

R O G E R K L E W I S F. A. I. A.

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Re: Letter of Support for the restoration of the historic Jesup Blair House in South Silver Spring, Maryland and for the proposed development of a vibrant Community Arts Center, as envisioned by Carpe Diem Arts, the Silver Spring Historical Society and other nonprofits and programming partners

To Whom This May Concern:

I strongly support the proposed preservation and creative contemporary reuse of Silver Spring's historic Jesup Blair House, and its existing addition, the former Silver Spring Library, located in the 14.5 acre Jesup Blair Park. The goal is the creation of an aesthetically attractive, diversely functional cultural resource serving not only the citizens of Silver Spring and Montgomery County, but also D.C. and the metropolitan Washington region.

The historic Jesup Blair House ensemble will be a fully accessible, multi-purpose venue for a mix of public, non-profit, year-round uses: musical and theatrical performances; special programs and events; educational activities, scheduled lectures and ongoing classes such as dance and aerobics; periodic conferences and meetings; and exhibitions of art and other creative work, honoring the historical significance of the property while also celebrating the diversity of arts and culture in Montgomery County. Also included will be office spaces for shared use by several Takoma Park and Silver Spring-based based, non-profit organizations, including Carpe Diem Arts, The Civic Circle, Justice Arts Coalition, and 1-2 others.

While the overall building forms and historic exterior facades will be preserved, the interior will be substantially transformed to accommodate the many public uses envisioned. Plans showing the variety and quality of newly formed spaces inside have been prepared pro bono by the distinguished DC firm KUBE Architecture, in collaboration with Stanley Ira Hallet, FAIA, former Dean of the Catholic University of America School of Architecture.

The design takes advantage of the existing building's geometry and structural framing while enhancing internal circulation and providing access to natural light and views. Especially notable are revised landscape and exterior courtyard design modifications. They greatly improve the ADA-compliant approach experience for visitors walking toward the new arrival lobby.

A new exterior stage and seating for major festivals, concerts, and puppet shows for kids will enliven the surrounding park. And the Jesup Blair House addition's heretofore abandoned basement will be used as a rich depository and research center for the Silver Spring Historical Society, its collection finally becoming open and available to a broad cross-section of the community.

This much needed project superbly exemplifies thoughtful, adaptive repurposing of a historic work of architecture. Inventively embodying sustainability principles and artful design, it will yield an invaluable physical

asset serving Silver Spring and Montgomery County for decades. Moreover, the revitalized Jesup Blair House will greatly augment the 14.5 acre Jesup Blair Park's appeal to visitors.

In light of the above, I urge Montgomery County government and its relevant agencies not only to endorse this project, but also to provide the financial support and construction funding necessary to preserve, revive and transform this unique public resource.

Sincerely,

Roger K. Lewis, F.A.I.A