

AGENDA ITEM #7  
July 28, 2009

**Action**

**MEMORANDUM**

July 24, 2009

TO: County Council

FROM: Jeffrey L. Zyontz,  Legislative Attorney

SUBJECT: **Action** - Resolution to Amend the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan

**PHED and HHS Joint Committee Recommendation:** On July 21, 2009 the Joint Committee recommended (4-1) retaining the current pedestrian bridge prohibition in the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan. Councilmember Leventhal would recommend amending the Plan as proposed by the Executive.

Procedural Background

On February 19, 2009 the Executive transmitted a proposed amendment to the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan. The current plan prohibits pedestrian bridges in the urban renewal area. The Executive believes that a pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue is warranted for the proposed Silver Spring library project. He recommends amending the plan by adding the underlined text to the current plan:

Pedestrian bridges and structures that cross existing rights-of-way will not be permitted over Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, Cedar Street, or Wayne Avenue with the following exception: A pedestrian bridge shall be permitted over Wayne Avenue, connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage with a County facility that includes a public library, located on the opposite side of Wayne Avenue outside of the Urban Renewal Area. This bridge must comply with ADA design standards, provide protection from the weather, and utilize transparent construction materials to enhance security. Elsewhere in the Urban Renewal Area, pedestrian connections could form an arch, gateway, or covering and utilize transparent construction materials. Such connections must provide for attractive and active pedestrian environments underneath them.

The PDF for the Library included the following requirement:

The Council has requested design options for the Silver Spring Library site that include additional design options for disability access to the library. At least one option must include on-site parking for individuals with disabilities and at least one option must include drop-off access. Conceptual designs for these additional disability access options must be received by the Council prior to the Council's public hearing on the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan amendment.

The Department of General Services prepared 3 options and made them available to the Planning Board:

- 1) a pedestrian Bridge from the Wayne Avenue Garage to the Library's 3<sup>rd</sup> floor entrance;
- 2) 5 handicapped spaces on-site, at grade – directly under the proposed building; and
- 3) 7 handicapped spaces and 22 additional spaces below grade and on-site.

On February 20, 2009, as required by §56-12 of the County Code, staff forwarded the proposed urban renewal plan amendment to the Planning Board for their comments. On May 14, the Planning Board reviewed the plan amendment.

The Planning Board vote was 2 in favor of the amendment and 2 opposed. Planning Staff recommended against approving the amendment. Planning Staff concluded that parking for persons with disabilities could be accommodated on the library site and that pedestrians should not be diverted away from the street.

### Public Hearing

The Council's public hearing on the amendment was held on June 30, 2009. A simple score card of positions on the amendment from testimony received was as follows:

<b>Supported Amendment</b>	<b>Opposed Amendment</b>	<b>No position</b>
Executive	Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board	Planning Board
Library Board	Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Board <sup>1</sup>	
Commission on People with Disabilities	Individual	
Disability Resource Center Library Advisory Committee	Planning Board Staff <sup>1</sup>	
Silver Spring Library Advisory Board		

Those who testified raised the following arguments for and against a pedestrian bridge for the Silver Spring Library:

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<sup>1</sup> Revised submission since the Council's public hearing, attached to the packet.

### **Arguments in favor of the bridge**

A bridge is a cost effective means to:

- 1) provide access for disabled persons, the elderly, and parents with young children;
- 1) shorten the walking distance from the Wayne Avenue garage to the library;
- 2) provide safe and secure access;
- 3) get non-library users across the street;
- 4) eliminate the need for any new parking spaces on the library site;
- 5) avoid hardship to other CBD users (or businesses);
- 6) remain independent of future construction; and
- 7) enhance sustainability.

“The primary rationale [behind the bridge] is not one solely of safety. It is primarily one of accessibility and sustainability.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Arguments against the bridge**

A pedestrian bridge would:

- 1) promote driving;
- 2) reduce the number of pedestrians on the street;
- 3) be anathema to a walkable community;
- 4) create more opportunities for crime on the bridge and on the street;
- 5) be an unwise use of resources; and
- 6) be contrary to the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan.

### **Analysis of Arguments**

- 1) Accessibility/Convenience

#### **Pro-bridge**

Allowing a pedestrian bridge between the parking garage and the new library would make it more convenient for people arriving by car and making a single-purpose trip to the library. It would reduce the walking distance by eliminating the need to first get to the street level, walk to the crosswalk and walk up to the library entrance. Those drivers who could park on the bridge level of the garage would be able to enter the library without the need for stairs or elevators. It would take less time to make a trip from the garage to the library on a bridge than it would to make the same trip at street level; the bridge would eliminate elevator and traffic signal waiting time and also shorten the distance between the parking garage and the library. The trip from the car to the library would be weather protected; it would avoid waiting for a traffic signal to change and looking out for turning cars in the crosswalk.

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<sup>2</sup> Letter to the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee and Silver Spring Citizen’s Advisory Board from Ike Leggett, June 4, 2009.

In addition to persons with disabilities, elderly persons and parents with small children deserve special consideration. The elderly population is the fastest growing segment of the population. The first baby boomers are qualifying for social security. A short weather-protected trip would make it easier for more people to use the library.

The Rockville library, touted by anti-bridge advocates, does not have a direct connection to a parking garage, but library patrons must only cross one lane of slow speed traffic. Pedestrian bridges are already used in Silver Spring (City Place), private Silver Spring businesses, and elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

The convenience for library users provided by the bridge does not take away on-street parking spaces. It also avoids any interference with the development of surrounding properties.

### Pro-street

The added convenience of a bridge to a parking garage gives a preference only to people arriving by car. It is a step back from Silver Spring's emphasis on mass transit use. The convenience given to those car occupants isolates them from the rest of Silver Spring. The single purpose trip made more convenient by the bridge does not add to Silver Spring CBD as an urban place. A bridge from point to point does not lend itself to any synergy with other places and businesses in Silver Spring.<sup>4</sup> If convenience were the measure of success, jurisdictions that have pedestrian bridges would not be tearing them down.<sup>5</sup>

The Rockville library demonstrates that all categories of users will walk in the open air to get to a well-designed library. The fact that the country is aging does not mean that all elderly are disabled. If or when an elderly person becomes disabled, the person would be treated accordingly.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Des Moines, Calgary, Minneapolis, and Fargo.

<sup>4</sup> "Cities are places where people are drawn together to experience one another. Skywalks rob us of that." Elliot Willensky, vice chairman of New York City's landmarks preservation commission, *Time*, August 1988; "Great cities are about the life, energy and vitality of what happens on the street." John Alschuler, *Downtown Skywalk Falls into Disfavor*, *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 1, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Cincinnati; Baltimore; Charlotte, N.C.; Hartford; and Kansas City, Mo – *Urban Skywalk Concept Brought Down to Earth*, Lisa Cornwell, Associated Press, January 29, 2006.

... many cities are gripped with builders' remorse. They say the skyways and tunnels have choked off pedestrian traffic, hurt street-level retailers and limited development in the city core. "The skywalks were not the best-developed scheme in recent history and have not served us all that well," said Jim Tarbell, a Cincinnati councilman. As cities try to draw residents downtown with loft conversions and tax incentives, several are trying to divert pedestrians back to the street and do away with the walkways, which critics say are antiseptic and have transformed cities into places to pass through, not live in.

--*Decades Old, Skywalk Idea Doesn't Seem to Fly Anymore*, *The New York Times*, August 2005.

<sup>6</sup> The qualifications for a Maryland handicapped tag includes the inability to walk 200 feet without resting. It parallels the provision for ADA access that requires areas wide enough to pull out of the pedestrian traffic flow not less than 200 feet apart.

Parking could be accommodated on the County-owned site next to the library without interfering with parking on Bonifant Street. This would require coordination with future construction, but the County is the owner and developer of the project.

## 2) Safety

### Pro-bridge

A bridge overcomes the hazards of busy intersections. Only the traffic in the parking garage could interfere with people parking and walking across the bridge. People would not be subject to slips and falls due to wet or snowy pavement.

Providing a bridge does not prevent pedestrian safety improvements to the Wayne Avenue at-grade crosswalk. The Executive is committed to making those improvements.

The amount of library users that will use the bridge is only 10 to 12 percent of the total number of library users. That limited number of people should not affect safety issues on the street.

### Pro-street

People on the street make it safer from crime for everyone. Eyes on the street help prevent crime and provide opportunities for social interaction. Pedestrians using the bridge could become targets for criminal activity. This possibility is acknowledged by the bridge advocates' request for surveillance cameras on the proposed bridge and the requirement for transparent materials. An active street would be perceived to be safer than an isolated bridge. Splitting pedestrian travel between the bridge and the sidewalk puts fewer people both in places and in that way makes both places less safe.

Avoiding pedestrian incidents with motor vehicles is another aspect of safety. Planning Staff recommends an exclusive pedestrian phase signaling (Barnes Dance).<sup>7</sup> Even though the at-grade pedestrian safety improvements are welcome, the intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street is not hazardous. In the past 5 years, there have been 4 pedestrian/vehicle incidents.<sup>8</sup> That is 4 too many incidents, but it is not rated as a high-incidence intersection by the Pedestrian Safety Coordinator, even before the improvements recommended by the Executive.

## 3) Disabled Persons

### Pro-bridge

The Silver Spring library includes a collection of books and materials of benefit to people with disabilities. The facility should make it as easy as possible for people with disabilities to get to the library. Handicapped parking on the bridge level in the parking lot would reduce the

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<sup>7</sup> Memorandum, July 16, 2009 supported by 2 published evaluations of such phasing.

<sup>8</sup> The 4 incidents may include some mid-block incidents. At the intersection of Wayne and Georgia Avenue there were an additional 8 incidents. The most dangerous intersection in the County is Piney Branch and University, where 32 incidents occurred in the past 5 years.

distance, from that parking lot to the library, to 180 feet from the mid-point of the handicapped parking space.<sup>9</sup> This is much shorter than the 563-foot travel path that would be necessary if people using the handicapped spaces had to start in the middle of the Wayne Avenue garage and proceed along the street.<sup>10</sup>

#### Pro-street

The first floor of the garage is the only floor with enough vertical clearance for an ADA van. One of every 8 spaces, but not less than 1 space, must have 114 inches of vertical clearance.<sup>11</sup> People using those spaces would have to use the sidewalk and crosswalk to get to the library. The level of the garage that is proposed to connect to the bridge has vertical clearance of 98 inches.<sup>12</sup> If appropriate ADA spaces cannot all be accommodated on the pedestrian bridge level, it would be less complicated to direct handicapped parking to a single on-site area.

Handicapped parking on the site of the library would be closer than parking across a bridge. The distance for people going from the handicapped spaces in the garage to the library is overstated. There is an elevator in the corner of the garage closest to the intersection of Wayne and Fenton. The absence of a bridge would make walking on the sidewalk about 230 feet longer than taking a bridge.

**ADA compliance does not require a bridge, even if parking were not provided on the library site.** If a bridge is not provided for able-bodied library users, it need not be provided for disabled library users. ADA guidelines for an accessible route state the following:

At least one accessible route within the boundary of the site shall be provided from public transportation stops, accessible parking, and accessible passenger loading zones, and public streets or sidewalks to the accessible building entrance they serve. *The accessible route shall, to the maximum extent feasible, coincide with the route for the general public.* [emphases added]

Any accessible route must meet standards, including maximum slope and minimum width; if it is longer than 200 feet and narrower than 60 inches (5 feet), the following provision applies:

If an accessible route has less than 60 [inches] clear width, then passing spaces at least 60 [inches] by 60 [inches] shall be located

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<sup>9</sup> See ©28.

<sup>10</sup> See ©44.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Justice, ADA Standards for Accessible Design, Revised as of July 1, 1994:

**4.6.5\* Vertical Clearance.** Provide minimum vertical clearance of 114 in (2895 mm) at accessible passenger loading zones and along at least one vehicle access route to such areas from site entrance(s) and exit(s). At parking spaces complying with 4.1.2(5)(b), provide minimum vertical clearance of 98 in (2490 mm) at the parking space and along at least one vehicle access route to such spaces from site entrance(s) and exit(s).

<sup>12</sup> See ©19.

at reasonable intervals not to exceed 200 [feet]. A T-intersection of two corridors or walks is an acceptable passing place.

Before July 21, 2009, Department of General Service Staff stated the distance from the furthest handicapped parking space to the library as 233 feet. If the walkway distance is 233 feet, it must provide a route wider than 60 inches clear or provide acceptable passing places on either side of the bridge.<sup>13</sup> The sidewalks along Wayne Avenue are 15 feet wide. Every place along the sidewalk is an acceptable passing place. The Wayne Avenue garage and the sidewalk both satisfy ADA standards.

The property to the north of the library is owned by the County. Temporarily using the land for handicapped parking, and then purchasing parking spaces in the ultimate building, would add to convenience by reducing the distance to the library for disabled persons.

#### 4) Sustainability<sup>14</sup>

##### Pro-bridge

A bridge saves the use of materials that would otherwise be used for new parking spaces on the library site.

##### Pro-street

The bridge has a number of unsustainable attributes. It encourages driving to the library by making driving more convenient. It requires energy for lights, ventilation, and security cameras. It requires maintenance to sustain its structural integrity.<sup>15</sup> The interior space of the bridge requires daily cosmetic maintenance. The energy use from all of these activities would challenge the claim of sustainability.

Comparing the bridge to unneeded parking on the library site is a false choice. Additional parking spaces beyond those available in the Wayne Avenue garage are not required. The most sustainable option, no bridge and no additional parking, may not meet the goal for accessibility. If 7 handicapped spaces are provided on the library side of Wayne Avenue, the material and maintenance required for those spaces would need to be compared to the material and maintenance required for the bridge in order to assess relative sustainability.

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<sup>13</sup> Material submitted by the Department of General Services on July 21, 2009 indicated the distance from the mid-point of handicapped parking to the library at 180 feet; see ©28.

<sup>14</sup> There are many definitions of sustainability. One widely used definition is from the World Commission on Environment and Development: "Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Webster's dictionary defines it as "Using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged."

<sup>15</sup> Gravity is a sustainable force that will act on the bridge for its lifetime. Poorly maintained bridges collapse over time from their own weight. Bridges have also been found to be unsustainable after being hit by trucks.

5) Cost: Bridge vs. On-Site Parking

Pro-bridge

Providing a bridge is the most cost-effective means to provide for people with disabilities:

<u>Option</u>	<u>Cost Estimate</u>
Pedestrian Bridge	\$745,228
5 handicapped parking spaces at grade	\$3,557,824
7 handicapped parking spaces and 22 other below grade parking spaces	\$5,938,328
7 handicapped parking spaces and 20 short term spaces (Planning Staff Alternative)	\$1.1 to \$1.6 mil.

The bridge makes every parking space in the garage closer to the library. It helps the elderly and parents with small children in addition to disabled persons at no additional cost.

The option of doing nothing for handicapped library patrons is unacceptable. An accessible library should not require a disabled person to cross Wayne Avenue at street level. The cost of on-site handicapped parking developed by the Department of General Services is higher than that of the bridge. The proposed options retain on-street parking for neighboring businesses. The options can also be accomplished without interfering with future construction on the adjoining County-owned site.

The alternatives recommended by the Planning Board would all require high costs for temporary parking (retaining walls, stormwater management, and an ADA-compliant path) that would be demolished in the course of constructing the County's housing project. Planning Staff has also suggested unsafe head-in parking off of Bonifant Street. These spaces would require cars leaving the spaces to back into a travel lane. Even if such spaces were safe, they would require disabled persons to travel across the future purple line in order to get to the library.

Pro-street

The bridge's cost estimate does not include the costs to assure a common floor elevation between the library and the garage.

Planning Staff compiled known bridge costs from recent projects.<sup>16</sup> The Department of General Services' cost estimate for the bridge is low in comparison to these numbers.

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<sup>16</sup> Memorandum, July 16, 2009 included 2 other bridges that are open air and do not use the supports of other buildings (River Road Capital Crescent Trail and Viers Mill Road Trail).

**Pedestrian Bridge Cost Comparison**

	<b>Silver Spring Library</b>	<b>United Therapeutics</b>	<b>Montgomery College Bridge</b>
<b>Construction Date</b>	-	Pending	2006
<b>Total Cost</b>	\$749,000	\$1.5 - 3,300,000	\$3,000,000
<b>2009 Cost*</b>	-	-	\$3,174,214
<b>Bridge span</b>	85 feet	90 feet	250 feet**
<b>Cost per Linear Foot</b>	\$8,812	\$16,666 - \$36,666	\$12,000
<b>Enclosed</b>	Enclosed	Enclosed	Enclosed
<b>Air Conditioned</b>	Pending	Heating and cooling	Ventilated - no heating and cooling

\* Based on consumer price index (CPI) using the US Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator

\*\* Span and price per linear square foot does not include the length of access ramps

The alternatives developed by the Department of General Services were limited. The alternatives did not include parking on Bonifant Street or taking advantage of the County-owned site to the north. Planning Staff estimated that it would cost \$420,000 to provide 7 spaces of handicapped parking on the neighboring County-owned site in a future garage. There is adequate space in the Wayne Avenue garage for all other parking.

The lowest cost alternative is no bridge and no on-site parking at the library. This would be ADA compliant but it may not meet the Executive’s accessibility goal. There are 3 alternatives that could temporarily accommodate the needs of disabled persons until the County’s adjoining housing project could be constructed:

- a) dedicate some on-street parking spaces;
- b) create head-in spaces on Bonifant (Planning Staff recommendation)<sup>17</sup>; or
- c) use the future right of way for the purple line.

The housing project adjacent to the library would have on-site parking when it is constructed. Some of the housing project’s parking could replace the on-street parking or purple line parking.

6) Master Plan Conformance

Pro-bridge

The Executive requested a minor amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan; it would allow 1 bridge under unique circumstances. The amendment does not harm the general prohibition against bridges.

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<sup>17</sup> Planning Staff sited examples of current head-in spaces at the Joint Committee’s July 21 worksession.

## Pro-street

Since the City Place pedestrian bridge was completed, there has been a consistent policy to invest in Silver Spring sidewalks and not in bridges. The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan states:

This plan encourages the development of active streets and sidewalks, busy with people walking to shop, commute, or for pleasure. They will become downtown's defining feature, and will support activity, creating the setting for community.

The feel of a community is created on its streets and paths, and Silver Spring's sidewalks should be bustling and active. An urban area's greatest economic asset and strongest physical definition comes from its pedestrian environment. Sidewalks and streets scaled to walkers create active environments where people can shop, commute, recreate, and socialize. Communities where people can walk are communities where people will spend time and money.<sup>18</sup>

This proposed amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan runs counter to a policy of emphasizing sidewalks.

## Conclusion

The Joint Committee recommends disapproval of the proposed amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan. The strongest argument for the bridge is its convenience to library users. This convenience would make the new library less of an asset to the street vitality of Silver Spring. Disabled parking can be accommodated on the same side of Wayne Avenue as the library, if not on the same site. Safety does not warrant approval of the bridge; if the sidewalk and crosswalk are not deemed safe enough, they should be made so. A pedestrian bridge, in contradiction to the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, would detract from the County's current investment in sidewalks.

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<sup>18</sup> Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, February 2000, page 24.

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Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: July 28, 2009  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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By: County Council

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Subject: Disapproval of the Amendment to the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan transmitted to the Council on February 19, 2009

Background

1. Under Chapter 56, Article III of the County Code, the County Council is authorized to implement urban renewal projects.
2. On March 11, 1997, by Resolution No. 13-816, the County Council approved the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.
3. On November 16, 1999, by Resolution No. 14-346, the County Council amended the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.
4. On February 19, 2009 the County Executive transmitted to the County Council a proposed amendment to the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan that would permit the construction of a pedestrian bridge over Wayne Avenue, connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage to the Silver Spring Library to be built on the south side of Wayne Avenue.
5. On February 20, 2009, as required by §56-12 of the County Code, staff forwarded the proposed urban renewal plan amendment to the Planning Board for their comments.
6. On May 14, 2009 2 members of the Planning Board favored the amendment and 2 opposed the amendment. Planning Staff recommended disapproving the amendment.
7. On June 30, 2009 the Council held a public hearing on the proposed amendment.
8. The Council referred the matter to a joint meeting of the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee and the Health and Human Services Committee.
9. On July 21, 2009 the joint Committee recommended (4-1) against amending the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan after reviewing the July 17, 2009 staff report and hearing from

the Department of General Services, the Planning Department, and a representative from the Commission on Disabilities, and considering public testimony.

10. On July 28, 2009 the Council agreed with the recommendation of the joint Committee.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland disapproves the amendment to the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan transmitted to the Council on February 19, 2009.

This is a correct copy of Council action:

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Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council

Resolution No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Introduced: June 9, 2009  
Adopted: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY COUNCIL FOR  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

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By: County Council

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Subject: Amendment to the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan

Background

1. Under Chapter 56, Article III of the County Code, the County Council is authorized to implement urban renewal projects.
2. On March 11, 1997, by Resolution No. 13-816, the County Council approved the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.
3. On November 16, 1999, by Resolution No. 14-346, the County Council amended the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.
4. The County Executive transmitted to the County Council this proposed amendment to the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan that would permit the construction of a pedestrian bridge over Wayne Avenue connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage to the Silver Spring Library to be built on the south side of Wayne Avenue.
5. The pedestrian bridge will allow Library patrons to use existing public parking and eliminate the need to construct additional parking for the new Silver Spring Library.
6. The new Silver Spring Library will have a special collection and provide services for the disabled; a pedestrian bridge between the Wayne Avenue Garage and the Library would provide safe and easy access for patrons with disabilities.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland approves the following resolution to amend the Amended Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan, dated November 16, 1999:

Amend the first paragraph on p. III-21 under the heading "Performance Guidelines for Compatibility" by adding the underlined text:

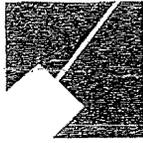
Pedestrian bridges and structures that cross existing rights-of-way will not be permitted over Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, Cedar Street, or Wayne Avenue with the following exception: A pedestrian bridge shall be permitted over Wayne Avenue, connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage with a County facility that includes a public library, located on the opposite side of Wayne Avenue outside of the Urban Renewal Area. This bridge must comply with ADA design standards, provide protection from the weather, and utilize transparent construction materials to enhance security. Elsewhere in the Urban Renewal Area, pedestrian connections could form an arch, gateway, or covering and utilize transparent construction materials. Such connections must provide for attractive and active pedestrian environments underneath them.

This is a correct copy of Council action:

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Linda M. Lauer, Clerk of the Council

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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

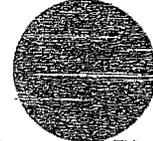
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Phil Andrews, President  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, Maryland 20850

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ACK Agn 6-9-09



2009 MAY 19 PM 1:31

**Subject: Amendment to the Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan:**  
Pedestrian Bridge, CBD-0.5, CBD-1, CBD-2 and CBD-3 Zones  
2000 Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan

Dear President Andrews:

In response to the request from the County Council, the Planning Board reviewed the proposed Amendment to the Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan. The Planning Board heard testimony from the staff opposing the amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan and the construction of the pedestrian bridge. The Planning Board also received testimony from the representatives of the County Executive and the community both in support and opposition to the bridge. A motion to eliminate the bridge and oppose the amendment to the Urban Renewal Plan did not pass with a vote by the Planning Board of two members in favor and two opposed.

The existing Urban Renewal Plan prohibits the use of pedestrian bridges across Wayne Avenue, Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, and Cedar Street. The draft amendment seeks to amend the Renewal Plan, on page III-21, as follows:

“A pedestrian bridge shall be permitted over Wayne Avenue connecting the Wayne Avenue Garage to a County facility that includes a public library located on the opposite side of Wayne Avenue outside the Urban Renewal Area. This bridge must comply with ADA design standards, provide protection from the weather and utilize transparent construction materials to enhance security.”

The purpose of the amendment is to provide a pedestrian bridge to serve the future public library. According to the County Executive, the bridge would be particularly important to patrons with disabilities and families. In addition, the use of the existing parking in the Wayne Avenue Garage will avoid the need to construct additional parking spaces in the downtown area and result in savings in the Silver Spring Library project.

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The Planning Board supported the use of the parking garage instead of constructing additional parking for the library, but expressed the need for another option to the construction of bridge. Two members of the Planning Board opposed the bridge and recommended the following:

- Locating parking for persons with disabilities on-site, adjacent to the library, instead of across Wayne Avenue and on the third floor of the nearby garage
- Providing improvements to the intersection of Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue at a significantly reduced cost instead of constructing a bridge
- Improving the sidewalks along Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street to serve the needs of pedestrians of all ability levels as well as the patrons of the library

The Planning Board remains concerned about providing sufficient access to the library. We are concerned about the cost of the bridge, and we are concerned that the bridge will not provide sufficient access at street level for all patrons of the library including pedestrians, people with disabilities and vehicle drop-off areas. Although the Planning Board remains concerned with the bridge, two members of the Planning Board did not find sufficient reasons to oppose the bridge. The motion to oppose the bridge was not approved.

The testimony received by the Planning Board supporting and opposing the bridge is enclosed. The Planning Board appreciates the opportunity to review the proposed amendment to the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan.

Sincerely,



Royce Hanson  
Chairman

Attachments:

- Staff Report, dated May 6, 2009
- PowerPoint presentation
- Testimony of David Dise, Director, General Services
- Letters

G: carter/Silver Spring Bridge



**MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT**  
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

July 16, 2009

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Jeff Zyontz, Legislative Attorney  
Montgomery County Council

**FROM:** John A. Carter, Chief  
Urban Design and Historic Preservation

John Marcolin, ASLA, Planner Coordinator  
Urban Design and Historic Preservation  
South Central Transit Corridor

Anthony Pins, Principal Planning Technician  
Urban Design and Historic Preservation

**SUBJECT:** Amendment to the Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan  
Pedestrian Bridge

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In response to your request, the following recommendation on the proposed amendment to the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan is enclosed. The amendment, put forth by the County Executive, seeks to eliminate the prohibition of a pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue in order to connect the proposed Silver Spring Library to an existing parking garage.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Debate over the amendment to the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan and the merits of a pedestrian bridge has centered on how to best provide access to the proposed library for persons with disabilities. The Planning Department believes that a solution with accessible on-site parking closest to the library entrance will best serve these needs. Such a solution can be accommodated by utilizing the site adjacent to the library for at-grade parking facilities, and later, in an underground parking garage connected to the library. Additional accessible parking can be provided on-site along Bonifant Street. This strategy has a number of benefits:

1. **Access for Persons with Disabilities** - Safe and convenient access for persons with disabilities should be provided as close as possible to the entrance of the proposed library. An on-site, underground parking solution would put accessible parking spaces close to the library elevators. An on-site parking garage could be designed to accommodate accessible van parking spaces alongside accessible parking, which is not possible in the Wayne Avenue Garage.

2. **Conformance with the Urban Renewal Plan** - An on-site parking solution is compliant with the recommendations and goals of Urban Renewal Plan and the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan.
3. **Cost** - An on-site parking solution is less expensive than constructing a pedestrian bridge and will allow funds to be allocated to improving the quality of the Silver Spring Library and its surrounding area. Underground parking must be provided in the future residential building. Dedicating accessible spaces in the garage for library patrons will not require the construction of additional parking.
4. **Pedestrian-Friendly Streets** - The Planning Department's recommended scheme calls for improvements at the intersection of Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue. These improvements are inexpensive, and invest in the community as a whole as well as library patrons arriving by foot.
5. **Public and Private Funds** - An on-site parking solution capitalizes on the long-term and ongoing investment of public and private funds by Montgomery County, the State of Maryland, and the private developers to improve Silver Spring's sidewalks and streetscape. This investment has been part of a thirty year planning effort to create safe and attractive streets in Silver Spring.
6. **Retail at Street Level** - Proposed on-site street level retail and existing retail on adjacent sites will benefit from vibrant pedestrian activity surrounding the future library.

## RECOMMENDED SOLUTION

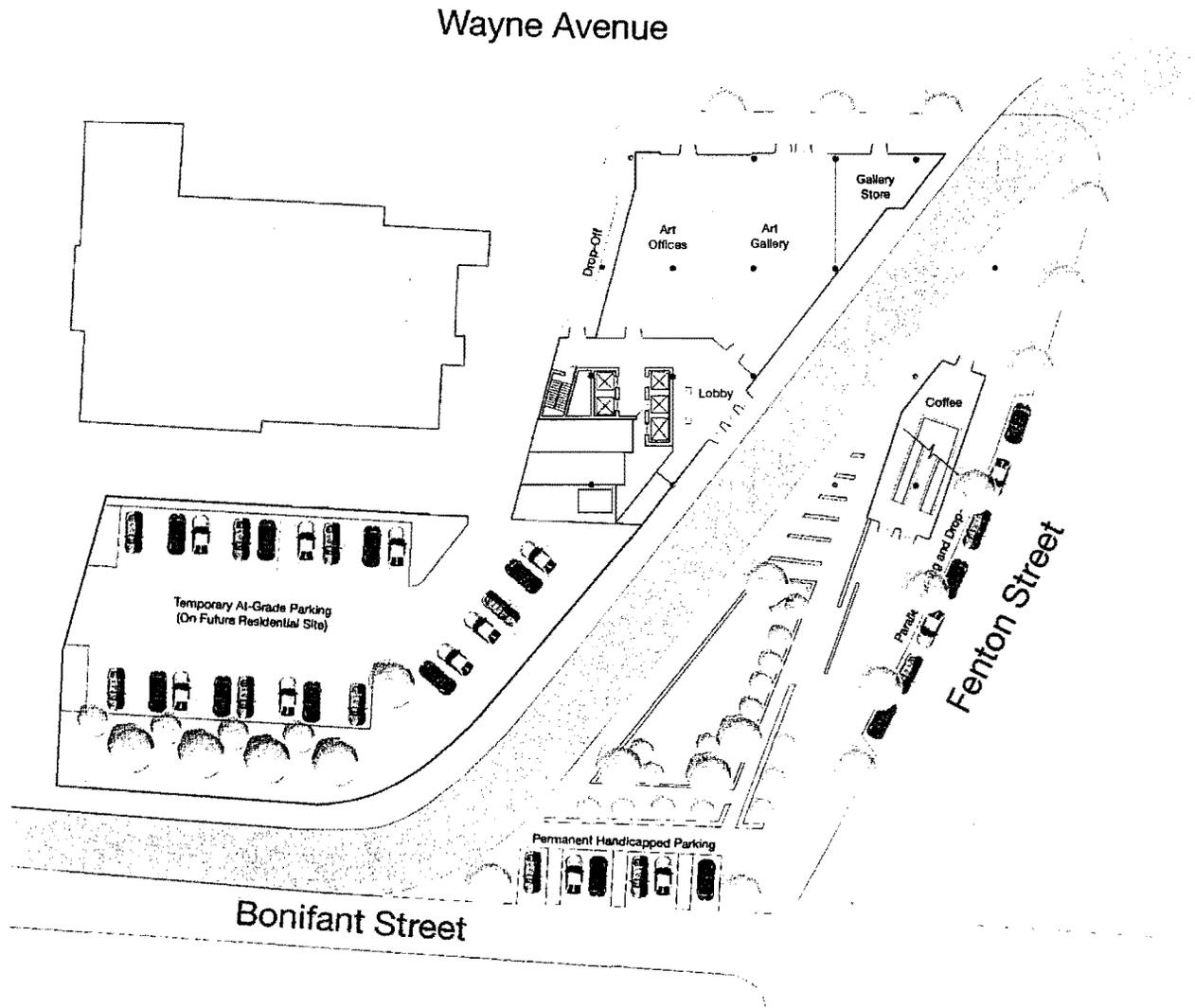
Current design proposals for the Silver Spring library have been constrained by the need to locate the lobby, elevators, and a major stairway on the north end of the site to connect with the proposed pedestrian bridge. If a bridge connection is not constructed, the building's vertical circulation systems can be located more centrally within the library building. This has three advantages. First, a centrally-located lobby allows for greater flexibility in providing accessible parking, including a connection to the future parking garage. Secondly, it allows for the arts center, store and offices to front along Wayne Street. These uses are visually engaging for the public realm, and facilitate window-shopping and retail-related activities. Finally, cost savings can be used to provide substantial but inexpensive improvements to the intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street.

### On-Site Accessible Parking

The construction of the Purple Line, and the conversion of Bonifant Street into a one-way road allows for the provision of six (6) on-site accessible parking spaces. These accessible parking spaces, located approximately 160 feet from the lobby, can be accommodated between Fenton Street and the Purple Line's approach through the library site. They will remain available throughout development of the library site along with short-term parking spaces along Fenton Street.

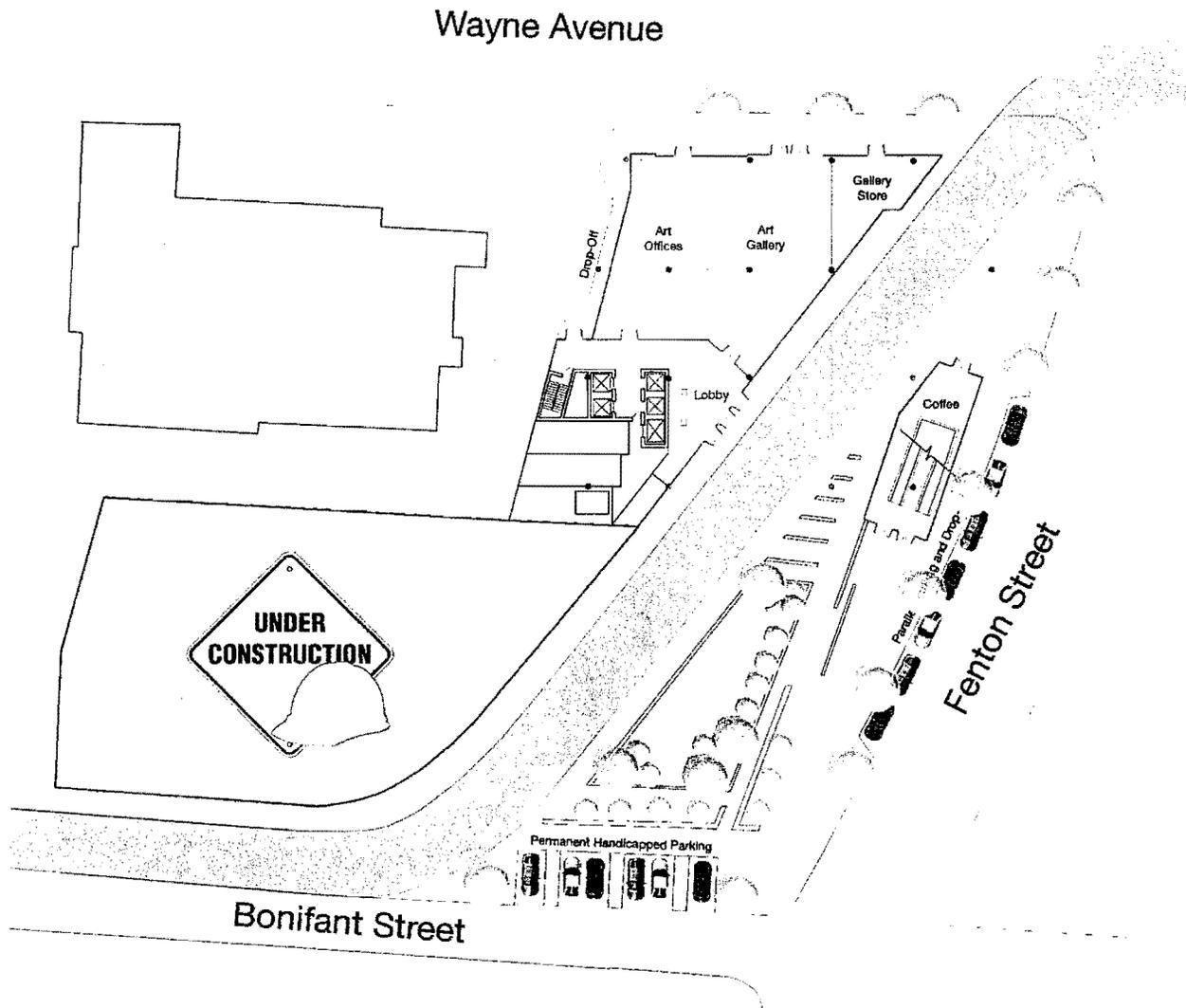
**Stage 1: Accessible Parking on the Future Residential Site**

Following the completion of the library, the site of the future residential building may be used for a large number of accessible parking spaces. These spaces will be less than 100 feet from the library entrance, and will accommodate accessible van parking.



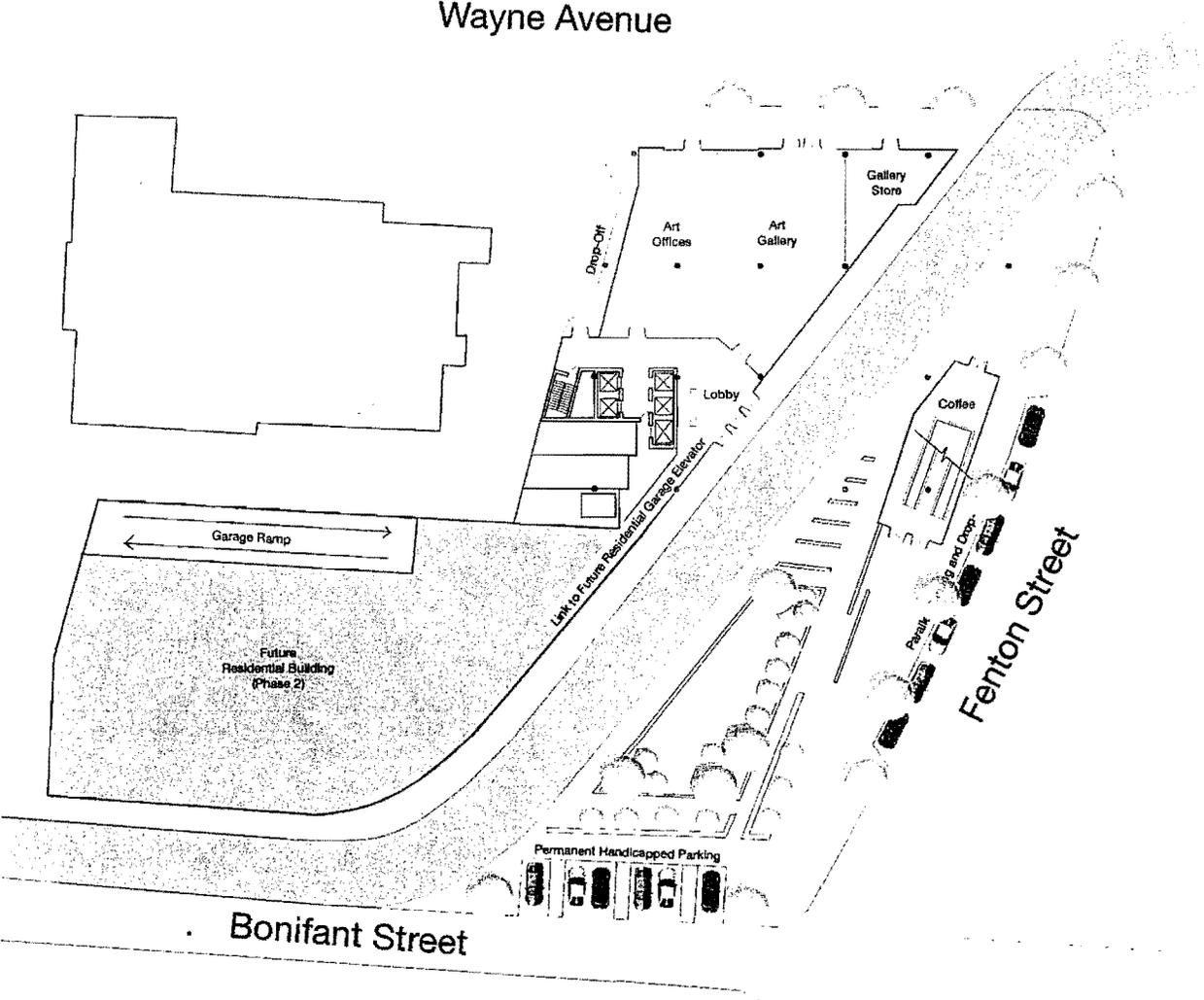
**Stage 2: Pull-In Accessible Parking Provided on Bonifant Street**

During construction of the residential building adjacent to the library, the accessible parking spaces along Bonifant Street remain, along with short-term parking on Fenton Street. These spaces are approximately 160 feet from the library entrance.



**Stage 3: Accessible Parking in the Underground Garage Below the Future Residential Building**

Upon completion of the residential building, accessible parking spaces in the underground garage can be reserved for library patrons. Providing on-site underground parking will best serve the library patrons with disabilities by requiring the shortest possible distance to the library entrance. The library design can anticipate use of the garage by installing elevators at the garage level and allowing for a future connection, or by allowing for a future connection through the library to a designated elevator in the residential building. Accessible parking spaces can be provided as part of a public-private partnership with the developer of the residential building.



In addition to on-site accessible parking, making improvements to the Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue intersection will enhance the quality of the pedestrian environment and increase safety. Intersection improvements make an investment that benefits the entire Silver Spring community, including patrons accessing the library by foot, and retail businesses on Fenton Street. Intersection improvements are also in accordance with Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, which recommends that planners examine the need for, and develop conceptual designs for intersection improvements at Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street (pg. 106). In 2002, countdown signals were installed to notify pedestrians of the time remaining to cross the street. Audible pedestrian instructions have also been installed.

### **Exclusive Pedestrian Phase Signaling (Scramble Intersection or Barnes Dance)**

The Planning Department recommends that the signal at Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue intersection be altered to accommodate exclusive pedestrian phase signaling. Alternately known as a scramble intersection, this type of traffic signal phasing stops automobile traffic in all directions to allow multi-directional pedestrian crossings. Scramble intersections have been used successfully in a number of communities with heavy pedestrian and automobile traffic to reduce conflict and accident rates. They are particularly effective at intersections with large volumes of turning traffic, and were formerly used at two intersections along Fenton Street.

The Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue intersection is a good candidate for an exclusive pedestrian signal phase given the high volume of turning traffic and the Sector Plan's designation of Fenton Street as a retail corridor. The intersection currently accommodates steady automobile traffic and pedestrian survey counts indicate about 365 pedestrian crossings take place during peak hour. The Silver Spring Library is estimated to generate between 350 – 550 trips during peak hour across a variety of modes including automobile, bus, light-rail and pedestrian travel.

Case study evidence shows that scramble intersections can significantly increase pedestrian safety. In the Chinatown district of Oakland, California, a community with a 24% elderly population, a pedestrian scramble was implemented at the intersection of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Webster Avenue following a fatal accident involving an automobile and pedestrian.<sup>1</sup> Improvements to the intersection, which accommodates heavy volumes of car and pedestrian traffic, were part of a larger community-based pedestrian safety effort that included widening sidewalks, and installing streetlights. The change required only the installation of new pedestrian signals, signs, and diagonal crossing lanes through the intersection, which were painted with Chinese designs to reflect the neighborhood's character. The effort resulted in a 49% reduction in vehicle conflicts between automobiles and pedestrians. The total cost for improving the intersection was \$80,000.

Similar measures were implemented in Beverly Hills, California where high traffic volumes in the Business Triangle and numerous close-calls necessitated intersection improvements. Because most of the equipment necessary to operate the scramble intersection was already in place, installation costs were minimal. Additional signage and diagonal stripes through the intersection

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<sup>1</sup> Allyson K. Bechtel, Kara E. MacLeod, and David R. Ragland, "Oakland Chinatown Pedestrian Scramble: An Evaluation" (December 17, 2003). UC Berkeley Traffic Safety Center. Paper UCB-TSC-RR-2003-06. <http://repositories.cdlib.org/its/tsc/UCB-TSC-RR-2003-06>

constituted the only major costs, and the follow-up studies showed a 66% decrease in conflicts between pedestrians and cars<sup>2</sup>.

In June 2008, a scramble intersection was implemented at one of Toronto’s busiest intersections, involving heavy turning traffic, and a streetcar stop adjacent to a major civic plaza. The cost of implementing the intersection improvements was \$60,000, primarily for additional pedestrian signals, signs, and paint. Its success has prompted the city to identify three other intersections for conversion.

Location	Street Intersection	Cost	Vehicle Traffic Per Hour	Turning Vehicle Traffic	Pedestrian Traffic per hour	Hazard Reduction
Silver Spring, MD	Fenton St./Wayne Ave.	-	2558*	40.8%	365*	-
Beverly Hills, CA	6 intersections	\$500-700	1267		1217	66%
Oakland, CA	8th St./Webster Ave.	\$80,000	4000	31-36%	1200	49%
Toronto, ON	Dundas/Yonge	\$60,000				N/A

\*Does not include the 350-500 estimated trips generated by the library.

**Additional Improvements**

Purple Line construction will require roadway widening on Wayne Avenue to accommodate light rail transit. This provides additional opportunities to upgrade the intersection at Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue by installing a planted median similar to the existing median on Georgia Avenue. A planted median can serve as a pedestrian refuge, and is an aesthetically pleasing solution to enhance to quality of the overall pedestrian environment (see attachments). Medians are relatively inexpensive to construct, costing between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

**ANALYSIS**

Given the viability of alternative methods for providing accessible parking for persons with disabilities, the Planning Department has the following concerns with amending the Urban Renewal Plan to allow a pedestrian bridge:

**ADA Requirements**

Section 4.6.2 of the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) states:

“Accessible parking spaces serving a particular building shall be located on the shortest accessible route of travel from adjacent parking to an accessible entrance. In parking facilities that do not serve a particular building, accessible parking shall be located on the shortest accessible route of travel to an accessible pedestrian entrance of the parking facility. In buildings with multiple accessible entrances with adjacent parking, accessible parking spaces shall be dispersed and located closest to the accessible entrances.”

<sup>2</sup> Bijan Vaziri, "Exclusive Pedestrian Phasing," (1996) from Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System: Case Studies. [http://www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe/downloads/pedsafe\\_ch6.pdf](http://www.walkinginfo.org/pedsafe/downloads/pedsafe_ch6.pdf)

Under Maryland State Law, drivers may qualify for a Special Parking placard if they are unable to walk 200 feet without stopping to rest. The estimated distance from handicap parking spaces located in the Wayne Avenue garage to the library is 230 feet.

The number of ADA accessible parking spaces necessary for the library is a function of the total number of parking spaces provided for library employees and visitors. Using the existing parking capacity in the Wayne Avenue Garage does not require additional accessible parking spaces so long as the spaces are located on the shortest accessible route to the library. If a pedestrian bridge is constructed, it should be served by at least six ADA handicapped parking spaces.

Additionally, one in every eight accessible spaces, but not less than one, must be served by an access aisle a minimum of 96 inches wide and shall be designated as "van accessible." According to ADAAG 4.6.5, ADA accessible areas must provide a minimum vertical clearance of 114 inches (9'6") at accessible passenger loading zones and along at least one vehicle access route to such areas from site entrances and exits. **The entrance to the Wayne Avenue Garage has a maximum clearance of 8 feet 2 inches, and is too low to accommodate the high-top vans equipped with wheelchair lifts near the bridge connection.** Van parking must be accommodated elsewhere with short and convenient proximity to the library entrance.

Other concerns persist about the safety of traveling through the Wayne Avenue Garage. The access point for the proposed pedestrian bridge is located adjacent to the primary path of vehicle circulation through the garage (see attached). Roll stops, cut corners, and wide swinging cars are common as drivers navigate the semi-blind U-turns from the ramp onto the next floor. Library patrons must walk in the drive-aisle, as opposed to a pedestrian curb next away from traffic, in order to reach the bridge. The auto-dominated nature of the garage environment places disabled library patrons at an unnecessary risk when alternatives are available.

On-site parking can locate handicap accessible parking spaces closer to the library entrance, and eliminate complications presented by the constraints of the Wayne Avenue garage. An underground parking garage located below the future residential building can be designed to accommodate van accessible spaces, and provide safer travel options for library patrons through the garage.

### Costs

The Urban Renewal Plan states that all projects should "maximize the return on the public investment in the Urban Renewal Area by requiring any proposed project be part of a comprehensive redevelopment approach to the Urban Renewal Area," (pg I-4). The Planning Department remains concerned that the proposed costs have been underestimated in comparison to similar completed and proposed projects in the county. Pedestrian bridges often suffer from low usage rates, and the potential return on investment may not justify the allocation of funds. The following table provides a cost comparison of pedestrian bridges built or proposed in Montgomery County.

**Pedestrian Bridge Cost Comparison**

	Silver Spring Library	United Therapeutics	Montgomery College Bridge	River Road Capital Crescent Trail	Viers Mill Road
Construction Date	-	Pending	2006	1993	Pending
Total Cost	\$749,000	\$1.5 - 3,300,000	\$3,000,000	\$1,100,000	\$6,000,000
2009 Cost*	-	-	\$3,174,214	\$1,722,202	-
Bridge span	85 feet	90 feet	250 feet**	280 feet**	620 feet**
Cost per Linear Foot	\$8,812	\$16,666 - \$36,666	\$12,000	\$3,929	\$9,677
Enclosed	Enclosed	Enclosed	Enclosed	Open air	Open air
Air Conditioned	Pending	Heating and cooling	Ventilated. No heating and cooling.	None	None

\* Based on consumer price index (CPI) using the US Bureau of Labor Statistics inflation calculator.

\*\* Span and price per linear square foot does not include the length of access ramps

Pedestrian bridge use depends largely on convenience and walking distances when compared to alternative crossing locations. Pedestrians will not use an overpass if they can cross at street level in about the same amount of time<sup>3</sup>. Once at street level, pedestrians will only opt to use elevated walkways when delays, generally longer than 1 minute and 50 seconds, slow crossings at intersections<sup>4</sup>. Familiarity with an area also factors into bridge use. The more a pedestrian visits an area, the less likely they will be to use a pedestrian bridge<sup>5</sup>. This evidence suggests that pedestrians at street-level are highly unlikely to use the bridge as an alternative to crossing at the intersection of Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue. Library patrons using the Wayne Avenue garage may also opt to link a series of trips to several destinations within the CBD. Their arrival to the library will likely be from other retail venues at ground level.

Providing improvements to the intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street, as discussed below, is a significantly less expensive solution for providing safe access to the library. While a bridge would cater to a select portion of library patrons, improving the intersection makes an investment to the community as a whole.

**Urban Renewal Plan**

The Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan was amended by the County Council in 1999 to increase the speed and flexibility of redevelopment in the Urban Renewal Area, and to “make the redevelopment of the core of downtown part of a comprehensive revitalization strategy for all of downtown,” (pg. I-1). Recognizing that “revitalization of downtown Silver Spring is a process, not a project,” (pg. II-46) the amended plan was refined to incorporate lessons from previous redevelopment attempts. One refinement was the prohibition of pedestrian bridges across specific streets within the Silver Spring CBD, including Wayne Avenue. This clause resulted from community dissatisfaction with a development proposal that connected two large-tenant retailers via a pedestrian bridge across Georgia Avenue. Community members rejected the proposal and the use of pedestrian bridges on the basis that they were harmful to the overall

<sup>3</sup> Moore, R.L., Older, S.J., 1965. Pedestrians and Motors are Compatible in Today’s World. Traffic Engineering, Institute of Transportation Engineers, Washington, DC (September).

<sup>4</sup> Ribbens, H., 1996. Pedestrian facilities in South Africa: research and practice. Transport. Res. Rec. 1538, 10–18.

<sup>5</sup> Räsänen, M., Lajunen, T., Alticafarbay, F., Aydin, C., 2007. Pedestrian self-reports of factors influencing the use of pedestrian bridge. Accident Analysis & Prevention. 39 (5), 969–973.

pedestrian environment within the CBD. The pedestrian bridge on Fenton Street connecting the City Place Mall to the Fenton Street Garage precedes the Urban Renewal Plan, and is not a desirable model to follow.

The Urban Renewal Plan specifically names the streets prohibited from constructing pedestrian bridges. All streets that border the Urban Renewal Area - Cedar Street, Colesville Road, and Wayne Avenue - are not permitted to construct bridges or structures that cross the existing rights-of-way. The purpose of this provision is to connect the downtown with adjacent neighborhoods and “foster an active street life by promoting pedestrian movement on public sidewalks,” (pg. I-3). The proposed library bridge does not serve any of these functions.

**Relationship to the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan**

The Urban Renewal Plan complements the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan by providing land use recommendations and design guidelines that foster and promote orderly development within the Urban Renewal Area. The Urban Renewal Plan confirms the goals and strategies of the Sector Plan, which seeks to shift the focus of downtown Silver Spring “from a single, large-scale private project to an emphasis on development of many projects to complete the whole,” (pg. 3).

One major objective of the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan is the redevelopment and revitalization of Fenton Village. The plan calls for providing “safe and attractive pedestrian connections between new development on the Urban Renewal Site and surrounding CBD neighborhoods, particularly Fenton Village,” (pg 73). The plan also specifies that Urban Renewal Area development frontage along Wayne Avenue should incorporate activating uses, including the proposed Green Trail, and allow visible pedestrian connections to Fenton Village, (pg. 80).

The proposed Silver Spring Library site is located outside the Urban Renewal Plan area, and will be reviewed under the mandatory referral process for conformance with the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan.

**Public and Private Funds**

Montgomery County and the State of Maryland have invested a significant amount of public funds to improve the sidewalks and streetscape as part of a long-term and ongoing planning effort to create safe and attractive streets in Silver Spring. Further funding for streetscape improvements has been raised through private development and concentrated to improve the pedestrian environment. These efforts have been part of a predictable regulatory effort over the past thirty years in accordance with the requirements of the Urban Renewal Plan.

**Pedestrian-Friendly Streets**

A pedestrian-friendly downtown is one of the central tenants of the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan. The Plan notes that “pedestrian traffic in Fenton Village has declined due to a variety of real and perceived problems including the lack of demand for the goods and service offered in Fenton Village, inadequate pedestrian circulation, concerns about security, the ability to attract office workers from the nearby Core, and the area’s deteriorating visual image,” (pg. 61). Pedestrian surveys indicate that much of the vibrant pedestrian activity occurring in the retail heart of Silver Spring at Fenton and Ellsworth Street does not spillover across Wayne Avenue into Fenton Village.

The Sector Plan envisions Fenton Street as “a local neighborhood retail center, recharged with the energy of multi-cultural restaurants and businesses. Fenton Street will be Fenton Village’s main street, lined with low-scale buildings and refitted as a pleasant walkable street with sidewalks shaded by trees and opening into the occasional small plaza (pg. 14). Urban design guidelines for redevelopment projects also call for the incorporation of “crime prevention principles through environmental design by integrating visibility, pedestrian activity, and programming into project layouts,” (pg. 73).

Improvement to the intersection of Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue, as well as concentrating pedestrian activity at the street level would provide a safe, and vibrant pedestrian environment.

### **Retail at Street Level**

The Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan notes:

“An urban area’s greatest economic asset and strongest physical definition comes from its pedestrian environment. Communities where people can walk are communities where people will spend time and money,” (pg. 24).

There is currently a lack of retail near the library site. The plan envisions Fenton Village, and Fenton Street in particular, as a center for neighborhood retail. The plan seeks to “revitalize Fenton Village by positioning it to benefit from redevelopment on the Urban Renewal site, facilitate housing that will upgrade the physical environment and bring in new residents, and provide a pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages people to stroll and stay,” (pg. 61).

A pedestrian bridge will not benefit local retailers. Impulse buying and the purchase of non-necessity items is facilitated by exposing potential consumers to retail products. Library patrons will have to make a conscious decision to leave the library and visit these uses. This is not an ideal retail environment.

Additional retail opportunities have been identified on Fenton Street across from the proposed library on a site currently occupied by the First Baptist Church of Silver Spring. The site is being considered for a two-story retail development (see attachments), which could benefit from additional pedestrian traffic resulting traveling to and from the Silver Spring Library.

### **Consideration of Alternatives**

Two options have been proposed as alternatives to a pedestrian bridge scheme. The first option examines the feasibility of providing spaces for the disabled on-site at the ground level of the library. The second option considers underground parking for seven accessible and 22 short-term parking spaces.

The first option, developed by the County Executive, suggests that in order to provide five accessible parking spaces on-site at street level, it is necessary to raise the arts center, store and offices to the second floor, and accommodate parking underneath. Priced at an estimated \$3.5 million, this scenario is not in conformance with the Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan, exceeds the maximum height allowance, and creates an unattractive, open-air parking condition below the

building. A useful analysis should be conducted to determine the cost and number of spaces that could be provided on site without significantly reducing the usable square footage on the ground floor.

The second option proposed by the County Executive examines the cost of providing 29 parking spaces in an underground parking garage. Priced at \$5.9 million, or approximately \$203,000 per parking space, the proposed underground garage is independent of the future residential building. This scheme suggests that the library will cover the costs of constructing the entrance ramp, and allow the future residential building to utilize the ramp for its underground parking at no cost. The scheme also fails to use the most efficient layout for parking spaces. A more efficient layout and construction process could significantly reduce underground parking costs, making the provision of a limited number of accessible spaces feasible.

## CONCLUSION

To accommodate parking for persons with disabilities at the Silver Spring library, the Planning Department recommends:

- Creating on-site accessible parking close to the library entrance, utilizing the future residential site and later the residential building's underground garage along with accessible parking spaces on Bonifant Street.
- Improving the Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue intersection as recommended in the Sector Plan by implementing pedestrian-priority signal phasing.

Given the viability of alternative strategies for providing accessible parking spaces for persons with disabilities, the Planning Department has the following concerns about amending the Urban Renewal Plan to allow a pedestrian bridges:

- The Wayne Avenue Garage cannot provide accessible van access to the pedestrian bridge as required by the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities (ADAAG).
- The proposed pedestrian bridge is not the most cost effective solution, and does not provide the best value to the community as an investment in public infrastructure.
- The Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan and Silver Spring CBD Sector Plan recommend revitalizing adjacent neighborhoods, specifically Fenton Village, by creating pedestrian-friendly connections to the Urban Renewal Area.

## Attachments

- Image of Wayne Avenue Garage height limit;
- Image of access route to pedestrian bridge;
- Images of Fenton Street development proposals;
- Images of a scramble intersection in Oakland, California;
- Images of proposed intersection upgrade

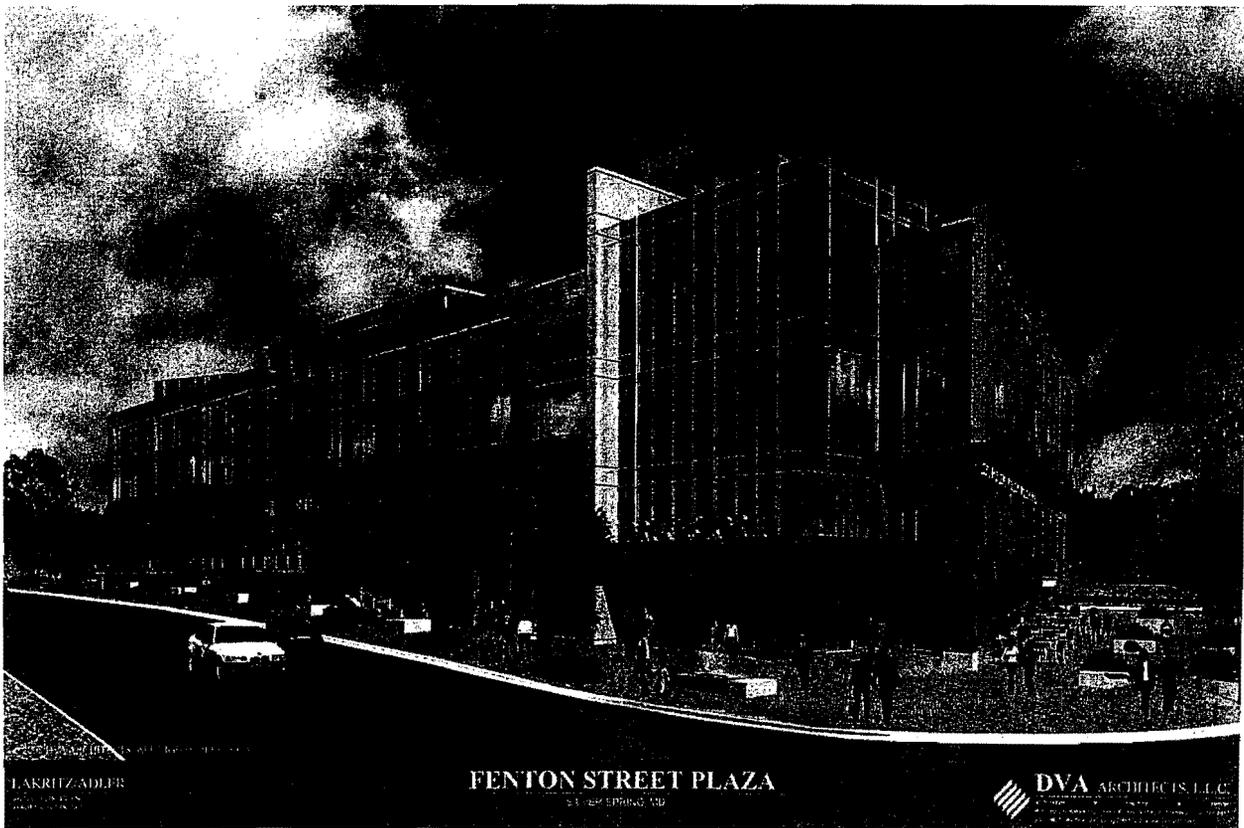
Image of Vehicle Height Limit in the Wayne Avenue Garage



Image of Access Route to Pedestrian Bridge



# Images of Proposed Office and Retail Development on Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue



Images of a Scramble Intersection in Oakland, California<sup>6</sup>

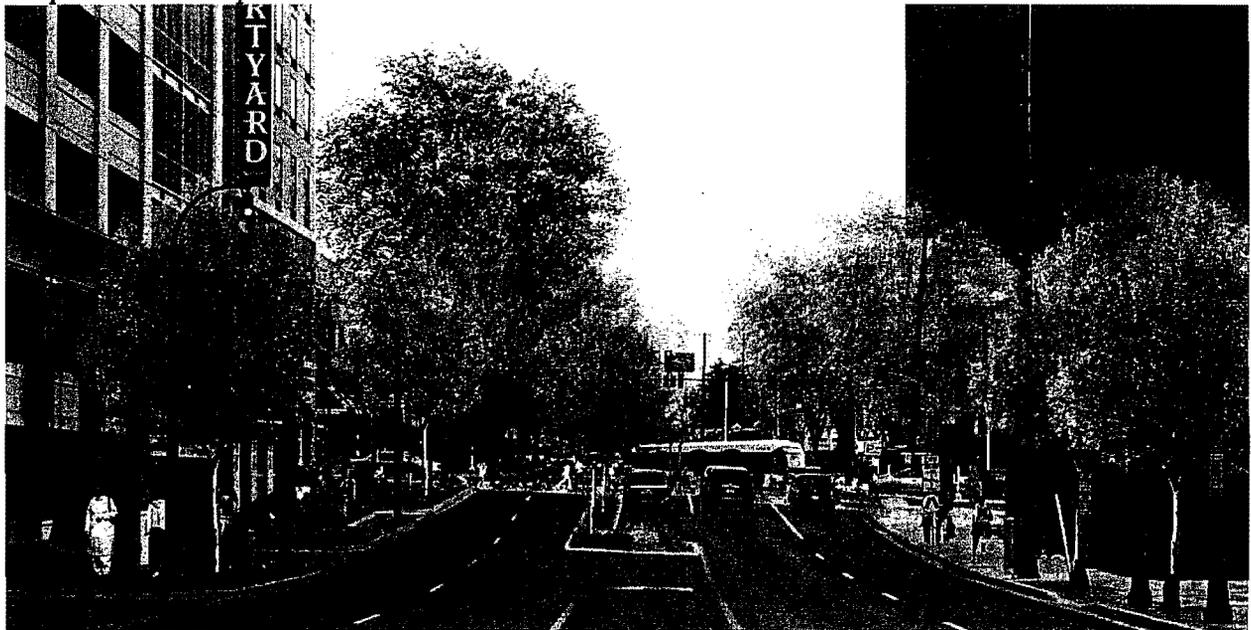


<sup>6</sup> San Francisco Streetsblog: <http://sf.streetsblog.org/2009/01/13/eyes-on-the-street-history-of-oakland-chinatowns-barnes-dance/>

**Images of Additional Intersection Improvements at Wayne Street and Fenton Village**  
Existing:



Proposed Landscaped Median:



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Montgomery County Council  
Public Hearing of June 30, 2009  
Resolution to Amend the Silver Spring CBD Urban Renewal Plan  
Consideration of Proposed Pedestrian Bridge at Silver Spring Library Site  
Testimony of David Dise, Director, Montgomery County Department of General Services

Good afternoon Council President Andrews and Council Members. My name is David Dise and I am the Director of Montgomery County's Department of General Services, which is responsible for the design and construction of County facilities, including the Silver Spring Library. I want to thank the Council for this opportunity to provide the County Executive's position on the modification to the 1999 Silver Spring Central Business District Urban (CBD) Renewal Plan.

We are here today to discuss challenges typical for any new facility like the Silver Spring Library; balancing competing needs to achieve optimal outcomes. Let me offer a quick summary about the County program that will be contained on the site. The project is located on County owned property at the corner of Fenton Street and Wayne Avenue, and will have a 63,000 square foot library; 20,000 square feet of Arts space; and 16,000 square feet of County office space, for a total of nearly 100,000 square feet of public use on the site. The site master plan includes the library and residential housing.

While the final mode and route of the Purple Line has not been identified by the State, the Library site is on the locally preferred route for the LRT, and will serve as the first station on the Purple Line east of the new Silver Spring Transit Center and the Metro Station. The design of the building is taking this possibility into consideration.

The Silver Spring Library has gone through significant public outreach during each step of the project development. Four public site design charrettes were hosted by the County in this process, from which came a final design scheme for the library and residential development that resulted in the most economical and effective approach to parking and automobiles. The site option that was selected utilizes the existing parking in the Wayne Avenue Garage which will result in significant savings to the project and is more environmentally sustainable. We are now going through a series of design meetings for the library building.

Throughout the design process there has been an ongoing consideration and concern for pedestrian access and safety, including safe and pedestrian friendly intersections. It is a priority that this project provides safe and inviting paths to bring pedestrians to the Silver Spring Library and future Purple Line station. The layout and design of the library site accomplishes 5 important public objectives:

1. The new Silver Spring Library programs and collection will have a strong focus on the disability community. Elderly and disabled patrons, and parents with small children, must have a reasonable, safe, and fair access, allowing accessibility to and use of the library to its fullest extent.

When the Urban Renewal Plan was developed in 1999, it was not known that the Wayne Avenue site would be designated for the library and the urban renewal project and plan did not address the confronting side of Wayne Avenue.

The importance of reasonable, safe and fair access for this community was recently highlighted in the recent work at Council to deal with the use and installation of brick pavers in the sidewalks and the impact on both the visually impaired and the mobility impaired. Qualifying disabilities for the use of ADA parking as defined by the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration include certain visual impairment or lacking the ability to walk without assistance or without stopping for 200 feet (the pedestrian bridge allows us to meet this requirement). With those parameters in mind we believe the bridge option is the best solution to afford disabled library patrons a safe, unfettered and protected access to the library's main entry.

2. The solution must take full advantage of the County's already built infrastructure, the Wayne Avenue Garage, demonstrating good fiscal stewardship.  
The estimated cost of the pedestrian bridge is \$750,000 compared to onsite at-grade handicapped parking at an estimated cost of \$3.5 million, and \$6.5 million if below-grade parking is constructed.
3. In keeping with the County's efforts to promote mass transit, walking, and cycling and reducing the overall carbon footprint of the new facility, no new parking spaces will be constructed.  
This project has the opportunity to be the most transportation friendly building the County owns or operates, with its pedestrian and cycling access, its location on existing bus lines and the future Purple Line. The County can reinforce this importance by not building more parking in a Parking Lot District that already has excess capacity.
4. The parking and access solution must not shift the economic burden or hardship onto other businesses or users in the CBD.
5. The parking and access solution must be available from the day the library opens and cannot depend on future actions of other parties, or future construction funding or efforts.

The library design approved by the County Executive, and supported by the HHS Committee and County Council anticipates utilizing the Wayne Avenue garage, a 1,665 space garage built as part of the downtown Silver Spring redevelopment, which operates at 65% to 70% capacity, with an access bridge between the library and the garage to meet the accessible access requirements.

Since the original drafting of the Urban Renewal Plan, significant changes have occurred in the world in which the County operates and this recommended change to the Plan is a natural extension of those changes.

In a public announcement for the Planning Board's public hearing on this matter a very key point was made; the proposed bridge will "connect" library patrons with the Wayne Avenue

garage. It is precisely the element of “connection” between existing parking and library patrons that establishes the need for this bridge

The new library is located just outside the boundary of the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Area. However, the Wayne Avenue garage, just across the street from the library does fall within the Urban Renewal Area limits. Amending the Silver Spring Central Business District Urban Renewal Plan poses no threat to pedestrian traffic and street level activities in either the Silver Spring business district or any future redevelopment of Fenton Village.

The image of persons with mobility challenges, and parents or caregivers with children and bags of books walking through rain, wind, or other elements to a busy intersection, crossing the street, and then walking back down to a street level library entrance is not a pleasant picture. In contrast, accessing the library from existing covered parking conveniently located to benefit handicapped patrons and crossing over a busy street by means of an enclosed pedestrian walkway, directly into the library, is the shortest, and most secure distance between these two points. Further, the bridge will be designed to be attractive and to contribute to the urban environment, and not to detract from it.

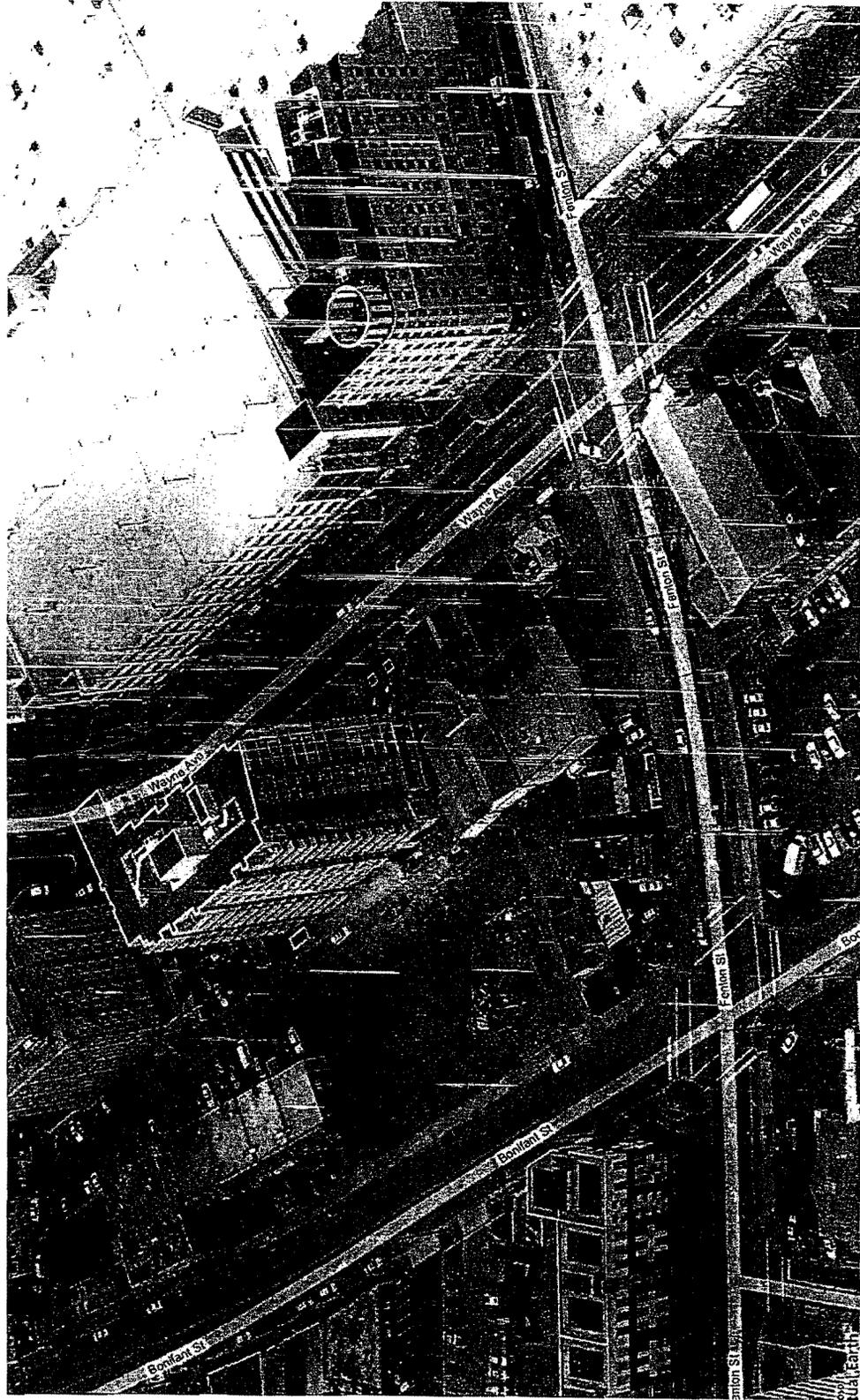
We respectfully disagree with assertions that a pedestrian bridge for library patrons would pull people off the streets, thereby adversely affecting the vibrant street level atmosphere and pose a threat to pedestrian safety. Nor would it emphasize the use of cars over other forms of transportation. In fact, utilizing existing parking and incorporating future mass transit into the site design emphasize a commitment to public transit and reducing automotive traffic. While the site design will allow for drop-off on site, providing limited parking onsite is unnecessary under the proposed plan, which utilizes existing parking and provides easier access for disabled persons and other patrons having special needs. Further, the plan includes intersection and sidewalk improvements so that patrons on the street have access to street-level arts and other activities, as well as providing easy access to the library without having to worry about incoming and outgoing car traffic.

Municipalities such as Portland, Oregon, that are recognized for successful public transportation and pedestrian friendly planning have effectively incorporated pedestrian bridges into their planning. While some urban environments known for densely packed towering office buildings may be removing bridges, there is no direct correlation to the specific purpose of this particular pedestrian access way from an existing public garage to a public library. It should be noted that there is no retail activity on the block of Wayne Avenue where the library and garage front. The bridge cannot pull people from commercial activities along a street where no such activities exist, or are planned to exist.

In conclusion, the 1999 Silver Spring Central Business District Urban Renewal Plan should be amended to permit a pedestrian bridge over Wayne Avenue connecting the Wayne Avenue garage with a County facility that includes a public library located on the opposite side of Wayne Avenue outside of the Urban Renewal Area. This bridge will comply with ADA design standards, provide protection from the weather and utilize transparent construction materials to enhance security. I ask that you support the requested modification, and we would be happy to answer any questions you may have.



# Silver Spring Library & Art Center Montgomery County Public Libraries



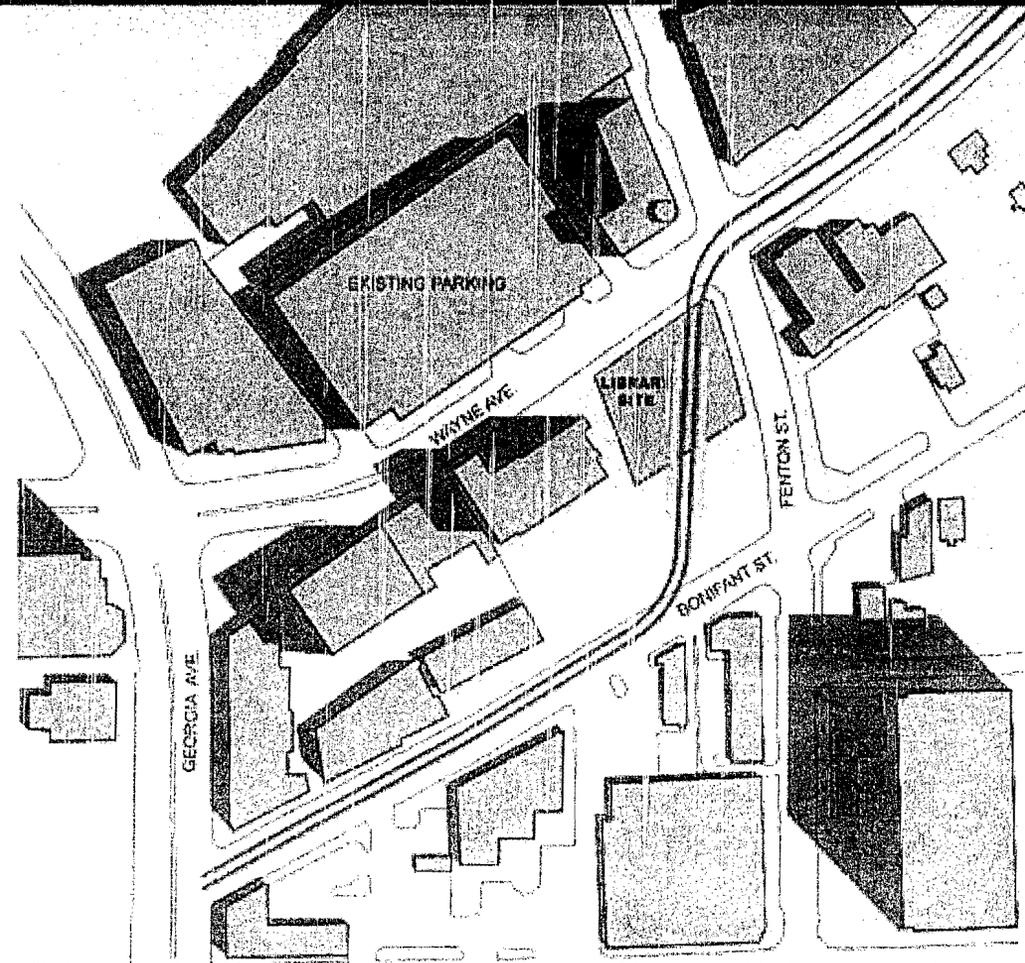
## On-site Parking Analysis



# Parking Options

- Bridge from Wayne Ave. Garage (Option 1)
- On-site parking – on grade (Option 2)
- On-site parking– below grade (Option 3)
- Temporary parking on adjacent residential site (Option 4)
- Parking in Wayne Ave. Garage (Options 5 & 6)
- Other Action:
  - Provide accessible drop-off locations
  - Upgrade street intersection anticipating future Purple Line
  - Upgrade streetscape anticipating future Purple Line

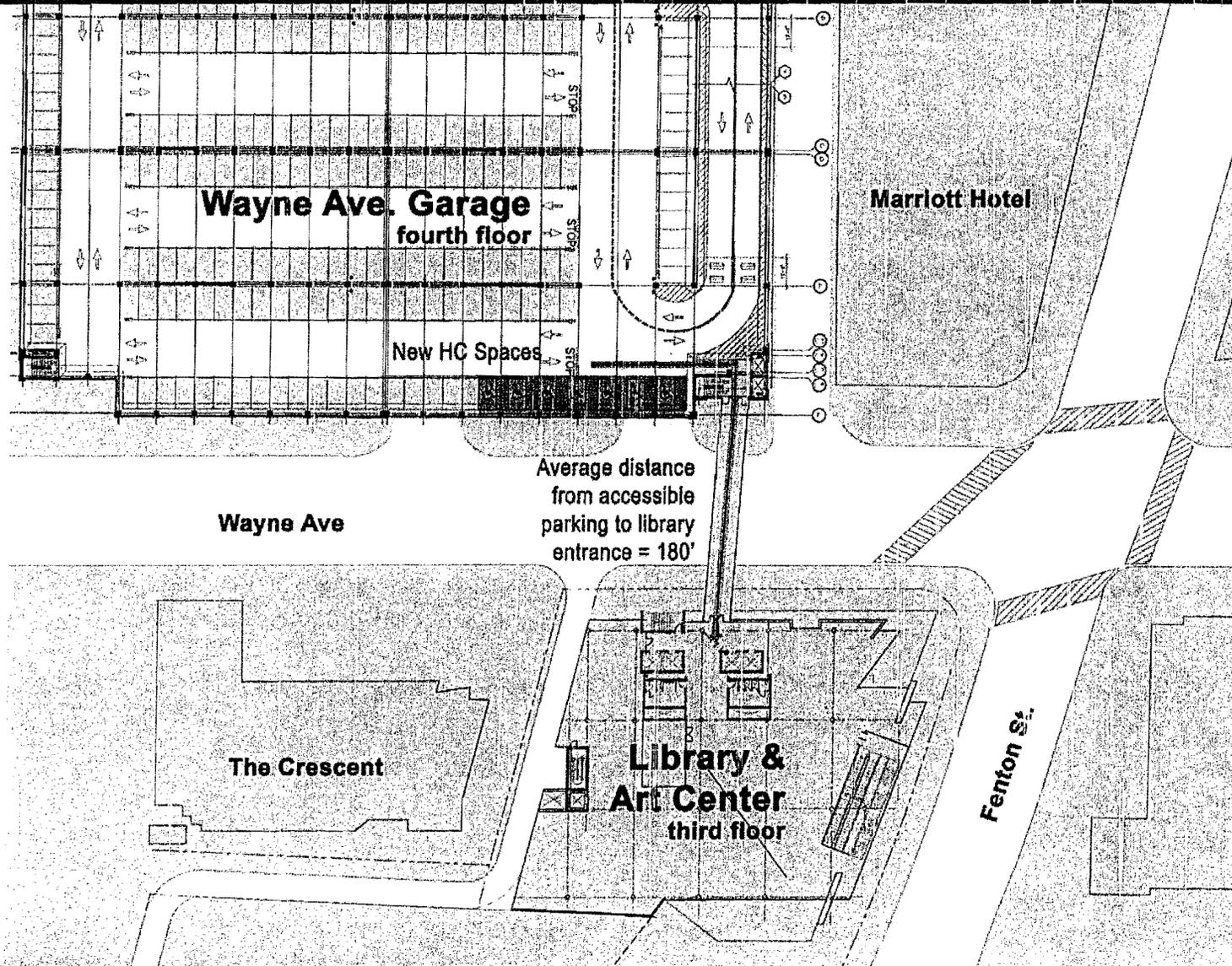
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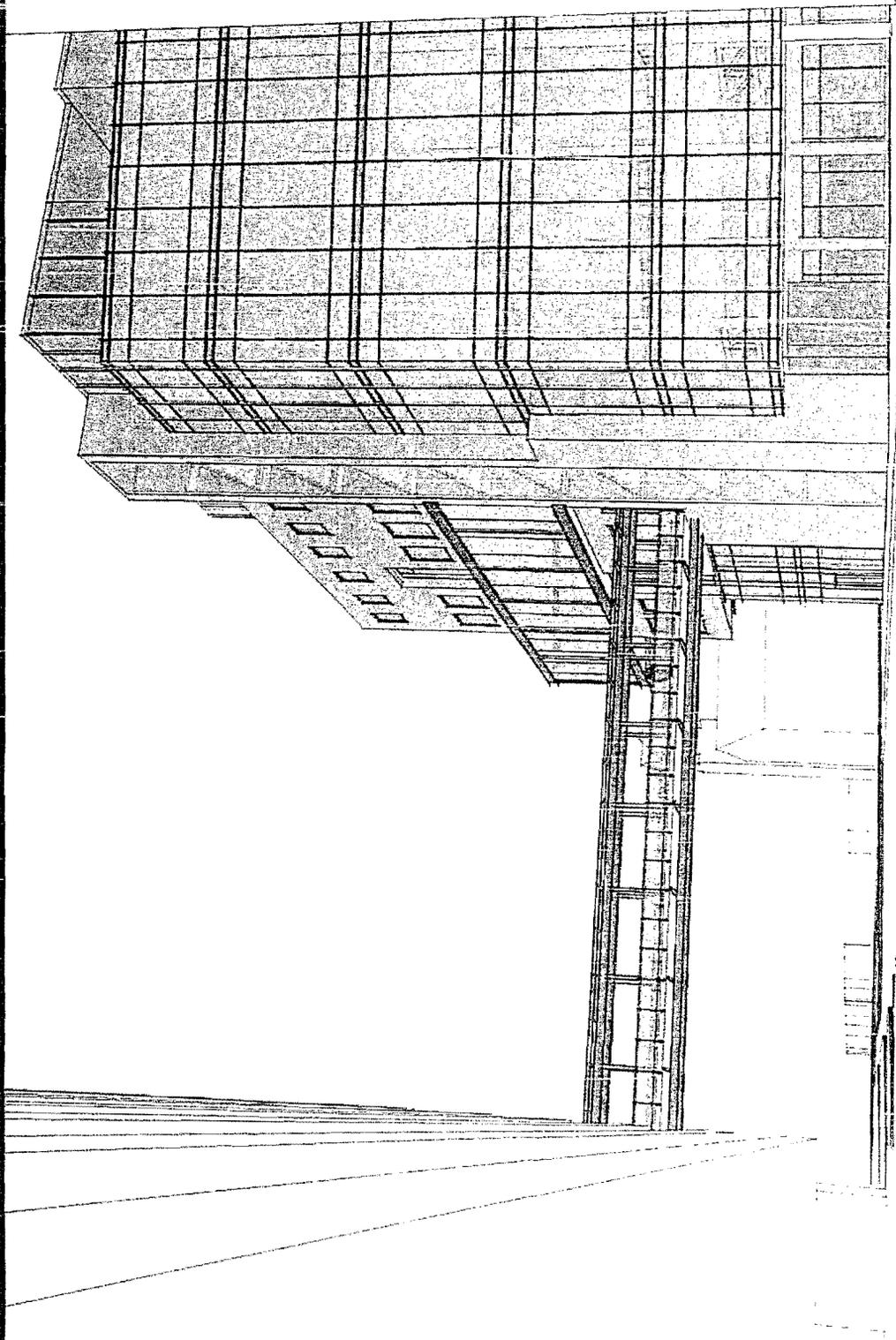
# Bridge Accessible Parking Option 1

180 ft. travel distance

27

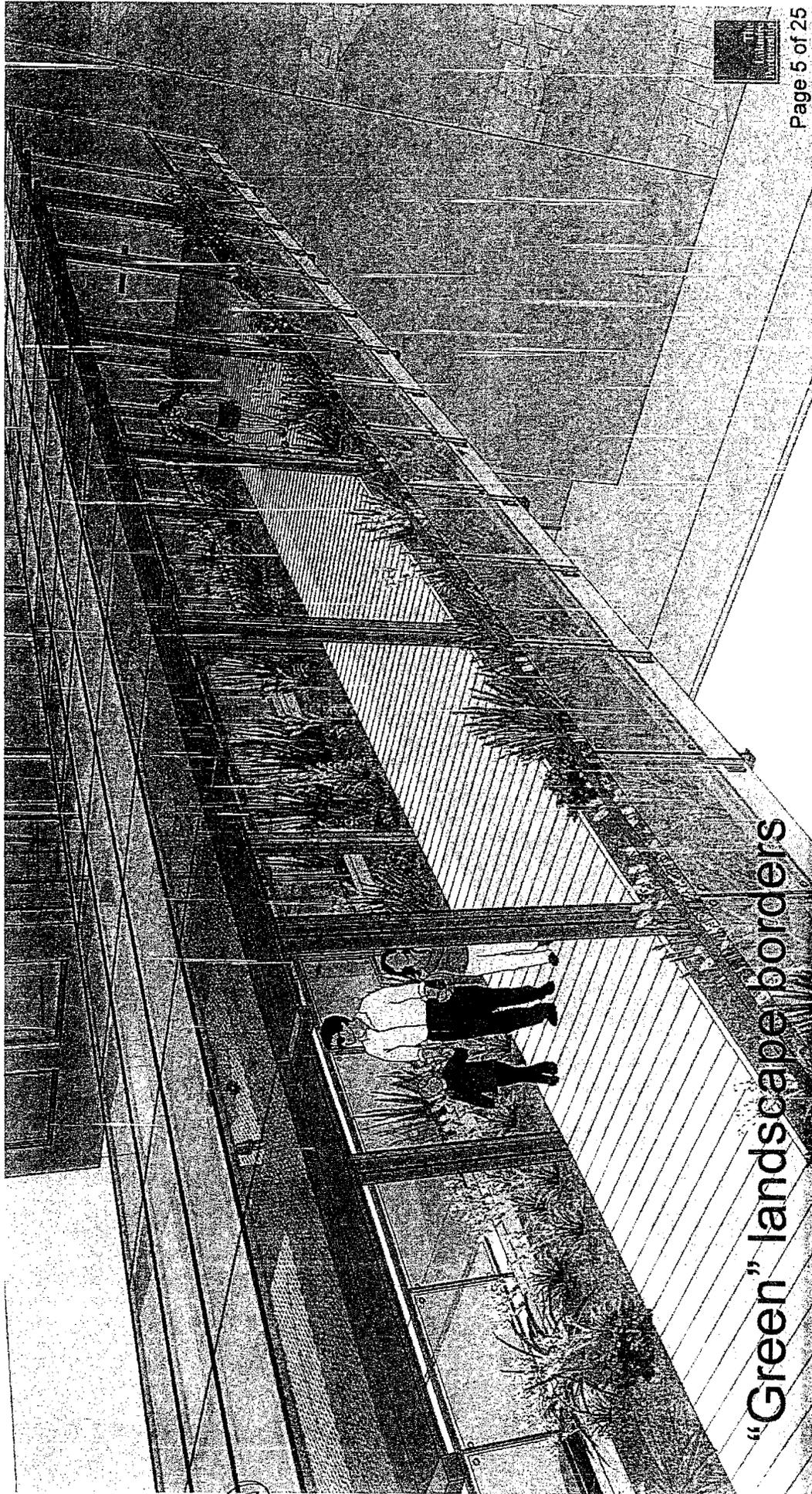


# Bridge Concept



View from Georgia Avenue

# Bridge Concept

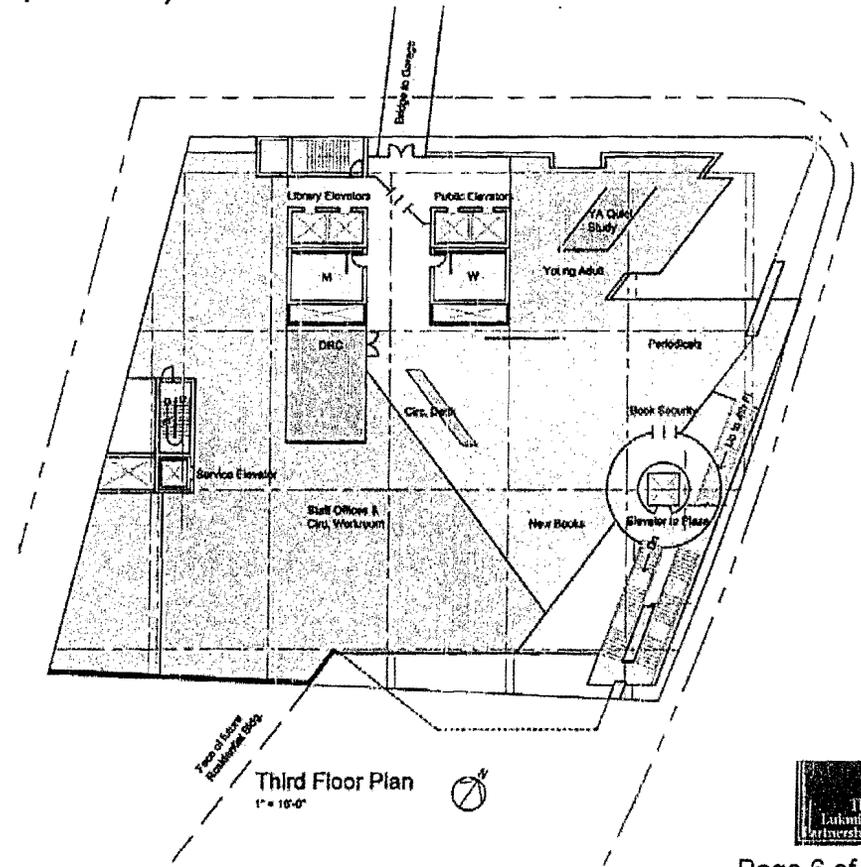
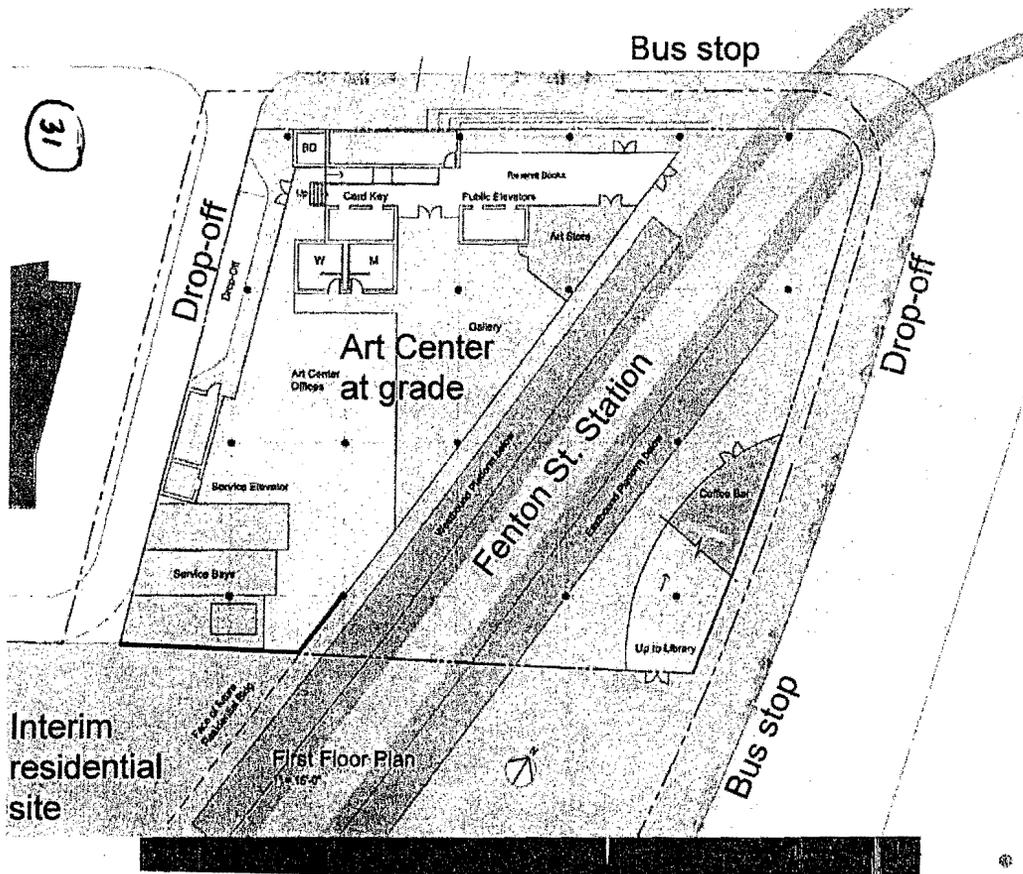


“Green” landscape borders

# Bridge - Accessible Parking Option 1

Provide pedestrian bridge from Wayne Ave. Garage.

Cost of bridge is estimated at \$745,228



# Bridge - Accessible Parking Option 1

– **Advantages:**

- Provides least cost option for 'on-site' accessible parking.
- Provides secure, weather protected access directly to Library for patrons arriving by car, including those w/ physical limitations who may not qualify for HC parking permits.
- Makes use of County's previous investment in Wayne Ave. Garage.
- Keeps Art Center's retail functions at street level.

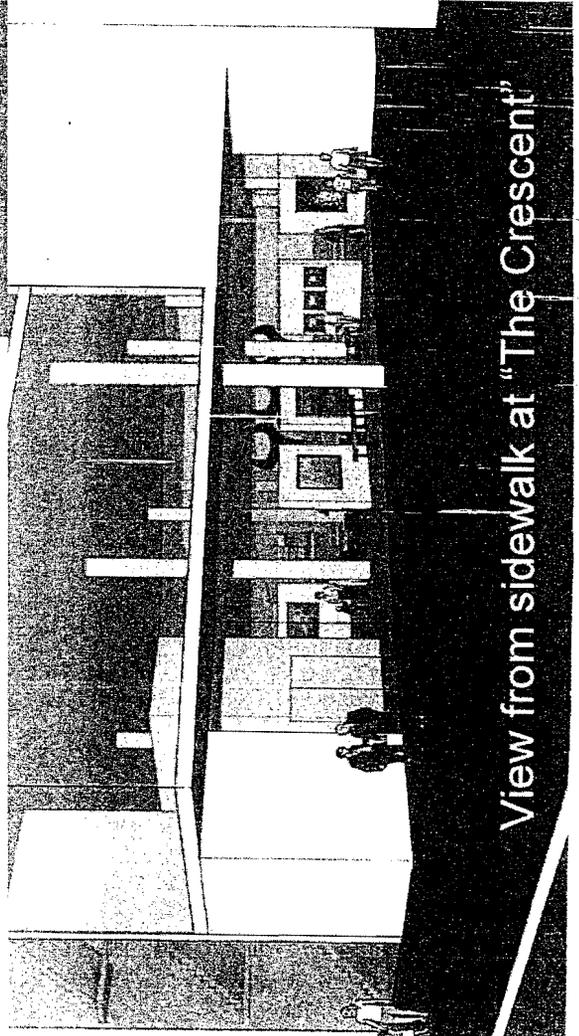
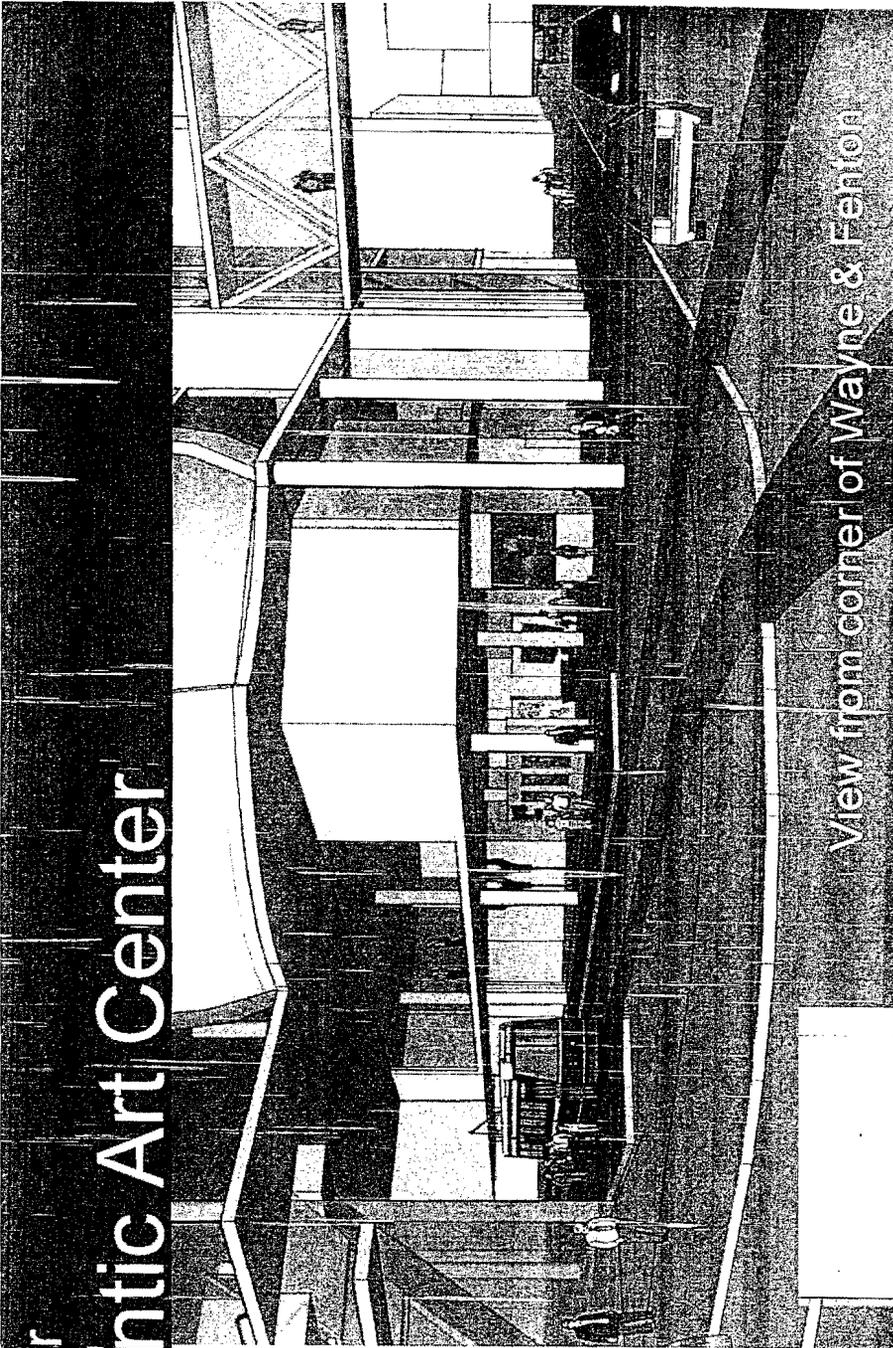
– **Disadvantages:**

- Removes small number of Library patrons from the street - but only if once at the library, patrons won't go outside.
  - 122-160 parking spaces = 10% - 12% of library patrons\* coming from garage.

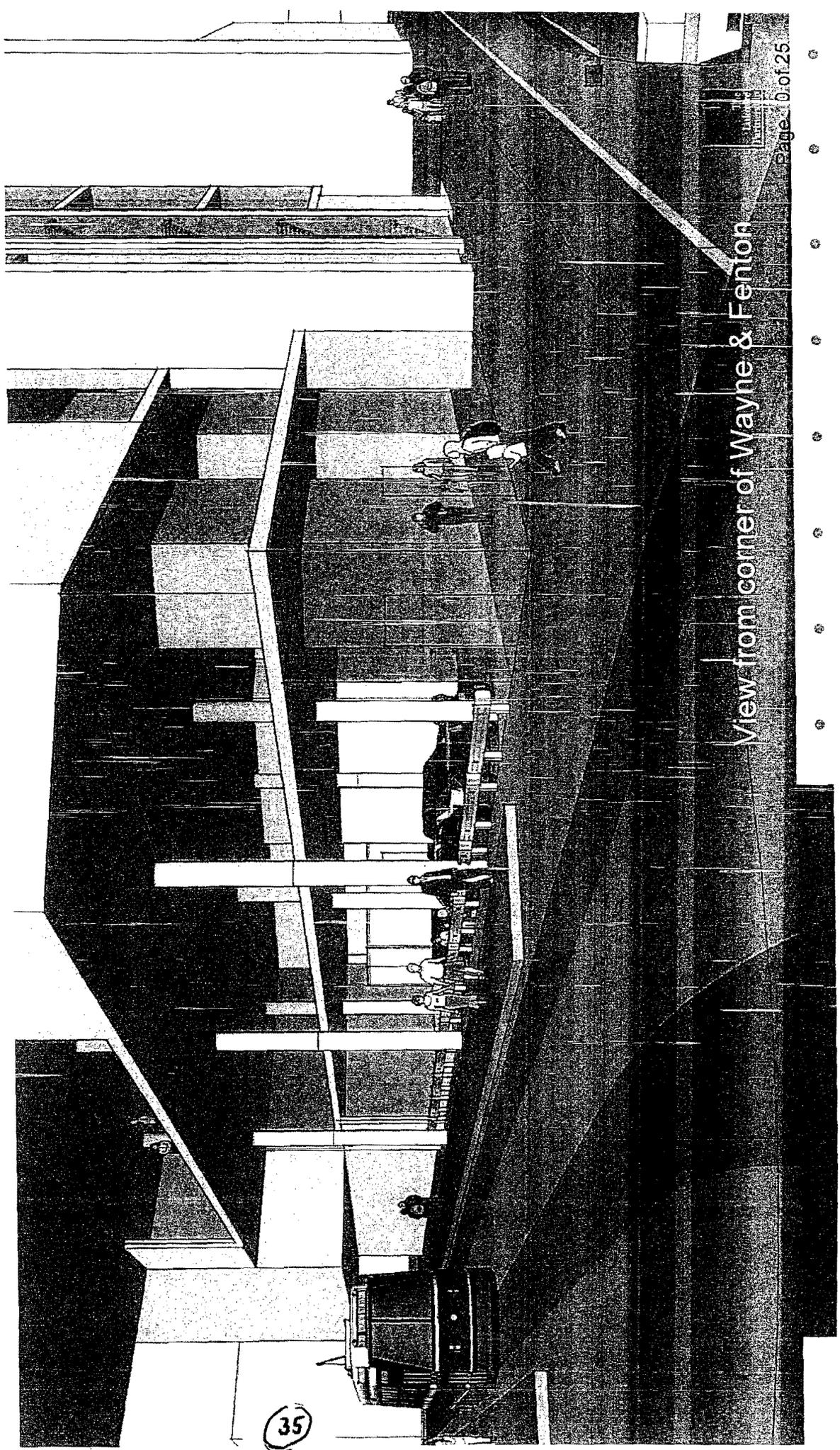
\*1.9 x 1,000 SF = 122 spaces (2hrs max) x 9 hrs = 440-550 or 10-12% of projected patrons.



# Schematic Design for Pyramid Atlantic Art Center

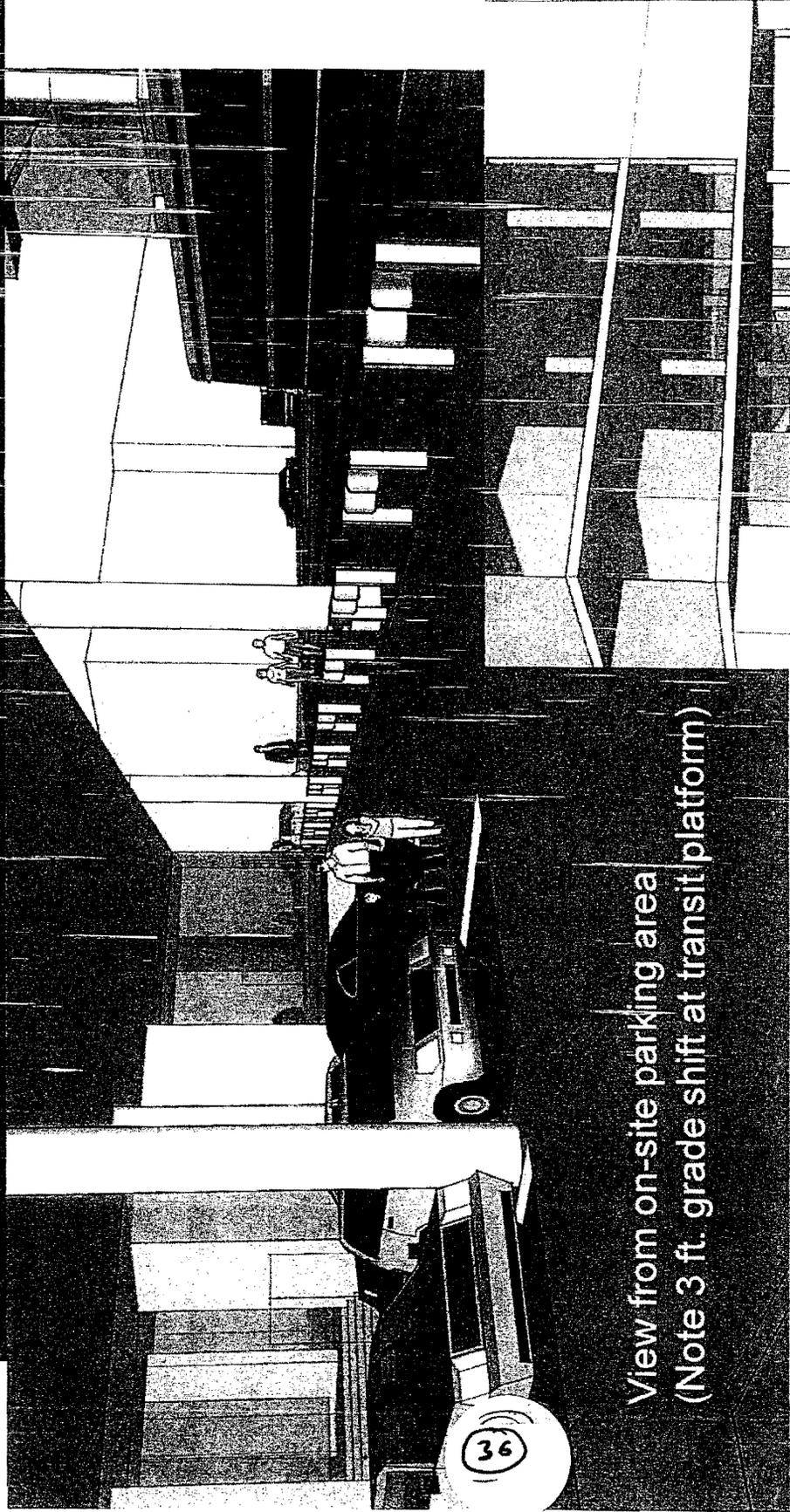


# Accessible Parking Option 2



View from corner of Wayne & Fenon

# Accessible Parking Option 2



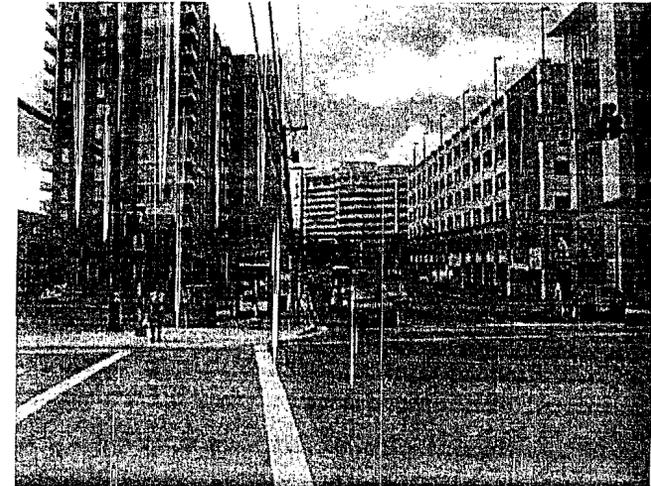
View from on-site parking area  
(Note 3 ft. grade shift at transit platform)

View from sidewalk at "The Crescent"

## Accessible Parking Option 2

Provide 5,100 SF at-grade parking spaces:

- removes the public-facing Art Gallery and Art Store to an upper level.
- moves the entire 22,000 SF building structure one floor higher
- requires street level lobby separate from rest of facility.
- increased expense of escalators, stairs, and elevators.
- requires remaining 2 accessible spaces to be at upper level of Wayne Ave. Garage.
- Splitting accessible spaces between two sites creates inherent functional disadvantage for disabled users.



## Accessible Parking Option 2

### Advantages:

- Avoids pedestrian bridge.
- Brings patrons and County staff to street level.
- Provides majority of required accessible parking requirement on site.

### Disadvantages:

- **\$3.6M** equates to + **\$700,000 / parking space.**
- Exceeds 120' Zoning height limit.
- Replaces street level retail with parking lot.
- Loses pedestrian traffic to Art Gallery & Art Store.
- Contradicts intent of approved Master Plan for on-site retail.
- Deletes 1 Library drop-off space shown in Option 1.
- Splits HC parking into two locations, making it difficult to direct disabled patrons looking for parking.



# Accessible Parking Option 3

Requires County construction of the first section of the garage for the future residential project

Garage ramp descends 20 ft. from grade to clear the Purple Line above, and will carry Purple Line.

Garage ramp =	10,000 SF
Future garage below ramp =	10,000 SF.
<u>Parking below grade =</u>	<u>16,320 SF.</u>
Total area below grade =	36,230 SF.

⑤

## Accessible Parking Option 3

### Advantages:

- Avoids pedestrian bridge.
- Keeps Art Gallery & Store at street level.
- Keeps building below 120' Zoning height limit.
- Brings most patrons and County staff to street level.
- Provides on-site accessible parking.
- Provides limited short term parking.

(14)

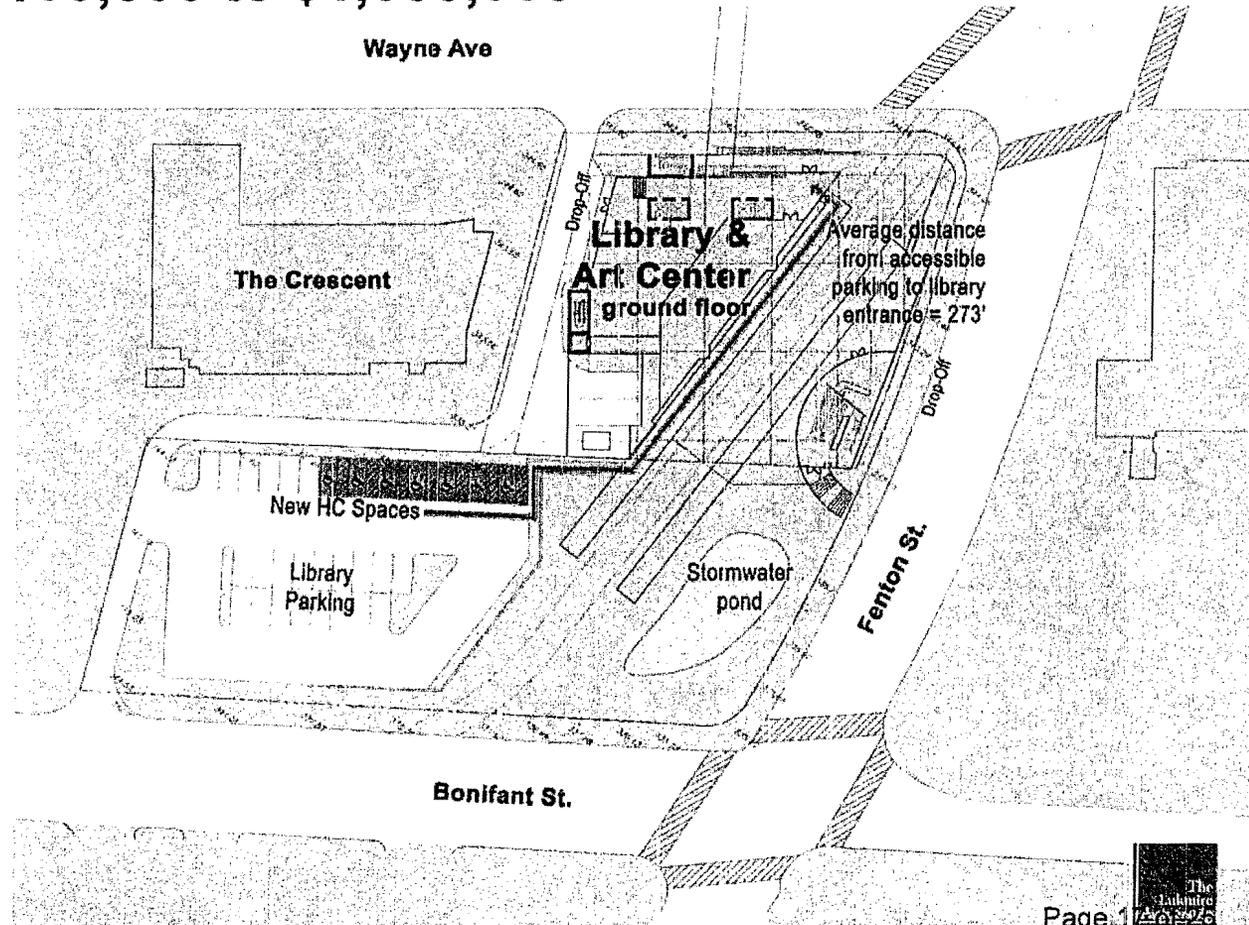
### Disadvantages:

- **\$5.9M** equates to over **\$200,000 / space**.
- Requires County to participate in constructing residential garage.
- Commits design of garage prior to developer's input on residential property.
- Complicates ownership & maintenance agreements between County and developer.
- May discourage developer interest in residential project.

# Accessible Parking Option 4 273 ft. travel distance

Temporarily provide 7 accessible + 20 short term spaces on future residential site

Cost is estimated at \$1,100,000 to \$1,600,000



# Accessible Parking Option 4

## Advantages:

- Avoids pedestrian bridge.
- Brings most patrons and County staff to street level.
- Provides temporary accessible parking on adjacent site.
- Provides limited short term parking.

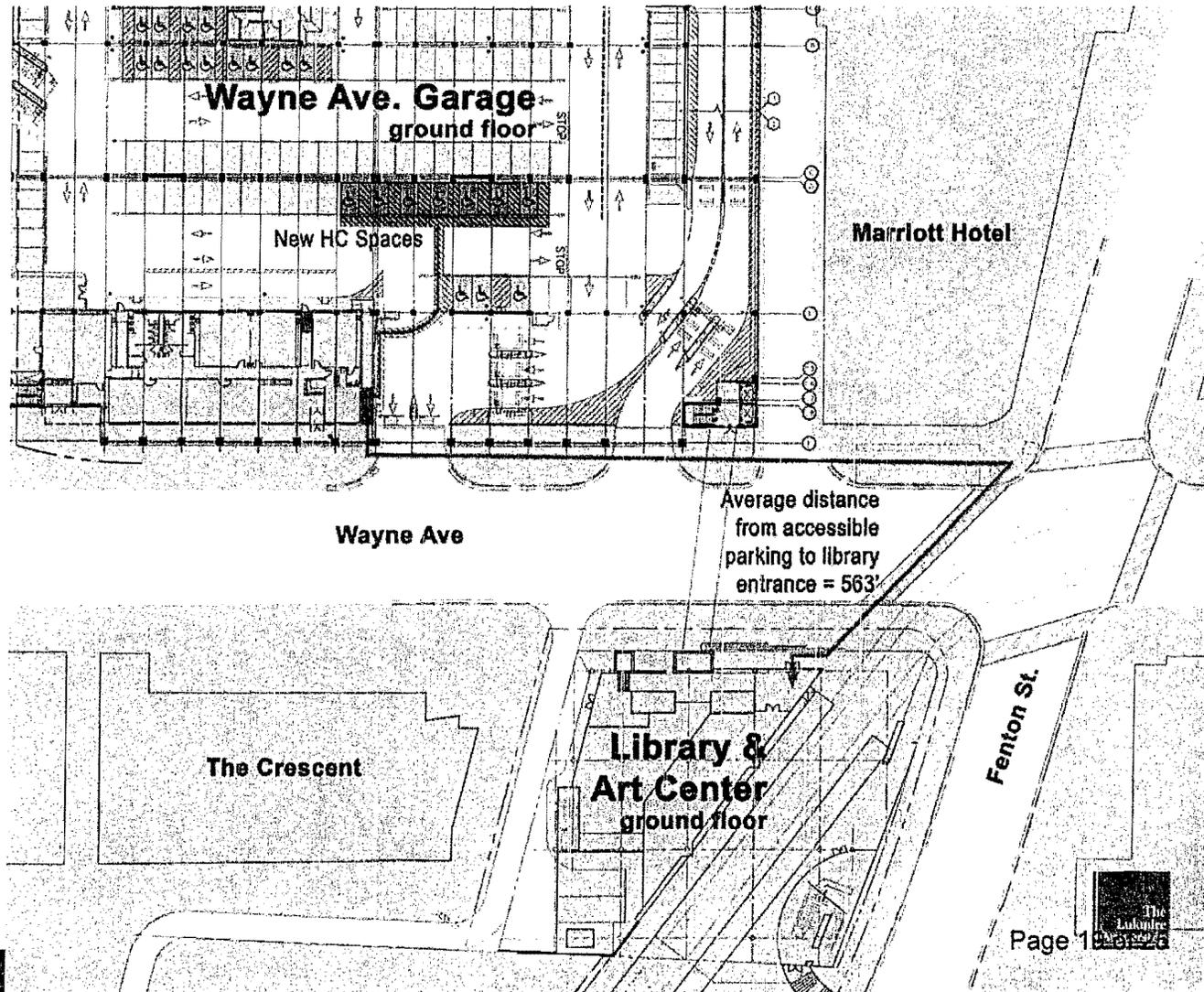
## Disadvantages:

- Provides no accessible parking for 2+ years of construction.
- Initial County investment lost to future residential project.
- Additional cost required for County parking in future garage (\$40,000 – \$50,000 per space).
- Long term parking in residential bldg. requires public access to private garage and residential lobby. & +/- 400 ft. travel distance.

# Accessible Parking Option 5

563 ft. travel distance

Provide 7 accessible space at ground level in Wayne Ave. Garage



# Accessible Parking Option 5

## Advantages:

- Avoids pedestrian bridge.
- Brings patrons and County staff to street level.

## Disadvantages:

- Travel distance exceeds 200 ft. Maryland HC permit definition.
- Path of travel crosses:
  - travel lanes inside garage;
  - 2 entrance lanes + 2 exit lanes to garage;
  - 2 lanes at alley entrance to Marriott
  - Wayne Avenue (5 lanes)

5h

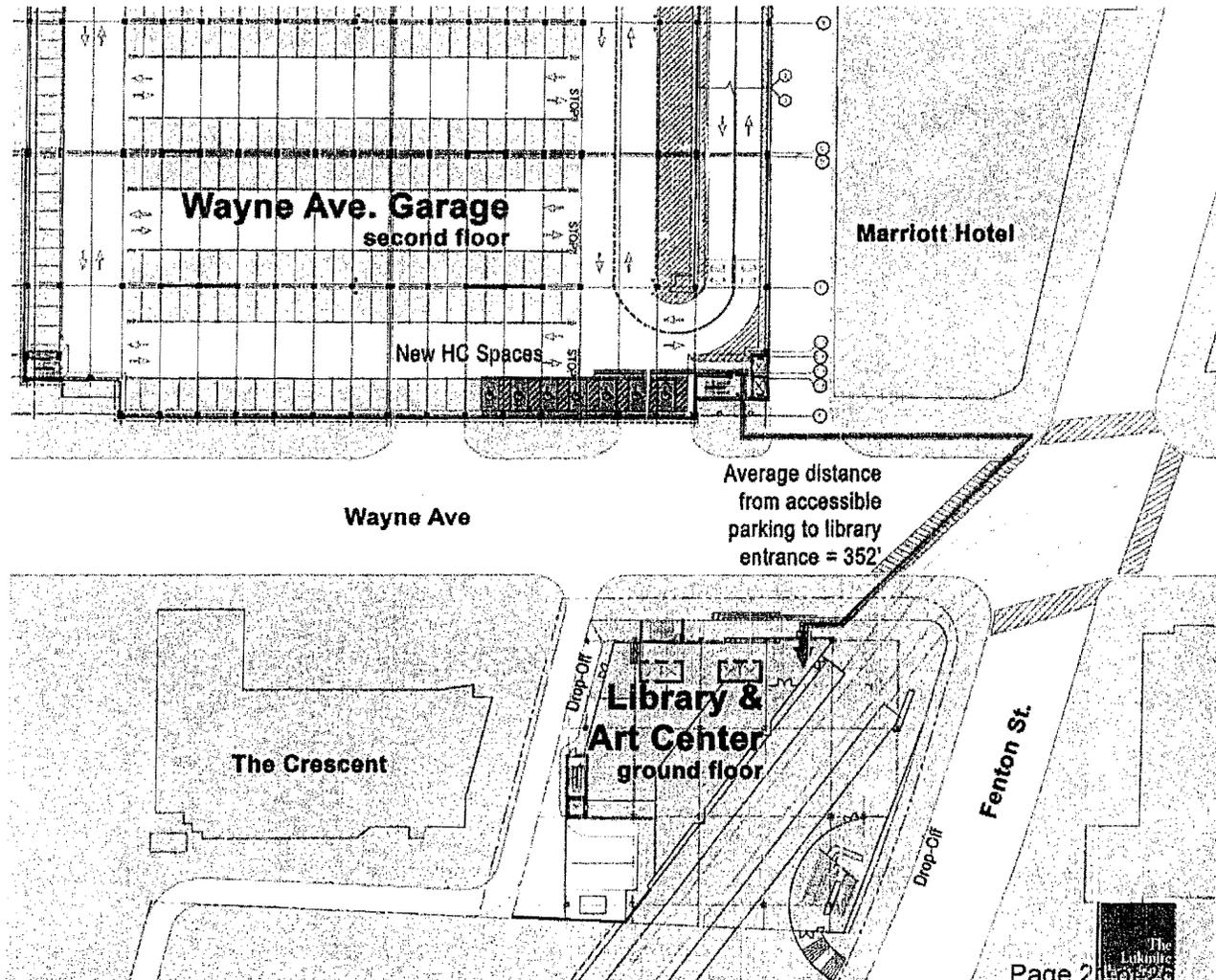


# Accessible Parking Option 6

352 ft. travel distance

Provide 7 accessible space at upper level in Wayne Ave. Garage

9h



# Accessible Parking Option 6

## Advantages:

- Avoids pedestrian bridge.
- Brings patrons and County staff to street level.

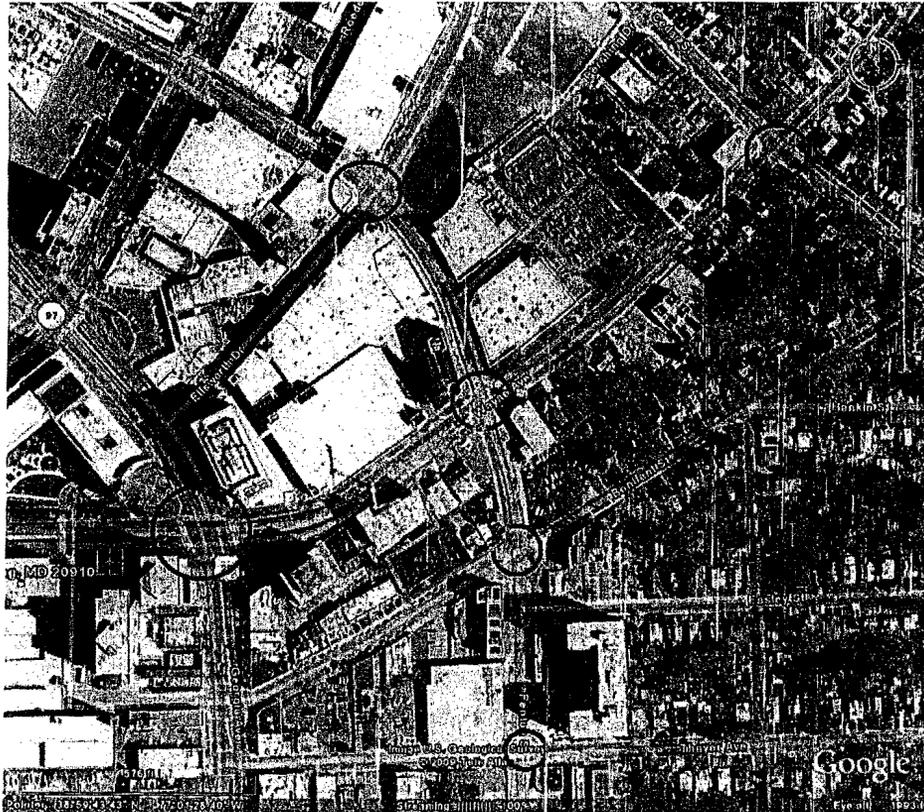
## Disadvantages:

- Travel distance exceeds 200 ft. Maryland HC permit definition.
- Path of travel crosses:
  - travel lanes inside garage;
  - 2 entrance lanes + 2 exit lanes to garage;
  - 2 lanes at alley entrance to Marriott
  - Wayne Avenue (5 lanes)

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# Silver Spring Library & Art Center

Montgomery County Public Libraries



- Wayne at Fenton
- Cedar at Wayne
- Wayne at Georgia
- Ellsworth at Fenton
- Thayer at Fenton
- Bonifont at Fenton

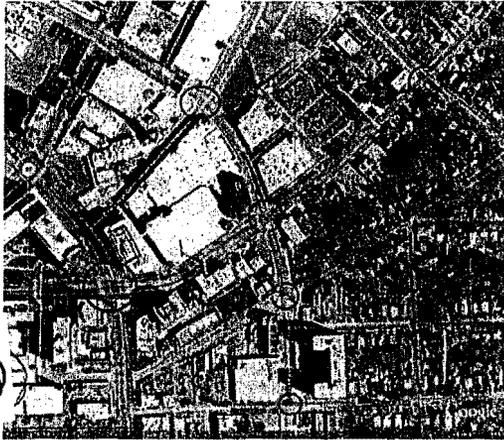
## Intersection Improvements

July 21, 2009



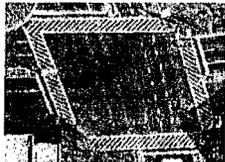
# Silver Spring Library & Art Center

Montgomery County Public Libraries



## 6 Intersections Examined

- Add 4 high contrast four way crosswalks (\$16,000)
- Add 3 Audible Pedestrian Signals (APS) (\$300,000)
- All current intersections already have count down pedestrian heads and marked crosswalks
- Improve Wayne Avenue at both sides to control Pedestrian crossing (\$100,000 to \$150,000)

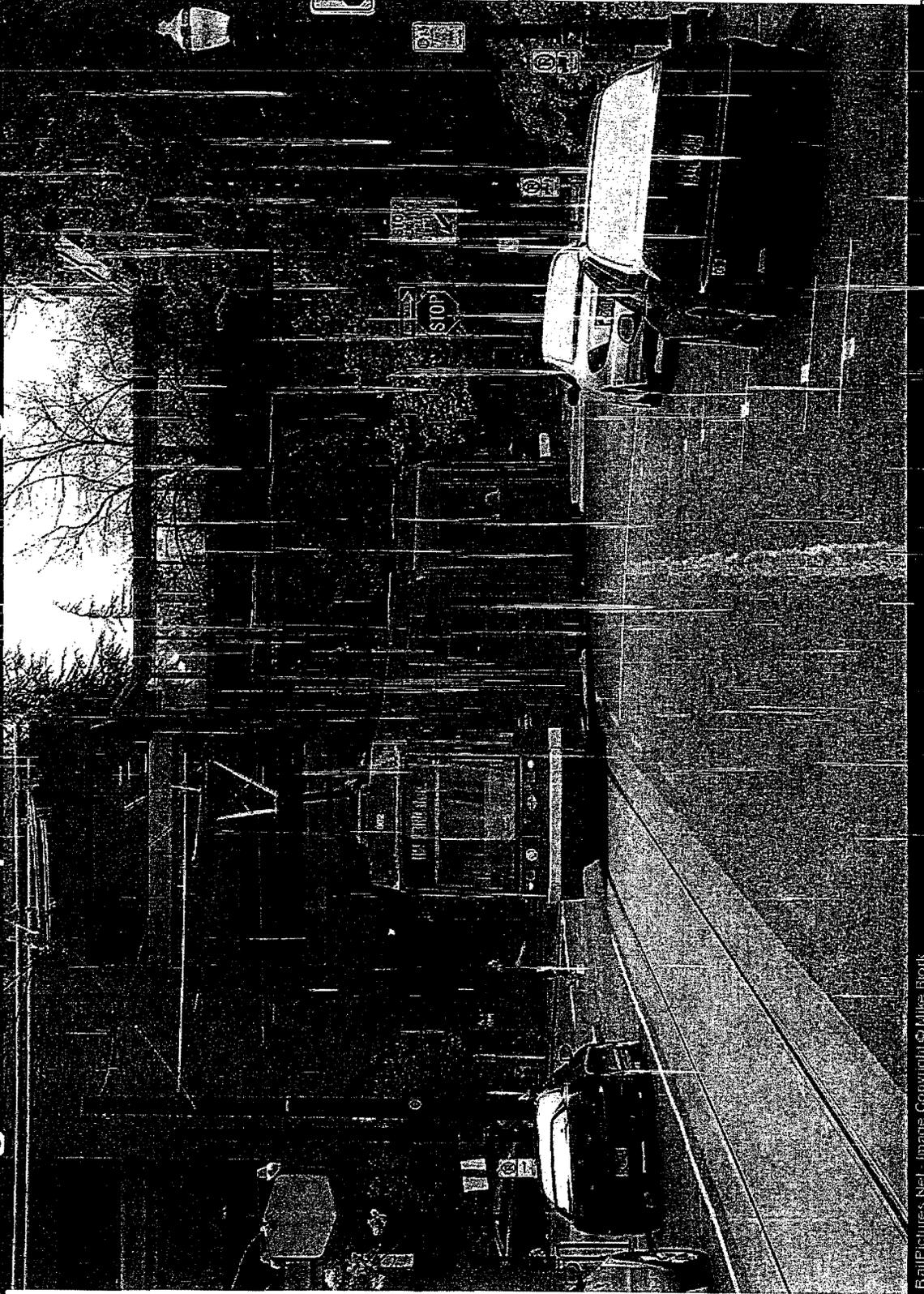


## Intersection Improvements

July 21, 2009



# Portland, Oregon light rail w/ pedestrian bridge



2

June 30, 2009

Council President Phil Andrews  
Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue, 6th floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Dear President Andrews:

I wish to express my strong support for the construction of a pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue for access to the new Silver Spring library.

The bridge will be necessary for the safe and convenient access by many patrons-

- disabled individuals
- the elderly
- mothers with young children
- multi-taskers who have too much to carry

The bridge provides a reasonable and safe access for the elderly, disabled, and all customers to use the library to its fullest extent.

The new Silver Spring Library can only keep our residents engaged, occupied, informed and educated if they can access the facility.

The bridge offers a safe and pedestrian friendly alternative to bring pedestrians and cyclists to the Silver Spring Library.

It is the best alternative that takes advantage of the County's already built infrastructure, the Wayne Avenue garage, and demonstrates good fiscal oversight.

I urge you to support the pedestrian bridge which is the proper solution for safe and convenient access to the new Silver Spring library.

Sincerely,

Lois H. Neuman, PhD  
Chair, Montgomery County Library Board



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board  
Testimony before County Council  
June 30, 2009

Hello, my name is Darian Unger, and I am the Chair of the Silver Spring Citizens Advisory Board. Our Board appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed gutting of the Silver Spring Urban Renewal Plan. We echo the community in **strongly opposing** amending the Silver Spring renewal plan to build a skybridge walkway. Our opinion is based on community sentiment. After many community meetings with residents, local businesses, library users, county staff and planners, a clear consensus has emerged.

Amending the urban renewal plan to allow a pedestrian bridge is a bad idea for several reasons:

**1) Sustainability: the proposed bridge is the polar opposite of smart growth and sustainable development.**

Champions of smart growth and thoughtful development oppose this pedestrian bridge. The existing prohibition against skywalks exists for an excellent reason. This is not the 1960's, and we are not in a cartoon episode of the Jetsons. Most pedestrian walkways are proven urban failures. They channel people like hamsters in tubes, inhibit street-level vitality, and encourage driving instead of walking or public transit. They are anathema to the kind of walkable, transit-and-pedestrian oriented communities that we are working to build near a metro station.

Voting to amend the urban renewal plan will undo a lot of good work. We are working towards a vibrant, open downtown, and have no wish to jam the brakes, reverse course and mimic Crystal City.

Further, this library will be over a Purple Line station and a block away from the Silver Spring Metro and Transit Center. The county chose years ago to move the library to this urban location and transit hub. One of the reasons the county decided to move it to an urban area in downtown Silver Spring was to make the library more accessible and to bring street vitality to the area. Whether you think that was a good idea or not, it would be foolish to now ignore the surroundings and build a bridge to, of all places, the upper story of a parking lot. The library will also link downtown Silver Spring to Fenton Village. A pedestrian bridge weakens that link, discourages walking, and encourages driving in a congested area. It is the exact opposite of smart development.

**2) Safety and accessibility: the bridge would be unnecessary, and would do more harm than good**

The Silver Spring library must be safely accessible to everyone. We will have a library conforming to ADA standards and already have a parking garage conforming to ADA standards. If the street-level crossing is made safe and easy, there will be no need for a bridge to circumvent it. Smooth, safe crosswalks with a safely-engineered intersection are the proper urban solution. This library can and should be safe and accessible without a bridge.

Although a pedestrian bridge would be helpful for the library and its driving patrons, it would be harmful to Silver Spring in general, the surrounding community, and pedestrians. By channeling people away from the

street, the pedestrian bridge would in fact make the street less safe by depriving it of pedestrians and literally stealing resources from the creation of a safe, ground-level crossing. The bridge proposal essentially says "if it's hard to cross the street right now, let's build a bridge over it rather than actually solve the problem." Those who walk to the library, along with pedestrians and patrons from downtown Silver Spring, will have a more dangerous intersection to cross because of a bridge catering to drivers.

We have heard from many residents and parents with small children that crossing ordinary roads (with safely designed intersections) is a normal and healthy part of life. They want a safe street level crossing; not a bridge.

**3) The bridge uses resources that – especially during these tight times – could really be better spent elsewhere.**

Since Silver Spring would be safer and more accessible without a bridge, we think the funding would be better spent on other aspects of the Library Department's budget. We have argued for a larger library, better signage, and a safer, flatter, all-stop crosswalk for easier accessibility. There is no shortage of other worthy goals on which to spend these funds.

In conclusion, the proposed pedestrian bridge is a narrow solution to a particular and valid concern. However, but if you take the time to look more broadly for solutions to the joint problems of accessibility, safety, and thoughtful development, there are several solutions that honor the community desire to create a walkable downtown in which the library plays a central part.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to express our appreciation for your consideration of community requests. Thank you very much.

My name is Cindy Buddington, and I am Chair of the Commission on People with Disabilities. Thank you for the opportunity to share our recommendations with you regarding access issues at the new Silver Spring Library.

Input for County projects from our Commission can help the implementing departments to provide the kind of infrastructure necessary to make our roads and sidewalks accessible and safe for all the residents of the county. The Commission had input with DOT into the recent completion of the pedestrian improvements made by the Department of Transportation to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Silver Spring, and that was a great step forward in pedestrian safety.

We want to thank Don Scheuerman, and the entire Department of General Services and Department of Transportation for requesting our input on this Silver Spring Library project walkway for the library prior to construction. He has done this before with the Silver Spring Transit Interim Operation Site, and as a result the County and State added many features that would improve access for people with disabilities as well as the entire community.

We understand that County's primary rationale is not one solely of safety; it is primarily one of accessibility and sustainability. The use of the existing underutilized parking garage is a "green" decision which saves the use of materials and taxpayer dollars which would have been otherwise needed to provide new on-site parking for the library. The disadvantage of utilizing the existing garage is the greatly increased travel path to the library for many patrons – including, but not limited to, the elderly and disabled who may need the disability parking spaces there. The bridge is being proposed to address this concern. FYI - one of the eligibility requirements to obtain a disability placard is that you **cannot walk more than 200 feet without stopping to rest**. The distance from the parking garage via the walkway is 189 feet. The distance from the garage on street level is over 300 feet.

With respect to the walkway and elevators to be used in accessing the library, for persons who are blind or who have visual impairments we are concerned about the level of accessible signage and way finding. Those with vision issues will need to find and understand the existence of the walkway, the elevators, and how to travel to the library and knowing where to go once inside. In short, a combination of large print, braille, and audible instructions would be helpful to those who do not see the route. Once inside the building, persons who are blind should be able to locate the elevators to go to the library and have large print, braille, and audible information available to them in finding the library. We also suggest that an audio recorded guide to the area be done by the library in order to give patrons who are blind the opportunity to better understand and utilize the environment surrounding them. This early introduction to the area would help with understanding what is happening around them as exemplified by the Purple Line.

In addition we recommend that all restroom doors be automated and that braille signage be placed on the wall next to the restroom door. Automated doors are not a requirement of the ADA, but makes restrooms more accessible for people with mobility impairments.

Accessing the library from the street level is as important as using the walkway. Insuring that the street sidewalk is easily traversed and the entryway to the building for the library is easily located are important dynamics. Avoiding the use of sidewalk spurs to access differing locations along the route is important from the perspective that a person could follow a spur and end up nowhere near where they want to go. Some change in the surface of the sidewalk might well be appropriate when crossing in front of the entry to the library building as a way of alerting persons who are blind that they have reached the entrance they seek.

While I am sure there is more we could add, we request that the Council take action to amend the Silver Spring Central Business District Urban Renewal Plan to enable the County to build a bridge from the parking garage to the library, include user friendly design that will accommodate as well as improve street access so that our entire community can use and enjoy this new library.

Thank you and we are here to offer our assistance.

MONTGOMERY COUNTY COUNCIL HEARING, JUNE 30, 2009  
PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE SILVER SPRING MASTER PLAN  
Testimony by Jean Dunnington, chair  
Disability Resource Center Library Advisory Committee

The Disability Resource Center Library Advisory Committee is the official liaison between the Montgomery County Public Library system and its patrons on issues involving disabilities. We are obviously interested in good access to the new Silver Spring Library, and for that reason **we strongly support the proposed bridge across Waune Avenue.** We are pleased to have this opportunity to comment on some concerns about the bridge. and to explain why we consider it necessary.

The concern that the proposed bridge will pull foot traffic away from the street comes from the mistaken idea that the bridge will lead directly into the library. In fact, it will lead to a lobby with the elevators to the street as well as the library entrance and the elevators to the county offices and perhaps to meeting rooms. These elevators can operate while the library is closed -- which makes the bridge simply a means of crossing Wayne Avenue easily from the upper levels of the garage. The destination could be a restaurant on Georgia Avenue, Bonifant Street, etc. as easily as the library.

A well-designed bridge could even create an attractive gateway to Fenton Street Village. And its horizontal line, in my opinion will soften the upward pull of the adjacent buildings' height and focus attention on the street level.

The concern for safety can be addressed in the design. We support a covered and mostly-enclosed bridge like the one across Rockville Pke; clear material for the sides and good lighting will provide good visibility. Security cameras for the bridge and lobby as well as the garage will be a crime deterrent, and the foot traffic will be a better one.

The proposed bridge is necessary because over half of people with disabilities who come to the county libraries either drive themselves or are driven by a taxi, a cabbie, and Metro Access drivers, Using the existing parking garage is the best plan. It will provide more parking spaces at a very much lower cost than the alternatives of underground parking or of temporary parking on the area designated for future residential development.

Without the proposed bridge, the plan gives disabled library patrons unsatisfactory choices. We can choose for limited street parking, We can travel several hundred feet, cross 5 lanes of traffic and take an elevator. We can be dropped off and picked up on a one-way access alley whose entrance is on the other side of the block from the library, which will inevitably be confusing. Or we can illegally block the curb lane on Wayne Avenue while we get in and out of vehicles.

The new Silver Spring Library is the primary occupant of this development. An anchor store, offered a similar location, would insist on the access bridge. Please treat the library with equal consideration, and amend the master plan to allow this bridge.

June 30, 2009

Montgomery County Council  
100 Maryland Avenue  
Rockville, MD 20850

Members of the County Council:

Thank you for your time and attention to today's testimony by the Silver Spring Library Advisory Committee.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our continued support for the construction of a pedestrian bridge connecting the Wayne Avenue parking garage with the new library. Our paramount concern is the need for all library patrons to be able to safely cross Wayne Avenue at street level as well as to have safe alternate access via the proposed pedestrian bridge.

Many of the library's current and expected future patrons are vulnerable to the vagaries of a complicated intersection filled with busy traffic carrying the many visitors to the Silver Spring Central Business District and nearby retail as well as commuters to Bethesda and to the District of Columbia. The intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street is also the proposed site of a Purple Line station, adding another transportation element to an already complex street-level situation. The Library Department anticipates a significant increase in the number of patrons at the new Silver Spring Library as well as an increase in the need for library services by the region's diverse population. Children's programs at the current library are already filled to bursting and accompanied by heavy stroller traffic with many caregivers weighed down by armloads of books as well as the need to maintain control of their young charges. The new library will also contain a Disabilities Resource Collection which will require safe and convenient access for many disabled individuals with diverse needs.

The pedestrian bridge will allow the public to take advantage of an existing county parking facility while providing ready access to retail on both sides of Wayne Avenue as well as to the library itself, an arts center, and public meeting space on the library site. Preliminary discussion indicates that ADA-required parking spaces can be readily allocated in the Wayne Avenue garage at the pedestrian bridge level. Furthermore, according to data supplied at the most recent design charrette by the Department of General Services, attempting to provide ADA-compliant on-site parking spaces would be significantly more expensive than building the pedestrian bridge and would radically alter the utility and appearance of the site, removing the arts center and any available space for street-level retail. Fiscal responsibility and a desire for a greener, more environmentally-conscious future dictate prudent use of county resources and argue against the addition of underground patron parking. In addition, the pedestrian bridge could be adapted to fill many auxiliary functions - signage to identify the library, public arts space for a mural or mosaic incorporating the many talents of the local art community, and/or a public notice board drawing attention to the many cultural events that energize a revitalized Silver Spring.

The Silver Spring Library has always served a diverse community. Through public outreach and the experiences of its members, the Silver Spring Library Advisory Committee has concluded that the pedestrian bridge is necessary to ensure safe access for all members of the library community.

Stephanie Subramanian

Chair, Silver Spring Library Advisory Committee



PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

July 17, 2009

Honorable Phil Andrews, President  
Montgomery County Council  
Montgomery County, Maryland

Dear Mr. Andrews:

The Pedestrian Traffic and Safety Advisory Committee, PTSAC, has been asked and challenged by County Executive Leggett to consider the needs of people, both able-bodied and physically-challenged, to have a safe and comfortable entry to the proposed Silver Spring Library.

We first received this challenge in February, 2009 and took the attached action, after giving careful study within the limited time frame we were given. Then, because of the advice we gave in opposition to that Pedestrian Bridge, we were asked to reconsider that advice. We did so again in March, May, and July, even inviting folks who represented those who have disabilities to meet with us. We were pleased to have the Chairwoman of the Disabilities Commission speak with us at our last meeting.

After all these meetings and having given serious thinking to the attached letter from County Executive Leggett, the PTSAC meeting in official session on July 9, 2009, VOTED again to NOT support the proposed Pedestrian Bridge and maintain the February, 2009 action.

Because we care greatly about all persons to have safe access to the proposed Silver Spring Library, we send the attached addendum to further clarify our thinking.

We do recognize and very much appreciate the greatly improved planning for safe pedestrian access that is shown in these deliberations, following our February, 2009 action. We wish nothing but the best for the Silver Spring Library patrons and look forward to the library's construction.

Sincerely,

Erwin H. Mack  
Chair, PTSAC

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Department of Transportation



## PEDESTRIAN AND TRAFFIC SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At our July meeting, after considerable discussion, the PTSAC voted to affirm the position it took in February in opposition to the handicapped-parking access bridge for the new library in downtown Silver Spring.

Again, the PTSAC did not take this position lightly. The Committee is mindful and respectful of the needs of the elderly and disabled and agrees that *all* library patrons, those with mobility limitations and those able-bodied, should have reasonable, safe and fair access to the library. The PTSAC feels strongly that handicapped-accessible parking and drop off location(s) must be provided in close proximity to the new library building at street level and that the library's street entrances be convenient and comfortable for handicapped access. There are many examples of popular and welcoming public facilities in similar locales across the country that provide safe and convenient access along and across roadways for those with mobility limitations. A pedestrian bridge, which *assumes* that all with mobility limitations will be driving to the library, is likely to do just the opposite; allow for more and higher speed traffic while degrading the streetscape and increasing safety hazards for those traveling along Wayne Avenue regardless of mode.

We recognize that it may seem counterintuitive for a committee whose primary charge is pedestrian safety to oppose a "pedestrian bridge". However, we believe that, in this densely populated, transit-oriented urban location, a handicapped-parking access bridge is not the best solution.

We believe that the safety of all library patrons, as well as area pedestrians, cyclists and transit users, will be better assured with roadway improvements to calm traffic and by implementing best practice crossing treatments. A pedestrian bridge is likely to encourage rather than discourage driving to the new library, creating a host of other safety, environmental and security issues. We also believe that library patrons approaching the library on foot at street level are more likely to patronize area merchants than those arriving by car, who are more likely to simply travel across the enclosed bridge to the library and back across to their cars, bypassing the neighborhood's stores, restaurants and cafes.

The site design for the library has focused on providing access to motorists and orienting the building to the Wayne Avenue garage. We ask that the County give full consideration to redesigning the roadway and re-orienting the library entrance to the signalized intersection to help to encourage safer pedestrian crossings. Reconfiguration of the road, with restriping or road dieting to slow traffic, shorten crossing distances and accommodate bicycles, should be given appropriate consideration. The County should not miss this opportunity to reconsider the operation and configuration of Wayne Avenue and at the same time prepare for the arrival of the planned Purple Line with a key stop at this very location. We believe we can create a more complete street, with slow moving vehicles, safety for pedestrians and cyclists and a true transit destination.

In sum, we think a pedestrian bridge is not the best solution as it brings with it a host of negative impacts: increasing the Library's carbon footprint, degrading the streetscape, creating an automobile-oriented street environment and facility design, and missing the opportunity to create a model multi-modal street with dedicated bike access, calm traffic and an environment welcoming to all members of the community.

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Department of Transportation

-----Original Message-----

**From:** taklangcda@aol.com [mailto:taklangcda@aol.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 11, 2009 12:08 PM

**To:** Andrews' Office, Councilmember; Ervin's Office, Councilmember; Leventhal's Office, Councilmember

**Cc:** taklangcda@aol.com

**Subject:** Pedestrian Bridge Over Wayne Avenue - From PTSAC

*Honorable Councilmembers:*

*The following is being submitted for your consideration, coming from the last meeting of the PTSAC on Feb 5, 2009.*

*Thank you.*

*Erwin H. Mack  
Chair, PTSAC*

This letter is in reference to pedestrian and bicycle travel and safety for the proposed Silver Spring library in downtown Silver Spring. One of the duties of the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (PTSAC) according to the Montgomery County Code is to: "advise the Executive and Council of priorities and needs for pedestrian and bicycle safety and access, and other pedestrian-related issues" (Chapter 49. Article 9. Sec 49-81)

**Therefore:**

**The PTSAC does not support the construction of a pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue in downtown Silver Spring. More cost efficient and proven improvements that will serve a greater number of library patrons as well as the larger Silver Spring community should be pursued and prioritized to provide access to the new library.**

**A pedestrian bridge at this location is prohibited in the Silver Spring 1999 Urban Renewal Plan.** The library project should adhere to the requirements established in the Renewal Plan. There is national evidence that pedestrian bridges are costly, often underused, and can impede the creation of vibrant urban spaces.

**A pedestrian bridge across Wayne Avenue from the parking garage will not improve safety for the majority of pedestrians and bicyclists in downtown Silver Spring.** A pedestrian bridge will serve a small number of library patrons parking on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Wayne Avenue Garage at great and disproportionate expense. All residents and visitors traveling to the library and other nearby destinations will be better served by focusing resources on redesigning Wayne Avenue to equally accommodate all users and truly be a shared space. Traffic calming techniques, road dieting, and enhanced treatment of at-grade crossings of Wayne Avenue (such as a raised crossing, curb extensions, leading pedestrian intervals, distinctive paving, landscaping) can create comfortable and safe crossings for patrons of all ages and mobility levels whether they choose to walk, bike, drive or take transit. A pedestrian bridge will allow Wayne Avenue to continue to prioritize motor vehicle travel creating an unfriendly and less safe environment for patrons, particularly those who choose to walk, bike or take transit to the library.

**A pedestrian bridge from the parking garage will degrade the street environment, increase security issues, and discourage walking, bicycling and transit use.** Pedestrian bridges reduce street life and activity, create dark, unwelcoming places underneath, present significant security issues, and allow roadways to become higher speed/volume facilities-with reduced safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. In designing the new library, access by foot, bike and transit should be the priority, in addition to creating a streetscape that invites non-automobile modes of transportation.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

Submitted by

Erwin H. Mack  
Chairman, PTSAC

**Dunckel, Jeff**

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**From:** Ike Leggett  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 04, 2009 9:53 AM  
**To:** 'taklangcda@aol.com'  
**Cc:** Luecking, Betsy; Greene, Nancy (HHS); Dunckel, Jeff; Roberts, Roylene; Hamilton, Parker  
**Subject:** Pedestrian Bridge Across Wayne Avenue

Dear Mr. Mack:

I would like to thank the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee for its continued service to the residents of Silver Spring and Montgomery County. The recent completion of the pedestrian improvements to 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Silver Spring was a great step forward, and a victory for pedestrian safety. Input for County projects from the Commission can help the implementing departments to provide the kind of infrastructure necessary to make our roads and sidewalks accessible and safe for all the residents of the county.

The Committee has raised some very real concerns about the pedestrian safety at the intersection of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street. I want to assure the Committee that I share those concerns, and have directed both the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of General Services (DGS) to work to make the intersection safe and pedestrian friendly. Having a safe and inviting path to bring pedestrians and cyclists to the Silver Spring Library and future Purple Line station will serve as a true hallmark of success.

As an example of what will be one of many incremental steps taken in the design of the library for pedestrian safety, based on the comments already received from PTSAC, DGS has instructed the design architects to explore relocation the Wayne Avenue entrance lobby as close to the corner of Wayne Avenue and Fenton Street as grade and the Purple Line station will allow. By relocating this entrance closer to Fenton Street and the existing crosswalk, pedestrian tendencies of walking direct line of sight across the street from the garage to the library may be reduced. The next step will be working with DOT to review sidewalk edge treatments on both sides of Wayne Avenue to help create a funneling effect to move pedestrians to the intersection and the crosswalks.

However, in reading the Committee's position on the issue of access to the Silver Spring Library, I think you misunderstand the reason I am recommending the pedestrian bridge; the primary rationale is not one solely of safety; it is primarily one of accessibility and sustainability. The use of the existing underutilized parking garage is a "green" decision which saves the use of materials and taxpayer dollars which would have been otherwise needed to provide new on-site parking for the library. The disadvantage of utilizing the existing garage is the greatly increased travel path to the library for many patrons – including, but not limited to, the elderly and disabled. The bridge is being proposed to address this concern.

Having the County's libraries accessible to all the county's patrons is not optional or something where the departments can simply make a good-faith effort; it is a mandatory expectation of my administration, and a civil right protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

I'm requesting that the Pedestrian and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee confer with the

Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities, and work to provide shared solutions for access to the Library. Betsy Luecking, Disability Policy Specialist, Health and Human Services (HHS), will be your contact for the Commission. Jeff Dunckel with DOT can assist you in making contact with Betsy. DOT and DGS will also provide any assistance needed in this effort. If you have any questions on the County's responsibilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act, please feel free to contact Nancy Greene (HHS) who is the County's Compliance Officer.

In order for the shared pedestrian safety solutions to be judged successful, they must also meet these other vital County interests, including:

1. Elderly and disabled patrons must have a reasonable, safe, and fair access, allowing use of the library to its fullest extent.
2. The solution must take full advantage of the County's already built infrastructure, the Wayne Avenue garage, demonstrating good fiscal stewardship.
3. In keeping with the County's efforts to promote mass transit, walking, and cycling and reducing the overall carbon footprint of the new facility, no new parking spaces will be constructed.
4. The solution must not shift the economic burden or hardship onto other businesses or users in the CBD.
5. The solution must be available from the day the library opens, and cannot depend on future actions of other parties, or future construction funding or efforts.

The Committee's service to the residents of Silver Spring and Montgomery County has already born fruit with the pedestrian safety efforts at 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. I ask the Committee to work to also meet the greater goals of providing not only pedestrian safe streets, but also an accessible library which uses the County's resources in a fiscally prudent and green sustainable manner that can make all residents proud. I believe we can work collaboratively to make the pedestrian bridge the proper solution and the right fit for all our goals.

Sincerely,

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive