

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	7209 MacArthur Blvd., Bethesda	Meeting Date:	9/4/2024
Resource:	Contributing Resource Potomac Overlook Historic District	Report Date:	8/28/2024
Applicant:	Kim & Arthur Newmyer	Public Notice:	8/21/2024
Review:	HAWP	Staff:	Dan Bruechert
Permit No.:	1069614	Tax Credit:	No
Proposal:	RETROACTIVE - Painting Unpainted Masonry		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the HPC **approve with one (1) condition** the HAWP application:

1. Repainting the exterior masonry will not be considered in-kind work and any alteration to the exterior of the brick requires a HAWP.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Contributing Resource to the Potomac Overlook Historic District
STYLE: 1958
DATE: Mid-Century (Highview Model)



Figure 1: The subject property is adjacent to Macarthur Blvd., but not visible from the street.

BACKGROUND

On December 7, 2022,¹ the HPC approved a HAWP to remove a non-historic bay and construct a new addition, replace existing skylights, install new porch railings and expand the ground floor walkway.

At an early 2024 site visit, Staff discovered the exterior masonry had been painted. Staff directed the applicant to apply for a HAWP that would be reviewed retroactively for the unpermitted work.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to paint the brick exterior of the house.

Though this work is complete, the HPC is charged to review it as if the work has not been undertaken.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Potomac Overlook Historic District several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the *Potomac Overlook Guidelines (Guidelines)*, *Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (Chapter 24A)*, and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)*. The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

Potomac Overlook Design Guidelines

Changes to houses in the Potomac Overlook Historic District are guided by three overall objectives:

1. Preserve historical architectural features and details;
2. Deteriorated architectural details should be repaired rather than replaced; and
3. Replace historic features in-kind when restoration is not an option.

Siding – The dwelling’s brick veneer on the first story and redwood siding (either tongue-and-groove or board-and-batten) on the second story are character defining material in Potomac Overlook. These materials add textural qualities, visual continuity, and character to the overall streetscape and shall be preserved.

Non-historic materials, such as cementitious fiberboard, are not appropriate as the primary siding material. The HPC may permit the use of smooth cementitious fiberboard in locations where: 1) the redwood siding has already been replaced with synthetic siding; 2) the building retains the original T1-11 siding (possible on only the Highview models); or 3) on new additions.

Design Objectives:

1. Retain and preserve original textured brick veneer walls and redwood siding.
2. Use the gentlest means possible to clean the building. Many procedures, such as

¹ The Staff Report and application for the December 2022 HAWP is available here: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/II.D-7209-MacArthur-Boulevard-Bethesda-1008960.pdf>.

- sandblasting and pressure washing, can result in accelerated deterioration or damage.
3. Match the original mortar joint and masonry size, tooling, and bond patterns when making repairs to brick walls.
 4. Do not paint previously unpainted masonry surfaces.
 5. Do not cover or obscure original wall and siding materials.
 6. If deteriorated beyond repair, replace original wood siding or brick veneer in-kind with materials of matching design, color, and texture.
 7. Avoid the use of non-historic materials on the original building.
 8. Cementitious fiberboard will be permitted only as a replacement for the original T1-11 siding (possible on the Highview models), existing synthetic siding and on new additions.

Montgomery County Code; Chapter 24A-8

- (b) The commission shall instruct the director to issue a permit, or issue a permit subject to such conditions as are found to be necessary to ensure conformity with the purposes and requirements of this chapter, if it finds that:
 - (1) The proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of an historic site or historic resource within an historic district; or
 - (2) The proposal is compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic site or the historic district in which an historic resource is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter; or
 - (6) In balancing the interests of the public in preserving the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district, with the interests of the public from the use and benefit of the alternative proposal, the general public welfare is better served by granting the permit.
- (d) In the case of an application for work on an historic resource located within an historic district, the commission shall be lenient in its judgment of plans for structures of little historical or design significance or for plans involving new construction, unless such plans would seriously impair the historic or architectural value of surrounding historic resources or would impair the character of the historic district. (Ord. No. 9-4, § 1; Ord. No. 11-59.)

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

1. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

STAFF DISCUSSION

The subject property is a Highview model house designated as a Contributing Resource to the Potomac

Overlook Historic District. Appendix A (attached) identifies all of the alterations made to the house, including a small side gable addition, a rear bay bump-out (the rear bump-out was demolished and reconstructed as part of the approved 2022 HAWP), and a replacement or substantially altered carport. The applicant proposes to paint the exterior masonry of the existing house.

The condition of the subject house before any work had been carried out was included in the Master Plan Historic District Designation Form, prepared in May 2021. Those photographs show the exposed mottled brick foundation (see *Figures 2 and 3, below*).



Figure 2: View of the subject house from the northwest (the green box identifies a non-historic modification).



Figure 3: The south elevation of the subject house from May 2021.

The house siding and brick were painted sometime during the house rehabilitation. Staff notes, painting the siding does not require a HAWP, as the vertical siding was previously painted.



Figure 4: Photo taken by Staff at an early 2024 site visit.

Staff finds retaining the unpainted finish of the brick foundations of houses throughout the Potomac Overlook Historic District is one of the design objectives identified in the *Design Guidelines* for the district. These foundations and first floors are character-defining features of the houses and should be retained. Additionally, Staff finds painting unpainted masonry is generally a disfavored historic preservation practice, because it changes the visual character of the material and because it can cause damage to the underlying material by trapping moisture and limiting its ability to breathe.

There can be instances when unpainted brick or masonry should be painted, however, those limited instances are when the underlying historic masonry is degrading and paint or limewash can provide additional protection to the historic material. This is not one of those instances.

Staff would not recommend the HPC approve the HAWP to paint the unpainted brick. While the HPC is to review HAWPs for retroactive work as though the work has not been carried out, this is a bit of a fiction because the work has occurred, and any decision the HPC makes needs to respond to the reality of the situation, in particular when dealing with recommendations for material treatment that may result in further degradation of the historic resource.

Even though Staff would not recommend the HPC approve painting the unpainted brick, Staff finds the methods that strip the paint and return the masonry to its unpainted condition inappropriate. Removing this paint will require a physically abrasive treatment (either sandblasting, dry ice, or baking soda) which can damage and erode the exterior face of the brick, or chemical stripping. Physical treatments often damage the exterior face of the brick and allow a freer flow of water through the masonry material,

increasing the chance of brick spawling, and substantially decreasing the lifespan of the material.² Staff recognizes that the mass-produced modern brick used in the subject property is much harder than 18th and 19th-century brick, but the chances of damage are still high. Staff finds there are a limited number of chemical strippers that could be successfully applied, however, they are often ineffective at removing all of the paint; and can still damage the underlying brick, causing damage to the historic material. An inappropriate chemical stripper can also cause a chemical reaction that can cause the formation of salts which can cause inward migration of moisture, causing additional damage to the house structure. Staff finds Standard 7 requires cleaning using the gentlest means possible and discourages the use of chemical or physical treatments that could damage historic fabric.

Staff finds the best course of action is for the HPC to approve the HAWP under 24A-8(b)(6). Relying on this justification acknowledges that the HPC finds the work to be inappropriate, but also recognizes that the long-term preservation of the house's brick exterior is best served by not requiring remedial action. Staff recommends the HPC add a condition to the approval of this HAWP that repainting the foundation is not considered in-kind work and requires the applicant to return to the HPC for a HAWP for any future treatment to the exterior masonry. In the intervening time period, new products may become available that will allow for a complete removal of the paint with a lower risk to the underlying masonry. The level of paint degradation may show that the paint produced a weak bond and the paint can be easily removed with a wire brush.

Staff reluctantly recommends the HPC approve the HAWP under 24A-8(b)(6) with the recommended condition.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve with one (1) condition:**

1. Repainting the exterior masonry will not be considered in-kind work and any alteration to the exterior of the brick requires a HAWP; under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(6) and the purposes of Chapter 24A;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall present an electronic set of drawings, if applicable, to Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) staff for review and stamping prior to submission for the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) building permits;

and with the general condition that final project design details, not specifically delineated by the Commission, shall be approved by HPC staff or brought back to the Commission as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall notify the Historic Preservation Staff if they propose to make **any alterations** to the approved plans. Once the work is completed the applicant will contact the staff person assigned to this application at 301-563-3400 or dan.bruechert@montgomeryplanning.org to schedule a follow-up site visit.

² See Preservation Briefs 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings: <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-06-abrasive-cleaning.pdf>.



**APPLICATION FOR
HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT**
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
301.563.3400

FOR STAFF ONLY:
HAWP# _____
DATE ASSIGNED _____

APPLICANT:

Name: _____ E-mail: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____
Daytime Phone: _____ Tax Account No.: _____

AGENT/CONTACT (if applicable):

Name: _____ E-mail: _____
Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____
Daytime Phone: _____ Contractor Registration No.: _____

LOCATION OF BUILDING/PREMISE: MIHP # of Historic Property _____

Is the Property Located within an Historic District? Yes/District Name _____
 No/Individual Site Name _____

Is there an Historic Preservation/Land Trust/Environmental Easement on the Property? If YES, include a map of the easement, and documentation from the Easement Holder supporting this application.

Are other Planning and/or Hearing Examiner Approvals /Reviews Required as part of this Application? (Conditional Use, Variance, Record Plat, etc.?) If YES, include information on these reviews as supplemental information.

Building Number: _____ Street: _____

Town/City: _____ Nearest Cross Street: _____

Lot: _____ Block: _____ Subdivision: _____ Parcel: _____

TYPE OF WORK PROPOSED: See the checklist on Page 4 to verify that all supporting items for proposed work are submitted with this application. Incomplete Applications will not be accepted for review. Check all that apply:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> Deck/Porch | <input type="checkbox"/> Shed/Garage/Accessory Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addition | <input type="checkbox"/> Fence | <input type="checkbox"/> Solar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition | <input type="checkbox"/> Hardscape/Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree removal/planting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grading/Excavation | <input type="checkbox"/> Roof | <input type="checkbox"/> Window/Door |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

I hereby certify that I have the authority to make the foregoing application, that the application is correct and accurate and that the construction will comply with plans reviewed and approved by all necessary agencies and hereby acknowledge and accept this to be a condition for the issuance of this permit.

Signature of owner or authorized agent

Date

HAWP APPLICATION: MAILING ADDRESSES FOR NOTIFYING
[Owner, Owner's Agent, Adjacent and Confronting Property Owners]

Owner's mailing address	Owner's Agent's mailing address
Adjacent and confronting Property Owners mailing addresses	

Description of Property: Please describe the building and surrounding environment. Include information on significant structures, landscape features, or other significant features of the property:

Description of Work Proposed: Please give an overview of the work to be undertaken:

The Evaluation of the proposed hardscaping requires additional information and will not be considered as part of this HAWP.

Work Item 1: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

Work Item 2: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

Work Item 3: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

**HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT
CHECKLIST OF
APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS**

	Required Attachments						
Proposed Work	I. Written Description	2. Site Plan	3. Plans/Elevations	4. Material Specifications	5. Photographs	6. Tree Survey	7. Property Owner Addresses
New Construction	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Additions/Alterations	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Demolition	*	*	*		*		*
Deck/Porch	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Fence/Wall	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Driveway/Parking Area	*	*		*	*	*	*
Grading/Excavation/Landscaping	*	*		*	*	*	*
Tree Removal	*	*		*	*	*	*
Siding/ Roof Changes	*	*	*	*	*		*
Window/Door Changes	*	*	*	*	*		*
Masonry Repair/Repoint	*	*	*	*	*		*
Signs	*	*	*	*	*		*



ROBERT BLACK 5 design
ARCHITECTURE

8604 Timber Hill Ln
Potomac, MD 20854
202 255 6474

www.robertblack5design.com

HDC - HAWP APPLICATION II 11-12-2022
HDC - HAWP APPLICATION 10-04-2022
PRICING PACKAGE 07-07-2022

RENOVATION & ADDITION TO:
NEWMYER RESIDENCE
7209 MACARTHUR BLVD
BETHESDA, MD
POTOMAC OVERLOOK HISTORIC DISTRICT

DRAWING TITLE
ARCHITECTURAL SITE PLAN

SHEET NUMBER
A003

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