

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Dan Reed <dreed@ggwash.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 12:33 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Greater Greater Washington comments on Weller's Dry Cleaners
Attachments: Comments on Weller's Dry Cleaners.pdf
Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Dear Chair Jeff Zyontz and members of the Planning Board:

Please find attached Greater Greater Washington's testimony in opposition to historic designation for Weller's Dry Cleaners, which is Item 5 in tomorrow's hearing. I will also be present to deliver this testimony, and am happy to answer any questions about our position.

Best regards,
Dan



Dan Reed, AICP (he/they)
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington
<https://ggwash.org>
(202) 256-7238

Think cities are great? Want them to be greater? [Support our work](#) and be part of the change!



February 23, 2023

Montgomery County Planning Board
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission
2425 Reedie Drive
Wheaton, Maryland 20902

Dear Members of the Planning Board:

My name is Dan Reed and I'm the Regional Policy Director for Greater Greater Washington, a nonprofit that works to advance racial, economic, and environmental justice in land use, transportation, and housing throughout Greater Washington. I'm also a Silver Spring resident living a few blocks from Weller's Dry Cleaners. We ask the Planning Board to reject historic designation for this property.

Mid-century modern design has value; it is considered emblematic of the 1950s and 1960s. But is that value sufficient to warrant historic designation of this property? That's a serious question. Recognizing the consequences of such a designation, we argue that it does not.

The Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan identifies Weller's and several other buildings from this time period as potential candidates for historic designation. The plan notes that Weller's was designed by a "prominent local architect" and operated by the same person for 55 years, and that the building represents the Googie style, which was frequently used for auto-oriented businesses, meaning the parking lot is historic too. The plan also notes that Mr. Weller built his shop at a time when Silver Spring was predominantly white and deeply segregated.

The notable architectural style is not sufficient to justify historic designation of the structure, let alone its adjacent parking lot. We urge the Planning Board to consider the ripple effects of such a decision. Historic designation would undermine the County's goals related to racial and socioeconomic equity, housing affordability, and environmental sustainability.

Mr. Weller was able to build a life, a business, and wealth here, and thus we ask the Board to consider how designating this property historic might harm current and future generations' ability to do the same. We have a regional and a national housing shortage. Home prices in Montgomery County have risen by double digits in the past three years because there aren't enough homes. Downtown Silver Spring is one of the few places where Montgomery County allows new homes today. Designating this property as historic would mean preventing the possibility of developing housing that would enable more families to establish themselves in Silver Spring, as Mr. Weller did.

The Washington, DC region is great  and it can be greater.

80 M Street SE, Suite 100, Washington, DC 20003
info@ggwash.org



This building sits on a block that is owned by a family who rented the building out to a tenant while considering long-term plans to redevelop the entire site, potentially with apartments. As the *Washington Post* reported, historic designation did not factor into their plans. Restricting what they can do with nearly half of their property by mandating it remain a single-story building with a parking lot effectively says, because other people were here first, you suddenly have to work within the constraints of the world they lived in 70 years ago.

It is difficult not to hear some of the conversations my neighbors have had about this building and wonder if that's the point: they want to keep people out, and preserve a place that many of us do not remember and at one time, due to segregation, could not even patronize.

I want to close by asking the Board to consider why buildings like Weller's Dry Cleaners are considered historic and others are not. Next door to Weller's is a high-rise apartment building called Silver Spring Towers. It arguably has a significant history by the same standards as this one: it was built by Jerry Wolman, a prolific developer who built thousands of apartments across the DC area, including Summit Hills and Georgian Towers, the building that caught fire last weekend. Wolman gained national attention for building the 100-story John Hancock Center in Chicago, and as the hapless owner of the Philadelphia Eagles. None of his buildings are recommended for any historic designation, but they are a notable part of our history, and they've given thousands of people the chance to build lives here in Silver Spring and add to our history further.

We want to give as many people as possible the chance to live in and leave their mark on Silver Spring, and sometimes that means other things need to make room for them. We urge that the Planning Board reject historic designation for this building.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments. I am happy to discuss any questions or concerns you have by phone at 202/256-7238 or by email at dreed@ggwash.org, and we look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,

Dan Reed
Regional Policy Director
Greater Greater Washington

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Jerry A. McCoy <sshhistory@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 11:26 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Cc: marcipro@aol.com; Jerry McCoy
Subject: Public Hearing Draft Plan for Weller's Dry Cleaning: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

The Silver Spring Historical Society enthusiastically supports the Master Plan designation of the Weller's Dry Cleaning Building, located since 1961 at 8237 Fenton Street in downtown Silver Spring, MD.

The Society concurs that this historic resource, designed by Silver Spring architect Ted Englehardt (1898-1980), meets two Designation Criteria: Firstly, that the building and its signage embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction via its playful distillation of "Googie" architectural design that originated in Southern California in the previous decade.

Secondly, that for the past sixty years the building and its sidewalk sign has served as an established and visual architectural feature of Fenton Village, of downtown Silver Spring, and of Montgomery County. The Society has long maintained that Weller's serves as one of a pair of "Mid-Century bookends," the other being 8201 Fenton Street at the opposite end of the block.

The latter 1963 structure features two-floors of glazing, a similar prominent overhang, and brightly colored porcelain enamel paneling. As a rare example of exceptional architectural design found in our community and for its longevity as a community landmark, the Weller's Dry Cleaning Building and sign deserve listing on Montgomery County's Master Plan.

The subject property satisfies the designation criteria listed in §24A-3 of the County Code and the HPC should recommend that the Planning Board lists Weller's Dry Cleaning in the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites and recommend in its transmission to the County Council that the Weller's Dry Cleaning be listed in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation."

SSHS as a preservationist organization has a long history of supporting downtown Silver Spring's small and diverse businesses and enthusiastically supports the Historic Preservation Office's December 2022 Weller's Staff Designation Report & Staff Memorandum.

Thank you.



Weller's architect incised brick. Photo by Jerry A. McCoy

Jerry A. McCoy, President
[Silver Spring Historical Society](#)
PO Box 1160
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-1160
(301) 537-1253
sshistory@yahoo.com

[Amazon Author Page](#)

[Metro Connection WAMU Feature](#)

[HistoryPin](#)

[Paths to the Present SILVER SPRING VIDEO TOUR](#)

[Montgomery County's Hidden Treasures - On the Right Track: Silver Spring's Historic Train Station VIDEO](#)

[Silver Spring: Then & Again BLOG](#)

[Facebook](#)

Silver Spring Heritage Trail

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.

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Marcie Stickle/Geo French <marcipro@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 10:52 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Weller's Master Plan-Supporting Testimony: Stickle, 2/23/23 Hearing, Item # 5
Attachments: Exuberant Googie Wellers & Signage 2 23 23 Stickle.docx

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Please Distribute to the Planning Board Chair & All Members for 2/23/23 Hearing, Item # 5, Thank You!

Exuberant Googie Weller's & Its Signage: For ALL of Us!

Deserving of Master Plan Designation

Designed by S.S. Architect & Resident Ted Englehardt

Testimony by Marcie Stickle, Planning Board Hearing, Item # 5, 2/23/23

Commencing early 2000's, my Partner and I, and Community Members, worked with and on behalf of our Multi-Cultural Moms & Pops/Small Independent Businesses/SIBs/Siblings/ to make certain they Thrived not just Survived in the Revitalization of Downtown S.S. Linking arms, we all worked together through the very effective, active S.S. Regional Services Center Neighborhood Committee!

Councilwoman Valerie Ervin was a champion of this cause working alongside community members, including preservationists/adaptive re-users! This initiative led to recommending "Targeted Investment Zones" within Heritage Areas; providing Mo Co Impact Assistance Funding; creating "Buy Local Silver Spring"; Latino Economic Development Center; founding of Fenton Village & Fenton Village Taste the World Days! See these 2 lovely "Buy Local" Brochures!

George French & I/SSHS provided slide shows to the community, one was at the Nora School, very well attended. "Multi-Cultural SIBs to Thrive in their Original Human Scale Buildings Built to Last along S.S.'s Original Main Streets & Adjacent Side Streets," as personified in our Fenton Village! MPI & SSHS were Champions, linking with others! Initiative/Movement to focus on our SIBs commenced through our very effective S.S. Regional Center's Neighborhood Committee, mentioned above!

S.S.'s Original Main Streets are Georgia Ave. & Colesville Road & their adjacent side streets, which includes our Fenton Village.

Heritage Tourism is Economic Development is the clarion call.

Versatile S.S. Architect Englehardt & Potomac Valley Architects were located at 912 Thayer Ave in the immediate neighborhood!

Beautiful Buy Local Silver Spring Brochures were created & distributed!

Addis Abeba Restaurant & Weller's Dry Cleaners were posted within, along with other multi-cultural small independent businesses!

George & I enjoyed dining so much at Addis Ababa over the years, promoting to friends & family.

We enjoyed also vibrant Weller's Presence on the Landscape, & for its services.
"Eye Appeal Is Buy Appeal"!

George French & I were invited to participate 2006 in the 2 Urban Land Institute Meetings on "Developing a Retail Strategy for Silver Spring," which included a Walking Tour. We submitted a Survey & Report with Photos. Included were eloquent letters of support from The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Maryland, and Montgomery Preservation Inc.

"Targeted Investment Zones," within Mo Co "Certified Heritage Areas" in Maryland was also supported by several State and County officials at that time.

Quoting from ULI Report, ULI Washington, A Technical Assistance Panel Report: Developing a Retail Strategy for Silver Spring

Sponsored by: Silver Spring Regional Service Center, Montgomery County, Maryland, September 26-27, 2006; **See # 1 Recommendation below:**

"The panel hopes that the recommendations provided in this report will stimulate ongoing action that will result in the revitalization of Silver Spring. In developing its recommendations, the panel created the following guiding principles that it hopes will be espoused by all stakeholders as they move forward:

*** Maintain Silver Spring's unique and historic character;**

Relating to impacts of Purple Line Construction on Bonifant St.'s multi-cultural small independent business; in more recent years, I attended meetings held on Bonifant St. at the businesses themselves. Concerned State & County Officials always actively participated!

Please take the next step, and as the HPC and their Staff advises, recommend the Planning Board list Weller's in the Locational Atlas, AND request the County Council approve an Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to designate Weller's as a Master Plan Historic Site.

Thank you!

**Marcie Stickle, 8515 Greenwood Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, 301-587-5955
marcipro@aol.com**

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Marcie Stickle/Geo French <marcipro@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 10:52 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Weller's Master Plan-Supporting Testimony: Stickle, 2/23/23 Hearing, Item # 5
Attachments: Exuberant Googie Wellers & Signage 2 23 23 Stickle.docx

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Please Distribute to the Planning Board Chair & All Members for 2/23/23 Hearing, Item # 5, Thank You!

Exuberant Googie Weller's & Its Signage: For ALL of Us!
Deserving of Master Plan Designation
Designed by S.S. Architect & Resident Ted Englehardt
Testimony by Marcie Stickle, Planning Board Hearing, Item # 5, 2/23/23

Commencing early 2000's, my Partner and I, and Community Members, worked with and on behalf of our Multi-Cultural Moms & Pops/Small Independent Businesses/SIBs/Siblings/ to make certain they Thrived not just Survived in the Revitalization of Downtown S.S. Linking arms, we all worked together through the very effective, active S.S. Regional Services Center Neighborhood Committee!

Councilwoman Valerie Ervin was a champion of this cause working alongside community members, including preservationists/adaptive re-users! This initiative led to recommending "Targeted Investment Zones" within Heritage Areas; providing Mo Co Impact Assistance Funding; creating "Buy Local Silver Spring"; Latino Economic Development Center; founding of Fenton Village & Fenton Village Taste the World Days! See these 2 lovely "Buy Local" Brochures!

George French & I/SSHS provided slide shows to the community, one was at the Nora School, very well attended. "Multi-Cultural SIBs to Thrive in their Original Human Scale Buildings Built to Last along S.S.'s Original Main Streets & Adjacent Side Streets," as personified in our Fenton Village! MPI & SSHS were Champions, linking with others! Initiative/Movement to focus on our SIBs commenced through our very effective S.S. Regional Center's Neighborhood Committee, mentioned above!

S.S.'s Original Main Streets are Georgia Ave. & Colesville Road & their adjacent side streets, which includes our Fenton Village.

Heritage Tourism is Economic Development is the clarion call.
Versatile S.S. Architect Englehardt & Potomac Valley Architects were located at 912 Thayer Ave in the immediate neighborhood!

Beautiful Buy Local Silver Spring Brochures were created & distributed!
Addis Abeba Restaurant & Weller's Dry Cleaners were posted within, along with other multi-cultural small independent businesses!

George & I enjoyed dining so much at Addis Ababa over the years, promoting to friends & family.

We enjoyed also vibrant Weller's Presence on the Landscape, & for its services.
"Eye Appeal Is Buy Appeal"!

George French & I were invited to participate 2006 in the 2 Urban Land Institute Meetings on "Developing a Retail Strategy for Silver Spring," which included a Walking Tour. We submitted a Survey & Report with Photos. Included were eloquent letters of support from The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Maryland, and Montgomery Preservation Inc.

"Targeted Investment Zones," within Mo Co "Certified Heritage Areas" in Maryland was also supported by several State and County officials at that time.

Quoting from ULI Report, ULI Washington, A Technical Assistance Panel Report: Developing a Retail Strategy for Silver Spring

Sponsored by: Silver Spring Regional Service Center, Montgomery County, Maryland, September 26-27, 2006; **See # 1 Recommendation below:**

"The panel hopes that the recommendations provided in this report will stimulate ongoing action that will result in the revitalization of Silver Spring. In developing its recommendations, the panel created the following guiding principles that it hopes will be espoused by all stakeholders as they move forward:

*** Maintain Silver Spring's unique and historic character;**

Relating to impacts of Purple Line Construction on Bonifant St.'s multi-cultural small independent business; in more recent years, I attended meetings held on Bonifant St. at the businesses themselves. Concerned State & County Officials always actively participated!

Please take the next step, and as the HPC and their Staff advises, recommend the Planning Board list Weller's in the Locational Atlas, AND request the County Council approve an Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to designate Weller's as a Master Plan Historic Site.

Thank you!

**Marcie Stickle, 8515 Greenwood Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, 301-587-5955
marcipro@aol.com**

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Andrew Malone <alindemannmalone@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 10:46 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Designation of former Weller's Dry Cleaning as a historic site

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Good morning,

This letter is in reference to item 5 on the February 23, 2023, Planning Board agenda. I am writing to oppose the designation of the former Weller's Dry Cleaning building as a historic site.

I am not qualified to speak on the question of whether the building "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction." To my layman's eye, it is kind of cool-looking, but nothing more than that.

However, I dispute the conclusion in the staff report that "The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape." I have lived in Silver Spring for almost 40 years, walking past the former dry cleaner several times a week. It is familiar only because it is there, just like many of the other undistinguished buildings that line Fenton Street in that neighborhood.

Yet I went into Weller's frequently, not because I was delighted by the architecture, but because I needed to have my clothes dry cleaned. The value of the building resided primarily in its use, not in its form.

As the report notes, "The design of the building, however, is diminished by the construction of an addition that impacts the character defining form, massing, and materials. On the façade, the brick-veneered addition interrupts the continuity and pattern established by the red and pink porcelain enameled panels. Furthermore, the addition anchors the upswept cantilevered roof canopy to the building instead of the original design where it floated beyond the southern elevation." However, these changes made the building operable as a modern dry cleaner, and apparently there was no effort to use governmental edict to prevent them.

Now the building is under new ownership, and the new owners reportedly want to do something different with the site. The minor aesthetic claims of the former Weller's Dry Cleaning building do not seem to match the possibilities of redevelopment with what potentially could be a new classic building, one that could perhaps house many households within walking distance to the Metro rather than preserving a parking lot that is seldom used, if at all, in this dense urban neighborhood.

It seems rather out of place to on the one hand encourage pedestrian mobility and dense development in and around Metro stations and on the other hand preserve this example of architecture designed to appeal to car drivers, with a driveway that interrupts two heavily trafficked sidewalks, causing potential danger to pedestrians and encouraging further traffic clogging Fenton and surrounding streets.

This site's potential as a place that is used is immensely valuable to Silver Spring. It should be allowed to be used however the market and its owners best determine.

Sincerely,
Andrew Malone

8416 Queen Annes Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Nancy Gurganus <nancy.gurganus@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 10:22 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Testimony for Historic Preservation
Attachments: Montgomery Planning Board.pdf

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Here is my testimony for the hearing tomorrow:

February 23 - Item 5 - Public Hearing: Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment

Thank you for your attention.
Nancy Gurganus
Nancy.gurganus@gmail.com
8112 Carroll Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910

February 21, 2023

Montgomery Planning Board

To whom it may concern,

As a lifelong resident of Silver Spring, I remember with great fondness what a special place it was and how lucky I was to grow up here. Many landmarks have been retained and repurposed and are still visible:

The B&O Train Station

Jesup Blair Park and Mansion (our first library)

The U.S. Post Office

The Hecht Company, JC Penney and Canada Dry facades

Many are gone:

The Armory (where I first voted)

The Polar Bear and The Reindeer Frozen Custard stands
among many others.

Now we are facing the possible loss of another historic landmark: the Weller's Dry Cleaning and Sign. It is a visual and visceral breath of fresh air to have this charming edifice and architectural example of *Googie* style within it's own open space along the Fenton Avenue concrete corridor; a reminder of a more fanciful era.

Please honor this symbol of the Silver Spring retail/commercial center by designating Weller's Dry Cleaning and Sign for the Montgomery Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Respectfully,

Nancy Hudgel Gurganus
8112 Carroll Lane
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Kelly Doordan <kdoordan@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 10:12 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Re Feb 23, 2023 meeting Item #5-- Oppose historic designation of Weller's Dry Cleaners site and parking lot

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Re Feb 23, 2023 Meeting Item #5 - Oppose historic designation of Weller's Drycleaners

Dear Planning Board,

I'm writing to oppose the historic designation of the Weller's Drycleaners site (including its building addition and parking lot) at the corner of Fenton and Thayer.

Our family lives on Thayer Avenue and we walk by what was the Weller's Drycleaners site and its two driveways almost daily. I oppose historic designation for this building and site in downtown Silver Spring and Fenton Village because it is not an essential community landmark nor is it an exemplary model of googie architecture. Further, historic designation would forever limit the potential for this great walkable location to evolve and meet the needs of the community who lives here now and in the future.

The most recognizable and nostalgic piece of this site is the sign which could be moved and/or repurposed if desired and without encumbering the entire lot or preventing the community from moving into the future. Preserving a parking lot at the expense of other potential higher and better uses also goes against our county's expressed visions and current needs to enhance climate resiliency, vibrancy, and walkability.

Please oppose the historic designation of the entire site of Weller's Drycleaners with its full building addition and parking lot.

Thank you for considering my comments,
Kelly Doordan
750 Thayer Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Eileen McGuckian <phileen3@verizon.net>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 9:43 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Cc: Eileen McGuckian
Subject: Testimony for Planning Board Feb. 23 agenda item #5 Historic Preservation amendments
Attachments: MPI testimony to Planning Board 2.23.2023.pdf
Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Good Wednesday morning,

Attached is a summary of major points in the testimony that I will present in person to the Planning Board on February 23.

This relates to Agenda Item #5 -- Amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, Edward U. Taylor School and Weller's Dry Cleaning.

Kindly confirm that you have received this and also that I am signed up to speak for up to 8 minutes as a representative of Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Thank you very much,

Eileen McGuckian, President
Montgomery Preservation, Inc.
phileen3@verizon.net
301-468-7331



Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Promoting the Preservation, Protection and Enjoyment of Montgomery County's
Rich Architectural Heritage and Historic Landscapes
P.O. Box 4661, Rockville, MD 20849 www.montgomerypreservation.org

**Summary of MPI Testimony to Planning Board re Amendment to the Master Plan for
Historic Preservation: Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning**
February 23, 2023 Eileen McGuckian, President, Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning

Both Mid-20th century buildings qualify for Historic Designation

Both represent local history and architecture that are not adequately represented on the Master Plan
Both sites meet multiple criteria established in Chapter 24A8 for historic designation
Few Mid-20th century resources have been nominated in Montgomery County in the past 45 years
Both buildings offer street appeal, immediately declaring their places in local history and beyond
Historic designation of both buildings is unquestionably in the public interest

Edward U. Taylor Elementary School

Stellar representative of 20th century progress in education of African Americans in Montgomery Co.
First building named for a local Black leader, a man long associated with public school education
Continued educational use is consistent with preservation principles and public use

Weller's Dry Cleaning

Rare Googie style architectural gem of the post-war automobile-centric culture that was central to
the development of Silver Spring and to understanding Montgomery County today
Long identified in plans and publications as significant and in need of protection
Enforcement and protection are needed or this exceptional historic resource will be lost
Designation will enable owner to take advantage of financial incentives for preservation

Property Owner Consent

Role of owner is always vital, from initial design to current use and future planning
Owner consent is not required; opposition to nomination often wanes over time or with future ownership
Examples provided of historic designations that have turned out well, even with initial owner objection

Actions requested of the Planning Board today

*Vote to recommend both Taylor School and Weller's Dry Cleaning for designation on the Master Plan for
Historic Preservation. This will provide full protection to both buildings and also offer incentives to
the owners to maintain and re-use them.*

*Vote to list Weller's on the Locational Atlas in order to provide immediate protection against
demolition or further substantial alteration.*

Eileen McGuckian, president
Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Ann Lafferty <lafferty_ann@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 9:19 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Weller's Dry Cleaner: Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment, 2/23/2023
Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Mr. Jeff Zyontz, Chair

Montgomery County Planning Board

2425 Reddie Drive

Wheaton, MD 20902

Hello Chairman Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board:

I am writing in support of designating Weller's Dry Cleaner building for historic preservation, to protect and preserve. Weller's, which is located on Fenton Street, at the corner with Thayer Avenue in East Silver Spring (ESS), has been a community landmark for decades. Indeed, I often give it as a point of reference when I give directions! (such as: have you seen the new building across from Wellers).

This is a unique building which harkens back to the time when "downtown Silver Spring" was booming with new construction for housing, commerce, and community (such as St. Michael's church) etc. The same era when my home in ESS was built, which I moved to in 1986. Please keep the building & its sign, so that my children (who were born here) and their children (who visit frequently) will appreciate and understand the history and ambiance. A time when things were constructed to last.

thank you,
Ann Lafferty
812 Violet Place
Silver Spring 20910

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Marcie Stickle/Geo French <marcipro@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 9:05 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Weller's Designation to Master Plan, George French Testimony, 2/23/23, Item # 5
Attachments: Planning Board Hearing on Weller's, February 23, 2023, Testimony by George Googie French.docx

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

**Please Distribute Attached Testimony to Planning Board Chair & All Members, Thank you!
2/22/23:**

Planning Board Hearing on Weller's, 2/23/2023. Testimony by George French

I support the HPC and HPC Staff's nomination of the unique Googie-style Weller's Dry Cleaners building and free standing identification sign to the MC Master Plan for Historic Preservation

For over 30 years I have been intrigued by and enjoyed the strange and whimsical "road-side architecture" of this wondrous structure termed Googie style architecture named first after a modernist style restaurant building in LA. The terrazzo floor in the lobby gave the building and business a sense of specialness while customers were waiting to drop off or pick up their cleaning.

Experts in Historic Preservation all agree that the building is worthy of protection. Potomac Engineering, (satisfying the requirements of the SS 2002 survey) signaled out Weller's for possible National Register eligibility when it reached the 50 year threshold; Weller's warranting two pages in Clare lise Kelly's 2015 "Montgomery Modern"; Traceries 2020 persuasive nomination for Nation Register eligibility; HPC staff's determination that Weller's met two criteria for MC Master Plan for Historic Preservation; SS Adjacent Communities Master Plan recommending Weller's for Master Plan for Historic Preservation designation review; The overwhelming recommendation of the HPC for Locational Atlas status, and listing in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation; Several historical societies and organizations; Art Deco Society, MPI, docomomodc, Preservation Maryland, SSHS. And finally the concerned public that appreciates the specialness of this superb Googie style building.

With all these Experts and organizations in Historic Preservation and knowledgeable lay persons, Weller's should clearly receive approval from this Board to be listed in our Master Plan and afforded all protections under the preservation ordinance Chapter 24A-3 of our County code. Noted architect Ted Englehardt designed Weller's and placed his signature brick in the north façade of his landmark masterpiece. Googie architecture is a rarity in MC and even scarcer in SS if even represented at all except for Weller's.

There has been much interest over many years from the former Silver Spring Park, now a part of East SS to protect and see the building retained for a business district built on a human scale and fast disappearing from the SS landscape.

Please take the next step, and as the HPC and their Staff advises, recommend the Planning Board list Weller's in the Locational Atlas, AND request the County Council approve an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to designate Weller's as a Master Plan Historic Site.

Thank you, George French, 510 Albany Ave, Takoma Park, MD 20912, marcipro@aol.com 301-587-5955

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Carter Dougherty <dougherty.carter@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 7:38 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Re-submittal of testimony for Feb. 23 meeting, address included
Attachments: FINAL Statement to PB re Dry Cleaner.pdf

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

From:
Carter Dougherty
6 Crescent Place
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Feb. 22, 2023

My name is Carter Dougherty. I live in Takoma Park. I'm here on behalf of a group of people supporting Mr. Dagmawi Lakew and especially his mother, Mrs. Bekelech Delelegne. And I'm here to urge you to reject the proposed historic designation of the former dry cleaner on Fenton Street in Silver Spring. I also want to urge you to dig into the reasons why the Historic Preservation Commission engaged on this issue when it did.

Let's remember that this building has been eligible for designation as historic for over 20 years, but only apparently because of some vague "recommendation" made by staff in the last two decades. Why move now? An [HPC staffer told *The Washington Post*](#) that thin staffing means it can take years. Let's be very clear here: *that is not an answer to the question.*

In any case, the situation of the owners, particularly if we keep in mind our collective interest in racial equity and the county's own plans for Silver Spring, is highly relevant here. The Planning Board needs to take that seriously. The timeline sure suggests that the change in ownership is what prompted HPC to act.

What do we know from the public record? The family purchased the property in May 2021 after a discussion with the Weller family that began in early 2021. The draft Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan only went to the Planning Board in the fall of 2021. HPC only made contact with the family in April or May of 2022, around when they started the designation process. Then there was an HPC hearing in September, as you know.

That meeting reached a particularly absurd level when HPC Commissioner [Radu](#) told the mother and son, rather condescendingly, "This is not a new thing." Why? Because a book called *Montgomery Modern* was published 2015 that included entries on Weller's dry cleaning.

Now, let's remember that the County Council [passed legislation](#) in 2001 requiring an owner of a designated property to disclose the property's historic status to each prospective buyer before signing a sales contract. So, from a legal standpoint, Comm. Radu is dead wrong. It is an *entirely new* thing to buy a

property and have it designated historic *only afterwards*. Indeed, the Council considered it material enough that its disclosure is required in a transaction.

But let's do talk about that book Commissioner Radu mentioned. The Planning Department hosted [a launch party](#) for this book on Oct. 30, 2015 in Bethesda. From the video on the department's website, it looks like maybe 50 people attended that gathering.

On Amazon, this book has attained, as of Sunday, a best sellers rank of #2,108,814.

Now, I say this as a published author myself. I am co-author of a book I'm *absolutely sure* all of you know, called *Rewriting the Rules of the European Economy*, published in 2020. I'm very proud that I wrote it with Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz, no less. It includes some innovative ideas for how to improve public accountability for the European Central Bank.

Its best sellers rank is #1,352,754, about 1.2 million places ahead of *Montgomery Modern*.

But in all seriousness, I try to have the utmost humility about who might know about this book by stressing, with some sincerity, that *my book is a highly effective treatment for insomnia* – unless European economic policy is your jam. What I do *not* say, if someone says something similar to what I wrote about the European Central Bank: I do not have the intellectual snobbery to say: "This is nothing new."

What should the Planning Board do?

1. Put the plans for voting on this matter on ice. Vote it down if you find it urgent to take vote and punt it back to HPC. But at a minimum more information is needed.
2. The Planning Board should seek more information about exactly why this process kicked into gear when it did. It's your staff, after all. The information is probably nothing that wouldn't be available under a public records request.

3. Consider revisions to the process of designating new sites, within the scope of its legal authority, designed to prevent this from happening in the future. Surely some greater disclosure would be possible.
4. Ponder changes to the law in the form of a recommendation to the MoCo Council. The focus should be on the accountability of the HPC.

Finally, if we are going to talk about what is new and what is old, I'd like to highlight something that Mr. Lakew's mother, Mrs. Delelegne, told HPC, in a rather anguished voice, I might add: "To us, this is all ... foreign."

Consider Mrs. Delelegne's native Ethiopia, which she left to make a better life for her family in Silver Spring. We can be proud that it's one of the most diverse communities in the United States.

Her native Ethiopia is an ancient civilization that is thousands of years old, probably ten times the age of this country. If you want to hear respect for history, talk to an Ethiopian.

And now, decades of the family's hard work is under threat by the two-year-old interest of the Historic Preservation Commission and local activists whose ancestors happened to arrive in the United States a bit earlier than this family did. And it's all happening in the name of a building whose age is less than the average American's life span.

You don't have to be from Ethiopia to appreciate the absurdities of how historic preservation is proceeding in this case. But it sure does help.

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Linda B. Lyons <lblami@aol.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 2:50 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Hearing on Weller's Dry Cleaning, February 23, 2023
Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

To: Montgomery County Planning Board Chair

Re: Hearing on Weller's Dry Cleaning, February 23, 2023

As a longtime resident of Montgomery County and an appreciator of our county's fine assortment of architecture, I don't want to see our most interesting buildings spoiled or replaced.

A good example is the former Weller's Dry Cleaning in Silver Spring, a playful example of the "Googie" Style popular in Southern California in the 1950s and 60s. A building like this should be acknowledged and protected to reflect the varied history of the Silver Spring area.

I urge the Planning Board to vote to approve adding Weller's to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation of Montgomery County.

Thank you for your attention,

Linda B. Lyons

3922 Oliver Street

Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Carolyn Lampila <cblampila@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 9:39 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Written Testimony - Weller's Dry Cleaning Historic Designation (Opposition)

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony regarding the discussion of the historical designation of the former Wellers' Dry Cleaner site. I'm unable to testify on Feb. 23 so appreciate being able to submit written testimony.

I live in downtown Silver Spring approximately half a mile from the site. I walk by it often and the Weller's Dry Cleaning building was abandoned for years and the building was in very poor condition. In that condition, it's been an eyesore and taking up space that could better used to meet needs of the community. I've recently learned that it's not just the Weller's Dry Cleaning building, but also another building and a parking lot, that are included in this effort to designate the property as historic. That's 18,000 square feet of extremely underutilized space that could be used to develop new small businesses that serve the current needs of a dense and vibrant community and/or build housing at a time with an extreme housing shortage.

It's also very upsetting that the current owners of this entire space bought these three properties with the dream and goals of developing them together. These are neighbors who have served the community, including operating the Addis Ababa restaurant and working hard over several years to purchase these properties. I do not know the details of the owners' intention for the properties but assume whatever their plans they would better serve the community than an old, until recently abandoned building, and a parking lot.

I think that the Weller's Dry Cleaning sign is very unique and should be preserved. The sign should absolutely be incorporated into future development. However, please support the owners of this property in allowing them to redevelop the property in ways that will undoubtedly better support the current needs of the dense and vibrant Downtown Silver Spring Community.

Thank you,

Carolyn Lampila
Downtown Silver Spring

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Russell Young <rmasonyoung@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 9:09 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Planning Board 2/23/23 Meeting: Designation of Weller's Dry Cleaning as Historic Site

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

We write to request that the Planning Board consider our comments below at its February 23, 2023 meeting, in which we support the designation of the Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign to the Montgomery County Master Plan of Historic Resources.

You will already be familiar with the Historic Preservation Commission's reasons for saving Weller's Dry Cleaning from demolition, and we agree with those reasons entirely. What we want to add is our own heartfelt appreciation for the building. We are long-time residents of the area — our house at 831 Violet Place is a 10-minute walk away — and we pass by Weller's several times a week on our way to shop. We can honestly say that seeing Weller's never fails to make us smile. The Commission is right in describing it as "humorous and playful" and "quirky". We don't know of any other building in the region that evokes those feelings, and would be a true shame to have this rare gem replaced by another bland box.

We understand the need for renovation and renewal in the county. But we sincerely hope that the Board makes an exception for what, after all, is an irreplaceable piece of Silver Spring's history. We respectfully ask that you designate Weller's as an historic site.

Thank you for your consideration,

Russell Young and Lisa Russell
831 Violet Place
Silver Spring, Maryland
20910
Rmasonyoung@gmail.com
Lisalynnerussell@gmail.com
(202) 503-7059

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Russell Young <rmasonyoung@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 9:03 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Cc: Lisa Russell
Subject: Planning Board 2/23/23 Meeting: Designation of Weller's Dry Cleaning as Historic Site

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

We write to request that the Planning Board consider our comments below at its February 23, 2023 meeting, in which we support the designation of the Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign to the Montgomery County Master Plan of Historic Resources.

You will already be familiar with the Historic Preservation Commission's reasons for saving Weller's Dry Cleaning from demolition, and we agree with those reasons entirely. What we want to add is our own heartfelt appreciation for the building. We are long-time residents of the area — our house at 831 Violet Place is a 10-minute walk away — and we pass by Weller's several times a week on our way to shop. We can honestly say that seeing Weller's never fails to make us smile. The Commission is right in describing it as "humorous and playful" and "quirky". We don't know of any other building in the region that evokes those feelings, and would be a true shame to have this rare gem replaced by another bland box.

We understand the need for renovation and renewal in the county. But we sincerely hope that the Board makes an exception for what, after all, is an irreplaceable piece of Silver Spring's history. We respectfully ask that you designate Weller's as an historic site.

Thank you for your consideration,

Russell Young and Lisa Russell
831 Violet Place
Silver Spring 20910
(202) 503-7059
Rmasonyoung@gmail.com
Lisalynnerussell@gmail.com

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Mandy Bolgiano <mandybolgiano@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 6:42 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: RE: Weller's Dry Cleaning – Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment, Feb. 23, 2023

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Jeff Zyontz, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Drive
Wheaton, MD 20902

Dear Chairman Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board:

I am writing to urge you to approve historic preservation designation for Weller's Dry Cleaning. I am a longtime resident of East Silver Spring, and the Wellers was always part of what made Fenton Village special to me and my family. I raised my children here and Weller's was that unique building that was a local landmark for them, as well as a cherished business. We often stopped by after school to pick up dry cleaning from Charlie Weller. My son has since moved back to East Silver Spring, to continue to be part of this special place.

The Weller's building and its sign are unique. There are few midcentury buildings like it in the county. The fact that a new business is there now shows that the Weller's can be there for my children's children.

Please keep the Weller's building and sign for the future by voting to protect and preserve Weller's in the Master Plan and on the Locational Atlas.

Sincerely,
Mandy Bolgiano
803 Violet Place
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Karen Shakira Kali <karenskali@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, February 21, 2023 5:18 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Testimony re: Feb. 23 Historic designation hearing OPPOSING Weller designation

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

RE: Public hearing, regarding amendment to the Master Plan of Historic Preservation for two sites on February 23 (the Edward U. Taylor School and Weller's Dry Cleaning sites)

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board,

As a citizen of Downtown Silver Spring (residing on Thayer Avenue) and an urban planner I would like to offer written testimony opposing the historic designation for the Weller's Dry Cleaning building, located at the intersection of Fenton and Thayer in Downtown Silver Spring.

While I understand the importance of elevating historical buildings and maintaining architectural significance for future generations, I believe that historic preservation must be critically significant and not impede good planning and economic opportunity.

While Weller's is an example of Googie architecture, there are certainly better examples across the U.S. in the form of restaurants, coffee houses, and hotels with considerably more space for retail use than the existing footprint of Weller's. Most important to me, however, is the fact that Montgomery County is experiencing a major shortfall in affordable housing while [income equality](#) continues to grow. Limiting opportunities for full use of the site stymies a locality's ability to meet the challenges of changing economic circumstances. I worry that historic designation may slow the potential for future development on that site, including the development of additional housing units, for example.

For these reasons, I urge the Montgomery County Planning Board to oppose the historic designation for Weller's.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

Karen S. Kali, AICP
734 Thayer Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Thompkins, Melissa

From: SJ - Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa <satjiwan_khalsa@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 2:27 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Wellers dry cleaner - 2/23/23

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org

Re Feb 23, 2023 meeting historical designation of Wellers Cleaners

Dear planning board,

I'm writing to oppose the historical restrictive designation for Wellers Cleaners. Fun as an architectural artifact that it may be to reminisce about a time when one -story, flashy, angular, modern design was intended to catch the eye of car dependent traffic, the downtown Silver Spring area is evolving into a more walkable community and is in need of more density and housing to adequately and efficiently support sustainable communities near transit.

I do however welcome any historical preservation groups or advocates to raise funds for purchase of the sign and maybe building facade to be rebuilt or preserved somehow... or with enough money to buy the land and building and preserve it with private funds for as long as that support is continued and funders are interested.

In this case the site meets only two criteria of the review (compared with three for Edward Taylor School - though I also have questions about how county resources should be spent restricting its own land and committing Xx unknown funds for years to come on a building that may soon be unusable without major investments). I wonder if there's a better way to tell the story of racially segregated schools and subsequent integration in our county. - possibly for less money and more impact.

With the Wellers site notably less valuable historically also having a stronger priority location for redevelopment, I think the historical designation should be opposed. I think that historical review should make sure to have a forward-looking perspective to see what is good for the future of our community.

Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa
6719 Conway Ave
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Erin OBrien <erinkeelyobrien@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 9:09 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Weller's dry cleaner is NOT a historic site

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Hi there! I am a homeowner and I live at 725 Silver Spring Ave. I am writing to ask that you NOT make Weller's Dry Cleaner at 8237 Fenton St a historic site. We have a desperate housing shortage, it is a toxic site that needs remediation, and no one wanted it saved until a Black Beauty supply store opened there--a sign it's not a key part of history in downtown Silver Spring, and this is about something else.

I walk my dogs by Weller's Drycleaners every single day. For years, the building has looked terrible and rundown, with peeling paint, old decayed signs falling apart inside, trash dumped outside, and even some smashed windows. I was thrilled to see it freshly painted, windows repaired, trash and weeds removed, and a new sign and new business occupying it. Unfortunately, a small number of my neighbors were enraged about these upgrades, perhaps because it signified change, but perhaps it is because it was occupied by a business that serves Black people. Since then it seems that a small number of my neighbors have started a project to designate this old building, which has long been uncared for and an eyesore, and which is very close to the SS metro and across the street from the new Purple line stop, to be a "historic" site. Nothing historic happened here. It is prime real estate for housing. As all old dry cleaner buildings do, it likely needs environmental remediation. Making this 'historic' will block the land from serving our community's need for housing and for healthy buildings that aren't environmental hazards.

Please do NOT support this ridiculous, racially-motivated effort to make this long run-down toxic building 'historic', and let it be developed as it needs to be--maybe turned into housing and businesses--to serve the now 2 metro stops within a few minute's walk of the site. Please think of the ENTIRE community in making your decision on what is best, remember nothing historic happened here, and don't fall for the whims of a small number of retired privileged people in making land use decisions--they don't speak for my community.

Thank you for considering, and for all your work, I imagine serving on the board is a thankless task, and I am very happy to live in Montgomery County and enjoy the fruits of all you do!

Best,

Erin

Erin Keely O'Brien, Ph.D.
Silver Spring, MD
540.250.5294

Thompkins, Melissa

From: SJ - Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa <satjiwan_khalsa@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 2:27 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Wellers dry cleaner - 2/23/23

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

mcp-chair@mncppc-mc.org

Re Feb 23, 2023 meeting historical designation of Wellers Cleaners

Dear planning board,

I'm writing to oppose the historical restrictive designation for Wellers Cleaners. Fun as an architectural artifact that it may be to reminisce about a time when one -story, flashy, angular, modern design was intended to catch the eye of car dependent traffic, the downtown Silver Spring area is evolving into a more walkable community and is in need of more density and housing to adequately and efficiently support sustainable communities near transit.

I do however welcome any historical preservation groups or advocates to raise funds for purchase of the sign and maybe building facade to be rebuilt or preserved somehow... or with enough money to buy the land and building and preserve it with private funds for as long as that support is continued and funders are interested.

In this case the site meets only two criteria of the review (compared with three for Edward Taylor School - though I also have questions about how county resources should be spent restricting its own land and committing Xx unknown funds for years to come on a building that may soon be unusable without major investments). I wonder if there's a better way to tell the story of racially segregated schools and subsequent integration in our county. - possibly for less money and more impact.

With the Wellers site notably less valuable historically also having a stronger priority location for redevelopment, I think the historical designation should be opposed. I think that historical review should make sure to have a forward-looking perspective to see what is good for the future of our community.

Sat Jiwan Ikle-Khalsa
6719 Conway Ave
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Thompkins, Melissa

From: David Schneider <schneiderd41@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 9:33 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Comment on: February 23 meeting agenda item: Action on An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic and Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites. Weller's Dry Cleaning (8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring)

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Dear Montgomery County Planning Board Chair:

My name is David Schneider and I live at 749 Thayer Avenue, in Downtown Silver Spring. I am writing to comment on *Action on An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic and Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites. Weller's Dry Cleaning (8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring)*. I encourage the Board to preserve the distinctive Weller's sign while allowing development to occur on the property.

I have lived in Silver Spring since 2003 and have seen many changes occur in Fenton Village and surrounding areas. Almost all of the changes have been positive, bringing new housing and small businesses within walking distance of my home. For example, across the street from the Weller's site is a building with 124 affordable apartments and two thriving small businesses both of whom happen to be minority-owned. This development replaced a shuttered auto mechanic shop and parking lot that had lain empty for years. It is the kind of smart growth I welcome in other parts of my neighborhood but that I fear would be impossible should the Board give historic status to the entire Weller's property, including the parking lot.

I also appreciate the architectural style of many of Fenton Village's buildings and do not want to sacrifice features that make my neighborhood interesting and charming. I understand that the sign is an example of mid-century modern "Googie" architecture and would like to see it preserved.

As you know, we have found ways to make historic preservation compatible with new development. For example, the Silverton Condominiums preserved the Canada Dry Bottling Plant sign and facade while adding 158 housing units. The National Dry Cleaning Institute now includes 210 apartments while preserving the first floor exterior. The Fillmore Concert Hall is an adaptive reuse of the JC Penny's Art Deco Façade.

In an ideal world, new development could incorporate the Weller's facade and structure (perhaps as a lobby or ground floor retail to an apartment building). However, action that would prevent redevelopment on the *entire* property, including the 9,376 surrounding parking lot, would be a missed opportunity to further the Board's vision for a diverse, distinctive, and thriving Silver Spring, as documented in the Silver Spring Downton and Adjacent Communities Plan.

My family and I have been fortunate to call Downtown Silver Spring our home for the past twenty years. We have benefitted from the influx of new residents and businesses and I have no interest in using Historic Preservation to roll the drawbridge up behind me. Preserving the Weller's sign while allowing additional density will allow us to celebrate the past, present, and future of Fenton Village, consistent with our respect for locally owned businesses and desire for an inclusive community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

David S. Schneider

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Mike English <mje213@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, February 20, 2023 9:25 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Opposition to Historical Designation of Former Weller's Site
Attachments: MEnglish Former Weller's Site Testimony.pdf

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Hello Members of the Planning Board,

I am attaching my written testimony to express my opposition to historical designation and protection for the former Weller's Dry cleaning site, as part of agenda Item 5 on February 23. Unfortunately I will not be available to testify live.

Please let me know if you have any questions

Thank you,

Mike English
8005 13th Street
Unit 304
Silver Spring, MD
20910

Members of the Planning Board

Thank you for accepting my written testimony about the historic designation of the former Wellers' dry cleaner site. To cut to the chase, I am writing to express my strong opposition to historic designation.

I live about a half a mile from the location, and walk by it all the time. Until recently it was an abandoned, rotting shell, with broken windows and sporadic plywood, and served no function other than to sate the aesthetic appetites of people that think neighborhoods exist more to look at than for people to live, work, and thrive in.

Now it is being used actively as a beauty supply shop. One would think that people would support this change, but no. In message boards, facebook groups, and elsewhere, people have derided the store as "trashy" and other such pejoratives, which is notable considering that the clientele for the business is decidedly less old and white than most people calling for preservation. People have called it "just a beige box" because it has been painted in a way they don't like, while waxing poetic about how the building used to mean something, used to have a soul, and other such pleasantries.

Sounding so high minded and above the fray, caring about things beyond dollars and cents may sound pure and selfless, but in this case it's actually quite selfish. I get why people fear change and relish the past, truly I do. I actually don't like change much myself, find comfort in routines, and know how scary it is when people and places around you drift in and out of your life. Still, that doesn't mean we get to try to stop all change because we like things the way they used to be. We don't get to hold a death grip on the past and squeeze the life out of a space because we wish we could stop time.

Neighborhoods are living, breathing, vibrant things. They ebb and flow and grow and change, and sometimes that means that they start to fill fewer of our needs even as they start to better meet the needs of others. Who are we to stand in the way of that? Who is anyone here to say that their memories of a building are more important than the business there now, or the other uses that might happen with the land if we allow it to adapt the way something so close to public transit, and in the middle of a vibrant downtown might if not put in a nostalgic straightjacket?

If the current use of this building continues for years? Great! If another business replaces it? Great! If it gets torn down and turned into a mixed-used site with housing and retail? Great! If some of the structure/sign remains and is incorporated into a new building? Great! If it doesn't? Also great! All of these are fine. What isn't fine is demanding something stay the same because we like looking at it. And let's face it. That's what we're ultimately talking about here.

Sure some will say this is about history. And yes, it is, but at the end of the day, the operative question is are buildings meant to be looked at, or lived and worked in? I know my answer. I'm not saying that historic preservation is always wrong if a building has true historic significance, but being the holdover of an architectural style, not the site of a historic event, and not a site of

cultural importance, doesn't rise to the threshold for preservation. And I believe that threshold should be a high one.

People asking this building to be "protected" will ask you to think about the damage done if history is lost. Fair enough. Allow me to ask you to think about some other things.

Think about what happens if the nostalgia of a generation that has greater wealth, including housing wealth, than younger ones is allowed to override the importance of jobs and commerce and potentially future homes for those unable to buy one when they were cheap decades ago. Think about what happens if we demand this building be frozen in amber, if we don't give the land the flexibility it needs to meet the needs of the community, whatever it may be now and later. If we do that, we do a disservice to the community

Think about the fact that there are cultures other than the one people are trying to preserve here. Think about the fact that preserving this space necessarily means choosing the culture of old over the current community, and what that says about equity.

Think about the fact that neither I, nor you, nor anyone else can say what the best use of this space will be 50 years from now, or even 10 years from now, and that to presume that we know best, forever and hereafter, by protecting a building that ultimately found itself abandoned is, in short, hubris.

Think about the possibility that preserving this space has a better chance of making people feel better than it has of actual doing good. The space as it is now can live on in peoples' memory, but people can't live and work in memories. Change happens, it's part of life, and it's usually scary. That doesn't mean we get to stop it so that we get to look at something we like looking at.

Communities aren't like blocks of granite. They change, the people living in them change. If we pretend they don't, we are fooling ourselves. This doesn't mean all history is bad and all change is good, but it does mean that we should have a good reason to stop it from happening, and I just don't think this is one of them.

Don't give into the sentimentality for a dry cleaning business that is dead and gone no matter what we do here, unless you want to "honor" its legacy by harming the community it was such a part of.

Thank you

Mike English
Downtown Silver Spring

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Benjamin Bradley <bradley.benjamin26@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 11:11 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Written testimony for 02/23 meeting, Item 5
Attachments: Opposition to Wellers Amendement.pdf

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Hello,

Please find attached my written testimony for Item 5 of the February 23rd, 2023 meeting.

My mailing address is:
8616 2nd Ave APT 407
Silver Spring, MD 20910.

Thank you,
Benjamin Bradley

I am writing to urge your opposition to amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to include the Weller's Dry Cleaning site.

First, I do not believe this site meets the criteria cited in the proposal. One of the 2 criteria listed is: "architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape." The application argues that this building serves as a tangible connection between the past and present, but there is no evidence provided that this is actually the case; no evidence that the community feels this way. No study demonstrated this; there is no mention of anyone in Silver Spring, the county, the state, or anywhere describing this site in such a way. I would be curious to see what the residents of Downtown Silver Spring actually think of this building. I'm not sure many are even familiar with it, nevermind consider it a "familiar visual feature". It would be one thing if there were evidence that this is considered an established and familiar visual feature, but I'm afraid I don't see the evidence of it.

My primary concern is that freezing this entire site as it is will do more harm than good. Freezing communities can be just as harmful as erasing the history of a community. This site, as the proposal mentions on page 10, is an example of car-centric design, and was designed to attract people in cars. I believe that granting this site a historic designation freezes this car-centered design while the county is trying to move away from such a thing.

While there are a variety of concerns regarding the harms of cars, the pollution from tire wear is a fact we are only really becoming aware of and one that most alternatives, such as electric vehicles, will actually only make worse. Studies are demonstrating that while we have greatly reduced car emissions, microplastics from tire wear are not regulated like emissions are; and, therefore, cause much more harm than emissions. As tires wear down they release particles into the air that we breathe in and even into the water. As cars get bigger and heavier this problem is getting worse. Moreover, the move to electric vehicles actually exacerbates this problem as they are heavier than traditional vehicles.¹²³⁴ Is it OK to subject the people in Downtown Silver Spring to this for Google architecture?

The reality is, including this full site would result in at least the second historically protected parking lot in Downtown Silver Spring. Silver Spring deserves better than historic parking lots. Preserving car culture in such a way is not only harmful, it is also unnecessary. Car culture, at large, is not going anywhere fast, regardless of its harms.

I believe that community members or the owner, if they wish, should use the sign or the structure to enhance the community. The sign, in particular, would likely be attractive for the

1

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/jun/03/car-tyres-produce-more-particle-pollution-than-exhausts-tests-show>

² <https://www.emissionsanalytics.com/news/pollution-tyre-wear-worse-exhaust-emissions>

³ <https://setac.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/etc.5140>

⁴ <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/acs.est.1c05092>

community and the owner where it is now and if maintained. However, if the owner is not interested in the sign, perhaps community members could make meaningful use of it: use it as a welcome gateway to Fenton Village, or move it to Ellsworth street.

Thank you,

Benjamin Bradley
Downtown Silver Spring

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Louis Simchowitz <lsimchowitz@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, February 19, 2023 9:33 AM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Weller's Dry Cleaning Building - Master Plan, February 23

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Dear Chairman Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board,

I am writing in support of the proposed historic preservation efforts and safeguards to protect the Weller's Dry Cleaning Building and its signage. These initiatives are encompassed in the Master Plan Amendment and Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites to be discussed this week. Others can speak better to the uniqueness of its architectural style to the community and to its truly iconic status in the Silver Spring community.

I, on the other hand, would like to touch on more personal comments. My wife and I moved to the area from St. Louis more than 20 years ago. We reside in North Chevy Chase and began exploring the surrounding neighborhoods. Weller's quickly became a bright spot, a welcoming beacon of nearby shops, restaurants, and other activities in Silver Spring. I miss my old friend and I am not yet ready to say good-bye.

Weller is much more than just an old building --- it is a rich reminder of our past, something to be cherished and not destroyed. Surely, we can find a way to preserve and protect such treasures that serve as constant reminders of where we came from and where we are headed. Weller's adds value and enriches the local community and the surrounding areas in Montgomery County.

Thank you for affording me the opportunity to voice my concerns and for providing me this outlet for expressing my strong support of ongoing preservation efforts.

Sincerely,

Lou

Louis Simchowitz
8904 McGregor Drive
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Thompkins, Melissa

From: Helen Wilkes <hcrettierwilkes@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 22, 2023 2:18 PM
To: MCP-Chair
Subject: Testimony, Feb. 23 hearing
Attachments: HCWAIA_Testimony_Wellers_02-23-2022.doc

Categories: Tracked To Dynamics 365

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

Dear Members of the Planning Board:

I'm sending my written testimony in advance of my in-person testimony at the hearing regarding the Weller's Dry Cleaning site, Item 5 on the agenda for the February 23 hearing.

Best regards,
Helen Wilkes

--

Helen Crettier Wilkes AIA
301-404-6700 mobile
301-933-0859 home/office

February 22, 2023

Dear Members of the Montgomery County Planning Board:

I am submitting here testimony on behalf of the preservation of the Weller's Dry Cleaning building, which serves, in my opinion, as an iconic representative of a time and place that is essential toward telling the story of Silver Spring's most characteristic architectural period. I've gone out of my typical lane to express this to you because I feel strongly that it is that important to do so.

As a resident and practicing architect in the historic district of Kensington over the last 34 years, I have long advocated for matters related to historic preservation in my town. I'm the proud recipient of a lifetime achievement award from Montgomery Preservation, Inc. for my efforts. And, like the architect for Weller's, I happen to be a past president of the AIA Potomac Valley chapter. However, I'm testifying in great part because I believe that my town lost out in the failure of efforts to preserve our own single, but significant, example of Googie architecture, in the form of the gas station at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Plyer's Mill Road, now demolished. Its preservation and reuse as part of a new development would have filled in what is now a gaping hole in expressing that time in Kensington's history when the attractive lure of mobility, and travel, was opening up to a post-war America, due to the increasing possibility for families to own a car. The Huggins family, who were longtime owners of the gas station, chose, in the 60s, to replace the ordinary old building that was there before and to replace it with a replication of the design of a Googie gas station in New Jersey. That style was meant to capture the exciting, exuberant expression of post-war optimism about growth and prosperity for all, and of the technological possibilities expressed in the rising space age. Its prominent location at a major crossroads was most certainly a factor in this eye-catching stylistic choice.

Now, we are left only with the most ordinary and mundane strip of highway gas stations to show how the age of the automobile has turned out for our historic garden suburb town, which was split in two by Connecticut Avenue when it was turned into a highway in the 50s. It has expanded both in girth and in the flow of traffic since then. There was no planning for this unfortunate outcome, no design intention behind the growing presence of gas stations along the town's Connecticut Avenue corridor, only the loss of the town's historic character as extant original town buildings gave way to "the strip." There is no positive way for our residents and visitors, and whiz-through commuters alike, to understand the story of how, and why, a two-lane road through our town was expanded to allow for the growth of traffic to and from the big city to the south, at the expense of the town's historic character. The best piece of that story is now gone.

The Huggins family's Googie building, even though it was a gas station, was by far the most architecturally significant piece of architecture in the town along the Avenue, up until its demise - yet, it was the only building that could explain, looking through the lens

H E L E N C R E T T I E R W I L K E S A R C H I T E C T S

of the historic development of our town, the coming of the age of the automobile and the early optimism it articulated so joyfully in its colorful style. We are now left instead with a mundane highway strip with multiple modern gas stations which bear no relationship to why part of our town was deemed significant enough to receive historic district status. For a brief moment, some of us had hoped that we could convince those who decide the larger planning and development questions to understand that the telling of the history of a place depends on the preservation of such significant pieces as our Googie station, and that historic preservation is a long game which requires vision and purposeful planning, as balanced with commercial considerations.

Which brings me to the possibility before you. The Weller's Dry Cleaners building is just such a significant piece. It more than carries the exuberant expression of an era that is unquestionably a defining characteristic of the city of Silver Spring. That character has increasingly been eroded by new development. I remember clearly the joy that I felt from seeing the architecture of downtown Silver Spring when I first stayed there with family friends during the summer I turned eleven, even if not from the memory of specific buildings themselves. The fifth of seven children of my post-war Hungarian refugee parents, who had been placed in North Carolina by Catholic Charities, my sister and I were sent up for a visit shortly after my father died in 1964. I had no idea then that I would become an architect, nor that I would someday embrace the history of the town where I would later put down roots – but I'm quite sure that the most expressive design characteristics of the Silver Spring of the 60s played a role in inspiring me to become an architect. It is essential to preserve the best buildings of that era, in their cohesive expression and design integrity, to convey the story of that time and place in Silver Spring's development. To be clear, I've never believed that one must necessarily freeze each and every historic building or place "as is" to achieve historic preservation goals. It is the preservation of essential historic characteristics, both of historic buildings individually and of historic places, that is essential to the telling of the story of what is historically significant, and why.

As a child of immigrants who has strived to achieve the American dream, I am here to testify that there is a tremendous cost to a community in the destruction of those characteristic pieces of the urban fabric that create a meaningful sense of place. I believe that my advocacy for historic preservation is deeply connected with this need for grounded meaning. I found my American roots in my historic town, where buildings have come and gone, but where the fight to preserve the town's historic sense of place has been an uphill battle in the wake of modernizing forces. I urge you to preserve the telling of the colorful story of Silver Spring by adding the Weller's Dry Cleaning site to the Master Plan for Historic and Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites.

Sincerely,

Helen Crettier Wilkes, A.I.A.



In re: Proposed Historic Designation of Weller's Dry Cleaners Building (8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, MD)

Dear Montgomery Planning,

Takoma for All (TFA) is a non-profit community organization composed of Maryland and Washington D.C. neighbors who advocate for a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous community. Our steering committee and members have thoroughly reviewed your proposed plans to add the old Weller's building in Silver Spring and we are immensely against the proposal.

This proposal is terribly misguided by the belief or even cultish desire to preserve a building that is neither historic to this area nor historically significant in its own right. Moreover, the proposal fails to even consider the wishes of the property owner, a minority immigrant who is seeking to build a better life for his family through property ownership. Finally, the location of this property is in a transit-rich neighborhood; it is very possible it could be redeveloped into housing and/or a mixed use property that would add to the area's housing supply - something that is desperately needed.

We denounce this proposal for the foregoing reasons, and we request that you reject the proposal for any or all of the reasons cited above.

Sincerely,

Anthony Camilli
Lead Representative
Takoma For All
www.takomaforall.org
Facebook/Twitter: @takomaforall



**Statement of Deborah Chalfie, Preservation Chair
Art Deco Society of Washington
Before the
Montgomery County Planning Board
February 23, 2023
Regarding
Listing of Weller’s Dry Cleaning, 8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, MD
in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and
the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites**

Chairman Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board, the Art Deco Society of Washington appreciates the opportunity to testify, and we offer our **whole-hearted support for listing the Weller’s Dry Cleaning building and signage in both the County’s Master Plan for Historic Preservation and the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites.**

Founded in 1982, the Art Deco Society of Washington (ADSW) is a nonprofit membership organization covering the Washington DC region. Our 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 core element of our mission. ADSW has a solid record of leading or supporting historic preservation efforts within Montgomery County (e.g., Silver Theatre and Silver Spring Shopping Center, Silver Spring CBD Historic District, Polychrome Historic District, and others). More recently, ADSW actively participated in the process around the Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan (SSDAC), during which we strongly and repeatedly supported the Plan’s proposal to add Weller’s to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. We also defended the Plan’s approach of keeping Fenton Village as a diverse, small-scale, commercial district.

SSDAC Sector Plan Supports Designation

The SSDAC sector plan for downtown Silver Spring singled out Weller’s for Master Plan evaluation. It was the Planning Board itself that proposed preservation of Weller’s in the public hearing draft it forwarded to the County Council in late 2021.¹ The Council agreed, and Weller’s is in the final sector

¹ Mont. Planning, *Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, Public Hearing Draft*, at 133 (Fall 2021), available at https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/SSDAC-Public-Hearing-Draft_FINAL.pdf.

plan approved by the Council and the M-NCPPC. The inclusion of Weller's was not in any way an afterthought.

For more than 20 years, Weller's has been publicly identified by planners, preservationists, and community residents as a gem to be preserved.² A 2002 survey of the CBD sector plan for downtown Silver Spring identified the Weller's building and sign – then only about 40 years old – as a candidate for Master Plan evaluation at any time, and possibly eligible for National Register listing when it turned 50.³ In 2011, Clare Lise Kelly, then Senior Architectural Historian for the Montgomery County Planning Department, blogged about Weller's as “Building of the Month,”⁴ and in 2015, she spotlighted Weller's as a “well-preserved example of Googie architecture” in her comprehensive chronicle of mid-century modern architecture in the county, *Montgomery Modern*.⁵

In anticipation of the opportunities offered by the upcoming downtown Silver Spring sector plan update, the HPO staff in the Planning Dept. contracted with EHT Tracerics in 2020, when the Weller family still owned Weller's, to research and prepare a form for the Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties,⁶ and secure an inventory number. The proposed designation of Weller's was included in the very first working draft produced by the Planning staff.

The SSDAC's support for designating Weller's is not only reflected in the explicit provision providing for its evaluation and encouraging its adaptive reuse if the occupant and use change,⁷ but it is also reflected in what is explicitly *not* in the plan. The SSDAC recommended redevelopment of the Safeway site catty-corner from Weller's, and it specified certain opportunity sites and improvements for Fenton Village. However, the SSDAC did *not* designate the Weller's corner lot or any part of that east side stretch of Fenton Street in Fenton Village as an opportunity site for redevelopment.⁸ Instead, the SSDAC calls for keeping Fenton Village largely intact as a district hospitable to diverse small businesses – something the community overwhelmingly supported.

In short, the SSDAC represents a consensus by county officials that Weller's is strongly deserving of consideration for placement in Master Plan. Since the Plan's adoption, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has fulfilled its role by voting to recommend that the Weller's building and sign be placed on both the Locational Atlas and in the Master Plan.⁹ This Planning Board should finish the job.

² See Mont. Planning, “Weller's Dry Cleaning,” Timeline, at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/historic/research-and-designation/wellers-dry-cleaning/>.

³ Potomac Hudson Engineering, *Historic Sites Survey Report: Silver Spring Central Business District*, at 22 (Dec. 2002), available at http://www.montgomeryplanningboard.org/agenda/2008/documents/20080612_resource-ss_cbd-survey1_print.pdf.

⁴ Clare L. Kelly, *The Third Place, A Montgomery Planning Department Blog* (Mar. 10, 2011), available at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/blog-design/2011/03/building-of-the-month/>.

⁵ Clare L. Kelly, *Montgomery Modern*, at 94, 96-97 (M-NCPPC, 2015) [hereinafter *Montgomery Modern*].

⁶ Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, See Appendix 9, beg. at 45, in *Appendix: Weller's Dry Cleaning (#36-86-1), 8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, Md 20910, Master Plan for Historic Preservation Designation Form, December 2022*, available at https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/3_Appendix.Weller.DesignationForm.pdf [hereinafter *Weller's Designation Form*].

⁷ Mont. Planning, *Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan*, at 186 (Approved and Adopted June 2022), available at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Silver-Spring-DAC-Approved-Adopted-web.pdf> [hereinafter *Final SSDAC*].

⁸ See *id.*, at 44-45.

⁹ Mont. Planning, Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning: *An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation*, staff report completed Feb. 16, 2023, at 1, available at

Weller's Is an Excellent Specimen of Googie Architecture

As thoroughly documented in the staff's Public Hearing Draft for the Board,¹⁰ as well as in EHT Traceries' MIHP form and Kelly's book on modern architecture in the county, Weller's is an excellent specimen of Googie-style architecture, a futuristic exuberant form of modern architecture that originated in Southern California and is characterized by cantilevered roofs, sharp angles, abstract shapes, bold colors, and integrated, eye-catching signage that produced an effect that was hip, casual, accessible, and fun.

Even GoBrent Realty, the real estate/leasing agent selected by Weller's current owners to market the building to a new tenant last summer, advertised the building as a "distinctive property," highlighting its "mid-century modernist 'Googie' style architecture" as a selling point to attract a new tenant.¹¹ Googie is *still* uniquely cool.

But, Googie buildings like Weller's are increasingly rare in Montgomery County. The Prestige Exceptional Fabricare building on Georgia Ave. in Silver Spring is unprotected and doesn't come close to Weller's dramatic features. The signage at Glenmont Shopping Arcade is under threat from center redevelopment. Other great examples are either long gone (e.g., the Hechinger's store in Rockville) or are being demolished one-by-one, such as the Huggins gas station in Kensington¹² that came down just last week. The cumulative effect is that we lose an entire style of architecture and an entire era of our history. We end up with the "bland" homogeneity of architecture that seems to be overtaking cities across the country,¹³ wiping out diversity in our built environment and erasing our community's unique character that contributes to a city's sense of place.¹⁴

Weller's Meets the Criteria for Designation and Master Plan Framework

The earlier Designation Report¹⁵ and recent Public Hearing Draft¹⁶ prepared by the Planning staff convincingly make the case that the Weller's building and sign meet at least two criteria for architectural and design significance: Weller's embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction (2A), and it represents an established and familiar visual feature of

https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/HP-Master-Plan-Amendment-Taylor-School-and-Wellers_2-23-23.pdf.

¹⁰ See Mont. Planning Dept., Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning: *An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Public Hearing Draft*, at 31-37 (Jan. 2023), available at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Taylor-Weller-Public-Hearing-Draft.pdf> [hereinafter *Public Hearing Draft*].

¹¹ GoBrent listing for 8237 Fenton St., available at <https://gobrentrealty.com/properties/8237-fenton-street/>.

¹² See generally Mont. Cty. Planning Bd., Resolution approving Site Plan No. 820220030 (May 31, 2022), Crossroads of Kensington, available at <https://eplans.montgomeryplanning.org/UFS/32890/99600/30-PBRESandMailingList-820220030.pdf/30-PBRESandMailingList-820220030.pdf>.

¹³ Anna Kodé, "America, The Bland," *N.Y. Times* (Jan. 20, 2023), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/20/realestate/housing-developments-city-architecture.html>. Unfortunately, the apartment buildings that have recently gone up in Silver Spring look very much like the buildings pictured in this article.

¹⁴ The SSDAC made a similar point: "The preservation of select historic resources is critical if the downtown is to develop in a way that reflects the authenticity and unique qualities of Silver Spring. The community's sense of place relies upon several historic buildings Adaptive reuse of historic buildings provides texture and depth to the architectural character of the Plan area. The resources are thoughtfully designed, often focus on the pedestrian-level, and stand out in the urban landscape. They are manifestations of the community's collective identity." *Final SSDAC Plan*, *supra* n. 7, at 180.

¹⁵ *Weller's Designation Form*, *supra* n. 6, at 9-11.

¹⁶ *Public Hearing Draft*, *supra* n. 10, at 34-35.

the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape (2E). The Art Deco Society strongly agrees. Weller's and its signage embody many of the character-defining features of the distinctive style known as Googie architecture, and should be considered together as one historic resource. Moreover, due to its singular style and long-time presence in its current location, Weller's is an important, place-making resource for Fenton Village, the downtown area, and the entire community.

It has not escaped anyone's notice that, soon after the last scheduled Planning Board hearing on Weller's was postponed, the owners allowed the new tenant to encase the building in a coat of beige paint, which had the effect of masking, but certainly not erasing, the building's brick and colorful porcelain enamel panels. All of the character-defining structural features of the building are still very much intact. It's just paint, and paint is superficial and can be removed¹⁷ – including from the porcelain enamel panels,¹⁸ or they replaced with like-kind materials since porcelain enamel panels are still made and used in construction.¹⁹ Glass can be replaced. Similarly, the content of the signage was altered when the owners/tenant removed and disposed of the Weller's sign panels from their metal frames, but the metal frames and whimsical clock are still there. The case for designation and protection of Weller's remains unaffected by the unfortunate alterations. Should the building be designated, the owners could take advantage of tax credits to help finance the paint removal and restoration.

In addition to meeting the designation criteria, the Master Plan indicates that priority should be given to buildings offering public benefits such as enhancing neighborhoods and communities.²⁰ Preservation of Weller's is not only important in and of itself, it is important to the preservation and enhancement of Fenton Village. By being a small-scale affordable commercial building, Weller's bolsters the small-business district that is Fenton Village. In fact, Weller's is not just one more small building; Clare Kelly stated that “the space-age design of the 1960 [sic] Weller's Dry Cleaning building serves as a *gateway* to a Fenton Street shopping district of [additional colorful midcentury buildings].”²¹

Preservation groups, including ADSW, were among the strongest defenders of preserving Fenton Village during the sector plan process; we advocated to keep Fenton Village accessible to small businesses and immigrant entrepreneurs. ADSW argued that “[t]he 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.”²² The small scale and affordability of the streamlined and midcentury modern

¹⁷ See generally, Anne E. Grimmer, *Keeping It Clean: Removing Exterior Dirt, Paint, Stains and Graffiti from Historic Masonry Buildings* 18-19 (Nat'l Park Service, 1988), at <http://npshistory.com/publications/preservation/keeping-it-clean.pdf>.

¹⁸ Thomas Jester, ed., *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*, 223, 229 (Getty Conserv. Inst., 2014) (“Paints can be removed [from porcelain panels] with proprietary strippers, but caustic ones, which can etch the porcelain enamel, should be avoided”), at <https://www.getty.edu/publications/resources/virtuallibrary/9781606063255.pdf>.

¹⁹ See generally, Porcelain Enamel Institute, at https://www.porcelainenamel.com/about_pei/architectural/.

²⁰ *Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County*, at 21 (M-NCPPC, Sept. 1979), available at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Master-Plan-for-Historic-Preservation.pdf>.

²¹ *Montgomery Modern*, *supra* n. 5, at 94 (emphasis added).

²² Statement of Art Deco Society of Washington to Mont. Cty. Planning Board Re: Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Draft Plan, at 4 (Dec. 1, 2021), available at <https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Item-8-Correspondence-Public-Hearing-for-Silver-Spring-Downtown-and-Adjacent-Communities-Plan-compressed-1.pdf> (p. 80 of 102).

buildings in Fenton Village are inextricably tied to the diversity that has flourished there. Fenton Village's diversity is something to celebrate and preserve. That won't continue if we fail to protect the small midcentury buildings there.

Historic Preservation Can Be Compatible with Redevelopment

ADSW is aware that the owners of Weller's believe that historic preservation is incompatible with their aspirations for the site. Yet, done right, these interests are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes buildings are preserved and restored in a way that they continue with the same function, such as the AFI Silver Theatre & Silver Spring Shopping Center. More often, buildings are preserved and then adaptively reused for a new purpose. In both cases, preservation is often not just compatible with development, it actually elevates the appeal and function of the entire development.

For instance, take the new Modena Reserve senior living development in Kensington that was built on what used to be the Mizell Lumber & Hardware property. There were two small historic buildings on that site, the Mizell office and a former gas station. The developer preserved and adaptively reused them. Now, they are amenities for the new apartment building: one is a hair salon for residents, and within the next month, the other will be a café open to residents and the public alike.²³ ADSW contacted the developer who managed the Modena Reserve development. He indicated²⁴ that they never considered demolishing the two small historic buildings on the property; from the start, they planned to preserve, refurbish, reuse, and connect them to the apartment building. Perhaps the owners of Weller's could do something similar with an adjacent apartment building. Or Weller's could be a lobby. There are many design options that are possible.

In any case, the rights incident to property ownership are not absolute, but are subject to reasonable regulation for the benefit of the community. There are many types of regulation deemed in the public interest that can limit a property owner's "rights" to do whatever they want with their business or property – laws and regulations on agriculture and the environment, on civil rights and public accommodations, on zoning, and on historic preservation. As a result, there are ample precedents for requiring preservation of a resource over an owner's objection. And in many instances, the owner comes around after-the-fact and sees the value – including the financial value – in preserving a building as part of a new development. For example:

- Canada Dry/Silverton - The Silverton Townhomes on East-West Highway in Silver Spring incorporated the old Canada Dry bottling plant façade and lobby interior into the new development. Initially, the owner strongly opposed preserving any part of this Streamline Moderne masterpiece. But once the county decided to preserve a good portion of the street-facing façade, the developer's designers were delighted and enthusiastic, saving the interior lobby with its terrazzo and spiral staircase as well. The owner also changed its tune and now the striking Canada Dry façade is often featured in real estate ads for those condos.²⁵
- Silver Theatre & Silver Spring Shopping Center – Whether to preserve these two John Ebersson masterpieces unfortunately became a battle royale between the developer vs. the community and preservationists. The owners of the theatre-shopping center started

²³ See first photo at Modena Reserve Kensington website, Gallery, <https://modenakensington.com/gallery/>.

²⁴ Telephone conversation of Deborah Chalfie, ADSW Preservation Chair, with Juan Cameron, Partner and Senior Managing Director, Development & Acquisitions, McCaffery (Feb. 17, 2023).

²⁵ See e.g., McEneaney Assoc. listing for 1201 East West Highway, #205, at <https://www.mceneaney.com/real-estate/1201-east-west-highway-205-silver-spring-md-20910/mdmc2050436/123692148>.

vandalizing the buildings²⁶ to avert preservation, but both properties ended up being preserved on both the Atlas and in the Master Plan, and meticulously restored. They are now the crown jewels of downtown Silver Spring.

Conclusion

“Architecture tells the story of a place, and the erasure of [modern architecture] ... is the removal of an important chapter of social, political, economic, and cultural history.”²⁷

Weller’s is a beloved and long-time fixture in downtown Silver Spring, reflecting the suburban culture and space age themes of its time. It is an anchor in Fenton Village, and an architectural highlight of Montgomery County. The question before the Board is not necessarily an either-or issue. Preserving Weller’s can coexist with the owners’ desire to build an apartment building next door. The Art Deco Society urges the Planning Board to forward a recommended amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* for Weller’s, AND to decide now to add it to the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites*, so that the building is protected during the remainder of the County’s deliberations.

Thank you for your consideration of our views. We would welcome any questions you may have. For further information, contact Deborah Chalfie, at dchalfie@adsw.org.

²⁶ See Benjamin Forgey, “The Vanishing Silver,” *Washington Post* (Aug. 30, 1984), available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1984/08/30/the-vanishing-silver/bcc8541d-bc43-4311-a995-c78d6fde3552/>.

²⁷ Paraphrase of The Cultural Tutor, Tweet on Brutalism (Jan. 17, 2023) available at https://twitter.com/culturaltutor/status/1615387835967868928?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email.

From: [Linda Keenan](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Feb. 23, 2023 Meeting, Item 5 Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment
Date: Thursday, February 16, 2023 1:55:19 PM

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

Greetings,

This is in regard to the Planning Board's Feb. 23, 2023 meeting, agenda item 5, Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment, Weller's Dry Cleaning at 8237 Fenton Street.

A sense of place is what makes places distinctive. The mix of buildings, different land uses, the sidewalks, street configuration, the parks, and the people all contribute to that sense of place.

I have only lived in Silver Spring for 10 years. In that time, I've greatly enjoyed the small businesses and outstanding entertainment venues present in Silver Spring, but I've also been dismayed by the steady loss of buildings that contributed to our sense of place.

Instead of requiring the developer to creatively incorporate the **Suburban National Bank at 8252 Georgia Ave.** into the Solaire apartment building, our county allowed the developer to knock it down.

The **National Sand & Gravel and Ready Mixed Concrete Association building at 900 Spring St.**, documented on pp. 166-167 in the *Montgomery Modern* book the National Capital Planning Commission published, was the embodiment of its organization, and a unique Brutalist-style building, but it too was demolished in 2020. Three years later, the site sits vacant.

The **National Tire and Battery Building (formerly Coca-Cola Bottling Works) 1110 East-West Highway building** will soon be removed for a park. Couldn't the county think of a way to incorporate this remnant of Silver Spring's industrial past into a recreational facility?

The building under consideration today is **Weller's Dry Cleaning at 8237 Fenton St.** The building and its sign together present a good example and a locally rare one of mid-century modern "Googie" architecture as documented on pp. 96-97 of *Montgomery Modern*. I urge the Planning Board to approve adding Weller's to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The purpose of your 2015 publication *Montgomery Modern* was to encourage the appreciation and preservation of 20th-century buildings. Let's make good on that goal by protecting **Weller's Dry Cleaning at 8237 Fenton St.** and other remaining Silver Spring structures.

I understand that Weller's Dry Cleaning has a new owner and tenant. It's wonderful that Silver Spring is attracting business entrepreneurs. There's no reason why the building's history can't be preserved while the interior of the building enjoys a new use. We have some great examples in Silver Spring of adaptive use: the preservation of part of the Canada Dry plant incorporated into the Silverton apartments and the rescue and restoration of the Silver Theatre.

I would hope that inclusion in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for any building, not just 8237 Fenton St., would mean that building owners would be better informed about changes that can and cannot be made to exteriors. As a community member, I want to support small businesses and historic preservation at the same time.

Thank you for consideration of my recommendation and comments.

Linda Keenan

9503 Saint Andrews Way
Silver Spring, MD 20901
linda@lindakeenan.org
240.605.8871

From: [Christine Tan](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Gary Kushner](#); [Paul Gallagher](#)
Subject: Stone Quarry HOA Public Hearing Comments
Date: Thursday, February 16, 2023 10:27:45 AM
Attachments: [Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal PowerPoint.pptx](#)

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

> I am president of the Stone Quarry HOA. I understand there is a Public Hearing on March 23 on the Pedestrian Master Plan. Attached are our comments submitted on behalf of Stone

>

> I am president of the Stone Quarry HOA. I understand there is a Public Hearing on March 23 on the Pedestrian Master Plan. Attached are our comments submitted on behalf of Stone Quarry HOA.

>

> Our community is located near the intersection of River Road and Seven Locks. We are concerned about the Beltway expansion plans which include a proposal to widen River Road. Our community objects to the Beltway expansion plans which will directly impact the entrance and exit from our community. The plans propose adding lanes to both sides of River Road which will make it even harder to exit and enter our community. There are pedestrian safety issue. Attached is a Powerpoint which sets forth our objections.

>

> We would like the Planning Board to consider these objections. Please contact us with questions or comments. Thank you.

>

> Regards,

> Christine

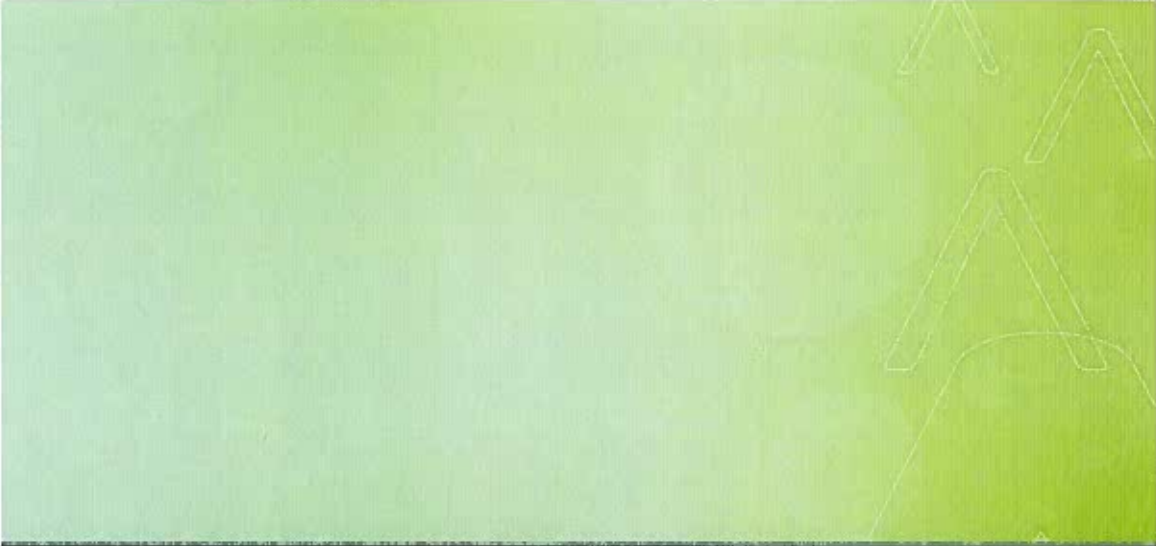
>

>

>

>

> Sent from my iPhone



- ▶ Stone Quarry
HOA Objections
to OP Lanes
Proposal

Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- Stone Quarry HOA represents the River Quarry community
- The River Quarry community is located off of River Road in Bethesda, Maryland between and bordered by I-495 and Seven Locks Road

Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- OP Lanes is proposing to widen River Road including the addition of one lane of traffic on either side of River Road right before the entrance to the River Quarry community.
- There is only one entrance to River Quarry from River Road.
- There is a short access road to enter River Quarry Place which is closely located to the I-495 exit ramp.
- The proposed widening of River Road will adversely affect entrance to River Quarry Place.

Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- The only traffic light near the River Quarry community is at Seven Locks Road.
- In order to exit River Quarry and turn left onto River Road to travel east toward Washington and downtown Bethesda, a vehicle must cross three lanes of approaching traffic and make a U-turn at the light.
- OP Lanes is proposing to add an additional lane in both directions on River Road which would result in having to cross four lanes of approaching traffic.

Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- Adding another lane would make it nearly impossible and certainly unsafe to enter River Road, no less cross the road.
- There are safety and navigation issues for pedestrians and the affected neighboring communities.
- The project will create noise and odors from both the construction itself as well as the additional vehicles.
- The Beltway project is to address traffic issues on I-495.
- Widening River Road is unnecessary and adversely affects residents and commuters.

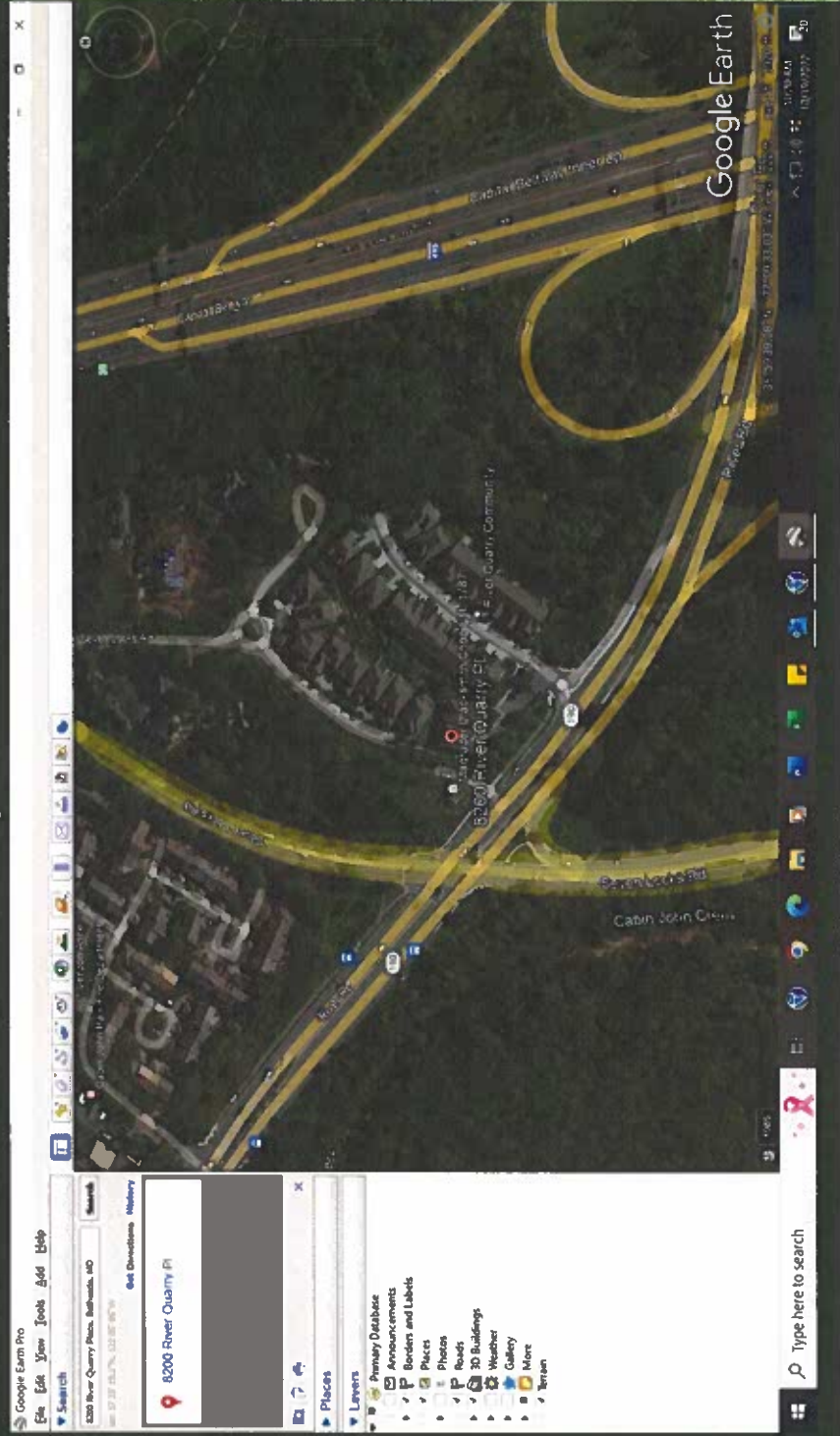
Stone Quarry Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- A legitimate traffic study would demonstrate the danger created by the OP Lanes proposal.
- The 2016 Whitman High School deadly crash on River Road is an example of the hazards of a four-lane divided road.
- River Road is a busy speedway.
- Adding another lane will only have an adverse effect on residents and communities located near River Road.
- Cabin John Park Fire Department's emergency and/or rescue response time will be negatively impacted if there are additional lanes to River Road.

Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- The slides on pages 8-10 show how close OP Lanes plans to build around the River Quarry community.
- The photos on these slides depict how difficult it will be for residents of River Quarry to enter and exit the community based on the OP Lanes plans.

Stone Quarry Objections to OP Lanes Proposal



Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal



Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

Roadway, Limits of Disturbance & Noise Mitigation



Stone Quarry HOA Objections to OP Lanes Proposal

- Stone Quarry HOA strenuously objects to the referenced proposal, at least to the extent it would involve widening of River Road adjacent to and across from the River Quarry community.

From: [Maria Mougridis](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Cc: [Nicholas Redding](#)
Subject: February 23, 2023 Board Meeting Letter of Support - Weller's Dry Cleaning
Date: Thursday, February 16, 2023 8:59:02 AM
Attachments: [Weller's Dry Cleaning LTR of support PresMD 2.15.23.pdf](#)

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

Chairman Zyontz and members of the Planning Board,

In reference to the work session and public hearing on February 23, 2023 for ammednig the Master Plan for Historic and Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites, I am submitting writtend support for Weller's Dry Cleaning (8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring) to be designated.

Maria Mougridis

(She/Her/Hers)

Preservation Initiatives Manager

Preservation Maryland

3600 Clipper Mill Road, Suite 248

Baltimore, Maryland 21211

410-685-2886 x302

MMougridis@presmd.org

presmd.org



PRESERVATION MARYLAND

February 15, 2023

Chairman Jeff Zyontz
Montgomery County Planning Board
2425 Reddie Dr.
Wheaton, MD 20902

RE: Weller's Dry Cleaning, 8237 Fenton Street

Chairman Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board:

On behalf of the staff and Board of Preservation Maryland and our thousands of statewide supporters, I write to express our support for listing Weller's Dry Cleaning (8237 Fenton Street) to Montgomery County's *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* at the February 23, 2023, hearing and work session.

In 2022, the *Silver Spring Downtown & Adjacent Communities Plan* called for the evaluation of Weller's Dry Cleaning to determine if it was eligible for listing in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. As a result of this evaluation, it was determined that Weller's Dry Cleaning meets two requirements of the Montgomery County Code: 2.A Architectural and design significance. The Historic resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. And 2.E Architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular characteristic or landscape. The Weller's Dry Cleaning structure is also one of very few remaining *Googie* architectural examples in the state and is an important representation of mid-century modern architecture in Maryland.

To prevent any further exterior changes to this historic property, we believe that the Historic Preservation Commission's recommendation for the proposed inclusion of Weller's Dry Cleaning in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* is an important step forward for Montgomery County, and they have the full support of Preservation Maryland.

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Redding
President & CEO, Preservation Maryland

From: [David Lefever](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Weller's Dry Cleaning – Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment, Feb. 23, 2023
Date: Friday, February 17, 2023 6:18:02 PM

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

Dear Chairman Zyontz and Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns before your meeting on February 23 with respect to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation Amendment for Weller's Dry Cleaning.

My family has lived in Montgomery County since 1958, and I bought my first house in Silver Spring in 1978. A significant aspect of the charm of Silver Spring is that it retains some of the charm of mid-century life. We still enjoy going to Silver Spring (especially the handsomely preserved Silver Theatre), but Silver Spring is losing its feeling as a neighborhood.

Part of preserving a city's character is embracing its roots, and this applies to Weller's. I believe that it is welcoming to see buildings different from others in proximity, particularly ones, such as Weller's, that have a distinct, inviting personality. Diversity of architecture is part of the signature of the city, and painting over such a recognizable small business storefront strikes me as making Silver Spring less engaging.

Please approve historic protections for Weller's Dry Cleaning.

Thank you for your consideration.

David Lefever
7106 Beechwood Drive
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

--

David Lefever
7106 Beechwood Drive | Chevy Chase, MD 20815

From: jkellysr@verizon.net
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Fw: Testimony Edward Taylor Hearing
Date: Thursday, February 16, 2023 1:50:33 PM

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

I typed in your address incorrectly last time; sorry.

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: jkellysr@verizon.net <jkellysr@verizon.net>
To: mcp.chair@mncppc-mc.org <mcp.chair@mncppc-mc.org>
Sent: Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 12:39:43 PM EST
Subject: Testimony Edward Taylor Hearing

I plan to testify at the hearing on next Thursday; I am forwarding a copy of my remarks .

Joan Taylor Kelly Testimony

My name is Joan Taylor Kelly, the daughter of Edward U. Taylor. I want to thank The Montgomery County Planning Board for considering this honor of his memory by

giving the Edward U. Taylor school building historic designation. We were pleased

when one of the four consolidated schools for Black children constructed in the 1950s was named in his honor. Our pleasure is added with your consideration of historic designation for that structure.

Edward Taylor came from a family that instilled in him the value of education so that much of his educational training was obtained in District of Columbia institutions. After earning his Baccalaureate degree from Howard University, he returned to his home community and was named the Supervisor of Colored Schools in Montgomery County.

His office was in his home where he assumed the duties and expenses of operating that office. He was involved in many of the initiatives related to the training of Negro teachers, the creation and operation of the first high school for negro students. (also taught in the high school in addition to his supervisory responsibilities), community involvement in the education of their children, and the development of extracurricular activities which broaden students' horizons.

The area is one of historic interest as the building is adjacent to the preserved Old Boyd Negro Elementary school, and next to the Cal Ripken Baseball field.

He developed a terminal illness and died in the 1950 without knowing that he had been honored by having a school named in his honor. As the sole survivor of his family I am pleased that he is again having an action taken to honor his memory.

Thank you.

Joan Taylor Kelly
4231 Flower Valley Dr.
R-ville, Md. 20853-1809
(301)929-1424

From: [Joe Prefontaine](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Weller's DO NOT PROTECT
Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023 11:31:21 PM

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

MCP-Chair,

I am a retired architect and member of the Art Deco Society of Washington, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, The National Building Museum, and the District Architecture Center.

I am familiar with the Weller's building and know with certainty that it or its sign has never been more than third rate commercial design. In choice of materials, scale, form and aesthetics the building is at best a tepid representation of mid-century architecture. While downtown Silver Spring has a dearth of examples of this "style" of commercial design Weller's nonetheless is so poor a representation that its preservation would serve only to diminish the public's appreciation of the style and stand as a reminder of how impoverished the DTSS area is of architecture from this period deserving of consideration.

Happily Silver Spring has exceptional examples of Art Deco and Art Moderne architecture and design that it rightly celebrates. I regret that SS has no better example than Weller's of the fleeting and kitschy period that it so dismally recalls but to elevate this building of grossly substandard quality to protected status would mock other protected buildings that deserve recognition - buildings that elevate Silver Spring's cultural heritage.

Year by year Weller's grows increasingly unappealing and irrelevant. I honestly can't believe I'm writing to condemn the recognition of a building that so clearly fails the smell test as a cultural icon. I wonder lately if historic preservation has completely gone off the rails. I can appreciate the broadening of what we as a society value, but to cavalierly extend that inclusiveness to a building of the quality of Weller's is folly and calls into question the competence of any professional who would advocate for its recognition much less its preservation.

Joseph Prefontaine *former AIA FHDA LEED AP*
1618 Decatur Street NW
Washington DC 20011
202.400.0900

From: [Ralph Buglass](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Written testimony re: Edward U. Taylor School - hearing date: Feb. 23
Date: Wednesday, February 15, 2023 4:42:49 PM
Attachments: [Edward U Taylor School testimony Ralph Buglass.pdf](#)

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

Hello,
Attached is testimony I'd like to submit on behalf of historic designation for the Edward U. Taylor School building in Boyds. The hearing on this item is scheduled for next Thursday, Feb. 23.

--Ralph Buglass
1482 Selworthy Road
Rockville, MD 20854

301-424-1552
rbuglass@gmail.com

To: Montgomery County Planning Board

From: Ralph Buglass, volunteer historian/speaker, Montgomery History
1482 Selworthy Road, Rockville, MD 20854 (home address)

Date: February 15, 2023

Re: Testimony on behalf of historic designation for the Edward U. Taylor School
Hearing, Feb. 23, 2023

The **Edward U. Taylor School** is most worthy of historic designation and preservation. It is a unique reminder and manifestation of our county's ultimate determination to reverse a century of racially segregated public schools — a shameful history indeed, but one that must not be forgotten, especially since its legacy remains with us today.

Toward that end, the Edward U. Taylor School has numerous **distinctions** worth commemorating:

- First, it was one of four mid-20th century elementary schools built to provide the county's Black students facilities that, for the first time since the beginning of school segregation after the Civil War, were **generally on par** with the schools for white students. As a result of the 1950-52 building program that produced Taylor and the three other schools, each grade had its own classroom — ending the practice of combining grades (sometimes 1-7 all together in a one-room school) that prevailed in the substandard Black schools until then. Additionally, kindergarten was finally provided to Black children for the first time, along with dedicated space for art, music, and physical education.
- After the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision overturning school segregation in 1954, the Taylor school was the only formerly Black school in the county to become a mainstream **integrated elementary school** beginning in the late 1950s, as part of the school system's county-wide desegregation process (1955-61).
- The building stands opposite the Boyds Negro School museum, operated by the Boyds Historical Society, which provides a first-hand look at segregated schooling practices from the 19th century into the early 20th (and quite fascinating to children today); the **proximity** of these two schools, representing the entire century-long span of segregation and its demise, provides a "tailor-made" opportunity to tell the full story of this unfortunate, but important-to-remember time.
- The **namesake** of the building, Edward U. Taylor, was the long-time Supervisor of the Black schools in our county (1923-51), essentially an assistant superintendent within the system. He was instrumental in establishing the county's first high school for Black students in 1927 — a struggle that was achieved long after high schooling for white youth began. His name was attached to the elementary school building, completed just a short time after his death, following a campaign by Black teachers he supervised. The building thus became the first county facility named for a local African-American figure, an honor that alone deserves to remain well into the future through historic designation of the building.

The segregated history of our county's schools is by no means a happy one, but recognition of "whence we've come" and preservation of those parts of the story that pointed toward a better future — as symbolized by the Taylor school — helps to commemorate a more inclusive view of history, and is perhaps all the more important, given Montgomery County's broad racial and ethnic diversity today.

For Montgomery History, I give talks on local history topics, including the segregated schools, but this is the first time I have testified on behalf of a historic property — a measure of the significance that the Taylor school has.



From: [Michael Dutka](#)
To: [MCP-Chair](#)
Subject: Oppositon to designating Weller's dry cleaning as a historic struture
Date: Thursday, February 2, 2023 12:57:24 PM

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

It's just a dry cleaners. Are we really going to do this when there are so many other vastly more beneficial uses for this site? Downtown Silver Spring is one of the most transit connected places in the United States, we should be maximizing its potential not preserving obsolete car oriented suburban architecture from the 1960's.

--Michael S. Dutka
713 Shetland Street
Rockville Md