

STAFF REPORT:

**SILVER SPRING CBD
HISTORIC DISTRICT &
HISTORIC SITES NOMINATIONS**

May 3, 1985

**The Maryland-National Capital
Park and Planning Commission**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
RECOMMENDATIONS	
DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS	1
INDIVIDUAL SITE RECOMMENDATIONS	1
DISTRICT ANALYSIS	
BACKGROUND.	4
HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT	7
Historical Assessment	7
Architectural Assessment	9
Summary of Findings	10
PLANNING CONTEXT.	10
Summary of Findings	12
PROPOSED INTEGRATION PROGRAM	13
Appropriate Preservation Mechanism	13
Additional Urban Design Tools	14
Administrative Guidelines for the Optional Method of Development	14
Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance	17
INDIVIDUAL SITES	
MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION	18
ADDITIONS TO THE LOCATIONAL ATLAS	19
REMOVALS FROM THE LOCATIONAL ATLAS	22
CONCLUSION	23
APPENDICES	
A. Summary of Silver Spring Public Symposium	24
B. Bibliography of Works Consulted	30

LIST OF FIGURES

1. Proposed Locational Atlas District	2
2. Individual Sites Added to the Locational Atlas	5
3. Proposed Master Plan Historic District Resources Added to the Locational Atlas.	6
4. Chronology of County Historical Development	8
5. Proposed Locational Atlas District Resource Classification System	15
6. Definitions Proposed for the Locational Atlas District Classification System	16
7. Proposed Individual Site Additions to the Locational Atlas	20

RECOMMENDATIONS

DISTRICT RECOMMENDATIONS

- For planning and public policy purposes, place and retain a portion of the Silver Spring Central Business District, as delineated in figure 1, on the County's Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites.
- Direct staff to develop Administrative Design Guidelines for use in review of the Optional and Standard Method of Development in this area, to achieve public policy and design objectives which address the following issues:
 - priorities and criteria for preservation/adaption
 - suggested amenities and facilities
 - height and bulk
 - building access and circulation
 - elements of compatibility
 - storefront and retail design
- Amend the Montgomery County Zoning Ordinance to expand the definition of amenity space to permit preservation of existing buildings to be included as amenities.
- Direct staff to separately draft text amendments to the Montgomery Zoning Ordinance to address the related issues of pedestrian/street activity and retail uses through the optional method of development.

INDIVIDUAL SITE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Designate the following properties as individual Master Plan Historic Sites with appropriate language for guiding future development.
 - The Silver Spring/Acorn Urban Park
 - Jessup Blair House
 - The Old Post Office
 - Armory Place
- Place or retain the following properties on the Locational Atlas:
 - Perpetual American Building
 - Wolfe Building
 - Canada Dry Bottling Plant
 - Springwood Garden Apartments
 - Silver Spring Railroad Station

- Remove the following properties from the Locational Atlas:

- Little Tavern
- Old Masonic Lodge
- Tastee Diner
- Trailways Bus Station
- Hewitt Building/Citizens Savings & Loan

DISTRICT ANALYSIS

BACKGROUND

On September 6, 1984, the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) acted to recommend the designation of a Silver Spring commercial historic district and the designation of several individual sites within the CBD on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation

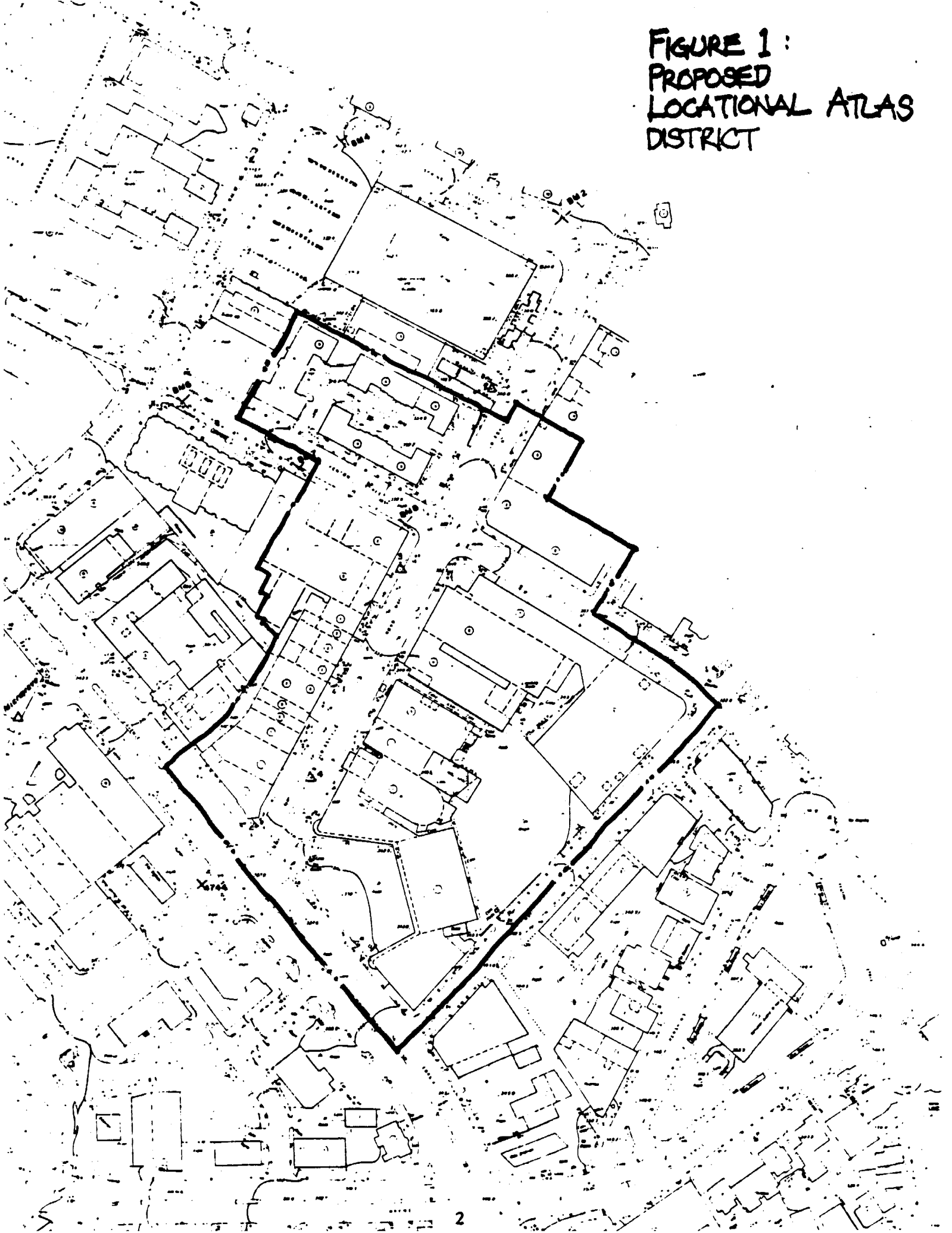
At the request of the Preservation Commission, the Montgomery County Planning Board acted on October 4, 1984 to place some of the nominated properties on the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County to afford them interim protection under Section 24A-10 of the County's Preservation Ordinance and prevent pre-emption of the County's designation process.

The individually placed historic sites are shown in figure 2. With regard to the proposed district shown in figure 3, the Board voted only to place the following properties named as resources to the proposed district:

1. J.C. Penney Store
8656 Colesville Road
2. Montgomery Arms Apartment
8700-8722 Colesville Road
3. Hecht Company
Fenton at Ellsworth
4. Eig Building
8641 Colesville Road
5. Silver Theater
8619 Colesville Road
6. Silver Shopping Center
8575-8533 Georgia Avenue
7. Fenton Building
8701-8719 Colesville/Fenton
8. Trailways Bus Station
817 Ellsworth Drive
9. Hewitt Building - Citizens Savings Bank &
Union Wallpaper Store
8585 and 8589 Fenton Street

Concurrent with the Board's action to place these properties on the Locational Atlas, a Preliminary Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation was prepared reflecting the Preservation Commission's recommendation. The public hearing on that amendment was held November 5, 1984.

FIGURE 1 :
PROPOSED
LOCAL ATLAS
DISTRICT



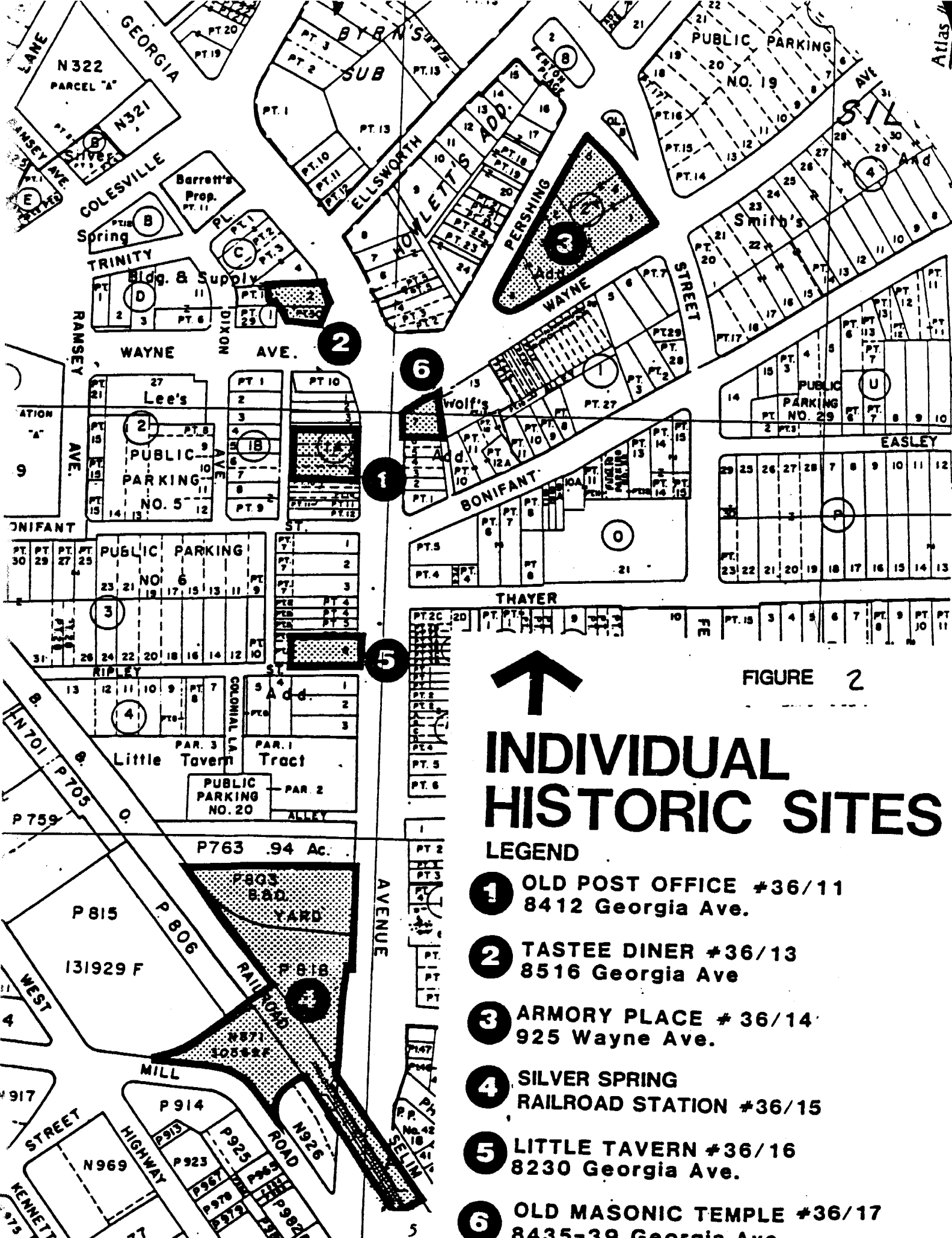


FIGURE 2



INDIVIDUAL HISTORIC SITES

LEGEND

- 1** OLD POST OFFICE #36/11
8412 Georgia Ave.
- 2** TASTEE DINER #36/13
8516 Georgia Ave
- 3** ARMORY PLACE # 36/14
925 Wayne Ave.
- 4** SILVER SPRING
RAILROAD STATION #36/15
- 5** LITTLE TAVERN #36/16
8230 Georgia Ave.
- 6** OLD MASONIC TEMPLE #36/17
8435-39 Georgia Ave

Because of the divergence of expert opinion on the historic and architectural value of the proposed historic district and because of the importance of the additional issues raised during the public hearing, the Planning Board deferred action on the district nomination. The Planning Board in the alternative authorized a comprehensive urban design study of the retail district to:

- Assess the comparative historic and architectural value of the area and the buildings identified as resources to the proposed district.
- Address issues of scale, sense of place, image, and continued retail use raised in the public hearing testimony.
- Create appropriate redevelopment methodologies that will integrate historic/architectural/design values and balance competing public interests within the CBD.

To assist in the comprehensive study, experts in the fields of architecture, architectural history, planning, and economic development were empaneled by the Planning Board. These experts participated in a general educational seminar held on February 4, 1985 for the staffs of the Planning Board, County Executive and the Historic Preservation Commission. The panel also participated in a public symposium held on March 5, 1985 to further explore the issues raised by the historic nomination with the general public. A summary of the symposium is provided in Appendix A and a complete bibliography of works consulted in the preparation of this report is provided in Appendix B.

The following report summarizes staff's findings as a result of this study of the CBD, and outlines staff recommendations for integrating identified values and public interests in the planning of the retail core.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL CONTEXT

One of the major purposes of the study has been to develop an objective assessment of the comparative historic and architectural value of the surviving collection of late 1930's to early 1950's commercial buildings within the proposed Silver Spring CBD historic district.

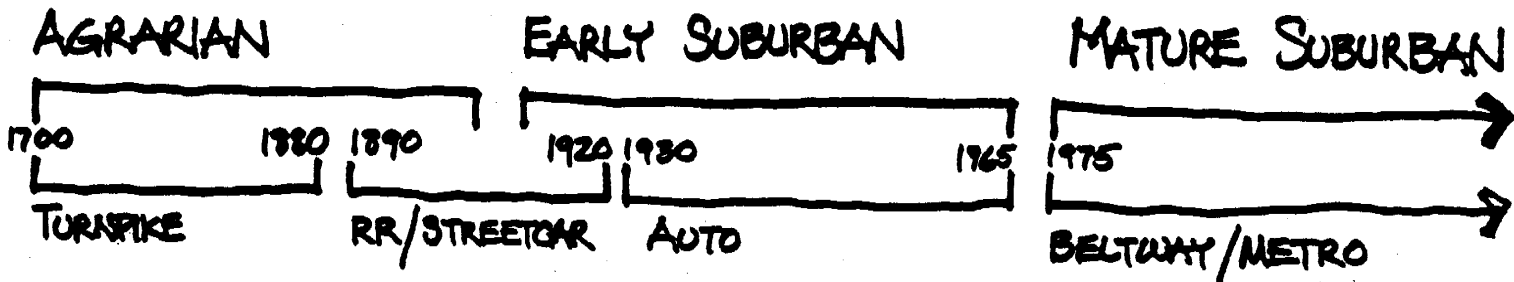
Historical Assessment

In order to place this collection of buildings in historic perspective, staff began by preparing a chronology of the County's historical development (see figure 4). The chronology identifies significant periods in the County's development based on the predominant pattern of settlement. To the extent these phases reflect development trends across the country, the chronology is useful in placing the proposed district in a national as well as local or regional historic perspective.

For purposes of this analysis, the development of the County can be divided into the following major periods:

- **AGRARIAN** -- Dating from the County's inception in the late 1600's and extending in dominance to the late 19th century, this period was based on an agricultural economy and was characterized by a small population, limited growth, and minimal commercial development, primarily at major market crossroads.

FIGURE 4 CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND



- PREDOMINANTLY RURAL PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

- AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

- LIMITED GROWTH & POPULATION

- PREDOMINANTLY LOW DENSITY "SUBURBAN" PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

- ECONOMIC/EMPLOYMENT DEPENDENCE ON CENTRAL CITY

- HIGH PERCENT RESIDENTIAL LAND USE WITH LITTLE FUNCTIONAL DIVERSIFICATION

- MARKED INCREASE IN THE RATE OF GROWTH & POP. EXPANSION

- CONTINUATION, WITH MODIFICATION OF SUBURBAN RESIDENTIAL PATTERN

- INCREASED FUNCTIONAL DIVERSIFICATION & INTENSIFICATION OF LAND USE

- SELECTED REDEVELOPMENT OF CBD'S BASED ON ADVENT OF METRO SYSTEM

- **EARLY SUBURBAN** -- Overlapping with the Agrarian phase, this development pattern began with the advent of the railroad in the 1870's, was augmented by the trolley in 1890's, and later supplanted by the automobile in the late 1920's. This phase was characterized by unprecedented growth and population expansion, economic and employment dependence on the central city and low-density/scale development, primarily residential.
- **MATURE SUBURBAN** -- This term describes the current period of selective land use intensification which began in the mid-1960's with the completion of the interurban freeway system. Residential development, in general, continues the earlier low-density suburban pattern with some modification in response to market/lifestyle changes, i.e., increase in attached single-family homes, allowances for accessory apartment conversion, etc. In contrast to the early suburban pattern, however, this period is characterized by a greater diversification of land use from primarily residential to office and retail commercial development, resulting in an expansion of the County's economic and employment tax base. Again, based on a transportation improvement, Metro, this period also marks the redevelopment or selected intensification of CBD's in the County.

In terms of physical development, the Early Suburban period, and in particular the early auto-oriented phase of the suburban process (late 1930's to late 1950's) initiated a period of unprecedented County growth and population expansion. The County's population nearly doubled in the years from 1946 to 1950 and more than doubled between 1950 and 1960.

Poised for this post war expansion, the Silver Spring CBD, with its residential market in place, emerged in the late 1940's as the County's earliest and largest comparison shopping center.

Architectural Assessment

The proposed historic district, as distinguished from Silver Spring's older retail area along Georgia Avenue south of Wayne, is composed of surviving period commercial structures that still visually relate together to produce a cohesive "historical" streetscape.

The architectural style of these buildings has been variously described as Art Deco, Art Moderne, Streamlined Moderne, 50's Moderne, and every conceivable combination thereof. As a practical matter, the the more generic term "mid-century modern" adequately describes both the character and quality of the stylistic range found within the proposed district. The style, as noted by the Park Historian in his survey of 20th Century Commercial Architecture in Silver Spring, evolved from the "streamlined" movement of the Depression. The vocabulary of the style, as exhibited in the open and closed store front designs of the retail core, includes flat roofs, curved or rounded corners, ribbon-banded windows with aluminum or metal frames, cantilevered canopies and applied signage often executed in neon.

As a relatively early suburban shopping center, the unusual configuration of the Silver Spring retail core appears to be a transition between the more traditional main street/downtown shopping environment of the small to mid-size city and the later auto-oriented, regional shopping center exemplified by Wheaton Plaza, which emerged to dominate suburban commercial development in the late 1950's.

While the configuration and the high order of goods and services provided by the retail core during its prime are of academic interest, the majority of surviving commercial buildings, when compared to the universe of period buildings, are pedestrian structures. Succinctly described by David Gebhard, architectural historian with the University of California at Santa Barbara, as "averages of the moment," the architectural value of these buildings lies in their overall impression and their ability, as an ensemble, to strongly convey a sense of the County's Early Suburban period which was an important time in the historical development of the County.

The human scale at street level of the existing complex of buildings also is a major value of the area. The one to four story building height at the street face, number, and location of pedestrian entrances, use of materials, and the retail display windows are all components of the human scale. Retention of this scale should be a guiding principle in the redevelopment of the area.

Summary of Findings

Based on the national and local/regional historical perspective provided by the chronology of County's historical development, and on a critical assessment of the surviving commercial buildings, staff makes the following findings on the relative architectural/ historical value of the retail core:

- The County's early auto-oriented suburban phase (late 1930's - late 1950's) produced a significantly greater rate of growth and population increase than previous development periods, and consequently is an important period in the historical development of the County.
- The proposed historic district has local historic value as the earliest shopping center of the County's Early Suburban period.
- The surviving ensemble of period commercial structures has local and regional architectural value in its ability to convey a sense of an early suburban shopping environment of the 1940's and 1950's.
- The human scale and street activity fostered by the exterior face of the buildings is a strong architectural value warranting preservation.

COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING CONTEXT

Unlike the historical context, which looks predominantly to the past in terms of time frame, the planning context must look predominantly to the future. In terms of substance, the historical perspective can focus exclusively on the values inherent in preservation. The planning context must embrace the full range of public values, including those that derive from economic considerations, ones which require the destruction of the old in order to make way for the new.

There are at least four separate perspectives that warrant recognition. We call them the historic, the architectural, the functional, and the economic. The mission of the Historic Preservation Commission requires it to pay particular attention to the first two perspectives; and its membership is derived predominately from persons with expertise or experience in one of these two areas. By contrast, the mission of the Planning Board frequently requires it to be involved in matters heavily influenced by the latter two

perspectives; and its membership seeks to embrace a variety of individuals and staff with experience in these areas, as well as a broad perspective over the entire spectrum.

The problem confronting us in Silver Spring involves the proper combination and relative weight to be given to these four perspectives. A building may have historic value, because it represents some unique event important to the history of the place. A building may have architectural value, because its form has a pleasing appearance that merits critical acclaim. A building may have functional value, because it shelters a human activity that is important to the community. A building may have economic value, because it provides a return on investment sufficient to induce development or maintain functional usage. But not all of these need be true at the same time. When only some of the four perspectives show a positive value, careful judgment is required.

Historically, planning efforts have recognized the locational advantages of Silver Spring and have promoted its commercial development. (See M-NCPPC planning and zoning documents noted in Appendix B and dated 1947, 1957, 1970, and 1975.) The adopted Sector Plan for the Silver Spring Central Business District was written at a time when the importance of preserving the buildings in the proposed district was given less weight than some would ~~not~~ consider appropriate. Although the goal of the County's most recent Sector Plan is to retain and revitalize the existing retail core as a major comparison shopping center (see p.51, Sector Plan), the CBD-3 zoning for the core encourages revitalization through displacement and redevelopment rather than the preservation or restoration of the existing commercial buildings. This intensification of development in Silver Spring, as well as other CBD's in the County, reflects County policy to maximize use of the massive public investment in the Metro system. While the 1975 Sector Plan assigns no historic or architectural value to the commercial buildings themselves, the historic retail function of the core as a major comparison shopping place is recognized and the area is identified for mixed--predominantly commercial--use (see figure 10, p.50).

The value of the area as a shopping place was reinforced in the public testimony received on the historic district nomination. That testimony identified a public interest in retaining existing, and in securing additional, "desirable" retail uses, both major comparison and local serving. Public testimony also identified quality of life factors such as the "main street" character of the retail core with its desirable human scale at street level. This scale coupled with the distinctiveness of the "mid-century modern" architecture produced an identifiable image for Silver Spring. While there appeared to be a consensus on the "imageability" of Silver Spring; that is to say, the ability of the name itself to produce a vision or image of a "place," there was no strong consensus as to whether that image was positive or negative. Moreover, there was no strong consensus on whether that image should be perpetuated or enhanced at an, as yet, undetermined cost to the public.

Therefore, we are faced with a problem in which the four perspectives produce evidence as follows: (1) historical - there is growing evidence that the relative value to the County, of the buildings in the proposed district, may come to be appreciated increasingly as time goes on; (2) architectural - there is clear evidence that the present population does want to preserve a sense of human scale, but there is no strong consensus about the relative merit of the "form" of the buildings themselves; (3) function - there is strong evidence that the present population wish to see retail services retained and enhanced, but they may be neutral on whether this should be accomplished by destruction

of the old buildings, and the creation of new forms to house these services; (4) economic - there is conflicting testimony as to whether preservation can be sustained within the economic market forces at work in any new development, and no clear picture about what any new development, which destroys the old, would look like.

Summary of Findings

In view of the current and historical planning goals for the retail core and the relative historical and architectural value ascribed to the identified ensemble of buildings within the core, staff makes the following findings concerning future policy for the area.

- The area delineated in figure 1 constitutes a distinct functional, architectural, and historical entity within the Silver Spring Central Business District.
- As a distinct entity, this area is vested with additional values and public interests above and beyond the balance of the CBD.

These interest/values include:

- Potential for intensification of land use to maximize public investment in the Metro system.
- Retail uses which provide shopping for the community and diversity within the CBD extending the life and use of both the district and Metro system.
- A historically and architecturally cohesive streetscape capable of providing continuity with the County's Early Suburban period.
- A strong and potentially marketable image and sense of "place."
- Desirable human scale, "main street" character at street level.

Staff concludes that reconciliation of these multiple and competing public interests in land use decisions can not be done on a broad brush basis. Proper judgements on how the public interest can best be served, within the proposed Locational Atlas district, will require a fine grained analysis that can only be done effectively in the light of specific development/redevelopment proposals on a case-by-case basis. Without a picture of the future relatively equal in detail to the picture we already have of the past, it would be easy to make the wrong judgment on such a closely balanced issue. Staff concludes that an incremental process which will allow for case-by-case evaluation and appropriate public dialogue is the best way to reach an integration of values, and to continue the evolution of Silver Spring as a "place" that genuinely serves the community.

The following section outlines staff's proposals for the development of a concerted program to integrate these values in the planning and future revitalization of the area.

PROPOSED INTEGRATION PROGRAM

Appropriate Preservation Mechanism

The County has two mechanisms for identifying and protecting significant architectural, historical or archaeological resources. Resources can be recognized through placement on the County's official historic sites inventory The Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites in Montgomery County, Maryland and/or designated as Historic Sites or Districts on the County's Comprehensive Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The first of these two mechanisms, the Locational Atlas is a survey prepared and updated by M-NCPPC in compliance with the objectives of the 1966 National Preservation Act. Like the majority of inventories generated by the Act it was originally prepared as a planning and policy guide for evaluating the impact of local, state, and federal programs on historic sites and districts.

As a preservation mechanism, the Locational Atlas is somewhat analogous to the National Register, in that its principal means of protection was based on the ability of government to review its own actions and to provide incentives to encourage the preservation of privately owned properties. Recognizing the need to further protect significant properties from adverse private as well as public actions, the County prepared a Comprehensive Master Plan for Historic Preservation and adopted a Historic Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 24A of the Montgomery County Code) in 1979. Approved properties meeting specified Ordinance criteria are elevated to Master Plan historic status and are subject to additional police power controls beyond the requirements of the underlying zone.

Not only do these controls constitute a separate police power regulation, but more critical for the planning process, they are administered by a separate regulatory body, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). That body is appointed by the County Executive and approved by County Council. It is this fragmentation of authority, and potential for conflict, in the redevelopment of properties where there are multiple/competing public interests, that we see as a major stumbling block in using Master Plan designation as an effective planning tool. Where the adopted land use plan reinforces historical land use, and where settlement patterns and zoning standards are compatible with the preservation of a resource, the mandate for preservation can be made clear, and final approval authority can be appropriately placed with the Preservation Commission. But where there are multiple and competing public interests, and a lack of clarity with respect to how development might serve those interests better, as in the case with the proposed district, a designation on the Historic Master Plan creates a circumstance, in which a developer is placed under too much of a single issue focus, and too heavy a burden of proof within this focus, to justify any change in the existing exterior of the old. We do not think the evidence justifies the limitations of this remedy.

Although we can attribute both historic and architectural value to the ensemble of surviving period structures within the core, staff concludes that the historic/architectural value does not necessarily outweigh other possible public interests and values in the area, including functional and economic ones.

Staff suggests that the most appropriate means for integrating historic and architectural value into the decision making process would be to identify that portion of the CBD which still conveys a sense of the Early Suburban phase of the County's

development, and place this on the Locational Atlas. Staff recommends that this Locational Atlas district form the geographic basis for the development of administrative policies and guidelines, and be accompanied by legislative changes in the optional method of development that are discussed in the following section of this report.

In making this recommendation, staff notes that all properties listed on the Atlas are subject to limited evaluation and review under the Moratorium on Alteration and Demolition provision of the County's Preservation Ordinance. Under that provision, the Planning Board has 45 days from date of application to hold a public hearing and make a finding as to whether the property will be designated on the Master Plan. It is the conclusion of staff that the incremental review of these buildings by the Planning Board in the context of proposals for redevelopment, under either the standard or optional method, will provide the most appropriate forum for the synthesis and resolution of multiple public interests in the area.

Additional Urban Design Tools

Since the creation of the CBD Zone, 38 Project Plans have been approved under the Optional Method of Development. A variety of public amenities have been approved to justify the additional densities granted in the Optional Method of Development. The majority of these amenities have included outdoor public spaces with a variety of animation features including ice skating rinks, food service facilities, small theater programs, and works of art. The Optional Method of Development process appears to have produced the best results when coupled with a major competition for design proposals, established by the public agency owning the public land (i.e., Bethesda Metro Center - Metro design competition); or an informal competition among major developers for a finite number of available and desirable sites (i.e., Bethesda "beauty contest"); or an opportunity to develop a large and important site (i.e., Silver Spring Metro Plaza - large site immediately adjacent to Metro). The use of the Optional Method of Development, coupled with the opportunities within the central business district of Silver Spring, is capable of producing some of the finest examples of urban design in the region. The issues of retail and historic preservation, scale and mass of future development, transportation constraints, character of the retail environment, and appropriate amenities should be addressed to create a special development opportunity in Montgomery County. Placement of the area delineated in figure 1 on the Locational Atlas will provide a tool to allow preservation of existing structures to be addressed together with any proposal for new construction. However, additional tools are needed to address the development issue in the central business district of Silver Spring. These additional tools include the following:

Administrative Guidelines for the Optional Method of Development

The priorities of preservation of individual buildings within the proposed Locational Atlas district, the mass and scale of building, character of the retail environment, and appropriate amenities could be addressed through a set of administrative guidelines for the Optional Method of Development. The success of similar guidelines for the Bethesda Metro Center has been demonstrated. The goal of these guidelines in Silver Spring would be to create a strong retail core for Silver Spring. Figure 5 identifies the boundaries of the proposed district recommended for placement on the Locational Atlas (see also figure 6), and the relative priorities of historic importance. At this point in time, the Silver Theater complex, J. C. Penney's, and the Hecht Company are identified as major period structures and carry the greatest value in terms of creating the historic "image."

FIGURE 5
DISTRICT
BOUNDARIES AND
PRESERVATION
PRIORITIES

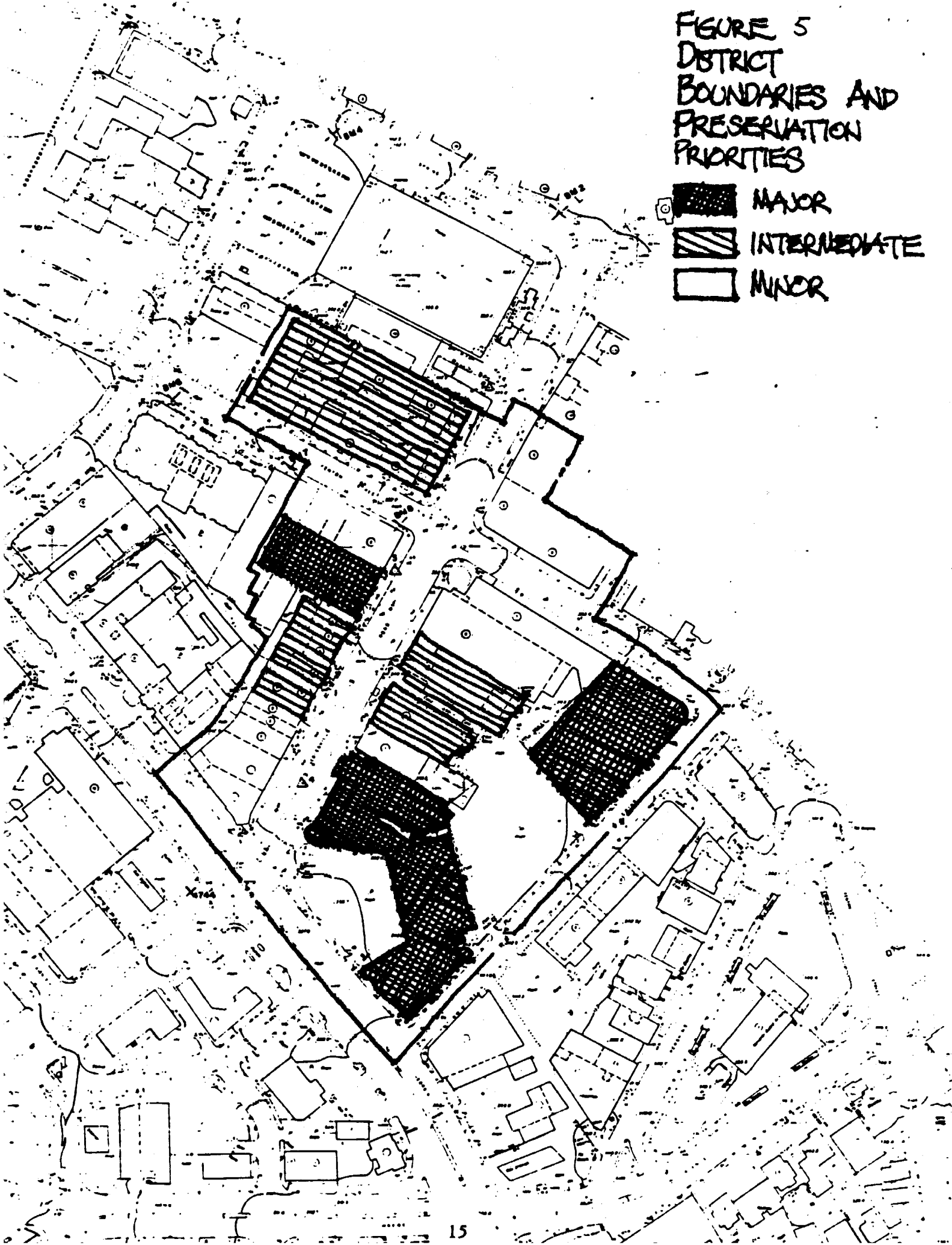
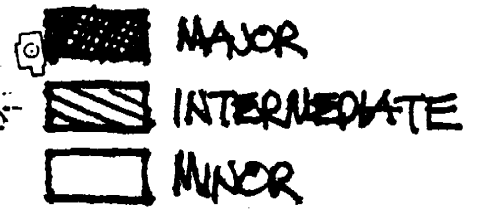


FIGURE 6

PROPOSED SILVER SPRING LOCATIONAL ATLAS DISTRICT BUILDING CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

MAJOR PERIOD STRUCTURES:

Buildings of the period (late 1930's to mid 1950's) exhibiting a number of elements from the vocabulary of either modified Art Deco or streamlined/50's Moderne architectural styles, and/or with additional historic or cultural significance.

INTERMEDIATE PERIOD STRUCTURES:

Buildings of the same period exhibiting a number of elements and materials typical of the Moderne style, somewhat less effectively executed but still moderately evocative of the period. The value of these buildings would be primarily contributory and supportive of the overall sense of time and place.

MINOR PERIOD STRUCTURES:

Buildings of the period exhibiting the most common elements typical of the Moderne style, minimally executed as functional commercial structures. These buildings would primarily serve as infill to link more significant period buildings.

Replacement of those structures by new ones would have to demonstrate a sensitivity of design and function greater than the other existing structures, in order to justify approval.

Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance

Several revisions to the Zoning Ordinance would improve the use of the Optional Method of Development, not only in Silver Spring, but also in other CBD's. These revisions include the following:

- **Amenity Definition (Preservation)** - The definition of amenity should be expanded to include preservation of existing structures. This tool would encourage preservation of existing structures within the CBD's.
- **Amenity Definition (FAR exclusion)** - The definition of amenity should be revised to allow indoor amenity space to be excluded from FAR calculations. Indoor amenity spaces are often part of creating a strong retail environment. Allowing the exclusion of indoor amenity spaces from FAR (at Planning Board discretion) will encourage the use of these amenities, increase the variety of amenities, and assist in the creation of a strong retail core.

Revising the definition of amenity would be completed in a manner similar to the method already in use that excludes above grade parking from FAR with far more desirable results.

- **Off-Site Amenities** - The use of off-site amenities has become a common component of recent Project Plans in addition to the 20 percent required on-site. The CBD zones should be revised to allow, at the discretion of the Planning Board flexibility in the amount of amenity space amenities to be located off-site. This method of obtaining amenities would be especially useful in the creation of a large public open space or a series of smaller, high priority spaces within the CBD which could be identified as part of a set of administrative guidelines.
- **Limited Retail Uses** - Within the CBD-3, limiting the range of permitted retail uses should be explored. The present CBD-3 Zone allows unlimited use of commercial banks, savings and loan institutions, real estate establishments, and other retail uses which if used to the maximum extent permissible would detract from the creation of a strong retail core.

INDIVIDUAL SITES

MASTER PLAN DESIGNATION

The Planning Board indicated, in their initial review on November 15, 1984, approval of the designation of the Old Silver Spring Post Office and Armory Place. Staff recommends the Board move final approval for the designation of these properties with the following language:

Site #36/11 Old Silver Spring Post Office - 8412 Georgia Avenue

- Constructed in 1936-37 this building is one of three distinctive federal post offices built in the County during the Depression under the aegis of the Work Progress Administration (WPA).
- This amendment recognizes that the zoning on the property permits an intensification of development for the site. If redeveloped, the intention of designation is to seek the preservation and integration of the labor intensive architectural features incorporated in the Georgia Avenue facade which are reflective of the role of the WPA in stimulating employment in the construction trades.

Site #36/14 Armory Place - 925 Wayne Avenue

- Representative example of early 20 century Armory architecture featuring distinctive medieval architectural affinities.
- Associated with Captain Frank Hewitt, Sr. and Colonel E. Brooke Lee, two of the founding fathers of modern Silver Spring.

In a supplemental action, the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) forwarded recommendations for designation of two additional park properties within the CBD. Although not part of the Preliminary Draft Amendment, the Board did receive testimony on both sites, the Jessup Blair House and the Silver Spring/Acorn Urban Park. Since these are park properties owned by M-NCPPC, staff recommends the Board consider taking action on these nominations as part of the present review. For the Board's information, both of these recommendations as well as the Board's initial indication on Armory Place have been forwarded to the new Director of Parks, Don Cochran, for comment. Planning staff concurs in the recommendations of the HPC and would recommend the sites be designated with the following language:

Site #36/5	The Silver Spring/Acorn Urban Park - Blair Mill Road and East West Highway	0.1 acre
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- Site of the original spring which is of symbolic importance to the community, being the site from which the town supposedly derives its name.
- The Park's acorn gazebo, originally from the farm of Francis Priston Blair, founder of Silver Spring, is a good surviving example of the picturesque garden furniture popular on the estates of the wealthy during the 19th century.

- Circa 1850—Unusually sophisticated two story frame house incorporating elements of Federal and Greek Revival styling and featuring a hipped roof with cupola, wooden quoin blocks, a molded architrave and pilasters framing the front entrance.
- Originally known as "the Moorings" the house was constructed as a summer residence for the prestigious Blair family, influential settlers and developers of the Silver Spring area.

Planning staff defers to the Parks Department for comment on the 13.5 acre (entire park) environmental setting recommended by the Preservation Commission. Staff notes that in past cases, in the absence of any "prevailing public interests," the environmental setting for park properties have been delineated to provide primary vistas of the related historic resource from the public right-of-way. Because the Jessup Blair House is sited well to the rear of the park property, securing a vista of the house from Georgia Avenue may require the full acreage associated with the park.

ADDITIONS TO THE LOCATIONAL ATLAS

As part of the comprehensive study of the retail core, the Planning Board instructed staff to survey the balance of the CBD and identify any additional structures of historic or architectural interest. Staff has completed a survey of the CBD and recommends that several additional CBD properties, as shown in figure 7, be recognized on the Locational Atlas for future evaluation for the Master Plan.

As the Board knows, placement on the Locational Atlas serves to preliminarily identify academic architectural or historic value and establishes a public interest in further reviewing the historic or architectural merit of the property.

All of the buildings under consideration date from early auto-oriented phase (1930's-1950's) of the County's Early Suburban period. Although relatively recent, the County is sufficiently into the next development period to begin to view these buildings in historic perspective. The staff concludes that there is sufficient historic or architectural merit to the following structures to justify a public interest in their ultimate disposition:

Note: Consistent with the Board's previous actions on additions to the Atlas, affected property owners received a two week notification of the staff recommendation and possible Board action.

1. Perpetual American Building - 8700 Georgia Avenue

One of three bank buildings constructed in the Metropolitan area by Perpetual American Savings in the mid-1950's. The Perpetual American Building is recommended for placement as a well designed example of mid-century modern architecture executed in high quality limestone and polished granite, materials typical of the period.

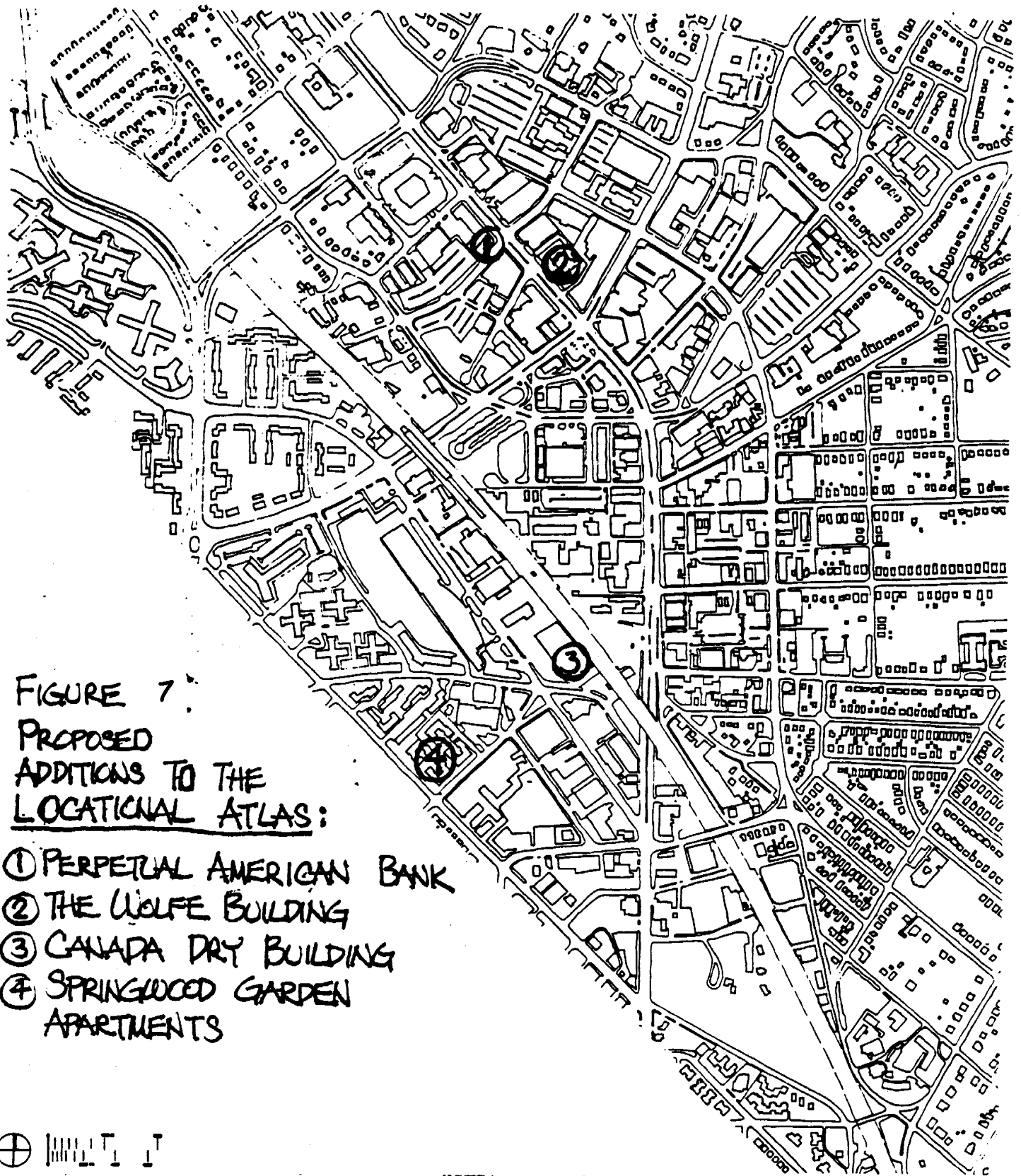


FIGURE 7:
PROPOSED
ADDITIONS TO THE
LOCATIONAL ATLAS:

- ① PERPETUAL AMERICAN BANK
- ② THE WOLFE BUILDING
- ③ CANADA DRY BUILDING
- ④ SPRINGWOOD GARDEN
APARTMENTS

2. Wolfe Building - 8621 Georgia Avenue
John Hopkins Applied Physics Laboratory

Initially constructed as a car dealership in 1941, this building was greatly expanded in 1944 to house the John Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. The building features horizontal banding interrupted by a limestone vertical plane, which is the hallmark of government research facilities of the period.

Additionally the laboratory was the site of the development of radio proximity fuse, an improved detonation device which made a significant contribution to the Allied bombing effort during World War II.

3. Canada Dry Building - 1201 East-West Highway

Constructed in 1946 and designed by accomplished New York architect, Walter Monroe Cory, this building is a notable example in the County of the "streamlined moderne" style. Use of the style in the design of a plant for the manufacture and distribution of soda pop illustrates the extent to which the streamlined movement permeated the designs of the period.

In making this recommendation, staff acknowledges that the Preservation Commission evaluated and rejected the Canada Dry Plant for designation. Since no formal research was forwarded on the site, staff presumes that evaluation was based on the limited research submitted by the Art Deco Society of Washington. Based on the advice of academic consultants and the expert testimony the Board received on the site, staff recommends the Board remand the site back to the Preservation Commission for further study and re-evaluation.

4. Springwood Garden Apartments - 1220 Blair Mill Road

Identified in the Park Historian's survey of garden apartments completed as part of the evaluation of Falkland, Springwood Gardens are one of the earliest examples of garden apartments found in Montgomery County. Although small, the complex exhibits a major principal of classic garden apartment design in their inward orientation and exclusion of the automobile.

The architecture of the complex is also distinctively "moderne" having broken with the accepted Colonial Revival Style commonly used in early garden apartments. The design features corner windows, geometric ornaments and courses of glass blocks.

5. Silver Spring Railroad Station

This site was reviewed by the Board as part of the November 15, 1984 work-session on Silver Spring. Staff at that time recommended the station itself be designated on the Master Plan with flexible language as to its eventual setting. The Board elected to consider the site at the time of its review of the zoning case pending on the property. Staff recommends the site be retained on the

Atlas to protect it from adverse action until its historic status can be resolved in the context of the zoning and land use decisions made on the property.

REMOVALS FROM THE LOCATIONAL ATLAS

In delineating a district for recognition on the Locational Atlas, staff eliminated the Trailways Bus Depot and the Hewitt/Citizens Savings and Loan Building as too far removed to contribute significantly to the streetscape. Although period buildings executed in the vocabulary of the "mid-century modern" style, staff finds they are not of sufficient merit to warrant designation as major period structures. Staff therefore recommends they be removed from the Locational Atlas and further regulation under the Ordinance.

At its November 15th worksession, the Board indicated agreement on the removal of the Old Masonic Lodge, the Little Tavern and the Tastee Diner from the Locational Atlas. Staff recommends final action for the first two sites but will take advantage of this opportunity to again advocate the designation of Tastee Diner or at a minimum retention of the Diner on the Locational Atlas.

Despite its current condition, the Silver Spring Tastee Diner is remarkably intact and with the renovation of the Bethesda Tastee Diner, remains the only diner in the County still exhibiting the classic railroad car design of the original roadside eateries. The highly mobile nature of the original dining car makes it an excellent candidate for incorporation in an optional method project. With a little effort, and unfortunately a lot of elbow grease, the diner could be adaptively reused, for example, as a coffee bar or ice cream parlor near the Metro. Given the compact and mobile nature of the resource and the current vogue in diners there is every indication that such a use would be both economically viable and a real amenity to the public.

It is staff concern that without designation or at least retention on the Atlas to assure review of the ultimate disposition of the diner, neither the imagination nor the elbow grease will be exerted. Or perhaps more sadly the diner will be relocated to enliven some other "place" and will be lost as part of the cultural fabric of Silver Spring. In light of the historic value now generally attributed to diners, staff urges the Board to reconsider its decision and designate the Tastee Diner with appropriate language in order to retain this resource for Silver Spring and the County.

CONCLUSION

In the preceding report staff has advanced a thesis to help formulate an objective judgment of the historical/architectural value of the proposed historic district. Although we believe this thesis is logical and reasonable, we acknowledge that the critical element needed to verify both the thesis and the value of the buildings themselves is the the passage of time.

Given the strong suburban heritage of Montgomery County, staff believes it is reasonable for the County to extend recognition of that heritage beyond the railroad and trolley car phases of its Early Suburban period, and to begin identifying cohesive concentrations and significant individual structures reflective of its early automobile period as well.

After careful review of currently available redevelopment tools and an exploration of the state of the "redevelopment" art across the country, staff concludes that identification on the Locational Atlas, in conjunction with selected changes in urban design tools represents the most prudent means of integrating historic and architectural value in the planning process for the central business district.

Placement on the Atlas assures a consideration of these values, on a case-by-case basis, but retains the redevelopment decision in a forum that requires a synthesis by the Planning Board of all public interests on the subject property.

While this use of the Atlas may seem a departure from past practice, staff notes that the inventory was originally prepared for planning and policy making purposes.

The intention of this recommendation is to reaffirm the Atlas as a planning tool and as a focus for building consensus on the future direction of County policy and program decisions in the Silver Spring CBD.

As requested, staff did examine the option of amending the Preservation Ordinance but recommends against opening up the Ordinance to a process that could potentially reduce the County's ability to secure preservation when there is a clear consensus on historic/architectural value as the over-riding public interest.

As the public hearing testimony and comments at the symposium indicated, there is no clear consensus on the value of the existing buildings within the nominated district. Admittedly for those of us who live and work and share birthdates with these buildings the label of "historic" is somewhat disconcerting. Yet from a purely academic perspective, it is not difficult to assign value to these buildings as a part of the County's suburban heritage. The difficulty arises when you weigh the public benefit and cost in their preservation.

Staff believes that recognition on the Atlas will provide a forum for continued and balanced public decision making and will assure that, in gaining approval, any proposed new development will meet or exceed the values and public interests already established by the development which it would replace.

APPENDIX A

SUMMARY OF SYMPOSIUM

"SILVER SPRING"

PAST IMAGES - FUTURE DIRECTION

Summary Silver Spring Symposium

March 5, 1985

Highlights of Panelists' Talks

1. **Brad Perkins** - Practicing architect with the firm Bradford Perkins and Associates, New York City
 - o Noted you can't assume quality development will occur without help.
 - o Community needs to define goals concerning image, scale and public commitment to regional retail.
 - o Existing buildings are pleasant but not exceptional examples of 40-50's Art Moderne, but to what degree does the community agree they are important and contribute to the sense of place and to what degree should they be a repository for discretionary development dollars?
 - o Cautioned against "freeze drying" the area at a critical time in the economic development cycle.
2. **Chester Liebs** - Architectural Historian, Chairman of the Historic Preservation Division of the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning at Columbia University, New York City.
 - o Silver Spring is identifiable through its "downtown" which is a very different "central place".

- o Art Moderne, the style of the district, is the next style to "take off" from a nostalgic viewpoint and from a dollars and cents viewpoint.
 - o Underpinning of urban planning now is preservation because a community needs an examination and evaluation of the existing built environment to make informed planning decisions.
 - o What Silver Spring has is worth working to preserve.
3. Steven Izenour - Architect/Planner, firm of Ventura, Rauch and Scott Brown, Philadelphia
- o Focused on the value of main street and the value of what we learn from the existing built environment; also the how and why of the ways we change our environments.
 - o Advised community to define preservation goals in recognition of the dynamic nature of "main street" and to educate designers on the elements that the community wants preserved.
4. Richard Longstreth - Architectural Historian, Chairman of the Department of Preservation, George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
- o Based on extensive study found the Silver Spring District unusual in its extent and "intactness" and reflection of post World War II society.
 - o Stressed the concept of local significance as part of the preservation movement and noted in terms of long-range plans the architectural style and configuration of the district was reasonably tolerant of adjacent high-density development.
 - o Cited economic benefits of preservation and its success as a revitalization strategy.

5. Tom Moriarty - Economic development consultant with Halcyon Limited formally with the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street" program.

- o Discussed what made a retail center and what Silver Spring had going for it.
 - economic value
 - development potential because of access and affluence of adjacent residential markets
 - cultural and emotional values wrapped up into a "sense of place".
- o Felt Silver Spring had competitive edge based on in place "identity or imageable" values
- o Critical question was how to overcome inherent conflict between economy of investment scale--that is what could be built verses what exists--in order retain and exploit those values.

Priscilla Schwab - Chairperson, Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission and practicing attorney in the State of Maryland

- o Identified the Preservation Commission as fellow countians working to build recognition of County historic resources such as the recommend Silver Spring district.
- o Felt preservation with profit was possible and should be the goal.

Summary of Issues Discussed

The symposium resulted in a series of related questions rather than in resolution of issues. These questions are summarized here under major topics of discussion:

Historic Preservation

1. What is it we are trying to preserve? Buildings or use? Main street? If so, which one? Georgia Avenue or Colesville Road?
2. How can we realistically blend old and new; provide continuity with the past; respect County heritage in a changing and dynamic time?
3. Are we confusing history with our sense of aesthetics; respect for the past with fear of the new?
4. History is a continuum, how do you determine what point to select as representative of the community's heritage and therefore worthy of preservation?

Redevelopment Issues

1. Can the retail core still support major comparison shopping in light of traffic and parking problems, and competition from malls?
2. Does redevelopment necessarily mean the loss of small shops that provide services to the adjacent community? How can good design be encouraged and useful services be retained for community?
3. What should the image of Silver Spring be?
 - Should the historic/architectural theme be exploited as a marketing tool?
 - Do we want to be another "in" place like Georgetown or Alexandria?
 - What are our images-related goals for aesthetics, pedestrian and other amenities?

Consensus

Although the symposium raised more questions than it answered, there was considerable consensus on the value of Silver Spring. The following summarizes the major points of agreement and is a basis for a continuing discussion on the future of Silver Spring:

1. Silver Spring is and must be special.
2. Special means change and new development.
3. Special means preservation of unique character.
4. Special means vital pedestrian scale.
5. Special means access--people, cars, Metro.
6. Special means fostering a sense of community.
7. Special means retention and improvement of retail.
8. Special means public and private design quality.
9. A Special Place in Silver Spring can be created through careful and thoughtful economic development.
10. Government, business and community should work together to establish and accomplish agreed upon goals.

MR:nlw

APPENDIX B

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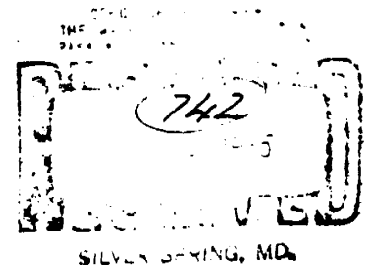
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MR:nlw



Maryland Historical Trust

May 2, 1985

Mr. Norman L. Christeller
Chairman, Maryland National Capital
Park and Planning Commission
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

269-2438

Dear Mr. Christeller:

The Maryland Historical Trust, a unit of the Department of Economic and Community Development and the state's historic preservation agency, has been following the issue of potential designation of a "Silver Spring Art Deco Historic District" in Silver Spring, and the recently announced proposed demolition of the Silver Theatre, and shopping complex at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road.

On March 5, 1985 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer Mark Edwards attended a public symposium, supervised/organized by John Westbrook, Chief of your Urban Design Division, and heard a variety of viewpoints expressed -- both by professionals and citizens of Silver Spring -- about the importance of retaining a sense of place and a sense of Silver Spring's history. The following discussion briefly summarizes the opinion of our office with regard to these matters:

- 1) Local Historic Designation: The Trust supports local district designation of buildings in the Silver Spring Retail Core Historic District. As the experts stated at the March 5th meeting, the Silver Spring Retail Core Historic District represents the most complete Collection of Art Deco/Moderne commercial buildings left in Montgomery County. In fact, as Mr. Edwards stated at the meeting, this concentration of buildings is best of its type within the state. Other experts, including Richard Guy Wilson of the University of Virginia, have echoed this view, and stated that this group of structures may represent -- outside of the well known Miami Beach Art Deco District -- the finest collection of such buildings yet unprotected on the East Coast. As such, they may be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's list of historic properties worthy of preservation.
- 2) Redevelopment: The Trust supports a redevelopment scheme that will utilize these buildings to the greatest extent possible. Time and time again participants at the symposium argued for the importance of retention of a "human scale" for the street, of mixed uses at street level, and most importantly the need to keep a "Main Street" feeling within this section of the community. Reuse of the existing buildings, perhaps as an entranceway or walkway into a carefully designed larger structure to the rear (see enclosed example) would meet the dual goals of preservation and sensible new development in Silver Spring.

- 3) Art Deco/Moderne Image of Silver Spring: Silver Spring needs to exploit its "Art Deco/Moderne" image as the focus of its revitalization plan. All the speakers at the symposium, including Richard Longstreth, Tom Moriarity, and Chester Liebs stressed the real importance of using the city's architectural heritage as the focal point for its re-development. Because so much of the city has been changed in recent years, this area needs to retain its "memory of place" so that this may be used to guide the development which will inevitably come to Silver Spring.

The Planning Board is now faced with the classic planning dilemma, with the desire to balance the public good (i.e., preservation of cultural resources valued by the community) with development interests which are pursuing "highest and best use of property." The Trust has read with interest a series of recent newspaper articles in the Washington Post and the Montgomery Journal in which representatives of the Kaempfer Company now state that preservation of these structures is impossible.

Preservation of these important buildings can occur in harmony with new development. Unfortunately, many of the most interested parties in this process -- the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, the Art Deco Society of Washington, D.C., and others -- have not been privy to the studies conducted by the Kaempfer Company. And without this data available to all decisionmaking bodies -- most importantly the Planning Board -- how can an informed decision about the reuse of these structures be reached?

Until all information on preservation/development scenarios is available for examination, we must concur with the statement of Marelyn Piety, president of the Allied Civic Group, who was recently quoted as saying "I don't think Allied is convinced that Kaempfer has really considered (preservation)..." Therefore, the Trust would like to pledge its support for the preparation of a study of this area, which should do the following:

- * conduct research on these buildings to evaluate their significance within the context of other Art Deco/Moderne commercial complexes in Maryland, within the region, and on the East Coast;
- * prepare a comparative study of preservation/development alternatives for these buildings. We believe this section of the study should examine the following financial tools for possible use:
 - 1) establishment of a "transfer of development rights zone" (a tool already allowed within the comprehensive plan, used in another preservation case involving the Magruder House);
 - 2) National Register listing and use of the 25% Investment Tax Credit, under provisions of the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981;
 - 3) Use of the 20% ITC under ERTA, with appropriate local design