes and a center median. Elkin Street is a north to south running roadway located on the property's eastern boundary and is classified as a Neighborhood Connector with two travel lanes and on-street parking located on both sides of the roadway.

The Project proposes a new east to west running road along the property's northern boundary that connects to Georgia Avenue and Elkin Street. It is envisioned as a private street. Justification for this private street will be provided at the time of the Preliminary Plan. Access on this road is limited to right-in-right-out access at Georgia Avenue. The road design includes a layby located approximately 70-feet east of the intersection with Georgia Avenue, adjacent to the proposed Wheaton Arts and

Cultural Center. It also includes a limited amount of on-street parking located approximately 40-feet west of the intersection with Elkin Street. The intersection at Elkin Street will be full access.

This private street will be the primary route used to access a proposed parking garage located at the center of the site that serves the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center and proposed multifamily buildings. A series of alleys that provide access to rear-loaded townhomes will also be accessed via this private street.

A private driveway is proposed along the southeastern corner of the Subject Property off Elkin Street. This driveway is primarily for loading and trash collection, but also serves as a secondary access to the proposed parking garage. A limited number of on-street parking stalls are also proposed approximately 130-feet west of the intersection with Elkin Street.

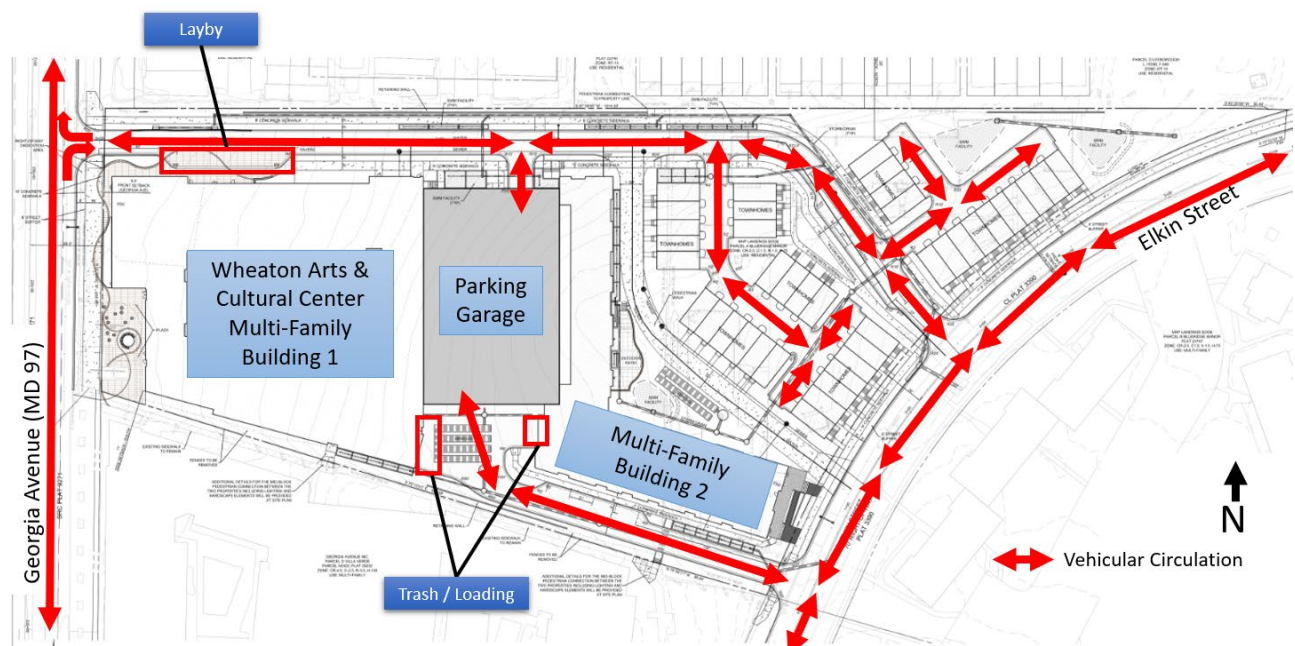


Figure 11: Proposed Vehicular Circulation

Nonmotorized Circulation

Nonmotorized access to the site is proposed off Georgia Avenue and Elkin Street via frontage improvements along these roadways.

A sidepath is recommended along Georgia Avenue in the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan* and 2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan* to serve both bicyclists and pedestrians. The sidepath will be 15-foot-wide and will be buffered from the roadway with an 8-foot-wide street buffer.

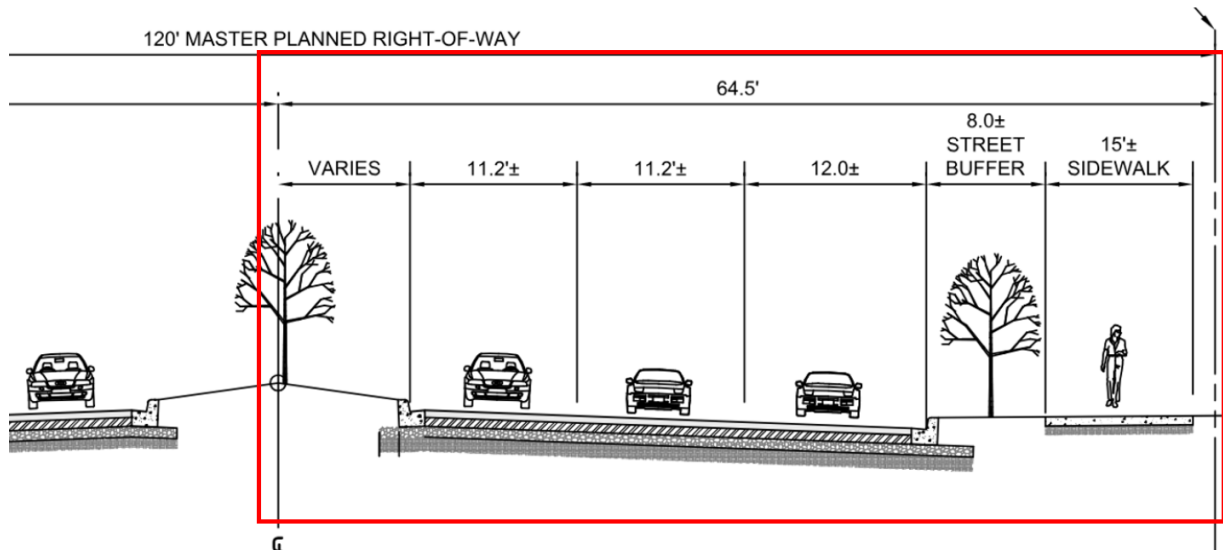


Figure 12: Georgia Avenue (MD 97) Cross-Section

Elkin Street will have a six-foot-wide sidewalk separated from the roadway with a six-foot-wide street buffer, consistent with the 2021 *Complete Streets Design Guide*.

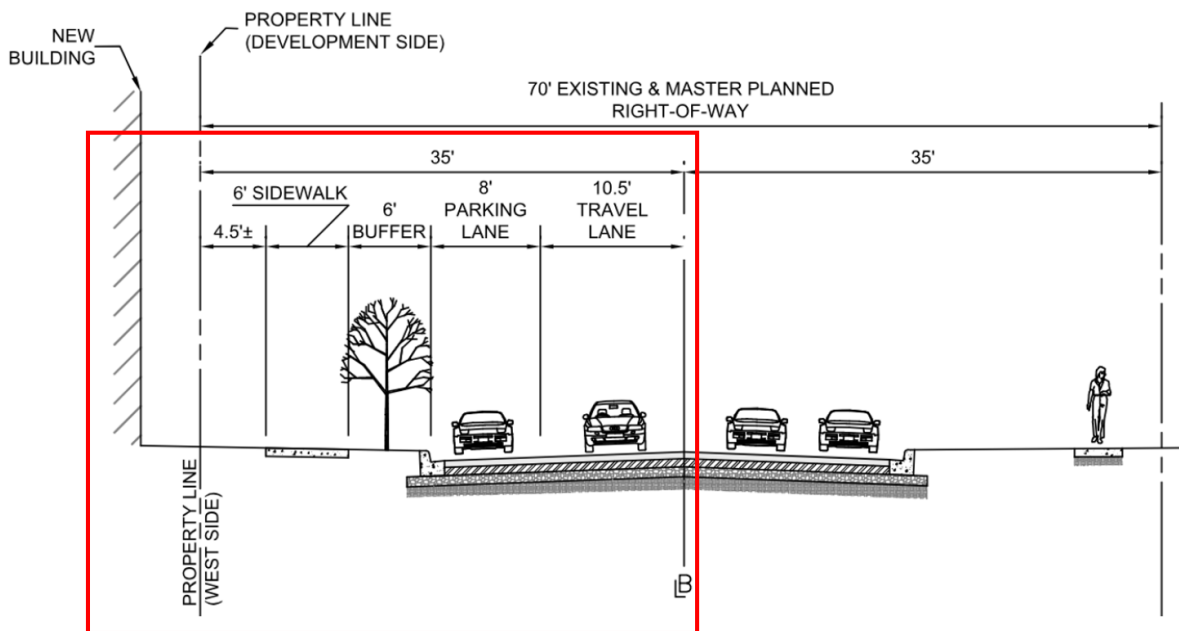


Figure 13: Elkin Street Cross-Section

The proposed Private Street will include sidewalks on both sides of the street. In most locations the sidewalks will be six feet wide, although in some limited locations the sidewalk width will be eight feet wide. The sidewalks will be buffered from the roadway with a six-foot-wide street buffer. An eight-foot parking lane will be provided just west of the intersection with Elkin Street. These widths are consistent with the 2021 *Complete Streets Design Guide*.

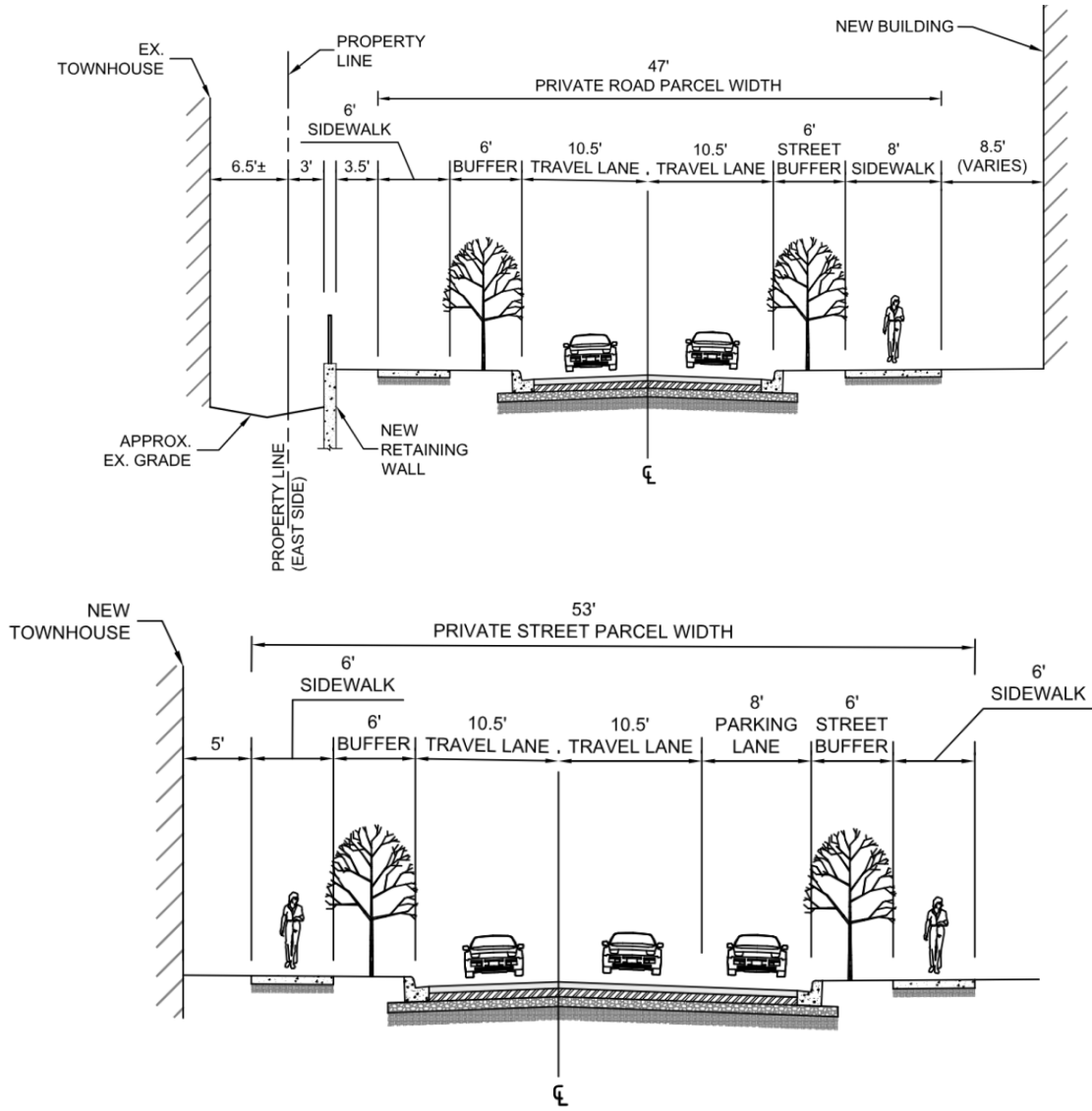


Figure 14: Private Street Cross-Sections

The private driveway located at the southeastern corner of the Subject Property will have a five-foot-wide sidewalk along the north side of the driveway, providing access to Multifamily Building 2, the parking garage, and the through-block connection.

The 2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan* identifies a proposed pedestrian connection to the property to the north. To allow for this future connection, the Applicant will provide a pedestrian connection to the northern property line. The exact location of the pedestrian connection will be determined at the time of Preliminary Plan.

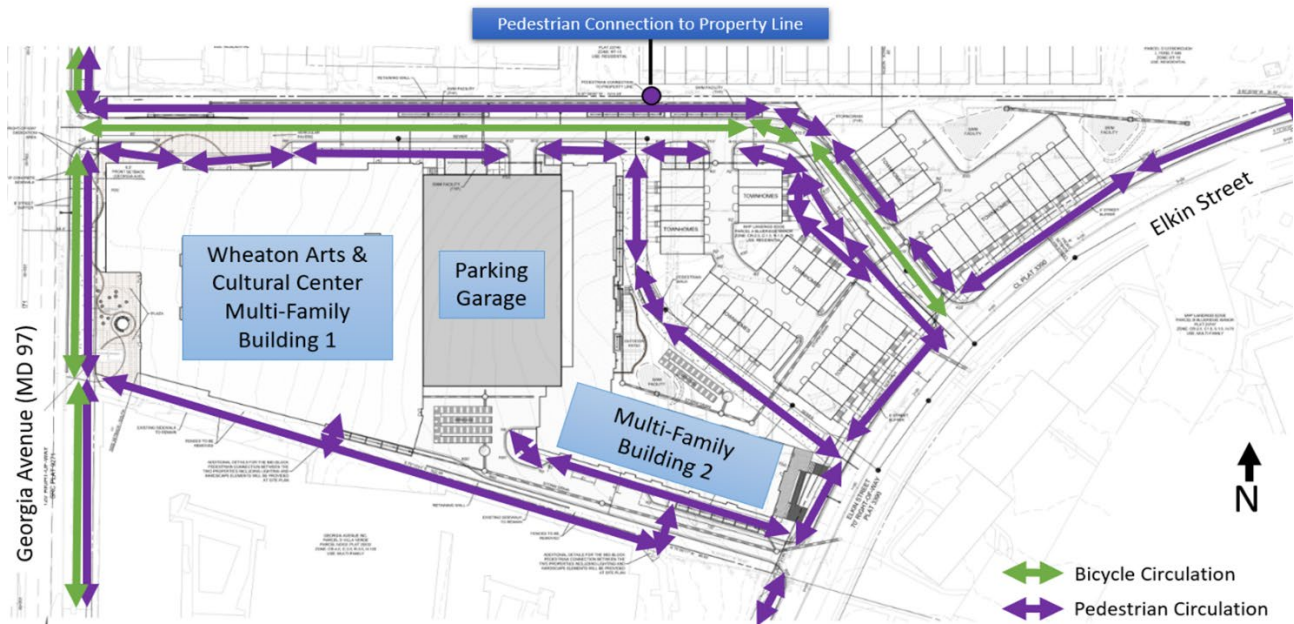


Figure 15: Proposed Nonmotorized Circulation

The property on the opposite side of Elkin Street is proposed to be redeveloped into a park. Therefore, providing adequate and safe pedestrian crossings will be essential for providing safe circulation in the area. Speed study information and further coordination with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) will occur at the time of preliminary plan to determine the appropriate location for pedestrian crossings and the type of facility that should be utilized as well as the need for any traffic calming features.

Transit Connectivity

The Subject Property is well served by transit. Bus stops are located along Georgia Avenue to the north and south of the Site. The bus stops are served by the following routes:

- Metrobus Route Y2 which operates from the Silver Spring Metro Station to the MedStar Montgomery Medical Center.
- Metrobus Route Y7 which operates from the Silver Spring Metro Station to the ICC Park and Ride Lot via Leisure World.
- Metrobus Route Y8 which operates from the Silver Spring Metro Station to the MedStar Montgomery Medical Center.

Bus stops are also located near the intersection of Elkin Street and Amherst Avenue just east of the site. The bus stops are served by the following routes:

- Ride On Route 9 which operates from the Silver Spring Metro Station to the Wheaton Metro Station.

- Ride On Route 31 which operates from the Westfield Wheaton Plaza to the Glenmont Metro Station.

A future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route is planned along Georgia Avenue at this location that will provide service between the Montgomery College – Silver Spring Takoma Park Campus and MedStar Montgomery Medical Center. As stated in the MCDOT letter dated October 19, 2023, the Site may need additional dedication to accommodate the BRT. This will be determined at the time of the Preliminary Plan.

ENVIRONMENT

The Subject Property is 6.14 acres and is partially developed with multifamily housing. A Natural Resource Inventory/Forest Stand Delineation (NRI/FSD) No. 420231710 was approved on June 26, 2023. The NRI/FSD shows 2.25 acres of forest that is a moderate priority for retention. There are no streams, wetlands, floodplains, or associated buffers on the Property. While there are not significant areas of steep slopes onsite, there is a 50-to-62-foot change in elevation from the Georgia Avenue frontage (on the west) to the Elkin Street frontage (on the east).

The proposed Sketch Plan shows removal of all 2.25 acres of forest. A Forest Conservation Plan will be required to be submitted with the Preliminary Plan. A transportation noise analysis will also be required with the Preliminary Plan, due to the proximity to Georgia Avenue.

SECTION 5: COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Applicant held a pre-submittal public virtual meeting on March 7, 2023, related to the MHP-Amherst, Sketch Plan No. 320230030 (see Attachment D for summary of meeting). The Applicant has complied with all submittal and noticing requirements.

Staff received community correspondence throughout the review of the Project.

One letter stated support of the Project and the location of WACC but wanted to ensure the Leesborough community had a landscaping buffer between property line from the MHP development. The Project will meet all screening requirements, as set forth in the Zoning Ordinance at the time of Site Plan. Additionally, Planning Staff believes there are opportunities to provide new connections between the Leesborough community, the WACC, and the new public park. Planning Staff will coordinate with the Applicant team and adjacent community during subsequent review to identify potential connections.

Planning Staff and the Applicant also held a vital joint meeting on November 3, 2023 with Jim Epstein (WUDAC Chair & Resident Member) and Ali Oliver-Krueger (Executive & Artistic Director InterAct Story Theatre). The meeting addressed concerns about the following:

- Bus accommodation on the site (for school children/ group visits)
- Visitors access to the site
- Potential expansion of the Arts and Cultural Center

See Attachment D for email responses to questions and meeting notes.

SECTION 6: SKETCH PLAN 320230030 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of a Sketch Plan is to identify general land uses, development intensity, and public benefits for the optional method of development in the CR, CRT, EOF or LSC zones. The Sketch Plan is intended to be conceptual in nature with an emphasis on building densities, massing, heights and anticipated uses, the locations of open and public use spaces, the general circulation patterns for all modes of transportation, an estimated range of peak hour trips and relationships between existing or proposed adjacent buildings and rights-of-way. Details of the proposed development are determined during Preliminary and Site Plan review. Section 59.7.3.3.E of the Zoning Ordinance states: “To approve a Sketch Plan the Planning Board must find that the following elements are appropriate in concept and appropriate for further detailed review at Site Plan. The Sketch Plan must:

1. Meet the objectives, general requirements, and standards of this Chapter;

Table 1: MHP-Amherst, Sketch Plan No. 320230030 Data Table for CR Zone, Optional Method, Section 59.4.5.4

Development Standard	Permitted/ Required	Proposed
Tract Area	n/a	300,917 SF (6.91 AC)
Tract Area - Prior Dedication	n/a	29,515
Tract Area - Proposed Dedication	n/a	4,081
Site Area (tract area minus dedications)	n/a	267,261 (6.14 AC)
Mapped Density CR-2.0, C-1.5, R-1.5, H-75		
Residential (GFA/ FAR)	1.5 (451,376 SF)	1.41 (423,000 SF)
Commercial (GFA/FAR)	1.5 (451,376 SF)	0.21 (62,000 SF)
Total Mapped Density (GFA/FAR)	2.0 (601,834 SF)	1.61 (485,000 SF)
MPDU requirement	12.5%	25%
Building Height, max average	75	75
Public Open Space (min s.f.)	10% (26,726 SF)	21% (57,100 SF)

a) Implement the recommendations of applicable master plans (59.4.5.1.A)

The Property is part of the 2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan*. The Sector Plan recommends that future development in this district should include street-oriented businesses along Georgia Avenue and University Boulevard West, along with housing, professional offices, and neighborhood retail. The Plan also recommends a public open space in the vicinity of Parking Lot 14. The Site is part of the northern gateway to downtown Wheaton, and is within Wheaton’s Central Business District, Wheaton Urban District, and Arts and Entertainment District boundaries. The Property was rezoned by the 2012 Sector Plan to encourage mixed-use development and was given the lowest CR density within the district to ensure development scale that would transition adequately to the existing adjacent residential uses. The Sector Plan recommends on these two

parcels (referred to as Parcel 920 for the former WMATA, and Parcel A for MHP) should provide appropriate transitions in building heights along the northern edge of Parcel 920 and Parcel A to be compatible with existing townhomes on the adjoining property to the north.

Revitalization Strategy

The Sector Plan's overarching goal is to revitalize Wheaton using public investment in the short-term to reawaken interest in future private redevelopment that delivers needed public benefits. The Sector Plan notes that given the significant amount of existing publicly owned land within the CBD, public investment should be encouraged to spur private investment at other locations. While not a public-private partnership, this application meets this goal by proposing redevelopment on public land that includes a public use as part of mixed-use development. The proposal will provide a mix of housing types that includes affordable units and townhomes, limited office space, and a public arts facility that will bring significant activity to the northern edge of the Central Business District. This development is like other recent public investments along the Georgia Avenue corridor, including the Wheaton Volunteer Rescue Squad, Wheaton Library and Recreation Center, Glenmont Fire Station 18, and headquarters for M-NCPPC, here in the center of Wheaton. Besides investing on public property, the application furthers the following Sector Plan objectives:

- Creates Mixed Use development that helps improve the balance of residential and commercial uses in the CBD,
- Significantly improves the CBD's public realm,
- Provides better pedestrian connectivity and supports safe, secure, and appealing street level activity,
- Includes uses supportive of nighttime entertainment in walking distance to Metro, beneficial to local restaurant uses.

Public Open Space

The Sector Plan recognizes the lack of public open space in downtown Wheaton and recommends temporary strategies to expand public space availability. This application will provide permanent open spaces, including a plaza along the development's frontage on Georgia Avenue, and other spaces spread through the residential portions of the Project. In addition, the construction of this project and the associated land exchange will make possible the construction of a future Montgomery Parks urban park of approximately 3 acres, on MHP property immediately adjacent, between Elkin Street and Amherst Avenue. A future site plan application must ensure public spaces provided by this application are accessible, and that the Plaza on Georgia Avenue is adequately activated by building uses.

Connectivity

The Sector Plan includes specific connectivity recommendations on this property. A north-south connection is shown on this property (SP Map 17, p.61). The Plan states this connection should “be designed as a safe and pleasant, direct passage, open to the public, with ample width, height and adequate lighting between Blueridge Avenue and future connection provided on the Leesborough development site to the north. Pedestrians should be able to travel from Blueridge Avenue to points north, including any future development at the undeveloped WMATA site, the Leesborough community, the Wheaton Library, and the Wheaton Recreation Center, without obstacles and in an inviting and safe manner. This connection may also be provided as a private street” (SP, p.50). This connection would also allow direct access from communities north to the proposed arts and cultural center, and to the future urban park at Elkin Street and Amherst Avenue. The Application’s proposed circulation system supports this recommendation.

Streetscape Standards

The future Site Plan application will address the requirements of the recently approved 2023 Wheaton Streetscape Standards.

b) Target opportunities for redevelopment of single-use commercial areas and surface parking lots with a mix of uses.

Though this Site is mostly forested and contains existing residential apartment buildings with surface parking. The proposed redevelopment does change the site into an affordable housing mixed used development that will provide an arts and cultural center and a future community park.

c) Encourage development that integrates a combination of housing types, mobility options, commercial services, and public facilities and amenities, where parking is prohibited between the building and the street.

The Project provides a maximum of 485,000 square feet comprised of up to 423,000 square feet of residential uses (up to 320 multifamily units and 39 townhouse units) and up to 62,000 square feet of non-residential uses. Non-residential uses on the site include up to 42,000 square feet for the arts and cultural center and up to 20,000 square feet of office space. Residential uses on the Site represent a net increase of up to 234 mixed-income affordable housing units within one-half mile of the Wheaton Metro Station. The Project will offer multifamily units ranging in size from one to three bedrooms with a healthy number of two- and three-bedroom units to provide needed housing for families. In addition, the Project is expected to offer up to 39 townhouses. The final number of multifamily and townhouse units will be determined at Site Plan. The presence of the arts

and cultural center as well as the future community park will provide meaningful public amenities at the doorstep of the new residences.

The Project will not provide any surface parking between the structures and the street; the majority of the parking will be located within the multi-level parking structure lined by Buildings 1 and 2. A total of five surface parking spaces will be provided within the townhouse community for guest parking.

Allows a flexible mix of uses, densities, and building heights appropriate to various settings to ensure compatible relationships with adjoining neighborhoods.

The Project height will vary from approximately 35-40 feet for the townhouses up to 75 feet for Buildings 1 and 2. The three different building types transition higher from denser to less dense as you move east from Georgia Avenue to Elkin Street. Building 1 is setback 60 feet from the northern Property line to promote the transition to the lower scale Leesborough community. The heights provide an appropriate transition to the surrounding development. The Project also meets the Height Compatibility requirements per 59.4.1.8.B as stated within the “Height Compatibility” section of the report.

d) Integrate an appropriate balance of employment and housing opportunities.

The Property is part of the Wheaton downtown area and the future residents will be in close proximity to the various commercial employment opportunities within Wheaton. In addition, the Property’s location less than one-half mile to the Wheaton Metrorail Station provides easy access to other commercial centers within the District/Maryland/Virginia region. Also, the Property will provide employment opportunities within the WACC and MHP offices located onsite.

e) Standardize optional method development by establishing minimum requirements for the provision of public benefits that will support and accommodate density above the standard method limit.

The Project will provide the required 100 public benefit points from a minimum of 1 category to achieve the desired incentive density above the standard method limit. At this time, all public benefits points are anticipated to be satisfied by the provision of a minimum of 25% MPDUs. Final determination of public benefit points will be determined at the time of Site Plan.

2. Substantially conforms to the recommendations of the applicable master plan;

As stated in Finding 1a, the Project conforms to recommendations of the applicable Sector Plan.

3. Satisfy any development plan or schematic development plan in effect on October 29, 2014;

The Sketch Plan is not subject to a development plan or schematic development plan.

4. Achieve compatible internal and external relationships between existing and pending nearby development;

The Project adheres to the height and density recommendations contained in the Sector Plan and zoning requirements. The proposed residential use will be compatible with the existing and proposed surrounding uses in the immediate neighborhood and larger Wheaton area. Also, will provide opportunities for enhanced connections to adjacent properties for access to onsite and future offsite amenities.

5. Provides satisfactory general vehicular, pedestrian, and bicyclist access, circulation, parking, and loading;

Vehicular access on Georgia Avenue and Elkin Street provides safe and efficient access to the proposed development for vehicles and non-motorized users.

Frontage improvements consistent with the 2018 *Bicycle Master Plan*, 2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan*, and the 2021 *Complete Streets Design Guide* will be implemented as part of the development.

The new private street that connects to Georgia Avenue and Elkin Street, the private drive located along the southeastern corner of the site, and the alleys that provide access to the rear-loaded townhomes will be designed based on the 2021 *Complete Street Design Guide*.

This includes adequate sidewalk and street buffer widths to allow for safe, adequate, and efficient circulation within the site.

Parking will primarily be provided via a central parking garage that serves the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center and Multifamily Buildings 1 and 2. Townhomes will have rear-loaded garages accessed via alleys. A limited number of on-street parking spaces will be provided along the new private street and along the private drive.

Loading and trash collection is proposed to occur via the private drive located at the southeastern corner of the site via Elkin Street.

6. Propose an outline of public benefits that supports the requested incentive density and is appropriate for the specific community;

Taking into account the considerations in Section 59.4.7.1.B, including the recommendations and objectives of the Sector Plan and any applicable design guidelines, the Incentive Density Implementation Guidelines, the size and configuration of the site and its relationship to adjacent properties, similar public benefits nearby, and additional enhancements related to the individual public benefits, the following outline of public benefits supports the Applicant’s request for incentive density and is appropriate for the community surrounding the site, as described below.

For the proposed development, the Zoning Ordinance per *Section 4.7.3. D.6.e: “a project that provides a minimum of 20% MPDUs does not have to satisfy any other benefit category under Section 4.5.4.A.2 and Section 4.6.4.A.2.”* The Applicant proposes to exceed the requirement utilizing 3 categories. Although at the time of Sketch Plan review only an outline of public benefits needs to be approved, the following table shows both the categories and points for the public benefits requested at Sketch Plan to demonstrate the project’s ability to meet the requirement to provide sufficient benefit points.

Table 2: Public Benefit Calculations- Division 59-4.7

Public Benefit	Maximum Points Allowed	Proposed
Transit Proximity	50	30
Diversity of Uses and Activities		
Moderately Price Dwelling Units	n/a	150
Quality Building and Site Design		
Structured Parking	20	8.77
Total Points	100	188.77

Transit Proximity

The entire Property is located between ¼ and ½ -mile from the Wheaton Metro (level 1) Station. Staff supports the **30-point** request based on the Property’s proximity to a Level 1 transit stop.

Diversity of Uses and Activities

Moderately Priced Dwelling Units

The Applicant is requesting points for providing 25 percent MPDUs. Twelve (12) points are allowed for every percentage point over 12.5 percent MPDUs. Staff supports the category based on the following calculation:

Formula: $(P-R) * 12 + W * 2 + T * 5$

P (percentage MPDUs provided)

R (percentage MPDUs required)

W (percentage 2-bedroom MPDUs provided, not otherwise required)

T (percentage 3-bedroom MPDUs provided)

$(25 \text{ (percentage of MPDUs provided)} - 12.5 \text{ (percentage required)}) * 12 + 0 \text{ (percentage of 2-bedroom MPDUs not required)} * 2 + 15 \text{ (percentage of 3-bedroom MPDUs)} * 5 = \mathbf{150 \text{ points}^1}$

Quality Building and Site Design

Structured Parking

The Applicant seeks 8.77 points out of a possible twenty for providing structured parking across the development. Staff supports the request based on the following preliminary calculation:

Formula: $[(A/T) * 10] + [(B/T) * 20]$

A (above-grade spaces)

B (below-grade spaces)

T (total spaces)

Structured Parking $[(590 \text{ (above grade spaces)} / 673 \text{ (total spaces)}) * 10] + [(0 \text{ below grade spaces} / 673 \text{ (total spaces)}) * 20] = \mathbf{8.77 \text{ points}}$

7. Establish a feasible and appropriate provisional phasing plan for all structures, uses, rights-of-way, sidewalks, dedications, public benefits, and future preliminary and site plan applications.

The Applicant stated the anticipated phasing is unclear and will depend on financing for the project. Additional information on project phasing will be available as part of subsequent plan review. Buildings 1 & 2 may be constructed as a single phase or if financing is an issue, as two separate phases. The townhomes will be constructed as a future phase. Amherst tenants will be relocated to Pembroke square or Amherst Apartments on east side of Elkin Street during construction and then relocated to the new project. Final phasing will be determined at site plan. The Project timing for the land exchange is still to be determined, however, it is expected that the land exchange will occur sometime after Building 1 is fully completed and all residents have been relocated. Planning Staff will determine appropriate phasing based on the future applications.

¹ Per Section 4.7.3.D.6.e: A project that provides a minimum of 20% MPDUs does not have to satisfy any other benefit category under Section 4.5.4.A.2 and Section 4.6.4.A.2.

SECTION 7 CONCLUSION

As conditioned, the Mandatory Referral No. MR2023015 and Sketch Plan No. 320230030 applications each satisfy the findings under Sections 59.7.3.3 and the applicable standards of the Zoning Ordinance, and substantially conform to the recommendations of the 2012 *Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan*. Therefore, Staff recommends approval of the Mandatory Referral No. MR2023015 and Sketch Plan No. 320230030 with the conditions specified at the beginning of this report.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Sketch Plan

Attachment B: Mandatory Referral Application

Attachment C: Agency Letters

Attachment D: Community Correspondence

Attachment E: Prior Approvals