

## WHEATON GATEWAY CONCEPT PLAN NARRATIVE

In January 2012, the Montgomery County Council (sitting as the District Council) voted to approve the Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan (the Master Plan). The result of years of effort by countless people, this Master Plan memorializes a vision of an evolving Wheaton core looking to build on its strengths. This vision seeks to promote the evolution of Wheaton into “a highly livable, unique place in the county.”<sup>1</sup>

Located in the Kensington View/Wheaton Hills district just northwest of the Wheaton Central Business District, Wheaton Gateway will directly contribute to the achievement of this Master Plan vision. As this Concept Plan submission illustrates, the proposed project will serve as a prime example of the type of development that the Master Plan is encouraging, both by specific reference and more generally.

### A Partnership of Locally Grown, Long Term Owners

Before addressing how this project complies with the Master Plan, it is first important to identify the partners behind the project and why we have come together. Wheaton Gateway represents a partnership of three very long-term interest holders with deep roots in the County, namely, the Housing Opportunities Commission of Montgomery County (“HOC”), the Duffie family (“Duffie”), and members of the Cohen family (“Willco”).



HOC was established in 1974 to help address Montgomery County’s growing need for affordable housing. HOC’s mission is to provide affordable housing and supportive services that enhance the lives of low- and moderate-income families and individuals throughout Montgomery County.<sup>2</sup>



Founded in 1953 The Duffie Companies is a family-owned, third-generation real estate developer and asset manager with deep roots in Montgomery County. This privately held firm, headquartered in Silver Spring, specializes in high-quality, energy-efficient commercial and multifamily developments across suburban Maryland. Unlike merchant developers that build to sell off their assets, The Duffie Companies is a long-term holder of real estate, allowing them to maintain a strong commitment to durability and sustainable design in all of their developments. In fact, Duffie has built up a significant

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<sup>1</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 9.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hocmc.org/about-hoc.html>, February 24th, 2020.

portfolio of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) properties that utilize a range of green building techniques across the region.



Willco is a leading developer, owner, investor and manager of first-class commercial real estate based in the Washington, DC Metro Area, with a broad network of partners and a deep understanding of the Metropolitan Washington Area, including a portfolio totaling nearly four million square feet.

Since Willco’s incorporation in the early 1960s, the company has completed hundreds of projects – office buildings, hotels, shopping centers and mixed-use facilities — totaling more than 20 million square feet of development. The company remains locally owned and uniquely adept at identifying overlooked opportunities in the regional market, with a long track record of valuable investments.

# WHEATON

For decades, HOC and Willco have owned in partnership the former Ambassador Hotel property (the “Ambassador”) located just west of the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard. Separately, Willco has owned the adjacent Mattress Firm (“Mattress”) property since 1963. More recently, HOC purchased the site of the Lindsay Ford dealership (“Lindsay”) located adjacent to and just north of Ambassador and Mattress<sup>3</sup>. Together, Ambassador, Mattress, and Lindsay make an incredible assemblage with enough area and density to make a statement at this important intersection.



<sup>3</sup> As of the date of this submission, Lindsay Ford remains in operation in accordance with the terms of a short-term lease agreement.

Now several years into a successful partnership with HOC in the Hillandale neighborhood of Silver Spring (i.e. Hillandale Gateway), Duffie has been making pioneering efforts into the development and construction of increasingly sustainable buildings (e.g. passive house and ZNE). With the clear opportunity to apply what has already been learned in Hillandale to Wheaton, Duffie has chosen to co-invest in Wheaton Gateway with Willco and HOC, and to serve as co-developer with Willco.

The goal of the Wheaton Gateway partnership is quite simple: to utilize our well-located assemblage of properties to, in several phases, develop a vibrant mixed-use, mixed income community comprised of modern, energy efficient buildings, with a variety of uses and amenities that the marketplace demands. The development shall be to a scale and character encouraged by the newly adopted Master Plan.

Notably, while HOC is the majority partner in Wheaton Gateway, rather than push the project to be redeveloped as a predominantly moderately priced housing development, the team will instead look to create a mixed-use, mixed-income community targeting 30% affordable units. The provision of mostly market rate homes in Wheaton Gateway will help to create an income stream that will support HOC's operations on the property, as well as HOC's mission in other parts of the County. Additionally, all three partners see the opportunity in Wheaton Gateway to create something new and exciting in eastern Montgomery County. Few and far between are locations so highly visible, adjacent to two primary thoroughfares, highly metro accessible (1/4 mile) and so proximate to a future bus rapid transit station (BRT).

The subject development is anticipated to contain new ground floor commercial space adjacent to functional public outdoor space for use by all including the existing community. The new residential components of the site will provide more shoppers to frequent local businesses just as the Master Plan envisions. Importantly, we hope that our team's investment in and development of Wheaton Gateway will help inspire County investment in new transit facilities located proximate to this density (which is necessary to support it), namely the Veirs Mill BRT line.<sup>4</sup> In summary, we are trying to create an impactful and signature project at the northern edge of the Wheaton CBD which will serve as an asset to the community, our partnership, and the County for decades to come.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Before describing the Wheaton Gateway plan in more detail, it is also important to understand the context in which this particular concept plan was created. The Wheaton Gateway team has placed particular importance on keeping the community informed as the project works its way through what can often be a years'-long entitlement process. While this Concept Plan submission is occurring in February of 2020, the process of introducing this project and our partnership to the community began in January 2019 when members of the team first met with the Director of the Mid-County Regional Service Office<sup>5</sup>. The Director helped provide the names and contact information of those groups most

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<sup>4</sup> Approved and Adopted Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan: Corridor 10: Veirs Mill Road, pgs. 63-64.

<sup>5</sup> At this time the partnership did not yet include Willco, as the assemblage of Ambassador and Mattress was not yet complete.

interested and involved in the redevelopment occurring in Wheaton. Following several introductory meetings and long before drawings were ever prepared for submission, the Wheaton Gateway team held two broadly advertised visioning/listening sessions.<sup>6</sup> At these meetings the project team and our goals were introduced. Following our presentation, the event turned toward five tables, each with a different subject matter, including Site Design, Building Programming, Sustainability, Walkability and Transit, and Demolition of the Ambassador Hotel. At each table, a subject matter expert moderated a discussion, while a scribe collected and questions, answers and suggestions given by those in attendance. While the most “popular” topic was by far the Ambassador Hotel Demolition, feedback was gathered on a myriad of subjects. Within the haystack of feedback, the design team found several opportunities on which the team could capitalize and incorporate within the project’s design. These include (in no particular order).

- Walkability, cyclist/ pedestrian safety and connectivity are very important and need enhancement.

It is for this reason that you see, notwithstanding a significant grading challenge, no less than three pedestrian connections and two bicycle connections provided between Veirs Mill Road and East Avenue. Additionally, this is the primary reason that the project team is supportive of signaling the intersection of Galt Avenue and Veirs Mill Road.

- Many in the community are interested in supporting and enhancing Wheaton as an Arts and Entertainment District. AND
- Local residents are interested in more local, high quality restaurants preferably with opportunities for outdoor seating.

Wheaton Gateway as currently designed provides space for a food hall. The project team feels that a food hall would represent an excellent expression of these requests. A food hall provides opportunities for small (often too small to open a “full scale” restaurant), budding restaurateurs the opportunity to express themselves in their culinary art. It is a way to incorporate local craft dining options, which the community so strongly desires, into the project. The hall is also designed to provide sufficient space (protected from the nearby, busy roads) for outdoor seating, another common request. While much research is still necessary to vet the market viability of a food hall in this location, the inclusion of the hall and the willingness of the team to continue our investigations is based largely upon feedback from the community.

- There remains an unmet need for affordable housing and housing for the elderly.

This was a common refrain. By its very nature, a partnership with HOC, whose mission is to provide and support affordable housing, will ensure that Wheaton Gateway will provide more than the minimum level of affordable housing necessary to meet inclusionary zoning standards. As designed, Wheaton Gateway is aiming to provide 30% affordable housing (spread evenly throughout each phase of

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<sup>6</sup> Meetings were held on June 12<sup>th</sup> 2019 and June 15<sup>th</sup> 2019 at Highland Elementary School.

redevelopment). This is more than twice the affordable housing than would otherwise be required by code.

- More public, open space would be welcome in the project.

As proposed, the project will feature two readily accessible public use spaces. The first public use space is immediately adjacent to the corner of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard. The second public use space will be adjacent to the aforementioned first floor retail (food hall) space, readily accessible to Veirs Mill Road, the project's internal street, and the ground floor commercial space (food hall).

In addition to the broader community meetings, and armed with the information previously gathered, the design team held an all-day design charrette on June 19<sup>th</sup> 2019. In attendance at this internal, design focused meeting were over twenty team members and design/engineering professionals including representatives of the project's ownership, architects, civil engineers, landscape architects, green building consultants, a general contractor, and very importantly, two members of Park and Planning Staff.

Notably, our community engagement did not end in June of 2019. Since we started our efforts, various members of the project team have attended over a dozen community related meetings and events<sup>7</sup>. We have blasted e-mails (to those who have signed up to receive more information) and posted half a dozen updates on topics ranging from sidewalk closures to the Housing Opportunity Commissions' internal vote to proceed with the project<sup>8</sup>. To keep in contact with our neighbors, the project team has created a website <https://www.wheatongateway.com/> where all of our updates are posted.

The result of this genuine community outreach and design feedback is the concept plan which is now before you for further review and comment.

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<sup>7</sup> See: <https://www.wheatongateway.com/community-engagement>

<sup>8</sup> See: <https://www.wheatongateway.com/news-updates>

# WHEATON GATEWAY

## SITE OVERVIEW

Wheaton Gateway is prominently located immediately north of the Central Business District, north of Westfield Wheaton. The project site is adjacent to two of the highest volume thoroughfares identified within the plan area, namely University Boulevard & Veirs Mill Road. The project is bounded to the south by the University Boulevard, to the west by East Avenue, to the north by the Kensington Boulevard, and the east by Veirs Mill Road.



Wheaton Gateway is not only an assemblage of partners, it is also an assemblage of ten different parcels within several different zoning classifications. In total, the area represented by this plan is an impressive 5.16 gross acres of land. Notably, the proposed development will also facilitate the dedication of land to the adjacent state and local roads.

DESCRIPTION	OWNERSHIP		ZONING
Parcels	Tax ID	Parcel	Zoning
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-00966988</a>	11250 Veirs Mill	CR-3.0 C-2.5 R-2.5 H-100
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-01027106</a>	11227 EAST AVE	CRN-1.5 C-.25 R-1.5 H-45
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-01027378</a>	11225 EAST AVE	CRN-1.5 C-.25 R-1.5 H-45
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-01026977</a>	11223 EAST AVE	CRN-1.5 C-.25 R-1.5 H-45
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-01027015</a>	EAST AVE	CRN-1.5 C-.25 R-1.5 H-45
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-01027026</a>	EAST AVE	CRN-1.5 C-.25 R-1.5 H-45
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-1027458</a>	0 UPTON DR	R-60 - .35% Max Lot Coverage
Lindsay West	<a href="#">13-01027004</a>	11217 EAST AVE	CRN-1.5 C-.25 R-1.5 H-45
Mattress	<a href="#">13-01188512</a>	11200 VEIRS MILL RD	CR-5.0 C-4.5 R-4.5 H-130
Ambassador & Mattress	C000151	2715 University Boulevard West	CR-5.0 C-4.5 R-4.5 H-130

## DESIGN CHALLENGES

While Wheaton Gateway enjoys the prominence of location and a significant land area close to an urban core, it also features several design challenges that the team was tasked with addressing. These challenges included:

- Limitations on Site Ingress/Egress
- Variability in Zoning Designation and Allowable Height
- Significant Grade Change Across the site ( ~20')

### Limitations on Site Ingress/Egress

Access to the site is constrained by long, unbroken medians along both Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard. These medians limit both vehicular and pedestrian access. Being able to quickly access main thoroughfares with ease strongly influences a person's decision to live in a particular location. Similarly, neighborhood retailers, including restaurants, rely on good visibility, ease of access and healthy traffic to survive.

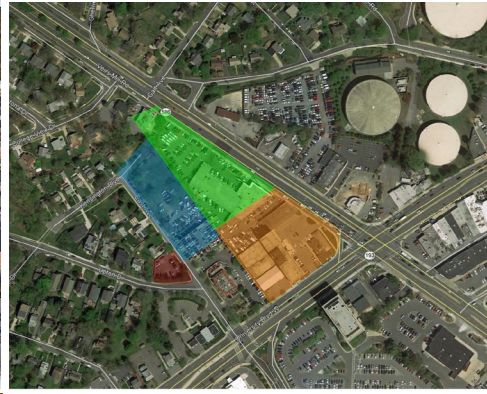


### Variability in Zoning Designation and Allowable Height

While the physical area and density of Wheaton Gateway create opportunities to provide signature buildings, the same scale results in challenges. On two edges of the property, the site adjoins some of the densest development recommended by the Master Plan. Conversely, on the project's western edge, the assemblage adjoins a lower density R-60 residential zone. This disparity in the character of

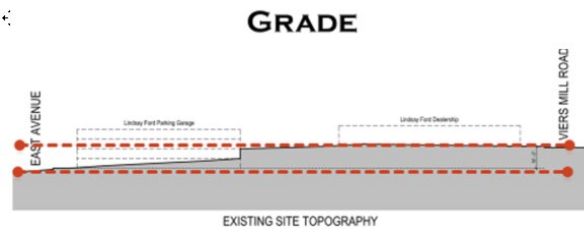
adjacency is reflected in the fact that the project bridges several different zoning classifications. Each zone of course offers its distinct use and height limitations and this variability across the site is another challenge to creating a cohesive project.

Map 12 Proposed Maximum Building Heights



*Significant Grade Change Across the site (~20')*

Another challenge being addressed by the design team is a significant grade change from southeast to northwest. The grade at the intersection of Veirs Mill Road (~462) is approximately forty feet (40') above the grade at the intersection of East Avenue and Kensington Boulevard (~422). The grade differential as drawn across the site at the proposed internal street connecting Veirs Mill Road (~454) to East Avenue (~432) is still a remarkable twenty-two feet (~22'). Also, it is worth noting the fact that the parcels with the highest zoning height allowances are those properties at the highest elevations.



22'



## WHEATON GATEWAY DESIGN & SOLUTIONS

Faced with the aforementioned challenges, the design team set out to find solutions that would allow Wheaton Gateway to succeed.

### Phased Construction of Properties

Despite being designed and planned together as a singular “concept”, the properties will be constructed and delivered in phases as the market demands. The Ambassador/Mattress site is currently being planned as the first phase of three to redevelop. We hope that this first phase of Wheaton Gateway will create an iconic building on the northern gateway to Wheaton’s Core District, both where the Master Plan calls for height and density and farthest from the lower density residential community to the west.

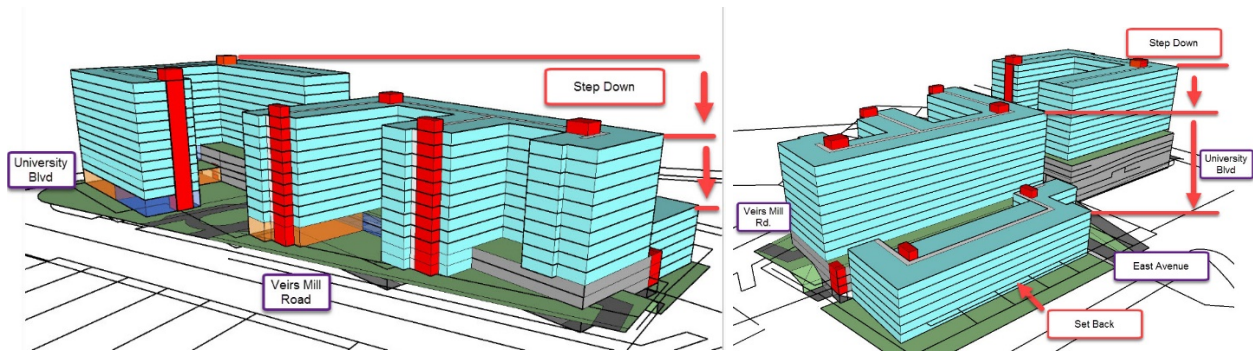


### Step the Height across the Site

To address the variance in density across the site, the team is proposing buildings that step down in height as they transition from Veirs Mill Road back to East Avenue<sup>9</sup>. As the densest zoning designations are at the intersection (CRN-5.0 C 4.5 R-4.5 H 130), the plan has accordingly placed its highest and most dense development at this prominent corner. Also, rather than construct buildings to the property line along East Avenue, the design team has incorporated into this concept a deeper setback (~36’ from the curb) along that East Avenue frontage to help address the transition to the adjacent residential community.

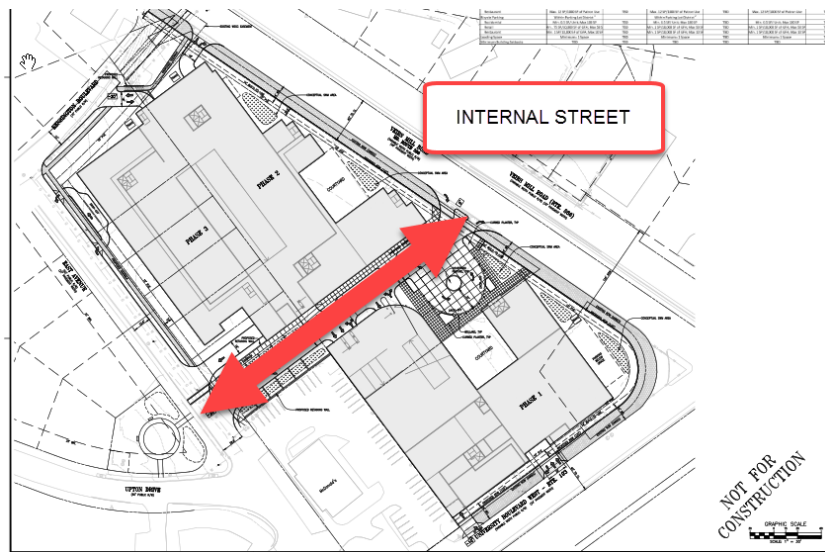
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<sup>9</sup> It is worth noting that as a project which is targeting more than the minimum inclusionary level of affordable housing (i.e. 30% vs. 12.5%), and project intends to utilize the bonus height and density afforded by such inclusion to accommodate this increased level of affordability.



*Provide an Internal Street to Address Site Circulation and Access*

Faced with the site access limitations - previously described, the team was able to a large extent minimize these challenges by developing an internal circulation street. Importantly, this street is also recommended by the Master Plan which provides that “A through-block connection between Veirs Mill Road and East Avenue is desirable at this Location.”<sup>10</sup> This internal street reduces the difficulty of vehicular site access by providing cars that enter the site with an opportunity to circulate between Veirs Mill Road and East Ave and choose the ideal way to exit the site depending on their intended destination.



*Provide Functional Pickup/Drop-off Areas*

As long-term owners of residential property, the partners in Wheaton Gateway have been noting the increased frequency in all manner of pickup and delivery services serving our buildings (e.g. Uber, Lyft, Grubhub, DoorDash, Uber Eats, etc...). Also, as leaders in sustainable design, the team is confident in the long term adoption of autonomous vehicles. We feel strongly that to be successful well into the future, adequate pickup & drop-off areas must be programmed into projects. Wheaton Gateway is

<sup>10</sup> “Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57.

designed to feature several such pick-up and drop-off locations adjacent and convenient to each of the project's residential and commercial spaces.



*Provide a Balance of Parking*

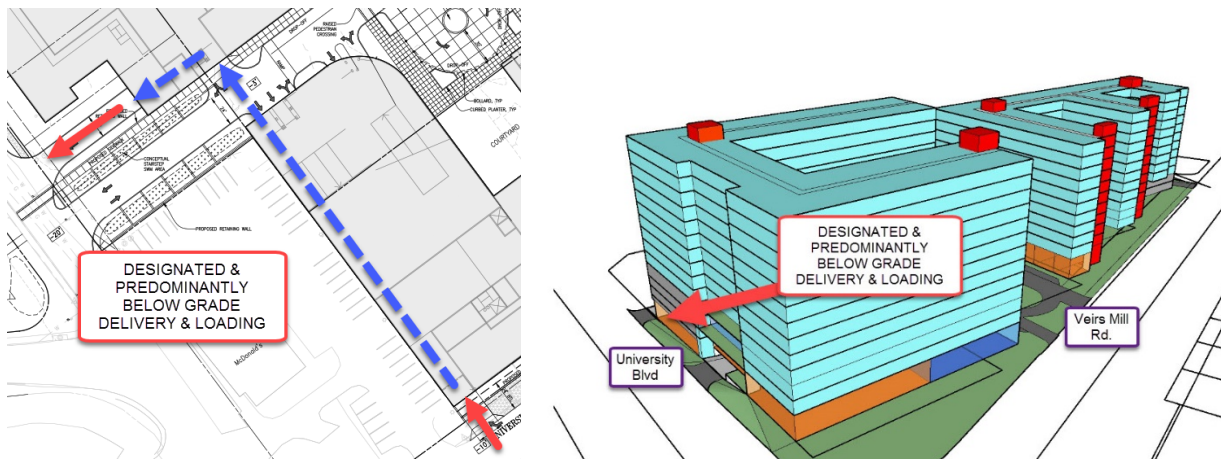
Among the challenges facing the team is addressing the appropriate amount and location of parking within the project. As designed, the project will contain a combination of below grade and above grade structured parking. The below grade parking will encompass areas which include the former below grade parking structure which served the Ambassador property and the below grade portion of the small retail building located at the corner of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard. Both of these below grade structures require removal and create the opportunity for below grade parking in the new project. In combination with this below grade parking will be two above grade parking decks, one in Phase 1 and one in Phase 2 (which may serve all phases including Phase 3). Both below grade structures are enveloped by the surrounding buildings to help disguise them from the street. While the Phase 1 parking structure is located adjacent to one of the two programmed public use spaces, the team anticipates utilizing this garage surface in some creative way. For example, one idea is to utilize that garage wall to create a canvas on which an engaging mural may be painted or displayed. The team will work on further refining garage treatments as we get farther into the entitlement process.

Other parking elements which will require refinement include 1) determining the ultimate number of parking spaces to be provided, 2) determining the degree of garage electrification and 3) exploring the adaptive re-usability of portions of the above grade deck(s). As to the number of spaces, the team will need to balance the need for sufficient parking to ensure the success of our programming (and avoid sending cars into adjacent neighborhoods and parking areas) with the likely reality of reduced, future parking demand to be brought about by increased use of transit (including our adjacent BRT) and autonomous vehicles. As leaders in sustainable design, it is the Applicant's intent to plan for the future when it comes to parking. With respect to the parking facilities, such future planning includes the provision of infrastructure that will allow for the charging of a significant number of electric vehicles (i.e., possibly hundreds of Level 2 vehicle charging stations) within the parking structures. In this way, as

residents transition to more electric (and, likely, autonomous) vehicles over time, the garage spaces that are constructed will be well positioned to facilitate this trend. Should parking demand materially dwindle over time, another strategy being investigated is the adaptive re-use of portions of the parking structure. For example, as to the Phase 1 deck, a portion of the deck closest to University Boulevard is being designed as a “flat plate” deck. In other words, there are areas of this deck which are ramped to allow for vehicular circulation and there are areas which are flat which could ultimately be re-captured as other uses<sup>11</sup>.

### *Below Grade Delivery, Move-In & Move-Out*

The team was also able to take advantage of the significant grade drop across the site to provide an internal delivery and move-in/move-out loading bay for residents and commercial tenants directly off of University Boulevard. This “loading only” site access is a full story below the grade of our internal street at its intersection with Veirs Mill Road and traverses the site mostly below grade, thereby minimizing its impact on both the project and the adjacent neighborhood.



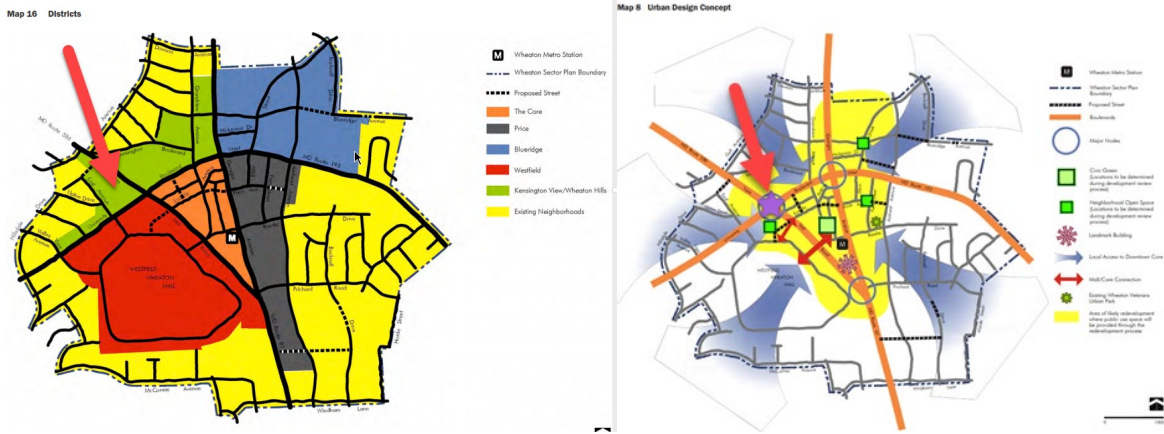
Each redevelopment site poses its distinct unique challenges and opportunities. The design team is confident that this concept plan offers a good starting point and strikes a fair balance of several competing interests and challenges to maximize the project’s likelihood of success.

<sup>11</sup> While the concept of creating the ability to “flat plate” a portion of the parking deck is appealing, it is important to recognize that this approach requires significant forethought and planning. Issues associated with “flat platting” include i) the fact that to the degree that a garage may be exposed to the elements, flat for re-use and flat for maintaining adequate drainage are not the same, ii) structural loading for cars is not the same (actually less) than structural loading for people, iii) access to light and bay depth differ for parking vs people, etc... All of these design elements will need to be evaluated to determine the ultimate feasibility of the adaptive re-use of portions of the parking deck(s).

# APPROVED AND ADOPTED WHEATON CBD AND VICINITY SECTOR PLAN

## Location

Wheaton Gateway is located within the “Kensington View/Wheaton Hills” District at the northwest edge of the Wheaton’s Core. This intersection is identified as one of the three “Major Nodes” denoted in the Master Plan.



## Identification(s)

The site is located within i) the Urban District, ii) the Parking Lot District, iii) the Arts and Entertainment District, and iv) the Enterprise Zone<sup>12</sup>. Notably, Wheaton Gateway is adjacent to roadways which have not been identified as “Priority Retail Streets.”



<sup>12</sup> Wheaton Gateway is also designated within the Federal Opportunity Zone program.



### Master Plan Compliance Generally

The Master Plan speaks to several high-level objectives that would help realize the Master Plan’s vision, especially for those projects which represent public private partnerships. Below we have highlighted how we feel that Wheaton Gateway can contribute to this vision.

- **“contribute to the overall economic and environmental sustainability of Wheaton”**.<sup>13</sup>

Wheaton Gateway will provide vibrant new housing and the opportunity for ground floor commercial space. As partners in Wheaton Gateway, The Duffie Companies, will bring their significant “green building” experience to bear on the project ensuring that the new buildings incorporate the latest in sustainable building practices and methodologies. Importantly, the incorporation of additional housing will also help to provide the density necessary to economically support both local businesses, but also to support the transit improvements and services that the Master Plan envisions in Wheaton.

- **“create mixed-use development to achieve a better balance of residential and commercial uses in the CBD”**.<sup>14</sup>

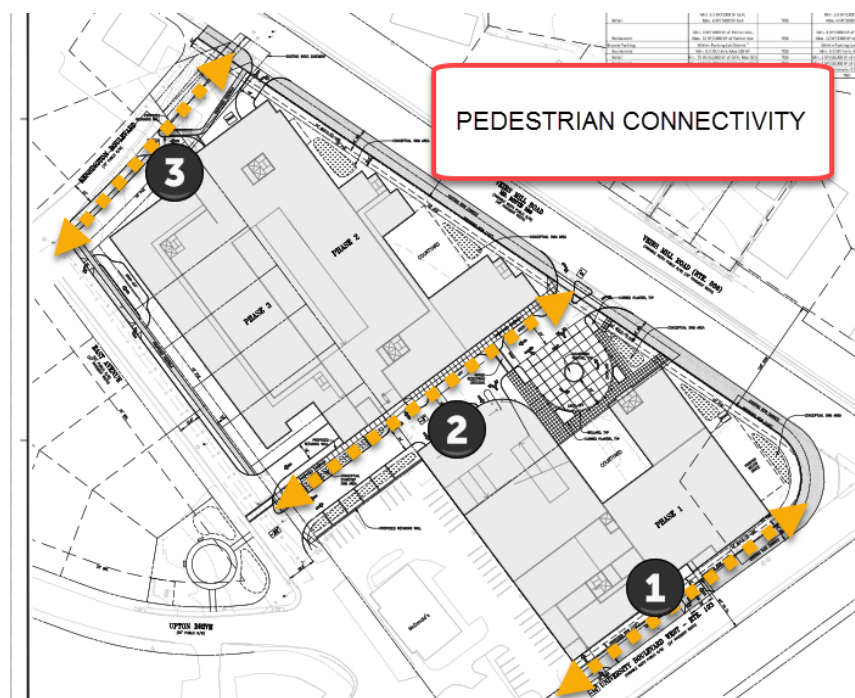
We believe that bringing more residents (potential shoppers and diners) close to Wheaton’s Core District, which has historically been more retail-use dominant, will help achieve the “better balance” the Master Plan is referring to. The dense residential development afforded to Wheaton Gateway will bring residents to help support local retail, restaurant, and commercial uses.

<sup>13</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.

<sup>14</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.

- **“provide better pedestrian connectivity and support safe, secure, and appealing street level activity”**.<sup>15</sup>

Wheaton Gateway will provide buildings constructed out to the street to help define the pedestrian realm as is encouraged by the Master Plan’s “Build-to Line” concept. This plan’s first-floor commercial space is anticipated to be accessed at street level in the vicinity of the actual corner of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard. This location is in closest proximity to the density of the Wheaton Core. As specifically recommended by the Master Plan, a through street will be incorporated within the site providing pedestrian connectivity from Veirs Mill Road to East Avenue.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, another pedestrian connection will be incorporated between Veirs Mill Road and Kensington Boulevard at the project’s northern boundary.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the plan incorporates three routes for pedestrians to traverse the site: 1) the sidewalk along University Boulevard, 2) an internal sidewalk connecting Veirs Mill Road and East Ave, & 3) the sidewalk along the property’s northern boundary connecting Veirs Mill Road and Kensington Boulevard.

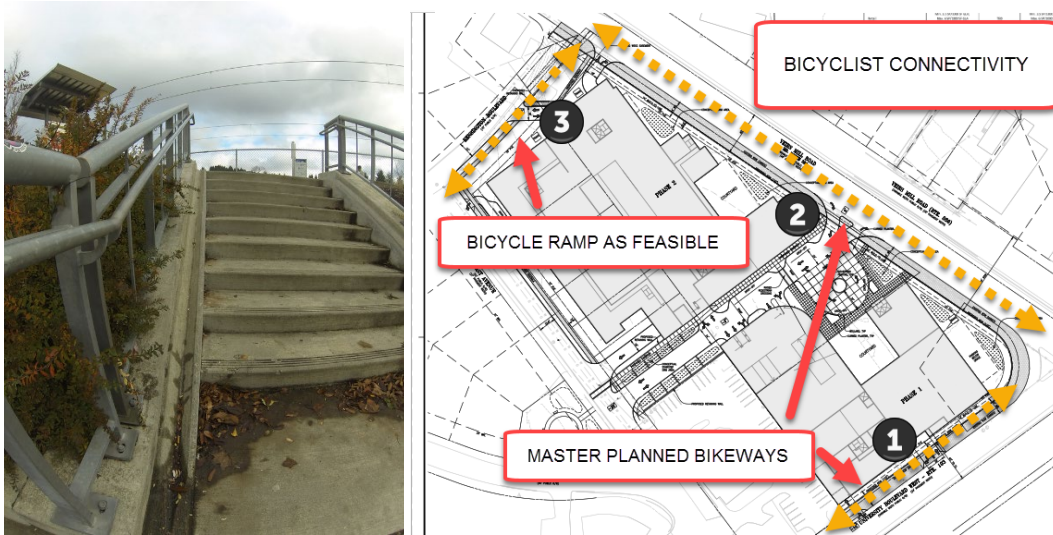


<sup>15</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.

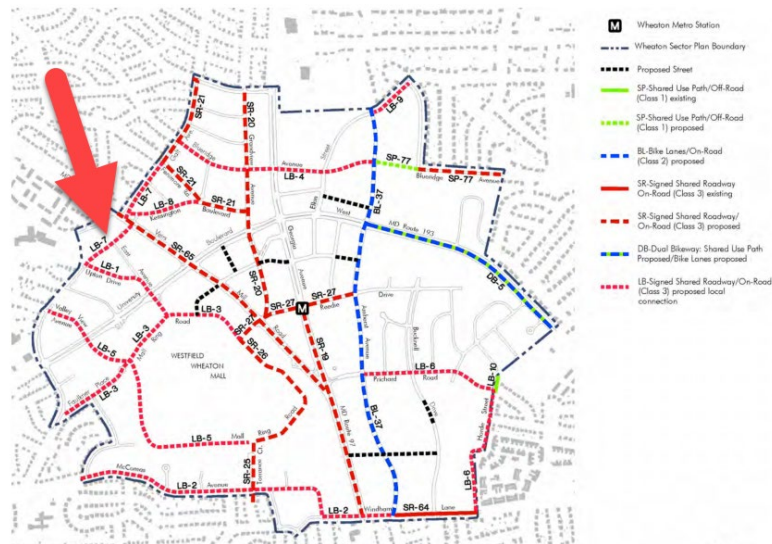
<sup>16</sup> “A through-block connection between Veirs Mill Road and East Avenue is desirable at this Location”. Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57.

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that Map 6 on pg.22 of the Master Plan reflects what appears to be a suggestion to connect Kensington Boulevard to Veirs Mill Road at the property’s northern edge. While this connection appears logical in two dimensions, there are two material impediments to making this connection. The first issue is that this area currently serves as a significant utility right of way which includes a gas main. The second and more difficult issue is that there is a significant grade separation between Kensington Boulevard at its eastern Terminus and Veirs Mill Road. This grade difference is on the order of 22 feet. While a pedestrian connection with stairs (including possibly a “bicycle stairway” is feasible, a vehicular connection is simply are not practicable.

Along with the inclusion of these three pedestrian routes, the project should improve mobility for bicyclists. Because there is a significant grade separation between Kensington Boulevard at its eastern Terminus and Veirs Mill Road to the east (~22 feet) the northern pedestrian crossing will contain several flights of stairs. In order to facilitate bicyclists' ability to traverse this area as recommended by the Master Plan<sup>18</sup>, the design team intends (as feasible) to incorporate a "bicycle stairway". Additionally, immediately south and east of the project, along both Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard, sufficient right of way is being dedicated to allow for the inclusion of bike lanes in each of those roadway's ultimate configurations.



Map 18 Existing and Proposed Bikeways



Importantly, the project team is aware of the focus on enhancing pedestrian and bicyclist safety wherever practicable outside of our site boundaries. For this reason, the team would be supportive of signaling the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Galt Avenue. Veirs Mill Road currently features

<sup>18</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 67.



a long, unbroken median which prohibits safe pedestrian and bicyclist crossing. Currently there exist no crosswalks across Veirs Mill Road from the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard to the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Newport Mill Road some ~3,200 feet away. Proving a signalized crossing at Galt would afford pedestrians and bicyclist a safer crossing closer to and from local bus stops and Wheaton Gateway. This crossing would also be in proximity to the northern pedestrian and bicyclist route that the design team is proposing at the project’s northern boundary.



**“ensure quality public use spaces benefiting the whole community”<sup>19</sup>.**

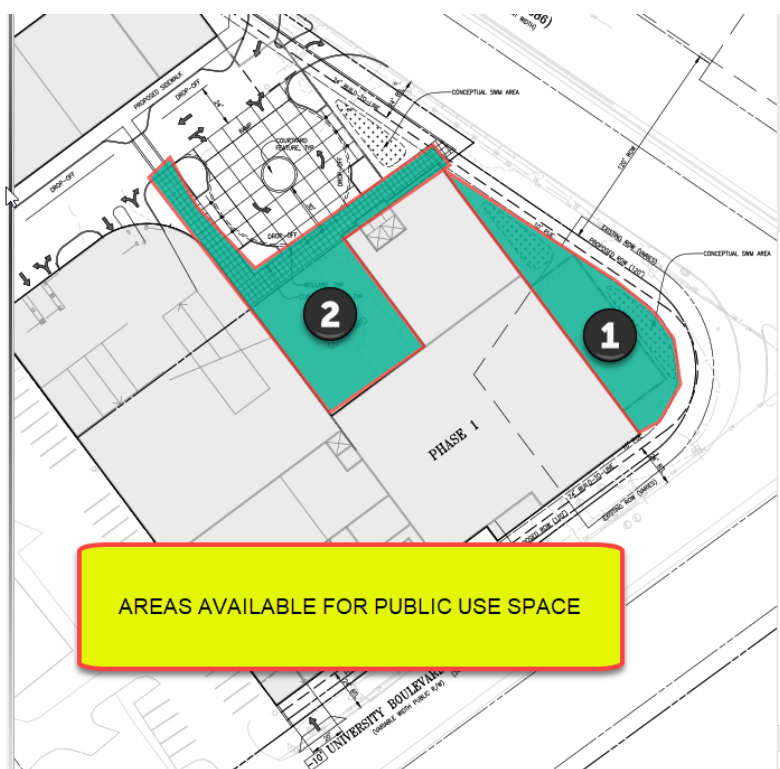
As proposed, the project will feature two readily accessible public use spaces. The first space is immediately adjacent to the corner of Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard. The Wheaton CBD & Vicinity Sector Plan Design Guidelines identify this location for a “Proposed Boulevard Landmark / Gateway Element”.<sup>20</sup>



<sup>19</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.

<sup>20</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and vicinity sector Design Guidelines plan pg. 10.

While the proposed buildings are designed to ‘front’ both Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard, given the current road geometry, the team has taken advantage of the space available to hold the Phase 1 building back from Veirs Mill Road by 55 feet. This space will afford the team the ability to program far more public use space than the typical 10’ wide sidewalk would otherwise allow. The second Public Use Space will be adjacent to the first-floor retail space, readily accessible to both Veirs Mill Road and the project’s internal street. The design team felt strongly that the inclusion of a public space, which was not adjacent to well-traveled and not particularly slightly thoroughfares, would be greatly beneficial. Additionally, the proposed location is adjacent to a functional pickup/drop off area which will help patrons and guests in their transition to/from automobile passenger and pedestrian.



- **“provide a housing mix that includes moderate-income housing, workforce housing, and live-work units such as artist studios”<sup>21</sup>.**

Wheaton Gateway is proposed to include a mixture of housing types with a target of 30% affordable units. Additionally, the team is investigating modern occupancy structures including both co-living and short-term stay models<sup>22</sup>. The team is also investigating the feasibility of including additional

<sup>21</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.

<sup>22</sup> Several residents have requested the incorporation of short-term stay options citing a lack of local hotels. The team will need to further investigate the appropriate use and zoning designations for areas that could be dedicated to short-term stay within what might otherwise be a traditional residential use.

above ground level flexible use/studio/meeting space but we believe that these particular space planning investigations are more appropriate for entitlement phases beyond concept.

- **“create opportunities to help retain and grow local small businesses” & “encourage new businesses including nighttime entertainment, restaurants, and a variety of boutique retail establishments”<sup>23</sup>.**

The project team is investigating the inclusion of a Food Hall within the project. While this avenue requires much more research, the team is confident that this particular use would create the exact type of opportunities for local small businesses, which the Master Plan is seeking to encourage. According to one source, “Food halls are usually a collection of small, locally-developed restaurant concepts or outright new creations that come from the minds of local chefs or start-up entrepreneurs and restaurateurs. They offer an assortment of unique food and beverage items that are usually cooked from scratch (prepared from raw ingredients vs. shipped in partially or wholly made) or nearby in a commissary (but still from scratch).”<sup>24</sup>

- **“Employ smart growth principles and construct LEED-certified buildings.”<sup>25</sup>**

Again, the Duffie Companies, will bring their significant “green building” experience and expertise to bear on the project. The project team is investigating not only LEED certification but potentially Passive House Certification which is generally regarded as the world’s most stringent ‘above code minimum’ energy standard.

For all of these reasons, we are confident that Wheaton Gateway will make an impactful contribution toward meeting the objectives outlined within the Master Plan.

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<sup>23</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.blueorbiting.com/what-is-a-food-hall-why-do-people-love-them-so-much/> sourced 2-13-2020

<sup>25</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 25.



front Veirs Mill Road which itself is over twenty feet (20) above East Avenue. Additionally, the project team has stepped the proposed lower residential buildings back off of East Avenue to provide greater separation between the newer and more densely zoned areas from the existing areas to help address compatibility.

- “The Plan envisions two new, low- to moderately-scaled mixed-use developments along Veirs Mill Road on Lindsay Ford properties, flanking the western entrance to the CBD.”<sup>28</sup>

The area described includes Phase Two of Wheaton Gateway which is designed as a mixed-use development combining both residential and commercial space in conformity with the designated zone.

- “Pedestrian connections will link these areas to the Core District and to existing neighborhoods.”<sup>29</sup>

As previously described, the plan as designed will allow for three routes for pedestrians to traverse the site thereby linking Veirs Mill Road to the existing neighborhoods: 1) the sidewalk along University Boulevard, 2) an internal sidewalk connecting Veirs Mill Road and East Ave, & 3) a sidewalk along the property’s northern boundary connecting Veirs Mill Road and Kensington Boulevard. Additional crossings to link Wheaton Gateway to the Core District will be provided at the intersection between Veirs Mill Road and University Boulevard utilizing existing crosswalks. The project team remains supportive of installing a signal at the intersection of Veirs Mill Road and Galt Avenue.

- “The Plan encourages higher buildings at the University Boulevard West intersections with Veirs Mill Road....”<sup>30</sup>

Wheaton Gateway’s tallest buildings are proposed at the intersection of University Boulevard and Veirs Mill Road.

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<sup>28</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 55

<sup>29</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 55

<sup>30</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57

### Master Plan Compliance by Block & Parcel Reference

As an assemblage of ten separate parcels referenced in the Master Plan, the Project crosses several blocks.

- Block C – “Rezone the Ambassador Building site (lot 2) and Parcel 1 from C-2 to CR 5.0: C 4.5, R 4.5, H 130 to provide a better transition and relationship to the Core District’s 6.0 FAR and maximum building height of 200 feet. This maximum height will allow a landmark structure at the intersection.”<sup>31</sup>

The District Council rezoned the above-referenced properties in accordance with the Master Plan on November 29, 2011, pursuant to Sectional Map Amendment G-911. Accordingly, in response to this rezoning, Wheaton Gateway’s tallest and most iconic buildings are proposed at the intersection of University Boulevard and Veirs Mill Road. Placing height at the intersection and “stepping down” away from the corner provides the transitional relationship the Master Plan is seeking.

- Block F – “A through-block connection between Veirs Mill Road and East Avenue is desirable at this location (see also text under Pedestrian Circulation, first bullet on page 64).”<sup>32</sup>

Wheaton Gateway proposes a through-block connection.

- Block F – “For properties recommended for CRN zoning along the East Avenue frontage of the block, residential or professional townhouses would be more compatible with the single-family houses across East Avenue than other commercial uses.”<sup>33</sup>

No commercial development is currently proposed along East Avenue. Only residential development with an associated pick-up drop-off area and general site access/egress are proposed along East Avenue.

- “If the car dealership properties are developed as one development, low-scale uses should be placed along East Avenue, with larger commercial uses and mixed-use development along Veirs Mill Road. Any adverse impacts of the recommended 100-foot maximum building height along the Veirs Mill Road side of the block should be carefully analyzed during the redevelopment process to make sure that higher building masses are placed away from the East Avenue frontage, with appropriate transition in building heights from the Veirs Mill Road side to the maximum building height of 45 feet along East Avenue. The Planning Board may limit height to less than allowed by the zone to achieve compatibility.”<sup>34</sup>

The buildings within the project step down significantly as they move toward the existing residential areas. Additionally, the project team has, with this design, stepped the proposed lower residential

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<sup>31</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57

<sup>32</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57

<sup>33</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57

<sup>34</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 57

buildings back off of East Avenue to provide greater separation between the newer and more densely zoned areas from the existing areas to help address compatibility.

- Rezone the Lindsay Ford dealership property, Parcel 282, from C-2 to CR 3.0, C 2.5, R 2.5, H 100 to encourage mixed-use residential development.

The District Council has also rezoned the Lindsay property in accordance with the Master Plan pursuant to Sectional Map Amendment G-911. The area described includes Phase Two of Wheaton Gateway which is designed as a mixed-use development combining both residential and commercial space in conformity with the designated zone.

### Density Supportive of Transit

The incorporation of additional housing will help to provide the density necessary to support the transit improvements and services that the Master Plan envisions in Wheaton.

- “Transit is an integral component of Wheaton’s mobility system, both today and tomorrow. The Plan’s vision is built on Metrorail, future bus rapid transit (BRT), and local bus service.”<sup>35</sup>

Wheaton Gateway effectively consolidates the Ambassador, Mattress & Lindsay properties into a cohesive development immediately adjacent to a future BRT Station on the Veirs Mill Line. This intersection is specifically denoted in the Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan (the “CTCFMP”).<sup>36</sup> The success of the BRT system will depend upon sufficient ridership and Wheaton Gateway will clearly provide needed density in a logical location. Importantly, the proposed project is designed to provide the dedication of area as recommended for the Veirs Mill Road corridor in the CTCFMP.<sup>37</sup>



<sup>35</sup> Approved and Adopted Wheaton CBD and Vicinity Sector Plan pg. 69

<sup>36</sup> Approved and Adopted Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan: Corridor 10: Veirs Mill Road, pgs. 63-65.

<sup>37</sup> Approved and Adopted Countywide Transit Corridors Functional Master Plan: Corridor 10: Veirs Mill Road, pg. 65.

## Conclusion

We are confident that Wheaton Gateway will be an outstanding example of the type of vibrant, mixed-use community that the Master Plan is seeking to encourage.

As we hope is apparent, the development team has solicited material feedback from the community and evaluated significant amounts of available information. This information has been incorporated into the plan before you in a manner that we believe does a very good job of addressing several challenges. We look forward to receiving your feedback so that we may proceed to Sketch Plan without delay.