

## Lee Development close to deal on Silver Spring project

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**Lee Development Group** is at the one-yard line in its years-long negotiations with Montgomery County to build a Fillmore Music Hall in downtown Silver Spring.

For the last six years, Lee Development Group has been working with County Executive Isiah Leggett on a deal that would give the county land for a 32,000-square-foot Fillmore music center run by Beverly Hills, Calif.-based Live Nation in exchange for the county's approval of a future mixed-use development directly behind the development between Georgia Avenue and Fenton Street.

The developer says a deal is imminent.

"We're saying 30 to 60 days, but hopefully, we're closer than that. We have several meetings over the next couple of weeks and are wrapping up the details," said Bruce Lee, president of Lee Development Group.

The deal seems simple — a developer gives the county land and is promised future approval — but the swap is unprecedented in Montgomery County and since the mixed-use project could be years off, Lee wants to be sure it will get the same approval in the future that it would if the project was before the planning board today.

"Basically our mixed-use plan would be within the setback and boundaries of the current zoning. A deal like this that deals with future development has never been done in the county before, so a process had to be created. It's really creative thinking for economic development. There is so much support on all fronts to get the music hall moving forward, that the deal makes sense," Lee said.

The music hall will rise behind the historic facade of a 1949 J.C. Penney store that fronts Colesville Road. Lee has demolished the interior portion of the building that was vacated in 1989 and, once it gets the green light from the county, will redevelop it into an approximately 1,000-seat venue for concerts, comedy acts, films and art festivals.

The county will own the site and lease it to Live Nation. Live Nation could not be reached for comment.

The two- to three-story music hall, once eyed by the Birchmere and 9:30 Club, will host up to 2,000 people for standing-room events and join the emerging arts corridor along Colesville Road that is already home to the Round House Theater and the **AFI Silver Theater**.

The state and county will each contribute \$4 million to build the center.

There are no final plans for Lee's future mixed-use project, though an **April 1 presentation to the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission envisioned a seven-story, 215,000-square-foot office building on Georgia Avenue and a 14-story, 139,000-square-foot hotel behind the music center on Fenton Street.**

Despite the drawn-out and, at times frustrating process of finalizing the deal with the county, Lee said the project is important to his family's company.

"We're a long-time family business in Silver Spring," he said. "We've been here for generations and we believe in doing what's right for the area."