



Committee: PHP
Committee Review: Completed
Staff: Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst
Purpose: Final action – vote expected
Keywords: #Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, Weller’s Dry Cleaning, Master Plan Amendment, HPC

AGENDA ITEM #11
July 11, 2023
Worksession/Action

SUBJECT

Amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller’s Dry Cleaning.

EXPECTED ATTENDEES

Tanya Stern, Acting Director, Montgomery Planning Department
Jason Sartori, Chief, Countywide Planning and Policy Division, Planning Department
Rebecca Ballo, Supervisor for Historic Preservation, Planning Department
John Liebertz, Historic Preservation Planner Coordinator, Planning Department

COUNCIL DECISION POINTS & COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

- The PHP Committee reviewed this item on June 12, 2023, and unanimously recommended both the approval of the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and the disapproval of the Weller’s Dry Cleaning Amendment.
- Council approval or disapproval of the Planning Board Draft Amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

DESCRIPTION/ISSUE

The Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School covers a seven-acre property in Boyds that includes the school building, two baseball fields, and various outbuildings. The Taylor School provides a unique opportunity to protect a cultural landscape that documents the progression of school design for Black residents and recognizes a significant educational landmark for Black residents in the county during the mid-20th Century.

The Planning Board (5-0) found that the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School meets three Designation Criteria as listed in Chapter 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code and recommended the Council designate the former Taylor school as historic. As part of the Planning Board’s motion, the Board suggested that the Council should consider designating a smaller section of the parcel as the environmental setting rather than designating the entire area (building and property) as currently shown in the amendment.

An amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for Weller’s Dry Cleaning would cover a 9,376 square-foot site in Silver Spring that includes the former Weller’s Dry-Cleaning building, an adjacent paved asphalt parking lot, and a roadside commercial sign. The Google-styled Weller’s Dry

Cleaning store and associated sign were built by the Weller brothers in 1961 within the Thayer Avenue commercial area in Downtown Silver Spring. The Googie style is a popular, but relatively rare, mid-twentieth century roadside commercial architecture that is a subset of the Modern Movement of architecture.

The Planning Board also considered whether to recommend that the Council designate the former Weller’s Dry Cleaning site to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Ultimately, the Board (3-2) found that the Weller’s site did not meet the designation criteria for listing to the Locational Atlas, nor did it meet the criteria to amend the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The site is privately owned, and the current owners are not supportive of master plan designation.

The Planning documents can be found here:

1. [Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller’s Dry Cleaning Amendment, Planning Board Draft Amendment](#)
2. [Edward U. Taylor Master Plan Historic Site Designation Form – Appendix](#)
3. [Weller’s Dry Cleaning Master Plan Historic Site Designation Form – Appendix](#)

SUMMARY OF KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- Because of their joint transmission, the Council held a public hearing on April 25, 2023, to receive testimony on both amendments.
- All speakers providing testimony to the Council regarding the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School supported the Master Plan designation for the site; however, the Council did receive testimony from the Boyds Historical Society opposed to a reduced environmental setting for the designation, which has been recommended by the Planning Board and supported by the Committee.
- A member of the County’s Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and several representatives from the historic preservation community provided testimony in favor of a Master Plan designation for the Weller’s site, while three speakers, including the current owner of the property, provided testimony in opposition. The Board and the Committee do not recommend the designation of this resource.

This report contains:

Staff Memorandum	Pages 1-6
Planning Board Letter of Transmittal	© 1-3
Resolution to Amend the Master Plan for Historic Preservation	© 4-6
Table: Proposed amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Resources	© 7-10
Submitted testimony	© 11-38

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MEMORANDUM

July 6, 2023

TO: County Council

FROM: Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: **Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller’s Dry Cleaning**

PURPOSE: Review the proposed amendments and resolution to amend the Master Plan for Historic Preservation

The Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller’s Dry Cleaning: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, contains the text and supporting documentation for an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland (1979), as amended; MARC Rail Communities Sector Plan (2019), as amended; and Thrive Montgomery 2050 (2022), as amended. As submitted, the Amendment addresses two separate resources: the former Edward U. Taylor Elementary School (now the Taylor Science Center) and Weller’s Dry Cleaning. Before evaluating the specifics of each amendment, a brief summary of the two primary mechanisms by which historic resources may be preserved and the Council’s role in the process is laid out below.

Background

In 1976, the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) created the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites, which identifies resources that are potentially historic. Placement on the Locational Atlas provides interim protection¹ to historic resources until they are designated on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The Planning Board has the sole authority to add resources to the Locational Atlas².

In 1979, the County Council adopted the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24A). The Master Plan for Historic Preservation is the County’s preservation planning document. It includes the list of all officially designated historic sites and districts. Historic resources which have been added to the Master Plan have been found to be of special historic or architectural significance and therefore merit protection under the Historic Preservation Ordinance. The County Council makes the final decision on the designation of historic sites and districts via an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The recommendations of the Planning Board are guided by Chapter 24A. Under this chapter, the Board is directed to apply the following criteria:

¹ From demolition or “substantial alteration”

² The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), appointed by the County Executive, reviews and makes recommendations on potential listing to the Locational Atlas.

In considering historic resources for designation as historic sites or historic districts, the Planning Board shall apply the following criteria:

- (1) *Historical and cultural significance.* The historic resource:
 - a. has character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the county, state or nation;
 - b. is the site of a significant historic event;
 - c. is identified with a person or a group of persons who influenced society; or
 - d. exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the county and its communities.
- (2) *Architectural and design significance.* The historic resource:
 - a. embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;
 - b. represents the work of a master;
 - c. possesses high artistic values;
 - d. represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
 - e. represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

These criteria are referenced by number and letter in recommendations by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to the Planning Board, and in the Planning Board's recommendation to the Council. The code does not specify a minimum number of criteria that must be met. Nor does the code require the Planning Board to consider ownership, alterations from the original construction, or National Register Eligibility.

There is no County or State law that mandates the designation of historic resources. Chapter 24A requires the Planning Board to apply historic criteria in making its recommendation to the Council, but the ordinance does not bind the Council to adopt resources that meet the above noted criteria.

The designation of historic resources occurs by the adoption of an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The purpose of all master plans, including the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, is found, in the State Code, Land Use Article §21-101(b), as follows:

- 1) guide and accomplish a coordinated, comprehensive, adjusted, and systematic development of the regional district;
- 2) coordinate and adjust the development of the regional district with public and private development of other parts of the State and of the District of Columbia; and
- 3) protect and promote public health, safety, and welfare.

In addition to the guidance provided by the purpose of all master plans is the purpose provided under Chapter 24A:

It is the purpose of this chapter to provide for the identification, designation, and regulation, for purposes of protection, preservation and continued use and enhancement, of those sites, structures with their appurtenances and environmental settings, and districts of historical, archeological, architectural or cultural value in that portion of the county which is within the Maryland-Washington Regional District. Its further purpose is to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the county, safeguard the historical and cultural heritage of the county, strengthen the local economy, stabilize and improve property values in and around such historical areas, foster civic beauty and to preserve continued utilization and pleasure of the citizens of the county, the state, and the United States of America.

Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Edward U. Taylor Elementary School

The Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for the Edward U. Taylor School contains the text and supporting documentation for an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland (1979), as amended; the MARC Rail Communities Sector Plan (2019), as amended; and Thrive Montgomery 2050 (2022), as amended.

The Planning Board Draft Amendment for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School covers a seven-acre property in Boyds that includes the school building, two baseball fields, and various outbuildings. In 1952, the Board of Education built the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, located at 19501 White Ground Road, approximately one mile southwest of Boyds. The school's history is representative of 1) the closure and consolidation of one-room and two-room Black elementary schools in the mid-20th century prior to desegregation; 2) sustained advocacy for modern school facilities and pressure applied from state and national litigation against the "separate but equal" doctrine; 3) the desegregation of Montgomery County's school system; and 4) the burden placed on the Black community to achieve the desegregation policies set forth by the county. The Taylor School provides a unique opportunity to protect a cultural landscape that documents the progression of school design for Black residents and recognizes a significant educational landmark for Black residents in the county during the mid-20th Century.

The Planning Board (5-0) found that the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School meets three Designation Criteria³ as listed in Chapter 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code and recommended the Council designate the former Taylor School as historic. The Board also moved to list the Edward U. Taylor School to the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites. This listing on the Planning Board's Atlas protects the property from any substantial alterations while the Council considers the Master Plan Amendment to list the property as an historic site. Montgomery County Public Schools, the owner of the site, supports the designation.

As part of the Planning Board's motion, the Board suggested that the Council consider designating a smaller section of the parcel as the environmental setting rather than designating the entire area (building and property) as shown in the amendment as submitted. The Board felt that a smaller area would preserve the important characteristics of this site but allow for unencumbered alterations to the athletic fields located within the environmental setting proposed by the Historic Preservation Commission. Items discussed included the importance of the viewsheds from along White Ground Road and from the Boyds Negro School across the street, and the need to ensure that any adjacent new construction is compatible with the historic school building. Staff told the Board that there were no contributing out-buildings on the site. As such, the recommendation of the HPC to regulate contributing out-buildings was removed.

The Council held a public hearing on the Amendment on April 25, 2023. There were several speakers providing testimony for both amendments. No testimony provided to the Council opposed this designation and amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation; however, the Council did receive testimony from the Boyds Historical Society opposed to the reduced environmental setting.

For reference, below is an aerial photo of the environmental setting, as submitted by the Board, outlined in red.

³ Chapter 24A designation criteria 1a, 1d, and 2e.



At the Board's suggestion, below is an aerial photo of the site showing a revised environmental setting that excludes athletic fields and retains a protected view from White Ground Road and the Boyds Negro School (circled in orange) across the street.



The Committee unanimously recommends the amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, including the designation of a smaller section of the parcel as the environmental setting rather than the entire area (building and property) as shown in the amendment as submitted.

Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Weller's Dry Cleaning

In addition to the amendment for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, the Planning Board, at its meeting on February 23, 2023, also considered an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for Weller's Dry Cleaning.

An amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for Weller's Dry Cleaning would cover a 9,376 square-foot site in Silver Spring that includes the former Weller's Dry Cleaning building, an adjacent paved asphalt parking lot, and a roadside commercial sign. The Googie-styled Weller's Dry Cleaning store and associated sign were built by the Weller brothers in 1961 within the Thayer Avenue commercial area in Downtown Silver Spring. The Googie style is a popular, but relatively rare, mid-twentieth century roadside commercial architecture, a subset of the Modern Movement of architecture. The style was first popularized in California where the intention was to attract motorists traveling at 35 miles per hour or more to stop and patronize roadside businesses through building design that uses bold shapes, colors, and glass, as well as iconic upswept or cantilevered roofs. Relatively few examples of this architectural style remain intact in the county or region.

The site was originally identified for evaluation as a historic resource over twenty years ago in the "2002 Historic Sites Survey Report: Silver Spring Central Business District". Similarly, the 2022 Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan includes a recommendation to study Weller's Dry Cleaning for potential future listing in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and to encourage the adaptive reuse of the building if the occupant and use change. The Historic Preservation Commission held public hearings and worksessions in 2022 for the Weller's building, site, and sign. The HPC found the former Weller's Dry Cleaning site to meet two Designation Criteria⁴ as listed in Chapter 24A.

Ultimately, the Board (3-2) found that the Weller's site did not meet the designation criteria for listing to the Locational Atlas, nor did it meet the criteria for amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The site is privately owned, and the current owners are not supportive of the master plan designation.

Historic resources proposed for amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation can be evaluated either as part of an area master plan or as a stand-alone amendment. When included in an area master plan, typically, the recommendation is to study a particular resource either for listing to the Locational Atlas and/or for amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. When not part of an area master plan, resources can be evaluated alone or as a group of proposed amendments. On average, it seems, the Council has been more conservative in its designation of historic resources than the Planning Board, and the Planning Board more conservative than the HPC (see table on © 7-10 for context).

One reason for this dynamic may be that the Council is not bound by the recommendations of the Planning Board, nor is it limited in its review to the criteria provided in Chapter 24A. In particular, Chapter 24A includes in its purpose "to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the county, safeguard the historical and cultural heritage of the county, strengthen the local economy, stabilize and improve property values in and around such historical areas, foster civic beauty and to preserve continued utilization and pleasure of the citizens of the county...". A more broad-sweeping appraisal than the designation criteria noted under Chapter 24A, one that allows for consideration of economic impacts, both with respect to the property in question and neighboring properties, for example.

Because of their joint transmission, the Council held a public hearing on April 25, 2023, to receive testimony on both amendments. There were 10 speakers, including those representing the Planning Board

⁴ Chapter 24A designation criteria 2a and 2e.

and the HPC. Several representatives from the historic preservation community provided testimony in favor of a Master Plan designation for the Weller's site, including speakers on behalf of Montgomery Preservation, the Silver Spring Historical Society, and the Art Deco Society of Washington. Bekelech Delelegne, the current owner of the Weller's Dry Cleaning property, the owner's son, and Dan Reed, a resident of Silver Spring, all provided testimony in opposition to the designation.

The Committee unanimously recommends support for the Planning Board's decision to not include Weller's Dry Cleaning as an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The resolution attached on © 4-6 is consistent with the Committee's recommendations.

February 24, 2023

The Honorable Evan Glass, President

Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

SUBJECT: Planning Board Draft for the *Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation*

Dear Council President Glass:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Planning Board, I am transmitting an electronic version of the Planning Board Draft for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning proposed amendment to the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. The Planning Board held a public hearing and worksession on February 23, 2023 and voted to send for your consideration the attached Planning Board Draft Master Plan Amendment. Hard copies will follow shortly. A summary of the Planning Board's actions and comments are below.

The Planning Board Draft is attached and can be viewed at:

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/historic/research-and-designation/edward-u-taylor-elementary-school-wellers-dry-cleaning-amendment/>.

The Planning Board (5-0) found that the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School meets three Designation Criteria as listed in Chapter 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code and recommended the Council designate the former Taylor school as historic. The Board of Education built the Modern Movement-influenced Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, located at 19501 White Ground Road, approximately one mile southwest of Boyds, in 1952. The school's history is representative of 1) the closure and consolidation of one-room and two-room Black elementary schools in the mid-20th century prior to desegregation; 2) sustained advocacy for modern school facilities and pressure applied from state and national litigation against the "separate but equal" doctrine; 3) the desegregation of Montgomery County's school system; and 4) the burden placed on the Black community to achieve the desegregation policies set forth by the county. The Taylor School provides a unique opportunity to protect a cultural landscape that documents the progression of school design for Black residents and recognizes a significant educational landmark for Black residents in the county during the mid-20th Century. Montgomery County Public Schools, the owner of the site, has been coordinating with the Planning Department on this effort for several years and spoke in support of the designation at our public hearing.

As part of the Planning Board's motion, the Board suggested that the Council should consider designating a smaller section of the parcel as the environmental setting rather than designating the entire area (building and property) as currently shown in the amendment. The Board felt that a smaller area would preserve the important characteristics of this site but allow for unencumbered alterations to the athletic field that is located within the environmental setting proposed by the Historic Preservation Commission. Items discussed included the importance of the viewsheds from along White Ground Road and from the Boyds Negro School across the street, and the need to ensure that any adjacent new construction is compatible with the historic school building. Staff told the Board that there were no contributing out-buildings on the site. As such, the recommendation of the HPC to regulate contributing out-building was amended accordingly.

The Planning Board moved separately to list the Edward U. Taylor School to our Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites. This listing on the Planning Board's Atlas protects the property from any substantial alterations while the Council considers the Master Plan Amendment to list the property as an historic site.

The Planning Board also considered whether to recommend that the Council list the former Weller's Dry Cleaning site to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. This site was originally identified for evaluation as an historic resource over twenty years ago in the "2002 Historic Sites Survey Report: Silver Spring Central Business District". The 2022 Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan directed the Montgomery County Planning Department to evaluate the Weller's Dry Cleaning site designation as a Master Plan Historic Site. The Historic Preservation Commission, the County's appointed body with jurisdiction over historic preservation review, held public hearings and worksessions in 2022 for the Weller's building, site, and sign. The HPC found that the former Weller's Dry Cleaning site meets two Designation Criteria as listed in Chapter 24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code. The Weller brothers built the Googie-styled Weller's Dry Cleaning store and its associated sign, located at 8237 Fenton Street in Silver Spring, in 1961 within the Thayer Avenue commercial area in Downtown Silver Spring. The Googie style is a popular, but relatively rare, mid-twentieth century roadside commercial architecture that is a subset of the Modern Movement of architecture. Architects popularized the style in California where the intention was to attract motorists traveling at 35 miles per hour or more to stop and patronize roadside businesses. The design of the Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign engaged the everyday consumer with a modern and popular architecture in lieu of the high-style austerity of the International, Brutalist, and Expressionist styles. Very few examples of this architectural style remain intact in the county or region.

Ultimately, the Board (3-2) found that the Weller's site did not meet the designation criteria for listing to the Locational Atlas, nor did it meet the criteria for listing to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The Historic Preservation Commission came to a different conclusion following its public hearings and worksessions and recommended the Board both list the property on the Locational Atlas and support historic designation by the Council.

While the Planning Board does not recommend historic protection of the Weller's property, the Board recognizes that the final determination will be made by the Council. The Board's role under County code is to apply historic criteria (Chapter 24A-3). The Council is obliged to undertake its own review of

The Honorable Evan Glass

February 24, 2023

Page3

the historic criteria and the extent to which the proposed designation achieves the purpose of historic preservation (Chapter 24A-1). All of the supporting documentation and information is being sent for your attention and final determination in this matter.

If you have any questions concerning the Amendment, please do not hesitate to contact Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation Supervisor with the Planning Department at Rebecca.Ballo@montgomeryplanning.org or 301-563-3404.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Zyontz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

Jeff Zyontz

Chair

Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

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2
3 **COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**
4 **SITTING AS THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THAT PORTION**
5 **OF THE MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT**
6 **WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**
7

8
9 By: County Council
10

11
12 **SUBJECT:** Approval of the Planning Board Draft for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary
13 School: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation
14

- 15 1. On February 23, 2023, the Montgomery County Planning Board approved an amendment to
16 the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School. The
17 Planning Board also considered an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for
18 Weller’s Dry Cleaning; however, the Board did not support this amendment.
19
- 20 2. On February 24, 2023, the Montgomery County Planning Board transmitted to the Council the
21 Planning Board Draft for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller’s Dry Cleaning:
22 An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation (hereafter referred to as the
23 Amendments).
24
- 25 3. The Planning Board recommended amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation
26 would designate the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School (#18-11-6) located at 19501 White
27 Ground Road, Boyds, Maryland 20841 as an historic resource. While the Planning Board Draft
28 includes an evaluation of Weller’s Dry Cleaning (#36-86-1), it is not recommended for
29 designation.
30
- 31 4. On April 25, 2023, the County Council held a public hearing on the Planning Board Draft
32 Amendments and referred the Amendments to the Planning, Housing, and Parks (PHP)
33 Committee for review and recommendations.
34
- 35 5. On June 12, 2023, the PHP Committee held a worksession to evaluate the Amendments and
36 Planning Board recommendations.
37
- 38 6. On July 10, 2023, the Council held a worksession to review the Amendments and the PHP
39 Committee’s recommendations.
40

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, sitting as the District Council for that portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The Planning Board Draft for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School, An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation is approved with revisions. Council revisions are identified below. Deletions to the text of the Plan are indicated by [brackets], additions by underscoring, and general instruction by *italics*.

Cover, as follows:

Edward U. Taylor Elementary School; [and Weller’s Dry Cleaning and]An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation

List of Sections, as follows:

[SECTION THREE: WELLER’S DRY CLEANING PAGE 29]

CONTENTS, as follows:

Delete Section Three references for page 29-41

Page 1, SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION, first paragraph, as follows:

The Edward U. Taylor Elementary School[and Weller’s Dry Cleaning]: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, contains the text and supporting documentation for an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland (1979), as amended; MARC Rail Communities Sector Plan (2019), as amended; and Thrive Montgomery 2050 (2022), as amended. [This Amendment addresses two separate resources: the former Edward U. Taylor Elementary School (now the Taylor Science Center) and Weller’s Dry Cleaning.]

Page 1, SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION, as follows:

Delete the third paragraph

Page 4, SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION, as follows:

[This amendment presents the Planning Board’s evaluation of the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School (M: 18-11-6) and Weller’s Dry Cleaning (M:36-86-1)]. In February 2023, the Planning Board listed the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School (M: 18-11-6) in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites and recommended its designation in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. [The Planning Board did not recommend listing Weller’s Dry Cleaning in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.] The County Council approves the amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation[to list ____]. Therefore, the resources are protected by the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code.

Page 4, SECTION ONE INTRODUCTION, as follows:

Delete the table summary of Historic Preservation Commission’s and Planning Board’s Evaluation

88

89 Page 25, ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, as follows:

90 *Revise the description of the environmental setting consistent with the Council's approval*
91 *of an environmental setting based on the 1951 parcel acquired by Montgomery County*
92 *Public Schools modified to exclude the two athletic fields and retain the unobstructed*
93 *frontage on White Ground Road as well as the view from the Boyds Negro School site.*

94

95 *Replace the illustration of the environmental setting with an updated illustration that*
96 *removes the two athletic fields from the setting.*

97

98 Pages 29, SECTION THREE Weller's Dry Cleaning, as follows:

99 *Delete this section contained on pages 29-42*

100

101 Page 45, Endnotes, as follows:

102 *Delete End Notes #95-120*

103

104 Back Cover and Headers throughout, as follows:

105 *Delete reference to Weller's Dry Cleaning and revise back cover photo*

106

107

108 This is a correct copy of Council action.

109

110

111

112 _____
Sara R. Tenenbaum

113 Clerk of the Council

Recommendations made as amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation - Not as part of an area Master Plan process

Multiple Historic Resources (Sites and/or Districts)

Title of Amendment	Public Hearing Draft/HPC	Planning Board Draft	Council Approved
Park Resources (2014)	Recommended eight historic resources be designated as an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.	Recommended seven resources be designated. (Board did not recommend designation for Stubbs House)	Designated six resources as amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The resource the Council chose not to designate over the Board's recommendation was the Wheaton Recreation Center. In addition, in its review Council Staff included a brief paragraph on the resource recommended by the HPC, but not recommended by the Board (with Council Staff recommending support for the Board's recommendation not to designate).
Upper Patuxent (2012)	Recommended 15 historic resources (one district, 14 sites) be designated via an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.	Recommended 12 historic resources (two districts, 10 sites) be designated.	Designated one district and 10 sites as amendments to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The Council Staff report of 6/25/12 only provides information on the Planning Board's recommendations, and does not cover the HPC recommendations not supported by the Board.
Greenwich Forest Historic District, Bureau of Animal Industry Building and Higgins Family Cemetery (2010)	Recommended designation of one historic district and two historic sites.	Supported Public Hearing Draft/HPC recommendations.	Designated the two historic sites and delayed review of the Greenwich Forest Historic District. Eventually, the Greenwich Forest Historic District was approved by the Council in 2011.

Single Historic Resource (Site or District)

Title of Amendment	Public Hearing Draft/HPC	Planning Board Draft	Council Approved
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Potomac Overlook Historic District (2022)	Recommended designation via an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.	Supported HPC/Public Hearing Draft recommendation.	Designated as an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.
Mesrobian House (2020)	Recommended designation via an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.	Supported HPC/Public Hearing Draft recommendation.	Designated as an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.
Kensington Cabin (2011)	Recommended designation via an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.	Supported HPC/Public Hearing Draft recommendation.	Designated as an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.
Recommendations made as part of an area Master Plan			
Recommend study to evaluate listing/designation			
Master Plan	Public Hearing Draft/HPC	Planning Board Draft	Council Approved
Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities (2022)	Weller’s Dry Cleaning recommended for study, eight other resources were noted for honorific listing in National Register where there is no restriction on what a nongovernmental owner may do with their property up to and including demolition, unless the project receives Federal assistance.	Supported Public Hearing Draft recommendation to study Weller’s Dry Cleaning for potential listing/designation. Retained all eight resources for potential honorific National Register listing.	Retained recommendation to study Weller’s for potential listing. Removed one of the eight resources proposed for honorific National Register listing. The property owner of the Perpetual Bank Building requested removal from the list of potential listees.
Ashton Village (2021)	No resources recommended for study or designation.	N/A	N/A

Germantown Plan for the Town Sector Zone (2021)	No resources recommended for study or designation.	N/A	N/A
Forest Glen/Montgomery Hills (2020)	Recommended the Montgomery Hills Shopping Center, Prestige Exceptional Fabricare, Calvary Lutheran Evangelical Church, Americana Finnmark, and the Grace Episcopal Church and Cemetery be studied for potential listing/designation. And recommended the Woodside Locational Atlas Historic District be studied for potential designation.	Supported HPC/Public Hearing Draft study recommendations.	Supported the Planning Board Draft study recommendations.
MARC Rail Communities (2020)	Recommended the Edward U. Taylor School be studied for potential listing/designation. Also recommended all structures on the site of the historic Hoyles Mill (Parcels 155 and 157) be evaluated for Master Plan for Historic Preservation eligibility prior to any changes, additions and/or removals.	Recommended the Edward U. Taylor School be studied for potential listing/designation but did not retain the other recommendation related to the Hoyles Mill site.	Supported the Planning Board Draft study recommendation.
Veirs Mill Corridor (2019)	No resources recommended for study or designation.	N/A	N/A
Recommend designation as part of the Master Plan approval			

Master Plan	Public Hearing Draft/HPC	Planning Board Draft	Council Approved
Shady Grove (2021)	Derwood Store and Post Office had been on the Locational Atlas since 2006. Draft recommended designation as part of plan approval.	Supported Public Hearing Draft recommendation and included a draft resolution to approve designation of the one resource.	Designated as an amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation as part of the approval process for the Shady Grove Minor Master Plan Amendment.



Written Statement of Deborah Chalfie, Preservation Chair
Art Deco Society of Washington
to the
Montgomery County Council
April 25, 2023
Regarding
Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation
for Weller's Dry Cleaning

Introduction

Council President Glass and Members of the Council, the Art Deco Society of Washington appreciates the opportunity to submit our written testimony on the Planning Board Draft. The Art Deco Society of Washington (ADSW) believes that **the temporary Planning Board's divided vote against designation of Weller's Dry Cleaning represented a grievous error, in that it flouted county law and ignored the overwhelming expert record in support of designation. ADSW urges the Council to correct this error and to amend the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to include Weller's.**

Founded in 1982, the Art Deco Society of Washington 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. 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 for keeping Fenton Village small and diverse: the small scale and affordability of the streamlined and midcentury modern buildings in Fenton Village are inextricably tied to the diversity that has flourished there. In addition, ADSW has played a first-hand role in promoting Silver Spring's Art Deco architecture as a commercial attraction, highlighting it in prior walking tours/bus tours, and organizing specific events such as a Polychrome House open house and our recent collaboration with AFI that drew a large crowd to celebrate vintage fashion and see a silent film in our historic Art Deco theater masterpiece.

Background

The Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan singled out Weller’s Dry Cleaning for possible preservation protection. This was not in any way an afterthought; for more than 20 years, various county planning studies and surveys have identified Weller’s as a unique, historic building that should be on the County’s preservation agenda. The uncontested¹ inclusion of Weller’s in the SSDAC *at every stage* of the public process – recommended by Historic Preservation & Planning Staff, proposed by the Planning Board, approved by the County Council (including committee worksessions), and finally adopted by the M-NCPPC – represented a consensus by county officials that Weller’s is strongly deserving of consideration for placement in Master Plan.² Weller’s would have never been spotlighted and approved in the SSDAC unless there was widespread confidence that it met the criteria and there was agreed-upon support for its preservation.

Since the sector plan’s adoption, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) fulfilled its role by considering the thorough documentation presented and voting to recommend that the Weller’s building and sign be placed both on the Locational Atlas and in the Master Plan. It was the temporary, interim Planning Board that conspicuously fell down on the job. Despite repeated admonishments by Chair Zyontz and Senior Counsel Mills during the Planning Board worksession about the need for decisions to be grounded in the legal criteria specified in the historic preservation ordinance, and repeated “clarifications” by Historic Preservation staff about what is and is not within the purview of the Historic Preservation Commission, a bare majority of the temporary Board ignored the law and the merits, and allowed themselves to be swayed by emotion, red herrings, and extra-legal issues.

In his transmittal letter to President Glass, Chair Zyontz stated that while it is the “Board’s role under County code ... to apply historic criteria [for designation,] [t]he Council is *obliged to undertake its own review* of the historic criteria and the extent to which the proposed designation achieves the purpose of historic preservation.”³

ADSW addressed the merits of this proposed designation in our prior testimony.⁴ In this statement, we call your attention to the clearly erroneous decision of the temporary Planning Board, and urge the Council to indeed undertake its own review in accordance with local law. Once the Council understands how flawed the Planning Board Draft is, and considers the unanimous weight of expert evidence and opinion in favor of designation, we hope that the Council will stick with its determination in the SSDAC that Weller’s is deserving of inclusion in the Master Plan.

¹ It should be noted that the current owner of the Weller’s property purchased the property in June 2021. Thus, they already owned the building when the SSDAC Staff Draft, Public Hearing Draft, and Planning Board Draft were publicly released, not to mention the six-month period of public hearings, worksessions, and deliberations of this Council on the SSDAC. The owners did not contest the possible designation of Weller’s during this entire, highly publicized process.

² The sector plan’s support for designating Weller’s is not only reflected in the explicit provision for its evaluation and reference to adaptive reuse, it is also reflected in what was 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, neither the Weller’s corner lot nor *any part* of that east side stretch of Fenton Street in Fenton Village was slated for redevelopment. Instead, the plan called for keeping Fenton Village largely intact as a district hospitable to diverse small businesses – something the community overwhelmingly supported.

³ Letter from Jeffrey Zyontz, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board, to Evan Glass, President, Montgomery County Council, Re: Planning Board Draft for the Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller’s Dry Cleaning: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation (Feb. 24, 2023) (emphasis added).

⁴ ADSW’s testimony to the Planning Board, which addresses the merits regarding Weller’s satisfaction of the criteria and its inclusion in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, is appended to this statement (Appendix).

The Interim Planning Board’s Decision Disregarded the County Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Weight of Expert Evidence in Support of Designation

To be eligible for inclusion in the Master plan, a resource need only be found to meet *one* of the criteria spelled out in §24A-3(b) of the County code. The Designation Report⁵ and Public Hearing Draft⁶ on Weller’s thoroughly and convincingly document the case that the Weller’s building and sign meet at least *two* criteria for architectural and design significance. First, Weller’s embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction (criterion 2A), i.e., the midcentury modern style known as Googie architecture, characterized by cantilevered roofs, sharp angles, abstract shapes, bold colors, and integrated, eye-catching signage. Weller’s and its clock-sign has all of this in spades. Second, Weller’s meets criterion 2E, in that it represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape. Weller’s has been a fixture of downtown Silver Spring since 1961. Love it, hate it, or everything in between, Weller’s and its whimsical clock-sign are a familiar visual feature of Fenton Village.

Nevertheless, rather than applying the legal criteria, several members of the interim Planning Board invented their own. One Planning Board Member implied that because she had never heard of Googie architecture, it must not be significant or historic. Personal lack of knowledge about architecture does not mean that a resource does not meet the legal criteria. In response to the concern raised by preservationists that planners have been slow to recognize and appreciate midcentury modern architecture as “historic” and as a result, have regrettably permitted several midcentury buildings to be demolished, the Board Member argued that if the County was allowing these buildings to be demolished, they must not meet the criteria for historic preservation – otherwise the county would have preserved them! This argument commits too many fallacies of logic to count. The more likely (and persuasive) explanation for why these buildings are being permitted to disappear is because, as with Weller’s, the Planning Board has failed miserably over the years to protect them, based on experience bias (something built while I’ve been alive can’t be historic!) or personal style preferences (I think it’s ugly), and deference toward developers.

Another Board Member stated that she would have voted in favor of Master Plan designation had the building not been painted over, simultaneously ignoring the designation criteria and rewarding an owner hostile to historic protection for having masked, but not irreversibly damaging or erasing, many of the building’s historic elements during the period when the Planning Board was in disarray. Yet another Board Member went off on a tangent about a concern that, if Weller’s was preserved, the owner would be required to undertake costly environmental remediation measures, when in fact, it’s just the reverse: HPO staff reported that the state Department on the Environment had given the owner of Weller’s a green light to operate in the building as is, and it is only if the owner *disrupts* the building’s foundation by demolishing it that environmental issues arise. Besides being wrong-headed, the points made by these Board Members side-stepped the legal criteria for designation.

On the other side of the ledger was the overwhelming weight of unanimous expert opinion that Weller’s meets the legal criteria and is indeed worthy of protection in the Master Plan. Beginning

⁵ Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, 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, at 9-11, available at https://montgomeryplanningboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/3_Appendix.Weller.DesignationForm.pdf.

⁶ 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 34-35 (Jan. 2023), available at <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Taylor-Weller-Public-Hearing-Draft.pdf>.

with the survey undertaken by Potomac-Hudson Engineering in 2002 and continuing with Senior Planner Claire Kelly's of survey of *Montgomery Modern* architecture in 2015, to the study and designation report prepared by EHT Tracerics in 2020 in contemplation of the SSDAC, the HPO staff's reports and memos, and the HPC's decisions in 2022 and 2023 to recommend inclusion of Weller's in the Locational Atlas and the Master Plan, all of these experts have agreed that Weller's amply meets the criteria for historic designation and should be protected. In addition, county historic preservation groups like Montgomery Preservation Inc. and the Silver Spring Historical Society were joined by ADSW, Docomomo-DC, Preservation Maryland, and Alan Hess, an author and national expert in modern art architecture generally and Googie architecture in particular, all registering their support to the Planning Board for amending the Master Plan to list Weller's.

Yes, the new owner of the Weller's property objects to Master Plan protection for Weller's. However, there is nothing in the historic preservation ordinance that requires owner agreement with designation, or prevents designation in the event of disagreement. Many buildings in Silver Spring have been added to the Master Plan over even the vehement objections of the owners (e.g., the Silver Theatre & Silver Spring Shopping Center, the Canada Dry/Silverton Townhomes).

HPO staff and historic preservation groups have repeatedly pointed out that historic preservation is not an either-or choice – designation doesn't mean no change or no development. There are a multitude of local examples where historic buildings and facades have been preserved as part of a larger development.⁷ Creative adaptive reuse would enable the new owner of the Weller's property to *both* preserve Weller's *and* build apartments.

Conclusion

Weller's is an iconic specimen of midcentury Googie architecture, and it is a concrete connection to Silver Spring's and Montgomery's County's history and development. The criteria spelled out in the historic preservation ordinance are there to provide an objective framework for deciding what should be preserved, instead of allowing emotion on either side to dictate what gets preserved. The interim Planning Board's decision on Weller's was clearly erroneous. However, our historic preservation process is broken, and much more than Weller's is at stake. Mid-century modern Googie buildings like Weller's are now nearly extinct in Montgomery County. Over time, the cumulative effect of the Planning Board's consistent failure to preserve these buildings is that we lose an entire era of wonderful and cool of architecture, and an entire era of Silver Spring's history. ADSW urges the Council to correct course here and **list the Weller's Dry Cleaning building and signage in the County's Master Plan for Historic Preservation.**

Thank you for your consideration of our views. For further information, contact Deborah Chalfie, at dchalfie@adsw.org.

⁷ E.g., the Modena Reserve senior living development in Kensington preserved and adaptively reused two small historic buildings on that site; they are now a hair salon for residents and a café open to residents and the public alike. See first photo at <https://modenakensington.com/gallery/>. Roadside LLC, which recently purchased the Tastee Diner property, has already announced plans to adaptively reuse the historic diner building. See <https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/03/22/tastee-diner-closed/>. ADSW recently supported the adaptive reuse of a former duckpins bowling alley in DC that will house amenities for a new mixed use development in the Brookland neighborhood. See slide 14 at <https://app.box.com/s/dhn9muwq7e6fgor5v5v40hn1w7yanfma/file/1119009910564>.

APPENDIX



**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 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

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.

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.

be placed on both the Locational Atlas and in the Master Plan.⁹ This Planning Board should finish the job.

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 Tracerics' 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

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* <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.

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 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

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

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

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).

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 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-

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).

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).

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 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.

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>.

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-be43-4311-a995-e78d6fde3552/>.

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.

Montgomery Preservation Inc.

Promoting the Preservation, Protection and Enjoyment of Montgomery County's Rich Architectural Heritage and Historic Landscapes

**Edward U. Taylor Elementary School and Weller's Dry Cleaning
Written Testimony to County Council – re: public hearing on April 25, 2023
Eileen McGuckian, President, Montgomery Preservation, Inc. (MPI)**

Edward U. Taylor School and Weller's Dry Cleaning stand strongly on their own, together portraying two different and important aspects of Montgomery County in postwar America. Both historic resources meet and excel County standards for historic designation, representing the best in their respective domains. Both are mid-20th century historic resources that are not adequately represented on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Both are intact -- immediately recognizable historic buildings – with street appeal that declares their places in local history and beyond. Where they diverge is that one has a reasonably secure future, and the other desperately needs protection from being obliterated.

EDWARD U. TAYLOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, opened in 1952

Edward Ulysses Taylor grew up in Emory Grove when Black students had to go elsewhere beyond 8th grade. After graduating from Howard University, he returned home to educate the next generations. His career paralleled that of better-known Edwin W. Broome, who became Superintendent of Schools in 1917 and convinced the Montgomery County School Board to bring on a Black supervisor for the Negro schools. Mr. Taylor was hired permanently in 1924.

For the next 27 years, Taylor and Broome were in lock step. Broome's 36 years as superintendent are known for expansion to kindergarten and 12 grades, and for accommodating our exploding population. Taylor fought for higher teacher salaries, summer training, and maternity leave. He helped to open the first high school in Rockville in 1927 and became its principal. There he taught social studies in the morning and visited elementary schools in the afternoon. In the 1930s and '40s, he led the Colored schools through closings of poorly maintained small schools in favor of larger and better facilities that still fell below the standard for White students.

After Mr. Taylor's death in 1951, it was fitting for one of the four new brick consolidated Colored schools to be named for him. Edward U. Taylor Elementary was the first to recognize a Black hero. It was state of the art, a move toward equal facilities only a few years before *Brown vs Board*. A decade later, Taylor was the only formerly Black school to become a mainstream integrated elementary. Taylor's juxtaposition near the one-room Boyds Negro School that opened the year of *Plessy vs Ferguson* is striking.

Montgomery Preservation concurs with the Planning Board and HPC that this site meets three criteria to earn designation on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

WELLER'S DRY CLEANING STORE, opened in 1961

Weller's Dry Cleaning is the best surviving example of "Googie-style" Mid-century Modern architecture in our county. Its whimsical, futuristic design typifies the kind of automobile-centric culture that was central to the development of suburban Silver Spring, and its physical presence is critical to understanding Silver Spring and suburban Montgomery County today. MPI concurs with Planning Staff and the HPC that Weller's is eligible for designation on the Master Plan, via criteria 2a and 2e.

Weller's has been identified by multiple experts and advocates, including architectural historians and planners, for two decades. It has been highlighted in multiple surveys, in adopted Master plans, and in a ground-breaking publication. In every instance, as County plans evolved, calls were made to preserve this unique property. Supporters of Weller's historic designation include the Art Deco Society of Washington DC, Preservation Maryland, Docomomo DC (public awareness of architecture and sites in the DMV), Silver Spring Historical Society, Robert Bachman (expert, speaker on Montgomery County in 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s), Alan Hess (architect, historian, author, critic for *San Jose Mercury News*), and Teresa Lachin (author of *Rockville's Recent Past*). All agree that it is high time to act decisively because: *When a building is gone, it is gone.*

Locational Atlas and Master Plan for Historic Preservation

In the late 1970s I was part of the Sugarloaf Regional Trails team that assisted the Planning Board to create background documents and draft the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. All of us believed, naively as it turned out, that it would be a smooth process to evaluate all sites on the 1976 *Locational Atlas* to determine which should be designated. In 1978 the County Council enacted an interim ordinance that required review of Atlas sites before they could be demolished. This was immediately effective in Takoma Park, where Montgomery College was razing blocks of Victorian houses.

When the Master Plan and Preservation ordinance were adopted in 1979, the Atlas was kept as a stop-gap to review proposed demolitions and substantial alterations, vital to protect sites that had not yet completed the lengthy process of being approved by the Planning Board and adopted by the Council. With 143 of the original sites and districts on the Atlas remaining to be evaluated, this document is still important. However, as a 1976 inventory, the Atlas does not cover Mid-century Modern sites. This, and that County DPS does not always enforce disclosure of Atlas status, results in lack of review for major exterior alterations to Atlas sites.

Mid-20th Century Historic Sites

In these 45 years, the Planning Board and Council have pretty much ignored a major era in County history. The post-WW2 period brought huge change in our demographics, in commercial and residential development, and architectural styles. Clare Lise Kelly's *Montgomery Modern* publication, sponsored by M-NCPPC in 2015, helps to fill this gap; Weller's appears in color on page 96.

Lack of concern about mid-20th-century history being destroyed is short-sighted and distressing. We are losing gems and icons of period architecture, particularly in our down-county suburban areas. *When they are gone, they are gone.*

Historic Preservation and Property Owner Consent

MPI is aware of Weller's owner to designation of her property. Owners are key to protection and restoration of historic properties. Owning one and maintaining it for future generations (whether related to you or not) is the most successful way to honor and use historic sites.

That said, very few preservation laws in the United States require consent of the property owner for designation. *Neither Maryland nor Montgomery County require it.* In fact, if all property owners were cooperative regarding zoning, planning, maintenance, and preserving their historic buildings, fewer laws would be needed.

This is solid legal ground. The U.S. Supreme Court has weighed in more than once on the rights of states and cities to enact land use controls to preserve historic sites. The Court ruled that “preservation ... is a permissible goal of government action” and that “communities have the right to be beautiful” as well as healthy, clean, and protected. Specifically, the Court stated that land use controls may be used “to enhance the quality of life by preserving desirable aesthetic features of the city.... and that preservation of landmarks benefits the citizenry economically as well as by improving the overall quality of life.”

Montgomery County has a solid record of informing owners and taking their preferences seriously. That is continuing here. Even so, there have been times when rights of the public to be beautiful as well as clean have trumped owner reluctance. And in every one of those cases, this has proven to be the right action. Most of those objections faded as situations and ownership changed, incentives were taken advantage of, creative new uses were found, and *communities recognized the public benefit* of preserving historic sites.

Not all Master Plan nominations have been supported by their owners

To the best of recollections, no Montgomery County Historic District -- from our earliest Capitol View Park Historic District to the recent designation of Greenwich Forest – has come in with 100% support of property owners.... with the one exception of Potomac Overlook.

Some examples of Montgomery County sites designated over the objection of their owners:

Silver Spring Theatre & Shopping Center– citizen outcry, rescued, now thriving arts venue and businesses
Carver High School & Jr College – student and citizen advocacy, repurposed as BOE administration building
Uncle Tom’s Cabin, now known as Josiah Henson house – owners respected history but concerned about privacy; one of first 61 designated sites, sold to M-NCPPC 2006, on the National Register 2011
Falkland Apartments, Silver Spring – remains affordable, charming housing
Hyatt-Jones house on Georgia Avenue near Olney – flourishing antique business
Canada Dry building, Silver Spring – owners appreciate unique residential marketing

Designation and preservation of Weller’s will not restrict this owner from developing her property. No one has been lecturing to or patronizing this owner. A savvy merchant would use Google charm to attract customers, which of course is what the Weller brothers did. In our time of needing to ask “Which city am I in?” unique architecture stands out. With its great curb appeal this gem could be used as the entrance to or part of a larger future residential or commercial project. Whoever the owner and whatsoever its use, this landmark deserves to gracefully age in place.

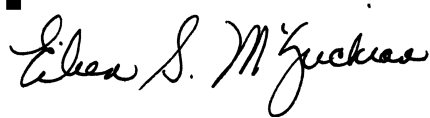
Preservationists have no illusions about our place in this fast-moving world. MPI has recognized more than 300 owners with awards over decades, but in reality we often lose battles. However, it is rare for a site to earn as much passion as has this little building. There are solid reasons for professional staff and a dedicated commission to be unanimous about Weller’s, and for so many different groups and individuals to agree on its significance. *Remember: when it’s gone, It’s gone.*

In closing, MPI urges the Council to designate Weller's Dry Cleaning on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. This would not only provide full protection to this unique building but also offer incentives to the owners to maintain, restore, and re-use it and return it as the gateway to the Fenton Village district. Please save this prominent emblem of small business strategies and commercial Mid-century Modern architecture.

MPI also requests that you vote to designate Edward U Taylor School on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Education and the African American experience are major components of our County's history, into today.

We hope you will agree that these actions are unquestionably favorable to the public interest.

Sincerely,



Eileen McGuckian, President
Montgomery Preservation, Inc.
www.montgomerypreservation.org
personal email: phileen3@verizon.net

Weller's & Taylor Elementary School's Master Plan Designation

Testimony by George French & Marcie Stickle, County Council Hearing April 25, 2023

We support placing the Googie Style Weller's Dry Cleaning structure with its insignia, floating, free-standing Sign, and the Taylor ES on the Montgomery County Master Plan for Historic Preservation. Both meet the criteria for inclusion as put forward by the HPC staff and agreed to by all of the experts in this field.

The experts supporting Weller's trace back to 2002 when Architectural Historian firm Potomac Engineering singled out Weller's for special consideration when it turned 50. 2020, another AH firm Traceries agreed to its significance when it determined that Weller's is National Register eligible. Our MC HPC staff, made up of career expert historic preservationists, concurs, and determines Weller's to be worthy of Master Plan designation.

Another former County career preservationist Clare Lise Kelly touts Weller's in her book, "Montgomery Modern," and vividly also on MNCPPC online preservation sites.

Our esteemed HPC voted overwhelmingly with only one dissension to list on the Master Plan. Alan Hess, an author and expert in Googie style architecture testified on Weller's behalf. Planning Board Chair Zyontz and one other commissioner who understands the Historic Preservation Ordinance voted listing on the Master Plan. The other 3 should have reconsidered their vote and followed suit on the county ordinance based on Weller's meeting two criteria. This Council should do the same.

Many other organizations including Preservation Maryland, Art Deco Society, docomomodc, Montgomery Preservation Inc., Silver Spring Historical Society, consisting of HP experts, and extremely knowledgeable individuals representing hundreds of years of cumulative scholarship vocation and avocation support preservation of Weller's.

For over 30 years we have been intrigued by and enjoyed the strange and whimsical "road-side architecture" of this wondrous structure termed Googie style architecture. There has been much interest over many years from the former Silver Spring Park, now a part of East S.S. to protect and see the building retained for a multi-cultural small independent business district built on a human scale, fast disappearing from the S.S. landscape.

Googie architecture is a rarity in MC and we are so fortunate to have such a stunning example as Weller's to celebrate and enjoy right here in Silver Spring.

We implore the County Council approve an Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to designate Weller's and Taylor ES as Master Plan Historic Sites.

Thank you, George French & Marcie Stickle, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

April 19, 2023

Karen Burditt

Montgomery County Council
Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for Weller's Dry-Cleaning.

Dear Council President Glass and Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing as a 24 year resident of East Silver Spring and as a Weller's Dry Cleaning customer until it closed in 2022. I knew Charlie Weller, his son Brian, and the other Weller's workers like Isaac and Mr. Mohammed. I saw them every week and listened to their stories about their families and they listened to mine. I am also writing as a long time supporter of Fenton Village, a founding member of the Fenton Village Inc. Board, and the creator of the annual "Best Of Fenton Village" contest that ran 2012-2017. Finally, I am writing as an Architect and Preservationist, who is actively involved in Montgomery County preservation issues.

I am writing in support of the designation of Weller's Dry Cleaning to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Fenton Village has always been a unique and 'funky' place. A small business district that is very different from the pre-planned town centers and cookie cutter mixed use developments. Fenton Village is 'real', a mix of old and new, a small business incubator, and one of the most diverse small business districts in Montgomery County. Fenton Village is so unique that the County spent considerable time and effort towards marketing it as a nighttime destination area. Fenton village has thrived while newer parts of the area have kept reinventing their look in an attempt to attract clientele. Part of Fenton Village's charm has been the varied building types that encompass more than 120 years of Silver Spring's history. Downtown Silver Spring has one of the best surviving collections of Mid Century commercial architecture left in the county. A visible link to a past when Silver Spring was the commercial center of the county. Weller's Dry Cleaner is the most identifiable building left in Fenton Village and downtown Silver Spring. There is not another building like Wellers left in the region.

Given the uniqueness of Fenton Village now, and the history of Downtown Silver Spring, the entire Fenton Village and Downtown Silver Spring areas should be a prized historic district. Sadly, the reality is far different. There has not been a building designated in Fenton Village and Downtown Silver Spring in over twenty years. Since those previous County Councils had the vision to designate a handful of buildings in the 1990's and early 2000's, no subsequent County Council has voted to designate a single building in the area. Reactive short term gain has been the focus of the Council, not a far sighted vision of how Silver Spring could be on the forefront of preservation of Mid Century Modern Architecture in the region.

My interest in preservation goes back to my childhood in Rockville. My family moved there just as the new Rockville Mall was finished in the early 1970's. The charming historic downtown of Rockville had been bulldozed and replaced with the concrete bunker of Rockville Mall, a forbidding dark place that was bankrupt within a decade. Now Rockville has a faux downtown, instead of a revitalized historic downtown. Downtown Silver Spring has more authentic character than downtown Rockville, or the Pike & Rose, or the Rio. And yet all the new developments depend on tearing down that authentic character to build generic new buildings that all look alike. Why would anyone come to Silver Spring when it looks just like The Pike & Rose, the Rio, or any of the new developments in the DMV?

It takes courage to advocate for preservation, the developers don't like you, the property owners don't like you, politicians avoid you. Yet, everyone loves a selfie in front of a unique preserved building. Residents and visitors alike seek out those unique places that are different from the one size fits all cookie cutter developments. The American Film Institute made the restored Art Deco Silver Theater its home because it understood the value of preservation. It takes courage to vote for designation, because as Council Members, you must rely on the expertise of the County's own Historic Preservation staff, the Planning staff, and those experts in the field who come to testify. It takes courage to explain to a Property Owner or a Developer that they need to think outside of their proposed box, to include a designated building in their project. To make Adaptive Reuse their goal.

I ask you to avoid the bunkerlike mentality that built Rockville Mall. Follow the lead of other urban areas in the Mid-Atlantic and adaptively reuse the unique historic buildings in Fenton Village and Downtown Silver Spring. If Baltimore, Richmond, DC, and Frederick, can successfully do it, then Montgomery County should be able to save their significant buildings while adding new residential space. It will take courage on your part, like the courage of those earlier Council members who saved the Silver Theater, the Hecht Building, The Dry Cleaning Institute, and the Canada Dry Building, all successful examples of adaptive reuse.

As an HPC Commissioner, I was at both HPC meetings related to Wellers, and there was no bias against the current owners of Wellers. There was a great deal of respect for these small business Owners who have made a success like so many others I have known in Fenton Village, like Charlie Weller. We tried to explain that their project could be successful with a designated Weller's and its tax credits.

I ask that you set aside the recommendation of a Planning Board vote and its procedural irregularities, and the troubling conduct of those Planning Board Commissioners. That Planning Board Meeting reflected poorly on the Planning Board and their understanding of the designation criteria and procedures.

I ask for your courage to vote to designate Weller's, so in the future, your term on the Council will be remembered as one that saved the history of Montgomery County for future generations.

Respectfully,

Karen Burditt, AIA, APT, NCARB
HPC, MPI

Exuberant Googie Weller's & Its Signage: For ALL of Us! Deserving of Master Plan Designation
Enlivening Adaptive Reuse! Designed by Noted Architect & S.S. Resident Ted Englehardt!
Testimony by Marcie Stickle, Montgomery County Council, 4/25/23

Commencing early 2000's, my Partner and I, SSHS Board Members, along with 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 in our Initiative, 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 such as ourselves! 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 2 lovely "Buy Local" Brochures! Addis Ababa Restaurant & Weller's Dry Cleaners are posted within, along with other multi-cultural SIBs!

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! Heritage Tourism is Economic Development is the clarion call.

Montgomery Preservation Inc. & SSHS were Champions, linking with others!
S.S.'s Original Main Streets are Georgia Ave. & Colesville Road & their adjacent side streets.

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

We enjoyed dining so much at Addis Ababa over the years, promoting to others.
We enjoyed also vibrant Weller's Presence on the Landscape, & for its services.
"Eye Appeal Is Buy Appeal"! Glass Window Walls serve as beguiling Display Windows!

We/SSHS were invited to participate 2006 in 2 Urban Land Institute Meetings on "Developing a Retail Strategy for Silver Spring." Working together with Jerry A. McCoy, SSHS President, we submitted to a Survey & Report with Photos to ULI. **Eloquent support letters from The National Trust for Historic Preservation, Preservation Maryland, and Montgomery Preservation Inc. were included.**

"Targeted Investment Zones," within Mo Co "Certified Heritage Areas" in Maryland was also supported by a number of 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 participated in 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 superb Expert Staff has researched, and advises, I enthusiastically request the County Council approve an Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation designating Weller's and its Signage as a Master Plan Historic Site for ALL of us!

Thank you! Marcie Stickle, 510 Albany Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912, 301-587-5955
marcipro@aol.com

TO: County Council President Glass and Council Members

FROM: Mary Reardon, representing Silver Spring Historical Society

RE: Testimony re Master Plan Addition of Weller's Dry Cleaning

Before County Council

Date: April 25, 2023

Good afternoon.

My name is Mary Reardon, and I'm representing the Silver Spring Historical Society. Our President is submitting a *written* statement.

Silver Spring Historical Society enthusiastically joins with other preservation groups and experts – and the Historic Preservation Commission - in affirming that the Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign are eligible for listing on the County Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

It's important to remind Council members what propelled this process. County planners, in the recently approved Silver Spring sector plan, *singled out* Weller's to be studied for potential listing on the Master Plan. The Historic Preservation staff promptly set this recommendation in motion.

My point is that the Historic Preservation Commission was not prompted by an immigrant family's purchase of this property, as some of our opponents have claimed – a preposterous accusation against Commissioners and staff and an example of the hostility directed at preservationists.

I have often been awed by the Weller's building. I was fascinated with its mixture of construction materials, colorful striped panels, and the bright geometric shapes of the sign – even before I learned about an architectural style called Googie.

The label "Googie" itself is another tool of hostility by opponents of designation. They've implied that unfamiliarity with the term means the style is not a serious architectural category. As if unfamiliarity with the term "Prairie Style" would delegitimize the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Preservationists have long valued the small independent businesses in Silver Spring's Fenton Village, particularly their ethnic diversity. During the sector plan work sessions, preservationists urged that Fenton Village's small businesses and moderate-scale, affordable buildings like Weller's be preserved.

Weller's long history of service in Fenton Village was begun, interestingly, by sons of Lithuanian immigrants. Weller's familiar, unique design, and its embodiment of the Googie

style, meet two legal criteria for historic designation - affirmed by the HPC (yet barely touched on by the three Planning Board opponents of designation).

We are aware that the Weller's owner considers designation incompatible with the family's plans for this site and her other properties, and that she is frustrated in encountering County regulations on preservation and also on environmental remediation requirements. But government regulations are part of the cost of doing business. And with its colorful elements restored, the unique features of Weller's could attract customers to businesses located there or provide a stunning entrance to a future housing or commercial structure. Moreover, demolition would involve environmental remediation costs at this former dry cleaning site.

The new occupant of the building has retained the structural elements of the Weller's building sign. The inverted triangle element contains text in Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia. So this new business contributes to the medley of cultures that is a pride of Fenton Village.

To conclude, Silver Spring Historical Society strongly urges the Council to list the Weller's building and sign on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Mary Reardon, 2236 Washington Ave., 101, Silver Spring 20910 240-535-5200

May 7, 2023

The Boyds Historical Society asks the Montgomery County Council to designate the Edward U. Taylor School on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. In addition, we specifically ask the Council to designate the entire area (building and property) as the environmental setting, as recommended by Historic Preservation Commission staff. We oppose the Planning Board's suggestion to consider designating a smaller section of the parcel.

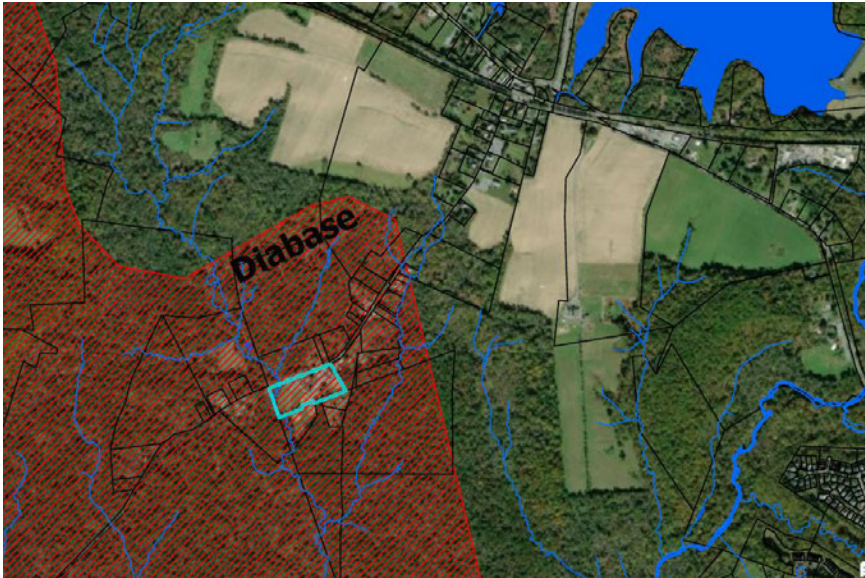
First, the entire area was the Taylor School – not just the building, or the building and part of the property, but the whole property. The entire area was the environmental setting, and thus the entire area should be designated as the environmental setting. In the memory of students who attended the Taylor School, both during segregation and after integration, the play area and playing fields were just as much a part of the school as the school building.

Second, the Planning Board's recommendation was based on a desire not to preclude further development on the parcel. However, further development on the parcel is extremely unlikely, regardless of historic designation, given that

- The area is on well and septic and designated to remain on well and septic.
- The western part of the parcel is in the 500-year flood plain (see olive green, on the left).



- The whole parcel is on diabase bedrock, which means the parcel will not pass a percolation test. (The Taylor School has a septic tank which must be pumped out multiple times a year, even with just the current limited usage of the building.)



- The parcel is also on an Exceptional Rustic Road (White Ground Road).

In addition, historic designation does not preclude further development; there are many examples in Montgomery County of further development within the designated environmental setting of a designated historic site.

For these reasons, we ask the Montgomery County Council to follow the original Historic Preservation Commission staff recommendation and designate the entire parcel as the environmental setting.

Thank you,

Miriam Schoenbaum
President, Boyds Historical Society

██████████
██████████

April 18, 2023

Steve Knight

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Montgomery County Council
Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Regarding: Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for Weller's Dry-Cleaning Building

Dear Council President Glass and Members of the Montgomery County Council:

I am writing in support of adding the Weller's Dry-Cleaning Building to the County Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The Planning Board's February vote against inclusion of this little midcentury modern building at the corner of Fenton Street and Thayer Avenue in Fenton Village was poorly considered, and went against the recommendations of the approved Silver Spring Downtown and Adjacent Communities Plan, Planning Staff, Historic Preservation Staff, and the Historic Preservation Commission, all of whom have worked with a great deal of professional care and community input for quite some time to put forth a solid case for protecting this building, the standout example of its era in the roughly 20 blocks comprising Fenton Village.

The February Planning Board hearing included some troubling irregularities (assuming you did not attend, here is [a link to the recording](#) of the hearing; the Wellers portion starts at about 1 hour, 10 minutes). Most notable among irregularities for me was the lack of focus on the redevelopment potential of the property that would include adaptive reuse of the Weller's building. Planning staff knowledgeable about the matter was on hand to elaborate, but no questions were ever asked of them.

For some background, the current owner has assembled the Wellers site along with the two adjacent parcels to the south. They have found a new tenant for the building (Silver Spring Beauty Supply), and their aim is to ultimately redevelop the assembled site, a laudable goal on the face of it. The current owner is representative of Fenton Village: they are Ethiopian immigrants and businesspeople who have worked hard and overcome challenges to attain their success.

I am a practicing architect, and I know the Weller's building and my East Silver Spring community well. I have studied the matter, and it is clear that a redevelopment scenario that includes adaptive reuse of the Weller's property yields only about 10% less total building area than a scenario that does not include adaptive reuse of Weller's. To help illustrate the difference in this particular case, this translates to about 9 fewer residential units, a particularly small sum for a community that has shown a great deal of sophistication and receptivity to growth and development over the last 10 years, absorbing somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 residential units in its 20-block area.

The above said, I appreciate that 10% of buildable area is significant to the current owner. The Planning Staff and Board have many tools at their disposal to help the owner realize the full buildable area potential if they were to retain the Weller's building as part of their redevelopment plans (e.g., adding a partial set back story above the currently allowable building height set forth in the Fenton Village Overlay Zone). I have looked into the matter further, and I have developed the attached study using relatively simple diagrams to illustrate 2 redevelopment scenarios for the assembled site: one that retains the Wellers Building (labeled Typical Redevelopment Scenario), and the other that does not (labeled Adaptive Reuse Redevelopment Scenario). With a little bit of creative thinking and possibly a variance that I think would be quite reasonable to grant, I am confident a redevelopment scenario that retains the Wellers Building can yield nearly the same amount of development yield. I have already shared these observations and the attached study with staff with Council President Glass's office and with Elsa HizeL-McCoy with Planning Staff.

There was one additional point to mention, as it was (inappropriately) raised as a potential barrier to adaptive reuse during the Planning Board hearing: namely that the original use of the building was a dry cleaner. As such, there may be concerns about soil contaminants from its previous use. In my experience, managing potential soil contamination in these situations is very routine, and should not be an impediment to adaptive reuse of the Weller's Building. In fact, the active years of Wellers in its original use coincided with relatively harmless methods of dry cleaning developed after World War II. More information about this can be found in the Preservation Staff's report.

My suggestion as described herein and as illustrated in the attached diagrams is, at its core, about enhancing value for the owner, the community, and the County. The County has not designated anything of significance for the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in any of our developed urban areas in at least a generation. Cases continue to be debated along familiar lines: maintaining property values and development rights vs. preserving some of our past. We have now added to that a need for more housing in those areas. What I am suggesting is a way for us to have them both by thinking a little more broadly about the development allowances of this site. For what it is worth, I have had the opportunity to engage with colleagues internationally who have successfully balanced preservation with development: if my friends in Mumbai and Tel Aviv can do, I am confident we can do it here in Montgomery County too.

I ask that you that you and your fellow Council Members reconsider the poorly reached conclusions of the Planning Board and reassess this matter. I (and many others!) care deeply about this building, the community, and the building's owner. I have tried to briefly outlay what I believe is a simple solution to a problem that has generated a great deal of unnecessary controversy. I hope that you will contact Planning Staff to learn more, I am available at your convenience to discuss the matter further if that would be helpful. I am confident that there is a win-win solution to this matter, and I have full faith in the building's owner to realize it.

Sincerely,



Steve Knight, SARA, AIA, NCARB

attachments (3)



Existing Site

Assembled Parcels at Southeast Corner of
Fenton Street & Thayer Avenue



Typical Redevelopment Scenario

New Adjacent 6-Story Development: 73,000 sf



Adaptive Reuse Redevelopment Scenario

Existing Building: 3,600 sf
 + New Adjacent 6-Story Development: 60,400 sf
 64,000 sf

+ Additional One-Story Bonus for Retaining Existing Building: 9,000 sf
 73,000 sf