Item 8 - Correspondence

From:	rg steinman
To:	MCP-Chair
Subject:	Dec 2 Testimony, Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities
Date:	Monday, November 29, 2021 12:27:55 PM
Attachments:	Testimony-Steinman, Downtown Silver Spring & Adjacent Communities Plan, Dec2,2021.doc

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Dear Chairperson and Commissioners,

Attached is my written testimony for the Dec 2, 2021 hearing on Silver Spring

Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Thank you,

~ Roberta G (rg) Steinman

Silver Spring, MD

Testimony by Roberta (rg) Steinman to Montgomery County Planning Board Public Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan December 2, 2021

To: The Montgomery County Planning Board Chair and Commissioners

From: Roberta G Steinman, 9009 Fairview Rd. Silver Spring, MD 20910

Subject: Testimony on Planning Board Public Draft of Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

Recommendation: Remove the 118 acres of Adjacent Communities, including Woodside Park and other nearby neighborhoods, from the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (SSDAC). Instead, explore increasing density, neighborhood by neighborhood, with *full neighborhood participation*. Regarding Jesup Blair Park renovation plans, protect the remaining trees in the Park and encourage the return of native trees through a natural regeneration process.

1. The SSDAC plan is aspirational, but provides no explanation or evidence for the way forward toward achieving the purpose of including adjacent communities.

The reason given for the inclusion of adjacent communities is to "include a greater variety of housing types, fully integrated into the existing fabric, to allow a wider range of residents to enjoy the valued proximity to the downtown. This will be consistent with the recommendations of the Attainable Housing Strategies initiative whose intention is make homeownership more attainable – with more equitable, mixed-income neighborhoods."

However, there is no explanation or evidence to support how you get from where we are to where you want to go. The plan presents no evidence that conversion from single family housing to multiplex housing brings us closer to the desired equitability goal. The plan presents no evidence that shows a change the zoning makes neighborhoods more integrated. The plan presents no evidence that we get any affordable housing from converting single-family housing to multiplex. There is no discussion of what price, or range of prices, we need to get to in order to make multiplex housing attainable or affordable.

The Silver Spring neighborhoods adjacent to the CBD are already ethnically, racially, and religiously diverse, and becoming more so every year. But more to the point, there is no evidence that allowing higher-density housing at market rates would make our community more economically or racially diverse at a faster pace than is now occurring. Nor is there any evidence that higher density housing would be more affordable, or even attainable. In fact, a county analysis showed that — partly because of high land costs — the market cost of a moderate duplex townhouse in or near downtown Silver Spring would cost in the range of \$715,000 to \$855,000.¹

Bottomline: Rezoning our residential zones cannot solve Downtown Silver Spring's equity, diversity, affordability, and environmental resilience issues. **Remove adjacent communities from this plan**.

2. A goal of the SSDAC plan is to preserve the residential nature of these neighborhoods and maintain the mature tree canopy found along many streets. But the plan's proposed incursions into the neighborhood would destroy the very qualities that make this a desirable and livable residential community.

You cannot preserve the residential nature and maintain the mature tree canopy of these neighborhoods while increasing housing density. These two goals are mutually exclusive, particularly as envisioned under the SSDAC plan. The increased density and attendant increase in impervious surfaces would

¹ https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OPI/Resources/Files/pdf/2021/CEStmtThrive-Montgomery-2050.pdf, p.7.

Testimony by Roberta (rg) Steinman to Montgomery County Planning Board Public Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan December 2, 2021

invariably lead to a loss of living landscape, green space and tree canopy, and endanger the ecological features of these neighborhoods that support the health of humans and wildlife. Hundreds of mature trees would be removed if multiplex conversions were to occur. Increased impervious surfaces and fewer trees means intensification of the urban heat island effect and more flooding from storm water run-off. Compounding the ecological impacts are the consequences of increased density on existing infrastructure: more traffic, more cars parking in the street, noise, school over-crowding, stressed water and sewer pipes. Developers and home- builders would be the beneficiaries, while the rest of the community would be left with the negative consequences of denser housing.

Where is the data that shows the impact of the sought for density on green infrastructure, on built infrastructure, on traffic, on schools? Where is the data that show the impact of increased density on housing prices and on taxes, or to what extent it would price out the current residents who will be forced to leave the neighborhood?

What is needed to achieve 'Equity' in 'Resiliency' and 'Community Health' for all is an improvement in the quality of the environment – more, not less green space; more, not less, mature tree canopy; and less, not more imperviousness, along with on-site storm water infiltration to protect our stream valleys from further erosion. This is exactly what the adjacent neighborhoods now provide for the community.

Annexing these neighborhoods into the SSDAC plan would imperil the Green Lungs of this urban area and lead to a decline in the quality of the environment – a loss to us all.

3. We don't have to annex adjacent neighborhoods to achieve a variety of housing types.

If increased density is deemed a necessity, consider the already existing and underutilized buildable area in Downtown Silver Spring. There is a considerable underutilized space within the Central Business District (CBD) for both commercial and residential expansion.

The findings for the downtown Silver Spring retail and office market space from a study that the Planning Staff, with the help of the consultant Partners for Economic Solutions (PES), prepared for the SSDAC Plan indicates extensive building vacancies in the CBD:²

- Office: "Currently, 18 percent of office space in downtown Silver Spring is vacant, sharply up since Discovery Communication's decision to relocate...." At the average pace of absorption between 2010 and 2020, even though 2018 was a very good year, it would take 53 years for office vacancy to decline to 9%.
- Retail: "PES estimates that 11% of retail space is vacant and that at the average pace of a absorption from 2017 to 2019 it could take 7 to 8 years for vacancy to fall to a healthier 5 per cent level."

All of this building stock should be under active consideration for adaptive reuse as residential units, as well as for office space. Furthermore, Downtown Silver Spring has nearly **1.7 million square feet of commercial space that is approved but not built**.³ In addition, there are **4,013 unbuilt (but approved) multifamily housing units in Downtown Silver Spring**.⁴

² <u>https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/OPI/Resources/Files/pdf/2021/CEStmtThrive-Montgomery-2050.pdf</u>, p.5.

³ See September 2021, Montgomery County, Pipeline by Master Plan Report, <u>https://montgomeryplanning.org/tools/research/development-pipeline/</u>, cell P491.

⁴ Ibid, cell N491. County-wide, there are more than 38,000 approved but unbuilt dwelling units, nearly 32,000 of which are multifamily dwellings (see cells L576 and N576, respectively.

Testimony by Roberta (rg) Steinman to Montgomery County Planning Board Public Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan December 2, 2021

So why is the Planning Board including areas in adjacent residential neighborhoods in the plan? Is it because it is cheaper for developers to buy land in residential neighborhoods for their projects than it is to buy land and assemble parcels within the CBD?

Clearly, we do not have to fold the adjacent communities into the SSDAC plan to achieve a variety of housing types in the Downtown Silver Spring area.

4. "By-right" construction of multiplex dwelling units bypasses community input and leaves the County without infrastructure funds.

Under 'by-right" development, local control is effectively eliminated. Projects permitted under the byright zoning do not require any legislative action or public hearings. The SSDAC plan proposes to allow higher-density housing "by right," meaning that builders would no longer have to seek planning board approval or solicit public input, effectively blocking any measure or eliminating any response to the pressures and costs to the natural environment or physical infrastructure under this form of development.

Furthermore, because this plan is "market driven," there is no requirement for developer contributions to infrastructure fees as part of "by right" development. Currently, all the proposed changes to the single-family neighborhoods are "by-right," meaning the county would have to fund the costs of new infrastructure.⁵ As a result of "by-right" development, the County loses control over important funding sources (such as impact fees) for infrastructure needs.

Each neighborhood is unique. One-size does not fit all. Given the drastic and far-reaching changes proposed, the SSDAC's plan to bypass the community, review boards, and elected officials with "by-right" development undermines our democratic process and trust in local government.

5. Upzoning without safeguards impedes home ownership as home prices soar and sends dollars out of the area as absentee landlords collect the high rents.

Upzoning without safeguards is a free-for-all for developers, and the competitive bidding leads to skyrocketing home prices, high rentals, and absentee landlords. This makes home ownership even more out of reach and sends rental dollars out of the local region. When density objectives are met by absentee landlords and investors who purchase properties to generate cash flow, less privileged residents get stuck in a perpetual rental cycle...thereby putting them farther away from home ownership and exacerbating generational wealth disparities.

Upzoning and increased density, if they are to occur at all, need to be accompanied with safeguards, to discourage developers and investors from using upzoning and increased density as a land/cash grab opportunity, as well as to protect our environment and the character of the neighborhood. Recommended safeguards include, but are not limited to, the following:

- -- Owner occupancy requirements,
- -- Tree canopy and green space preservation,
- -- Safeguards to prevent real estate developer exploitation,
- -- Safeguards from rising property taxes due to higher values of homes, as a result of competitive bidding,

⁵ While this applies to Thrive2050, it would be disingenuous to consider the SSDAC plan without simultaneously considering Thrive 2050 and the zoning changes that would need to accompany the implementation of Thrive2050 and the SSDAC plan, in order for these plans to come to fruition. <u>https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/council/Resources/Files/agenda/cm/2021/20210726/20210726PHED3.pdf</u>. See Transportation Comments, p.4 (pdf p.28)

Testimony by Roberta (rg) Steinman to Montgomery County Planning Board Public Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan December 2, 2021 -- Safeguards to preserve the character of neighborhood, architecturally and environmentally.

6. What is appropriate for Jesup Blair Park is an ecological restoration plan, not a developmentoriented plan. Protect the remaining trees in Jesup Blair Park and encourage the return of native trees through a natural regeneration process.

Jesup Blair Park is a unique and vital oasis in downtown Silver Spring, which is so lacking in nature. Despite the tremendous loss of trees, especially the old growth Oaks, in the early 2000s due to M-NCPPC's 'renovation' of Jesup Blair Park and the bridge that Montgomery College built into the old Oak grove, Jesup Blair Park continues to be a treasured and valuable place of respite. There are still trees in this park that are over 200 years old. Preserving the existing trees, especially the mature trees, in Jesup Blair Park must be the number one focus of any further 'renovation.' In addition, using a natural regeneration process, enlisting the "free" help of squirrels, birds, and the wind, begin the restoration of Jesup Blair Park by encouraging the return of native trees such as Black Gum, Hickory, Oaks, Maples and Tulip Poplar.

Jesup Blair Park provides a haven to escape the stress of daily life, a place to reconnect with nature and big trees, and improve our overall health and outlook. In 2017 "residents ranked trails, natural space, wildlife habitat, and nature recreation as the top three (sic) priorities for parks, across a variety of demographic segments.⁶ Turning Jesup Blair Park into hardscape, pavement, and buildings is at odds with public sentiment to preserve nature. In addition, as is so well-known by now, from an ecological perspective, these trees provide irreplaceable biological functions. They offer shade, filter pollutants from the air, provide fresh oxygen, retain and filter water, moderate the urban heat island effect, sequester carbon from the air, and act as a sound barrier. These older forest trees also provide abundant food for urban wildlife. And, with their grace and beauty, these trees offer peace and serenity by their very nature. In short, parks with trees, particularly big, old trees, are an oasis from the hectic pace of life and contribute to a higher quality of life.

The planners' vision to "activate" Jesup Blair Park with additional hardscape and impervious surface areas is incompatible tree and green space preservation. The loss of green space is unjustifiable in light of the scarcity of green space in Downtown Silver Spring, and in light of the critical ecological importance of trees.

Thank you for considering my testimony and taking action on my suggestions.

Respectfully submitted, ~ rg Steinman Woodside Park, Silver Spring

⁶ https://www.montgomeryparks.org/uploads/2018/06/508-2017.PROS-COMPLETE.pdf, p.6.

From:	lifeonearth@verizon.net
То:	MCP-Chair
Subject:	Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan - Dec. 2, Public Hearing
Date:	Monday, November 29, 2021 12:44:01 PM
Attachments:	Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan.doc

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Find attached - Public Hearing testimony on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan submitted by:

John Parrish, 9009 Fairview Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910-4106

December 2, 2021

RE: Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan, Public Hearing Testimony

Submitted by: John Parrish, 9009 Fairview Road, Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Commissioners,

I am a 25 year resident of Woodside Park, which is one of the adjacent communities directly impacted by the Plan. My neighborhood, founded in the 1920's, is ethnically, racially and religiously diverse. We have three townhouse clusters totally 53 units and some of our single-family detached homes have accessory apartments. The entire community lies within a 15-minute walk to access shopping in Silver Spring and/or Montgomery Hills. Our community is a green oasis next to the gray CBD. My community conveys a "sense of place" due to its architecture, diversity, greenery, history and vigorous civic participation. Many in my community chose to live here due to these attributes and we would like our neighborhood character to remain intact.

The Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan serves to undermine the integrity of my community by destroying the historical housing stock, causing unnecessary impacts to trees and greenery, and altering the zoning abutting our streets. The Plan would change the historical architectural character and have direct negative impacts to trees and greenery surrounding our homes. I object to this Plan because it essentially proposes to take a portion of my community and convert it to higher densities. This would come about by tearing down existing homes to construct missing middle housing. Sixteen homes and one church in my neighborhood are affected by this Plan including the following addresses:

Colesville Road - 8808, 8900, 8904, 8908, 8910 Noyes Court - 1, 2, 3, 4 Noyes Drive - 1000, 1004, 1006, 1007, 1008, 1009 North Noyes Drive - 1000, 1006

In addition, I object to this Plan because it would eliminate R-60 zoning from an existing parking lot and an adjacent playground area owned by Unither Corporation at the end of Cameron Court. This area abuts homes in Woodside Park on Noyes Drive, Fairview Road and Fairview Court and is proposed to become a CR zone. This zoning change would allow for more intrusive land uses that would negatively affect 1008, 1020, 1024, and 1026 Noyes Drive, 8917 and 8919 Fairview Road and thirteen townhouse units at Fairview Court. Under the current R-60 zone the maximum building height limit is 35 feet. If changed to a CR Zone the maximum building height is 100 feet. **Buildings of this size would cast a huge shadow over the homes listed above and darken the skyline for many more homes in our community, especially during winter months when the daily arc of the sun is low.** Simply put, this intrusion could heavily impact the quality of life for nearby residents. How is this acceptable or desirable?

This Plan is one of many attempts at increased urbanization that have contributed to the erosion of the character of Woodside Park. Such efforts date back to the late 1950's and run up to the present day. During this time period, M-NCPPC and the County Council proposed many times to alter and sometimes change zoning along Colesville Road, Spring Street, Fairview Road and Georgia Avenue. This has led to a steady encroachment of higher density housing and non-residential zoning at the edge of our beautiful community. Now the Plan intrudes directly into our streets!

The following paragraphs outline additional areas of concern I have regarding this Plan.

Sidewalks

Map 21 (pg. 95) indicates sidewalks recommended to come into our neighborhood. It shows proposed sidewalks on Fairview Road, Noyes Drive and North Noyes Drive. **Construction of sidewalks would necessitate the outright destruction of numerous young and old trees in the County right-of-way that beautify our streets.** In addition, numerous trees would suffer critical root zone impacts leading to declining health and premature tree death. Some of the trees are exceptional specimens including a healthy six foot diameter tulip tree at 8916 Fairview Road. Woodside Park was originally designed without sidewalks with an intention to preserve the scenic park-like character of the neighborhood. **Building sidewalks in Woodside Park undermines a key goal of the Plan to "maintain mature tree canopy" in the adjacent communities.** If built, it will surely lead to more proposals to construct connecting sidewalks in my neighborhood at the expense of our trees and tree canopy.

Zoning Map Error

Map 14 (pg. 55) indicates that the existing zoning on 5 lots in Woodside Park is CR Zone. The addresses include 1000, 1004, 1006, and 1008 Noyes Drive and 8808 Colesville Road. **The map appears to be incorrect.** Current on-line County zoning maps indicate these lots to be under R-60 zoning. Please confirm the correct zoning and make sure the maps are presented accurately.

Trees and Urban Tree Canopy

One of the stated goals of the Plan is to "maintain mature tree canopy by continuing to plant and replace street trees as needed." At first glance this appears to be a worthy goal and would be very worthy so long as existing mature trees are a high priority to protect and preserve. However, the Plan's statement can also be construed that mature trees are expendable so long as they are replaced by planting new trees. The language in the Plan needs to be clarified to emphasize preserving mature trees in addition to planting trees where none currently exist. It takes many decades for trees to mature and provide maximum ecological services. Woodside Park has experienced a steady decline in tree canopy in recent decades due to severe storms, old age and lack of replanting. Allowing higher densities in housing in the adjacent communities will inevitably lead to an acceleration of tree loss due to increased impacts to trees critical root zone areas as well as outright tree removal to accommodate new construction. The downtown area has the greatest need for trees. I support an aggressive tree planting throughout this area.

Community Gardens and Food Security

The community garden programs in the County have long been insufficient and under funded to meet the high demand for gardening plots. It is good that this Plan calls for increased opportunities to garden (pg. 119) but it fails to identify specific spaces that could be suitable to meet the demand in the downtown area. Community gardens are especially important for those that reside in homes without a yard space. **The Plan should at least identify public spaces that could be put to community garden use.** This could be on treeless parts of public parkland as well as other non-park public spaces lacking trees.

Delineation of the Adjacent Communities boundary

The delineation of adjacent community boundaries in Woodside Park appears to be haphazard. No detailed explanation is provided to justify why one portion of my neighborhood is included while other areas are excluded. For example, there are parts of my neighborhood that are excluded even though they are nearer to the current boundary of the downtown CBD compared to areas proposed to be included in the Plan. The same can be said for the Woodside community across from Spring Street. The delineations appear to be arbitrary and capricious. Why not stay within the existing CBD and leave us out of the Plan?

Jesup Blair Park

This park is an exceptional green space. It is the largest area of public green space in downtown Silver Spring and should be regarded as a gem. I agree that it is good to keep the park activated to lessen crime and to offer a variety of recreational and contemplative spaces for people to enjoy. However, over the past twenty years, efforts to "activate" the park led to a massive loss of mature trees due to impacting their root zones with paved surfaces, excessive mulching, excessive wall structures and other intrusive construction projects. Special care needs to be exercised to assure that the remaining trees are respected and protected from harm when adding recreational amenities. The park has already suffered too much at the hands of well intentioned planners.

Recommendatons:

1) Eliminate the Adjacent Community component of the Plan and focus on the downtown area. This will respect existing communities and help keep tree canopy and green spaces intact.

2) Keep the R-60 zoning intact for the areas at the end of Cameron Court so that Woodside Park residents are buffered from intrusive incompatible land uses by Unither Corporation or any other future owner of the property.

3) Eliminate the proposal for sidewalks in Woodside Park. This will help maintain the tree canopy and preserve the park-like green character of the neighborhood.

4) Add a serious community garden component to the Plan by making specific recommendations on where to site them. Nothing brings people together better than growing food together. This can provide much needed food security to low income residents and strengthen community connections.

5) Respect Jesup Blair Park for the gem it is. Keep construction projects completely outside the root zone areas of existing trees. Install pollinator friendly trees, shrubs and perennials to benefit bees and butterflies. Make sure all park development plans call for a net increase in trees and tree canopy in the Park.

6) Provide more diverse housing types within the existing downtown area. There are many vacant and underused buildings in the CBD that can be retrofitted or rebuilt for more diverse housing.

7) Aggressively plant trees, shrubs and flowerbeds throughout the downtown area. Provide the trees with adequate spaces for their roots to grow. Current standards do not always provide enough root zone space for the trees to thrive. If this means removing concrete, so be it.

8) Revise the Plan to add sizable (>one acre) parks and green spaces. The Plan fails to envision or seriously attempt to add sizable green spaces into the downtown area. The most desirable and attractive towns and cities have sizable parks centered amid their urban districts. Rather, this Plan relies on green space at the periphery of the CBD to satisfy a green component even to the point of annexing surrounding neighborhoods. The interior of the Silver Spring downtown area would benefit greatly by additional parks and green spaces that are more than an acre in size. This would help counter the urban heat island effect and beautify the core. Why not consider tearing down some vacant or underused buildings to convert into sizable parks and green spaces?

Pocket parks and "greens" are desirable but are simply too small to significantly reduce urban heat island effects, infiltrate storm water, nor do they provide adequate habitat for most species of native wildlife.

The Plan cites the huge cost it would take to provide more parkland as an obstacle to providing it. Yet, we spend many hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to perform "restorations" to streams damaged by excessive impervious surfaces from urban environments such as Silver Spring. Our local streams, Sligo Creek, Fenwick Branch and Rock Creek will become cleaner only when we reduce the concentration of buildings and pavement and replace that with sizable pervious green spaces.

It is sad that failures of planning allowed for the destruction of the very spring that Silver Spring is named for. Acorn Park is a pathetic reminder of the total disregard by past planners to keep enough acreage in natural condition to maintain the namesake spring. Burying streams by piping them underground is yet another sad example of disregard by planners. The least we can do is make a serious attempt to reverse the extent of environmental destruction in downtown Silver Spring. That will take a much bolder vision than is presented by this Plan. Green loops are but cosmetic distractions from the real problems our society faces with climate disruption, loss of biodiversity, species extinctions, declining water quality and over population. Without the creation of sizable parks, Silver Spring will remain an artificial landscape perpetuating the illusion that our human community is somehow separate and not dependent on the well-being of the other species we share the planet with.

Please revise the Plan to remove gray infrastructure and replace it with green infrastructure. Our future health and well-being depends on it.

Thank you for considering and acting on my comments.



[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Attached please find the testimony on behalf of Colesville Joint Venture, LLP for property located at 8551 Fenton Street, Silver Spring. Attached to the testimony is a PowerPoint indicating the owner's proposed redevelopment of the Property.

My colleague, Laura Tallerico, will speak at the public hearing to present a summary of the enclosed testimony. Please include the attached testimony and PowerPoint in the record of the public hearing.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our views with the Planning Board and Staff on the Draft Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Thank you.

Barbara Sears

Barbara A. Sears

11 N. Washington Street | Suite 700 | Rockville, MD 20850-4229 D: +1 301.517.4812 | O: +1 301.762.1600 | F: +1 301.517.4812



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Public Hearing Testimony of Colesville Joint Venture, LLP

December 2, 2021

Good evening. My name is Laura Tallerico. I am an attorney with Miles & Stockbridge P.C. and together with my colleague, Barbara Sears, represent Colesville Joint Venture, LLP, owner of the property located at 8551 Fenton Street in at the northeast quadrant of Colesville Road and Fenton Street. We appreciate all of the hard work that staff has done on the Plan and for the opportunity to present our views on the changes that we are requesting the Board make to the Draft Plan.

The Property consists of a gross tract area of approximately 27,100 square feet and is improved with an approximately 38,000 square-foot, two-story commercial building built in 1952. The net tract area is approximately 19,000 square feet. The current owner has owned the property since 1982.

Since the initiation of the Master Plan revision, the owner has evaluated what recommendations in the new Plan would incentivize viable redevelopment of the site. To assist, the owner engaged VIKA and others and has shared their findings with Staff.

In this regard, VIKA

- 1. Conceptualized a mixed-use building form, containing ground-floor commercial, belowgrade parking, and a residential high-rise tower to take advantage of the property's prominent location;
- 2. Created access for service and parking on Roeder Road, keeping access off Fenton and Colesville;
- 3. Created a 3D model to study views, massing and compatibility of the proposed building in its locational context; and
- 4. Determined a potential zone and height needed to realize the concept.

A PowerPoint presentation summarizing these evaluations through images is attached to this testimony and submitted for the Planning Board's review.

In summary, we believe that an approximately 250-foot building containing ground floor retail with a 21-story residential tower above and below-grade parking and yielding approximately 250 units would provide a dynamic, new building well suited to its location which would not only further the implementation of the Plan's stated visions and goals, but realistically encourage redevelopment of the site to achieve these visions and goals. Accordingly, we request that the Plan identify the site as an Opportunity Site in the Ellsworth District specifically recommending redevelopment of the Property for a significant mixed-use building with multi-family residential use over retail.



To help in achieving financial viability of the redevelopment proposal, we request that the Plan recommend a base zone of CR-8.0 with equalization of the C and the R, H-200' and allow the use of the BHIZ to increase the height with the FAR above the base zone being subject to the recommended payment to the Infrastructure Fund. Because we do not yet know the details being considered for the payment amount, we are concerned that, for the economic feasibility of the project, the amount of FAR to be purchased be limited to a reasonable amount. In our case, this would be the difference between an 8.0 FAR under the base zone (proposed by the owner) and an approximate 10.3 FAR needed for the proposed project. We also feel that the maximum height allowed under the BHIZ should not be at the discretion of the Design Advisory Panel. The DAP should be in an advisory role to the Planning Board and should not determine the allowed increase in height.

The proposed building made possible with the Plan modifications requested would be a positive addition to shaping the further evolution of Silver Spring. Additionally, from a planning perspective, these recommendations are warranted based on the following;

- 1. The Property is located in the Ellsworth District, which the Plan acknowledges to be the "heart" and "primary activity center of Silver Spring." (p.17) This location places the Property within convenient walking distance of a wide variety of uses, including major employers like United Therapeutics, arts and entertainment uses (such as the Fillmore and AFI), grocery stores, retail, and restaurants. This confluence of commercial uses surrounding the Property makes it an ideal location for significant residential density, as residents would be able to complete most necessary trips on foot or by bicycle, including possibly their commute to work.
- 2. For destinations not reachable on foot or by bike, the Property is also within easy walking distance of many transit options, including the Route 29 BRT, future Purple Line Stations at the Silver Spring Library and Silver Spring Transit Center, the Metro Red Line, and various Metro and RideOn Bus Routes.
- 3. Significant height is also justified for the Property based on the surroundings. While the existing building on the Property is a low-scale retail building built many years ago, building heights step up dramatically to the north and moving away from the center of downtown Silver Spring from the Property. Specifically, moving north on Colesville Road from the Property, there are several buildings with significantly greater heights, including two hotels, United Therapeutics' "Unisphere" building, as well as the office and multifamily residential buildings that flank the intersection of Spring and Colesville. In this manner, heights now step up away from the Center of Downtown Silver Spring. In recognition of the urban character of Silver Spring, including the location of the Property in the "primary activity center of Silver Spring," the Plan should also allow heights to step up closer to the Center away from the lower-scale residential neighborhoods to the north.



We hope you will agree with our requests and will include them in the Plan.

Thank you.

MILES & STOCKBRIDGE P.C.

Barbara A. Sears Laura Tallerico 11 N. Washington Street, Suite 700 Rockville, MD 20850 Attorneys for Colesville Joint Venture, LLP



8551 FENTON STREET



CONTEXT

Context Aerial



Existing Conditions

- 38,000 sf Existing Commercial Bldg Constructed in 1952
- 27,100 sf Gross Tract Area
- Net Tract Area approx. 19,000 sf



Existing Conditions

Facing Northwest

- Blue indicates maximum building envelope under existing zoning
- White portrays existing built condition
- Magenta is the subject property's ex. bldg



Existing Conditions

Facing Southeast

- Blue indicates maximum building envelope under existing zoning
- White portrays existing built condition
- Magenta is the subject property's ex. bldg





Concept Layout

- Proposed Building Footprint indicated
- Garage entry and service located on Roeder Road





Concept Layout

Facing Northwest

- Light Blue indicates maximum building envelope under recommended base zoning (height may be increased by 150% using BHIZ)
- Gold and gray box portrays proposed building height at 250 feet.
- Gold is the subject property's residential tower.
- Salmon is the subject property's commercial first floor
- White portrays existing built condition





Concept Layout

Facing Southeast

- Light Blue indicates maximum building envelope under recommended base zoning (height may be increased by 150% using BHIZ)
- Gold and salmon in gray box portray proposed building height at 250 feet.
- Gold is the subject property's residential tower
- Salmon is the subject property's commercial first floor
- White portrays existing built condition



51 Fenton Avenue					
GTA				last printed:	11/23/2021 14:
27,101.50					
	Requeste	d CR-8.0 Mapp	ed Base Zone		
	CR	С	R	Н	
Zone	8.00	8.00	8.00	200'	
Allowable GFA	216,812.00	216,812.00	216,812.00		
	height	number of floors			
typical floor	11	16	176		
first floor	15	10	15		
jiiotjioor	10	17	191	Totals	
	SF	number of floors	GFA	FAR	
floors 6-22	12,350	12	148,200	180	
floors 2-5	13,650	4	54,600	7.48	R
ground floor commercial	14,000	1	14,000	0.52	c
ground floor connicielar	14,000	17	216,800		Totals
roximately 192 total units, at Req		y & Height und	er BHIZ for Pro		
FAR	10.50	Commercial	Residential	Height	1
Allowable GFA	10.50	1.00	10.00	250'	
Allowable GFA	284,565.75	27,101.50	271,015.00		
	height	number of floors	height		
typical floor	11	17	187		
	11	4	44		
first floor	15	1	15		
		22	246	Totals	
	SF	number of floors	GFA	FAR	
floors 6-22	12,350	17	209,950	9.76	
floors 2-5	13,650	4	54,600	9.70	R
	14,000	1	14,000	0.52	с
ground floor commercial					

Development Tabulations



9 Our Site Set on the Future



MASSING MODEL

Facing Northwest

- Gold is the subject property's proposed residential tower
- Salmon is the subject property's commercial first floor



MASSING MODEL

Facing Southeast

- Gold is the subject property's proposed residential tower
- Salmon is the subject property's commercial first floor



From:	<u>LIz D</u>
То:	<u>MCP-Chair</u>
Subject:	Testimony for Public Hearing SS Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan 12-2-2021, 6:30 PM
Date:	Tuesday, November 30, 2021 6:03:19 AM
Attachments:	Shades of Green, Testimony of Liz Davenport, 12-2-2021.docx

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

To: Casey Anderson, Chair Montgomery County Planning Board

Attached is my written testimony. I signed up to highlight some key points from this testimony briefly during the public hearing. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Liz Davenport Property co-owner 519 Dartmouth Ave. Silver Spring, MD 20910

Sent from my iPad



December 2, 2021

Elizabeth Davenport, 519 Dartmouth Ave., SS, MD 20910 Testimony: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

To the Montgomery County Planning Board and Staff,

Thanks for encouraging public input at each phase in the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan. I have provided comments since the Plan's inception, from the perspective of homeowner in the Seven Oaks neighborhood with my husband for the past 21 years. We live between the Plan's NE Adjacent Communities boundary and Sligo Creek Park. I also worked more than a decade in Downtown Silver Spring (DTSS) in the field of environmental science and policy. Our children attended Sligo Creek Elementary School and Silver Spring International Middle School. We enjoy our diverse and welcoming neighborhood of people who live and/or work in homes, a small apartment building, a Montgomery County housing facility, local grocery, dry cleaners, offices, and the schools. We have an addition on our home built in 1938; some area homes are multifamily in design and function. Most owners have yards with mature trees and gardens that are essential to the area wildlife like deer, fox, rabbits, raccoons, and many birds (including a Bald Eagle) that freely roam through our yards and into Sligo Creek Park.

Given climate change impacts and the Plan's noted doubling of Silver Spring's population, I appreciate the Plan's dedication to parks and ensuring access to them, part of the *heart* of Silver Spring that will require planning, investment, and care to ensure they survive and thrive. During the pandemic, I walked more than ever in parks, DTSS, and neighborhoods, craving exercise

and being outdoors. The Plan's Green Loops offer environmentally designed, safe links among the 7 Districts and adjacent neighborhoods to create one environmentally strong Green Community: *Green, climate resilient, walkable streets...505 acres...encourage healthy lifestyles and create vibrant places. Linking the Central and Outer Green Loops are multimodal connectors, shaded (with canopy trees with deep soil panels) and comfortable for visitors with access to parks and public spaces. Green infrastructure will help mitigate climate change.*

The Plan is convincing that being green can be a magnet for start ups (especially for women and minorities), associations, government offices, and for serving as a designated arts and entertainment district. Silver Spring's mature trees and tree canopy are valued for being productive engines of storm water management, air pollution control, heat index mitigation, and wildlife protection in addition to providing essential recreational, physical, and mental health values. From Downtown, the views of green expanses that include Sligo Creek Park symbolize Silver Spring...tree upon tree, connected and protecting life...qualities that attract individuals and families to live, work, and play here.



The Plan's Implementation section has not included how to protect trees during planning and development. There are tools publicly online to learn about trees and tree canopies to better use, monitor, and protect them. The US Department of Agriculture has *i-Tree* systems to assess the environmental value of yard trees, such as which trees offer the best solutions for providing shade or absorbing excess water. Analyses can be done at different scales: yard, neighborhood, city, and county. In addition, planning and development processes use County, State, and sometimes local laws and guidelines that offer tree protection. This section could help planning and development decision makers understand how trees and tree canopies can be critical in reaching personal and community goals and outcomes.



Tools for Assessing and Managing Forests & Community Trees

Specific Changes to Further Strengthen the Plan

MyTree Benefits	2
Sugar maple, (Acer saccharum)	i-Iree
Serving Size: 30.00 in. diameter Condition: Excellent	
Total benefits for this year:	\$18.31
Carbon Dioxide (CO ₂) Sequestered	\$14.14
Annual CO2 equivalent of carbon ¹	608.07 lbs
Storm Water Runoff Avoided	\$4.05
Runoff Avoided	453.36 ga
Rainfall Intercepted	2.245.24 ga

Silver Spring will begin this Plan with a tree deficit. Why? Many mature trees were removed for Purple Line and other developments...most will not be replaced. Existing trees must be preserved wherever possible. Silver Spring's high heat index and expected added heat from climate change will likely create conditions unfavorable for growing younger trees.

In 3.2. Connecting the Districts...Included in the elements for the Green Loop are canopy trees with deep soil panels. Add: "These trees are a high priority to add to the Green Loop to provide shade, storm water management, etc."

In 4.5.2. Parks, Trails, and Public Places Goals: Maintain high standards of environmental stewardship in park planning, design, management and operations. Improve the ability of parks and park facilities to withstand the effects of climate changes. The 2016 book, "Urban Environmental Stewardship and Civic Engagement," examined how the Million Trees NYC project affected civic democracy. "Cities are actually being hailed as highly efficient, and complex social ecological systems, with well-tended community gardens, rooftop farms, and other viable habitats capable of supporting native flora and fauna. At the forefront of this transformation are the citizens living in the cities themselves." Add: "Civic education will be key. SS is among the best candidates in Montgomery County to channel environmental stewardship to its populace through its public schools, Montgomery College, and civic associations."

In 4.7.4. Urban Heat Islands and Tree Canopy

Recommendations: Environmental stewardship is critical for trees and canopy within existing and future parks, Optimal Method Projects, and developments within the entire Plan. **Emphasize the need to preserve existing, older trees in this section and throughout the Plan.** The Plan effectively proves that older trees will far outperform smaller trees for decades to come. Given conditions and possible stresses of a warming or unpredictable climate, young trees might not thrive.

Recommendations: **"REQUIRE a minimum of 35% green cover on Optional Method Projects."** (Replace ENCOURAGE with REQUIRE regarding green cover: green roofs, tree canopy, or combination or energy self-generation). Using REQUIRE is consistent with the Bethesda Plan. For potential SS developers, this will not be a "make it or break it" decision point. On the contrary, developers may recognize trees as a win-win tool for tree equity (needed in some parts of SS according to the American Forests Tree Equity Study, 2020), and for meeting any future climate cooling and resiliency goals. People who live and work in SS deserve the full benefits this change will provide.

In **5. Implementation, Can there be an introduction?** I propose: "SS faces many challenges in the next 20 years: 11,000 new residential units; twice the population; and twice the current jobs. This Plan's bold environmental theme of Green Community will attract startups, associations, government agencies and others to an exciting opportunity, a city of tomorrow designed with lessons learned from climate change and the pandemic. Sensitive to the need for more parks, public spaces and seamless access to them, two Green Loops and connecting corridors will be constructed. Maryland will meet its 40% goal for no net loss of urban forest through preservation of as many existing trees as possible during Plan implementation (see MD Sustainable Forest Law). Silver Spring will use the Plan to reduce its Urban Heat Index, meet its 35% green cover requirement for optional method projects, assess how effectively and broadly roofs are becoming green, low albedo, or converted to alternative energy and "cooling." Silver Spring's economic and social diversity will be partly addressed with tree equity projects in this Plan. Since individual trees have no "standing," it is important to visualize them singly and as a whole to determine the real value of their preservation, particularly for those between 20 to 80 years old in Silver Spring Downtown and the Adjacent Communities. Saving existing trees can be an economic and societal win when calculated at almost any scale for planning and development.

Explanatory Notes

USDA i-Tree System: Tools to determine how and where trees can add social, economic, and environmental benefits. Example of i-Tree statistics, ONE RED MAPLE tree growing over 20 years, the length of a Plan, could potentially:

- 1. Remove 3,100 lbs. of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- 2. Reduce 5,500 lbs. of carbon dioxide emissions and 30 lbs. of air pollution from a power plant.
- 3. Save 570 kWh of electricity and 20 MMbtu of fuel for cooling and heating.
- 4. Intercept 27,000 gallons of rainfall and 4,800 gallons of runoff.
- 5. Filter 15 lbs. of ozone, nitrogen dioxide, and sulfur dioxide from air breathed.

Silver Spring Heat Index: A 2018 Emergency Montgomery County Climate Change Mobilization Task Force report called for massive tree planting by virtually every County property owner to combat Climate Change. The County's *Shades of Green Program* targeted DTSS to plant trees to deter heat island effects. Silver Spring's contiguous green tree canopy shading in Adjacent Communities and neighborhoods adjoining Sligo Creek Park were recognized as a critical buffer for the narrow creek corridor that together served as the "lungs and arteries of Montgomery County."

Preserve Existing Trees and Tree Canopy and Plant Individual Trees: A Virginia Tech University June 2014 report on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed states, "Develop best management practices that address the conservation and maintenance of existing tree canopy. Conservation BMPs will reduce future pollutant loads by reducing the loss of tree canopy in future land use projections. Maintaining tree canopy has the potential to have a greater positive impact on local efforts and actions to address water quality than tree planting alone."

Green Community: Sustainable in meeting economic, environmental, and social needs concurrently for equity, climate change, pandemic effects, and environmental justice issues. Silver Spring has been recognized as the last home of environmentalist Rachel Carson, author of "Silent Spring," the book that stirred President Nixon to create the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and helped foster the US environmental protection movement. Today in SS:

- Smart Growth near SS metro stop will continue with government-wide calls to reduce urban heat temperatures and heat island effects, employ green, vegetated, and cascade roofs, preserve existing trees and plant trees.
- Best Management Practice (BMPs) will use trees to manage stormwater runoff (reduce flash floods by way of evapotranspiration, where water is taken up by the roots and released into the air via leaves as water vapor).
- Programs for climate change mobilization and urban heat effect mitigation will target SS to lower energy costs, including for low- to mid-income residents in more compact, dense areas...cleaning polluted air...and making communities quieter by absorbing sound.
- In future, saving SS trees and tree canopy will be lauded as acts as important as if not more significant than preserving SS Art Deco architecture, AFI Silver Theater, Historic Woodside Park, and other landmarks.

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Although there are many laudable sections of the "Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan" concerning the downtown Silver Spring Central Business District, the proposed plan has a fatal flaw.

All the so-called "adjacent communities" should be removed from the plan-- as I have explained below -- because their inclusion is arbitrary, based on a single factor that does not reflect how residents of the neighborhoods define their neighborhoods or even how the M-NCPPC has viewed the neighborhoods since planning began. Even more troubling, the inclusion of Woodside Park lots is based on faulty calculations.

The so-called "adjacent communities" simply are not communities. In this draft plan, they are arbitrarily defined by blocks and, in some cases, individual lots rather than cohesive communities or neighborhoods. They have been arbitrarily, and even capriciously, carved out of four residential neighborhoods abutting the long established boundary of downtown Silver Spring. Blocks have been split in such a way that one house may be pulled out and placed in an "adjacent community" while the house next door remains in the neighborhood . . . the neighborhood that has been recognized historically by everyone, even by the M-NCPPC in its Master Plans. This makes no sense and surely is contrary to good planning principles.

"Adjacent communities" were designated on the basis of calculated walking time from a Purple Line or Metro station, as if walking distance from transit is the only factor that defines a community. It obviously isn't in the real world. Given that most residents do not rely on transit for commuting and other travel, and that commuting itself will become less important as more work becomes remote over the long term -- a trend greatly speeded by the pandemic but not recognized in the proposed plan, defining a community solely on the basis of walking time from a transit station is not a reasonable criterion. It would make far more sense to define communities as they have traditionally been defined in Montgomery County, based on subdivision and civic association membership areas.

Additionally, redefining communities solely on the basis of walking distance from transit, as noted above, or on adjacency to a major street, as was done in the Montgomery Hills - Forest Glen Sector Plan, balkanizes long-established neighborhoods. Even though the Woodside and Woodside Park neighborhoods have been treated as separate cohesive neighborhoods since planning began, under the proposed Silver Spring Downtown and

Adjacent Communities plan and the adopted Montgomery Hills - Forest Glen Sector Plan, both neighborhoods will be split into areas covered by three different plans. This is harmful to our residential neighborhoods and makes no sense from a planning perspective.

At least this time notice was given concerning the proposed inclusion of part of Woodside Park into the plan. So far as we have been able to discover, no notice was ever given to property owners or the Civic Associations of the inclusion of properties in Woodside and Woodside Park along Georgia Avenue north of Spring Street into the Montgomery Hills / Forest Glen Sector Plan.

The proposed incorporation of specific Woodside Park properties into an "adjacent community" is particularly egregious. When young, vigorous community members attempted to walk from the southernmost part of Woodside Park to the nearest transit station (the as-yet-unbuilt Purple Line station at the Silver Spring Library), they were unable to do so in the allotted time. If they had jaywalked and ignored walk signs at Spring Street and Colesville Road, perhaps they could have done it, but as a practical matter the route cannot be walked in 10 minutes despite a theoretical calculation that it can be done.

Remove "and Adjacent Communities" from the Silver Spring Downtown Plan. Their inclusion is arbitrary, based on a single factor that does not reflect how residents define their neighborhoods and, at least in the case of Woodside Park's included lots, is based on faulty calculations.

This Plan should concentrate on how to make Silver Spring's downtown the best it can be without resorting to a land grab of nearby residential properties.

Robert E. Oshel 9114 Crosby Road Silver Spring, MD 20910 301-523-0307

Jane Lyons
MCP-Chair; Anderson, Casey; carol.rubin@mncppc-mg.org; Verma, Partap; Patterson, Tina; Cichy, Gerald
Margolies, Atara
CSG Testimony on Silver Spring Plan Public Hearing Draft
Tuesday, November 30, 2021 3:17:50 PM
2021.11.30 CSG Testimony to Planning Board on Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan - Final.pdf

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good afternoon,

Please find attached the Coalition for Smarter Growth's comments on the public hearing draft of the Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan. We look forward to sharing the main points of our testimony at the public hearing on Thursday. Feel free to reach out if you have any questions about our comments or recommendations.

Thank you, Jane

Jane Lyons (she/her) | Maryland Advocacy Manager Coalition for Smarter Growth P.O. Box 73282, 2000 14th St NW Washington, DC 20009 (410) 474-0741 | jane@smartergrowth.net Your gift helps keep CSG's advocacy going! Donate today! November 30, 2021

Montgomery County Planning Board 2425 Reedie Dr, 14th Floor Wheaton, MD 20902

Item 8 - Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

Testimony for December 2, 2021

Jane Lyons, Maryland Advocacy Manager

Thank you, Chair Anderson and Planning Commissioners. My name is Jane Lyons and I'm testifying on behalf of the Coalition for Smarter Growth, the leading organization advocating for walkable, inclusive, transit-oriented communities as the most sustainable and equitable way for the DC region to grow and provide opportunities for all.

We support the draft of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, although we believe there is room for improvement to think more strategically, creatively, and boldly about certain elements. In general, we are excited that the plan embraces downtown Silver Spring as the right place to grow, and to grow in a way that supports diversity, connectivity, resiliency, and health.

Silver Spring is where people want to live — it is also the residential economic engine of the county. Housing is one of the key methods for Silver Spring to retain its diversity. However, this draft misses the mark on strategies to preserve existing **income-restricted and market-rate affordable housing**. The plan should use the department's housing preservation study, which focuses largely on the plan area, to identify which properties are most at-risk and which tools would be most helpful to preserve the properties.

Furthermore, this plan often discusses the redevelopment of publicly owned garages and parking lots and states a goal of 30 percent moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs). We think this goal is not ambitious enough in its set-aside percentage or income targeting, and urge the Planning Board to look for creative models in neighboring District of Columbia and elsewhere for how to redevelop transit-oriented public land in order to maximize the amount of below-market rate units and deeply affordable units. In addition to this, publicly owned properties such as these are also a unique opportunity to try out new models for affordable housing, such as a community land trust.

Next, regarding the **adjacent communities** included in the plan: The built form of the adjacent communities does not allow for a step-down transition with the high-rise buildings in the CBD and would benefit from gentle density, such as with three to five story buildings, connecting the CBD to lower density neighborhoods. We applaud the planners for considering allowing different housing types, but this underlying issue will not be addressed by only allowing buildings that are

"compatible with the surrounding development" in terms of height and massing. These properties are appropriate for more than just house-scale duplexes and triplexes.

Also, this plan should not rely on the Attainable Housing Strategies guidelines for downtown Silver Spring's adjacent communities because it is unclear when, and if, those recommendations will be formally adopted. We urge the Planning Board to think more boldly and creatively about what can be pioneered in this plan.

Finally, in addition to these points, we would like to see the plan be more visionary for policies and programs to protect existing small businesses and help new ones to thrive, and to reimagine major arterial roads such as East-West Highway, Georgia Avenue, and Colesville Road.

Thank you for your consideration.

See below for our full, detailed comments on the draft plan:

- 2. Introduction
 - 2.6. Plan Goals
 - "Provide more diverse housing types and preserve existing affordable units to serve individuals and families of all ages, incomes, and backgrounds." Not only should we preserve existing affordable housing, but also create more affordable housing.
- 3. Districts
 - 3.2. Connecting the Districts
 - 3.2.2. Green Loop
 - We are intrigued by this idea, but would like more of an explanation on why a loop is the best design choice, as opposed to a grid, given that a grid generally is more efficient and improves connectivity better than a loop.
 - This section would also benefit from an explanation as to how the Green Loop integrates with the already envisioned downtown Silver Spring bike network, as well as additional emphasis on the idea that the Green Loop bike lanes must be protected.
 - 3.2.3. Connecting Across the Rail
 - We are excited about the idea to have a new pedestrian connection over the train tracks. Accessibility for pedestrians and bicycles is extremely important.
 - The Colesville Road (not Avenue) Metrorail underpasses would be enhanced by more frequent cleaning.
 - 3.3. District Recommendations
 - 3.3.1. Ellsworth District

- The Silver Spring Shopping Center acts as the gateway for people visiting the Ellsworth District, but the shopping center's parking lot provides an unwelcoming barrier. Redesigning the parking lot needs to be a priority.
- We are excited by the idea to redevelop the parking lot at the Whole Foods/Ace Hardware with a mix of uses, structured parking, and a green open space.
- In general, we would encourage higher FARs and heights allowed along the edge of the Central Business District (CBD).
- 3.3.2. Fenton Village District
 - We concur with the recommendations regarding redevelopment of Safeway this neighborhood must retain a full-sized grocery store.
- 3.3.3. Metro Center District
 - We strongly agree with the recommendation to have the highest intensity commercial development in the Metro Center District. This district has been underutilized for far too long. The idea to have a new landmark building at the Transit Center Development Site is especially desirable, and we concur that no parking should be provided given the site's proximity to multiple modes of high-quality transit. We would like the county to encourage, partner, and prioritize space in this future development for child care.
- 3.3.5. South Silver Spring District
 - This is clearly the district with the most opportunity for redevelopment and positive change. Within this district, we would like to see the plan also recommend making the Newell Street closure permanent and redesigning the intersection of East-West Highway, Georgia Avenue, and Burlington Avenue to prioritize the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. Newell Street's closure has reactivated Acorn Urban Park in a way that is at-risk of being lost if the street is to return vehicular traffic.
 - It is unclear from this document the specifics of The Blairs Master Plan, but similar recommendations regarding the continued service of a full-sized grocery story are similarly important for this location.
- 3.3.7. Falklands District
 - We strongly support the no net loss of market-rate affordable housing goal.
 - Public open space on the north side of East-West Highway would be more welcoming if internal to the site rather than adjacent to busy East-West Highway and 16th Street.
- 3.3.8. Adjacent Communities
 - In addition to our comments above, we would like to see more details on the envisioned renovations to Ellsworth Urban Park.
- 4. Plan-Wide Recommendations
 - 4.2. Housing
 - In addition to our comments above, we would like to see the plan explore potential incentives for condominium development to create more homeownership opportunities.
 - 4.3. Economic Growth and Resiliency
 - The recommendation from Fenton Village to ensure buildings are divided into smaller components, instead of one large, monolithic structure, should be true of the whole plan area to allow for small businesses to thrive and better walkability in Fenton Village and beyond.
 - We would like to see more creative thinking for policies, programs, and investments to ensure the future of small businesses in Silver Spring.
 - 4.5. Parks, Trails, and Public Spaces
 - For Jesup Blair Park, wouldn't it be better to have the food truck zone near a social zone, rather than a contemplative zone?
 - We will reiterate our strong support to permanently close Newell Street to vehicular traffic and expand Acorn Urban Park. Even with the new South Silver Spring Urban Recreational Parklet planned, an expanded Acorn Park is desirable for this rapidly growing neighborhood.
 - 4.6. Transportation
 - 4.6.2. Bicycle Network Recommendations
 - We are glad to see the plan talk about bicycle parking, but more needs to be done to identify where more bike parking is needed.
 - 4.6.4. Transit
 - Glad to see dedicated bus lanes along Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue included
 - 4.6.5. Roadways
 - This plan should do more to reimagine East-West Highway, Colesville Road, and Georgia Avenue as safe, green, multi-modal boulevard.
 - We support the construction of new streets with the purpose of improving connectivity. Any new streets should be built with adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
 - 4.6.6. Parking and Loading
 - We support a constrained parking policy that supports an urban area well served by transit. It is unclear from the text whether Silver Spring has parking minimums, but if so they should be removed in support of this policy.
 - The plan should offer a vision that public parking in Silver Spring be priced at market-rate so that the parking of private vehicles is not publicly subsidized.
 - 4.6.7. Transportation Demand Management

- We encourage the Planning Board to set an even more ambitious goal for Non-Auto Driver Mode Share than 55 percent, which has already been achieved and would only continue the status quo.
- 4.7. Resilient Downtown
 - We urge you to include improving stormwater management and reducing flooding risks as a goal in this section. Furthermore, the plan should state specifically where improved stormwater infrastructure should be prioritized, similar to the maps showing ROW priority tree planting areas.
- 4.8. Community Facilities
 - Over the next 20 years, downtown Silver Spring should strive to be more welcoming by offering public restrooms across the plan area.
 - We are excited by the prospect for a public school in downtown Silver Spring through redevelopment of public parking garages and conversion of office space.
- 4.9. Historic Resources
 - We support the adaptive reuse of the parking lot at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road.
- 5. Implementation
 - 5.1.1. Silver Spring Downtown Building Height Incentive Zone
 - We support the Silver Spring Downtown Building Height Incentive Zone generally, but would like to see more specifics. It should be clear that developers' contributions to the Connectivity and Infrastructure Fund (CIF) are not meant to fund all improvements listed. The county should primarily make these public infrastructure investments to improve quality of life and make Silver Spring more desirable.
 - 5.1.6. MPDU Minimum Percentage
 - We support the recommendation to increase the base MPDU requirement for the plan area to 15 percent.

From:	Margolies, Atara
To:	MCP-Chair
Subject:	FW: Seabury at Springvale Terrace"s Letter to Montgomery County Planning Board
Date:	Tuesday, November 30, 2021 5:24:11 PM
Attachments:	Seabury at Springvale Terrace Letter to Montgomery County Planning Board 2021-11-30.pdf

Atara Margolies, AIA, LEED AP Planner Coordinator

Montgomery County Planning Department 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902 <u>Atara.Margolies@montgomeryplanning.org</u> p: 301.495.4558

From: Dawn Quattlebaum <dquattlebaum@seaburyresources.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 30, 2021 4:36 PM
To: Anderson, Casey <Casey.Anderson@mncppc-mc.org>
Cc: Margolies, Atara <Atara.Margolies@montgomeryplanning.org>; Robert (Robby) Brewer
<rgbrewer@lerchearly.com>
Subject: Seabury at Springvale Terrace's Letter to Montgomery County Planning Board

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good Afternoon Casey Anderson,

On behalf of Seabury at Springvale Terrace, an affordable housing community in Silver Spring, Maryland, I am sending our attached letter in advance of your public hearing this week on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Thank you.

--Happy Holidays! Please note our new address.

Dawn M. Quattlebaum Pronouns | she/her/hers Chief Executive Officer Seabury Resources for Aging® 555 Water Street, S.W. Washington, DC 20024 P: (202) 414-6310 . F: (202) 289-5693 www.seaburyresources.org

Follow Seabury on Twitter: @seaburysays

Seabury supports older adults across the greater Washington, DC region — providing affordable permanent housing and transportation solutions, minimizing food insecurity and social isolation, and creating safe and compassionate solutions for living with dignity. <u>Join us</u>.

#SeaburyCares





November 30, 2021

Casey Anderson Chair Montgomery County Planning Board Email: <u>casey.anderson@mncppc-mc.org</u>

Subject: Public Hearing on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

Seabury Resources for Aging is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide personalized, affordable services and housing options to help older adults in the greater Washington, DC area live with independence and dignity.

Seabury was founded in 1924, and was formerly known as Episcopal Senior Ministries, until being renamed in 2010.

Today, more than 3,500 volunteers, hundreds of contributors, and the Seabury staff continue this tradition of providing personalized, affordable services to help older adults live with independence and dignity.

One of Seabury's programs is the Seabury at Springvale Terrace retirement community. Springvale Terrace provides affordable housing for up to 146 seniors, and is a mix of independent and assisted living units. Our site is located just east of downtown Silver Spring, in the "Adjacent Communities" district, and it is immediately next to the future Purple Line on Wayne Avenue.

Our staff and Board of Directors have closely followed the development of the Sector Plan. We have been actively involved in the public meetings throughout the process. We have appreciated the work of the Planning Board staff as they have worked with the community over the past months and years to draft this proposed plan.

(301) 587-0190 office(301) 588-1126 FaxWebsite: <u>www.springvaleterrace.org</u>

8505 Springvale Road Silver Spring, MD 20910



Because Seabury's mission is affordable housing for older adults, we have been particularly interested in the Sector Plan's goals to preserve and create affordable housing opportunities. We were grateful to see that the draft Sector Plan calls out the Springvale Terrace site as an "Opportunity Site" with a recommended zoning of CRT. Seabury would like to continue to provide affordable housing in Silver Spring, and this zoning will allow us to continue to consider how we might best serve the senior community in the future.

We look forward to working with the Planning Board and our community as this Plan is considered over the next few months. We are excited about the future opportunities that are possible for Silver Spring, and we strongly support the recommendations that will preserve and create additional affordable housing for seniors.

Thank you.

Sincerel

Dawn M. Quatflebaum Chief Executive Officer Seabury Resources for Aging

cc via email: Atara Margolies Robert Brewer

From:	<u>M G</u>
То:	MCP-Chair
Cc:	mariaschmit@hotmail.com
Subject:	Downtown Silver Springs & Adjacent Communities Comments for 12/2/2021
Date:	Tuesday, November 30, 2021 9:45:30 PM

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Planning Board,

We submit these comments for inclusion in the public record for the Planning Board's December 2, 2021 public hearing on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

We have lived in the Seven Oaks-Evanswood neighborhood since 1999. Our house is within the border of the "Adjacent Communities" portion of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan ("the Plan").

As you know, Seven Oaks-Evanswood is characterized by its many mature trees and old growth vegetation. According to the Center for Watershed Protection, these trees and their canopy provide the following important environmental benefits:

- Stormwater management by intercepting rainfall
- Reduce the urban heat island effect
- Reduce heating/cooling costs
- Lower air temperature
- Reduce air pollution
- Increase property values
- Provide wildlife habitat
- Provide aesthetic and community benefits such as improved quality of life

https://www.cwp.org/urban-tree-canopy/

Moreover, trees play a vital role in protecting human health:

Stress, anxiety, and depression are on the rise. The numbers are truly staggering. According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of people reporting symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder during the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, from January to June 2019, 11% of adults reported these symptoms. In recent months, these figures have more than tripled.

We are in dire need of new coping mechanisms. One of the best coping mechanisms that is easily overlooked is all around us: trees! Spending time in nature is a powerful way to reduce anxiety, depression, and mental illness. You do not need to hike for hours in the wilderness to reap these benefits. A 20 minute "dose" of urban nature is all that is needed to measurably reduce stress levels. Every little bit helps; simply looking at trees through a window has been shown to alleviate stress. In recent years, the medical community has increasingly recognized the importance of trees

to mental health. A growing number of scientists have been studying and documenting the health benefits of trees. For example, one study found that a 25% increase in neighborhood tree canopy was associated with a 1-point decrease on a 5-point scale for depression, anxiety and stress. [Emphasis added].

https://forestrynews.blogs.govdelivery.com/2020/12/10/trees-support-mental-healthduring-covid-19/

Given the ongoing catastrophes of global warming and loss of biodiversity – the world is currently in a sixth mass extinction event known as the Anthropocene Extinction, because it is driven by human activity – preserving and protecting mature trees and vegetative growth is crucially important. Yet, since moving here roughly 20 years ago, we have seen numerous mature trees in Seven Oaks-Evanswood cut down for development ranging from housing to the Purple Line. Trees such as oak and maple take decades to mature. When these trees are destroyed, they are replaced often with smaller, decorative trees that provide a mere fraction of the environmental benefits of the older and larger mature trees.

On Thursday, November 25, 2021, the *Washington Post* published an article titled, "Goodbye to an old friend." The sub-headline was, "Loss of Md. Family's beloved tree portends a sad fact: Oaks are dying throughout the mid-Atlantic." The article stated:

Oak trees are dying across the Mid-Atlantic region, crippled by extreme weather, old age, **construction and development**, then finally succumbing to disease and pests. [Emphasis added].

The Planning Board cannot control the weather or age of trees, but you can place limits on construction and development. Last year, we testified to the Planning Board that we hear far fewer birds singing in the morning now than when we moved here 20 years ago. This situation has not improved. Please remember that neighborhoods like Seven Oaks-Evanswood were designed as detached single family home neighborhoods. This is why we have so many mature trees in residents' yards. We are concerned that if the Planning Board allows development-by-right of denser housing, it will come at the expense of mature trees and other mature vegetation that have grown and thrived throughout the last century. Allowing the construction of large buildings on detached single family home lots will inevitably result in the destruction of trees as developers seek to maximize profit by adding as much density as possible to a plot of land. The Plan, as currently written, does not do enough to protect mature trees in the adjacent neighborhoods. Planting new trees to replace lost trees is good, but it is more important to save mature trees and long-established vegetation from destruction in the first place. The Plan should be revised accordingly.

In conclusion, we ask that the Planning Board reflect upon the fact that it wants to transform the character of neighborhoods where people have lived for years, in communities they cherish. With all due respect, the Planning Board must take into account the concerns of the residents who call these communities home. We have come to deeply appreciate the importance and beauty of the mature trees and vegetation of Seven Oaks-Evanswood and the nearby other adjacent communities. They are filled with life, and they provide all of us with invaluable benefits. They must be protected and preserved.

Yours truly,

Michael Gurwitz and Maria Schmit 8607 Springvale Road Silver Spring, MD 20910

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Downtown Silver Spring & Adjacent Communities Plan, Middle-Missing Housing Component Testimony by George French, Th., 12/2/21, Planning Board Hearing, Item # 8

I am vehemently opposed to the DTSS & Adjacent Communities Plan Middle Missing Housing and Re-Zoning Components. From the looks of many local community organizations, associations and individuals, I am in good company. To give examples the Mo Co Civic Fed and Mo Co Taxpayers League are opposed also. I was impressed with the Minneapolis MN study that shows that our Planning Dept. has grasped onto unworkable and detrimental initiatives that will damage neighborhoods throughout the County.

Very concerning is the letter from MCDOT on this subject (Thrive 2050), and the "by right" where the County has to pay for infrastructure needs, no longer a requirement from developers' impact fees. I am opposed to increasing the SSCBD. East SS and Woodside Park neighborhoods should become historic districts and remain the special places that they are. These Mo Co planning dept. plans primarily benefit developers and realtors pretending to help families treated unfairly by the housing industry now and in the past.

Instead of these plans we need affirmative action type initiatives for modest income people including of color to purchase their dream homes in these SS neighborhoods, and have good paying jobs that allow them to enter all housing markets, that they arrived at through scholarships and free tuition.

Reinstate affirmative action programs as they pertain to school and college enrollment. Another idea would be to have long term mortgages, say 40 years instead of 30 to buy into wonderful SS neighborhoods of their choice. Subsidies programs need to be expanded for housing insecure residents to help reduce property taxes. Direct monetary reparations to help with past inequities and unjust practices is another idea.

The Purple Line has caused myriad negative unintended consequences throughout its alignment in construction and in the housing markets, setting communities up for gentrification. What is needed is rent stabilization and rent control. Planning dept., in a conundrum, has always claimed that rents will increase 30% near the new transit stations. It is reasonable to assume that housing prices will also increase furthering the inability of lower income families to buy and rent in transit hub areas, and exacerbate the inequities in the housing market. No more tearing down of affordable garden apts. for high price, high density, residential hi rises. Need subsidies to balance out this inequity in these areas.

I'm in agreement with the historical component of the plan as described by the HPC Staff under the title "Historical Resources," and applaud the creation by HPC Staff of the "Legacy Business Registry."

Be sure to read all the comments in the MCREACTMAP. There are a lot of good suggestions that were left on the cutting room floor. Especially as it pertains to Historic Jesup Blair House and Park. There are over 330 trees in the Park and labeling many of them, think "arboretum," would enhance the Park as another destination aspect, for a wonderful contemplative and educative experience. Arts and Humanities groups should enliven and coordinate the whole make-up of the Mansion and its community vision.

How can the Parks Dept., in good conscience, create another urban park, only 3 blocks from

Jesup Blair, a Park they perceive as underutilized while the Moorings House remains unfinished and vacant. Restore the Mansion first, and then revisit the proposed new park later. Again, set up safe cross walks on Ga. Ave, e.g. at Jesup Blair Dr. and Blair Rd. for South Silver Spring patrons of the Park; a pedestrian traffic HAWK is one excellent possibility.

The cost of the proposed Urban Park at 1110 East West Highway:

\$7,500,000 to acquire the 1 acre piece of land (from the Parks land acquisition fund) for the property. Then \$500,000 to demolish and land fill the NTB building, a useful business and the former Coca Cola Bottling plant, and set up an Interim park. Then spend around \$3,000,000 to \$4,000,000 (this is unspecified) for acquisition of the adjacent Church property of one-half acre, and for demolition of the church building to expand the Interim park to 1.5 acres. Before this pocket park is completed, it could end up costing the County \$12M or more. Other yearly costs associated with this new urban park endeavor: \$2,500 OBI (Operating Budget Impacts), initially for an Interim park, expanding to \$5,000/yr for the completed park. Figures are from Mo Co Planning Dept. announcement. Thank you,

George French, 510 Albany Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, 301-587-5955

From:	Heather Dihopolsky
То:	MCP-Chair
Cc:	Margolies, Atara
Subject:	Written Testimony on Behalf of NRP Properties LLC for 12/2/21 Public Hearing on Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 8:01:21 AM
Attachments:	8040 13th Street Written Testimony to Planning Board on Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan 4891-9063-6548 v.1.pdf

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Chairman Anderson and Members of the Planning Board,

Attached please find our written testimony on behalf of NRP Properties LLC, for tomorrow evening's hearing. Ben Audrain, on behalf of NRP, will also be testifying orally.

Thank you very much.

Heather

Heather Dlhopolsky Wire Gill LLP 4800 Hampden Lane, Suite 200 Bethesda, MD 20814 hdlhopolsky@wiregill.com (301) 263-6275 www.wiregill.com

This email from Wire Gill LLP may contain confidential or privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, please advise by return email and delete immediately without reading or forwarding to others.



December 1, 2021

Via Email (MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org) Montgomery County Planning Board 2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Re: Comments on Public Hearing Draft of Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, for December 2, 2021, Planning Board Public Hearing

Dear Chairman Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

On behalf of NRP Properties LLC ("NRP"), we are submitting this letter with our comments on the Public Hearing Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (the "Draft Plan"), for the Planning Board's consideration at its public hearing on December 2, 2021. NRP is the contract purchaser and developer of property identified as 8040 13th Street, located on the north side of 13th Street, adjacent to Kennett Street on the east and Eastern Avenue on the west (the "Property"). The Property is currently in the area subject to the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, approved and adopted in 2000, and in the South Silver Spring area of the Draft Plan. NRP has held several meetings with local residents and resident associations; held preliminary discussions with the Montgomery County Department of Transportation ("MCDOT") regarding inclusion of the County-owned surface parking lot (the "County Parking Lot") located just north of the Property and adjacent to the County-owned Kennett Street Garage (Garage 9 – the "County Garage")), into the Property assemblage; and also met with the Development Review Committee recently on the Concept Plan that NRP submitted for the Project (defined below) in order to receive preliminary feedback. The Property and the County Parking Lot are referred to collectively as the "Assemblage."

NRP would then propose to develop the Assemblage with a mixed-use project, comprised of a total of approximately 415 multi-family residential units, and approximately 9,500 square feet of non-residential uses, as well as a multi-level structured parking bay to be added to the existing County Garage that will serve the multi-family residential units and retail, private amenities, and public benefit points (the "Project"). The proposed Project would include three structures: (1) an approximately 373-unit multi-family building on the eastern side of the Property adjacent to Kennett Street, with 12.5% of these units proposed as Moderately Priced Dwelling Units ("MPDUs"), proposed to be 13 stories; an approximately 42-unit multi-family building on the western side of the Property adjacent to Eastern Avenue, for which the Applicant plans to pursue Low Income Housing Tax Credits ("LIHTC") from the Maryland Community Development Administration, proposed to be 4 stories in compliance with the height stepdown provisions toward Eastern Avenue specified in the Ripley/South Silver Spring Overlay Zone; and (3) the multi-level parking bay to be added to the County Garage to serve the Project would technically be a standalone structure from a building code perspective.



Heather Dlhopolsky

hdlhopolsky@wiregill.com

301-263-6275

While NRP hopes to proceed with submitting applications to M-NCPPC for redevelopment of the Assemblage in advance of final adoption of the Draft Plan, we submit these comments for your consideration as we believe they make smart planning sense notwithstanding the timing of redevelopment of the Assemblage. And, certainly if submittal of applications is delayed for any reason given the complexities of the proposed Project, the Project could potentially be subject to the ultimate provisions of the Draft Plan which make them all the more relevant.

The Property is currently split-zoned, with the westernmost lot zoned CR-3.0, C-2.0, R-2.75, H-125T, and the two eastern lots zoned CR-3.0, C-2.0, R-2.75, H-90T; the Property is also located in the Ripley/South Silver Spring Overlay Zone. NRP makes several points with regard to current and proposed building height:

(1) The existing maximum building heights make little sense, in that greater height is permitted on the western lot, despite that it is directly adjacent to Eastern Avenue and as such is subject to the height stepdown provisions toward Eastern Avenue per Section 59-4.9.13.C.1 of the Ripley/South Silver Spring Overlay Zone. Greater height should in fact be permitted on the eastern two lots, where it is achievable and not (or in any case, should not be, per #3 below) subject to the height stepdown provisions of the aforementioned Section.

(2) The Draft Plan proposes to update nearly all existing maximum building heights in the plan area to remove the "T" height provisions, and as such proposes maximum height of 150 feet on the Property's western lot, but only 110 feet on the Property's two eastern lots. This revision is a puzzling result given that the Draft Plan also proposes to retain the height stepdown provisions toward Eastern Avenue under the newly named South Silver Spring Overlay Zone. Instead, the two eastern lots should also be proposed for maximum height of 150 feet, as it is on those lots that such height would actually be achievable and desirable.

(3) The Draft Plan proposes to update the Ripley/South Silver Spring Overlay Zone. NRP proposes that clarification is needed to Section 59-4.9.13.C.1.a regarding height stepdown toward Eastern Avenue. The current language is unclear as to its applicability, specifically whether it pertains to a property that fronts on Eastern Avenue, or a building that fronts on Eastern Avenue. We suggest that the language should pertain only to a building that fronts on Eastern Avenue, specifically in a case such as this where the Property is very deep, and its eastern side along Kennett Street is over 450 feet (at its most shallow depth) from Eastern Avenue. We suggest the following clarifications as part of the forthcoming update/creation of the South Silver Spring Overlay Zone (proposed additional clarifying language shown in bold underline):

A. The maximum building height is 45 feet along Newell Street and Eastern Avenue <u>for a</u> <u>building</u> that confronts a Residential zone in the District of Columbia; however, this building height may be increased to:

i. a maximum of 90 feet for any building or portion of a building that is set back a minimum of 60 feet from the street; or



Heather Dlhopolsky

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ii. a maximum of 125 feet for residential development that is set back at least 100 feet from Eastern Avenue and Newell Street and includes a public parking garage constructed under a General Development Agreement with the County.

Aside from these specific comments and clarifications, NRP is very supportive of the overarching goals and strategies proposed by the Draft Plan, and we look forward to continuing to follow the Planning Board's discussions. We thank you for your consideration of our comments. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Wire Gill LLP Meather Elkopolsky

Heather Dlhopolsky

cc: Atara Margolies, M-NCPPC

From:	Margolies, Atara
To:	MCP-Chair
Subject:	FW: See attached
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 8:55:22 AM
Attachments:	Listening Session Testimony.PDF

Atara Margolies, AIA, LEED AP Planner Coordinator

Montgomery County Planning Department 2425 Reedie Drive, Wheaton, MD 20902 <u>Atara.Margolies@montgomeryplanning.org</u> p: 301.495.4558

From: Daniel Meijer <dmeijer@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 1, 2021 8:10 AM
To: Margolies, Atara <Atara.Margolies@montgomeryplanning.org>
Cc: Wright, Gwen <gwen.wright@montgomeryplanning.org>
Subject: See attached

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Ms. Margolies,

Responding to your 11/23/2021 e-mail announcement, this will be the third Central Business District (CBD) "Silver Spring Sector Plan" to occur since I moved here.

In the 1993 one, we were told that if all the development permitted by the 1974 one was built, the CBD infrastructure could not support it. In addition, the CBD was rezoned to concentrate dense development in the core which tapered down in areas such as South Silver Spring or Fenton St Village to: 1. keep those properties affordable for small business that were displaced from the core (to migrate to) and 2. providing a smooth transition to the residential neighborhoods that surround the CBD.

I continue to support that concept and hope the current planning staff does the same now.

Attached is my written testimony regarding my concerns about the current proposed:"Thrive Montgomery 2050" plan which I understand might have an inappropriate influence on this matter.

Sincerely Yours

Daniel Meijer

Cell or text: (240) 381-4396

Daniel Meijer 929 Gist Avenue Silver Spring Maryland 20910 (240) 381-4396 dmeijer@hotmail.com

November 28, 2021

Montgomery County Council Stellla Werner [Council] Office Building 100 Maryland Avenue, 4th Floor Rockville Maryland 20850

RE: Written "Listening Session" testimony regarding Thrive Montgomery 2050

Dear Montgomery County Councilmembers,

- 1. Please find attached as "Exhibit 1", a copy of a well written, thoughtful post that appeared on a local neighborhood web site that I feel accurately reflects my concerns about the present proposed "Thrive Montgomery Plan".
- 2. This follows with Exhibit 2, which is a copy of my 10/20/2021 letter to the Chairman of the Planning Board and to the Washington Council of Governments (COG), that raises the issue of another possible sewer moratorium which may be caused by the implication of the present proposed "Thrive Montgomery Plan". I feel this agency & COG have a duty/responsibility to first address this issue before any such long-term land use plan is approved.
- Lastly; Exhibit 3, my letter to the National Fire Protection Institution (NFPA), Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute, in which I raise the effects that increased density in older neighborhoods will have on public safety (& homeowner's insurance premiums).

Thank you for taking the time to consider the concerns raised the attached exhibits,

2 Min

Daniel Meijer

EXHIBIT 1

FYI: "Next Door East Silver Spring" posting (a response to the 11/21/2021 Washington Post article)

I agree with Roberta Faul-Ziegler on serious pitfalls (& miscues) in yesterday's WAPO article by Katherine Shaver. Shaver tilts towards very intrusive so-called "Up-zoning" that inserts without regulatory review for-profit new 'multiplexes' & even apartments in existing suburban residential neighborhoods all over MOCO. Top-Down Central Planning is the main stratagem of deliberately vague and far too 'drafty' THRIVE: to replace (in one fell swoop) entire current County-wide zoning system. MOCO's M-NCPPC Planning Board and urbanist planning advocates claim this badly designed major overhaul will somehow or other "solve" problems of insufficient affordable housing AND historically racist house ownership discrimination in Montgomery County, Maryland.

Their claims are specious, as Roberta points out: proposed new For-Profit Developer-built Multiplexes and apartments intended to displace existing neighborhood single family homes (both attached and detached) will be marketed for profit as Rentals. They will not be sold to deserving families unless THRIVE plan is thoroughly rewritten/modified to include bottom-up participation by existing suburban neighborhoods of owner-occupied housing. Outcomes (if this odd new THRIVE draft is approved more or less as is by County Council) will mean more and denser rental units 'shoe-horned' into residential streets on many existing small lots without enough on-street/off-street parking or needed Parkland, public schools, underground utility infrastructure, etc. THRIVE will NOT raise real numbers of owner-occupied housing units, or percentage of Minority or lower-income owner-occupied homes. It will shift the ratio of owned to rental units in a neighborhood towards higher percentages of rental units with absentee owners.

I need not go into how ongoing rising and inflationary prices for house ownership will vitiate assertions that THRIVE make homes more affordable. If multiplex units are sold by Developers or Real Estate corporate owners, they will be priced far too high to be 'attainable' by prospective buyers who lack enough current income to acquire prime mortgages and do not have adequate financial assets to afford down payment, settling costs, taxes. The chimera of so-called 'Attainable' home-ownership through peculiar THRIVE device is nothing more than a 'mirage', it is an ideological posture by those calling themselves 'Progressives'.

My assessment is this faddish juggernaut effort is likely to fail miserably and set back the long-term cause espoused by pragmatic (real) progressive thinking and analysis. Amore productive approach calls for proceeding in two key ways: 1) Starting immediately, pass regulations and rules to actually preserve and improve the quality and availability of existing affordable family housing, both subsidized and market-rate. 2) use Federal/State/County funding to build new government-subsidized family-sized affordable apartment units in designated higher-density areas like former shopping malls and failed Office blocks, deploying a stepwise approach with measurable targets. 3) Create more For Sale attached housing (e.g., Townhouses) through in-fill on available empty lots (private & County-owned) that use the MPDU approach. Include neighborhoods that vote to participate in housing densification fully into decision-making. 4) Close For-Profit MPDU loopholes allow Developers to avoid sales of below market rate home by paying a derisory amount upfront into a County-wide fund that does not actually help leverage sale of more subsidized housing in the same localities. Same goes for expanding Parks - not just anywhere in the County - but in very same housing neighborhoods with raised densities. In short, let's come up with a participatory design, targeted and interactive approach to actually increasing affordable home ownership, and preventing market-driven 'Rent is Too High' adverse impacts on affordability.

Give aspiring first time home buyer residents realistic options of mortgage-affordable homes and/or preservation of existing affordable rentals (e.g., via a reformed HOC). Incentivize Non-Profit sector (rather than For-Profit Developers) to renovate and/or construct affordable houses and apartments (e.g., Habitat and County-based affordable housing builders). Design buildings for reasonably-priced, quality family-sized rentals - rather than highly irrational Planning Board policy of approving mainly luxury apartments in posh high-rises OR too many studios/1-bedroom units in tiny apartments for single persons or non-family renters mainly younger unmarried individuals/roommates who are transient. Place policy emphasis on enhanced housing stability for families in communities rather than top-down urbanist 'densification'. Get over the notion that a THRIVE type of 'Silver bullet' CONCEPT will solve MOCO housing insufficiency problems, provide equity, fill the so-called 'Missing Middle', and somehow lower prices and costs for aspiring homeowners.

This bizarre centralized planning 'FAD' is puffed-up 'Trickle-down Economics' - using unproven economic models like 'filtering': basically, a corporate Real Estate 'economic fiction' to incentivize for-profit building of massive new upscale housing units, that supposedly translates to older, less modern units declining in rental cost and/or purchase price due to simply the generic policy of adding more (often far more costly) total units to the County's available housing stock. THRIVE - as contrived by the M-NCPPC Planning Board urbanist planners - is basically a propaganda piece. The term THRIVE appears borrowed from a recent Kaiser-Permanente Health marketing LOGO for a big Health Care/Health Insurance system. The THRIVE 'concept' is a 'one-size fits all' centralized scheme ill-fitted to real-world affordable housing needs in MOCO.

Joel Teitelbaum

Daniel Meijer 929 Gist Avenue Silver Spring Maryland 20910 <u>dmeijer@hotmail.com</u>

EXHIBIT 2

October 20, 2021

Mr. Casey Anderson Chair of the M-NCPPC Planning Board 2425 Reedie Drive, 14th Floor, Wheaton, MD 20902

MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org

301-495-4605

Dear M-NCPPB Chair Casey Anderson & Washington Council of Governments,

Please find attached a Washington Post article that describes the previous WSSC moratorium imposed upon Montgomery County that delayed *"for an undetermined period construction of 13,000 housing units and about 20 commercial and industrial projects planned throughout the county."*

According to this article this was because: "the county had exceeded the amount of sewage it can send to the huge Blue Plains sewage treatment plant in the District of Columbia and a much smaller plant in Seneca".

Considering the large amount of increased density that "Thrive Montgomery 2050" is proposing, a similar and likely scenario will come up. Does that long term plan include a section that suggests a solution to this inevitable problem?

Will the other jurisdictions (currently sharing the capacity of the Blue Plains Treatment plant in the District of Columbia that Montgomery County exports it's sewage to), be triggered by the large density increase proposed in "Thrive Montgomery 2050", to **thus insist this long term plan must include a requirement to build an additional waste treatment plant along a major river like Blue Plains but in Montgomery County: for example, along the Potomac River [1]?**

Concerned affected citizen,

Daniel Meijer

[1] See second attached Washington Post article titled: "Sludge Plant to Be Closed"

in which then County Executive Ike Leggett is quoted: "It was a mistake to put this facility at that [North White Oak, next to the Prince Georgia County border] location. It's just too much of a dense highly populated area"

WSSC Puts Curbs On Sewer Lines In Montgomery

By Judith Valente

May 31, 1979

In a split vote, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission imposed a new sewer moratorium yesterday on Montgomery County that will delay for an undetermined period construction of 13,000 housing units and about 20 commercial and industrial projects planned throughout the county.

The commission acted after a report by its general manager indicated the county had exceeded the amount of sewage it can send to the huge Blue Plains sewage treatment plant in the District of Columbia and a much smaller plant in Seneca. The WSSC oversees water and sewer construction and operations for both Montgomery and Prince George's counties.

It was not immediately clear how long this latest moratorium on new development could last. But it comes at an awkward time for Montgomery, which had been pushing hard recently to attract the new development denied it during eight years of earlier moratoriums.

The new moratorium will not affect projects already under construction, but only proposed construction still awaiting commitments of sewage capacity from the WSSC.

The simmering regional rivalry between the two counties was reflected in yesterday's vote: The three WSSC commissioners representing Prince George's County all approved the moratorium while two of the three Montgomery County commissioners abstained.

The third Montgomery County commissioner, David Scotton, left the meeting before the vote but indicated before leaving that he also wanted to abstain.

Montgomery and Prince George's have been feuding for months over a number of sewer-related issues. One of the key points of dispute is whether Prince George's, which has more sewage capacity at the Blue Plains plant than it needs right now, can lend some of its excess capacity to Montgomery.

Issues in this proposed trade are still unresolved.

Montgomery can send up to 82.6 million gallons a day into the local treatment plants, which are shared by four metropolitan area jurisdictions. Currently, Montgomery is sending 71.3 million gallons daily into the system, and has given out sewer commitments for an additional 12 million gallons a day, according to Arthur Brigham, a WSSC spokesman.

That puts Montgomery 560,000 gallons a day over its authorized capacity.

The county reached its limit earlier than expected because April's heavy rainfall increased the sewage flow already in the system, according to Edward Graham, assistant director of the county's Office of Environmental Planning.

When the ground water level goes up, the sewage flow goes up. "More sewage flows through the pipes in wet weather," Graham said.

County Executive Charles W. Gilchrist said the current moratorium "will have a serious effect [on growth and economic development] as it continues." He said he is counting on Prince George's County to let Montgomery use some of its estimated 12 million gallons a day in unused capacity at Blue Plains.

Prince George's also has 30 million gallons of unused daily capacity available at other sewage treatment plants.

Montgomery County is "going to be in a constant tight situation" unless it can use some of the Prince George's allocation, he said.

Even if Montgomery recalculates its estimates of average household sewage use, the county will be able to come up with only about 2 million gallons a day of sewage capacity to give out in future sewer commitments, according to Steve Poteat, an environmental planner.

Among the projects being held up by the new moratorium are 13,000 housing units, including nine subsidized housing projects, several churches and commercial and industrial projects, and a community center for the Scotland area. All are planned for construction over the next three years.

Sludge Plant to Be Closed

By Manuel Perez-Rivas Washington Post Staff Writer Sunday, January 24, 1999; Page C1

Sixteen years after a sludge composting operation opened, Montgomery County is set to abandon the \$68 million plant that was built over the heated objections of nearby residents as well as officials in neighboring Prince George's County.

The Montgomery County Regional Composting Facility, north of White Oak, lived up to many expectations of Montgomery's



Compost operator Steve Broznowicz works at the Montgomery County Regional Composting Facility, in Silver Spring. (Rick Bowmer — The Washington Post)

environmentally conscious leaders, turning sewage sludge into compost so rich it has been spread on the White House lawn. Its many environmental awards fill a wall inside its offices.

But the benefits of composting sludge have not been enough to quiet the protests of neighbors, who for years have complained about the odors. After spending millions of dollars trying to stop the smell, county officials say it is time to look at alternatives for handling Montgomery's share of the sludge generated by the Blue Plains Wastewater Treatment Plant in the District.

"What a big waste of money," said Del. Barbara Frush (D-Prince George's), who lives in nearby Calverton and was a leading civic opponent of the east Montgomery site.

On Wednesday, board members from the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, the bicounty water and sewer agency that runs the plant, are slated to consider a proposal to shut it down. Montgomery County Executive Douglas M. Duncan (D) and County Council President Isiah Leggett (D-At Large) are backing closure, citing the neighborhood opposition and saying there are cheaper methods of disposing the sludge, such as spreading it on fields.

"It was a mistake to put this facility at that location. It's just too much of a dense, highly populated area," Leggett said.

Duncan said he has gotten complaints from residents and commercial landowners about the plant's smell. But, he said, financial considerations persuaded him to push for its closure. Because of the odor, WSSC had for years operated the facility at less than half its capacity of 400 tons a day, driving up the cost per ton. County officials said it costs \$100 to compost a ton of sludge. Meanwhile, spreading it on fields -- which is how most of Montgomery's sludge from Blue Plains is handled -- costs \$35 a ton.

"It's cost-prohibitive to run that facility," he said. "It's never going to operate at capacity. I want to cut our losses now instead of waiting five years and spending another \$10 million."

The county is considering closing the plant at a time when other jurisdictions, such as Virginia and counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore -- two potential recipients of additional Montgomery County sludge -- are showing a growing resistance to imported waste. Some officials and environmental advocates caution that this backlash could make land application much more expensive in the future.

"This [composting] is the kind of experiment that we need to make work for us," said Neal Fitzpatrick, conservation director at the Audubon Naturalist Society, an environmental group. "I'm going to be very disappointed if we give up on it."

The composting facility has been a thorn in the side of Montgomery officials since the late 1970s, when the County Council chose to situate it on 110 acres in an industrial park off Route 29 near the county's eastern border. The plant was needed to handle Montgomery's share of Blue Plains sludge, which now amounts to 400 tons a day.

The selection drew immediate protests from people in nearby communities and from Prince George's officials, who saw the site selection as an affront because it was so close to their boundary. At the time, the two counties were involved in a dispute over sewer capacity.

"This was as much a snubbing of Prince George's County as anything else," said Robert B. Ostrom, the Prince George's county attorney at the time. Montgomery prevailed after a lengthy court fight, and the plant opened in 1983.

Over the years, WSSC, with backing from Montgomery officials, has spent millions in upgrades, such as enclosing storage areas and installing state-of-the-art exhaust scrubbers to try to diminish the odors produced while turning sludge into compost.

But the complaints about the smell never went away.

"They put a lot of money into it. They've gone through a lot of effort," said Bruce Donaldson, an engineering professor and longtime opponent of the plant who is a member of the Calverton Citizens Association. "It still stinks."

Some county officials, such as council member Marilyn Praisner (D-Eastern County), who represents the area surrounding the plant, have backed efforts to close it for years. The push gained momentum last year, when Duncan recommended shutting it down as part of the county's 10-year solid waste plan.

This month, WSSC commissioner Kevin P. Maloney, one of three Montgomery representatives on the agency board, said he would make a formal motion to close the facility. "It's too expensive to run," Maloney said in an interview, "but the reason it's closing is political: The people don't want it there."

The three Prince George's representatives on the board said they would support closing the plant if several conditions are met, including promises that no sludge would be disposed of in their county and that the WSSC would not have to repay federal grants for building the composting plant.

Montgomery County's Chief Administrative Officer Bruce Romer, who is working on meeting those conditions, said Friday that he expects everything to be set in time for Wednesday's meeting. "All of these things are being worked out," he said.

The actual decision of what to do with the physical plant itself -- the \$68 million investment -- would come later.

"Our interests are grounded in economics," Romer said. "This has never been an economic equation that can work."

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Daniel Meijer 929 Gist Avenue Silver Spring Maryland 20910 dmeijer@hotmail.com March 22, 2021

EXHIBIT 3

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Attention: Ms. Meghan Housewright Director, Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute (The Policy Institute) 1 Batterymarch Park Quincy, Massachusetts 02169-7471

Dear Director Housewright,

I understand from a 9/14/2017 NFPA press release that: "*The Policy Institute will study a range of issues and provide guidance and information to policymakers on the best approaches governments can take to improve safety for the citizens they serve*". Thus, please find attached my testimony to the local Council of this County that expresses my concerns on such a matter that I believe the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute should address.

The bases for my concern are the many narrow residential access roads that were designed and built in the 1920/30's in this area. Fire trucks and ambulances were much smaller then. In particular, ambulances, which at that time were modified station wagons (of narrow width - till the 1950s fin era) - then became modified vans (but still reasonably narrow) and are now wide modified trucks. The recently built nearby fire station garage doors for these vehicles I have measured to be over 15 feet wide. From that, one may reasonably conclude residential roads must have at least that width? Perhaps the Policy Institute could for example: recommend specific road width requirements for such emergency vehicles?

I am also concerned that such obstructions may increase the response time for fire trucks that may eventually reduce the "Town Grading" of my community – which according to what my brother experienced in his community – results in a considerable increase in one's homeowner's policy premium.

Increasing the occupancy load of existing single family homes to a multifamily use on small lots has become a nationwide trend under the category of "Smart Growth". I have noticed that most of the active proponents of this concept tend to be younger adults who have not had to face the health concerns that older adults do (in particular "Senor Citizens of Advanced Age" - who have chosen to age in place). This is when rapid ambulatory access to residential dwellings may be a life or death situation.

For the reasons described above, I strongly feel the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Policy Institute should place this issue on their agenda and issue guidelines on the matter.

Thank you for considering my concerns, Daniel Meijer

Daniel Meijer 929 Gist Avenue Silver Spring Maryland 20910 (240) 381-4395 dmeijer@hotmail.com

February 15, 2021

President Tom Hucker & other Members of the Montgomery County Council 100 Maryland Ave, 6th floor Rockville Maryland 20850

Written Testimony Concerning: ZTA 20-07

Dear President Tom Hucker and other Members of the Montgomery County Council,

As stated in my oral testimony in the "Public Hearing – ZTA 20-07, R-60 Zone – Uses and Standards" last Thursday. I am very concerned that this ZTA, (along with the recent previous ones that will impact the allowable density in such zones) may interfere with timely access by emergency vehicles in older residential communities.

This is because many of the older neighborhoods have very narrow roads that were only designed to handle the traffic from the occupancy load of the single family lots they serve.

Increasing the occupancy load of existing single family homes to a multifamily use on the small lots (that are common in older neighborhoods) – puts the entire community at a public safety risk.

One can easily visualize an ambulance or fire truck stuck on a narrow street obstructed by the off-site parking needs of multifamily conversions of single family home lots in older comminutes where existing road structure was not designed to support such an increased "occupancy load" density.

As I described in my oral testimony – such delays can have a life threating impact on the residents in such neighborhoods – giving my sister as an example who has a serious heart condition and has had required ambulance services to her home in East Silver Spring that if delayed – might have become a life or death situation. Something which should be of grave concern to those who wish to "Age in Place" in their current homes.

For that reason, I believe this could rise to a legal level of "gross negligence" * if land use decision makers (such as the Council) simply do not dutifully address this public safety issue that is described in this written testimony on ZTA 20-07.

Thank you for addressing this concern,

Daniel Meijer

*Maryland Courts and Judicial Proceedings Section 5-522 (a) (4) (ii): "Immunity of the State is not waived ... [for] Any tortuous act or omission of State personnel that: ...Is made with malice or gross negligence" (emphasis added)

From:	joy
То:	<u>MCP-Chair</u>
Subject:	Letter re: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, Item #8, 12/2/2021
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 8:58:26 AM
Attachments:	Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan-Planning Board Letter 12-1-2021.pdf

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Anderson and Board Members;

Attached is my letter concerning Item #8 on your 12/2/2021 meeting. Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and consider my views.

And thank you for all the work that you are doing to ensure a bright future for Silver Spring.

Best regards, Joyce

Joyce Nalewajk Silver Spring MD 20910

To: Chairman Anderson and Board Members. Montgomery County Planning Board

From: Joyce Nalewajk Date: December 1, 2021

Re: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, Item #8, 12/2/2021

Dear Chairman Anderson and Board Members;

Thank you in advance for reading my letter. It's been frustrating to Silver Spring residents that the Planning Board's work on our Master Plan proceeded during the Covid 19 pandemic, when community members were not only house bound and unable to engage on topics with neighbors in physical forums but also, for the first time during a Master Plan process, were without a local newspaper to keep them informed (Montgomery County Sentinel ceased 2020, the Gazette ceased 2015). Except for one or two Planning Board presentations online, the overwhelming majority of Silver Spring residents have been kept in the dark. This opportunity to present a letter is greatly appreciated.

ADJACENT COMMUNITIES: Abolishing Middle Class Neighborhoods of Single Family Homes & Torpedoing the "American Dream"

The Master Plan for Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities should drop the entire Adjacent Communities section. The proposed Thrive plan to upzone single-family neighborhoods would encourage hedge funds and other speculators to buy up and replace single-family homes with higher density housing. The new, higher density housing will not be affordably priced; new construction is costly. The only long-term winners in this scenario are developers, realtors, and Wall Street real estate investors. Silver Spring loses its coveted, close-in, stable and racially diverse neighborhoods of single-family homes adjacent to Downtown. The "American Dream" of owning a home with a garden plot on a quiet street will endure, but those pursuing it will look elsewhere, as that kind of housing won't be available in Silver Spring. By reducing the supply of single-family homes downcounty, Montgomery County will accelerate the need to rezone agricultural land upcounty for single-family homes, benefitting developers yet again.

The Adjacent Communities/ Thrive plan is an example of outdated, pre-pandemic, high density urban planning. In health and fresh air conscious, remote-work reliant, post-pandemic times, high density near work is no longer in demand; single-family houses are. Bizarrely, this plan reduces single-family housing from downtown Silver Spring's adjacent communities at a time when demand for this housing type worldwide has never been higher. The Covid pandemic permanently changed housing preferences for all ages; single-family homes provide space for remote work and study, and outside entertainment and garden space. Those able to afford a house no longer need to settle for an alternate, denser type of housing; they will look elsewhere.

WOODSIDE: A 19th C. Railroad Suburb: The Oldest, Most Historic and Unique Suburban Community Adjacent to Downtown Silver Spring

While no neighborhoods bordering downtown Silver Spring should be considered part of downtown and open to upzoning, most troubling is the proposal to rezone Woodside, the oldest, most historically significant, and most architecturally diverse suburban neighborhood adjacent to Downtown Silver Spring. Woodside was founded in 1889 by **Benjamin Leighton**, a Maine lawyer who moved to DC and, beginning in 1881, served as **Dean of Howard University Law School**. Leighton also speculated in real estate along the B&O railroad (current route of Metro's Red Line), developing **Woodside in MD** and **Brookland in DC**, and was known to ignore then-standard racial covenants by sometimes selling lots to Blacks.

Decades ago, when living in one of Woodside's small houses near the railroad tracks, I drafted a book on Woodside which – interrupted by work demands – I now desperately need to revise, update and complete. I also curated an exhibition in Silver Spring on Woodside's history featuring photographs of Woodside houses taken by Jack Boucher, the late great National Park Service/HABS photographer.

In planning parlance, Woodside is a 19th Century Railroad Suburb, built originally as an enclave of summer homes for government workers and other DC professionals in the days before fans or air conditioners. It is one of a handful of railroad suburbs built in Montgomery County along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad, comparable to Takoma Park, Forest Glen and Kensington. But Woodside's historical significance in Silver Spring extends back even further. To create Woodside, Leighton had purchased a Civil War era farm from its widow, laid out lots on a grid plan, built a train station (now gone), and built homes in a wide variety of sizes and architectural styles. Woodside represents Montgomery County's – and Silver Spring's – economic, social and architectural transformation from pre-Civil War agricultural settlements to a suburb of Washington DC during the late 19th and early 20th Century.

Woodside today is one of Silver Spring's most beautiful neighborhoods, featuring impeccably-preserved and architecturally distinct single-family homes on spacious lots with century old shade trees. It retains its original 19th Century homes, impeccably preserved, including the home that Leighton built for himself. It also contains smaller, early 20th C. homes, built on the grid plan's lots over time. Unlike the prolific track developments of cookie-cutter houses that sprouted overnight in 20th Century Montgomery County, Woodside grew organically, with distinctive houses of diverse architectural styles, age (1800s through mid 1900s), price and size (tiny cottages to spacious mansions).

The Adjacent Communities plan targets the southern end of Woodside, where most of the railroad suburb's first homes were built and remain today – including Leighton's own. By removing single-family zoning to increase density, the plan would demolish numerous 19th century architectural gems and the entire character of the bucolic neighborhood. It would remove from the housing supply what is perhaps *the* most diverse collection of single-family homes – varying widely in style, age, size and price – of any single neighborhood in Silver Spring. It would displace the diverse middle class population living there. Woodside as it stands today enriches the fabric of Silver Spring with its beauty, diversity, distinctiveness and history.

BRINGING LIFE INTO DOWNTOWN SILVER SPRING'S COMMERCIAL CORE: Converting Vacant Office and Retail Space to Housing Instead of Increasing Housing Density in Adjacent Neighborhoods

The Planning Board's current plan does not take into account how dramatically the pandemic has reduced demand for office, retail and high-rise residential space. Numerous office buildings and retail spaces in downtown Silver Spring are empty. Instead of reducing the highly coveted supply of single-family homes in adjacent neighborhoods to build higher density housing, more housing – from Missing Middle to high-rise – should be considered within the Downtown commercial area.

Empty office buildings could be remodeled as apartments. However, the Planning Board should make sure that high-rise apartments are not over built in Silver Spring; there seems to currently be excess space in both older and new high-rise buildings Downtown. To accommodate the pandemic era's demands for fresh air and space for outdoor entertainment, balconies, roof-top gardens and community patios/courtyards should be required for all new high-rise apartment construction.

Vacant retail space in the Commercial Core could be remodeled or rebuilt as Missing Middle housing (apartments, duplexes, and townhouses). Downzoning to encourage construction of this housing type within the Downtown area should be considered.

More pocket parks should be constructed throughout the Downtown area to encourage outdoor activities like tennis and skateboarding.

Consideration should be given to designating a portion of East West Highway as Silver Spring's "Bottling District," running from the Canada Drive building, past the Coca Cola Bottling Plant, to Georgia Avenue. Denizens is currently headquartered there, and more breweries and distilleries should be invited to move there, restoring older historic buildings including Coca Cola, a "Bottling District" landmark, like Canada Dry.

THE BEST OF THE BEST IN "MISSING MIDDLE" HOUSING: ACKNOWLEDGING THE FALKLAND APARTMENTS AS A NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT MASTERPIECE THAT WON AN INTERNATIONAL DESIGN AWARD

Besides preserving the existing stock of single-family housing adjacent to downtown Silver Spring, Montgomery County should plan to preserve and promote the north, south and west parcels of the Falkland Apartments as prescient, inspired, well-designed examples of "Missing Middle" architecture in Silver Spring that are also of national historic and architectural significance. Featuring affordable rents and ample and scenically landscaped green space, these historic, 1936-38 Garden Apartments are ideally suited for middle density housing during pandemic and post-pandemic times. Designed by Louis Justement, the Falklands were the first garden apartments to receive FHA financing under the New Deal and won an international design award. This Missing Middle complex is a national and international significance regarding design/planning, architecture, and history. The most beautiful and extensive garden apartment complex in Silver Spring, they are admired and beloved by the young, diverse population that lives there. Instead of reducing the stock of single-family homes in Adjacent Communities to build Missing Middle housing, the Planning Board should preserve this masterpiece of design.

JESUP BLAIR PARK: SILVER SPRING'S CENTRAL PARK AND THE GATEWAY TO MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Jesup Blair Park is THE most important green and historic resource in downtown Silver Spring. It is impossible to overestimate this site's importance to Silver Spring's future success. Jesup Blair Park features lawn and mature trees on 15 green acres with an historic house in its center, called The Moorings, built by the Blair family that settled Silver Spring and owned Blair House, now the White House's Guest House on DC's Lafayette Square. Together, the parkland and historic manse are a priceless public green resource, an architectural treasure, and an historic site of local, state and national importance.

Jesup Blair Park is as irreplaceable and essential to an urbanizing Silver Spring as Central Park is to New York City. As population density and high-rise construction continues increases within downtown Silver Spring, the need for green space will become paramount. If the pandemic continues to persist in some form – which sadly seems likely – nature and ample green space adjacent to apartments and offices will become a necessity. Green space and access to nature in an urbanizing area is priceless.

It is essential that Jesup Blair Park be carefully managed as a natural, green respite from urban density, a regional green asset like NYC's Central Park, with shade trees, picnic grounds, ample walking paths, botanical gardens, and an amphitheatre. It should NOT be developed as an urban park for active recreation, especially recreation in need of hardscape; tennis courts, skate

parks, basketball courts and other single-focused recreational activities should instead be placed on new pocket parks created and distributed throughout the Downtown Commercial Core.

Regarding The Moorings: a diverse group of arts professionals (of which I'm a part), has been studying transforming the historic house into a central hub for a number of DMV non-profit arts organizations. These non-profits hope to use The Moorings for office, classroom/study, meeting/films and performance space, while using the park grounds –the amphitheatre and lawn – for performances, movies/film/videos, exhibitions, festivals, lectures and other arts activities. The arts groups would enliven the park day and night, seven days a week with activities for all ages and races, and the park land would in turn assist the arts, providing a shared central home for these organizations and an inviting outdoor environment for live performances regardless of pandemic surges.

In order to fulfill this vision of Jesup Blair Park as Silver Spring's own, bucolic Central Park, and as the arts gateway to Silver Spring/ Montgomery County/ Maryland from the District of Columbia, it is important that the acreage of Jesup Blair Park not be diminished by further outside intrusions. For that reason I am firmly opposed to enlarging the Montgomery College bridge that now intrudes into the park, built despite community opposition. Jesup Blair Park – the land and historic house – is a priceless asset for all of us who live in and love Silver Spring, and can never be replaced.

CLOSING

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and consider my views. And thank you for your hard work to create a positive future for Silver Spring. We sharej that goal.

Best regards Joyce Nalewajk Silver Spring, MD 20910

From:	Marcie Stickle/Geo French
To:	MCP-Chair
Subject:	SSDT/AC Testimony by Marcie Stickle, SSHS, Planning Board, Th., 12/2/21, Item # 8
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 9:24:19 AM
Attachments:	SSHS DTSS AC Testimony 12 2 21.docx

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

SSDT/AC Testimony by Marcie Stickle, Silver Spring Historical Society, Advocacy Chair, Before Planning Board, Th., 12/2/21, Item # 8, Attached,

Please Distribute to Planning Board Chair & Planning Board Members, 12/1/21 Thank you!

SSDT/AC Testimony by Marcie Stickle, Silver Spring Historical Society, Advocacy Chair Before Planning Board, Th., 12/2/21, Item # 8

Restoration of our historic Jesup Blair House [The Moorings], must swiftly be brought to fruition, and immediately re-entered into the CIP process! Our historic 15-acre Green Oasis of a Park is already active: The CIP process noted on the Parks chart for J.B. Park needs immediately to be switched to the House Restoration as its top priority, or a co-equal House Restoration CIP Category be immediately created! In fact, SSDT/AC P. 80 specifically refers to The Moorings: "Inside the contemplative zone consider going beyond the traditional passive uses by introducing active programs such as yoga, tai-chi, and other activities that can benefit of the natural settings of this zone including its beautiful restored historic building."

SSHS is poised to testify as always we have as requested by Parks Dept. in the previously active CIP process!

The Pandemic, as elsewhere in Parks, temporarily brought our House Restoration to a severe pause, a standstill, now is the time immediately to get back on track! Our House calls out now for re-activation! Our treasure, now a tight & dry shell, eagerly anticipates Restoration completion and vibrant use: An Artful, Diverse, Multi-Cultural, Inter-Generational, Socially Just, Joyful Destination!

SSHS enthusiastically endorses the stewardship of Carpe Diem Arts, Busy Graham, Founder & Executive Director, and her superb Board, and Team, as the lead tenant, guiding light, and organizing principle enlivening the Mansion's design, activities and mission visions.

Jesup Blair House will again become Jesup Blair COMMUNITY House as it was referred to between 1934 &1957 when it served as the S.S. Library! With Carpe Diem Arts' superb visionary Leadership, embracing, engaging all of the vibrant Arts & Humanities groups' creativities & abilities, J.B. House & its Green Oasis of Land will be a "Hub," a pro-active magnet drawing us all in to express, enjoy, share our pro-active creativity with each other & others! Busy Graham, Carpe Diem Arts Founder, Executive Director, & its superb Board, Team, & Advisory Council are experienced, pro-active, nurturing leaders in their fields. https://www.carpediemarts.org

Arts Advocate Busy Graham was bestowed the Mo Co Executive's Lifetime Impact Award 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PeXOE7oN4gM

"Graham echoed the celebratory sentiments of the evening while accepting her award for Lifetime Impact. 'Time and time again,' she stated, 'the arts and humanities have proven to be the most accessible and affordable way to celebrate what is right in the world and to give people of all ages the means to imagine and then create a better world for themselves. I believe we can rest assured that the arts and humanities will continue to thrive in Montgomery County.' "

"Arts Angel" Busy Graham receiving 2017 Sue Hess Maryland Arts Advocate of the Year Award:

https://www.culturespotmc.com/stories/getting-to-know-you/arts-angel/

https://carpediemarts.org/blogs/busy-s-blog/posts/busy-graham-receives-2017-sue-hess-maryland-arts-advocateof-the-year-award

SSHS will serve as the historic roots of the House & the Park, sharing The Moorings and Downtown Silver Spring's sweeping history!

Jesup Blair House & Park, "The Moorings," "The Anchor," is "The Peoples' Park," the Community's. All will be served through visiting the SSHS Archives, sharing in a variety of historical events we will hold in the Park & in

the House, e.g., Tours of the Trees, Re-enactments, "meet Lincoln's Postmaster General Montgomery Blair," who also represented the free formerly enslaved Dred Scott before the Supreme Court 1857; FREED, Female Re-enactors of Distinction, presentations, book signings, musical performances, celebrations!

SSHS has been promoting, extolling the virtues of the historic J.B. House & Park, "The Moorings," since the 1990s, significant at national, state, county, local levels, on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, National Register-eligible, a "public park in perpetuity," an Underground R.R. site, pre-Civil War, Civil War site, last remaining House & its surrounding Land, green oasis of 15 acres, of S.S.'s founding Blair family.

Around 2009, Parks Dept. asked us to join them in the House renovation, rehabilitation, restoration. Our vision as a partner is that the lowest level will house SSHS Archives & artifacts, once the House is restored. Upon request by Parks Cultural Division, SSHS annually testified before the County Council to assure that CIP Funding was to be provided for the historic House and other historical structures in the Parks System.

We project at least 1 Weekend Day a Month to hold an Open House for the Community. We are a completely volunteer 501(c)3. We will also hold appointments for researchers & community members to enjoy & "imbibe" our Archives stories. Our seeing the need for Park Grove interpretation and protection, we were honored to be asked to assist Parks in the creation of 3 "History in the Parks" Heritage Signs along the Park's walking path!

Celebrating Earth Day at The Moorings in its idyllic setting is a joy! Violet Blair Janin who bequeathed our "public park in perpetuity," wrote an eloquent Poem praising her beloved Oak Trees!

"I think of the joyous e'enings, Under our old oak trees, With the moonlight shadows moving, When Stirred by the gentle breeze."

SSHS is very excited and honored to be joining with Carpe Diem Arts &other vital Partners in the Restoration, Revitalization, Re-Activation of our Jesup Blair Community House!!

J.B. Park Discussion:

Retain Regulation Soccer Field, including retaining its moveable goal posts: Diverse, Multi-Cultural Adult Teams & Children's Teams play regularly on the Field, with their family & friends cheering them on from Park picnic tables & stone wall. Happening right now while I'm composing this Testimony! Sun. 11/28/21! When not in use for Soccer matches, Soccer practice, folks fly kites on windy days, throw Frisbees, throw balls & play baseball, do Yoga & Zumba!

Do not widen the Pedestrian Bridge into the Park, no more impermeable surfaces in the Park, No impacting the trees' critical root zones! Protecting the Trees are intrinsic to Violet's 1933 Will!

Strolling paths in the Park need to remain as such: Individuals & families stroll comfortably, some with strollers, baby buggies; runners run gently by.

Park paths do not need widening, and are not to become speeding extensions of the Metropolitan Branch Bike Trail, completely changing the nature of the Park. No more hardscape, no Skate Board Park! No Bridge widening. No Zip Line. No Dog Park! No Trenching.

Without changing the footprint of the Children's Playground, adding some swings, & especially the new modern see-saws the kids love, would be so used and enjoyed!

Socializing can take its natural place in a Garden in the Park. Jesup Blair Park is also an arboretum!
4.9 "Historic Preservation Resources"

We applaud the HP "Historic Preservation Resources" Diverse Analyses, especially:

4.9.3. New Sites or Districts to be Studied as future Historic Preservation Master Plan Amendment(s), PPs 133.

4.9.4. National Register of Historic Places, PPs 134-137.

We respectfully request that the Falkland North Parcel be included within the **Garden Apartment District:** Falkland North represents authentic Middle-Missing Housing since architect Justement's Falkland Apts' New Deal inception in 1936, Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt cutting the Blue Ribbon opening day. The North Parcel, many apartments with porches, is abundant with fragrant flowering & other significant trees, set in its green terrain with dramatic gorge, providing a natural Park setting with children's playground & picnic tables for Falkland North residents. At that time, William Blair's Land of the founding Blair family.

4.9.6. Cultural and Heritage Resources, especially 4.9.6 A, PPs. 137-138.

• Establish a legacy business registry to recognize the economic, cultural, and social contributions of longstanding businesses to the fabric of Silver Spring.

• Study potential incentives to preserve local, independently owned businesses.

Working Together, Equity & Reparations are best served through the Guidance and Protections of our 1967 Montgomery County Fair Housing Law, our "Open Housing Law," signed into law 1 year before the U.S. government's 1968 Fair Housing Law! These results are NOT achieved through the proposed Adjacent Communities Plan.

See https://www2.montgomerycountymd.gov/mcgportalapps/Press_Detail.aspx?Item_ID=22322

Mo Co's Open Housing Law, 7/20/1967, was proclaimed "nearly a full year before President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the federal Fair Housing Act into law on April 11, 1968."

Montgomery County Proclaims Open Housing Day For Immediate Release: Tuesday, July 31, 2018

history of the Montgomery County Office of Human rights https://montgomerycountymd.gov/humanrights/Resources/Files/civil_right_progress.pdf



Equity & Reparations can best be achieved rather through Already Existing Opportunities & Avenues, Including Adaptive Reuse! One golden Opportunity is the elegant mid-century modern Guardian Bank Building of glass panels and brick at Ga. & Cameron, by noted Mo Co architect Fon J. Montgomery, originally advertised to be developed for Millennials, however, nothing has happened there for years; what a wonderful superb spot for authentic Equitable, Equity Condos or Apt. Homes, what a terrific vital location in DTSS!

Also, PB's 8787 Ga. Ave! Including saving many of its wonderful trees, could have been the perfect Appropriate Model Spot for Equity, Equitable "housing, homes" of many different types, single-family homes, townhouses, condos, duplexes, small apt buildings! A great location also! Let's put on our thinking caps to arrive at other existing Equitable solutions! Let's Work Together!

Marcie Stickle, SSHS Advocacy Chair, 8515 Greenwood Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, marcipro@aol.com

SSHS MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the all volunteer 501(c)(3) Silver Spring Historical Society is to create and promote awareness and appreciation of downtown Silver Spring's heritage through sponsorship of educational activities and the preservation and protection of historical sites, structures, artifacts and archives.

See also Statements by Mo Co Taxpayers League, Mo Co Civic Federation, & Responsible Growth for Montgomery County, emphasizing Working Together to achieve "inclusiveness, diversity, prosperity."

From:	Deborah Chalfie
То:	<u>MCP-Chair</u>
Subject:	ADSW Statement for December 2, 2021 Hearing on Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Draft Plan
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 9:37:12 AM
Attachments:	ADSW statement to PB re SSDAC 12-1-21.pdf

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chairman Casey,

Please find attached the Art Deco Society of Washington's written statement for the record for the Planning Board's December 2, 2021 hearing on the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Draft Plan. I am signed up to testify at the hearing as well. We appreciate the Board's consideration of our views.

Sincerely, Deborah Chalfie, ADSW Preservation Chair



December 1, 2021

Montgomery County Planning Board 2425 Reedie Dr., 14th floor Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Draft Plan

Dear Chairman Anderson and Members of the Planning Board:

Founded in 1982, the Art Deco Society of Washington (ADSW) is a nonprofit membership organization covering the Washington DC region, whose mission is to foster awareness of, celebrate, and preserve the architectural, decorative, industrial, and cultural arts of the Art Deco era and adjacent modern movements of the 20th Century. Architectural preservation is a strong element of our mission, and we have had many successes, including in the downtown Silver Spring area. ADSW actively led the fight to preserve and restore the Silver Theatre, now the AFI & Cultural Center, and the Shopping Center at Colesville & Georgia. We also participated in supporting the preservation of the Falkland Apartments and the Canada Dry Building. ADSW has participated from the beginning of this process and appreciates the opportunity to submit its views on the Public Hearing Draft (Draft Plan).¹

ADSW commends the staff of the Historic Preservation Office for their meticulous research of the social history of downtown Silver Spring, and in particular its history related to racial segregation, discrimination, and the fight for civil rights. It is vital to have a complete history of historic resources, those aspects to be deplored and those to be celebrated. Their work greatly adds to our collective understanding of the true historic context of buildings and sites.

We also commend the staff's careful work and thoughtful recommendations with regard to the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. To that end, the Plan Draft states:

The community's sense of place relies upon several historic buildings such as the Silver Spring Shopping Center and Theatre, the Fillmore, Hecht's Building, Canada Dry Building, Dyers and Cleaners Building, and the North Washington Shopping Center. ... Silver Spring's historic buildings are critical to the community's character, collective memory, offer tangible connections to the past, opportunities for education and interpretation, and create a diversity of building types within the plan area.²

¹ Montgomery County Planning Dept., *Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Public Hearing Draft* (Fall 2021) [hereinafter *Draft Plan*], at <u>https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SSDAC-Public-Hearing-Draft_FINAL.pdf.</u>

² Id. at 129 (Fall 2021).

ADSW whole-heartedly agrees with these statements. In particular, Downtown Silver Spring's rich collection of Art Deco commercial and residential buildings does indeed provide "texture and depth to the architectural character of the plan area."³ We offer these comments in the hope that this plan expands preservation efforts of existing and new historic resources.

Silver Theater and Silver Spring Shopping Center

There can be no argument that the Silver Theater and Silver Spring Shopping Center are the historic crown jewel of downtown Silver Spring, and ADSW was proud to have played a central role in ensuring their preservation and restoration. The Center's parking lot is an integral part of the resource: it is within the resource boundaries and is an integral part of its historic context in that it was one of the first "park and shop" centers in the metropolitan area. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) already approved substantial incursions into the parking lot by permitting the creation of outdoor dining space to replace nearly half of the parking spaces in the lot. Fortunately, the dining space will be constructed (of unattached wood decking and movable furniture & planters) to be temporary and "completely reversible."⁴ Moreover, the lot will retain its historic use and character-defining shape, and there are no approved changes to the building, sidewalks, curbs, or canopy.

Still, ADSW is greatly concerned about the Draft Plan's apparent support for "further reimagining and activation"⁵ and continued "improvements ... to better draw pedestrians through the lot into the Ellsworth Place pedestrian mall."⁶ There is already a breezeway/pass-through leading directly from the middle of the Center to the pedestrian mall, existing sidewalks from both sides of the Center (Colesville Rd. side and Georgia Ave. side) leading to the breezeway, and direct access to the mall from Ellsworth, one very short block south from the Georgia Ave. entryway. There is simply no need for further "draws" through the Shopping Center to the mall, where there already is and will be more "public space."

ADSW does, however, support the recommendation to explore adding a "small-scaled, one-story building that is compatible with the architecture of the shopping center and respects the relationship between the shopping center and streets."⁷ As the plan notes, there used to be a small gas station there, and it would be fitting to see another small-scale business such as a small diner/coffee shop/ice cream shop to take that place. To make this work, however, the recently added perimeter landscaping and approved dining space would need to be reconsidered to make room for such an addition, restore sufficient parking, and permit easy ingress and egress.

Weller's Cleaners

ADSW strongly supports amending the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to add Weller's Cleaners.⁸ The Weller's Cleaners building, with its slanted, cantilevered roof, colorful porcelain panels, glass walls, and whimsical, iconic signage with clock, make it an excellent specimen of Googie architecture, a futuristic (and still cool!) form of modern architecture popularized in the late 1940s-early 1970s. Weller's

³ Id.

⁴ Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report, re: Silver Theater & Shopping Center, Case # 36/7-20A, at 30 (Feb. 5, 2020), available at <u>https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/I.K.-Multiple-Addresses-Silver-Spring-Staff-Report.pdf</u>.

⁵ Draft Plan, supra n. 1, at 130.

⁶ Id., at 25.

⁷ Id., at 130.

⁸ See id., at 133.

is a well-preserved example of Googie architecture,⁹ rare in Montgomery County, and the only such resource in the Plan area. Moreover, the building was designed by a prominent local architect, Ted Englehardt, who designed other notable, midcentury modern buildings in downtown Silver Spring. It is vital this unique historic resource receive long-warranted protection under the Master Plan.

Garden and Mid-Rise Apartment Complex Historic District

ADSW also strongly supports the Draft Plan's proposed creation of a Garden and Mid-Rise Apartment Complex Historic District to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Two of the apartment complexes to be included in the proposed district are Art Deco apartments that have already been separately incorporated in the Master Plan (i.e., **Montgomery Arms**) or Locational Atlas (i.e., **Spring Garden Apartments**), however both complexes do belong in a larger historic district that marks the significance of the Garden City movement.

ADSW also agrees with the inclusion of the south parcels of the **Falkland Apartments** in the proposed Historic District, but we continue to be disappointed that the north parcel of the Falklands – also developed as part of the New Deal to combine affordable housing with livable surroundings and green space – appears to be slated for high-density redevelopment that merely "striv[es]"¹⁰ for, but does not require, no net loss of market rate affordable housing. The County is undertaking many initiatives to retain and increase the supply of "missing middle" affordable housing, yet these multifamily garden apartments are already here, and remain more affordable than many of the newer high-rise apartments in downtown Silver Spring. ADSW urges the Planning Board to reconsider destruction of the north complex.

Other Additions to the National Register

For some time now, ADSW has believed that mid-century modern architecture is the next frontier of historic preservation -- not only as unique examples of modernist design and architecture, but also because of the stories these buildings can tell. They coincide with a formative period in the County's history as both a DC suburban bedroom community and as an identifiable community in its own right. As staff have ably documented, this period was also a formative time in the community's and nation's history, as the civil rights and other social justice movements raged and made an impact on policies and practices.

ADSW thus supports the Draft Plan's recommendation to add the **American National Bank Building**, the **Perpetual Building**, the brutalist **Montgomery Center Building**, the **Operations Research Inc. Building**, and the other office buildings listed in the Draft Plan¹¹ to the National Register. Adding these buildings to the National Register would represent a good start, but would not furnish protection from substantial alteration or demolition. The County's Locational Atlas for Historic Resources has only included piecemeal updates since its creation in 1976, during which time buildings erected in the 1950s and 1960s are now 60-70 years old and eligible for greater protection. We urge the Planning Board to add recommendations to the Draft Plan that at least some of these mid-century modern office buildings be added to the Locational Atlas as well.

There are also many Art Deco buildings that have not yet but should be surveyed for addition to the Locational Atlas. The old **Coca-Cola Bottling** building on East-West Highway (now National Tire) is

⁹ Clare Lise Kelly, Montgomery Modern 96 (2015).

¹⁰ See Draft Plan, supra n. 1, at 48.

¹¹ *Id.*, at 134.

already slated for demolition to build a new urban park,¹² which illustrates the importance of being proactive in designating historic resources. ADSW urges the Planning Board to add some unprotected art deco buildings (e.g, **Crisfield's**, the old **Silver Spring Tire Co**./now Hertz rental cars building) to the list of buildings in the plan district that should be surveyed and placed in the Locational Atlas.

Fenton Village

During the development of the Draft Plan, Planning staff emphasized that there was strong community support for keeping Fenton Village largely as is. The community appreciates the area's history of: providing a toehold for small entrepreneurs, often recent immigrants; nurturing small businesses that serve diverse communities; and maintaining the small-scale of its older buildings and nearby street parking. For the most part, the Draft Plan evinces an intent to preserve these features, making some improvements to the streetscape and creating some green space. But, the Plan also repeatedly refers to new development in Fenton Village, especially between Georgia and Fenton, and behind Fenton, allowing changes in height and types (zoning) of developments, and eliminating parking. Such changes could easily change the character of this "much-loved"¹³ district, and should be significantly constrained.

On behalf of the Art Deco Society of Washington, thank you for the opportunity to share our views. If you have any questions, please contact me or Steve Knight, ADSW President, at president@adsw.org.

Sincerely,

All Cuty.

Deborah Chalfie, ADSW Preservation Chair dchalfie@adsw.org

¹² ADSW urges the County to consider whether any part of the Coca-Cola building might be preserved and reused, for instance as a gateway into the new park. At a minimum, the building should be photographed and documented for the HPC's records.

¹³ *Id.*, at 17.

From:	Seven Oaks / Evanswood Citizens" Association
То:	MCP-Chair
Subject:	Written Testimony re: Silver Spring Downtown Plan
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 10:50:38 AM
Attachments:	SOECA DTSS Plan Letter to Planning Board.docx

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Dear Chair Anderson and the Planning Board,

Please see the attached letter from SOECA (the Seven Oaks–Evanswood Citizens Association). We're the neighborhood civic org that represents folks who live (approximately) between Colesvile and Wayne from Spring Street out to Franklin and Flower Aves. We cover a pretty large chunk of the geography to the northeast of downtown Silver Spring, and the new DTSS Plan includes a section of our area within the "adjacent communities" part of the plan.

As noted in the letter, we humbly ask that the Planning Board consider beefing-up aspects of the Plan that focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety and infrastructure. To the extent that the "adjacent communities" are going to be considered an integral part of downtown Silver Spring, we hope that you'll keep in mind several of the trouble-spots noted in our letter. These areas do not currently provide the kind of non-motorist connectivity and comfort that I know the Planning Board desires for the area.

Thank you for your thoughtful and diligent work.

All the best, Chris Reynolds SOECA President

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This message was sent on behalf of the Seven Oaks–Evanswood Citizens' Association. Our website: <u>http://soeca.org/</u> Follow us on Facebook <u>facebook.com/SOECASilverSpring</u> and Twitter @soecatweet December 1, 2021

Casey Anderson, Chair Montgomery County Planning Board Wheaton, MD

Re: Draft Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan

Dear Chair Anderson,

At the request of our Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee, the Seven Oaks–Evanswood Citizens Association (SOECA) is writing regarding safety concerns in our portion of the "adjacent neighborhoods" section of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan. SOECA embraces the Plan goal to create an area "that is better connected and characterized by green, climate-resilient, walkable streets that are safe and comfortable for everyone – pedestrians, bikers, transit riders and drivers."

Our newly reconstituted Traffic Committee has recently identified several public streets where that goal is going to be a challenge. SOECA requests that the Montgomery County Planning Board and Planning Department include in the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan additional work focused on resolving unsafe vehicular use of "adjacent neighborhood" streets, including local arterials and state highways, in support of the plan's goals. We look forward to working with you to make our adjacent community safer and more welcoming for all!

As a reminder, the SOECA portion of the "adjacent communities" includes Ellsworth Urban Park, the forthcoming Gudelsky Child Development Center (\approx 180 children and \approx 50 staff), and the Seabury Nursing Home at Springvale and Wayne. Just outside the Plan's border are Sligo Creek Elementary and SSIMS (\approx 1800 students and \approx 150 staff), Sligo Creek Park and Trail, Zinnia (formerly Mrs. K's Tollhouse), a preschool at St. Luke Lutheran Church, and the forthcoming Purple Line Station at Dale Drive and Wayne Avenue. There is significant pedestrian and bicycle traffic to each of these destinations, but there are several neighborhood streets that cater almost exclusively to the desires of drivers and that lack sufficient infrastructure to adequately protect other road users.

Within the plan area, Bonifant St. and Ellsworth Rd. are designated as bicycle routes, but lack appropriate infrastructure. Ellsworth is slated to be a "greenway," but we are concerned about the safety of all road users, particularly as the new daycare center opens at the old library site. According to an <u>October 2020</u> <u>Hearing Examiner</u> determination, the future Gudelsky child development center at the old Silver Spring Library expects Ellsworth to be the main route to and from the center. Gudelsky's only traffic-mitigation was funding the traffic signal redesign at Dale and Colesville. Some child-care clients will be accessing the facility via bus—there is a stop mid-block between Noyes and Spring St.—and will need to cross Colesville at the unsignalized crosswalk, there. We think there are opportunities to improve the road design to better serve the community's needs, here.

Here is the list of other local roads, arterials, and state highways that our community views as especially challenging to non-motorist travelers—and often to drivers too:

- a) Dale Drive: Inconsistent speed limit signs; dangerous crosswalks; speeding. (Note: This is issue for all of Dale Drive from Piney Branch to Georgia Avenue. Currently, only the span from Colesville to Georgia is getting significant road-safety improvements.)
- b) Bonifant between Fenton and Cedar: Large amounts of cut-through traffic, drivers disregarding stop signs and speed limits; illegal heavy-truck traffic (very large trucks and equipment that ignore the gross vehicle weight restriction on that stretch).
- c) Dartmouth (between Dale and Wayne): This is used as a bypass by drivers to avoid the intersection at Wayne and Dale where delays are common due to Purple Line construction; Purple Line construction vehicles also use this as a cut-through; many drivers disregard the "no left turn" sign on Wayne; high traffic volume, speeding, and reckless driving; note that this is right across from Sligo Creek ES and SSIMS.
- d) Colesville Road: Needs re-imagining.
 - i) South of Sligo Creek Parkway: The reversible lane causes accidents; frequent accidents especially at the intersection with Dale; speeding; noise from cars with illegally modified exhaust systems; residents can't safety access driveways; sidewalks on both sides are extremely narrow, have no buffer from the road, and are made worse by very poor management of vegetation and road debris
- e) Ellsworth Drive (Dale to Cedar): This street is very, very wide, which encourages speeding; many cyclists and pedestrians, including many children use Ellsworth to get to DTSS; the daycare center coming to old SS library will increase traffic; the county designated Ellsworth Drive as a bike route and future "complete" street, but we would like a clearer path for improving this stretch of road.
- f) Chelsea Heights: Residents are forced to exit from the development by turning right onto Springvale, then left on Pershing to exit the neighborhood; Pershing has no sidewalks and the intersection at Dale and Pershing is hazardous due to poor sight lines.

Thank you very much for including our request in your review of the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan. We hope that the Plan can be an opportunity to make road safety improvements in conjunction with its other important goals.

Sincerely,

Chris Reynolds President, Seven Oaks–Evanswood Citizens Association (SOECA)

Jean Cavanaugh Chair, SOECA Traffic and Pedestrian Safety Committee

From:	Jane Redicker
То:	<u>MCP-Chair</u>
Subject:	Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan - GSSCC Comments for the Record
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 11:12:30 AM
Attachments:	SSCACP - GSSCC Comments - 11-30-21.pdf

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Attached please find comments and concerns of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, submitted for the record, on the public hearing draft of the proposed Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Jane Redicker

President & CEO Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce 8601 Georgia Avenue #203 Silver Spring, MD 20910 Office: (301) 565-3777 www.gsscc.org

Business is the most effective social program on earth; it has lifted millions out of poverty.





November 30, 2021

The Honorable Casey Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board 2425 Reedie Drive 14th Floor Wheaton, MD 20902

Re: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan

Dear Chair Anderson and Members of the Board:

On behalf of the leadership of the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, I appreciate the opportunity to provide comments for the record on the Public Hearing Draft of the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

Much has changed in Silver Spring since the adoption of the 2000 Silver Spring Central Business District Sector Plan. Indeed, many of those changes support the need for a review and update of the plan for Silver Spring. Unfortunately, despite the assertations of the Planning Department staff in the draft plan, many of the goals in the 2000 Plan did not come to fruition. As such, we believe that the Planning Staff's analysis of the current Silver Spring environment paints a false picture of the current state of Silver Spring and is not grounded in reality.

In the draft, staff describes downtown Silver Spring as "a vibrant urban area. . .[boasting] a vibrant retail market [and]. . . a center for arts, retail, entertainment, and business that draws visitors and consumers from across the county and the region. . ."

Sadly, this does not describe the perspective and experience of many business and property owners in our community.

Commercial building owners talk of a dwindling commercial office market where current tenants are leaving and few, if any, have been willing to consider coming in. Ground floor retail and restaurant owners describe their struggles with the loss of a daytime stream of customers that some will attribute to the loss of the Discovery headquarters, an event which staff barely acknowledges in the public hearing draft. (More than three years later, only one tenant occupies one floor of this iconic building.)

Office workers and business owners lament the arrival of all the bike lanes where they see few, if any, bicyclists, but do experience inconvenient and unsafe disruptions in traffic flow. They hear customers complain about cars parked away from the curb, creating other safety and visibility issues.

Owners and managers of the apartment buildings in downtown talk of complaints from their residents who struggle with a "nighttime economy" of late-night bars and clubs, whose priorities are not in sync with those who have chosen to live here. Business and property owners also bemoan many of the green spaces and parks that are more often inhabited by those in need of social services than those who live and work nearby. (The exception is the dog park at the old library site, which is very popular.)

There are a few bright spots. United Therapeutics has continued to expand its operations and its footprint in downtown. The Housing Opportunities Commission is bringing its headquarters here. The Fillmore attracts patrons locally and from around the region. A world-class aquatic center is being built in downtown Silver Spring. And, numerous high-rise apartment buildings have been completed, adding more 5,000 housing units, equating to new residents. (Sadly, however, some of those apartment buildings were previously envisioned as commercial office space, at least in part.)

But, from a neighborhood health standpoint, we need eyes and feet on the street in our commercial districts during the day. The absence of office workers, who spend thousands of dollars each every year at stores and restaurants near their work, is a death sentence for some commercial districts where the restaurants and retail uses rely heavily on daytime revenue from office workers. The absence of these daytime workers can lead to business commercial districts that feel less safe to the people who are doing the shopping.

At the end of the introduction, staff "imagines a Silver Spring of the future that is diverse, distinctive and thriving. . .will continue to be a great place to work, do business, and enjoy the arts; a downtown that is home to small independent businesses, cutting-edge tech companies, hubs for science and research, educational institutions, and arts organizations that draw patrons from around the region."

These are worthy aspirational goals. However, after reviewing the current draft, it is difficult to see how the recommendations offered will accomplish this.

The staff's "Concept Framework Plan" includes: "activity zones, residential area, destinations, parks and open spaces." But where are the business hubs? Where do employers and jobs fit into this framework? Even the stated plan goals – Diversity, Connectivity, Resiliency, Community Health – don't mention business and commerce.

The draft relates the plan to the THRIVE Montgomery 2050 vision for Silver Spring, saying that it "advances Thrive's goal to integrate parks and public spaces along with economic development strategies and land use planning in order to attract employers and workers, build social connections, encourage healthy lifestyles, and create vibrant places." But it doesn't address how parks and public spaces will bring employers and jobs. While the goal is laudable, the means to achieve the goal are missing.

The draft "envisions a future in which downtown Silver Spring is among the region's premier office markets, has continued to grow its profile as a unique retail destination, and has a diverse base of high-quality jobs in numerous industries making it resilient to evolving economic conditions and an attractive place to work and do business in Montgomery County." It mentions "incentiviz[ing] approximately 44,000 jobs in downtown Silver Spring, a 50% increase from what is currently existing." But it does not include specific strategies for how to realize this vision.

The plan does talk about, "Improv[ing] the public realm to make downtown Silver Spring more attractive for businesses, retailers and consumers." But where is the research data that demonstrates how "a green, maintained, well-connected, walkable, safe, multimodal public realm" will attract employers and business growth to an area? If it exists, it is not cited in the plan. Are there case studies that show how a community with a dwindling commercial market was reinvigorated (and brought in actual employers and jobs) because it built a green "realm" that replaced streets and parking with bike lanes? Did staff get input from current property owners that are now losing tenants? Did they reach out to corporations and commercial site selection experts to get input on how to successfully attract employers to an area? Did commercial property owners say that taking additional property to require bike lanes and other green space helps to attract businesses? If so, the plan does not discuss what these experts recommend or where such success has occurred.

The plan mentions making Silver Spring into "a premier office market, with a special focus on start-ups, associations, and government agencies." But, this is unrealistic and perhaps not financially feasible for property owners. Most associations are not as financially healthy as corporations and will likely be looking for lower-cost office space. Latest reports are that the Federal government is shrinking, not expanding its office footprint. And, start-up companies are typically looking for low-cost office space. These do not sound like options that would create a "premier" office market.

Likewise, the recommendation to "Encourage the conversion of obsolete office space to other uses (shortterm or long-term),including residential (condominiums or rentals), hotels/hospitality centers, healthcare facilities, laboratory/research facilities, education facilities, and non-profit service centers" does not necessarily support the vision of Silver Spring as one of "the region's premier office markets." Nor does considering "an incentive for property owners with underutilized street level retail spaces to build and fit out the space for a retail incubator managed by a mission-oriented non-profit organization in which entrepreneurs can try new retail concepts." Who bears the cost of this incentive? Is this something that the Planning Staff has discussed with County government officials? Or with any of the property owners having such spaces?

The suggestion that "Downtown North will build on the connection between the state-of-the-art South County Regional Recreation and Aquatic Center and the world-renowned United Therapeutics campus to create a unique health- and health-sciences- focused district" is interesting, but, again, there are no concrete ideas about how this plan is going to accomplish attracting more health-science businesses to this area. Did staff talk with experts at United Therapeutics about what kinds of businesses would be interested in relocating in this area and how to attract them?

The draft plan talks of "expanding the Metro Center District as commercial center." But this is the "district" in which the former Discovery headquarters building is located. And, despite its proximity to the Metro, its existing park and green space, and its accessibility to the new cycle track, it has not attracted more than one tenant. How do planners expect turn around this situation?

The draft plan mentions "Increasing zoning flexibility and incentivizing additional height and FAR" in Downtown North. That's a good thing. But it won't necessarily help the oft-mentioned ground floor retail. The retail spaces on Cameron have been vacant for many years. Clearly, there isn't enough daytime street traffic to support retail in these locations. While the plan hopes that improving the public realm will revitalize the commercial market, the reality is that parks don't bring shoppers. Neither do wide sidewalks that don't have businesses along them. Unless there is a solid strategy for attracting a for-profit office market to these and other locations, ground floor retail will not survive.

A number of recommendations made in the draft plan simply won't work. Expanding the development site at Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue to include the adjacent two-story commercial property for a signature mixed-use development has been suggested. Many would agree that this is a laudable idea, since having a two-story commercial building so close to a Metro station doesn't make sense. But these properties are privately-owned, and while this idea has been floated numerous times over the years, the owners have not been interested in coming together. This situation also exists with the individual low-rise buildings along Colesville Road between Georgia Avenue and Fenton Street and on the Sherwin-Williams paint site along Georgia. How does the planning staff propose to incentivize property owners to come together now? Did they speak with the owners? Did they ask them?

The draft plan also includes a number of desirable, but aspirational recommendations that would come at a large financial cost. A pedestrian and bicycle connection from East-West Highway to the western terminus of Silver Spring Avenue in the Ripley District and a "world class arrival center" around the Metro station are nice ideas, but who would pay for the cost of these? Additional lighting and other

safety improvements in the tunnel and Colesville underpass would be welcome safety and security additions. It appears that the Planning Department expects that future developers would bear the financial burden of building these, something we will address in the next paragraph. But there is another cost, the cost of upkeep, particularly for something like lighting maintenance. Sadly, it is not unusual for Montgomery County to find the necessary capital dollars to build things but is not willing to allocate the resources for continued upkeep and maintenance.

We assume that staff expects that the cost of some of these infrastructure improvements would be borne by those who undertake future development, either by providing the benefits on site or paying into a fund for the benefit of the broader community. However, we believe that public infrastructure is a public responsibility and should not be added to the already high cost of private development. Oftentimes, these public amenities come at the expense of the property owner. Widened sidewalks and streets reduce the commercial footprint or remove areas for business to occur along the street, all making the project less financially viable and less likely to occur. While we agree that an appropriate mix of affordable housing will assure that many who work in our community can afford to live here, the recommended increases for expanding density and height for optional method development projects (minimum of 15% MPDUs) is not financially feasible. Likewise, the recommendation to require up to 30% MPDUs, along with the income thresholds, in public/private partnerships is not realistic. Silver Spring is not Bethesda. The cost of constructing a building is the same in both communities, but the market rental rates are not. The return on investment takes longer to achieve in Silver Spring because the rents are lower. This reality makes it even more unrealistic to expect developers in Silver Spring to absorb the cost of all these extras that benefit the public at large.

A major concern: Why is public utility infrastructure not considered public benefits, the cost of which should be borne by the public? It is not unusual for a project to be halted or delayed because the developer was being asked to subsidize the cost of providing not only the infrastructure needed by the project, but also public infrastructure that should have been kept up using public dollars.

Another issue we must raise: The draft plan, a major priority of the Planning Department, is increasing bike lanes and trails in Silver Spring, and decreasing accessibility for autos. Based on observations by many of our business owner members, the existing bike lanes, about which they complain, are rarely, if ever, used. This subjective data is not accepted by the Planning Department or the County's Department of Transportation. Therefore, we are exploring an effort to undertake a life-in-the-day count to assess usage of this project that has come at a large cost to the County.

Something we can support: While we question whether the draft plan's emphasis on providing more green space will help to bring more business and economic prosperity to Silver Spring, we do support one recommendation in this category. We agree that Jesup Blair Park should be both a gateway to Silver Spring from Washington DC and a unique destination in the downtown. This effort is long overdue and it is something that the Montgomery County Parks Department can undertake immediately. You own the property. It is public space. The improvements can and should be included in the Parks Department Capital Budget and paid for with public funds to benefit the public.

In conclusion, we urge the Planning Board to direct staff to refocus portions of the draft plan to place Business and Commerce among the plan's stated goals and to provide clear and concrete details about how its other recommendations will bring increased business, jobs, and economic prosperity to Silver Spring. We need more large employers to make sure that our small businesses survive. We want our "unique retail market," celebrated in the plan, to survive. But it won't survive without daytime economy. We need that oft referenced "ground floor retail" to thrive, but it won't without a vibrant daytime economy brought about by commercial office development. Yes, the pandemic has, in many ways, changed the way we work, but not everyone is going to be working from home. Many have already headed back to the office, evidenced by the number of cars we are seeing on major arteries during rush hour times. We want a thriving, vibrant, and welcoming Silver Spring, where everyone – business owners, employees, residents, visitors, patrons – want to live, work, and play, and run a business.

A final note: This plan was developed in the midst of a worldwide pandemic that changed the face of Silver Spring in many ways. We have expressed our concerns that some of the assumptions made by the plan drafters may not reflect current market realities, and that future market conditions may not support the development that will be required to achieve the planner's goals. As such, it may become clear in a very short time that many of the plan's aspirational goals will not come to fruition. Therefore, we suggest that the draft acknowledge these factors and provide a mechanism for the plan to be quickly revisited and perhaps revised through the Master Plan Amendment process, should future circumstances warrant.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns, comments, and suggestions,

Reduch

Jane Redicker President & CEO

From:	Busy Graham
То:	MCP-Chair
Cc:	Dianne Harrison; Jerry A. McCoy
Subject:	Written testimony to be presented by Carpe Diem Arts at December 2 Planning Board Hearing re. DTSS/AC Plan- re. historic Jesup Blair House and Park
Date:	Wednesday, December 1, 2021 12:03:49 PM
Attachments:	Testimony for planning board meeting 12-2-21 from Carpe Diem Arts re. Jesup Blair House & Park .pdf

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

TO: Casey Anderson, Chair Montgomery County Planning Board 2425 Reedie Drive Wheaton, MD 20902

FROM: Dianne Harrison, Board Member Carpe Diem Arts, Inc. with input from Busy Graham, Founder-Executive Director who is unable to attend the hearing

RE: Testimony to be delivered 12-2-21 at Planning Board meeting re. Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan (DTSS/AC)

See attached document for download purposes.

Written testimony prepared for Montgomery County Planning Board Thursday, December 2, 2021

Re. Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (SSDC/AC)

by Dianne Harrison, Board Member, Carpe Diem Arts, Inc.

Thank you Chair Casey Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board--- for this opportunity to present our testimony at the Public Hearing for the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

I speak today with a proposal to restore historic Jesup Blair House in South Silver Spring for community use.

My name is Dianne Harrison. I am a member of the Carpe Diem Arts Board of Directors

and a business owner in Montgomery County.

Carpe Diem Arts is a nonprofit community arts organization based in Silver Spring---known for its high quality and culturally diverse programs and extensive outreach to schools and communities throughout Montgomery County.

A primary focus is on the Silver Spring and Takoma Park area---and on bringing programs to under-resourced communities. Through creative partnerships with housing developments, social service agencies, schools and libraries, senior centers, and the County Recreation Department, Carpe Diem is able to expand its reach and deepen its impact.

Carpe Diem's program participants include preschoolers, children and youth, families, special needs audiences, and seniors. Our signature programs include the Daily Antidote of Song, Jump Start with the Arts, Youth ArtBeat after-school programs, Arts Alive for seniors, our summer arts and language immersion camps, Ukes on the Move, and the Healthy Families|Healthy Communities program in collaboration with Brass Ring Company. Carpe Diem receives general operating support from the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County and the Maryland State Arts Council.

I am here today to testify in support of the rehabilitation of the historic Jesup Blair House, located at the gateway to Silver Spring, Maryland, adjacent to Montgomery College's Cultural Arts Center and the Cafritz Arts building----and is within easy reach of bus stops on Georgia Avenue, and walking distance to both the Takoma and Silver Spring metro stops.

This remarkable historic property, also known as "The Moorings," was built in c. 1850 and is connected to the founding family of Silver Spring. The house is surrounded by 14.5 acres of beautiful park land and old growth trees. Just 7 miles from the famous Blair House in Washington, D.C., the Jesup Blair House was built by Preston Blair for his son James.

Civil War historians are fully aware of the significance of the Jesup Blair property as being the last building standing in Silver Spring that was an integral part of the Civil War's Battle of Fort Stevens. Silver Spring constituted the Confederate front lines, and this is where the attack on the Capital was repulsed.

The Jesup Blair House is also significant from the perspective of the Underground Railroad.

A violent episode unfolded in 1850 in front of Jesup Blair House, when a posse confronted, then shot into, a coach driven by an abolitionist with two enslaved persons aboard on their way up through the Underground Railway to freedom. Both escaped, but one was recaptured and the other turned himself in—and then escaped again to become a chaplain

in the United States Colored Troops when the war came.

With dozens of languages spoken within a few mile radius, Jesup Blair House in Silver Spring could showcase and communicate its past while looking boldly forward into its future of diversity and dynamism.

The Jesup Blair House will lift up all Silver Spring and other Montgomery County residents with programming and performances that connect neighbors to neighbors through the arts, while bringing cultural and artistic expression to the incredibly diverse communities of Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and northern DC.

With tenants of the building promoting inclusion and anti-racism as they provide arts and education to the community, Jesup Blair House will establish itself as a beacon for inclusion and multiculturalism, worthy of its place along the educational heritage trail of the Underground Railway in Maryland.

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This is the chance to rescue and preserve one of Silver Spring's most important and most at risk—historical monuments, and to energize it with programming that lifts up the present and future residents of Silver Spring, while honoring its past.

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JESUP BLAIR HOUSE

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NOTE: Many other possibilities are in the wings for additional programming partners--particularly for the presenting of outdoor festivals and special events.

Written testimony prepared for Montgomery County Planning Board Thursday, December 2, 2021

Re. Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (SSDC/AC) by Dianne Harrison, Board Member, Carpe Diem Arts, Inc.

Thank you Chair Casey Anderson and members of the Montgomery County Planning Board--for this opportunity to present our testimony at the Public Hearing for the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan.

I speak today with a proposal to restore historic Jesup Blair House in South Silver Spring for community use.

My name is Dianne Harrison. I am a member of the Carpe Diem Arts Board of Directors and a business owner in Montgomery County.

Carpe Diem Arts is a nonprofit community arts organization based in Silver Spring---known for its high quality and culturally diverse programs and extensive outreach to schools and communities throughout Montgomery County.

A primary focus is on the Silver Spring and Takoma Park area---and on bringing programs to under-resourced communities. Through creative partnerships with housing developments, social service agencies, schools and libraries, senior centers, and the County Recreation Department, Carpe Diem is able to expand its reach and deepen its impact.

Carpe Diem's program participants include preschoolers, children and youth, families, special needs audiences, and seniors. Our signature programs include the Daily Antidote of Song, Jump Start with the Arts, Youth ArtBeat after-school programs, Arts Alive for seniors, our summer arts and language immersion camps, Ukes on the Move, and the Healthy Families|Healthy Communities program in collaboration with Brass Ring Company. Carpe Diem receives general operating support from the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County and the Maryland State Arts Council.

I am here today to testify in support of the rehabilitation of the historic Jesup Blair House, located at the gateway to Silver Spring, Maryland, adjacent to Montgomery College's Cultural Arts Center and the Cafritz Arts building----and is within easy reach of bus stops on Georgia Avenue, and walking distance to both the Takoma and Silver Spring metro stops.

This remarkable historic property, also known as "The Moorings," was built in c. 1850 and is connected to the founding family of Silver Spring. The house is surrounded by 14.5 acres of beautiful park land and old growth trees. Just 7 miles from the famous Blair House in Washington, D.C., the Jesup Blair House was built by Preston Blair for his son James.

Civil War historians are fully aware of the significance of the Jesup Blair property as being the last building standing in Silver Spring that was an integral part of the Civil War's Battle of Fort

Stevens. Silver Spring constituted the Confederate front lines, and this is where the attack on the Capital was repulsed.

The Jesup Blair House also is significant from the perspective of the Underground Railroad. A violent episode unfolded in 1850 in front of Jesup Blair House, when a posse confronted, then shot into, a coach driven by an abolitionist with two enslaved persons aboard on their way up through the Underground Railway to freedom. Both escaped, but one was recaptured and the other turned himself in—and then escaped again to become a chaplain in the United States Colored Troops when the war came.

With dozens of languages spoken within a few mile radius, Jesup Blair House in Silver Spring could showcase and communicate its past while looking boldly forward into its future of diversity and dynamism.

The Jesup Blair House will lift up all Silver Spring and other Montgomery County residents with programming and performances that connect neighbors to neighbors through the arts, while bringing cultural and artistic expression to the incredibly diverse communities of Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and northern DC.

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Forwarded message % Marcie 12-1-21

Any individual or organization may submit a written statement for consideration by the Planning Board.

Written comments must be received in the Chair's office no later than 12 noon the day before the Planning Board hearing date, referencing the hearing date and item, to be reviewed by the Board and included in the official record of the hearing.

Comments should be transmitted via e-mail to MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org faxed to Chair Casey Anderson at 301-495-1320, or addressed to: Casey Anderson, Chair Montgomery County Planning Board 2425 Reedie Drive Wheaton. MD 20902.

https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda-item/december-02-2021/ https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SSDAC-Public-Hearing-Draft_FIN AL.pdf

6:30 pm PLANNING BOARD MEETING CONTINUES Item 8 Public Hearing for Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan ATTACHMENT 1 – SSDAC Public Comments ATTACHMENT 2 – SSDAC Comment Summary

A. Margolies 8:30 pm ADJOURN