

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Use the aesthetics, character, and economic potential of Silver Spring's historic buildings to help create a revitalized downtown.

VISION

The CBD's historic buildings preserve history and are also good architectural neighbors, make economic sense, and add texture to the community. They should be a vital and visible part of downtown revitalization.

Objective:

- Reuse and incorporate historic resources into new projects, preserving Silver Spring's unique past.

Summary Recommendations:

- Evaluate Locational Atlas sites for designation in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.
 - Consider the designation of an Art Deco District.
 - Support the reuse of Silver Spring's historic resources.
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The CBD's historic buildings illustrate the development of Silver Spring, from the community's beginnings at the spring itself to its development as a suburban center enlivened by the Art Deco-style Silver Theatre and Shopping Center.

Preserving Silver Spring's historic resources saves more than just old buildings. Reusing and incorporating historic resources into new projects preserves Silver Spring's unique past, giving texture and depth to the CBD's redevelopment. Historic buildings stand out on the urban landscape; they look different and they resonate with meaning, recalling memories and experiences.

Silver Spring's historic buildings are also good urban neighbors. They are well designed, oriented to the street and pedestrian, because they were built at a human scale. The buildings not only remind people about Silver Spring's past, they provide models for what has always been great about Silver Spring—the street life of the city.

Beyond the intangible, historic buildings make economic sense. They can be adapted to new uses, sometimes more economically than new construction, and their unique appearance can add market value. The CBD's historic resources are both publicly and privately owned and contribute to the community's commercial and civic life. Silver Spring's historic resources can contribute to a new market image for the CBD.

Montgomery County's historic resources were initially listed in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites, which was compiled from a 1976 survey. In 1979, the County established planning and regulatory techniques to protect historic resources by adopting the Master Plan for Historic Preservation and Chapter 24A, the

Historic Preservation Ordinance of the County Code. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) is charged with evaluating Atlas properties for designation under Chapter 24A.

The exteriors of properties in the Locational Atlas cannot be substantially altered or demolished without review to determine if they merit inclusion in the Master Plan. Master Plan designation requires review and regulation of exterior changes to maintain historic integrity. Historic properties are eligible for tax credit programs at the county (10 percent), state (25 percent), and federal (20 percent) levels to assist with restoration and maintenance costs. Millions of dollars in restoration work has been completed in the County through these programs, benefitting the entire community. Silver Spring's historic resources are discussed below (Map 41).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Evaluate Locational Atlas Sites for designation on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Silver Spring's Locational Atlas sites should be quickly evaluated for designation on the Master Plan. Those properties which are designated will receive the protection of Chapter 24A; those properties which are not designated will be removed from the Locational Atlas and the property owners will not be governed by the historic preservation ordinance.

The 1993 CBD Sector Plan recommended that the HPC consider whether the Silver Spring Fire Station at 8131 Georgia Avenue should be included on the Locational Atlas and, eventually, on the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

- The fire station should be considered for designation in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

The Silver Spring Historic District - site #36/7

The proposed district comprises properties on both sides of Colesville Road from Georgia Avenue to Fenton Street, including the corner buildings at Colesville Road and Fenton Street. Since 1984, when the district was proposed in the Locational Atlas, several of the individual buildings have been individually evaluated and either removed from the Atlas or designated on the Master Plan. Others have been demolished.

- There is still potential for a thematic district in the CBD. A proposed amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation should be considered in the near future to designate an Art Deco district that includes the J.C. Penney facade and several buildings along the north side of Colesville Road.

The Hecht Company Department Store (1947, 1950) - site #36/7-4

Most of the original structure's exterior has been retained and incorporated into the City Place Mall. The Art Deco/Moderne facade represents a pioneering venture in retail trade when this major downtown retail company chose Silver Spring for establishing its first suburban department store. The business was highly successful in the expanding suburban market.

- The Art Deco facade has been stabilized by its incorporation into the City Place facade, but any future reuse should retain the original facade intact, pending evaluation for designation in the Master Plan.

Ensure that Master Plan Resources are preserved and contribute to downtown revitalization.

The Silver Spring Train Station Complex (1945) - site #36/15

This Colonial Revival style station was built on the foundations of the original Silver Spring train station and is the only extant 20th century station building in the County. In 1936, the B&O Railroad established a suburban stop for mainline trains in Silver Spring, creating the impetus for it to grow from a country village to one of the area's largest business communities.

The station was recently approved by the County Council for Master Plan designation along with 1/4 acre of land and the connecting tunnel as a historic resource. The remainder of the property was not designated.

- The Station should be reused by an appropriate public or private sector owner/tenant.
- Consider the design, access, and open space goals of the Ripley District in reuse plans for the Train Station.

The Silver Spring/Acorn Urban Park - site #36/5

Acorn Park is the site of the original Silver Spring, for which it is said the community was named. The Park's acorn-shaped gazebo was originally located on the farm of Francis Preston Blair, Silver Spring's founder. The gazebo is an example of picturesque garden features popular in the 19th century. The gazebo was moved to the park in 1955.

- The park should retain its visibility and accessibility amid redevelopment of South Silver Spring.

The Jesup Blair House - site #36/6

Built circa 1850 as a summer residence, the Jesup Blair House incorporates elements of the Federal and Greek Revival styles, including a hipped roof with cupola, wooden quoin blocks, pilasters, a molded architrave, and a front door framed with transom and sidelights. The house has served a variety of community uses since its donation to the State of Maryland in 1933 by Violet Blair Janin, and was renovated in 1990 as transitional housing for single-parent families. The property is currently owned by M-NCPPC.

- The Jesup Blair House should be incorporated into park renovations and continue to serve a public use.

The Montgomery Arms Apartments - site #36/7-2

This Art Deco apartment complex was built in 1941, and is an important example of pre-World War II apartment design in Montgomery County. The buildings' Art Deco details mirror those of the Fenton Building and Silver Theatre. In 1993, the apartments were zoned CBD-R1 (a designation that allows maintenance, but doesn't encourage redevelopment).

- The Montgomery Arms should continue to provide affordable market-rate housing in the CBD and its historic character should be preserved to contribute visual interest to the CBD.

The Silver Theatre and Shopping Center Complex - site #36/7-3

This complex of connected buildings, at the visible intersection of Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue, was built in 1938 in the Art Deco style and reflects Silver Spring's role as the County's shopping and entertainment center. The buildings were designated on the Master Plan in 1993 and are proposed to be integrated into the Downtown Silver Spring main street-style development that will include the American Film Institute, returning active retail and entertainment uses to these historic buildings.

- The Silver Theatre and Shopping Complex should be retained, restored, and reused.

The Silver Spring Post Office - site #36/11

The Georgian Revival style post office building is prominently located on Georgia Avenue and was built in 1936-37. It is one of three post offices in the County built by the Works Progress Administration. It is now privately owned and operated as a medical facility. The site was rezoned to CBD-R2 in the 1993 Plan and this Plan proposes to rezone it to CBD-2.

- The Post Office should retain its visibility at its prominent location on Georgia Avenue.

The Falkland Apartments—Cupola Building - site #36/12

The Falkland Apartments' Cupola Building provides a landmark entrance to the CBD at Sixteenth Street. The apartments were built in 1936-38 and were one of the first three projects insured by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), serving as a model for later projects. In 1993, the southern portion of the Falklands complex was rezoned to R-20 to preserve this rental housing convenient to jobs and metro.

- The architectural prominence of the Cupola Building on its site should be retained.

The Tastee Diner - site #36/13

The Tastee Diner was assembled at its Georgia Avenue site in 1946 and, with the Bethesda Tastee Diner, remains one of two original diners in the County in the classic railroad car design. Since the 1993 Plan, the diner has been evaluated and designated on the Master Plan with the understanding that it would be moved to another CBD site. It is now proposed to be moved to a site at Cameron Street and Ramsey Avenue, where it will be attached to a new, larger restaurant and will include a transit information and ticket center.

- After site plan review by the Planning Board, the diner should be moved to its new location and continue to serve the public as an example of a classic diner-style restaurant.

