

WEST END CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

Rockville, Maryland



May 2021

YOU ARE INVITED!

To the West End Citizens Association
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (Virtual)
Thursday, May 27, 2021
7:00 p.m. via Zoom*



Guest Speaker: **Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton**

Topic: **I-270 Expansion**

Latest plans, City's efforts against,
Impacts on the West End

Annual election of WECA Officers

This year's candidate slate:

President: Brian Shipley

Vice President: Noreen Bryan

Vice President, Outreach: Tracy DiGioia

Treasurer: Jen Timmick

Corresponding Secretary: Jane Pontius

Recording Secretary: Margaret Magner

Join us online to learn what's going on in your community.

We hope to see you there!

**Instructions for joining the Zoom meeting appear on Page 3. If you are on WECA's email list, you will also be emailed the virtual meeting link and instructions in May.*

Any resident of the West End who is over 18 years of age is a member of the West End Citizens Association (WECA). If this newsletter was delivered to your door, YOU ARE A MEMBER OF WECA.

This newsletter was delivered by _____, your WECA Block Captain.

PRESIDENT'S NOTE

-Brian Shipley



Now that Spring is here, I am looking forward to getting out in my yard, working in my gardens which I love, and seeing neighbors again. While all winters are isolating, the pandemic has made us feel like hibernating bears, truly cut off from the wide world. With warmer temperatures we are out again and hungry for all the activities that bring us together: birthday parties, barbecues, chatting over the fence. Whatever your passions, may Springtime renew your energies and bring new happiness as you re-engage with friends and family.

WECA has had an eventful year. We are on the verge of seeing the approval of our Neighborhood

Plan. The City Manager supports Design Guidelines for the West End and we hope to have funds for a Design Guidelines consultant in the FY22 budget. We conducted a successful Block Captain survey on issues facing the neighborhood. We are putting the finishing touches on a new website, and – in my humble opinion – we mastered Executive Board meetings by Zoom! Still, I am so missing seeing everyone in person, sharing a few jokes and hearing personal experiences.

The WECA website will be a great central place to connect with the community, provide information about the organization (bylaws, motions and meeting schedule), and document our work on various initiatives and standing committees. Watch for us to launch and announce the new site shortly.

Our January Block Captain survey of issues important to the West End garnered a strong response, and our January and February Executive Board meetings reinforced the importance of the issues. *(continued on page 3)*

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President's Note (continued):

Of greatest concern to neighbors is the vitality of Town Square, the impact of I-270 expansion, and pedestrian safety. Fortunately, the approval of the Neighborhood Plan will be the runway for addressing many issues. This year we will work with City staff to launch zoning revisions that enact the policies of the Neighborhood Plan. At the same time, through Design Guidelines, we will take on the challenge of protecting the character of the West End in the face of developers whose goal is maximizing profits rather than sustaining the rich mix of housing styles and prices in the West End. With each initiative, WECA needs your views and support to make products that the community embraces. In the coming weeks we will reach out to you through our email list to let you know how you can participate. If you do not receive WECA emails, please sign up via the link on page 5 (we promise to only send a couple messages a month with only information pertinent to the West End).

I hope to see you at our May meeting – Mayor Newton will be discussing the plans and impact of the I-270 expansion. (*Note: This meeting will be VIRTUAL; see below for how to attend.*)

Happy Spring – see you around the neighborhood. Let's hope that we can get together **in person** in the fall to share a favorite beverage or just rub elbows with friends. And thank you, Donna Sprague, our outgoing VP of Outreach, for your years of dedication to WECA!

My Best,

Brian Shipley

President, West End Citizens Association
shipley.brian@gmail.com

HOW TO JOIN WECA'S MAY
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

To join online:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88103989897>

Meeting ID: 881 0398 9897

To join by phone:

Dial 1-301-715-8592

Meeting ID: 881 0398 9897#

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN & ZONING REVISIONS

Background:

For over five years, WECA newsletters have been reporting on the update to our Planning Area 4 Neighborhood Plan. However, for those of you who are new or have not been following the update to the Plan, here is some important information.

The Neighborhood Plan, a component of the City's Master Plan, is the vision for the future of the neighborhood. It creates policy for critical issues, such as:

- Will the West End remain residential, composed mostly of single- family houses?
- Where will commercial establishments be allowed in the neighborhood?
- What will happen to the roads and how will cut-through traffic be managed?
- How will walkability and pedestrian safety be improved?
- How will historic buildings and places be preserved?

The Neighborhood Plan is based on the values expressed by residents in the extensive neighborhood survey done during the plan's revision. It sets policies to preserve the West End's best characteristics by defining what actions can and cannot be taken. Some of these policies require zoning revisions to enact them.

For example, the section on *Transportation and Roadways* makes the role of the Neighborhood Plan clearer. The West End has three major streets that run through the neighborhood carrying high volumes of traffic. These are West Montgomery Avenue, Great Falls Road and Maryland Avenue. Associated cut-through traffic and pedestrian safety have always been of great concern, as shown in the neighborhood-wide surveys of 1986 and 2016. To minimize further increases of traffic in the neighborhood, the Plan establishes policy that does not allow widening of the major streets, thereby

protecting the neighborhood from bigger, faster roads carrying more traffic that would ultimately degrade the West End’s residential character. There are other policies directed specifically to walkability, pedestrian safety, bicycling and public alleys. To learn more go to p. 291 of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan at:
<https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/40922/Comprehensive-Plan-Planning-Areas---PC-Approved-Draft?bidId=>

Status:

The Planning Commission completed its review of the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and sent it to the Mayor and Council on March 15, 2021. Per state law the Mayor and Council have 150 days to review, revise and approve the Plan. The first public hearing was held on April 12, 2021. A second public hearing is scheduled for June 14th and the record will close on Friday, June 18th.

Next Steps:

Many of the policies in the updated Neighborhood Plan require zoning changes to implement them. For example, the historic houses on South Washington Street and South Adams Street are currently zoned to allow commercial establishments, such as nail salons, banks, pet grooming, and carryout restaurants. More than 85% of respondents to the 2016 survey opposed encroachment of commercial uses into the neighborhood. Accordingly, the policy in the Neighborhood Plan calls for allowing only residential or office uses on these properties. Zoning needs to be revised to enact these policies. Over the next year WECA plans to work with City staff on these zoning revisions. Thereafter, they will be sent to the Mayor and Council for approval. Please take a little time to read and understand the Neighborhood Plan and send any comments to the Mayor and Council by June 18th. Thank you!

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Paul provided sound guidance throughout the process. From what to fix, how to stage, open house process, contract review and the closing. His reputation and experience proved to be a huge success for us.

Gloria & Randy

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Paul Hillstrom, Broker



REPLANTING HISTORY

Two hundred years ago, what is now South Van Buren Street used to be a carriage lane that went through the wooded Prettyman estate on the edge of town. While there remain a handful of majestic “original” trees in front and back yards along the street, many of these mature trees have been lost throughout the years.

Fast forward to 2019: The Pontius family had planted several oaks on their South Van Buren properties. Their regular Garden Center, Behnke’s Nursery in Beltsville, was closing its doors for good. Jane Pontius, joined by her son, James, drove to Behnke’s for one last purchase. While perusing the grounds, James noticed a group of 18 white and red oaks in a corner. They made the decision to buy them all. It took two trips to transport them home. James and his brother John knocked on neighbors’ doors asking who would like a free tree planted in their yard. The result was 18 new oak trees,



Jane Pontius and her son James with one of the Oak trees that they donated and planted in their West End neighborhood.

about six feet in height, planted on South Van Buren and adjacent South Adams streets.

The Pontius family is happy to report that all but one oak tree continues to survive today, with most now over 10 feet tall. If you walk along South Van Buren, you can notice these new trees by the green deer guards wrapped around the trunks. As trees continue to come down in the West End, it is important to replant.

STAY IN TOUCH BETWEEN NEWSLETTERS!

Over 500 of your West End neighbors regularly receive important alerts, community news, and opportunities to share their views by belonging to the WECA email list. Sign-up is simple, and your email will be used **only** to send you occasional emails about issues of interest and concern to West End residents.

Go to: <http://eepurl.com/b6oWgX> to sign up for WECA email updates

You can also follow WECA's Facebook page:

Go to: <https://www.facebook.com/WECARockville/>

Or search WECARockville while on Facebook. Once on the WECA page, click on “Like” and “Follow” (must have a Facebook account).



DESIGN GUIDELINES

Are you concerned about the growing number of home demolitions in our neighborhood, followed by speculative construction of large new houses on small lots? Are you troubled by the increasing loss of mature tree canopy and green spaces in the West End? With its location between Town Center and I-270, the West End is under constant developer pressure, yet most of the neighborhood is not covered by the covenants or design guidelines that protect neighborhoods in other areas of Rockville.

Increasingly, those spurring home replacements are not existing homeowners seeking to rebuild, but outside developers coming into the neighborhood seeking to maximize their profit. This is resulting in new construction which is often edge-to-edge on

lots, destroying mature tree canopy, and creating large impervious surface areas which impact the hydrology of neighboring yards and houses.

Following the successful East Rockville design guidelines initiative, the City has included funding for a similar initiative in the West End in its FY22 proposed budget. If approved by the Mayor and Council, this will support a grass roots effort in FY22 by West End residents, in collaboration with the City Planning and Development Services, to create design guidelines for new construction in our neighborhood. The goal is not to suppress development or change existing structures, but rather to ensure that newly-built homes or additions contribute positively to the character and environmental health of the neighborhood.

Residents should have more of a say than outside developers about how new construction is done in our neighborhood! If you would like to get involved in this important initiative with other neighbors from the West End, please contact Margaret Magner at margaretmagner@gmail.com.

CHECK OUT

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT DAWSON'S MARKET

HAPPY HOUR
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ACCESSORY BUILDINGS ACCESSORY APARTMENTS AND DWELLING UNITS

Background:

For more than two years the City has been considering zoning revisions for accessory buildings and accessory apartments/dwelling units. Since these two topics are intertwined, they can be confusing. Here is a brief explanation.

- **Accessory buildings:** Zoning regulations for accessory buildings, structures that are separate from a main house such as garages and tool sheds, exist today and define the size and location of these buildings on residential lots. The City is proposing a revision to allow accessory buildings to become larger with a potential for a second story and up to more than twice the size.
- **Accessory Apartments/Dwelling Units (ADUs):** The proposed zoning for Accessory Apartments/Dwelling Units is new and does not have a precedent in existing zoning. It would allow additional residential units on single-family lots. These units could be internal to the main house (e.g., in the basement), attached to the main house as an addition, or be stand-alone buildings in backyards. Stand-alone ADUs are accessory buildings, and therefore, they will be required to meet the regulations of size and location for accessory buildings.

WECA position:

The WECA Executive Board has discussed and testified on both topics on several occasions.

- **Accessory buildings:** Current zoning restricts accessory buildings to 500 square feet regardless of lot size. It specifies a maximum height of 15 feet and maximum rear lot coverage of 25%. The City's proposed zoning revisions would allow the footprint of an accessory building to vary with lot size. A bigger lot would be able to have larger

accessory buildings. The height could be increased to 20 feet to allow a second story. There would be no change to maximum rear lot coverage. After investigating the details of the proposed zoning revisions, WECA supports allowing larger accessory buildings on larger lots. However, these buildings should not be so large that they lead to the excessive loss of green space, destruction of the mature canopy of trees and other environmental degradations. Further, WECA recommends retaining the maximum building height of 15 feet thereby opposing a second story that could dominate and overwhelm the main house. WECA provided testimony to the Mayor and Council on March 2, 2020.

- **Accessory Dwelling Units:** Policies in the update to the Comprehensive Plan and in a draft zoning ordinance would allow the following:
 - One accessory apartment, internal to the structure, on a residential detached lot, OR
 - One accessory dwelling unit, attached or detached from the primary building in accordance with size, parking, and development standards for single unit detached lots.

WECA supports allowing accessory apartments internal to the main house and ADUs attached via a common wall with the main house. These would provide additional housing units for family members and rental income for the homeowner, without changing the appearance of a single-family neighborhood. WECA is opposed to stand-alone ADUs because they would bring an end to the West End's defining characteristic, namely one house per lot. Once a second dwelling unit is built on a residential lot it will become a permanent part of the neighborhood. It will reduce affordable housing by incentivizing developers to tear down the smaller, more affordable housing to replace it with two houses per lot: a large primary residence and a backyard rental unit. It will lead to higher property taxes. It will lead to a loss of mature tree canopy and green, park-like backyards. It is unlikely to provide new affordable housing while destroying existing affordable housing. Why? Because many new ADUs will likely be used as Airbnbs which

return significantly more income than long term rentals.

WECA supports policy that would permit accessory units internal or attached with a common wall to primary residences, but would prohibit stand-alone ADUs. This would be a win-win for the West End. It allows an expansion of housing while preserving the lifestyle and character so valued by its residents.

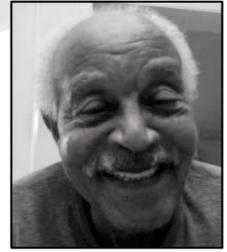
Further, it is undisputed that each neighborhood will be affected differently if stand-alone ADUs are permitted. Free-standing ADUs are prohibited in some of Rockville’s neighborhoods by Home Owners’ Associations (HOA) restrictions and are not possible in other neighborhoods because of the small size or shape of their lots. It is the older neighborhoods – East Rockville, Lincoln Park, Twinbrook and the West End – that have residential lots where stand-alone ADUs can be built. More importantly, the residents of some neighborhoods may want free-standing ADUs while others may not. Since city-wide policy cannot be implemented in many neighborhoods, thereby affecting only a handful of neighborhoods, WECA supports policy on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis, following the preference of each neighborhood. Design Guidelines provide an optimal vehicle for doing this.

Next Steps:

Following direction from the Mayor and Council given in October 2020, staff have been conducting more city-wide outreach to gain citizens’ views. As of the writing of this article, a public hearing on both accessory buildings and accessory apartments/ADUs is scheduled for May 10, 2021 before the Mayor and Council. This will be the last step in community outreach. Thereafter, the zoning revisions for both accessory buildings and accessory apartments/ADUs will be sent to the Planning Commission for its review, followed by review and approval by the Mayor and Council. WECA will let those on our email list know about additional public hearings if they are scheduled. Please stay tuned for more information and decisions as they become available. You can also find more details on the City’s website.

SELDON HIGGINS

Life & Legacy

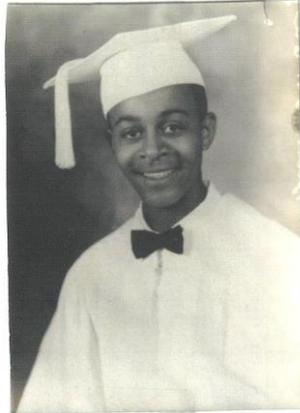


On March 25th WECA hosted a Zoom conversation with 95-year-old Rockville resident, Mr. Seldon Higgins, where he shared his experiences as a Black man who began his life in Kentucky and moved to this area as a young adult to raise his children and pursue a career with the federal government. Seldon moved to the Haiti section of Rockville on Martin’s Lane after he married his college sweetheart, who had deep Rockville roots. Assisted by his daughter, Constance Newsome, Seldon began his Zoom remarks by praising the action taken on that day by Maryland Governor Hogan, who awarded \$577 million for Maryland’s Historic Black Colleges and Universities. The following are excerpts from Seldon’s remarkable life history as recently told in informal conversation with Noreen Bryan, Galen Whittaker and Margaret Magner and shared during the Zoom meeting on the 25th.

CHILDHOOD – Mentoring Advice

“To give you an example of my childhood experiences, my father used to drive with Mr. Ben Williamson, recruiting, during the 30s and 40s. Mr. Williamson was the kingpin of the Democratic Party of Kentucky. One time they took me along with them. In the car was Mr. Ben, Fred Vinson and Alben Barkley. I’m riding in the car with them going through eastern Kentucky where they were making talks. During the same period Mr. Ben sat me down in the car one night and said, ‘Sonny, you are experiencing something that you will never forget in your life. You got two men here. Right now one of them’s a judge - Vinson - in Louisa, Kentucky, and Barkley is now a Senator in Washington.’ He said, ‘So you’re gonna have experience in saying that you were with these two men. But what I want you to know is that what you’re seeing now, I want you to see and believe that you can do whatever you want to do if you have the skill and the ability and the exposure to do

it. So don't feel that you are looked down on. Feel that you have the guts, the drive, and hopefully later on, the opportunity to do what you want to do, and be able to do it.' That stuck with me. That showed me that I could deal with a White person, I could deal with a Black person, I could deal with a person that had authority, I could deal with a person who has an education, and a historian. So, that prepared me for my life later on."



HIGH SCHOOL – Kentucky basketball star

"Our school, Booker T. Washington High School, was the first Black school in the South, below the Mason-Dixon line, that played a White school, in 1942. We didn't know that was against segregation law. But this White school had heard so much about our team and how we were playing. And they wanted to play us because they were rated very high in that area. We started out (and this was during the war, gasoline was rationed) at 10 o'clock that morning and had three flats. We called home and heard that, 'They still want you to come.' We said, 'Yeah, but it's 6 o'clock!' They said, 'They want you to stay there and they're gonna come and pick you up.' They came, brought us back and we got into that town [laughs] about 11 o'clock. They were sleeping on the floor with a big pot-bellied stove. Anyway, the game started at 1 o'clock. We stayed overnight and slept in the gym. The next morning they gave us food and we left. And then we found out that it was publicized in the Army Times. My father was in London, England at the time and he wrote me a letter and said that it was in the Army Times that we had played in an inter-racial game and it was against the segregation laws. My skill as a basketball player was recognized many years after I graduated. On February 21, 1958 I was inducted in the Booker T. Washington Hall of Fame. On May 31, 2003 at a celebration in my honor I was recognized as the first basketball player in the state of Kentucky – Black or White – to make All-State for three consecutive years."

EARLY MARRIED LIFE – respect for women and mothers

"My wife and I were married while I was finishing my education at Central State in Kentucky. We had our first child Tyrone Douglas Higgins on December 26, 1949. We had health problems with our son. He had a rare bone deficiency that the doctors in Ashland [Kentucky] didn't know how to deal with. Fortunately, Mary's family was in Rockville, Maryland. Children's Hospital was in Washington, D.C. and Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, Maryland. They were the two hospitals that we felt could help us.

Unfortunately, Tyrone died in January, 1954. I was 28 and my wife was 25 years old. So you can imagine the impact on a young couple, who had just entered into being parents. Tyrone was buried in Ashland, Kentucky. Now the uniqueness of Ashland as I've said before, the same cemetery was used by both Black and White, the same hospitals.

But you can imagine how a young woman in her 20s, going through that and being able to survive that, and still live to have a nice life and a healthy life that she had. That proved to me how strong a woman is and how much love a woman will always have for her child because that's a part of her. And I have a lot of respect for a woman and a mother, more than anything else. Because what they have to go through, mentally, physically and then be able to provide love and affection for someone else. It's just unbelievable. So I always think of her as part of me."

CAREER WITH FEDERAL GOVERNMENT– recruiting trip to Georgia

"When I worked for the Federal Housing Administration, we started the first intern program for Blacks. I would go to Historical Black Colleges and Universities and tell them what we were trying to do. Instead of flying, my normal way of travel, I drove south with a White intern, whose hometown was Albany, Georgia where I was recruiting. At our first stop the Administrator pulled me aside and asked, 'Why was I traveling with this White guy? Do you realize that the FBI is still looking for the Black girl who is reported to have been kidnapped? Be very careful when you leave.'

Seldon Higgins, continued

We started out going to Albany on a black top road. After about 30 minutes on the road, the intern told me to get on the floor of the car. I asked him, ‘Why?’ He said, ‘I see in my mirror two guys standing in a truck with shot guns in their hands. I am going to try to outrun them.’ He outran them, and he insisted that he wanted to visit his grandmother. We pulled onto this dirt road that ended in a cemetery. This is where his grandmother was. My heart left my body and I don’t know where it went!! He went to her grave and returned to the car. We left. I asked him to stop and get me a half pint of Jack Daniels to cool my nerves.

We had reservations at a motel composed of four army barracks. After a hassle with the White guy behind the counter who didn’t want to honor my reservation, he threw the key for my room to the White intern. I was put in Barrack #4 and the intern put in Barrack #1. When we got to barrack four, Jackson suggested that I put everything up against the door. He would knock four times in the morning to let me know it was him. We didn’t know if the FBI was still looking for the missing Black girl. I shut the door, put chairs against the door, drank my Jack Daniels and got under the bed and slept on the floor all night. The next morning Jackson knocked on the door four times. I opened and let him in, and told him to take me to the airport. I told him, ‘I am not riding back to DC with you in this car.’ When we got to the airport, it was a Piper Cub twin propeller, one pilot, four seats and a hostess that sat in the back. That is how I got back to headquarters in Washington. Still, I was successful in getting some of those students a professional job in the federal government.”

IN CONCLUSION

To quote Seldon, he has “lived from Jim Crow to Black Lives Matter.” During his long life, he had numerous positive experiences with political leaders and a long, productive career with the federal government. Seldon Higgins has experienced many of the major civil rights events in the final half of the twentieth century. His life and struggles have furthered the cause of Black American citizens. In sharing his story he wants to encourage Black

youths to get involved; to stay the course and improve justice for Black Americans.

At the conclusion of his WECA conversation, Seldon was recognized by Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton on behalf of the City Council with a Proclamation of Appreciation for his many years of service and “for bringing out the better angels in ourselves and our community.” Thank you, Seldon.



If you are interested in reading all of Seldon’s Life Story, WECA will be sending a message to the WECA email list containing a link to his story and to the proclamation presented by the Mayor.

Preparing for Post-Pandemic Life

- Getting vaccinated against COVID-19: **Check!**
- Wearing masks and following CDC guidelines: **Check!**
- Anticipating wonderful things we can do again when life is “back to normal”...

What are you looking forward to?

Here are some thoughts shared by West End neighbors about what they are most looking forward to doing again as COVID-19 recedes:

- *Seeing people in person, having a drink or coffee and interacting normally, not just on Zoom.*
- *Reviving our neighborhood gatherings here in the FELD (Falls, Evans, Laura, and Dale): the annual 4th of July parade, National Night Out at the park, our neighborhood book club, the tiki bar parties!*
- *Concerts on the lawn at Wolftrap!*
- *Seeing my family all together again.*
- *Visiting with my family (kids and grandkids) in person, sharing a meal, and most importantly giving hugs. It has been a long time coming.*
- *Going to a favorite restaurant, sitting down and being served a glass of wine and a great meal, and then having someone take the dishes away, so I don’t have to clean up my kitchen!*
- *Summer Friday Night Live concerts and other events in Town Center.*
- *Getting back to in-person WECA meetings! It’s not the same on Zoom.*
- *Greeting people with a hug!*

ROCKVILLE TOWN CENTER

Background

The overarching goal for Rockville Town Center in the Town Center Master Plan adopted in 2001 was to “create a daytime, evening, and weekend activity center that is easily identifiable, pedestrian-oriented, and incorporates a mix of uses and activities.”

Town Center has had some successes over the years but many businesses have failed, and there is concern that Town Center has yet to live up to the potential of its plan.

Town Center and the West End

The vitality of Town Center is of great concern to residents of the West End. In a January 2021 survey of the West End Citizens Association Block Captains, this was the number one neighborhood

concern, expressed by nearly 70% of respondents. Many West End residents have expressed that for Town Center to succeed it should remain a pedestrian-friendly and walkable destination, and that they do not want increasing development and traffic in Town Center to encroach on the West End. A current change proposed to land usage on the west side of North Washington Street is a good example. From its inception, the Town Center area along the west side of North Washington Street was intended to have four-story buildings of residential apartments on top of retail/commercial businesses on the ground floor. The current proposal, made in the Town Center Neighborhood Plan, is to add more residents by increasing the maximum height of buildings on the west side of North Washington Street from four stories to seven, and to make retail at ground level optional.

In April 2021, a survey about these proposed changes was sent to West End households via WECA’s email list. Thank you to the 97 West End neighbors who responded. The results are below:



IN-PERSON AND VIRTUAL OPTIONS!

SUMMER PROGRAMS

JOIN OUR WELCOMING & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY!

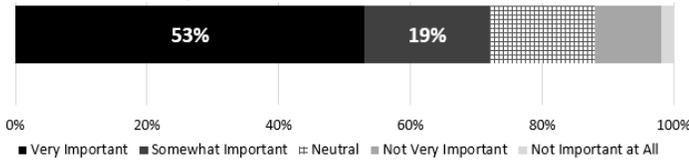
CHRIST EPISCOPAL SCHOOL
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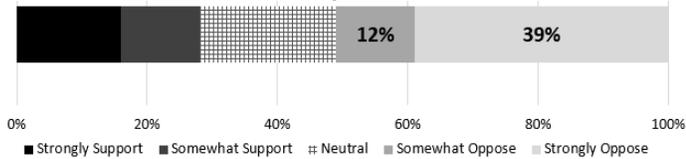
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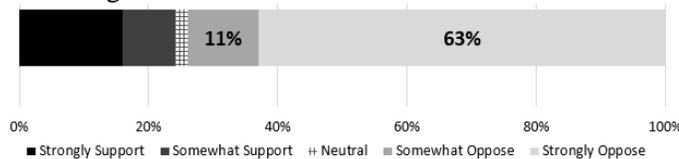
- 71.5% of West End survey respondents find it very or somewhat important to preserve the presence of retail/commercial enterprises on the west side of North Washington Street.



- Respondents narrowly oppose (51.7%) having exclusively residential apartment buildings on the west side of North Washington Street.



- 74% of respondents oppose increasing the maximum allowable building height on the west side of North Washington Street from four to seven stories.



WECA’s Position

Based on the survey results, WECA testified at the Mayor and Council’s April 12, 2021 public hearing to provide the neighborhood’s feedback of strong support for keeping retail on the west side of North Washington Street, and strong opposition to allowing seven story buildings there. We also provided full survey results, including comments, at the request of a member of the Council.

Next Steps

- The Mayor and Council are scheduled to make a determination on this proposal through their action on the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Rockville this summer. Public comment will be accepted through June 18.
- At its April 22, 2021 meeting, the WECA Executive Board determined that the vitality of Town Center will be a key initiative for action and advocacy by the group this year. If you would like to get involved, please contact Brian Shipley at shipley.brian@gmail.com

For those who are new to the neighborhood, or want a quick reference to recent events and resources related to Town Center, here is a summary:

- In October 2018 after Dawson’s Market closed, concern about the problems of Town Center heightened. Over 400 attended a standing room only Town Hall meeting on the topic. Concerns expressed included parking, competition from other locations such as Pike & Rose, high commercial rents, frustrations with management by the owner of Town Square, and the impact of eCommerce. Dawson’s was able to reopen at a later date.
- In July 2019, the City of Rockville and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments jointly convened a Technical Assistance Panel of the Urban Land Institute to study and make recommendations about overcoming Town Center’s challenges. Recommendations included retaining significant employers, building density, strengthening relationships with Montgomery College, and addressing parking.

The full report can be viewed at:

<https://www.rockvillemd.gov/documentcenter/view/35862>

- In 4Q 2020 the Planning Area 1 Town Center Neighborhood Plan was presented to the Rockville Planning Commission. Its recommendations include increasing the residential density of the west side of North Washington Street and other Town Center areas, increasing walkability and pedestrian safety, studying the possibility of a new public park, and providing additional travel routes through Town Center by extending Dawson Avenue across North Washington Street to 355, and extending Maryland Avenue northward. This plan would supersede and adjust the original Town Center Master Plan. It is now before the Mayor and Council, who will hold a final public hearing on June 14, 2021 and will accept comments through June 18, 2021.

The full Town Center Neighborhood Plan is Chapter 1 (page 246) of the Planning Areas section of Rockville’s Comprehensive Plan, viewable here:

<https://www.rockvillemd.gov/DocumentCenter/View/40922/>

West End Citizen’s Association

For more information about WECA, contact WECA President Brian Shipley (shipley.brian@gmail.com). Interested in getting more involved? Consider being a Block Captain! Contact Recording Secretary Margaret Magner (margaretmagner@gmail.com).

