

# CARPE DIEM ARTS

## Bringing the Arts to Life!

*Promoting the arts and engaging communities  
across generations and cultures*

Testimony: Carpe Diem Arts % Busy Graham  
Public Hearing before the County Council re. DTSS/AC  
February 17, 2022

Thank you Council President Alborno and Council members for the opportunity to speak about the Downtown Silver Spring and Adjacent Communities Plan—specifically with regard to the Historic Jesup Blair House.

My name is Busy Graham, and I have been a resident of Silver Spring for 36 years. I am the founder and Executive Director of Carpe Diem Arts, a Silver Spring nonprofit providing a broad range of culturally diverse visual, literary and performing arts programs to our County residents.

I am here today representing Carpe Diem Arts and several other interested nonprofits, plus numerous programming partners.

We are glad to see the DTSS Plan bring some focus to the beautiful 14.5 acre Jesup Blair Park.

Barely mentioned, however, is the Jesup Blair House which is owned by Montgomery Parks/ M-NCPPC and has been vacant for 14 years.

Located within the designated Arts and Entertainment District, the House was built in 1850 and is connected to the founding family of Silver Spring, the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, and President Abraham Lincoln's Cabinet. It also served as the Silver Spring Library from 1934-1957.

The Jesup Blair House could serve as a catalyst for drawing residents to the Park, while also serving as a vibrant center for arts, culture and education, and a venue for major outdoor festivals and other special events.

In addition, the House would provide a much-needed home for several Silver Spring and Takoma Park nonprofits, including Carpe Diem and the Silver Spring Historical Society whose valuable archives would be housed on the lower level and featured in a Period Room.

We believe our vision would revitalize both the Park and the Jesup Blair House, supporting the County's goals for South Silver Spring, while also celebrating our diversity and addressing the priority of equity, access and inclusion.

Now is the time for our County to honor the history of Silver Spring and preserve this unique public resource as a sound investment in a bright future for arts and humanities—and vital community development.

We seek your support for restoring this remarkable property—and ask you to find ways to help fund the estimated \$1.5-2 million rehabilitation.

To learn more about our collective vision, please visit [JesupBlairHouse.org](http://JesupBlairHouse.org)

Thank you for your consideration.