



# Sandy Spring-Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium

*We are pro-Master Plan, not anti-development*

*MCCF Community Hero Award, January 2009*

*www.ssarpc.org -- SSARPC, Post Office Box 518, Ashton, MD 20861*

December 2, 2009

Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission  
8787 Georgia Avenue  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Historic Preservation Commission,

We are writing on behalf of the Sandy Spring-Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium (SSARPC). As our name implies, the SSARPC's mission is to support development in Ashton and Sandy Spring that conforms to the 1998 Ashton/Sandy Spring Master Plan, in order to preserve the historic rural villages that are Sandy Spring and Ashton.

In the matter of the signage for I-D 900 Olney Sandy Spring Road, the SSARPC supports the Historic Preservation Commission's Staff's statement about the signage proposal for 900 Olney Sandy Spring Road. The SSARPC has some additional comments and recommendations that follow.

For the most part, the SSARPC is in agreement with most of the conditions given by the Historic Preservation Staff. We agree that the sign on the south side should remain, while the sign on the east side should be removed. If in fact the door on the west side of the building is a customer entrance, then the SSARPC has no problem with a sign on that side of the building. To date, there are trees blocking the walkway and no indication that it is a public entrance. Perhaps a smaller sign closer to the door might direct customers to that entrance.

It is mostly the north side of the building with which we take some issue. The original proposal by the applicant asks that there be two signs on the front of the building. One attached to the wall, while another hung below the frame of the portico. (Circle 10) A newer plan, received November 30, 2009, shows the portico sign placed on top of the building. We believe that one sign hanging from the portico entrance to the Prime Med Urgent Care business should remain and the sign attached to the building should be removed.

One might say that since the photo of the Insurance building in 1928 (Circle 32) shows the sign at the top of the portico, there is historical precedent for placement there. We believe that in 1928 the sole use of the building was the Insurance Company. In 2009, there are multiple uses for this property providing various service and office spaces. A sign at the top of the portico might lead one to believe that the entire building is for the Prime Med Urgent Care tenant rather than the entryway for one particular business.

If, however, the HPC sees that the sign can remain on top, we feel that it should be a nicely designed sign of painted solid wood with some kind of border relief or a metal sign, which should be framed by a wrought iron decorative frame more reminiscent of historic signage. It should look handcrafted. Additionally we would like to see it smaller.

The applicant already has an approval for a freestanding sign. A sign using removable slats, perhaps hanging and lit, should be used and placed at the front of the building.

This would make it easy to change as tenants change, would give the tenant business in the back some exposure and would maintain the look of a historic district building rather than a historic building with multiple signs attached to it.

To date, the front of the building has been cleared so that the post sign is quite visible from the road, even at night. Lighting on the freestanding sign could further enhance visibility.

Alternatively, another approach would be to replicate the design of the sign used for the Montgomery Mutual building (behind the property). This would provide consistency in signage for the office spaces and service providers in the two buildings, creating a campus feel in the historic and rural district.

The SSARPC appreciates Staff's review of the signage for this property and hopes that the HPC considers our recommendations when making its decision in this matter.

Sincerely,

Michelle Layton and Donna Selden  
Co-chairs Sandy Spring Ashton Rural Preservation Consortium