

Washington Post Editorial

Let's Hear It

Squabbles over power and planning could kill a world-class music venue in Silver Spring.

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THE EPIC saga of [Montgomery County](#)'s efforts to attract a world-class music hall to downtown Silver Spring, now entering its sixth year, has all the allure of an off-key warm-up band that remains on stage for hour after tuneless hour. After a while, you'd pay money to get to the next act. In this case the next act is almost certainly worth waiting for since the county has made a tentative deal to land a Fillmore hall, which could draw some of the music world's hottest acts. But first it must resolve a tangled dispute between County Executive [Isiah Leggett](#) (D), who negotiated the deal, and the Planning Board, which insists that the county could do better.

The quarrel involves whether the deal will provide for adequate amenities around the hall, such as landscaping and a pedestrian walkway. There is bickering, as well, about the package of development concessions that would be granted to the current landowners, the Lee Development Group, which would donate the property for the hall. Mr. Leggett and his allies on the County Council say the county is getting a fair deal; [Royce Hanson](#), planning board chairman, says the county is giving away the store.

We have previously conceded some of Mr. Hanson's main points -- that the county, which together with the state is contributing \$8 million toward the arrangement, could have driven a better bargain. The developers, not to mention the Fillmore's owners, mega-music promoter [Live Nation](#), have clinched themselves a sweet and probably no-lose deal.

But squabbles about pedestrian walkways and the niceties of who gets what or could have done better have obscured the larger point, which is that installing a music hall in downtown Silver Spring would go a long way toward completing the revival of a once-decrepit urban wasteland. Even Mr. Hanson concedes the point that a Fillmore hall, which would be within a block or two of the [American Film Institute](#), the Discovery headquarters, the Round House Theatre, and a sheaf of new restaurants and clubs, would be an excellent capstone to what remains an unfinished, if now vibrant, project.

The site in question, once a [J.C. Penney](#) department store, has stood vacant and gloomy for 18 years. Now there is a viable plan on the table, one that would bring thousands of people to Silver Spring and a tub of tax dollars to the county. The argument between Mr. Hanson and Mr. Leggett, which is mostly about power and prerogative, should not be allowed to subvert that prospect.