



THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

February 11, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Robert Kronenberg, RLA
Development Review Division

Malcolm Shaneman, Supervisor
Development Review Division

VIA: Glenn Kreger, Team Leader, Silver Spring/Takoma Park Team *GK*
Community-Based Planning Division

FROM: Miguel Iraola, ASLA, Planner Coordinator *MI*
Community-Based Planning Division

SUBJECT: Newell Street Lofts
Project Plan Review No. 9-03000
Preliminary Plan Review No. 1-03021

The Community-Based Planning staff has reviewed the above referenced Project Plan and Preliminary Plan for conformance with the *Silver Spring Central Business District and Vicinity Sector Plan* (February 2000). The subject property is located on Newell Street at Kennett Street in the South Silver Spring revitalization area of the Central Business District (CBD). Community-Based Planning recommends the approval of this Project Plan and Preliminary Plan with the following comments:

1. Provide full-width streetscape improvements to Kennett Street and Newell Street in accordance with the *Silver Spring Streetscape* (April 1992) technical manual or as amended.
2. Coordinate with the Silver Spring Regional Service Center on the placement of any proposed wayfinding signs at the time of Site Plan Review.
3. Present the final public art components to the Silver Spring CBD Art Review Panel for review and comment at the time of Site Plan Review.

ZONING AND LAND USE:

The 1.4 acre subject property is zoned CBD-1 (Central Business District, 1.0). The approved CBD Sector Plan recommends CBD-1 zoning for this site and was executed through the Sectional Map Amendment (SMA) adopted July 18, 2000 per County Council Resolution 14-600. The property is located within the Ripley/South Silver Spring Overlay Zone area. The Overlay Zone addresses special development issues in order to ensure compatibility and provide flexibility of the development standards. The Overlay Zone specifically requires building heights along Newell Street that confront residential uses, must not exceed 45 feet. The building height may be increased to a maximum of 90 feet provided that the building be setback at least 60 feet from the street.

The proposed site plan conforms to the uses permitted in the existing CBD-1 zoning for the site. The proposed building meets the special setback and height requirements outlined in the Ripley/South Silver Spring Overlay Zone. The project proposes 120 residential units (85.28 du/ac) which is less than the permitted maximum of 206 units (125 du/ac) for an optional method project under the CBD-1 zone. Approximately ninety parking spaces will be provided on-site. The minimum required public use space for this project is 12,260 sf (20% of the net lot). The project proposes 12,640 sf or 20.6% of the net lot in public use space in addition to 3,215 sf of off-site streetscape improvements.

SECTOR PLAN CONFORMANCE:

The February 2000 Approved and Adopted *Silver Spring Central Business District and Vicinity Sector Plan*, approved by the County Council on February 1, 2000, outlines six themes which articulate the shared goals and vision for a revitalized Silver Spring. Four of these themes (i.e. a transit-oriented downtown, a residential downtown; a green downtown; and a pedestrian-friendly downtown) apply to this proposed project.

This project is being developed under the optional method which provides opportunities for landscaped public open spaces, plazas and streetscapes. This project encourages the development of active urban streets and improves the quality of the pedestrian environment by providing the optional method streetscape treatment as mandated by the *Silver Spring Streetscape* (April 1992) technical manual.

The proposed development is located less than a quarter mile (5 minute walking distance) from the Silver Spring Metro Station. The proximity to transit facilities as well as the downtown employment core will reduce the dependency on the automobile for the residents of the development. The Sector Plan specifically identifies the proposed project site as a potential housing site (see Attachment- Map 35 Residential Downtown). This project is being developed under the standard method of development and provides opportunities for landscaped public open spaces and streetscapes. This project encourages the development of active urban streets by providing public spaces along street edges. The proposal also improves the quality of the pedestrian environment by providing the Plan B Silver Spring streetscape treatments on all of the proposed public street frontages.

- A. **Compatibility:** The Sector Plan encourages residential uses throughout the CBD and specifically recommends residential for this site. Community-Based Planning feels that the proposed development satisfactorily meets the setback and height requirements of the Overlay Zone and the Sector Plan regarding compatibility with adjacent residential uses.
- B. **Silver Spring Wayfinding System:** The Applicant should coordinate with the Silver Spring Regional Service Center regarding the placement of any wayfinding signs as described by the Silver Spring Wayfinding System.
- C. **Public Art:** The Commission has formed an Art Review Panel for Silver Spring composed of representatives from the development, academic and arts community. The Panel gives input on the location, type, and the community context for all public art proposed for Optional Method projects. The public art component proposed in concept by the Applicant must be presented to the Silver Spring CBD Art Review Panel for final review and comment during Site Plan review.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

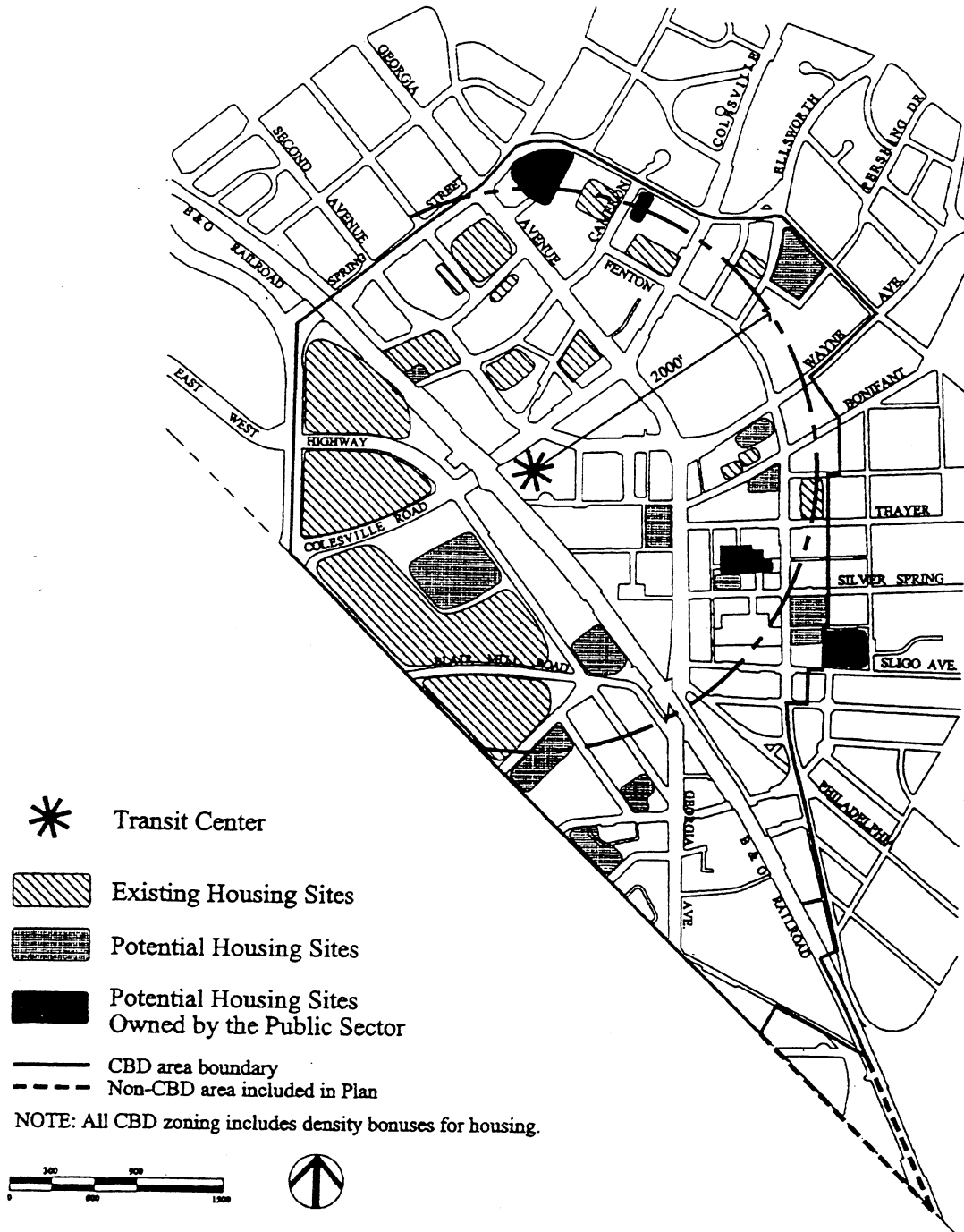
The applicant has met with various community and historic advocacy groups regarding this proposal. These groups have included the Silver Spring Historical Society, the CBD Subcommittee of the Silver Spring Citizens Regional Advisory Board, the Shepherd Park community, the Gateway Coalition and the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce. The public has been generally supportive of this proposal.

MI: G:\Iraola\regulatory\project plans\NewellStreetLofts\9-03000_CBPMemo.doc

Attachment

Attachment- Map 35 Residential Downtown

Map 35 Residential Downtown



M-NCPPC

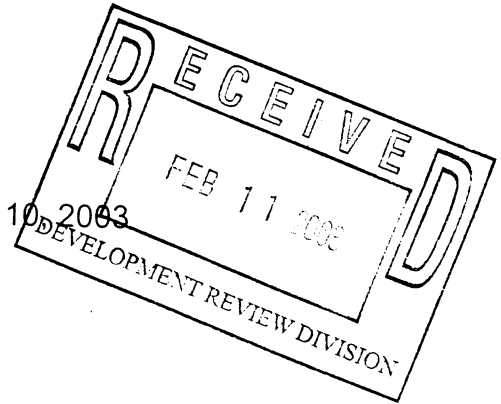


MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PARK & PLANNING

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION


8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910-3760

February 10, 2003



MEMORANDUM

TO: Malcolm Shaneman, Supervisor
Robert Kronenberg, Senior Planner
Development Review Division

VIA: Ronald C. Welke, Supervisor
Transportation Planning 

FROM: Janet E. Gregor, Planner/Coordinator JEG
Transportation Planning

SUBJECT: Preliminary Plan No. 1-03021
Project Plan No. 9-03000
Newell Street Lofts
Silver Spring CBD Policy Area

This memorandum is Transportation Planning staff's adequate public facilities (APF) review of the subject concurrent project and preliminary plans.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Transportation Planning staff recommends the following conditions as part of the APF test for transportation requirements related to approval of the preliminary and project plans:

1. Limit the preliminary plan to no more than 120 condominium garden apartments and 3,000 square feet of office space.
2. Dedicate 70 feet of right-of-way along Newell Street as shown on the preliminary plan.
3. Dedicate 60 feet of right-of-way along Kennett Street as shown on the preliminary plan.
4. Provide five feet of sidewalk along Newell Street and eight feet of sidewalk along Kennett Street as shown on the preliminary plan. Provide sidewalk connections into the development.

5. Comply with all applicable streetscape standards as defined in the Silver Spring CBD Plan.
6. Participate in the Silver Spring Transportation Management District in accordance with the approved Traffic Mitigation Agreement.

DISCUSSION

Site Location, Access and Circulation

The site is located in the southeast quadrant of the intersection of Kennett Street and Newell Street. Access to the site will be via a two-way drive leading to an under ground parking garage off Newell Street.

Perimeter sidewalks provide pedestrian access with connections into the site as well as through paved public open space areas. A direct pedestrian connection is provided between the condominiums and Montgomery County Public Parking Garage No. 9. An existing pedestrian overpass across Kennett Street connects the Newell Street Lofts directly to the Discovery Communications Creative and Technical Center.

Master Plan Roadways and Bikeways

The Silver Spring CBD Master Plan classifies Kennett Street as a business district street in the vicinity of the site with a recommended 60-foot right-of-way. Newell Street is also classified as a business district street, with a recommended 70-foot right-of-way. There are no master plan bikeways adjacent to the site. The Metropolitan Branch Trail, however, is easily accessed from the site.

Local Area Transportation Review (LATR)

Newell Street Lofts is expected to generate 52 new peak-hour trips in the weekday morning peak period (6:30 to 9:30 a.m.) and 52 new trips during the evening weekday peak period (4:00 to 7:00 p.m.). A traffic study was required because the site trips exceed the 50-trip threshold established in the LATR Guidelines.

The traffic study indicated that, under total future traffic conditions (i.e., existing, background and site) no nearby intersection would exceed the Silver Spring CBD Policy Area Critical Lane Volume (CLV) of 1,800. The following table provides peak-hour intersection CLV values for local area intersections for existing, background and total future traffic.

Critical Lane Volume Analysis						
Intersection	Existing Traffic		Background Traffic		Total Future Traffic	
	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
Colesville Road and East West Highway	1,024	1,109	1,083	1,160	1,095	1,171
Blair Mill Road/ East West Highway and Newell Street	508	610	527	634	548	652
Georgia Avenue/Burlington Avenue/ 13 th Street and East West Highway	1,343	1,246	1,381	1,257	1,387	1,261
Kennett Street and 13 th Street	191	257	205	261	223	265
Eastern Avenue and Newell Street	457	424	457	424	463	430

Policy Area Review

The Newell Street Lofts are located in the Silver Spring CBD Policy Area. As of January 31, 2003, this policy area had a remaining capacity of 2,003 jobs and 5,375 housing units.

Cc: Greg Leck
 Greg Cooke
 Mary Goodman
 Glenn Kreger

Preliminary And Site Plan Newell Street Lofts.doc



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

January 15, 2003

Hon. Derick Berlage, Chair
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RECEIVED
JAN 16 2003

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Dear Chairman Berlage:

The Silver Spring Historical Society would like to comment on the plan of applicant "8045 Newell Street, LLC" for "Newell Street Lofts" (Case No. 9-03000), particularly as the plan affects the former Blair Station Post Office building. We ask that our comments become part of the public record. At this point, of course, we have not yet seen the staff report.

The Silver Spring Historical Society welcomes development in the area of Silver Spring where "Newell Street Lofts" is proposed. However, we would object strongly to demolition of the original Blair Station post office (by "the original Blair Station post office" we are referring only to the structure built in 1949-1950¹ and located at 8051 Newell Street, where it intersects with Kennett Street.) We believe the Blair Station post office should be preserved, restored, and re-used.

WHY PRESERVE THE ORIGINAL BLAIR STATION POST OFFICE?

Two years ago, when the Blair Station post office was at risk of demolition, the SSSH testified in favor of preservation. What has changed since then is 1) more definitive documentation of the age of the building; and 2) recognition through listing on the County's Inventory of historically significant 20th-century structures in the Silver Spring CBD, completed last month (for this reason the Silver Spring Historical Society has nominated it to the County's Atlas of Historic Sites).

¹ Our research indicates the Blair Station post office was "established" on September 1, 1950.

We ask that the 1950 portion of Blair Station post office be preserved because we believe that this older building will enhance the ambiance appropriate to loft-style apartments (which themselves are emblematic of and celebrate a past era) - just as the architecturally significant portion of the nearby Canada Dry building will enhance the feel of those loft and English basement-style apartments. Other communities (notably Baltimore) have recognized that older functional buildings can greatly contribute this ambiance to apartment communities.

We believe the Blair Station post office is historically and architecturally significant for a number of reasons.

THE "CANADA DRY SOLUTION"

As with the Canada Dry bottling plant, we are proposing that a relatively small portion of the entire site of the Newell Street Lofts project be preserved, leaving most of the site for development. The 1950 building is only one-fifth the size of the 1954 building. We ask that the 1950 structure be preserved so that the facades along Newell Street and Kennett Street are visible.

Along Newell Street, we are referring to all three bays - the central bay and the two outer bays, including the bay angling from the central entrance at the corner of Newell and Kennett Street (described in the Inventory of 20th century buildings in the Silver Spring CBD as the bay "angled at approximately 45 degrees from the sides facing either street").

If Locational Atlas status is approved, we would wish to be flexible, as we recognize the constraints the developer faces in combining old and new. The Canada Dry preservation solution has been widely cited as an example of successful collaboration among developers, the Planning Board, the Historic Preservation Commission, the preservation community, and the community in general. We think this approach could work with the Blair Station post office.

SALVAGE IS NOT PRESERVATION

The developer has proposed "commemorating" the Blair Station facility in two ways in the plaza: with a "paving pattern to evoke postal cancellation stamp" and with a display of "architectural remnants or machinery parts from postal equipment."

These proposals are not acceptable substitutes for preservation. There can be no substitute for preservation. With all due respect to the architect, the paving pattern makes a mockery of preservation, as does the suggested "salvage" preservation. In fact, a proposal to commemorate a building is an

acknowledgment of its historical and/or architectural value. It makes sense to save machinery or machinery parts from postal equipment, but only if they are incorporated into a restored post office.

SPECIFIC OPTIONS

We urge the Planning staff and Planning Board to work with the developer to arrive at a solution that preserves the 1950 building. We see these options:

1. The Board would waive the 20 percent public-use requirement and substitute preservation of the Blair Station as meeting the requirement. Under this option, the building would remain standing in lieu of the currently planned plaza. There would be no promise to be fulfilled later by the applicant - preservation would be incorporated into the project plan. We urge the Board to extend this flexibility to the applicant. It would be ironic if a requirement intended for the good of the public nevertheless would limit an applicant's ability to accommodate preservation of a structure that marked a milestone in Silver Spring's history.
2. Preserve the structure and use it to help meet the public-use amenity space requirement. This would necessitate having the building open to the public much of the time; consequently, it would limit the possible types of uses. A museum, featuring machinery and other artifacts salvaged from the post office, and/or artifacts from the archaeological dig at the Blair Lee house site, is one such use. A post office substation might be another use.
3. Preserve the structure as an amenity outside the public-use amenity space requirement. This would require the applicant to meet the 20 percent public-use amenity quota elsewhere in the project. In return, the applicant could be allowed greater density to accommodate more loft units. If this were done (or option #1), Blair Station building could be used for whatever purpose the applicant sees fit (e.g., their condo office).

HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Blair Station is historically and culturally significant

- It was the first post office built in Silver Spring following construction in 1937 of the main postal facility on Georgia Avenue.
- It is one of the markers of the post-World War II development of Silver Spring as a burgeoning suburb (Other markers of the era include the train station in 1945, the Canada Dry bottling plant in 1946, and the Hecht Company department store in 1947). The years immediately following the war were a

period of rapid suburban growth nationwide, with Silver Spring no exception. The Blair Station is physical evidence of that period, and the only *public* building that marks the period.

- It is the site of a significant step forward in mechanization of postal service, which had been postponed by the Depression and World War II. In 1957, the Transorma, an automated sorting machine, was pilot-tested in the adjoining section of the post office, which was added in 1954 (at 8045 Newell Street). The machine had been tested earlier, elsewhere in the United States, but Silver Spring was where the test succeeded. Officials at the time said the Transorma could be as history making as the Pony Express in speeding the mail.

Since 1954, the post office as a whole has consisted of the 1950 section plus the larger addition. Once the 1954 section is demolished, the original Blair Station post office at 8051 Newell will be the only remaining physical link to the use of the *Transorma*.

The Blair Station is architecturally significant

- The Blair Station post office is an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood due to its singular physical characteristics. The recently acclaimed documentary by Walter Gottlieb and the SSHS that aired on PBS, *Silver Spring: Story of an American Suburb*, demonstrates how important older examples of the built environment are in the lives of Silver Spring residents. Implicitly, the film was an argument in favor of preserving the physical evidence of our past. The Blair Station post office was depicted in the film in the context of the dramatic postwar suburban growth.

- Post offices are one of the few places in which citizens have the opportunity to interact (amicably) with their federal government on a day-to-day basis. By meeting a public need for half a century (until 1999), the Blair Station post office not only became a familiar and useful feature of its largely residential neighborhood, but also a friendly one. In the Silver Spring CBD are other types of structures dating from the mid-20th century: a bottling plant, a train station, and a department store. The Blair Station would add a mid-century post office - a federal government structure - to that body of architecture.

- We make no claim that this small, humble, workaday structure is the Silver Spring equivalent of Versailles. It is vernacular architecture, but many architectural historians have celebrated that category. Intended to meet a public need, the Blair Station post office is a functional building, nevertheless distinctive

in blending architectural styles and types of materials. The Inventory cites its "unusual combination" of Neoclassical and International themes and its departure from the stark simplicity of the International Style through use of rustic stone facing and massive windows and door surrounds. As far as we know, it is unique in the County.

- It's possible that the design of the building was part of the shift in building criteria specified by the federal government for post offices after World War II. Post offices became prominent examples of the dictum that "form follows function." When the General Services Administration was established in 1949 and took over public-building functions, the Commissioner instructed that designs be simplified. One of the first building types affected were post offices, which began to feature clean lines and to eliminate such "frills" as exterior steps.²

In scale, the Blair Station post office is a good fit with the apartment buildings and single-family dwellings (the latter in Washington, DC) adjacent to it or nearby. Up until the facility ceased operations, postal employees placed pots of African violets in the windows. This use would not have been well accommodated in a building larger in scale. Preservation would offer a transition and welcome relief from the far larger scale of the proposed project behind it. Preservation would provide some physical continuity with Silver Spring's history as the suburb undergoes change in this century.

THE SILVER SPRING CBD 20TH CENTURY INVENTORY - AND PRESERVATION

The ink is barely dry on the Inventory of 20th century buildings in the Silver Spring CBD. Only one month after the Inventory's completion, a building listed on it is in imminent danger of demolition. To our knowledge, the Blair Station post office is the first building on the Inventory to be at risk. The architectural and historic merits of the Blair Station, and its function in the South Silver Spring neighborhood over the years, are without question. David Berg, developer of the Inventory, included the Blair Station post office among the buildings considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

For these reasons, aside from the building's merits, it would be sad indeed if the Board rejected preservation while approving the project. If that happens, the entire preservation community in this County could only conclude that the Inventory is irrelevant as a tool to promote preservation.

² Lee, Antoinette J., *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000:286.

We respectfully suggest a Canada Dry preservation solution will work for the Newell Street Lofts project and we would be pleased to work with the applicant and the Board to that end.

Thank you for your interest and attention.

Sincerely,



Jerry A. McCoy
President
301.565.2519
sshistory@yahoo.com
www.sshistory.org



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

December 27, 2002

Mr. Steven Spurlock, Chairman
Montgomery County
Historic Preservation Commission
1109 Spring Street, Suite 801
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Chairman Spurlock:

The Silver Spring Historical Society (SSHS) hereby nominates the original building of the former Blair Station Post Office, established in 1950 and located at 8051 Newell Street in Silver Spring, to the County's Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites. The nomination form, prepared by David Berg, is enclosed. The SSHS supplied Mr. Berg with some information for his research.

We hope you will agree that this building deserves the protection and recognition that Locational Atlas status confers. We believe it meets the following ordinance criteria:

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.*

It was the first post office built in Silver Spring following construction in 1937 of the main postal facility on Georgia Avenue. It is one of the markers of the post-World War II development of SS as a burgeoning suburb (Other markers of the era include the train station in 1945, the Canada Dry bottling plant in 1946, and the Hecht Company department store in 1947).

b. *Is the site of a significant historic event.*

In 1957, the Transorma, a machine that represented a major step forward in automated mail sorting, was pilot-tested in the adjoining section of the post office added in 1954--8045 Newell. Assuming the proposed development of this property is approved, the property at 8051 Newell will be the only remaining physical link to that event.

d. *Exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, political or historic heritage of the County and its communities.*

The Blair Station post office exemplifies one aspect of the economic and social heritage of Silver Spring. The years immediately following World War II were a period of rapid suburban growth nationwide, with Silver Spring no exception. The Blair Station is one of the few remaining physical reminders of that period.

Architectural and design significance: The historic resource:

e. *Represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or County due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.*

This small structure, built to meet a public need, is nevertheless distinctive in its blend of architectural styles and types of building materials. In scale, it fits well with the apartment buildings and single-family dwellings (the latter in Washington, DC) adjacent to it or nearby. Post offices are one of the few places in which citizens have the opportunity to interact with the federal government on a

day-to-day basis. By serving a public use for half a century, the building became a familiar feature of the neighborhood.

The former Blair Station has been listed on the inventory of historically significant 20th-century buildings in the Silver Spring CBD, completed last week. It is one of the inventory buildings considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. To our knowledge, it is the first building on the inventory for which protection is being asked of the Commission via listing on the Locational Atlas.

Please let me know when the hearing to consider the nomination will be held, because our organization would like to send a representative to testify.

I can be reached by email at judy@ojp.usdoj.gov, or by phone during the day at 202-514-6284.

Thank you for your interest and attention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Judy A. Reardon".

Judy Reardon
Vice President

cc: Wayne M. Goldstein, President - Montgomery Preservation, Inc.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No.

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Blair Station Post Office Annex

other Blair Station; (Old Falklands Mansion Site).

2. Location

street and number 8051 Newell Street not for publication

city, town Silver Spring vicinity

county Montgomery

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Lee, E. Brooke Jr., Et Al.

street and number C/O David L. Scull, 6707 Democracy Blvd., Suite 404 telephone
city, town Bethesda state MD zip code 20817

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Circuit Court (deeds) liber 21126 folio 295
city, town Rockville tax map JN33 tax parcel N975 tax ID number 00979310

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
 Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
 Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
 Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
 Recorded by HABS/HAER
 Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
 Other: _____

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<u> </u> structures
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<u> </u> objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<u>1</u> Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	
		<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
		<input type="checkbox"/> social	
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			<u>0</u>

7. Description

Inventory No.

Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Blair Station Post Office combines the architecture of International and Neoclassical styling. It has a varied façade that departs from the true simplicity of the International Style by the use of rustic stone facing and massive window and door surrounds, yet other walls are plain and unadorned.

The Blair Station Post Office is an unusual combination of International and Neoclassical styling. It is a one-story building that has faces on both Newell Road and Kennett Street. The main façade of the building faces Newell Road. It has a rusticated coursed stone face of three bays. The outer two bays are eight-light, steel sash windows with massive limestone surrounds. The sills of the windows are limestone and rest on a limestone water table. The central entrance bay is an extremely large configuration of steel sash windows approximately 20' high that surround a double glass door. There are two sets of six fixed light windows on each side of the double doors separated by a large steel-supporting framework. Four large single light windows rests on top of the doors. The entire entranceway is framed by a massive limestone architrave. The top of the front entrance has a roof parapet that is capped with a limestone coping.

The section to the west of the central entrance is faced with large limestone blocks and consists of a single bay that consists of a four-light, steel sash awning window set in an unadorned brick recess. A bay to the right of the central entrance occupies the corner of Newell Road and Kennett Street and is angled at approximately 45-degrees from the sides facing either street. This bay also consists of a sandstone façade with a bay set in a recessed brick panel, but this bay has a larger window with two single-light center sashes flanked by two four-light sections. The windows on both sides of the central entrance have limestone sills.

The Kennett Street Side of the building consists of a simple, unadorned brick wall with six steel sash awning type windows, each with simple angled brick sill. A protective steel grate covers each window. These grates appear to be original. The rear façade of this building consists of a large loading deck with long, flat roof overhang that is common to the International Style. The loading deck is concrete, and the rear wall is brick.

The building at 8045 Newell Road, constructed in 1954, is attached to the west side of the building. It is a two-story, brick building with much more prominent International Style influence than the main Post Office building. It continues the use of massive limestone surrounds and steel sash fenestration, but with a much more horizontal feeling, as can be seen in the second story windows which are a continuous row of steel sashes with a complete limestone surround and limestone structural supports separating the sashes. Above the flat roof, the parapet terminates in a limestone coping. This building is about five times the size of the original Blair Station building,

8. Significance

Inventory No.

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates 1949, 1956-57. **Architect/Builder** Silver Spring Property Management Company

Construction dates 1949

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

Blair Station Post Office, constructed in 1949 with later additions in 1954, represents the tremendous growth of Silver Spring after World War II. Its unusual architecture, a combination of International and Neoclassical themes, was a departure from the Colonial and Classical Revival architecture common in government buildings that preceded it. Due to the large volume of mail handled at this facility, which was at one time more than any other Post Office in the United States, this office was home to the first successful trial of the automated mail handling machine called the TRANSORMA, an acronym for a sorting system developed by engineers in the Netherlands. Although an earlier version of this machine had been tested in New York, the trial at Silver Spring was the first to succeed. This success forever changed the way mail was handled by the United States postal system.

The Blair Station Post Office annex at 8051 Newell Road was constructed in 1949 on the site of the former Falklands Mansion, the estate of Blair Lee. Because the property had been selected by the U.S. Government for the annex, the Silver Spring Fire Department burned the mansion as a training exercise. The block south of Newell Road and west of Kennett Street had already been chosen by the U.S. Government of other undisclosed laboratories during World War II, and the location of the post office annex at the corner of Newell Road and Kennett Street was a logical choice of location.

The construction of the new Blair Station Post Office as an annex to the Silver Spring Post Office began in mid-1949. It was being used by November for the Christmas rush, although it may not have been fully completed by that time. The Postmaster at the time of its construction was William E. Bowman. The Post Office Department added a much larger section to Blair Station in 1954 with a street address of 8045 Newell Road. It was attached to the west side of the original building and carried the official name of the "Postal Annex". This addition was a brick, 2-story section about five times the size of the 1949 building. A plat executed around the time of its construction illustrates the size and plan of the addition, which is virtually the same today. The plat also shows the footprint of the "Original Blair Lee House" underneath on the plan of the "Postal Annex". Sanborn maps also show this annex as constructed in 1954.¹

¹ Plat of the "Postal Annex" on file at the M-NCPPC Historic Preservation Division. Sanborn maps, 1955, 1959.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

Mail through Silver Spring had increased so tremendously after World War II that two branches were opened in 1948 and 1949 in Wheaton.² When Mr. Bowman began his tenure as Postmaster in 1944, Silver Spring's single post office on Georgia Avenue had only 52 employees. Within twenty years, there were three branches and six outside contract offices with a total of 400 employees. Even with all these offices, the Blair Station annex handled about 60-percent of all incoming mail in Montgomery County, or about 6 million pieces of mail yearly.³

Blair Station illustrates the enormous growth experienced by Silver Spring after the war. It became one of the premier post office annexes in the United States, handling more mail than any other branch. As late as 1955, all mail was still sorted by hand by an employee who would "flip" mail into one of 50 to 75 slots on a wall (known as the pigeon-hole method). This method was becoming impractical as mail handling was increasing at a phenomenal rate. From 1956 to 1957, nationwide annual mail volume increased by a total of over two and a half billion pieces – a four-percent increase. As a result, the U.S. Post Office began to seek new ways to deal with the volume. They turned to science and engineering, and contracted with the National Bureau of Standards to study letter sorting procedures and existing technology for new ways to deal with mail. Eventually, the study found that other nations, notably Holland was far ahead of the United States in the field.⁴

According to the U.S. Postal Service, this research led to the first semi-automatic American-made parcel-sorting machine in Baltimore in 1956. A year later, a Holland-built multi-position letter-sorting machine (MPLSM), known as the TRANSORMA, was installed and tested in Silver Spring's Blair Station. An earlier version of the TRANSORMA had been tested in a New York post office during 1939, but the machines performance did not convince officials of its value⁵

The Post Office purchased and installed the TRANSORMA at Blair Station on an experimental basis, in late 1956. Werkspoor of Amsterdam, of Holland, built this machine. In this system, each letter dropped into a slot and moved in front of an operator, who would punch a symbol based upon its destination. The machine would then route the mail to a slot based upon its destination. The operators had to be skilled, memorizing 400 symbol codes representing different cities and states.⁶ The TRANSORMA could sort 15,000 letters in one hour in any of 300 slots with a five man team, or about twice as many as five men could sort by hand in the same time.⁷ The Postmaster General, Arthur E. Summerfield, called the move a "major experimental step" in the department's drive toward automation. Others within the

² "Work to Start on Postal Annex in Silver Spring", *Washington Evening Star*, August 19, 1949.

³ "Postmaster Asks 2 New Branches", *Washington Evening Star*, July 24, 1965.

⁴ "Moving The Mail By Magic", *The Baltimore Sun*, Sunday, February 16, 1958.

⁵ www.kjell.smult.com/transorma_utl.htm

⁶ "New Gadget to Route Mail Faster Will Get Test Here", *Washington Post/Times Herald* September 21, 1956.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 2

Postal Service saw it as a history-making event equal to the Pony Express, the train, and the airplane in making mail handling more efficient.⁸

The machine installed in Silver Spring was approximately 13' high and weighed about 15 tons. Workers operating the sorting machine sat on a platform elevated about ten feet from the floor. Its inaugural operation was on May 2, 1957. Dignitaries attending the ceremony and luncheon held for the event included Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield; Assistant Postmaster General Eugene J. Lyons; Malcolm Clarke, Regional Director of the U.S. Post Office; Joseph F. Thomas, President of the United National Association of Post Office Craftsmen; Maurice H. Stans, Deputy Postmaster General; William Bowman, Silver Spring Postmaster; J. W. Klitsie of Netherlands PTT, and others.⁹

The name TRANSORMA is derived from the words TRANsport, SORTing, Marchand, and Andriessen. J.J.M.L Marchand and J.C. Andriessen collaborated on the invention, creating the Marchand-Andriessen Engineering Company at The Hague, Netherlands in 1926. Marchand had served as a postal worker from 1898 to 1925, part of that time he sorted mail. The tedious experience, led him to experiment with ways to automate the process. He patented one machine in 1925, but after collaboration with Andriessen, they produced an advanced prototype in 1927. Although there was some interest in the machine at conferences, no one ordered one. It was not until 1930 that the Netherlands Postal Service (Netherlands PTT) ordered a machine. In that same year, the duo transferred the rights to their TRANSORMA to the Werkspoor Company of Amsterdam. When the first machine proved to be a success, other orders followed. By the mid-1950s, nine other countries, including the United States, had installed the machines.¹⁰

⁸ "New Gadget to Route Mail Faster Will Get Test Here", *Washington Post/Times Herald* September 21, 1956.

⁹ "Transorma Installation at Silver Spring to take Drudgery out of Mail-Handling", *The Washington Region Newsletter*, U.S. Post Office Department. January 1957.; Information of opening ceremonies courtesy of Mr. W. H. Wheeler Jr., Stamford Conn. On file at the Silver Spring Historical Society.

¹⁰ *The Transorma Letter Sorting Machine: 1931-1981*. Booklet published by M.J. Vrijaldenhoven, OOSTRA. Located in the library of the Silver Spring Historical Society, Silver Spring, MD.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. M

Name
Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 3

The first American-built letter sorter, based on a 1,000-pocket machine originally adapted from the TRANSORMA design, was developed during the late 1950s. "The first production contract was awarded to the Burroughs Corporation for 10 of these machines. The machine was successfully tested in Detroit in 1959 and eventually became the backbone of letter-sorting operations during the 1960s and 70s".¹¹

¹¹ http://www.usps.com/history/history/his3_5.htm

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No.

The Transorma Letter Sorting Machine: 1931-1981. Booklet published by M.J. Vrijaldenhoven, OOSTRA. Located in the library of the Silver Spring Historical Society, Silver Spring, MD.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

United States Geological Survey. *Washington West, MD, Washington D.C. Quadrangle, 7.5 minute series*. Photorevised 1983

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 00.10 acre
Acreage of historical setting 00.10 acre
Quadrangle name Washington West

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boudaries of this proerpty consist of the entire tax parcel of 00.10 acres at the corner of Newell and Bonifant Streets.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title David C. Berg, Architectural Historian
organization _____ date October 15, 2002
street & number R. R. 1, Box 16 telephone 570 465 2614
city or town Susquehanna state Pennsylvania

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No.

The Transorma Letter Sorting Machine: 1931-1981. Booklet published by M.J. Vrijaldenhoven, OOSTRA. Located in the library of the Silver Spring Historical Society, Silver Spring, MD.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990.

United States Geological Survey. *Washington West, MD, Washington D.C. Quadrangle, 7.5 minute series*. Photorevised 1983.

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Quadrangle name Washington West

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boudaries of this proerpty consist of the entire tax parcel of 00.10 acres at the corner of Newell and Bonifant Streets.

11. Form Prepared by

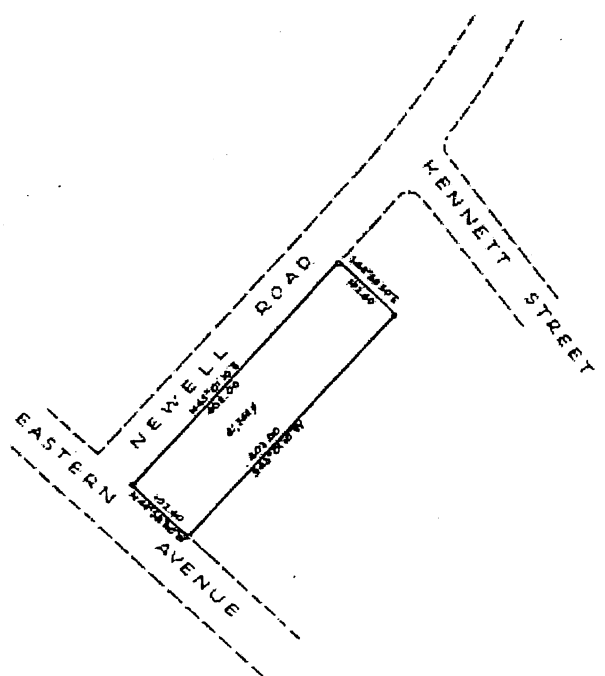
name/title	David C. Berg, Architectural Historian	date	October 15, 2002
organization		telephone	570-465-2614
street & number	R. R. 1, Box 16	state	Pennsylvania
city or town	Susquehanna		

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-514-7600

PLAT No. 2972



OWNERS' DEDICATION

We, Sterling & Scull Inc., a Maryland Corporation by John B. Sterling, Pres. and David Scull, Sect. owners of the property shown and described hereon hereby adopt this plan of subdivision; establish the minimum building restriction lines and dedicate the streets to public use.

There are no suits of action, leases, liens or trusts on the property shown on this plan of subdivision.
Date Nov. 16, 1951

Attest David Scull By John B. Sterling
David Scull, Secretary John B. Sterling, President

ENGINEER'S CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the plan shown hereon is correct that it is a subdivision of all the lands conveyed by Blair Lee III et al to Sterling & Scull Inc. by deed dated November 15, 1951 and recorded in Liber... at Folio... and also a subdivision of part of block B as shown on the 130 Street Dedication, Plat recorded in Plat Book 29 Plat 1793 all among the land records of Montgomery County, Maryland and that iron pipes marked thus are in place where delineated hereon.

Date Nov. 15, 1951 By: [Signature]
Ralph F. Hopkins
Registered Land Surveyor 1985

PARCEL A - BLOCK B

SILVER SPRING

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

Scale: 1"=100' November, 1951

MADDOX & HOPKINS, INC.

CIVIL ENGINEERS

SILVER SPRING, MD.

The Metropolitan and National Capital Area Planning Commission

APPROVED: NOVEMBER 15, 1951

[Signature]
Ralph F. Hopkins

M-C. P. & C. RECORD FILE NO. 187-69

RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES

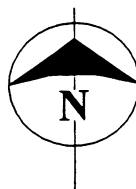
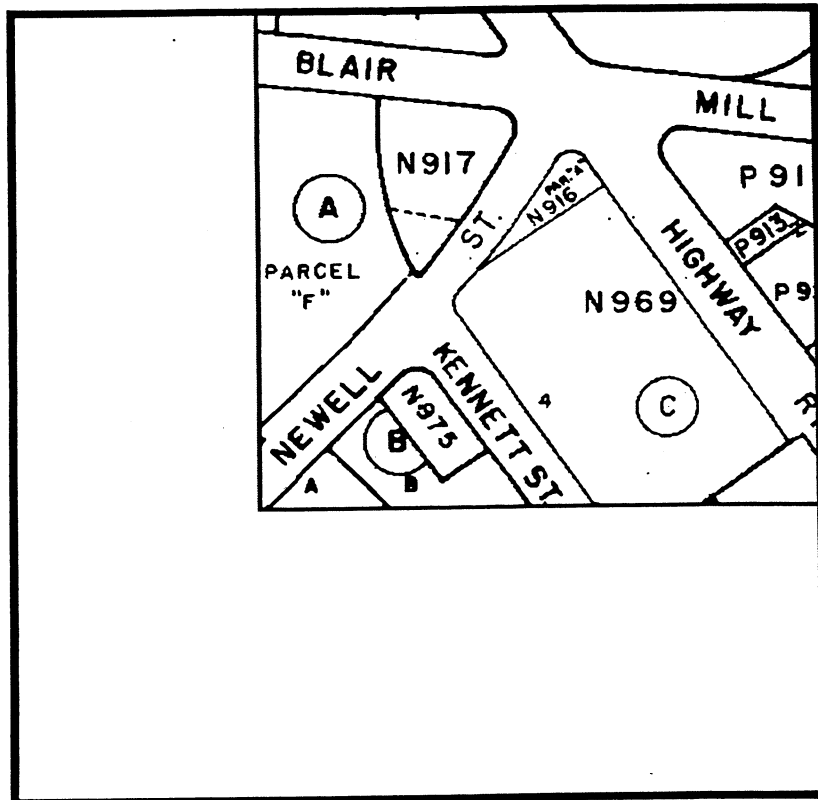
APPROVED: NOV 15, 1951

SUBJECT: FOR MINOR ENGINEER DESIGN WITHOUT COMMENT AS TO CONVEYANCE

[Signature]
CIVIL ENGINEER

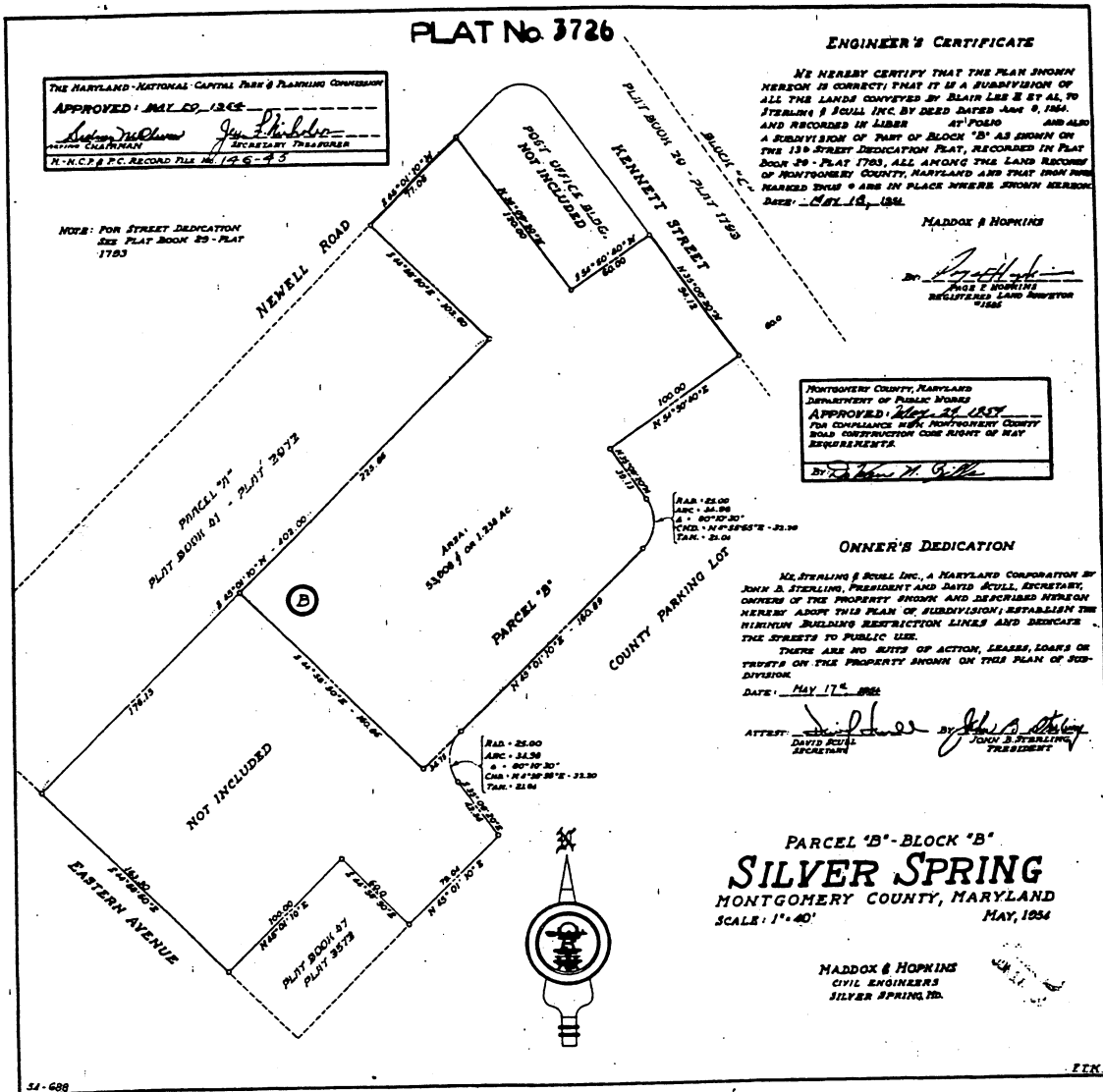
Blair Station Post Office Annex
Silver Spring
Montgomery County

MIHP No.
Washington West



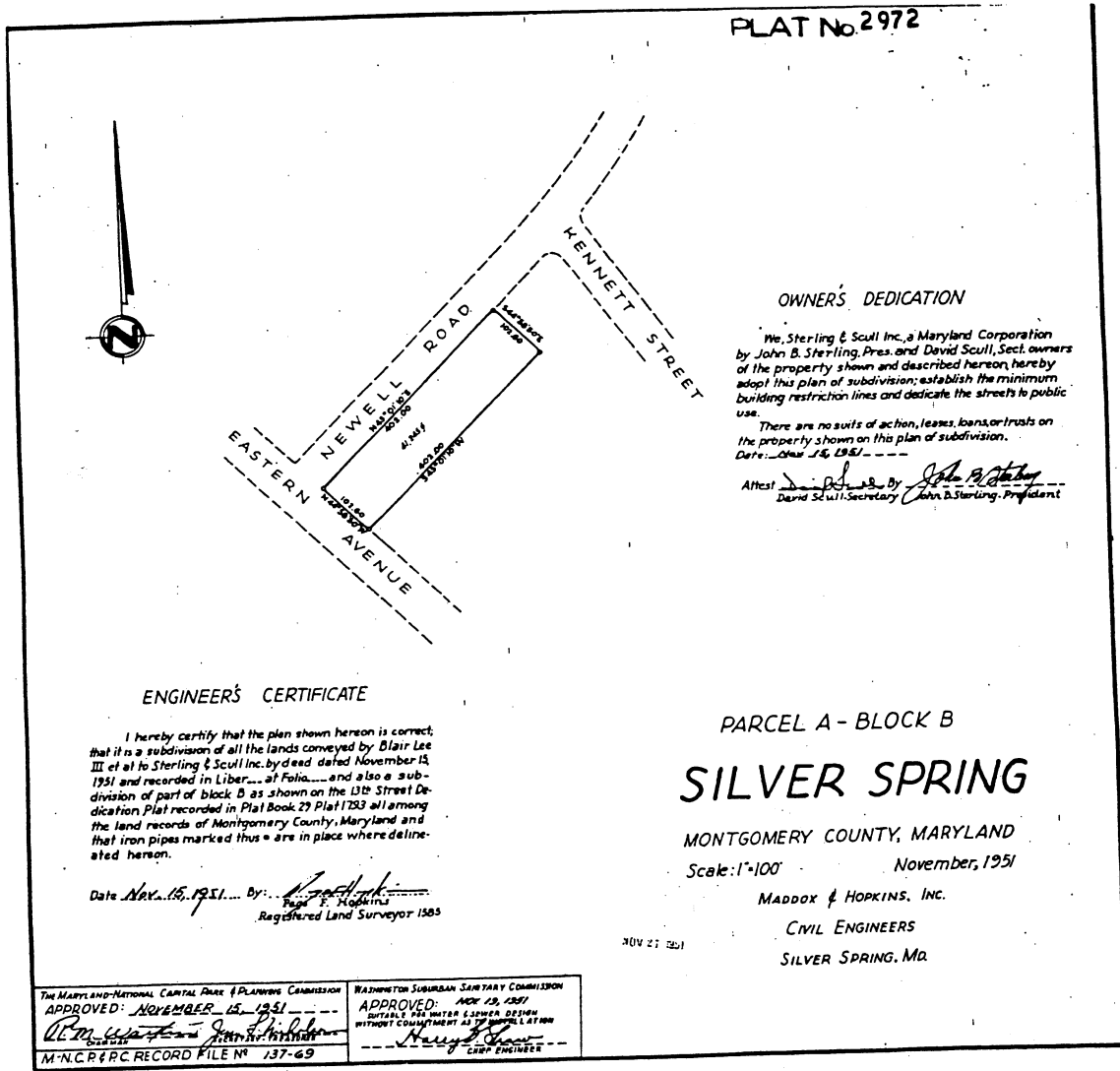
Blair Station Post Office Annex
 Silver Spring
 Montgomery County

MIHP No.
 Washington West



Blair Station Post Office Annex
 Silver Spring
 Montgomery County

MIHP No.
 Washington West



OWNERS DEDICATION

We, Sterling & Scull Inc., a Maryland Corporation by John B. Sterling, Pres. and David Scull, Sect. owners of the property shown and described hereon, hereby adopt this plan of subdivision; establish the minimum building restriction lines and dedicate the streets to public use.

There are no suits of action, leases, loans, or trusts on the property shown on this plan of subdivision.
 Date: Nov. 14, 1951

Attest: David Scull By John B. Sterling
 David Scull, Secretary John B. Sterling, President

ENGINEERS CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the plan shown hereon is correct that it is a subdivision of all the lands conveyed by Blair Lee III et al to Sterling & Scull Inc. by deed dated November 15, 1951 and recorded in Liber... at Folio... and also a subdivision of part of block B as shown on the 13th Street Dedication Plat recorded in Plat Book 29 Plat 1753 all among the land records of Montgomery County, Maryland and that iron pipes marked thus are in place where delineated hereon.

Date Nov. 15, 1951 By: Paul F. Hopkins
 Paul F. Hopkins
 Registered Land Surveyor 1583

PARCEL A - BLOCK B

SILVER SPRING

MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
 Scale: 1"=100' November, 1951

MADDOX & HOPKINS, INC.
 CIVIL ENGINEERS
 SILVER SPRING, MD.

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVED: <u>NOVEMBER 15, 1951</u> <u>Alm. Washington</u> M-N.C.P. & P.C. RECORD FILE NO. 137-69	WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION APPROVED: <u>NOV. 15, 1951</u> DETAILS FOR WATER & SEWER DESIGN WITHOUT COMMITMENT AS TO FINAL LAYOUT <u>Harry J. ...</u> CIVIL ENGINEER
--	---

Blair Station Post Office Annex
 Silver Spring
 Montgomery County

MIHP No.
 Washington West

ENGINEER'S CERTIFICATE **PLAT No. 171**

WE HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE PLAN SHOWN HEREON IS CORRECT; THAT IT IS A SUBDIVISION OF ALL OF THE LANDS COVERED BY DEED DATED JAN 1, 1955 AND RECORDED IN LIBER BOOK 104170 MONMOUTH'S BY DEED DATED JAN 1, 1955 AND RECORDED IN LIBER BOOK 104170 MONMOUTH'S BY DEED DATED JAN 1, 1955 AND RECORDED IN LIBER BOOK 104170 MONMOUTH'S BY DEED DATED JAN 1, 1955 AND RECORDED IN LIBER BOOK 104170 MONMOUTH'S BY DEED DATED JAN 1, 1955 AND THAT THE LINES MARKED WITH * AND STONES MARKED WITH * ARE IN PLACE WHERE SHOWN.
 DATE: JUNE 23 1955

MADDOX & NOPKINS

By: [Signature]
 REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER
 NO. 1285

PARCEL 'C'
35,924 sq ft

SILVER SPRING
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
SCALE: 1"=40'

OWNER'S DEDICATION

MR. WILLIAM ROBINOWITZ AND STELLA ROBINOWITZ, HIS WIFE OWNERS OF THE PROPERTY SHOWN AND DESIGNATED HEREON HEREBY ADOPT THIS PLAN OF SUBDIVISION AND ESTABLISH THE MINIMUM BUILDING RESTRICTION LINE EXCEPT AS SHOWN.
 DATE: JUNE 23 1955

[Signature] WITNESS
[Signature] WILLIAM ROBINOWITZ

[Signature] WITNESS
[Signature] STELLA ROBINOWITZ

WE ASSENT TO THIS PLAN OF SUBDIVISION:
 THE BOARD OF SILVER SPRING

[Signature] WITNESS
[Signature] WILLIAM S. BLAIR, TRUSTEE

[Signature] WITNESS
[Signature] DONALD H. STALLY, TRUSTEE

FILED
JUL - 6 1955

NOTE: FOR STREET DEDICATION SEE PLAT BOOK 29 - PLAT 173

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK & PLANNING COMMISSION

APPROVED: JUNE 23 1955

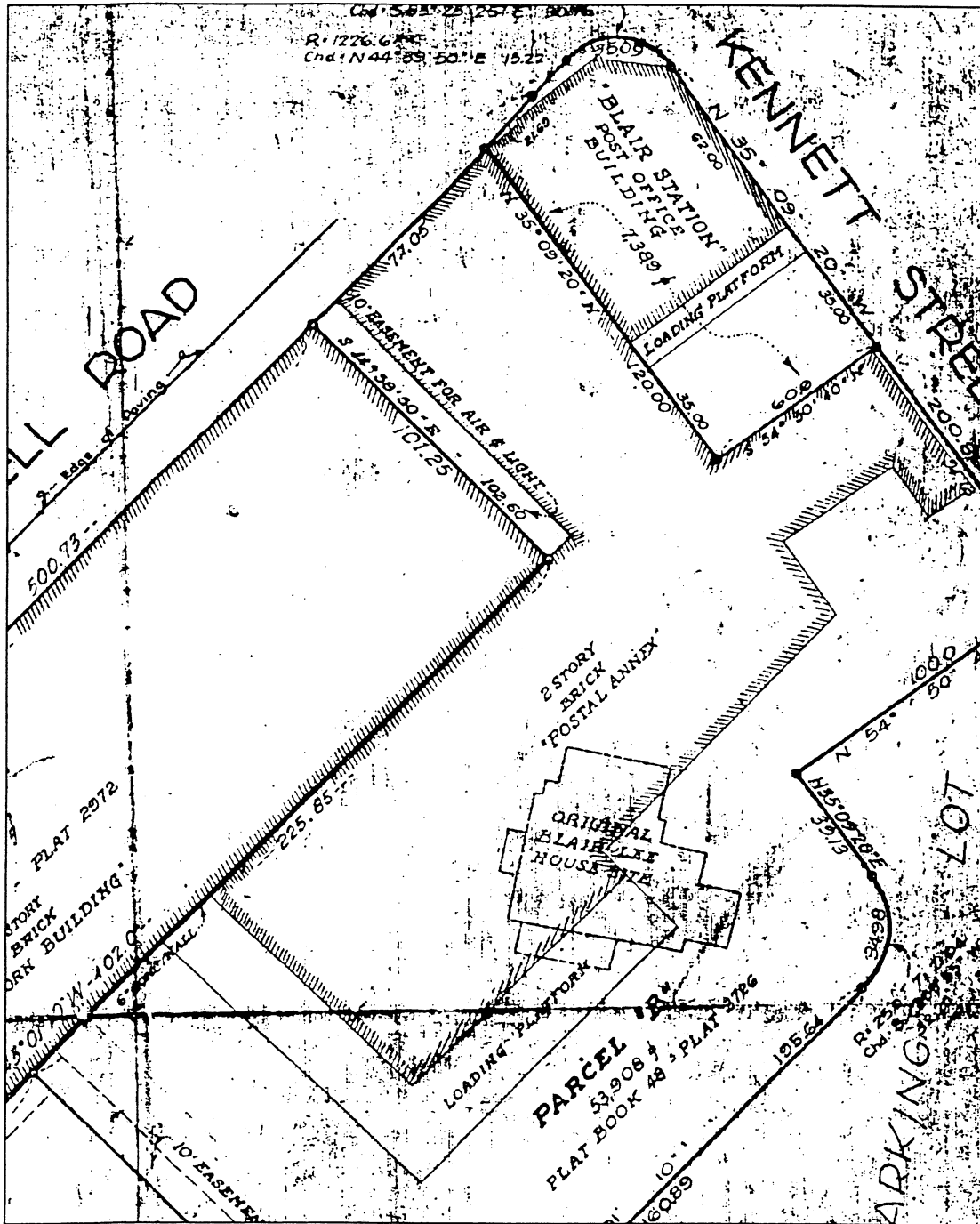
[Signature] CHAIRMAN
[Signature] SECRETARY-TREASURER

N.W.C.P. & P.C. RECORD FILE NO. 1482/3

MADDOX & NOPKINS
 CIVIL ENGINEERS
 SILVER SPRING, MD

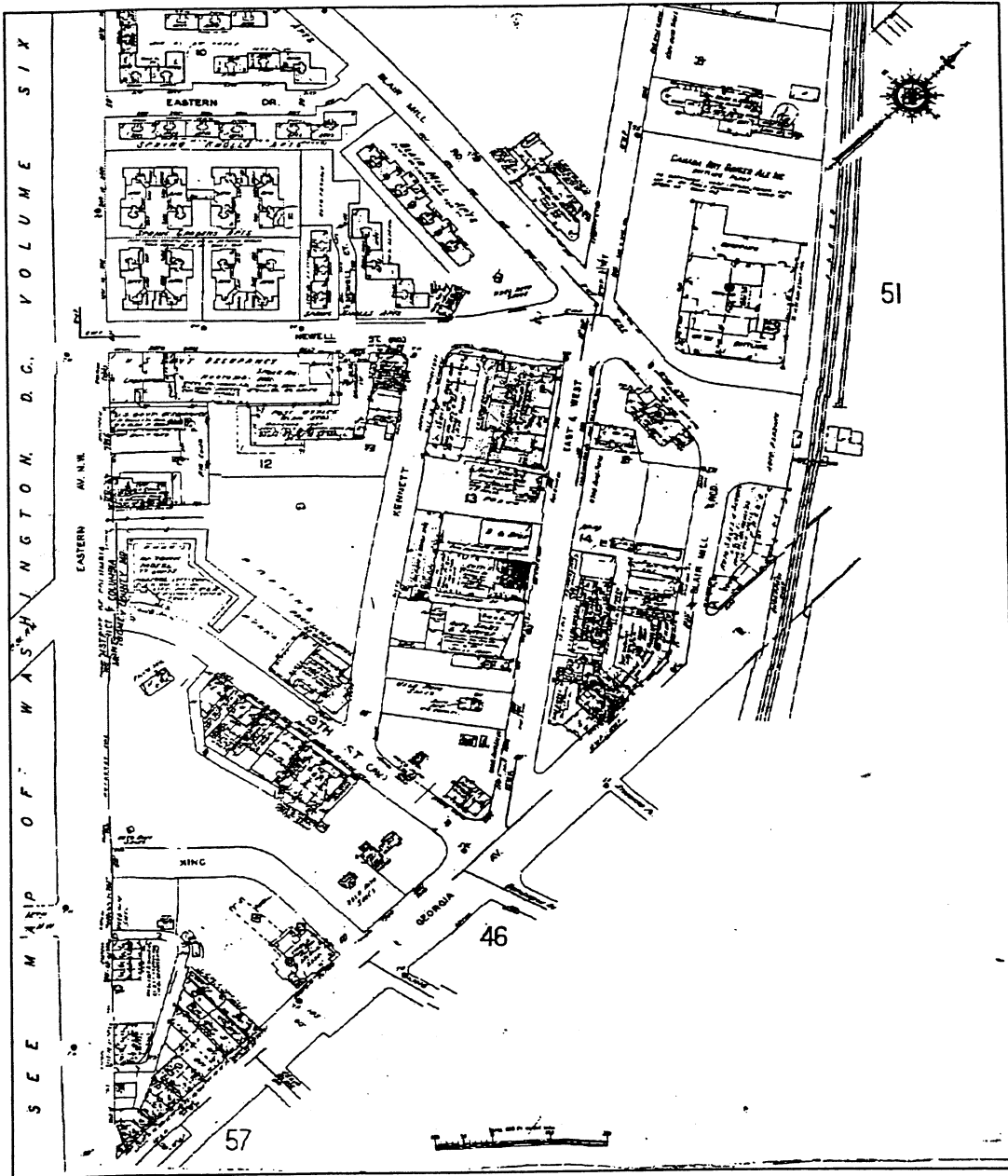
Blair Station Post Office Annex
Silver Spring
Montgomery County

MIHP No.
Washington West



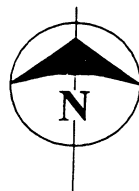
Blair Station Post Office Annex
Silver Spring
Montgomery County

MIHP No.
Washington West



Blair Station Post Office Annex
Silver Spring
Montgomery County

MIHP No.
Washington West



8051 Newell (SW) Building Front





BLAIR
STATION

Silver Spring, Md.
9251

100
100





THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

MCPB
Item # 3
1/30/03

January 23, 2003

MEMORANDUM

TO: Montgomery County Planning Board

VIA: Jeff Zyontz, Chief
County Wide Planning Division

FROM: Gwen Wright, Historic Preservation Supervisor
County Wide Planning Division

SUBJECT: Nomination of Former Blair Station Post Office to the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* and/or the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Do not add the original building of the former Blair Station Post Office to the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* and/or the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*.

HPC REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATION

On January 22, 2003, the HPC held a public hearing and worksession on this nomination. After presentation of a staff report and after hearing testimony from a number of witnesses, the Commission voted to support the staff recommendation and to not recommend to the Planning Board that the former Blair Station Post Office be added to the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* and/or the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. There were five HPC Commissioners in attendance at the January 22nd meeting – three voted to support the staff recommendation, one was opposed, and one abstained.

BACKGROUND

The original building of the former Blair Station Post Office has been nominated by the Silver Spring Historical Society for designation on the *Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites* and/or the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. A copy of their December 27th nomination is attached. In addition, a development plan for the property – which would include demolition of

the entire building and replacement with a new housing complex – has been filed and will be heard by the Planning Board in late February.

The former Blair Station Post Office was also identified as being potentially National Register eligible as part of the recently-completed Silver Spring Central Business District Survey project. This project was undertaken as part of the Armory mitigation agreement worked out between the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), the Maryland Historical Trust, and the Silver Spring Regional Center. The project was done by a consultant (Potomac Hudson Engineering) and included a survey of the entire Silver Spring CBD to determine which buildings are 50 years or older – a total of 205 such buildings were identified. Then, each building that is 50 years old or older was assessed for National Register eligibility. Ten individual properties and three thematic historic districts (including 23 properties) were identified by the consultant as being potentially National Register eligible. Maryland Historical Trust Inventory Forms were completed for the 10 properties and 3 districts that may be National Register eligible. The MHT form for the former Blair Station Post Office is attached to the nomination submitted.

The entire Silver Spring CBD Survey will be presented to the HPC and the Planning Board later this winter (date to be determined). However, the issue of the former Blair Station Post Office has been “kicked to the front of the pack” because of the nomination filed.

DISCUSSION

The MHT form completed for the former Blair Station Post Office states that the building represents the tremendous growth of Silver Spring after World War II. It emphasizes the historic importance of the site as the place where the TRANSORMA machine was successfully tested, which was a major milestone in the automation of the U.S. Postal system. The form provides little information about the architecture of the building, simply stating “Its unusual architecture, a combination of International and Neoclassical themes, was a departure from the Colonial and Classical Revival architecture common in government buildings that preceded it.”

Role of the former Blair Station Post Office in Silver Spring’s Growth

Staff agrees that Silver Spring experienced tremendous growth in the early and mid- twentieth century. In fact, staff feels that there was a continuum of growth – beginning in the 1920s and subsiding in the 1960s – that is very significant in the understanding of suburban development in Washington region. Many of the historic sites that have been designated in Silver Spring – including the 1936 Silver Spring Post Office at 8412 Georgia Avenue – have been designated because they represent this significant trend.

Indeed, the former Blair Station Post Office is one of the few civic buildings from the post World War II expansion period that still remains in Silver Spring and that is of interest. Most of the other civic buildings in Silver Spring (the Armory, the Fire Station, the main post office, the government building that was at Georgia and Colesville) were built in the 1920s and 1930s.

However, the structure is an odd civic building – it is not located on a major thoroughfare, but rather in a more industrial part of Silver Spring; it was designed in a very utilitarian fashion with

a very modest public “face”; and it was clearly not the main post office for Silver Spring (the main post office was the structure at 8412 Georgia Avenue.)

Staff feels that there is an argument for the concept that the former Blair Station Post Office is historically important as a post-World War II civic building. But, staff also feels that argument is weakened by the building’s lack of architectural and siting prominence. It may have been a publicly-owned building, but it did not strongly represent the civic activity and community center of post-World War II Silver Spring.

Importance of the TRANSORMA in relation to the Former Blair Station Post Office

The history of the TRANSORMA is extremely interesting and important in understanding how the U.S. Postal system became automated. Its testing at the Blair Station Post Office was an important step in the mechanization and modernization of the postal system.

However, there are several aspects of the TRANSORMA’s connection to the former Blair Station Post Office that staff finds troubling from a historic perspective:

- the TRANSORMA was located in the 1954 section of the Blair Station postal complex, not in lobby at 8051 Newell Street (which is the specific portion of the building noted in the nomination letter for addition to the *Locational Atlas*);
- the TRANSORMA was not the machine which was ultimately used throughout the country for automated mail sorting – the MHT form states that the machine that ultimately became the backbone of letter-sorting throughout the U.S. was made by Burroughs Corp. and was tested in Detroit; and
- the 1957 TRANSORMA was only one a part of the overall effort to automate the postal system. As noted in the MHT form, an earlier version of the TRANSORMA had been tested in New York during 1939 and an American-made parcel sorting machine was used in Baltimore in 1956. It is not clear how long the TRANSORMA was used at the Blair Station Post Office and when it was removed/replaced.

Architecture of the Former Blair Station Post Office

Subsequent to the December 27th nomination letter, staff has received a number of additional letters and emails about the architect of the Blair Station Post Office, Clifton White. All information which staff has received is attached to this report.

After looking through the materials provided and speaking with Michael Cohalan, an architect who apprenticed with Mr. White in the early 1960s, staff is not convinced that Mr. White can be considered a “master” as noted in designation criteria 24A-3(2)b (“Represents the work of a master.”) Mr. White appears to have been a good local architect. However, staff has not been able to find any information to show that his projects were published in architectural journals of the period or that he won any architectural awards. Based on my conversation with Mr. Cohalan, he seems to have specialized in churches and remained very committed to designing in the

Colonial Revival style even in the early 1960s when many architects were designing in a more Modern style.

The architecture of the former Blair Station Post Office was not identified as significant in either the MHT form prepared by the consultant or in the December 27th nomination letter from the Silver Spring Historical Society. The additional information provided about the building's architect has not convinced staff that this structure has notable architectural or design significance.

CONCLUSION

Staff feels that the former Blair Station Post Office has some historic significance as a post-World War II civic building and as the site of the testing of the TRANSORMA. Staff does not feel, based on current information, that the building has architectural or design significance.

The Silver Spring Historical Society has requested that the original building (the lobby) be added to the *Locational Atlas*. From a historic perspective, this is the least significant portion of the building and does not, in staff's judgment have architectural or design significance. Thus, staff can not support the nomination.

Staff feels that other ways should be explored to interpret and explain the importance of the TRANSORMA and its testing in Silver Spring



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

January 29, 2003

Mr. Derick Berlage
Chairman, Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Nomination of the Former Blair Station Post Office to the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites and/or the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Dear Chairman Berlage:

I am writing to inform you that the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board concurs in the recommendation of Gwen Wright, Historic Preservation Supervisor, and the Historic Preservation Commission, that the former Blair Station Post Office should not be added to the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites and/or the Master Plan for Historic Preservation. The addition of this rather basic and non-descript industrial building would deal a severe blow to the revitalization of south Silver Spring by its negative impact on the Patriot Group's condominium project.

Patriot Group's project is beneficial to Silver Spring for several reasons. First, it includes market rate units, almost exclusively, in an area that has a significant shortage of market rate housing. Second, the project will be the area's first condominium in an area where hundreds of new rental units will be built in the next few years. Third, along with the other housing projects under development in the area, Patriot Group's project will help to enliven South Silver Spring, and bring valuable activity to downtown Silver Spring.

It has come to our attention, however, that the January approval hearing for the project was delayed due to an application for historic designation for the former Blair Station Post Office that was located on the site. We understand that the application has been made not as much for the historic significance of the Blair Station Post Office building, as for machinery that was used in the building but removed many years ago.

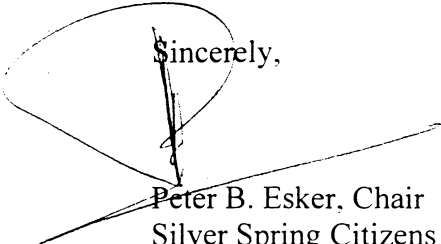
While the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (SSCAB) acknowledges the value of preserving truly significant historic properties, we, and many others including the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, are very concerned that applications for historic designation can also become serious impediments to progress for Silver Spring.

Mr. Derick Berlage
January 29, 2003
Page Two

While the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board (SSCAB) acknowledges the value of preserving truly significant historic properties, we, and many others including the Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce, are very concerned that applications for historic designation can also become serious impediments to progress for Silver Spring. Historic designation based on long-gone equipment housed in a particular building does not, in our estimation, justify delaying or preventing valuable, needed redevelopment from moving forward, and we urge you to oppose designation of this site.

Accordingly, the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board joins in the recommendation that the nomination of the Former Blair Station Post Office to the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites and/or the Master Plan for Historic Preservation not be approved by the Planning Board.

Sincerely,



Peter B. Esker, Chair
Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board

#3



DOWNTOWN SILVER SPRING URBAN DISTRICT

Douglas M. Duncan
County Executive

Gary Stith
Director

January 29, 2003

Mr. Derick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Re: 8045 Newell Street, Patriot Group, LLC Project

Dear Mr. Berlage:

The downtown Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Board met and voted to support Patriot Group, LLC's proposed condominium housing project for 8045 Newell Street in downtown Silver Spring.

This housing project will be an added benefit to the revitalization efforts going on in the central business district of Silver Spring, especially in the southern part of the district. This is an exciting project, as it will be the first condominium project in our area to add needed housing units to downtown.

Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that Patriot Group, LLC's project was removed from Park & Planning's January agenda so that it could be considered for historic designation. The property is the site of the former Blair Station Post Office, which apparently at one point in time, had some machinery housed there that may have had some historic significance. The members of the Advisory Board respect and appreciate historic significance of properties, but this is going too far. We urge you to oppose the application for historic designation for this site. We greatly appreciate your attention to our concerns. It is our hope that the Planning Board will approve the now delayed schedule for Patriot Group's condominium project.

Sincerely,

Bruce H. Lee, Chair
Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Board

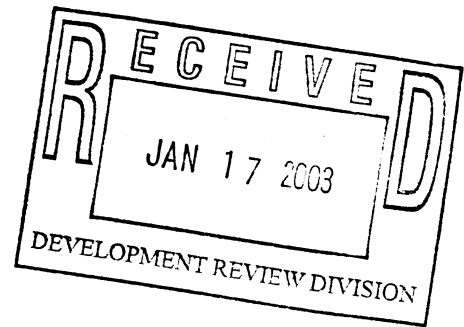
cc: Steven Spurlock, Historic Preservation Commissions
Robert Kronenberg, M-NCPPC



Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce
8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 203 · Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
(301) 565-3777 · FAX (301) 565-3377

January 15, 2003

Mr. Derick P. Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Ave.
Silver Spring, MD 20910



Dear Mr. Berlage:

The Greater Silver Spring Chamber of Commerce (GSSCC) has recently seen a presentation of the condominium housing project proposed for 8045 Newell Street by Patriot Group LLC.

Patriot Group's project is beneficial to Silver Spring for several reasons. First, it includes market rate units, almost exclusively, in an area that has a significant shortage of market rate housing. Second, the project will be the area's first condominium in an area where hundreds of new rental units will be built in the next few years. Third, along with the other housing projects under development in the area, Patriot Group's project will help to enliven South Silver Spring, and bring valuable activity to downtown Silver Spring.

It has come to our attention, however, that the January approval hearing for the project was delayed due to an application for historic designation for the former Blair Station Post Office that was located on the site. We understand that the application has been made not as much for the historic significance of the Blair Station Post Office building, as for machinery that was used in the building but removed many years ago.

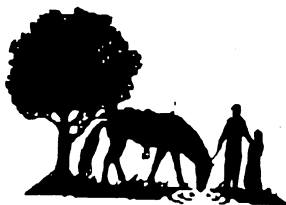
While GSSCC acknowledges the value of preserving truly significant historic properties, we are very concerned that applications for historic designation can also become serious impediments to progress for Silver Spring. Historic designation based on long-gone equipment housed in a particular building does not, in our estimation, justify delaying or preventing valuable, needed redevelopment from moving forward, and we urge you to oppose designation of this site.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns. We hope the Planning Board will expedite the now-delayed process for approval of the Patriot Group condominium project.

Sincerely,

Scott Egloff
President

c: Steven Spurlock, Historic Preservation Commission
Robert Kronenberg, M-NCPPC



LDG INC

LEE DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Lee Plaza, 8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 200, Silver Spring, MD 20910

January 21, 2003

Derrick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RECEIVED
JAN 29 2003

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

Re: 8045 Newell Street, Patriot Group, LLC Project

Dear Mr. Berlage:

The downtown Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Board met and voted to support Patriot Group, LLC's proposed condominium housing project for 8045 Newell Street in downtown Silver Spring.

This housing project will be an added benefit to the revitalization efforts going on in the central business district of Silver Spring, especially in the southern part of the district. This is an exciting project, as it will be the first condominium project in our area to add needed housing units to downtown.

Unfortunately, it has come to our attention that Patriot Group, LLC's project was removed from Park & Planning's January agenda so that it could be considered for historic designation. The property is the site of the former Blair Station Post Office, which apparently at one point in time, had some machinery housed there that may have had some historic significance. The members of the Advisory Board respect and appreciate historic significance of properties, but this is going too far. We urge you to oppose the application for historic designation for this site. We greatly appreciate your attention to our concerns. It is our hope that the Planning Board will approve the now delayed schedule for Patriot Group's condominium project.

Sincerely,

Bruce H. Lee, Chair
Silver Spring Urban District

cc: Steven Spurlock, Historic Preservation Commissions
Robert Kronenberg, M-MCPPC



Woodside Park Civic Association

1509 Dale Dr.
Silver Spring, MD 20910
January 17, 2003

Derick Berlage, Chairman
Montgomery County Planning Board
8787 Georgia Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910

RE: Plan for "Newell Street Lofts" (Case No. 9-03000)

Dear Chairman Berlage:

The Woodside Park Civic Association voted on January 8 to support preservation of the 1950 Blair Post Office at the corner of Newell and Kennett Streets in Silver Spring and its listing on the County's Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites.

We are aware that a project plan has been submitted to the Park and Planning Commission for construction of a condominium community of loft-style apartments. We welcome the addition of housing in the Silver Spring Central Business District, but we would hope that the plan could combine old with new, as in the plan for the nearby Canada Dry site. Incorporation of an early 1950s-era building would likely enhance the setting for loft apartments, while retaining a physical remnant of Silver Spring's history.

The documentary history of Silver Spring that aired recently on public television placed great emphasis on Silver Spring's expansion and building boom after World War II. The former Blair Post Office was constructed to serve our suburb's rapidly growing population and is therefore among Silver Spring's historical markers. The 1950 post office, like the neighborhood of Woodside Park, was deemed important enough to be shown in the film.

Members of our association who also belong to the Silver Spring Historical Society have informed us that the Blair Post Office was the site of the first successful U.S. pilot testing of the TRANSORMA, which was a significant step in the automation of mail sorting. If the loft project goes forward, the actual TRANSORMA site in the 1954 part of the building will definitely be demolished, but the 1950 portion--which was after all the entrance to the post office--could serve as a remembrance. We understand also that the architect, Clifton White, was in a sense one of our own, having designed homes in the Silver Spring-Bethesda area. Our neighborhood contains a Tudor-style home designed by Mr. White.

Since the 1950 post office was selected from the recently completed survey of 20th century Silver Spring buildings as being a possible candidate for National Register eligibility, preservation of this property would be a good precedent. We urge you to incorporate preservation of this corner into the requirements for approval of the plan.

Sincerely,

Chuck Dolan
President, Woodside Park Civic Association

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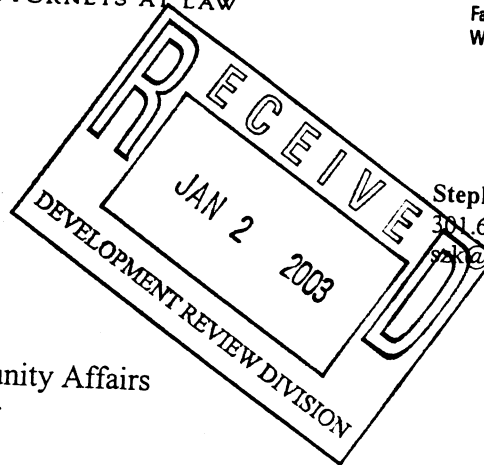
OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN
THE MARYLAND NATIONAL CAPITAL
PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

LINOWES AND BLOCHER LLP

ATTORNEYS AT LAW

1010 Wayne Avenue, Tenth Floor
Silver Spring, MD 20910-5600
301.588.8580
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December 24, 2002



Stephen Z. Kaufman
301.650.7056
szk@linowes-law.com

Elizabeth B. Davison
Department of Housing and Community Affairs
100 Maryland Avenue, Fourth Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Re: Patriot Group; 8045 Newell Street ("Newell Street Lofts")

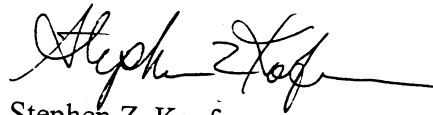
Dear Ms. Davison:

The purpose of this letter is to follow up on our recent conversations regarding the provision of moderately priced dwelling units ("MPDUs") at the Patriot Group's condominium project (the "Project"), located at 8045 Newell Street in South Silver Spring. I believe you will recall as discussed, the Patriot Group ("Patriot") intends to provide ten (10) MPDUs on-site. However, due to the limited size of the Project, Patriot can not accommodate on-site all fifteen (15) MPDUs required by the Montgomery County Code. Therefore, we propose that Patriot contribute a fee in lieu of the five (5) units that can not be accommodated on-site to the Montgomery County Housing Initiative Fund. Such payment is authorized by Section 25A-5(e)(1)(C) of the Montgomery County Code. Based on our conversations, it is our understanding such an arrangement may be agreeable to the Department of Housing and Community Affairs ("DHCA"). Accordingly, if Patriot's proposal is acceptable, please contact us at your earliest convenience in order that we may discuss an agreement with DHCA so it can be made part of the project plan application record currently before the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

Thank you for your continued cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

LINOWES AND BLOCHER LLP


Stephen Z. Kaufman

1

■ LINOWES AND BLOCHER LLP

Elizabeth Davison
December 24, 2002
Page 2

cc: Robert Kronenberg
Eric Larsen
Leith Wain
Terry Green
Stephen Jones
Erin E. Girard, Esq.

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