

WELLER'S DRY CLEANING (#36-86-1)

8237 FENTON STREET, SILVER SPRING, MD 20910

**MASTER PLAN FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DESIGNATION FORM
DECEMBER 2022**



 **Montgomery Planning**

THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NAME OF PROPERTY	1
LOCATION OF PROPERTY	1
ZONING OF PROPERTY	1
TYPE OF PROPERTY	1
FUNCTION OR USE	1
DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY	2
Site Description.....	2
Sign Description.....	2
Architectural Description.....	2
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	3
Applicable Designation Criteria.....	3
Statement of Significance	4
Period of Significance.....	4
Significant Dates	4
Significant Persons.....	4
Areas of Significance	4
Architect/Builder.....	4
Narrative	4
History of Dry Cleaners	4
Design of Dry Cleaners after World War II.....	5
Googie Architectural Style.....	5
Ben and Charles Weller's First Dry-Cleaning Stores	6
The Opening of Weller's Dry Cleaning at 8237 Fenton Street.....	8
Architect Ted Englehardt.....	8
DESIGNATION CRITERIA	9
CONCLUSION	10
ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/GEOGRAPHICAL DATA.....	11
PROPERTY OWNERS.....	11

FORM PREPARED BY	11
MAJOR SOURCES CONSULTED	11
APPENDIX ONE: ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING.....	13
APPENDIX TWO: SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS.....	15
APPENDIX THREE: AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS	17
APPENDIX FOUR: HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS	20
APPENDIX SIX: MODEL OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING	33
APPENDIX SEVEN: GOOGIE ARCHITECTURE	38
APPENDIX EIGHT: DRY CLEANER PLANTS CONTEXT	41
APPENDIX NINE: MIHP FORM	415

Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission
Montgomery County Department of Planning
Master Plan for Historic Preservation Designation Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Weller's Dry Cleaning
Current Name: Weller's Dry Cleaning
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties: #36-86-1

2. LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Address Number and Street: 8237 Fenton Street
County, State, Zip: Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland, 20910

3. ZONING OF PROPERTY

CR-3.0: The property has a zoning of CR-3.0 C-2.0 R-2.75 H-60 T. CR zones are designed to encourage mixed-use development in town and urban centers near transit and a variety of housing, services, and amenities. Parcels zoned CR are given an overall FAR, and then that is broken down into maximum commercial density allowed (C) and maximum residential development allowed (R) followed by the maximum allowable height.

4. TYPE OF PROPERTY

A. Ownership of Property: Private

B. Category of Property: Private

C. Number of Resources within the Property

Contributing		Noncontributing	
<u> 1 </u>	Buildings	<u> </u>	Buildings
<u> </u>	Structures	<u> </u>	Structures
<u> 1 </u>	Objects	<u> </u>	Objects
<u> </u>	Archaeological	<u> </u>	Archaeological
<u> 2 </u>	Total	<u> </u>	Total

D. Listing in the National Register of Historic Places: The building has not been reviewed by the Maryland Historical Trust, but EHT Tracerics, Inc. submitted an evaluation form to Montgomery Planning that recommended listing the building as locally significant under National Register of Historic Places Criterion A (Architecture).

5. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic Function(s): COMMERCE/TRADE, Specialty Store, Dry Cleaner

Current Function(s): COMMERCE/TRADE, Vacant Commercial

6. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPERTY (See Appendix Five —Exterior Photographs)

Site Description:

The Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign are located in Fenton Village in downtown Silver Spring at the southeast corner of the intersection of Fenton Street and Thayer Avenue (App. 3, Fig. 2). Benjamin and Charles Weller (property owners) and Ted Englehardt (architect) constructed the building in 1961 on the northwest corner of a rectangular 9,376 square-foot lot and oriented the façade towards Fenton Street. Automobiles access the property via a paved asphalt parking lot in the southern portion of the lot. A driveway extends from the parking lot and wraps the rear of the building to provide egress to Thayer Avenue. A combination of brick and concrete sidewalks along the primary elevations on Thayer Avenue and Fenton Street allows pedestrian access to the site. There is no landscaping outside of a narrow grassy area to the north of the building, adjacent to a sidewalk on Thayer Avenue.

A mix of residential, commercial, and office buildings are near the dry cleaners. The remainder of the intersection at Fenton Street and Thayer Avenue consists of: 1) the Fenton, a mixed-use, six-story apartment building at the southwest corner; 2) a Safeway grocery store and associated parking garage at the northwest corner; and 3) an Exxon gas station and the Silver Spring Towers, a fifteen-story apartment building, at the northeast corner. A two-story office building (built ca. 1963) and a two-story vacant commercial building (built ca. 1961) comprise the adjacent lots to the east and south, respectively.

Sign Description:

The Weller's Dry Cleaning site features an original, distinctive, double-sided sign oriented to travelers on Fenton Street that harmonizes with the design of the building and attracts attention (App. 5, Fig. 7-8). The colorful sign consists of three distinctly shaped and illuminated metal-framed sign boxes stacked on two metal poles anchored in the sidewalk.¹ The shapes (rectangle, triangle, and circle) are offset from one another and slightly separated. This whimsical design suggests that these elements float in defiance of gravity. The lower component features a rectangular box with a black sign face embellished with a floral emblem and capitalized text that reads "one hour dry-cleaning."² The edge of the sign face is outlined with a bright yellow border. The central component consists of an inverted triangular box offset towards Fenton Street. The pale-yellow sign face includes lowercase text that reads "weller's." The upper component of the sign includes a circular operational clock inspired by the works of George Nelson. The clock features a white face, black clock hands, and rectangular, multi-colored rectangles in place of numerals.

Architectural Description:

In 1961, Benjamin and Charles Weller hired architect Ted Englehardt to construct Weller's Dry Cleaning. Englehardt designed a Googie-styled building that consisted of two distinct parts: a setback main rectangular block and a shorter, projecting, rectangular section on the facade. The main block, clad in alternating red and pink porcelain enamel panels, served as the anchor of the building and the shorter projecting section with its metal-frame, plate glass windows, shed roof, and cantilevered awning provided the iconic characteristics (App. 5, Fig. 1-6).

¹ The metal support poles are protected by a non-historic wood planter.

² The owners spray painted over the words "one hour" after stopping that service.

The main block (approximately 45'x52') primarily held the dry-cleaning operations. This section rested on a concrete slab foundation. The frame supported a flat roof concealed behind a parapet. The front (west) and side (north and south) elevations visible from Fenton Street and Thayer Avenue were clad primarily with porcelain enamel panels set within a stainless-steel frame. Englehardt capitalized on the wide range of colors available in porcelain enamel and alternated between red and pink to create a candy-cane/striped effect. The bold use of color created visual interest to this otherwise utilitarian section of the building. The projecting section covered the majority of the main block's west elevation, but Englehardt continued the stripe effect of the porcelain panels visible above the shed roof. The fully exposed main block's side elevations (north and south) consisted of eleven bays that Englehardt divided into three parts. The lower part of each bay consisted of a red or pink porcelain enamel panel. The central part featured three stacked metal-frame awning windows that created a ribbon effect across the elevations. The upper part consisted of a porcelain enamel panel that alternated with the color of the lower panel. Small variations between the elevations included single, metal-framed, awning windows or metal ventilation grills at the base of several lower panels. The less visible rear (east) elevation consisted of a running-bond brick veneer and five metal-framed awning windows, three jalousie metal louvered vents, and a double-leaf metal service door accessed by a set of concrete steps.

The projecting shorter section (approximately 17'x48') held the customer service area and counter. This section is constructed from a concrete block and metal-framed structural system that rests on a concrete slab and supports a shed roof with a cantilevered awning. The concrete block section on the northern end of the massing is clad in a natural uncoursed, ashlar-cut, stone veneer that extended beyond the shed roof to create a parapet. The stone is pierced by a paired, metal-frame awning window on the façade (west elevation). The heaviness of this material contrasted the transparent full-height, metal-frame, plate glass window walls and two single-leaf metal doors with transoms on the remainder of the west and south elevations. The glass extends to the sidewalk so that the interior seems like an extension of the exterior space. The cantilevered awning sheltered the window walls, doors, and sidewalk, and extended beyond the face of the porcelain enameled main block. All of these features turned the building into its own billboard as it allowed drivers and pedestrians to see the counter and inner operations.

In the late 1960s, the property owners altered Englehardt's original design. The full-width, 13' addition to the southern end of the main block interrupted the continual wrapping of the porcelain enamel on the primary elevations of the main block. On the façade (west elevation), the addition featured a brick veneer wall pierced by a single paired metal-window and a large metal louvered vent. The architect of the addition likely repeated the design scheme of the original south elevation as it matches the north elevation. It is unknown if the existing metal-frame window awning with a vertical pattern and alternating stripes dates to the original building or the addition. Furthermore, the addition diminishes the prominence of the cantilevered shed roof. In the original design, the roof extended beyond the face of the main block allowing it to float seamlessly in the air. The addition, however, anchors the cantilevered roof to the building thereby minimizing the desired effect. For a comparison see the original model, Appendix 6, Figures 1-7.

7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

- A. Applicable Designation Criteria as described in §24A: Historic Resources Preservation, §24A-3, Montgomery County Code:** Weller's Dry Cleaners meets two of the Designation Criteria listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code. See Section J for the complete evaluation.

B. Statement of Significance:

The Weller's Dry Cleaning Historic Site consists of a Googie-styled commercial store and sign. The Googie style is a popular, but relatively rare, mid-twentieth century roadside commercial architecture that is a subset of the Modern Movement of architecture. Architects popularized the style in California where the intention was to attract motorists traveling at 35 miles per hour or more to stop and patronize roadside businesses. The design of the Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign engaged the everyday consumer with a modern and popular architecture in lieu of the high-style austerity of the International, Brutalist, and Expressionist styles. As a result, the site is a visual landmark for residents and visitors within the Thayer Avenue commercial area and greater Downtown Silver Spring. Very few examples of this architectural style remain intact in the county or region.

C. Period of Significance: 1961

D. Significant Dates: 1961, 2022

E. Significant Persons: Charles Weller (1914-2016) and Benjamin Weller (1912-1993)

F. Areas of Significance: Commerce

G. Architect/Builder: Ted Englehardt

H. Narrative:

History of Dry Cleaners

In the United States, commercial dry-cleaning operations started in the mid-1800s. The industry shifted from the use of volatile dry to liquid solvents as compared to laundries that used water to process garments. The earliest solvents consisted of either turpentine, benzol, benzine, gasoline. The use of gasoline continued for years despite the fire hazard it posed to the operator and public. In addition, tradesman cleaned each garment by hand resulting in a slow and expensive process. These factors led to drycleaners to be located in manufacturing and industrial areas. Press shops and tailors closer to residential areas sent garments to wholesale cleaning plants before completing the service (App.8, Fig. 1).³

In the 1920s, the industry shifted to petroleum-solvent, known as the Stoddard solvent. This product provided satisfactory cleaning ability at a lower cost, reduced the risks of fires, and dominated the industry. In the 1940s, companies such as One Hour Martinizing introduced and shifted to nonflammable synthetic solvents (perchloroethylene, trichloroethylene, and carbon tetrachloride) that allowed for quicker service.⁴ The development of machinery, advancements in solvents, and efficiency of plant layouts all led to the diversification of the industry.⁵ By the 1960s, there were four major categories: 1) traditional tailor or presser shops (which subcontracted with wholesale dry

³ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Establishing and Operating a Dry Cleaning Business* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 1-4.

⁴ Drycleaners using synthetic solvents increased from 27.2 percent in 1954 to 50.8 percent in 1963. U.S. Department of Commerce, *The Laundry & Drycleaning Industry: A Study of Problems and Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), 37.

⁵ Ibid, 36-37.

cleaners to rough clean garments); 2) wholesale dry cleaners; 3) chain dry cleaners (a business with a central plant with retail stores for pick-up and distribution); and 4) the drive-in dry cleaner. Drive-in dry cleaners achieved popularity before World War II and quickly expanded. All the cleaning occurred at the site on a well-traveled road or avenue where customers dropped off and picked up clothing (App. 8, Fig. 1).⁶

Martinizing Dry Cleaning started in 1949 when chemist Henry Martin propagated the concept of quick on-premise dry cleaning service and use of perchloroethylene (synthetic-based) solvents that became an industry standard.⁷ One Hour Martinizing, along with Sanitone and One Hour Valet, changed the dry-cleaning business model with its relationship between the franchise and individual owner. The organizations offered small businesses the advantages of training, equipment, selection, layout, process research, accounting, market research, advertising, and financing while retaining their traditional independence.⁸ Slogans for One Hour Martinizing included “The Most in Dry Cleaning” that was apparent on a sign in front of the Weller’s Dry Cleaners during its construction (App. 8, Fig. 3).

Design of Dry Cleaners after World War II

Advancements in the dry-cleaning industry and the spread of drive-in dry cleaners that focused on the automobile led to changes in the design of stores. Manuals such as *Modern Dry Cleaning Plants* (1945) highlighted the advantages of the Modern Movement of architecture to create forward-looking, streamlined, designs with wide canopies that would engage the public. The architects who authored the document recognized that the new stores should serve as the primary advertisement for the business with brilliant colors and floor to ceiling plate glass windows inviting customers to view modern equipment and cleaning process. The manual stated that “Walls are windows that say to customers ‘Here is a fine place to do business,’” an essential idea as the industry shifted to on-premises retail cleaners.⁹ Other key elements included the elimination of unneeded ornamentation, clean building lines, and wide canopies. The architects emphasized further the importance of large, bold signage to attract customers during the day and illuminated signs for the night. As stated in the manual, “Bright lights sell the suburbs” and signs that cantilevered over the sidewalk increased visibility (App. 8, Fig. 2).¹⁰ A focus on these building elements allowed for Googie architecture, a subset of the Modern Movement, to be used in the design of these stores as the style gained in popularity.

Googie Architectural Style

Googie architecture developed years before the field named or classified it as a distinct style. In 1952, Douglas Haskell, architectural editor for *House and Home*, wrote an article titled “This is Googie Architecture.” Haskell derived the name “Googie” from Googie’s Restaurant in Los Angeles, a building he believed exemplified the burgeoning aesthetic for roadside architecture spreading from

⁶ U.S. Department of Commerce, *Establishing and Operating a Dry Cleaning Business* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946), 6-7.

⁷ Robert Gottlieb, *Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change* (Cambridge Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 321.

⁸ U.S. Department of Commerce, *The Laundry & Drycleaning Industry: A Study of Problems and Prospects* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966), 42.

⁹ SEC Cleaning Systems, *Modern Dry Cleaning Plants: Manual of Design, Layout and Operations* (Bloomfield, NJ: Star Equipment Corporation, 1945), 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 18.

California across America.¹¹ The public had embraced this style for coffee houses, diners, drive-ins, motels, bowling alleys, arcades, and dry cleaners.

In the 1950s, Googie thrived as architects readily experimented with new designs, materials, and forms. The style captured the national obsession with atomic energy, space travel, plastics, automobiles, television, and other forms of burgeoning technology. All these sectors spurred the design of Googie-styled buildings where architects manipulated glass, stainless steel, concrete, porcelain enamel (which use grew rapidly after the war), and other innovative materials to convey progress, optimism, and experimentation (App. 7, Fig. 1-2).

Googie-styled buildings were designed with bold and dynamic features to create a strong curb appeal to capture the attention of motorists traveling at 35 miles per hour on major roadways.¹² The designs featured dramatic acute angles, boomerang and amoeba shapes, upswept cantilevered roofs, exposed steel, several materials on the same elevation, and prominent use of glazing. Natural materials (such as ashlar cut stone) often contrasted with modern components. Architects accentuated these forms and materials with bright colors and neon lighting. Floor-to-ceiling windows served as an advertisement by allowing pedestrians and passing vehicles to catch a glimpse of the commercial activities within the business. In addition, bold commercial signage, either attached or detached from the building, attracted consumers with its physical presence in the built environment. Parking lots accompanied almost all Googie-styled buildings to facilitate customer access or delivery operations.¹³

Ben and Charles Weller's First Dry-Cleaning Stores

Benjamin (1912-1993) and Charles Weller (1914-2016) were the sons of Max and Minnie Weller who immigrated from Kounas, Lithuania, to the United States in 1903.¹⁴ Between 1900 and 1914, 1.5 million Eastern European Jews fled en masse due to pogroms (organized massacres) and ill-treatment of the community by Russian czars. In 1920, Max and Minnie had settled in Pennsylvania and operated a general store. The census listed six children: Hymen (14), Samuel (13), Mollie (10), Lena (8), Benjamin (7), and Charlie (5).¹⁵

Benjamin Weller married Jeanette R. [family name unknown] and lived in York, Pennsylvania, where he worked in a shoe store in 1939. The following year, he joined the U.S. Hoffman Machinery Corporation, one of the oldest manufacturers of dry-cleaning and pressing machines, as an executive assistant. Weller then became one of the founders and field engineer for the Martin Equipment Company of Buffalo, New York.¹⁶ Benjamin and Jeanette Weller then moved to the Washington, D.C. region and purchased property in the Carroll Knolls subdivision of Montgomery County (north of Forest Glen).¹⁷ In 1950, Weller opened and owned a One Hour Martinizing Dry Cleaning franchise at 948 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, in addition to his duties as field engineer for the company.¹⁸

¹¹ Alan Hess, *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), 68-69.

¹² *Ibid*, 3.

¹³ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁴ "Max Weller," 1930 *United States Federal Census* (Altoona, PA), Ancestry.

¹⁵ "Max Weller," 1920 *United States Federal Census* (Reade, PA), Ancestry.

¹⁶ "New Type Dry Cleaning Plant Will Be Constructed in City," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, August 23, 1954, Newspapers.com.

¹⁷ Montgomery County Circuit Court, "James B. Evans, Nathan Levin, and Nathaniel J. Taube to Benjamin Weller and Jeanette R. Weller," December 20, 1949, Liber CKW 1334, Folio 350.

¹⁸ Advertisements in the *Evening Star* noted employment opportunities for an experienced presser to work in a new modern plant at 948 Wayne Avenue in 1950. Classified advertisements noted storerooms for rent at 948 Wayne

The success of the business led to the opening of additional stores throughout the south. Weller's obituary stated that he opened at least 28 dry cleaner stores throughout Maryland, Virginia, and the Carolinas.¹⁹

Charles Weller remained in Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania, and lived with his parents. During World War II, he was drafted in the United States Army and deployed overseas between 1944 and 1945.²⁰ He returned home and gained employment as a truck driver for a furniture store. Weller married Edith Segal and moved to Montgomery County by 1953 where he worked for his brother's burgeoning One Hour Martinizing dry-cleaning stores.²¹

In 1953, Benjamin and Charles Weller entered a lease to open another One Hour Martinizing store in a neighborhood shopping center at 6 North Washington Street in Rockville.²² The lease agreement for the Rockville store and county directories recorded Benjamin as the president of the company and Charles as the secretary or manager.²³

In the 1950s, de jure and de facto segregation limited access of Silver Spring residential communities and commercial businesses to nearby Black residents or visitors. In 1951, classified advertisements for a clerk position recorded hiring discrimination at the One Hour Martinizing in Silver Spring. The advertisement stated:

CLERK, white, for modern dry cleaning plant; pleasant working conditions. Call SH, 1669. 948 Wayne ave., Silver Spring, Md.²⁴

Research did not uncover analogous advertisements for the Weller's Dry Cleaning Store at 8237 Fenton Street. Neither the businesses nor the owners were listed in the available case summaries for the Human Relations Commission that oversaw complaints of violations to the County's Public Accommodation Ordinance.²⁵

Avenue in 1961 and directed interested parties to contact Mr. Weller. This coincided with the opening of the subject dry cleaners. "Presser," *Evening Star*, October 3, 1950, Newsbank.

¹⁹ Newspaper article stated that he opened 10 stores in Europe as well. For example, Ben Weller owned a store with Isadore Charles Weller (likely a relative who was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania) in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, in 1955. "Benjamin Weller, Dry-Cleaning Innovator," *Washington Post*, October 30, 1993 Proquest. "New Martinizing, Koretizing Plant to Open Here Tuesday," *Rocky Mount Telegram*, February 21, 1953, Newspapers.com.

²⁰ "Charles Weller," *Pennsylvania, U.S. Veteran Compensation Applications Files, WWII, 1950-1966*, Ancestry.

²¹ The couple had four children: Louis (Ziggy) Chelec, Marc Weller, Robin Melnick, and Lisa Weller. Land Records 1943/7; "Edith Segal Weller," *Washington Post*, March 26, 2020, Proquest; "Charles Weller," *Washington Post*, June 14, 2016, Proquest.

²² By 1961, advertisements listed the business as "Glazer's One-Hour Martinizing" which suggests new ownership for the business. Montgomery County Circuit Court, "George P. Kimmel, trustee for N. Richard Kimmel to One Hour Martinizing," March 30, 1953, Liber CKW 1806, Folio 588-598; "Glazer's One Hour Martinizing," *Montgomery County Sentinel*, October 12, 1961, Chronicling America.

²³ Directories.

²⁴ "Clerk," *Evening Star*, September 5, 1951, Chronicling America.

²⁵ In 1966, at the Weller's Dry Cleaners owned by Ben Weller and I.C. Weller Isadore Charles Weller (likely a relative who was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania) in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, the Ku Klux Klan picketed the business because the Black employees refused to clean their robes. I.C. Weller responded by subcontracting the work. *Jet* noted, "They [KKK] carried placard claiming unfair treatment....Weller said he was not able to persuade Negro employees to clean the robes and had been forced to sublet the work. The KKK thought it a dirty deal and threw up a picket line." "KKK Picket For Clean Robes, Negroes Refuse," *Jet* (August 4, 1966): 9.

The Opening of Weller's Dry Cleaning at 8237 Fenton Street

In 1960, Benjamin and Charles Weller purchased the property at 8237 Fenton Street.²⁶ Benjamin and Charles served as the president and secretary-treasurer, respectively.²⁷ The brothers hired local architect Ted Englehardt to design the purpose-built dry cleaners which opened in 1961. The company received a \$66,500 mortgage on the property that likely financed the construction of the building and acquisition of equipment.²⁸

Historic photographs taken during the construction of the building documented a sign that reads "Weller's One Hour Martinizing" with the standard One Hour Martinizing franchise slogan "The Most in Dry Cleaning" (App. 4, Fig. 1-2).²⁹ Reference to the franchise, however, is not indicated in later photographs or the current signage, and is no longer present on the building. It is unknown when the Weller brothers severed their relationship with One Hour Martinizing. The success of Weller's Dry Cleaning led the brothers to construct an addition on the south elevation of the main block by 1970.³⁰

The ownership structure of Weller's Dry Cleaning varied over the first 17 years. Benjamin and Charles conveyed the property to Welbro, Inc. in 1961 with Benjamin as the president of the company.³¹ In December 1978, Benjamin divested his financial interests at 8237 Fenton Street. Welbro, Inc., sold the southern portion of the property to Ben Weller Associates, Inc., but retained possession of the store.³² The conveyance, however, included a restrictive covenant that forbid Ben Weller Associates from operating a competing dry-cleaning establishment at this property for a period of 20 years. The following year, Charles Weller renamed Welbro, Inc., to Charles W., Inc. as the sole proprietor. Between 1979 and 2012, Charles and Edith Weller transferred the property under five different incorporations or trusts.³³ Charles Weller operated the dry cleaner business for over 55 years and died at home in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 2016 (App. 4, Fig. 3).³⁴

Architect Ted Englehardt

Julian Theodore Englehardt, better known as Ted Englehardt, was one of the founders and early president of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the AIA.³⁵ Born in 1898, Englehardt first worked and

²⁶ Montgomery County Circuit Court, "Harry Malasky and Dora L. Malasky, et. al to Ben Weller and Charles Weller," May 15, 1960, Liber CKW 2735, Folio 139.

²⁷ Montgomery County Circuit Court, "Welbro, Inc. indebted to Home Beneficial Life Insurance Company," July 15, 1963, Liber CKW 3108, Folio 58-60.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Photographs courtesy of the Englehardt family.

³⁰ Sanborn fire insurance maps and aerial photographs record the construction of the addition between 1964 and 1970. The exact date of construction is unknown.

³¹ Montgomery County Circuit Court, "Ben Weller and Charles Weller to Welbro, Inc.," March 30, 1961, Liber CKW 2893, Folio 247.

³² Montgomery County Circuit Court, "Welbro, Inc., to Ben Weller Associates, Inc.," December 8, 1978, Liber HMS 5256, Folio 387; Montgomery County Circuit Court, "Welbro, Inc., to Ben Weller Associates, Inc.," December 8, 1978, Liber HMS 5711, Folio 810.

³³ EHT Traceries, "Weller's Dry Cleaning Building," Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form, M:36-86-1 (2021).

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Secondary sources incorrectly listed Englehardt as the first president of the Potomac Valley Chapter of the AIA. In the "History: Events Leading to the Chartering of the Potomac Valley Chapter," the author listed Dana B. Johannes as the first president and Roland S. Senseman as the second president. Englehardt first served on the board

apprenticed in an architect office in his home state of Tennessee at 15 years old. He continued his hands-on education as draftsman for different firms and agencies and supplemented his architectural design skills with physical construction labor for builders on concrete and steel projects. In 1927, he entered the drafting, design, and inspection period of his career in Tennessee where he worked for architecture firms, the U.S. Army of Engineers, and the City of Chattanooga. The depression, however, closed the city planning office and insufficient work led him to the Office of the Supervising Architect in Washington, D.C. in 1934. Englehardt worked for various offices of the federal government over the next 13 years where he assisted with the design of National Airport, developed plans for defense housing projects, and negotiated contracts with prefabricated housing manufactures. Unsatisfied with this work, he returned to private practice in 1947. He joined Proctor and Englehardt, Architects, at 8616 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, and then assumed control of the practice as Ted Englehardt, Architect, when Proctor retired in 1951.³⁶ He designed primarily homes, commercial, and educational buildings. Notable works included various buildings at the University of Maryland, the Asphalt Institute (1956), Denton Hall (1962), and Elkton Hall (1965), and laboratories at the National Institute of Health.³⁷ In Silver Spring, Englehardt was the architect of the Operations Research Institute at 1400 Spring Street (1963), an International Style office building with turquoise spandrel panels of porcelain enamel.³⁸ Englehardt retired in 1977 and passed away in 1980, at the age of 82.³⁹

I. Designation Criteria:

The Weller's Dry Cleaning Historic Site meets two Designation Criteria as listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code.

2.A Architectural and design significance. The historic resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

The Weller's Dry Cleaning building represents the characteristics of Googie design, a subset of the Modern Movement of architecture. The humorous and playful space-age architecture appealed to the broader public and captured the sense of technological optimism permeating the country. Purveyors of the style designed dramatic forms, celebrated new materials, contrasted natural and textured forms with glass openings, and accentuated these elements with bold colors to use architecture as advertisement. Architect Ted Englehardt relied on these elements to create a landmark building in downtown Silver Spring. He successfully contrasted the solid, red and pink striped porcelain enamel box with a stone veneer and lighter, projecting section featuring expansive windows and a cantilevered awning that floated in the air. The roof form permitted greater visibility as the floor-to-ceiling windows allowed motorists and pedestrians to view operations of the business. All of these features combined to create a

as Treasurer. The AIA chapter elected Englehardt as its third president in June 1957 and he remained in the position for a one year term. V.T.H. Bien, "History: Events Leading to the Chartering of the Potomac Valley Chapter," *Potomac Valley Architect* 1, no. 1 (October 1956): 2-3; "Potomac Valley Chapter of Maryland," *Potomac Valley Architect* 2, no. 1 (September 1957): 2.

³⁶ American Institute of Architects, "Application for Membership: Julian Theodore "Ted" Englehardt," (1953).

³⁷ John F. Gane, ed., *American Architects Directory*, 3rd ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1970), 255.

³⁸ Architectural historian Clare Lise Kelly noted that Englehardt embedded a brick with his signature on the walls of his buildings. Both Weller's Dry Cleaning and the Operations Research Institute featured the trademark brick. "Operations Research Institute (1963), 1400 Spring Street." *The Third Place: A Montgomery Planning Department Blog* (October 17, 2012).

³⁹ "Ted Englehardt, Owned Own Firm of Architecture." *The Washington Post*. January 4, 1980.

playful and quirky building that engaged the everyday consumer with a modern and popular architecture in lieu of the high-style austerity of the International, Brutalist, and Expressionist styles.

The Weller's Dry Cleaning business featured a distinctive Googie-styled sign that embodied commercial architecture in the mid-twentieth century. The original, double-sided sign-oriented travelers on Fenton Street and harmonized with the design of the building. The sign served as a visual landmark with a scale and composition that attracted motorists and pedestrians to the store. The colorful design consists of three distinctly shaped and illuminated metal-framed sign boxes stacked on two metal poles anchored in the sidewalk. The shapes (rectangle, triangle, and circle) are offset from one another and slightly separated which creates a whimsical appearance and suggestion that these elements float in defiance of gravity. The upper component of the sign includes a circular operational clock inspired by the works of George Nelson and offset towards the property. The clock features a white face, black clock hands, and rectangular, multi-colored rectangles in place of numerals.

2.E Architectural and design significance. The historic resource represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or county due to its singular physical characteristic or landscape.

The Weller's Dry Cleaning is a rare example of Googie commercial architecture in Montgomery County. Many of these architectural resources have been lost to demolition throughout the country. *Montgomery Modern* (2015), a chronicle of mid-century modern architecture in Montgomery County, documented three commercial Googie-styled buildings.

The Weller's Dry Cleaning building and sign represent the continued suburban development of Silver Spring and the area's importance as a vital transportation route in the mid-twentieth century. Googie-styled buildings relied on nearby high-volume traffic to attract motorists with futuristic design. Weller's Dry Cleaning addressed the car-orientated populace and remained successful at the pedestrian scale. The illuminated sign overhanging the sidewalk anchored the building at the intersection and beckoned customers to return with its physical presence on the street. The roadside architecture serves as a tangible link between the community and its past, providing a sense of continuity, orientation, and place.

J. Conclusion:

The Weller's Dry Cleaning site retains integrity to express its period of significance. The building and sign have integrity of location and setting. Both resources remain in their original prominent location at the intersection of Fenton Street and Thayer Avenue in Downtown Silver Spring. The building and sign retain integrity of design, workmanship, and materials as they continue to reflect the Googie style, a subset of the modern movement of architecture. The design of the building, however, is diminished by the construction of an addition that impacts the character defining form, massing, and materials. On the façade, the brick-veneered addition interrupts the continuity and pattern established by the red and pink porcelain enameled panels. Furthermore, the addition anchors the upswept cantilevered roof canopy to the building instead of the original design where it floated beyond the southern elevation. Nevertheless, these alterations do not negate the building's architectural value as it continues to express the core

components of the Googie style. In addition, the Weller's Dry Cleaning site has integrity of association and feeling. The building and sign continue to evoke their period of construction and commercial use. Therefore, Historic Preservation staff recommends finding that the Weller's Dry Cleaning Historic Site satisfies two designation criteria.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING/GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Property Land Area: 9,376 SF

Account Number(s): 01047605

District: 13

Environmental Setting Description: The Weller's Dry Cleaning Site is located at 8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, Montgomery County, Maryland. The proposed site to be listed in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* consists of the building, sign, and its associated 9,376 square-foot lot identified as Account Number 01047605, District 13, and shown on the accompanying map (App. 1, Fig. 1). Presently, the sign is located within the public right-of-way, but is planned to be moved to the property in the near future. The environmental setting shall include a piece of the right-of-way until the relocation of the sign.

Environmental Justification Description: The environmental setting incorporates the entire parcel associated with the dry cleaning business and the sign historically located in the public right-of-way.

9. PROPERTY OWNERS

Lakew LLC
1608 White Oak Vista Drive
Silver Spring, MD 20904

10. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: John Liebertz, Cultural Resource Planner III, Historic Preservation Office
Date: September 2022

11. MAJOR SOURCES CONSULTED

AIA Historical Directory of American Architects, <http://www.aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net>.

Ancestry.com [numerous].

Evening Star [numerous].

Hess, Alan. *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004.

Montgomery County Land Records, <http://www.landrec.net>.

Rocky Mount Telegram [numerous].

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps.

SEC Cleaning Systems. *Modern Dry Cleaning Plants: Manual of Design, Layout and Operations*. Bloomfield, NJ: Star Equipment Corporation, 1945.

U.S. Department of Commerce. *Establishing and Operating a Dry Cleaning Business*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946.

U.S. Department of Commerce. *The Laundry & Drycleaning Industry: A Study of Problems and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

Washington Post [numerous].

APPENDIX ONE:
ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Environmental Setting
Weller's Dry Cleaning
8237 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, MD

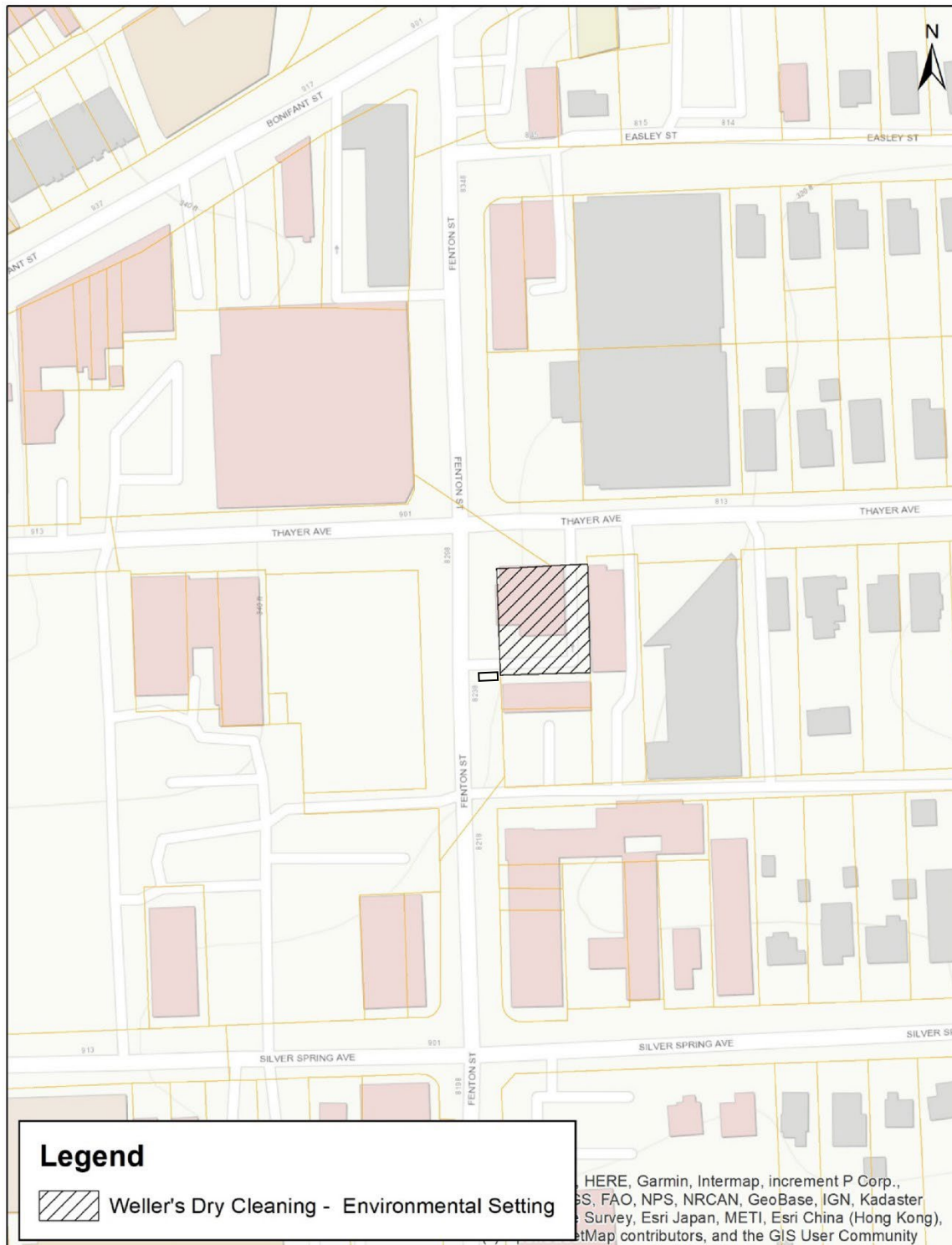


Figure 1: The environmental setting includes the subject property and the sign located in the public right-of-way.

APPENDIX TWO:
SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS

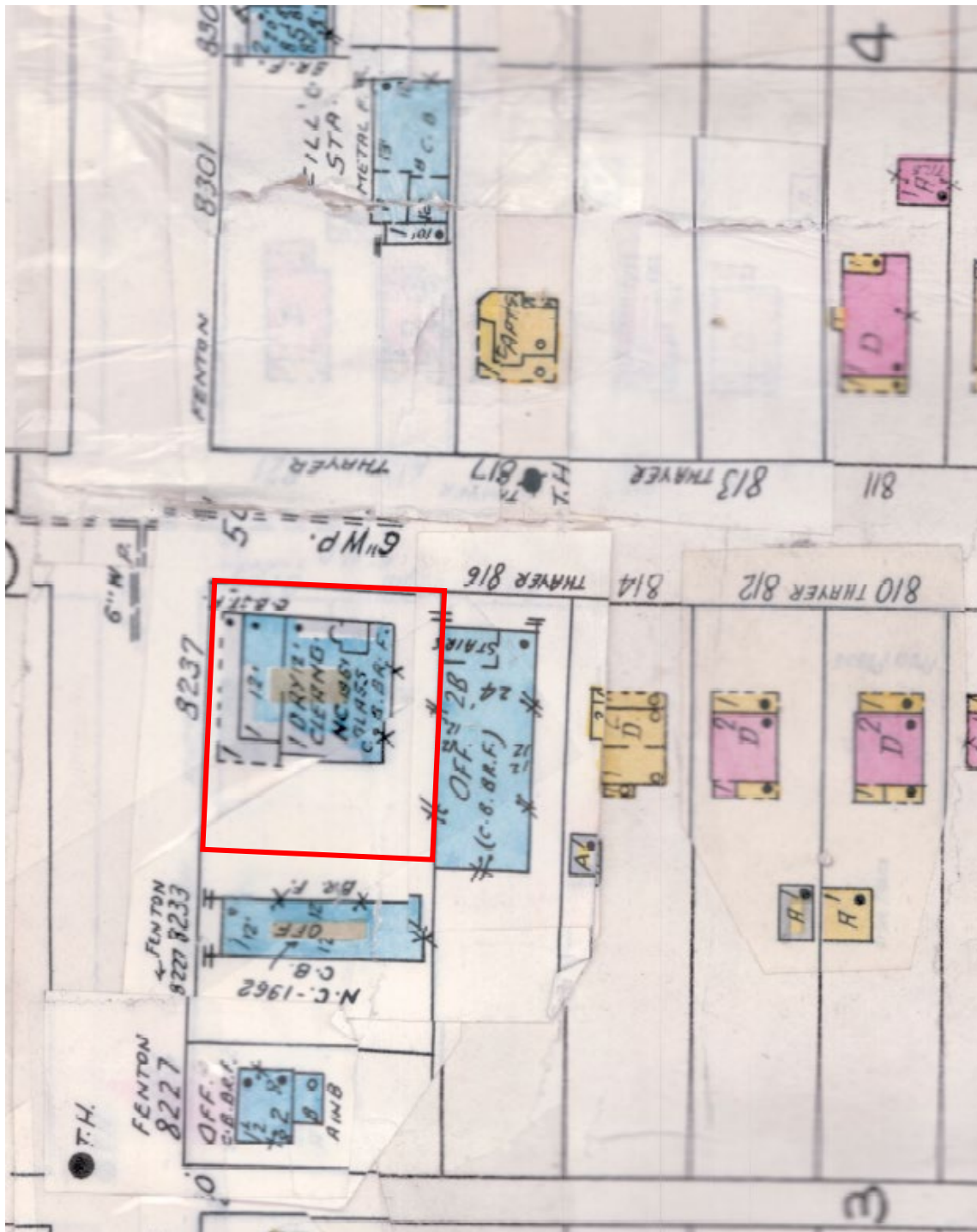


Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1927-1963. The map recorded the construction of the building in 1961. The drawing showed the original footprint with the canopy extending beyond the face of the main block of the building.

APPENDIX THREE:
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 1: Aerial photograph of Weller's Dry Cleaning, 1963. The red arrow points to the porcelain enamel-clad main block of the building prior to the construction of the southern addition.
Source: Netronline, <http://www.historicaerials.com>

**Weller's Dry Cleaning
8247 Fenton Street, Silver Spring, MD**



Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp.,
CEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster
NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong),
(c) OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community,
MCG, GIS, ESRI, Pictometry

Figure 2: Aerial photograph of Weller's Dry Cleaning, 2021.
Source: Montgomery Planning.

APPENDIX FOUR:
HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS



Figure 1: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaning under construction, ca. 1961. Note the sign that reads "Weller's One Hour Martinizing." The concrete block wall on the rear elevation and the stone veneer on the front elevation are visible.

Source: Courtesy of Rose Jean Weller/Silver Spring Historical Society.



Figure 2: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaning under construction, ca. 1961. Note the sign that reads "Weller's One Hour Martinizing The Most in Dry Cleaning. " The framing for the glazed projecting section and the concrete block wall on the rear elevation are visible.
Source: Courtesy of Rose Jean Weller/Silver Spring Historical Society.



Figure 3: Charles Weller inside Weller's Dry Cleaners, date unknown.
Source: Courtesy of Rose Jean Weller/Silver Spring Historical Society.

APPENDIX FIVE:
EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHS

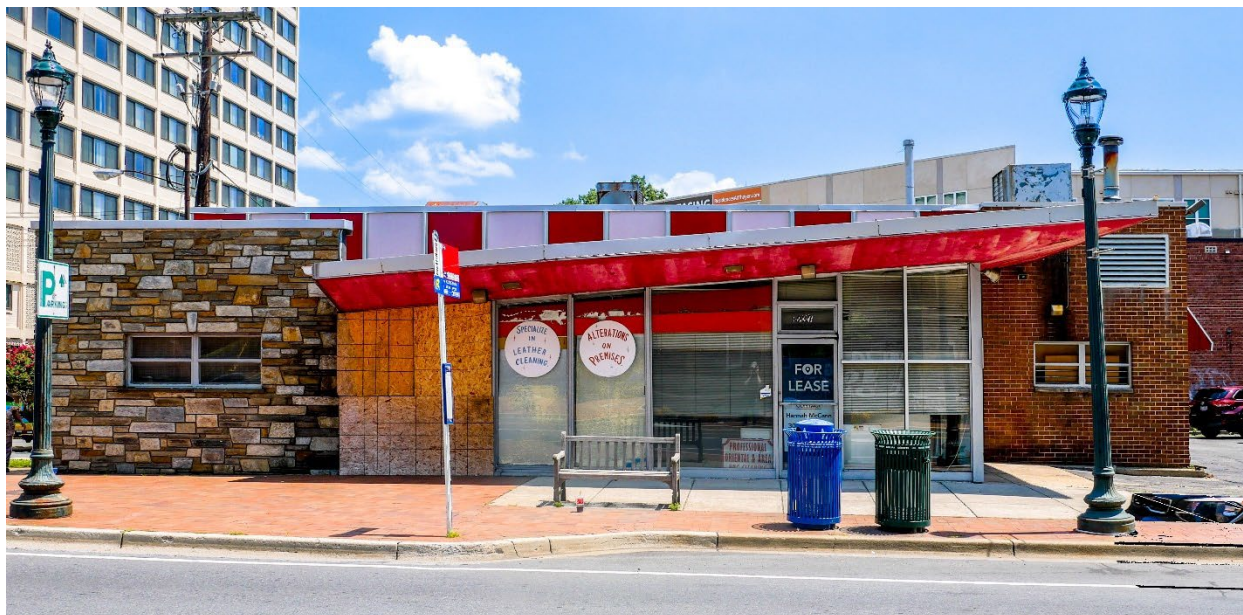


Figure 1: View of the façade (west elevation), 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 2: View of the façade and south elevation, 2022. Note the brick veneered addition on the south elevation.

Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 3: View of the south elevation, 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 4: View of the south and east (rear) elevations, 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 5: View of the east (rear) and north elevations, 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 6: View of the north elevation, 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 7: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaning sign looking south from the store, 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.



Figure 8: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaning sign north on Fenton Avenue, 2022.
Source: Historic Preservation Office, Montgomery Planning.

APPENDIX SIX:

MODEL OF THE ORIGINAL BUILDING

(This model was created in SketchUp by Historic Preservation Staff in an attempt to show the original building condition prior to the southern addition that was constructed in the 1960s. The model is based on aerial imagery, Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, and an evaluation of the building.)



Figure 1: View of the west (front) elevation.

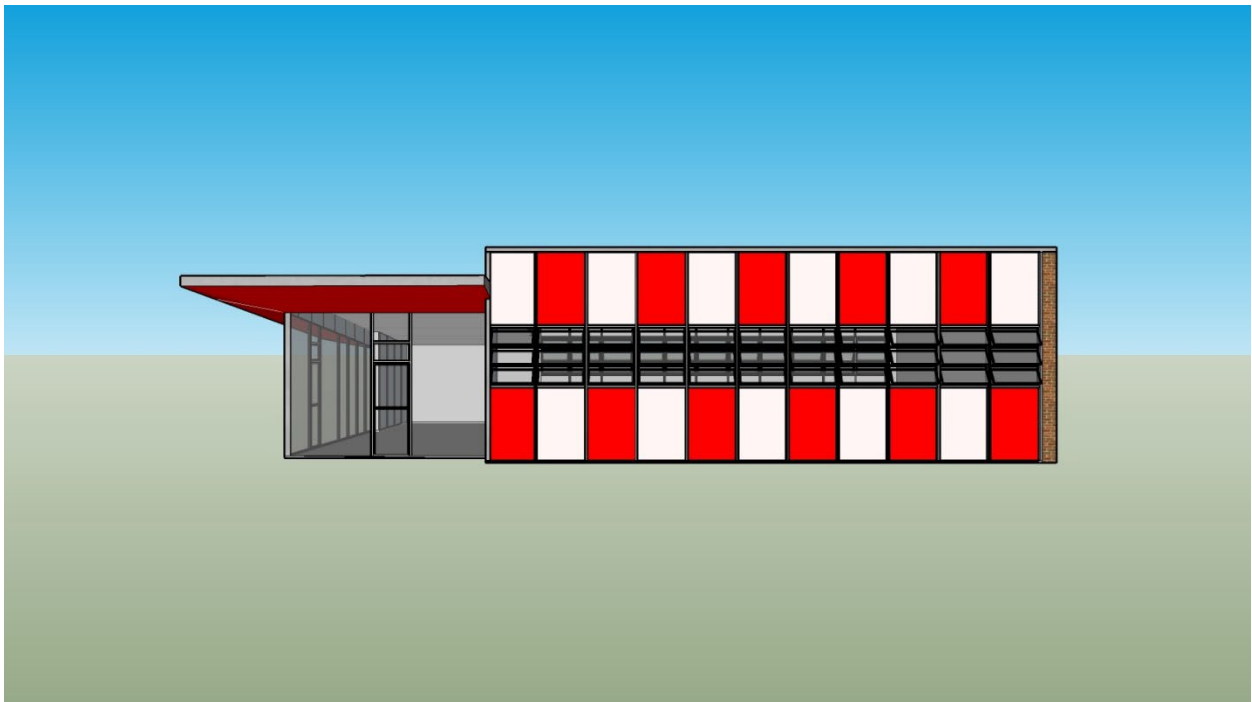


Figure 2: View of the south elevation.



Figure 3: View of the south and west (front) elevations.

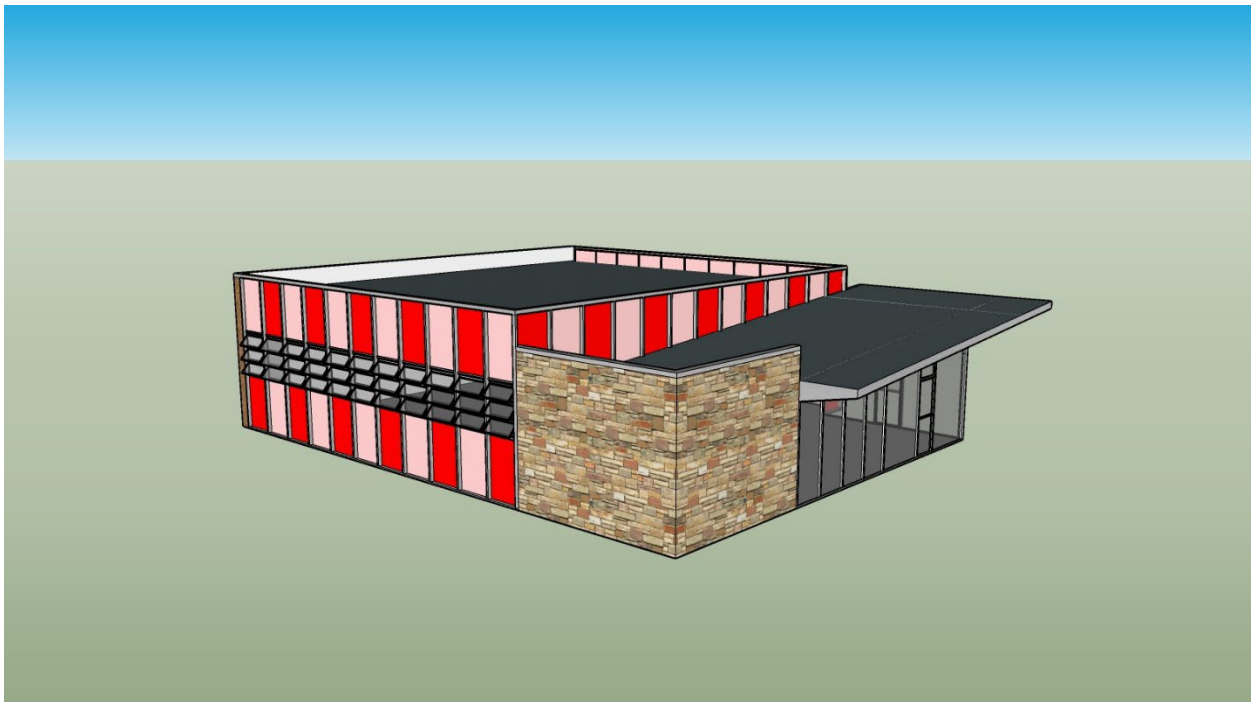


Figure 4: View of the north and west (front) elevations.



Figure 5: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaners when traveling north on Fenton Street.

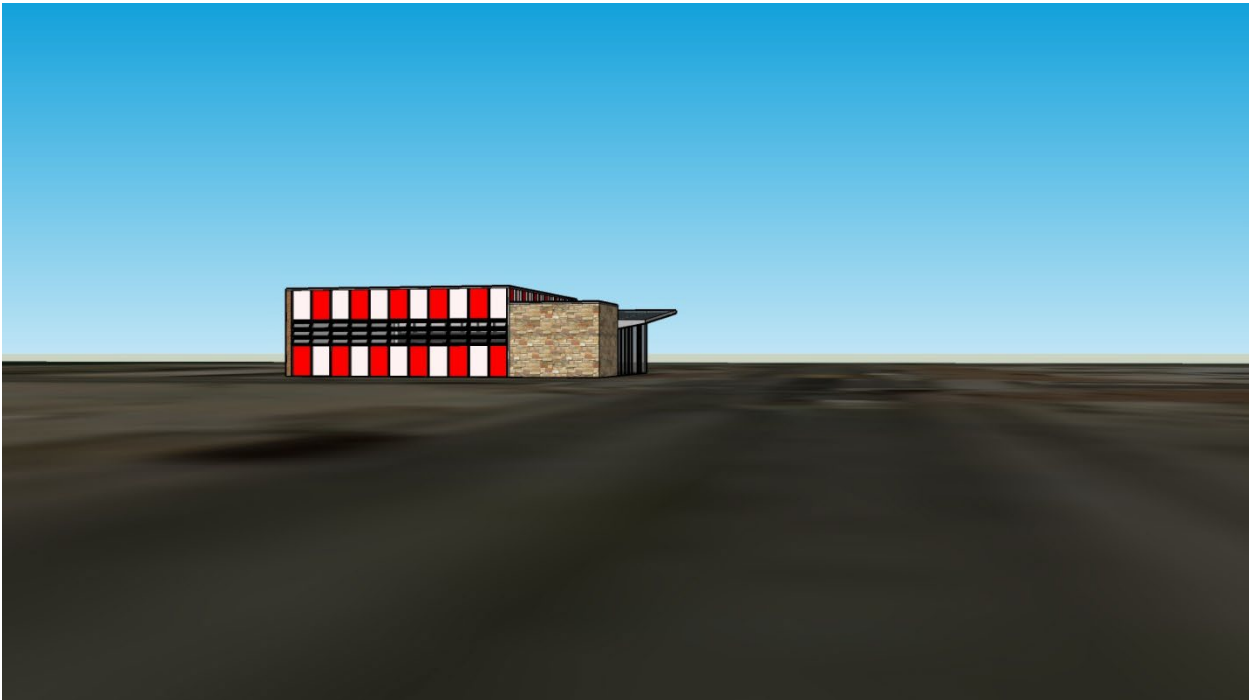


Figure 6: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaners when traveling south on Fenton Street.



Figure 7: View of the Weller's Dry Cleaners when traveling east on Thayer Avenue.

APPENDIX SEVEN:
GOOGIE ARCHITECTURE



Figure 1: Norms La Cienega, Los Angeles, California.

Source: Kansas Sebastian, "Norm's Restaurant – Façade (E)," <http://www.flickr.com>.



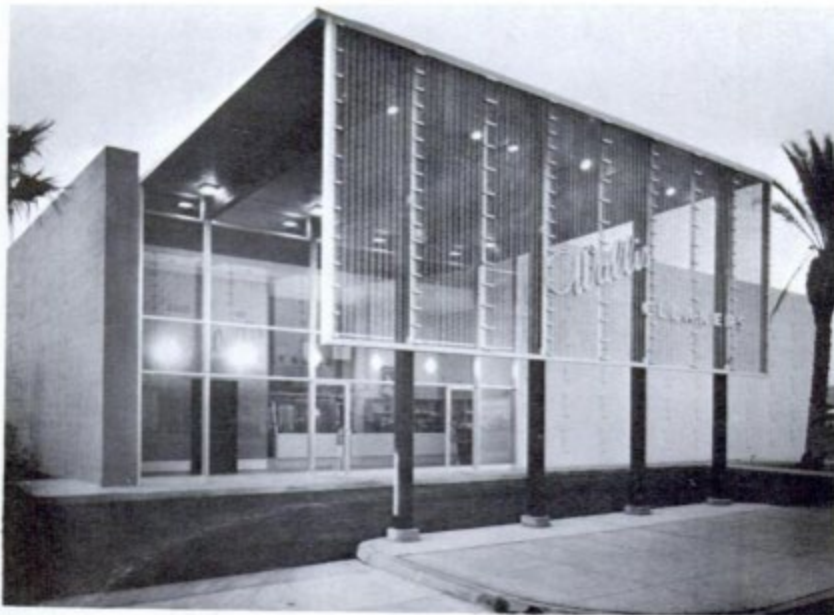
Figure 2: Harvey's Broiler, Southern California.

Source: Bob's Big Boy Broiler, <http://www.bobsbigboybroiler.com>.



Figure 3: Prestige Exceptional Fabricare, 9420 Georgia Avenue, Montgomery County, Maryland, 2012.
Source: EHT Tracerics, Inc.

APPENDIX EIGHT:
DRY CLEANER PLANTS CONTEXT



The contrast between the old "dyeing and scouring" establishment above and the modern cleaning plant below shows the increasing emphasis on business appearance, in an effort to attract more customers in an increasingly competitive business.

Figure 1: Note the contrast between the two dry cleaning establishments from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. *The Laundry & Drycleaning Industry: A Study of Problems and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

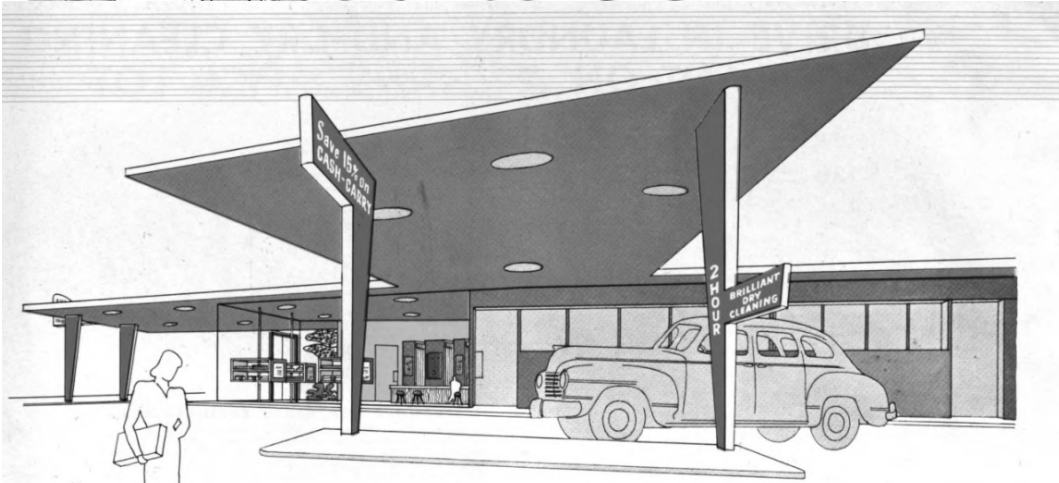


Figure 2: Illustrations for the design of modern dry cleaning stores, 1945.
 Source: Star Equipment Corporation. *Modern Dry Cleaning Plants: Manual of Design, Layout and Operation*. Bloomfield, NJ: SEC Cleaning Systems, 1945.



Figure 3: An example of a One Hour Martinizing Dry Cleaners, ca. 1963.
 Source: U.S. Department of Commerce. *The Laundry & Drycleaning Industry: A Study of Problems and Prospects*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1966.

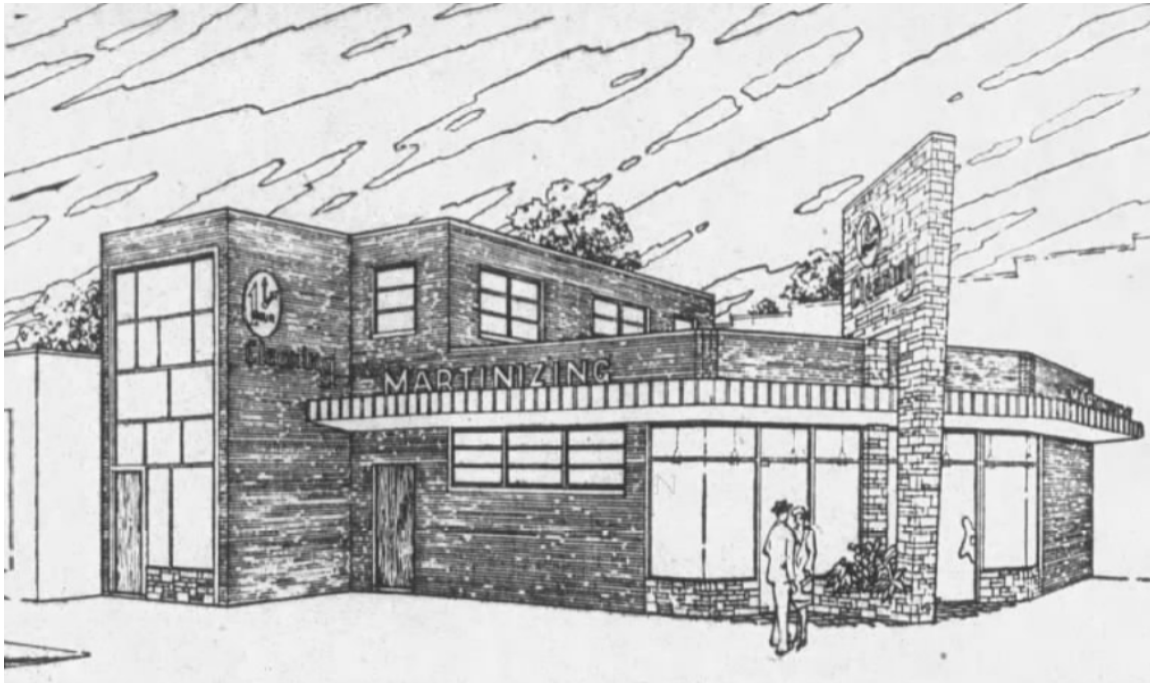


Figure 4: Architect's sketch of Ben Weller's One Hour Martinizing Dry Cleaners in Rocky Mount, North Carolina, 1954.
 Source: *Rocky Mountain Telegram*.

APPENDIX NINE:
MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES (MIHP) FORM