



P.O. Box 1160 • Silver Spring, Maryland • 20910-1160

TO: Montgomery County Council President Gabe Albornoz and Council Members

FROM: Jerry A. McCoy, President, Silver Spring Historical Society, PO Box 1160, Silver Spring, MD, 20910.

RE: The Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, February 17, 2022

DATE: February 22, 2022

Since 1998, our mission has been to create and promote awareness and appreciation of downtown Silver Spring's heritage through the preservation and protection of historical sites, structures, artifacts and archives. In this spirit, we wish to share our opinions on key aspects of the Plan.

Partial upzoning envisioned in the **Adjacent Communities Plan** of four historic neighborhoods, Woodside, Woodside Park, Seven Oaks-Evanswood and East Silver Spring, could result in greater density through the incentive to purchase and raze single-family homes. It would not increase affordable housing.

The landmark 1850 **Jesup Blair House**, located in Jesup Blair Park, has been inactive for over a decade. We ask that the Plan add full restoration of the house for use as a cultural and arts facility in the Capital Improvement Plan. In 2009 Montgomery Parks invited our society to utilize a portion of the Blair House as a safe repository for our materials and to share the collections with the public. A leading architect has recently designed an archival space for these materials in the house's lower level.

For the past twelve years, we have been a strong advocate on behalf of Montgomery Parks to seek funding to renovate and adaptively reuse this historic home. In partnership with Carpe Diem Arts, we hope that our two organizations, in addition to others, will be tenants. Together we will activate this long dormant property by providing educational, performing arts, artistic, social justice, and recreational activities to the public.

Jesup Blair Park is the crown jewel of Downtown Silver Spring's historic, cultural, and recreational parks and needs to be carefully respected for the history and nature that it embodies. We request limits be placed on hardscaping of the park's grounds and that improvements and widening of the park's pedestrian bridge be reconsidered. **The original construction of this bridge came at the loss of two historic park structures and several old-growth trees.** As a Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation listed and National Register for Historic Places eligible site, Jesup Blair Park's natural character must be preserved and protected.

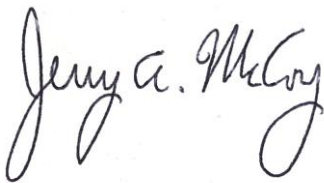
The Garden Apartments District in the Plan is welcome and commendable. These apartments offer historic architecture, affordable market rate housing and are the very embodiment of Missing Middle Housing. The large north parcel of the 1938 Falkland Apartments offers these same advantages and should be included in the district and preserved. “

Downtown Silver Spring is fortunate to retain a large percentage of early to mid-20th century historic commercial buildings on its two main thoroughfares, Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road. The Master Plan designated 1938 Silver Spring Shopping Center and Silver Theatre, including its parking lot, is at the heart of downtown Silver Spring. The parking lot and its functions are of integral importance to the complex's historic context, but alterations are being reviewed and we would object to any physical changes that would reduce its function as a parking lot.

The assemblage of these varied historic properties, many occupied by small independent businesses, offers great opportunities for heritage tourism via an “Old Town Silver Spring” marketing campaign. Old and new Downtown Silver Spring CAN coexist, offering a diverse community that will prove attractive...but only if continued demolition is halted.

Sincerely,

Jerry A. McCoy

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jerry A. McCoy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "J" and "M".

President

Silver Spring Historical Society

sshhistory@yahoo.com