

State Designated TOD Narrative

Wheaton Downtown

The Wheaton downtown is the northernmost Central Business District (CBD) in Montgomery County, Maryland and includes the Wheaton Metro station on the eastern leg of the Red Line. Downtown Wheaton converges on three major state roadways including Georgia Avenue (MD 97) University Boulevard (MD 193) and Veirs Mill Road (MD 586). Three Bus Rapid Transit (BRT/Flash) routes will serve downtown Wheaton, one of which is in the design phase and the two other routes are in the planning phase. All three lines will have a stop at the Wheaton Metro Station. The area serves as a hub for 14 heavily used and frequent local bus lines converging at the Wheaton Metro Station, which also functions as a high-volume transfer center. Several bus lines are the focus of ongoing Bus Priority efforts.

The downtown embodies Transit-Oriented Development strategies and components including increased heights and densities, all composed of mixed-use development. New development is active in Wheaton incorporating housing, office, retail, grocery and other commercial uses. The downtown hosts some major employers including Wheaton Regional Mall, as well as the M-NCPPC Headquarters building, the latter of which also houses six additional county agencies, the Regional Services Center, and a variety of small businesses supporting the downtown.

The boundaries for this TOD designation area generally align with the 2012 Wheaton CBD master plan and recently approved [2025 University Boulevard Corridor Master Plan](#) and generally are bounded by University Boulevard and Blueridge Avenue to the north, Prichard Road to the south, the ring road of Wheaton Regional Mall to the west, and Amherst Avenue to the east. Planning Staff recently kicked off an update to our comprehensive planning with [The Wheaton Plan: A Georgia Avenue Community Plan](#). All of the boundary area is within a five-to-ten-minute walkshed from the Metro and planned BRT Stations.

Wheaton Downtown – Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Justification

Project Area: Wheaton Downtown, Montgomery County, Maryland

Lead Agency: Montgomery County Planning Department (M-NCPPC) + MCDOT

Transit Assets: Metrorail Red Line, Three Planned BRT Corridors, Local/Regional Bus Network

TOD Type: High-Intensity, Mixed-Use, Multimodal Activity Center

1. Strategic Transit Access

- Anchored by the Wheaton Metro Station (Red Line), a high-capacity regional rail station.
- Served by three Bus Rapid Transit (BRT/Flash) corridors:
 - Veirs Mill Road BRT (in design)
 - University Boulevard BRT (in planning)
 - Georgia Avenue BRT (in planning)
- A hub for 14 heavily used and frequent local bus lines converging at the Wheaton Metro Station, which also functions as a high-volume transfer center. Several bus lines are the focus of ongoing Bus Priority efforts.
- All TOD parcels fall within a five-to-ten-minute walkshed of heavy rail and planned BRT stations.
- Convergence of major state highways (MD 97, MD 193, MD 586) supports multimodal access and regional connectivity.

2. Alignment With Adopted Plans

- TOD boundaries correspond to the *2012 Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan* and the *2025 University Boulevard Corridor Plan*.
- Both plans designate Wheaton as a priority growth area with:
 - Increased building heights and densities
 - Mixed-use development patterns
 - Pedestrian-oriented design
 - Reduced reliance on single-occupancy vehicles
- A new comprehensive planning effort, *The Wheaton Plan: A Georgia Avenue Community Plan*, is underway to refine TOD strategies and guide future investment.
- The district is designated a Regional Activity Center by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC)

3. TOD-Supportive Land Use and Development Patterns

- Wheaton Downtown exhibits established TOD characteristics:
 - Vertical mixed-use buildings integrating housing, office, retail, and grocery
 - High-density residential development within walking distance of transit
 - Major employment anchors, including Westfield Wheaton Mall and the M-NCPPC Montgomery Planning Headquarters

- A diverse small-business ecosystem supporting local jobs and services
- Development patterns support increased transit ridership, reduced VMT, and efficient use of existing infrastructure.

4. Equity and Community Benefit

- Wheaton is one of Montgomery County’s most diverse communities, with multilingual households and a wide range of income levels.
- The Wheaton area includes Equity Focus Areas (County) as well as Equity Emphasis Areas (Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments)
 - Equity Focus Areas are parts of Montgomery County that are characterized by high concentrations of lower-income people of color, who may also speak English less than very well
- TOD investment directly advances state and federal equity goals by:
 - Expanding access to high-frequency transit for underserved populations
 - Supporting affordable housing preservation and production near transit
 - Improving pedestrian and bicycle safety in historically auto-oriented corridors
 - Enhancing access to employment, education, and essential services

5. Economic Development Potential

- Wheaton is a designated growth area with significant redevelopment capacity.
- TOD investment will:
 - Catalyze infill development on underutilized parcels
 - Support small business retention and expansion
 - Strengthen the economic viability of the Wheaton CBD
 - Increase commercial and residential tax base
 - Leverage existing public infrastructure investments

6. Readiness and Implementation Capacity

- Montgomery County and M-NCPPC have demonstrated capacity to deliver complex, multimodal planning initiatives.
- The district benefits from:
 - Adopted master plans with clear TOD policies
 - Active BRT design and planning processes
 - Zoning that supports higher densities and mixed uses
 - Strong interagency coordination with MDOT, WMATA, and Montgomery County DOT

- These factors indicate a high level of readiness for TOD-related funding and implementation.

Summary

Wheaton Downtown meets key state and federal TOD criteria, including multimodal access, supportive land use, equity benefits, economic development potential, and strong implementation readiness. Investment in this district will advance regional mobility, support sustainable growth, and deliver long-term benefits to residents and businesses.

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