

The Honorable Craig Rice, President, and Members  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland St.  
Rockville, MD 20850

March 25, 2014

Dear Council President Rice and Councilmembers,

Residents and small business owners need a Town Square that will be the vibrant heart of Wheaton. Therefore, Audubon Naturalist Society and Anacostia Watershed Society join in support of the March 10th, 2014 [Montgomery County Civic Federation](#) emergency resolution:

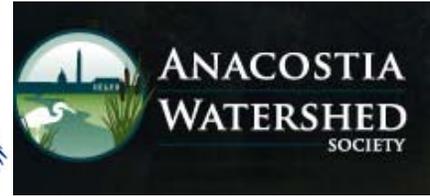
***"Request to withhold CIP budget funds for Wheaton Redevelopment until a General Development Agreement is signed."***

Withholding public funds is a measure of last resort. But, the proposed Wheaton Town Center project, that will house the headquarters of the Departments of Planning, Environmental Protection, and Permitting Services, has significant and well-documented public concerns. Despite years of public input by civic and environmental groups and [small business owners](#), the design for this project does *not* meet Wheaton's basic requirements.

**Town Square: The site must harmonize with existing small businesses, and provide ample public space.** Wheaton was promised a viable Town Square in previous CIP appropriations – "*The project provides for design, site improvements, and construction associated with a town square on Parking Lot 13 that is at least 1/3 the area of the site*" – yet the currently proposed "community event plaza" has no frontage to businesses and is only 14,300 square feet – smaller than many single-family lots. This is too small for its intended public use, including for [Taste of Wheaton festival](#).

**Environment: The site must contribute to the restoration of Sligo Creek and the Anacostia - as required by the Wheaton Sector Plan Environmental Principle.** Local civic and Anacostia activists put forth [constructive suggestions to green this flagship County building](#). (A rendering of a greener design that honors existing businesses is attached.) The design proposes a huge glass box, which got [the civics](#) and [local environmental groups](#) concerned that the project does not contribute to a viable town center. The County responded with some additional greening, including a small green roof on the building and more trees in the plaza, but these are insufficient. To embody the environmental leadership role of Montgomery County, this site needs ample and accessible green roof space and more shade trees, along with other plant-based practices to collect and reduce runoff, like rain gardens and vegetated walls.

AUDUBON NATURALIST SOCIETY  
*Connecting people with nature in the DC region*



**Accountability: A written Agreement must spell out community, small business and environmental commitments.** With no Community Benefits Agreement or General Development Agreement publicly reviewed or signed, the project does not comply with the Wheaton Sector Plan or Design Guidelines. Allegations are surfacing that this project is [a developer bait-and-switch bid](#) for the land currently occupied by MNCPPC on Georgia Avenue in Silver Spring.

Instead of rushing forward with the current design, Montgomery County must take the time to ensure that this project meets all the essential community and business needs as it has promised. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to raise the bar on green construction in the County, contribute to restoration of Sligo Creek of the Upper Anacostia, and [save taxpayer money](#) in the long run.

Because the current design of this project does not meet the needs of residents, shoppers and small business owners, **we join the Civic Federation in asking the Council to delay allocating this project's funds until these concerns are addressed.** Thank you for considering our views on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Diane Cameron  
Conservation Director  
Audubon Naturalist Society

Dan Smith  
Public Policy & Advocacy Director  
Anacostia Watershed Society

Attachment: Graphic showing Community Design Vision for the Wheaton Redevelopment Project



## Community Design Vision

\* County building has ample green roofs and green walls.

\* Small businesses are featured near plaza.

\* Plaza is next to county building & small businesses.



## DOT Design

- \* Green roof too small and not visible or accessible
- \* County building overwhelms adjacent small businesses
- \* Town Square plaza is not next to building, instead would be across Reddie Drive. \* Not enough shade trees.

