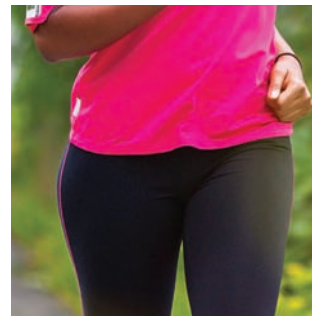
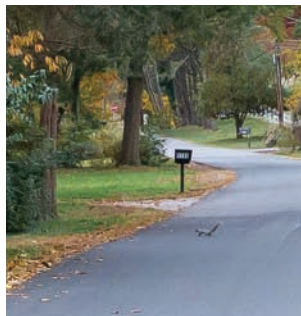
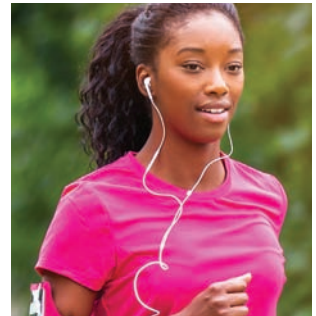
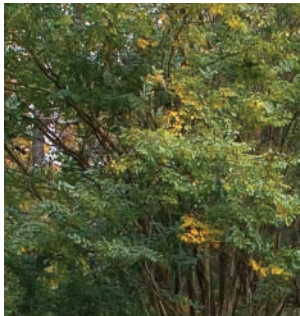


MONTGOMERY COUNTY WHITE OAK

# Strategic Communications & Marketing Plan



Submitted by **Sharp & Company, Inc.** *April 12, 2019*



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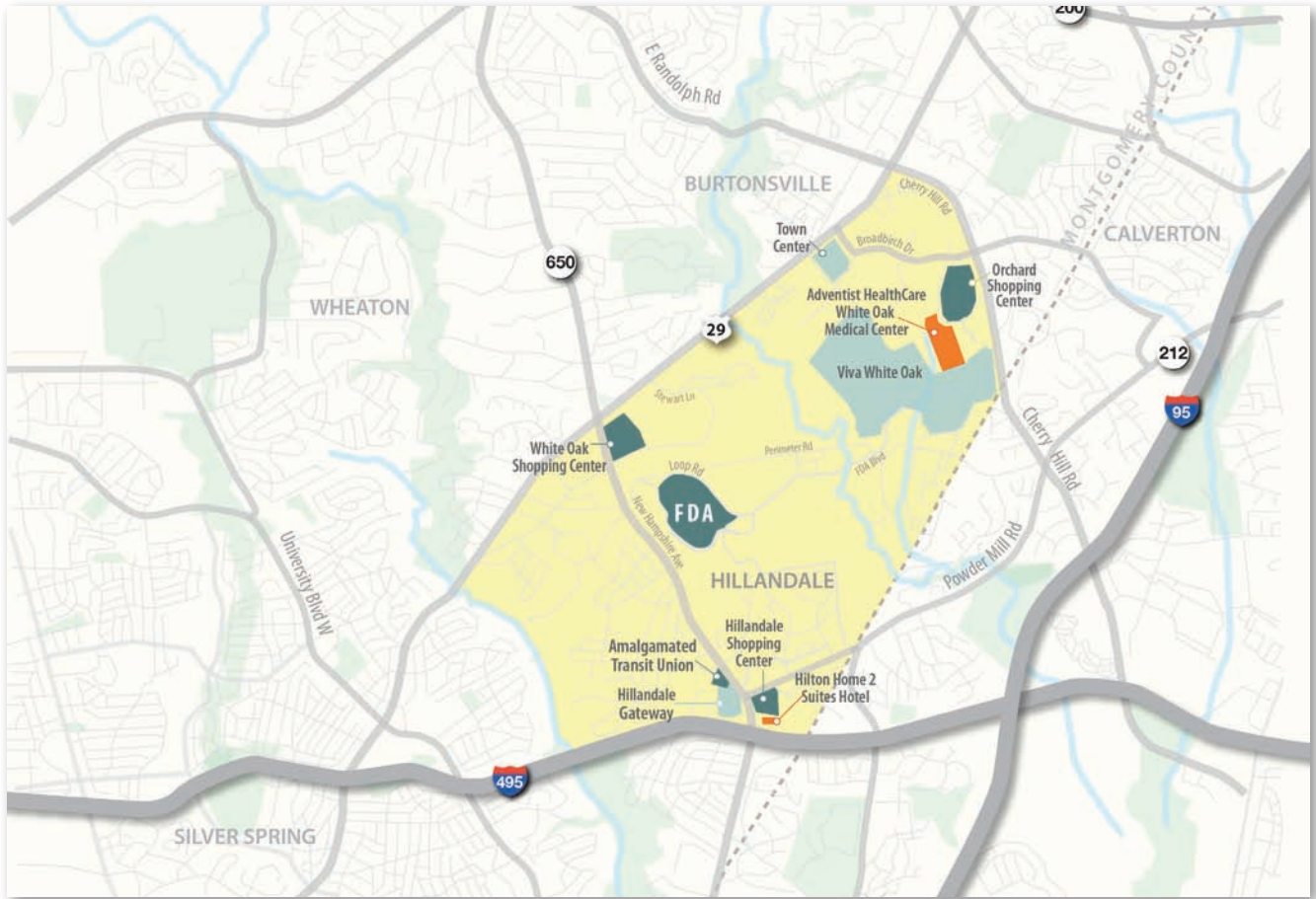
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# White Oak Boundaries



# Executive Summary

The White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan has built the foundation to realize its new vision of White Oak as a thriving multicultural community and an economic center in Montgomery County, where mixed income and mixed cultures are united to build community success through engagement and connections. Approved in 2014, the Master Plan focuses on Hillandale, White Oak, and the Life Sciences/Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Village areas. With new development underway, approved plans, and secured investments, White Oak is evolving into a vibrant mixed-use, transit-served East County community.

It is important to build and sustain the momentum with a comprehensive communications and marketing plan for White Oak that engages the community and supports economic and community development. Connecting the elements – a strong, solid base of health organizations committed to building a world class life sciences destination, an economically and culturally diverse population, exciting new lifestyle amenities, improved transportation options, and the commitment and involvement of the County – will enable White Oak to grow into a flourishing community and destination.

The White Oak Implementation Coordinator, in the Offices of the County Executive, has procured the development of a clear, actionable, scalable communications and marketing plan that addresses all the key audiences interested in the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan and shapes communications about the plan over a period of time. Like all effective communications and marketing plans with outreach to diverse audiences, the White Oak plan is goal-driven and based on careful, critical analyses of existing communications, audiences, and what the County hopes to achieve in the communication and marketing process. It contains principal messages and key themes that will be incorporated throughout the implementation, as well as methods for evaluation. Of course, the plan is also proactive, and includes plans for taking the initiative where possible. It also prepares the County to react to unexpected events or potential crises during the life of the program.

## The tasks identified in the scope of work for the communications and marketing plan included:

1. Conduct a critical analysis of what is being communicated about White Oak and by whom
2. Identify opportunities and challenges, based upon critical analysis
3. Identify goals and objectives of future communications
4. Identify key audiences and prioritization: who we want to reach and engage
5. Recommend communications tools and strategies, including media pitches, stories and narratives, social media strategy, crisis communications
6. Develop a variety of key themes and message frames
7. Outline a time-line for implementation and a mechanism to evaluate implementation
8. Develop branding message
9. Design website, logo, and visuals
10. Propose community outreach events

# Goals and Objectives

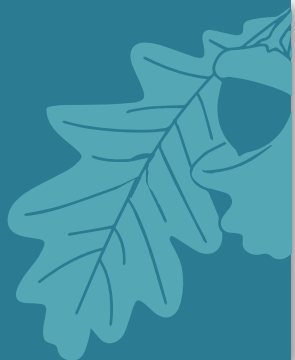
An effective communications and marketing plan never loses sight of its core purpose and is driven by clear goals and objectives. Some goals and objectives in this plan are specific to particular audiences (residents within subsections of White Oak communities, targeted businesses, such as FDA, and the media, for example), while others are more general. Strategies and tactics in the communications and marketing plan throughout implementation will tie back to the core goals and objectives.

With information about existing communications, opportunities, and challenges in hand, the team has determined the following overarching goal.

## GOAL:

To support the vision of the White Oak Master Plan by proactively engaging existing residents and businesses and attracting future residents, businesses, non-profits, and developers to White Oak.

The following objectives have been identified for successfully meeting the goal of the plan, supporting plan activities, and ensuring that all communication with audiences is consistent throughout the communications and marketing plan period.



## OBJECTIVES:

1. Increase positive awareness about White Oak and build a brand that is aligned with the vision of the White Oak Master Plan.
2. Provide factual and clear information about the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan, correcting misinformation and false perceptions.





# Situation Analysis

Sharp & Company (S&CO) conducted an evaluation of formal and informal communication about the White Oak community and the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan to determine existing research/data and public opinion, that has developed over the years, that may influence the choice of strategies and tactics.

This critical analysis of the current community environment (physical, operational, economic, social, etc.) identified strengths and weaknesses, both actual and perceived, that attract or deter residents, visitors, and businesses. These strengths and weaknesses will serve as the foundation to develop key messaging and the overall marketing strategy.

## *Efforts to collect data included:*

- Meeting with the Montgomery County Government Office of the County Executive (MCG), Friends of White Oak, White Oak Business Community, and County Council members Nancy Navarro and Tom Hucker to discuss any past official communications about the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan and any other records on file from various County government agencies, civic organizations, special interest groups, homeowners' associations, landowners, developers, etc.
- Requesting County data including crime rates to compare perceptions with facts and to compare to other areas in the County.
- Conducting research for news stories and online comments, including the following outlets: Washington Post, Washington Business Journal, Bisnow, WTOP, Maryland Daily Record, Montgomery County Sentinel, Montgomery Community Media, Bethesda magazine, Greater Greater Washington plus hyper-local blogs and online news sites such as Patch, Growing East County, Just Up the Pike, East MoCo and social media sites Facebook and Instagram.

Discussions with MCG and Friends of White Oak produced a list of the meeting participants' perceived strengths and weaknesses for each of the key audiences identified—residents, businesses, nonprofits, and developers by the meeting participants. The Sharp team has considered the following list in the development of the plan:

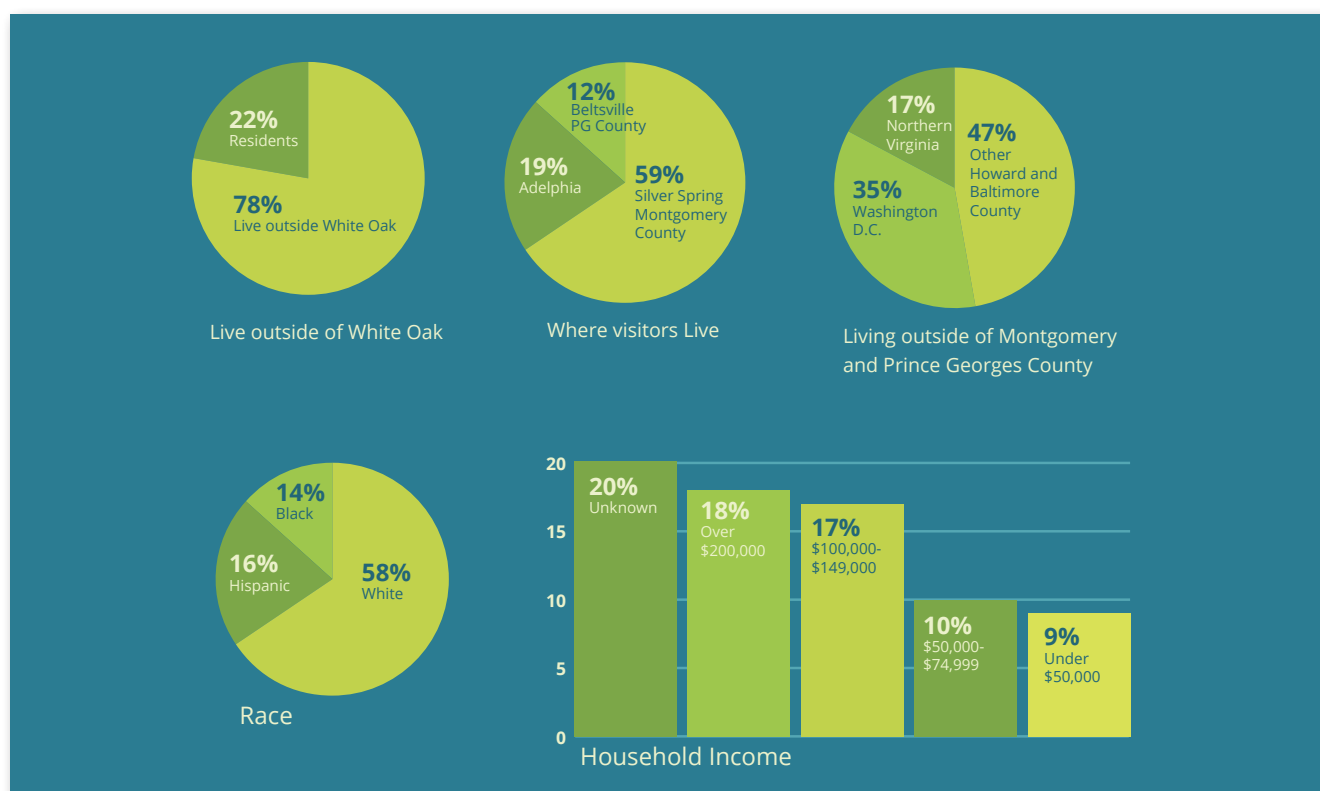
## Perceived Strengths and Weaknesses

	STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
Residents	Mature trees	Varied housing in small, compressed areas
	Established community	Dilapidated homes that are not maintained
	Well-constructed homes	Lack of amenities for families (no movie theater, shopping, food)
	Stable demand and supply	Poor quality grocery stores
	Great Rec Center	Lack of quality dining options
	Affordable	Low-performing schools. Parents not involved in their children's education
	Diversity at Schools	Schools don't have as many internship programs
	Small homes	People are leaving their homes instead of making them bigger and better
	Adventist Healthcare and plenty of other doctors	Lack of public transportation (discussed that even with the BRT coming there will be a learning curve)
	Plenty of Faith Organizations	Lack of businesses to sponsor school activities
	Convenient to DC, MD, VA	Lack of parent volunteers at schools
	Close to 495, 270, 50, 29	
	Accessible to airports	
	Has a bus system	
	FDA employer	
	Senior facilities and housing	
	Educated community	
	The Jewel of India restaurant	
	Different housing styles	
Business/ Developers/Nonprofits	Plenty of office space	Shopping center left out of plan
	They see themselves the same as Olney, but Olney is awesome and has four grocery stores so why can't they?	Disposable income models show people in White Oak have no money to spend
	Perfect for an incubator type enterprise	FDA came but built a fancy cafeteria inside, so no one ever leaves. They also didn't build enough parking, so no one wants to leave and lose their spot.
	Money to be made here. People want to spend. (There was some debate about this.)	Not enough B2B opportunities
	It's a life science area	Not a lot of non-profits
	A lot of community organizations	

As much of the community outreach around the White Oak Science Gateway Master Plan occurred in the planning phase in 2011-2013, limited recent official public communication activities, files, meeting notes, or media coverage were discovered. S&CO determined the need for an initial survey to gather public input from residents in Montgomery and Prince George's County. The survey was developed by S&CO and went live on **Oct 15, 2018** via the White Oak Facebook page, concluding on **Oct 26, 2018**. A total of **1207 INDIVIDUALS** completed the survey. The survey consisted of **16 multiple choice questions** with the opportunity to write in answers for specific questions.

## WHITE OAK SURVEY RESULTS OVERVIEW

### Respondent Profiles



The following Information gleaned from the survey responses has influenced our recommendations within the marketing plan.

As (one of) the overarching goals of the plan is to create a brand for the White Oak community, it was imperative that we first assessed the current perception, or perceived

brand, of White Oak. Below are the revealing results and comments from respondents when asked about their overall perception of White Oak. Answers were categorized into the following general areas: crime, transportation, atmosphere, entertainment, economic, housing, and schools.



## EXISTING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT WHITE OAK



### Crime

- White Oak has been associated with crime, being not safe, having a bad reputation, and being the worst part of Montgomery County. The perception is that Montgomery County does not care about White Oak.
- Cars get broken into at Sears parking lot.
- Multifamily development surrounding shopping center increases crime; overrun by section 8 housing.
- Not monitored well/need more police and security guards, police officers.
- People begging for money outside Giant and Walgreens, others appear to be on drugs, drug dealing, homeless population, fighting, gangs, lots of loitering.
- Bad lighting makes it appear more unsafe.



### Transportation Issues

- Not bike or pedestrian friendly.
- No convenient public transportation. Some know of BRT coming; more dislike the idea than like it.
- Want a downtown where people can walk around. Can't do that now. Shops spread out.
- More of a crossroads than a community Rte. 28/Stewart Lane intersection is bad. Need to connect New Hampshire Ave and Cherry Hill Rd.
- Roads need to be paved.
- Lots of jaywalking.
- Need to connect with bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure from Lockwood, from Tech Drive, from MLK along FDA.
- Unsafe corners; no sidewalks in many areas.
- Traffic – heavy (Colesville especially), congested, parking issues.
- Public transit areas are seen as unsafe. Homeless people are living in bus shelters.



*The WO Shopping Center can be a bit scary at night. More of a police presence/security cameras could help the drug/crime situation. Also, children-friendly parks/playgrounds would be so appreciated, especially in the Burnt Mills development - lots of kids with no place to go. Burnt Mills Elem School desperately needs to be renovated, updated, and expanded. It has been over populated by almost 100% in the past years. The neighborhood will not attract families coming for the Science Gateway if the school continues in the present situation and lack of family recreation possibilities.*



### Aesthetics/Atmosphere

- Trashy, rundown, not clean. Literally trash on streets; smells bad.
- Dated, ugly.
- Loitering, scary, loud.
- Building heights don't match suburban setting.
- No landscaping, trees, or green space.



### Things to do/Entertainment

- Boring.
- Upgrade restaurants, low quality or same you can find anywhere. People appreciate the different and family owned restaurants.
- Make it like Bethesda and Rockville, Pike and Rose, Mosaic District (Fairfax). Don't fill with cheap stores, pawnshops.
- Need more nightlife/bars.
- More cafés and small nonchain restaurants.
- Needs movie theater.
- Not enough places for kids to go; need more playground.

## *Economic*

- Not enough jobs there, but in close-by areas.
- Need IT jobs.
- See Adventist Hospital and Science Center as potential for more jobs.
- Seen as low-income area. Others noted a wide range of income.
- Too much low-income housing.

- Drop in home values (otherwise would have moved already).
- People have been waiting to move into Viva White Oak but (believe) it was never built.
- Suggest tax incentives for business to move in.

## *Schools*

- Neglected by county, rundown, no amenities, bad.
- Not safe.



### OVERALL POSITIVE OBSERVATIONS

- Location – excellent – off the Beltway and 29. Convenient to and from work – I guess Silver Spring, Bethesda, Rockville, D.C.
- Great park areas.
- Has some nice residential neighborhoods surrounding.
- Like the diversity; cool vibe.
- Affordable housing available now, concerned it will go away with development
- Overall inexpensive
- Accessible (may mean location)
- People are optimistic about hospital bringing community up and science center bringing in professionals with money.
- Want a sense of community, opinions are that better roads, transit (Metro bus stops) would improve and events – family and free or low cost.

### POSITIVE FEEDBACK FOR THESE SPECIFIC AMENITIES

- Bowling, Sears (and mention of good use for space once it closes, e.g. library, mixed use retail, residential housing), Indian restaurant (Hillandale) current library, Recreation Center, White Oak Plaza, Hillandale Safeway.
- Hillandale shopping center in general is fairly well received and just needs a boost.
- People are optimistic about the hospital bringing the community up and the science center bringing in more professionals with money.

## SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Additional questions within the survey asked participants about what influenced them to visit or not visit White Oak, and what would encourage them to visit more. We also asked about their awareness of specific improvements in the area. Following are the highlights of those findings.

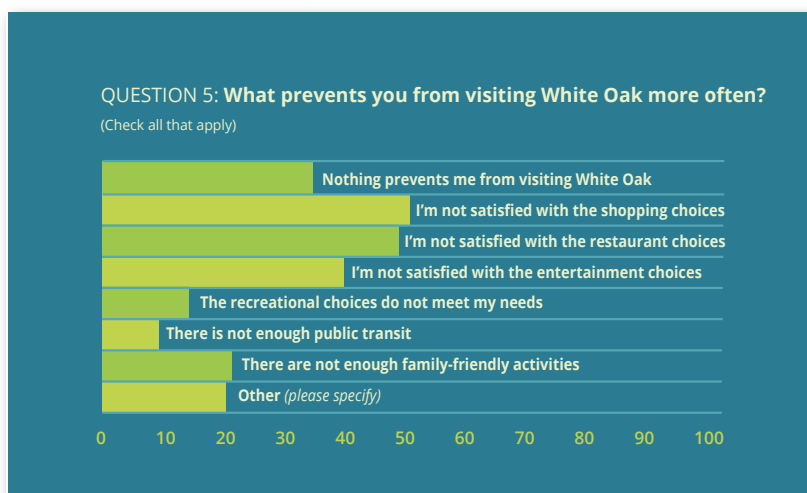
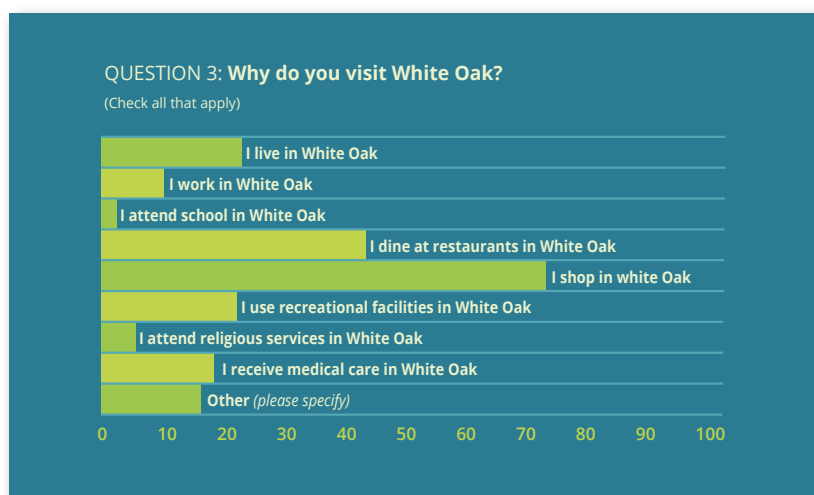
### REASONS FOR VISITING/NOT VISITING WHITE OAK

Respondents cited the top three reasons for visiting White Oak as shopping (71%), dining (42%), and recreational facilities (21%). Contradictory, when asked what prevents them from visiting more often, respondents cited not being satisfied with the selection of shopping, (49%) dining (48%) and entertainment (39%). Another main reason for not visiting is the lack of family-friendly activities (21%).

Looking further into the fill-in answers for these categories, it appears that a majority of those who visit for the shopping, dining, and recreational facilities do so because of convenience of location off the Beltway and other major roads, or the need to be in the area for another reason, rather than the facilities themselves.

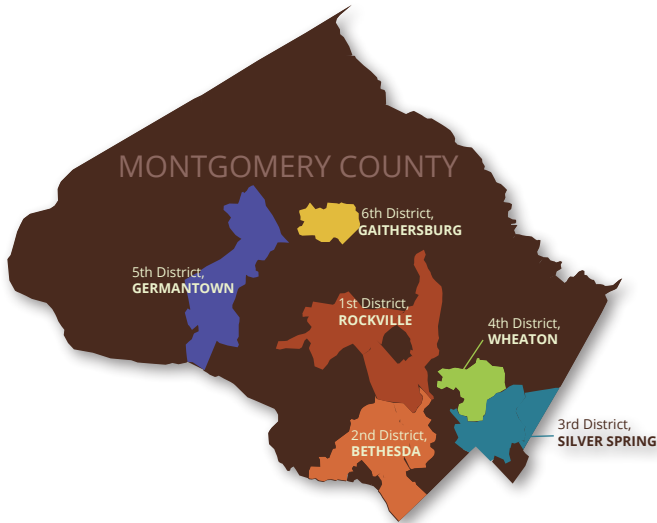
Survey Question 6 asked participants what would encourage them to visit more frequently. Not surprising, the top five answers were better restaurant choices (75%), better shopping choices (74%), better entertainment choices (57%), more family-friendly activities (32%), and better recreational facilities (29%). These strong results make it clear that adding, replacing and improving these amenities will make a big impact on the area visitation.

Another common thread throughout the survey results was the concern about crime in the area. It appeared most often for fill-in responses for overall perception, reasons for not visiting more often, and what would encourage respondents to visit more often.



### CRIME REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

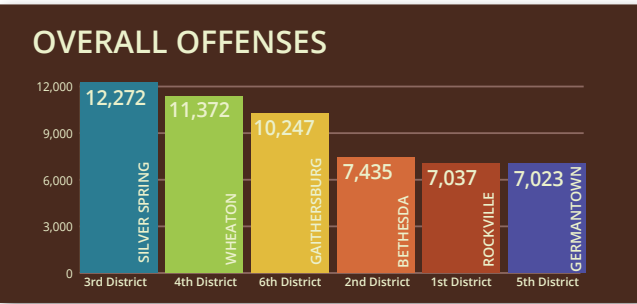
To help assess the perceived crime rate of the White Oak area with the reality, S&CO requested official documentation from the Montgomery County Department of Police. In their 2017 Annual Report on Crime & Safety, the Department of Police summarized reported crimes by categories for the six districts in the County: 1st District, Rockville; 2nd District, Bethesda; 3rd District, Silver Spring; 4th District, Wheaton; 5th District, Germantown; and 6th District, Gaithersburg. White Oak falls into the 3rd District, Silver Spring.



The report summarizes only overall County statistics for violent crimes, such as assault, homicide, human trafficking, abduction, and sex offenses, but separates statistics by district for the following categories:

- Crime against a person (burglary, vandalism, theft, etc.)
- Crime against property (weapons violations, drug, violations, prostitution, etc.)
- Crime against society (possession of a controlled dangerous substance, overdoses)
- Category B Offenses (disorderly conduct, trespassing, driving under the influence, peeping Tom)

From the findings in the 2017 Annual Report, perception of a higher crime rate in the White Oak district, compared to other areas in the County, appears to be somewhat accurate. The 3rd District Silver Spring reported the highest number of overall offenses with 12,272, as compared to 11,372 in 4th District Wheaton, 10,247 in 6th District Gaithersburg, 7,435 in 2nd District Bethesda, 7,037 in 1st District Rockville, and 7,023 in 5th District Germantown.



As compared to the 2017 lowest overall crime report district, Germantown, Silver Spring had a 21% higher rate in "crime against a person," 57% higher rate in "crime against property," 116% higher rate in "crime against society," and 90% higher rate in "group B offenses." Comparisons to other districts are highlighted in the *chart below*.

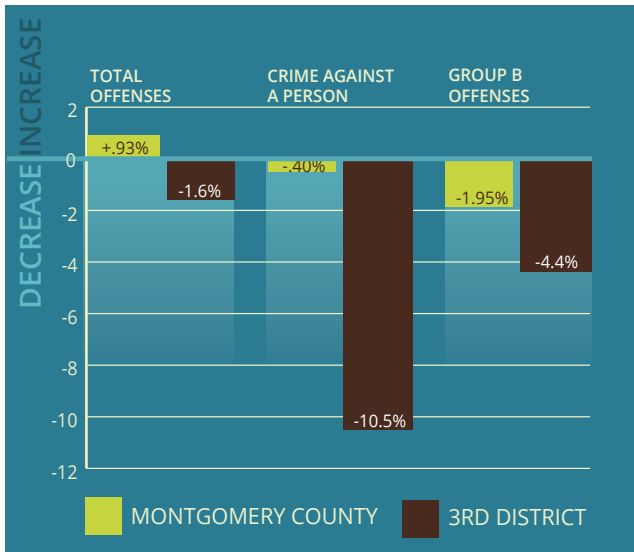
Selected Montgomery County and 3rd District <b>CRIME STATISTICS</b>		
	County	3rd District
2016-2017 Total Offenses	+.93%	-1.6%
2017 Crime	-.40%	-10.5%
2017 Group B Offenses	-1.95%	-4.4%



## GOOD NEWS – IMPROVEMENT HAS BEGUN

Even though the 3rd District does report higher crime rates as compared to other districts, the good news is that the area has made notable improvements in key categories. Overall, Montgomery County reported an increase from 2016 to 2017 in total offenses by .93%; in contrast, the 3rd District reported a decrease by 1.6%. While all of Montgomery County has decreased crime against a person by .40% in 2017, the 3rd District has reduced it by a notable 10.5%. Similarly, while Montgomery County has reduced group B offenses by 1.95%, the 3rd District has reduced the category by 4.4%.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CRIME 2016 to 2017



The 3rd District command attributes the reduction in criminal activity in 2017 to a continuation of a multi-layered approach to enforcement, particularly of crimes against persons. Efforts specifically for the White Oak area were cited as:



The District Community Action Team (DCAT), assisted by the Special Assignment Team (SAT) and a hybrid of officers from each sector, led a White Oak SAFE (Saturation and Aggressive Felony Enforcement) detail during the summer months when serious crimes tend to increase. Calls for service for serious crime decreased by 61% during those months when compared to the previous summer. An increase in calls for service in the Henry Sector (Quebec Terrace, Ruatan Street, and Piney Branch/Flower Avenue) resulted in a similar detail that focused on more high visibility enforcement and aggressive patrols by DCAT and SAT.”



The following chart shows crime rates broken down by categories for the County overall, followed by the same breakdown for each district.

## County Crime Statistics

Area	Offense Catagory	2016	2017	% Difference
Montgomery County	Crime Against Person	6,021	5,998	-0.40%
	Crime Against Property	23,644	24,292	2.70%
	Crime Against Society	6,622	6,927	4.60%
	Group B Offenses	20,661	20,258	-1.95%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>56,948</b>	<b>57,475</b>	<b>0.93%</b>
1st District Rockville	Crime Against Person	595	686	15.3%
	Crime Against Property	2,800	3,142	12.2%
	Crime Against Society	640	784	22.5%
	Group B Offenses	3,002	3,188	6.2%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,037</b>	<b>7,800</b>	<b>10.8%</b>
2nd District Bethesda	Crime Against Person	521	573	10.0%
	Crime Against Property	3,956	3,795	-4.1%
	Crime Against Society	577	674	16.8%
	Group B Offenses	2,381	2,336	-1.9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,435</b>	<b>7,378</b>	<b>-0.8%</b>
3rd District Silver Spring	Crime Against Person	1,271	1,137	-10.5%
	Crime Against Property	5,009	5,087	1.6%
	Crime Against Society	1,649	1,703	3.3%
	Group B Offenses	4,343	4,150	-4.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>12,272</b>	<b>12,077</b>	<b>-1.6%</b>
4th District Wheaton	Crime Against Person	1,179	1,204	2.1%
	Crime Against Property	4,146	4,103	-1.0%
	Crime Against Society	1,590	1,598	.5%
	Group B Offenses	4,457	4,333	-2.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11,372</b>	<b>11,238</b>	<b>-1.2%</b>
5th District Germantown	Crime Against Person	1,013	935	-7.7%
	Crime Against Property	2,944	3,236	9.9%
	Crime Against Society	757	787	4.0%
	Group B Offenses	2,309	2,183	-5.5%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>7,023</b>	<b>7,141</b>	<b>1.7%</b>
6th District Germantown	Crime Against Person	1,287	1,253	-2.6%
	Crime Against Property	4,100	3,973	-3.1%
	Crime Against Society	1,237	1,162	-6.1%
	Group B Offenses	3,623	3,356	-7.4%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>10,247</b>	<b>9,744</b>	<b>-4.9%</b>



## Lessons Learned about Perception of White Oak

IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO IMPROVING PERCEPTIONS ABOUT:



# Key Audiences

Based upon the recommendations in the White Oak revitalization project RFP and a series of in-depth discussion between S&CO, MCG, and Friends of White Oak, following key audiences have been identified:



## EXISTING RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AND THE FDA IN WHITE OAK AND SURROUNDING AREAS

### Residents

The 14,195 existing White Oak households have the most to gain from seeing the area thrive. The S&CO survey reveals that residents believe White Oak is underserved with existing retail amenities, services, and jobs. Many residents travel to Silver Spring, Bethesda, Rockville, or other locations for quality restaurants, grocery stores, entertainment, and retail shopping. The Master Plan highlights the need to improve the quality of life for White Oak residents and includes strategies to attract public and private reinvestment to generate a commercial revitalization.

### Businesses/Nonprofits

The participation and buy-in from businesses and nonprofits, especially the FDA, Viva White Oak, and Adventists Hospital, will be crucial to this plan's success.

As one of the area's greatest strengths, the FDA has nearly 11,000 personnel assigned to the White Oak campus, with a projected 18,000 population with the development outlined in the FDA 2018 Master Plan. In S&CO's community meetings and site visit to FDA we learned that this daytime population of White Oak is spending very little money within the community. The FDA is an important captive audience and key to the success of White Oak's retail and business community. See page 26 for FDA spotlight.

The 280-acre Viva White Oak, a \$3 billion mixed-use development project with approximately seven-million square-feet of commercial development and 5,000 residential units, is being jointly developed as a public-private partnership between Global LifeSciDevelopment Corporation (an affiliate of Percontee, Inc.) and Montgomery County. Phase I of the project is slated to include a Viva White Oak Town Center which could become the much-needed central meeting space for the White Oak community to eat, shop, and relax.

The new Washington Adventist Hospital will be strategically adjacent to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Viva White Oak. The new hospital will also expand access to patient care in the community. The hospital is scheduled to move its acute-care operations to the newly constructed 170-bed facility, estimated to open in August 2019. The partnership between Washington Adventist Hospital, the Food and Drug Administration, and Viva White Oak will open up new areas of medical research and discovery, funding and cooperation that are critically important for protecting and promoting public health, innovation, and creating synergistic economic development. The entire region will benefit from this important affiliation. These projects will create a life sciences hub bringing together medical researchers, businesses, and retailers, a combination that is projected to contribute \$5 billion to the state's economy. The

hospital will create nearly 7,500 jobs between construction and hospital operations, according to an analysis by Stephen Fuller, PhD, director for the Center for Regional Analysis at George Mason University.

Other White Oak businesses also have much to gain from the White Oak Master Plan strategies to generate a commercial revitalization. During the meeting with the business community and local developers on February 12, 2019, S&CO heard the need and desire for White Oak businesses to become part of this marketing effort. The business community wants to sell their goods and services to the FDA, the DMV, and beyond. They also have concerns about rents and property taxes going up as new development moves in.

## **ATTRACTING NEW RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES AROUND THE DISTRICT, MARYLAND, AND VIRGINIA**

### *New Residents*

Attracting new residents to the community is crucial to White Oak's revitalization. New residents bring additional income to area businesses and increased tax revenue for the County to invest in roads, public transit, schools, the arts, and parks. As the FDA campus grows, providing housing options for the expanding workforce in White Oak will help keep FDA dollars in the community.

As the revitalization progresses, positive news about White Oak will spread outside the area, gaining the attention of individuals who may be considering moving to or near the community. This positive news could conceivably attract more residents to the area.

### *New Businesses/Developers/Nonprofits*

Bringing more businesses and development to White Oak is key to revitalizing the area. Currently new businesses are not attracted to the area for a number of possible reasons, including perception of the area, unappealing retail space, perceived lower incomes/discretionary income, traffic, and crime. The Master plan envisions lively urban and suburban areas with newly-built centers and a diversity of housing options accessible by varied transit options that will create a pool of customers and employees.

# Key Themes and Message Frames

Consistency in messaging creates successful marketing/branding campaigns. S&CO has developed several key themes and message frames that will be carried through each communications channel, from website content to paid advertising to media relations. While the messaging is consistent, it is also tailored to resonate with each key audience.

Key phrasing and similar language style and tone all contribute to supporting the essence of the brand—the brand promise, vision, purpose, and strengths.

Possible taglines:

**White Oak**  
*Grow with Us*

Then, once the main tagline is established, the following taglines might be used for a variety of areas:

**White Oak**  
*Live with Us (or Live and Grow)*

For promoting newly built resident living, apartments and housing developments

**White Oak**  
*Learn with Us (or Learn and Grow, Think and Grow or Discover and Grow)*

For Life Science Hub promotion and alliances with research universities and institutions to collaborate on academic and lab research efforts

**White Oak**  
*Have fun with Us*

For recreational and family friendly activities and events

**White Oak**  
*Work with Us (or Work and Grow)*

To attract employees to FDA, Adventist Hospital and other large employers

To attract new employers and businesses

# Strategic Positioning Tactics

## BRANDING

Before beginning to develop the new White Oak logos, S&CO researched White Oak's past, present, and future in order to create a unique mark for the community. The four distinct logos shown below capture several aspects of White Oak's identity, including diversity, tradition, science (STEM), and history. As this mark will represent White Oak, S&CO believes it's important for the community to have a voice in this decision. To do this S&CO is

developing a survey with the four branding options below. To encourage participation, this survey will offer a prize of a \$50 gift card for a local White Oak business to one randomly selected participant of the survey. The logo with the most votes will become the identifier for the community and be used on the website, signage, and all other communication materials.



## WEBSITE

Having an accurate and trusted resource of information that's easily accessible to a variety of audiences is key to meeting the objectives of the marketing plan. An informative, interactive website – preferably with an easy-to-remember domain name – will serve as the go-to source for news about the revitalization of White Oak. Phase I of the website development and content will have the capability of being carried into future project phases. Content may include, but is not limited to, an overview of the Master Plan and its vision of White Oak; photos, highlights and updates of existing projects; announcements of new plans, activities and events; and public information materials (newsletters, flyers, factsheets, infographics, FAQs, etc.).

S&CO has developed the following two URL options for the White Oak website. These URLs are currently available and would not be confused with similar jurisdictions (White Oak, Texas and White Oak, Pennsylvania).

[whiteoakmaryland.com](http://whiteoakmaryland.com)

[mywhiteoak.com](http://mywhiteoak.com)



*Sample homepage designs. Stock photos will be replaced with photos from WO community.*





Sample homepage designs. Stock photos will be replaced with photos from WO community.

## Website Phases

<b>PHASE I</b> <i>(As part of this current contract. Now until end of May)</i>	<b>PHASE II</b> <i>(timeline TBD)</i>	<b>PHASE III</b> <i>(timeline TBD)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Create a SurveyMonkey/contest promoted on social media for the community to choose their favorite logo. Use the selected logo on the White Oak webpage.</li> <li>■ Create the White Oak homepage.</li> <li>■ Include and write the following sections:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Overview</li> <li>■ Events (like the Friends of White Oak meetings)</li> <li>■ Resources (like the Master Plan)</li> <li>■ Business Directory</li> <li>■ Contact</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Phase I, plus:</li> <li>■ Photoshoot for homepage to take in White Oak and include a diverse mix of White Oak residents and activities.</li> <li>■ Expand to website with regularly updated sections having their own page:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Overview</li> <li>■ History</li> <li>■ Business Directory</li> <li>■ Events/Calendar</li> <li>■ Resources</li> <li>■ News</li> <li>■ Contact/Location</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Phase II, plus:</li> <li>■ More fully realized content throughout website               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Start listing more comprehensive upcoming events and activities on the website</li> <li>■ Flesh out the future section</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Regular updates to all sections of the website               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Content on local businesses such as opening of Adventist hospital</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ Start posting regular social media content on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram</li> </ul>

## MEDIA RELATIONS

Communicating and generating interest about White Oak in a way that presents the area as a desirable, up-and-coming community will be crucial. A systematic program for placing positive news stories and initiating other media interactions to engage stakeholders, residents, businesses, developers, and potential visitors will help shape attitudes and advance the new brand identity of White Oak.

The news media, both traditional and digital, are important sources from which the general public learns about communities in their region, including new businesses, construction, and community developments and initiatives. S&CO conducted media research and discovered very limited press coverage on the community projects and improvements already underway. The groundbreaking of Viva White Oak, for example, is a substantial development with huge potential to raise the status of the community. From S&CO's initial survey, it was discovered that a surprising percentage of White Oak residents were unaware that the construction had even begun. Similarly, limited coverage appeared about the Hilton Home2 Suites Hotel and Victoria Crossings Senior Apartments construction. These are missed opportunities to communicate good news about White Oak that could possibly have generated a more positive perception of the community today. While the groundbreakings have already occurred, many opportunities for positive press coverage exist in promoting the progress and grand openings of several large projects such as these, in addition to various community events and activities.

Creating and executing a strategic media relations campaign will serve as one of the foundations to promoting the new brand identity of White Oak. S&CO proposes developing a robust media relations campaign to inform and educate audiences about the Master Plan's vision, existing projects and initiatives, progress, and approved plans, as well as to communicate the marketing plan's key messaging. The plan will target writers, reporters, editors, and producers whose coverage is influential in shaping public perceptions about these topics.

The media relations campaign will include:

- Building a database of media outlets, editors, and journalists who focus on similar issues
- Cultivating relationships to create interest and excitement from key media contacts
- Issuing news releases focused on positive, good news stories including:
  - Progress of existing building construction – Viva White Oak, Adventist Hospital, Home2 Suites Hotel, Victoria Crossings Senior Apartments, new home developments
  - Announcement of new, approved construction projects
  - Grand openings of businesses, restaurants
  - Report on White Oak lowered crime rates and current and planned efforts
  - BRT plan updates
  - Announcement of planned community events and invite media to cover events
  - Positive economic and employment news, such as rising home sale prices and new jobs created by new businesses in the area
- Developing relationships with media/communications staff of larger developments, such as Viva White Oak to collaborate on media coverage
- Carefully crafting media pitches for story ideas that will resonate with specific media outlets and audiences
- Preparing talking points/fact sheet, including statistics to counter misperceptions, or to clarify points
- Developing guidance for a crisis communications plan to respond promptly to adverse media coverage or incorrect information, using prepared talking points and factsheet. Develop strategy to shift communications needs if mid-stream adjustment becomes necessary.
- Drafting and securing placement of op-eds in print and digital media outlets.
- Creating a web page specifically for the media on the newly designed White Oak website

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a powerful, cost-effective marketing tool that increases the reach to key audiences. S&CO will develop a plan to launch a social media campaign to inform, engage, and excite audiences about the new White Oak. These social networks, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram can announce ground breakings, grand openings, and community events, as well as drive traffic to the website where audiences can access more information.

While there is no charge for basic use of social media tools, a paid social media campaign can reach targeted groups even more effectively. Facebook sponsored posts

and Google ads can be targeted by geography, various demographic attributes, and hobbies and interests. For example, these paid social media options could reach native-Spanish speakers, or transit users in Rockville, or shoppers in Silver Spring. The possibilities are endless, and, in every case, these tools track the results in real time to maximize effectiveness while minimizing cost.

At the end of the first year of marketing plan implementation, a new survey assessing the perception of White Oak will be promoted quickly and effectively through social media channels, measuring the success of the overall marketing plan.



Sample Facebook posts.

COMMUNITY SIGNAGE

Once White Oak has been established as a brand and the community has begun to appreciate the benefits of a well-regarded area, S&CO recommends creating banners/signage. These branded wayfinding materials could be displayed in plazas, entrances, public transit stops, streets, parks, etc. to further enhance White Oak's identity.



Sample banner designs



## WHITE OAK MASCOT

A White Oak mascot can be implemented immediately as an ambassador who can appear virtually anywhere. This customized squirrel mascot would appear at community festivals and events, ground breakings, store openings, or school events - in and out of White Oak. S&CO has found that young and old love to have their picture taken with a mascot and the news media loves something interesting and unusual to spotlight. This mascot could have several props or outfits for different occasions such as a lab coat for White Oak Wednesdays, an acorn crest for elementary school appearances, and glasses for STEM events.



*Sample mascot costumes and sketches.*



# Proposed Community Outreach

S&CO recommends a variety of outreach events to inform, educate, and engage with members of the local White Oak community. S&CO has been successful in reaching diverse audiences through “pop-up” events, in which the team participates in previously scheduled community events, such as local festivals and farmer’s markets, where

the public is already attending. This is an effective way to increase interest in a casual and fun setting, while tapping into existing resources in the community. In addition to public pop-up events, holding events at a specific business or retail establishment effectively targets a subset of the community while also leveraging the existing resources.

## FDA OUTREACH

Currently, nearly 11,000 FDA employees converge on the FDA campus that sits squarely in White Oak, yet few of them spend money in the community. This is a missed opportunity for many of the businesses in White Oak, including restaurants, supermarkets, and dry cleaners. S&CO visited the FDA campus to speak with employees and understand why they were not spending their money in White Oak and identify areas of improvement. Below is a summary of the findings.

### Issues/Concerns

- There is little parking for FDA employees. They find it difficult to leave the campus during the day for lunch, run errands, or even visit a doctor.
- The FDA Campus offers plenty of dining options in several of its buildings, including an Einstein Bagels, a coffee shop, a medium-sized cafeteria, and a larger

cafeteria with multiple dining options and affordable prices.

- For even more dining options and convenience, the FDA brings in food trucks on Thursdays and holds a farmer’s market every Tuesday during the summer.

### Opportunities

- While the Campus meets a lot of employee needs, it doesn’t meet all of them. The FDA daycare facility has a long waiting list, leaving many parents to find daycare on their own.
- The cafeteria closes at 2pm, which leaves little options for those working late.
- FDA employees are a captive audience with high incomes. If marketed to correctly, these thousands of employees could be persuaded to spend their money in White Oak and even become permanent residents.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY – WHITE OAK WEDNESDAYS

S&CO's recommended approach to reach FDA employees is simple. Go to the FDA. S&CO recommends a monthly White Oak Information Day on the first Wednesday each month and naming it "White Oak Wednesdays." Wednesday is one of the days of the week where no additional food options such as food trucks or farmer's markets are available to staff, giving White Oak businesses the perfect opportunity to have their undivided attention. In the courtyard next to the large cafeteria or in the large cafeteria itself, S&CO would set up a series of information tables or booth. Each table would represent a local retailer, restaurant, housing developers or apartment building, police, daycare facility, doctor, etc. A knowledgeable representative of each specialty/business would be available to answer questions. Ideally, they would distribute free samples or giveaways and informational handouts to entice FDA employees to learn more about what they have to offer. We recommend these information days be held from 11:30 – 1:30pm when the large FDA cafeteria and quad has the most traffic.

### How:

The first step is to use our current contacts at the FDA to identify the staff or staff members that will champion White Oak Wednesdays. This could be someone in HR that is probably already managing the Tuesday Farmer's Market and Food Truck Thursdays. It will be important to cultivate a relationship with this person and provide incentive to them to make this happen. They need to know that putting effort behind this would only help their standing with FDA leadership. This may require an initial presentation to get their buy in.

Once FDA has approved of the event and the date, time, and location is secured, the second step is to market this event to the community. As it's a low-cost advertising solution for the vendors it should be simple to explain the benefits of the event and secure their participation via email blast, social media advertising, or direct mail advertising.

The final steps will involve securing tables, chairs, and signage for the event. An event plan will need to be created that would map out vendor locations, parking information, and some basic rules (no smoking, tables must be manned at all times, etc.) Staff will need to be available the day of to direct vendors and make sure the event is running smoothly.



*The large FDA cafeteria would be the perfect location to hold White Oak Wednesdays in the winter months.*



*The Quad would be the perfect location to hold White Oak Wednesdays in the summer months.*

## WHITE OAK FOOD FESTIVALS

Festivals centered around food themes – Chicken Wing Festival, Mac & Cheese Festival, Tacos & Tequila festival, Wine & Oyster festivals, are large attractions to DC, MD, and VA residents looking for new and exciting weekend experiences.

For example, the Maryland Chicken Wing Festival brings thousands of people from around the state to the tiny town of Crownsville, MD (population 1,800). The event runs from 11:00AM – 7:00PM and includes live music, a wing eating competition, and a large selection of chicken wing and BBQ vendors and craft beers. Thousands of people bring their friends and family and spend an entire afternoon eating and drinking, listening to music, and enjoying Crownsville. They post pictures of themselves having fun on their social media pages, tagging local businesses that have created their favorite wings and the town of Crownsville. Beyond the thousands of people who have visited Crownsville, there are thousands more viewing these positive images of Crownsville. The \$12 admission fee goes to the administration of the event, as well as supports two local community groups – The Bernie House and Parole Rotary.

S&CO recommends White Oak create a food-themed festival that people will associate with the community. This festival would run annually in the spring, summer, or fall and feature local businesses and entertainers.



*Yum.*



*Chicken wing eating competitions draw large crowds.*



*A White Oak food festival could take place in the middle of a major street.*



*Coming together for the love of food is an American favorite.*



## FAMILY-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY EVENTS

Community events are a great way to bring family-friendly activities to local residents. S&CO consistently received feedback from the local community that there isn't enough to do in the area. S&CO has put together a list of suggested activities:

- Weekly summer Zumba fitness classes or Yoga on the Adventist Hospital lawn.
- Saturday night s'more making at the White Oak Shopping Center in the fall months.
- A Thanksgiving Day parade on Lockwood Drive featuring area school children and local non-profits and businesses.
- Free photos with Santa at the White Oak Library.
- Saturday farmer's markets in the parking lot of the Burnt Mills Seventh-day Adventist Church.
- An Easter Egg hunt at the White Oak Rec Center.
- Weekly outdoor movie nights at the White Oak Rec Center in the summer months.
- Weekly live music at the White Oak Rec center along with food provided by Food Trucks in the summer months. These weekly events could be themed – Hispanic music/food, Caribbean music/food, etc.
- A 5k color run along Lockwood Drive.



*Making S'mores street side is easy and super fun!*



*Movie nights in the summer are great family-friendly events!*



*Color runs are great events to get positive exposure for White Oak as you simply cannot go to a color run without taking and posting at least 10 selfies.*

## Touchpoints per Audience

Touchpoints	Current Residents	Current Business/Non-Profits	Potential New Residents	New Business/Non-Profits	National/International Business/Developers
<b>PR/Media</b> working with traditional media and new media such as local bloggers to put out positive stories about White Oak.	Positive stories make White Oak look more attractive, drown out negative stories, potentially bring in new residents, new businesses, and new revenue to the community.	Positive stories about local businesses (especially restaurants) will attract new customers.	Positive stories make White Oak look more attractive, drown out negative stories, potentially bring in new residents, new businesses, and new revenue to the community.	Positive stories make White Oak look more attractive, drown out negative stories, potentially bring in new residents, new businesses, and new revenue to the community.	
<b>Website</b>	Provides a legitimacy to White Oak in an area that is currently undefined and unnoticed by those outside the immediate area.	Provides another outlet for promotion for current businesses.	Provides potential new residents a place to find initial information about this community.	Provides new businesses a place to find initial information about this community.	Provides developers and national and international visitors a place to find initial information about this community.
<b>Social Media Paid Promoted Posts</b>	Shared positive stories and images make White Oak look more attractive, drown out negative stories.	Shared positive stories and images about local businesses (especially restaurants and retailers) will attract new customers.	Shared positive stories and images make White Oak look more attractive, drown out negative stories and show things to do in White Oak.	Shared positive stories and images about local businesses will encourage new businesses to consider White Oak.	
<b>Local Events</b> with a focus on food - Chicken Wing Festival, Wine & Oyster Festival, or Mac & Cheese festival, etc.	Gives residents a family-friendly activity, new food options, and is entertaining.	Allows businesses to participate as a vendor and sell their goods and services to new and potential customers.	If the event is unique enough it, will put White Oak on the map for people who are not familiar with the area.		
<b>FDA White Oak Wednesdays</b> local businesses go to White Oak to promote their goods and services.		Allows businesses to get inside the FDA and sell their goods and services to a captured audience.	FDA employees who don't live in the area would get a chance to meet with potential apartment building representatives or realtors.	If current businesses are seeing success from this effort it would encourage new businesses.	

## COST OPTIONS

### Option 1

- Quarterly White Oak Wednesday events for local businesses at the FDA
- Average of one press releases per month
- Traditional media
- Partner with Viva White Oak, Adventist Hospital, and others to create one family-friendly activity and entertainment for the community
- Develop website, perform quarterly web updates and maintenance
- Participate in already scheduled events such as White Oak Day

*Cost Range: \$100,000 - \$125,000 a year*

### Option 2

- Monthly White Oak Wednesday events for local businesses at the FDA
- Average of two press releases per month
- Traditional media
- Local bloggers (foodie blogs, etc.)
- Develop website, perform ongoing monthly web updates and maintenance
- Host one large scale event (centered around food) in summer with an appearance from our mascot
- Partner with Viva White Oak, Adventist Hospital, and others to create up to five family-friendly activities and entertainment for the community
- Create paid promoted social media posts and regular social media content
- Finalize, purchase, and install branded White Oak signage

*Cost Range: \$125,000 - \$250,000 a year*

### Option 3

- Weekly White Oak Wednesday events for local businesses at the FDA
- Average of three press releases per month
- Traditional media
- Local bloggers (foodie blogs, etc.)
- Develop website, perform ongoing web updates and maintenance
- Partner with Viva White Oak, Adventist Hospital, and others to create up to ten family-friendly activities and entertainment for the community
- Continuous paid promoted social media posts and regular social media content
- Finalize, purchase, and install branded White Oak signage
- Host three large scale events in spring, summer, and fall with an appearance from our mascot
- Paid media to promote White Oak (TV, Radio, Traditional Media)

*Cost Range: \$250,000 - \$500,000 a year*



## Year One Proposed Timeline (Option 2 recommendation)

TASKS	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
<b>FDA White Oak Wednesdays</b>													
Develop partnership with FDA and coordinate logistics													
Monthly White Oak Wednesdays													
<b>Public Relations</b>													
Two press releases per month													
<b>Website</b>													
Ongoing web updates and maintenance													
<b>Events</b>													
Coordinate and plan for one large scale foodie event, create mascot													
Hold event													
Coordinate and plan for five family friendly local activities													
Hold five family friendly activities													
<b>Social Media</b>													
Create and post social media													
<b>Placemaking</b>													
Finalize branding, create signage artwork, research, purchase signage													
Signage is installed and visible													