

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	29 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park	Meeting Date:	4/8/2026
Resource:	Contributing Resource Takoma Park Historic District	Report Date:	4/1/2026
Applicant:	Margaret Flaherty Devon Brophy	Public Notice	3/25/2026
Review:	HAWP	Tax Credit:	No
Permit Number:	1151654	Staff:	Devon Murtha

PROPOSAL: Rear stair and landing replacement, hardscape alterations, and door replacement

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission **approve with two (2) conditions** the HAWP application with final details delegated to Staff prior to issuance of approval documents.

1. The Trex decking boards must be installed with an edge board to conceal decking edges. Trex boards used as stair treads must be installed to hide the edge condition, either with the installation of end caps or mitered corners on the risers.
2. The applicant cannot install Trex-brand fascia boards, railings, or stair risers, and must submit updated specifications for paintable materials.



Figure 1: The subject property at 29 Philadelphia Avenue in the Takoma Park Historic District is indicated with a yellow star.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Contributing Resource within the Takoma Park Historic District
 STYLE: Craftsman
 DATE: c. 1915-25

The subject property is located on a triangular corner lot at the intersection of Philadelphia Avenue and Park Avenue. The property contains a one-story house executed in the Craftsmen style. The façade faces east onto Philadelphia Avenue and features a porch, and the rear elevation faces west onto Park Avenue and features a covered metal landing.



Figure 2: View of subject property along Philadelphia Avenue (Montgomery County Planning Staff, 2026)

PROPOSAL

The applicant is proposing to

- Demolish the existing platform, guardrail, handrail, metal awning and concrete stairs attached to the rear elevation;
- Construct a new wood-framed deck with Trex-brand composite decking, stairs, railings, and fascia board to match the existing footprint;
- Remove the existing rear slate patio and replace them with permeable pavers to improve drainage; and,
- Replace the existing rear door with a new Anderson fiberglass door and aluminum storm door.

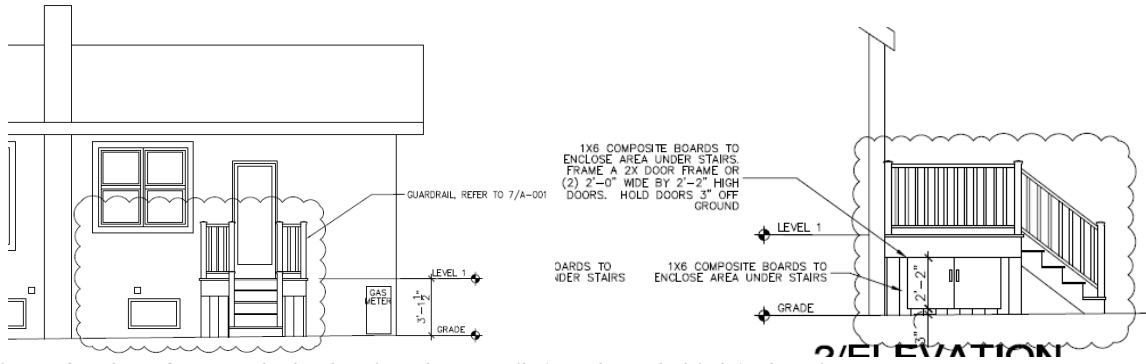


Figure 3: Plans for rear deck, showing the west (let) and north (right) elevations.

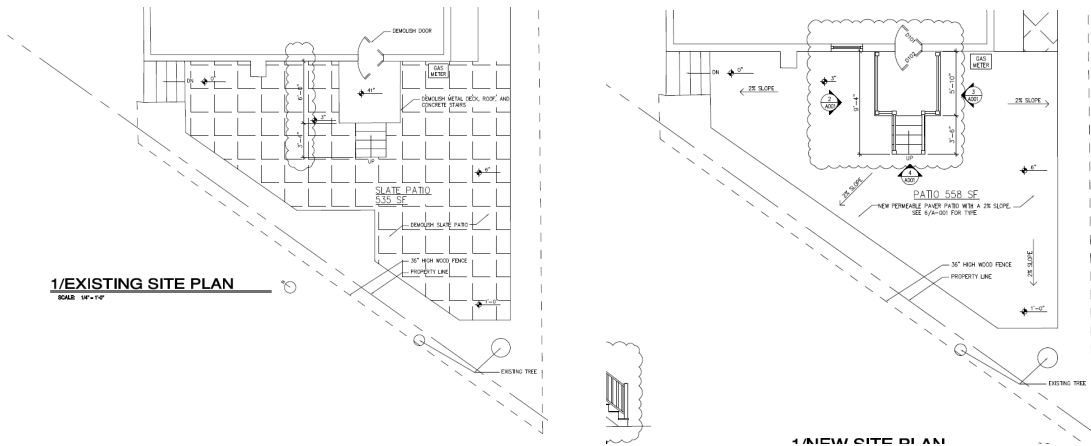


Figure 4: Existing (left) and proposed (right) site plan.



Figure 5: Proposed storm door (left) and Anderson fiberglass-clad door (right)

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

The Historic Preservation Office and Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) consult several documents when reviewing alterations and new construction within the Takoma Park Historic District. These documents include the historic preservation review guidelines in the approved and adopted amendment for the *Montgomery County Code, Takoma Park Historic District (Guidelines)*, *Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (Chapter 24A)*, the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards)* and the *Historic Preservation Commission Policy No. 24-01: Policy for the Appropriateness of Substitute*

Materials for Porch and Deck Flooring. The pertinent information in these four documents is outlined below.

Takoma Park Historic District Guidelines

Contributing Resources should receive a more lenient review than those structures that have been classified as Outstanding. This design review should emphasize the importance of the resource to the overall streetscape and its compatibility with existing patterns rather than focusing on a close scrutiny of architectural detailing. In general, however, changes to Contributing Resources should respect the predominant architectural style of the resource. As stated above, the design review emphasis will be restricted to changes that are at all visible from the public right-of-way, irrespective of landscaping or vegetation.

Relevant factors to be considered in reviewing HAWPs on Contributing Resources include:

- all exterior alterations, including those to architectural features and details, should be generally consistent with the predominant architectural style and period of the resource and should preserve the predominant architectural features of the resource; exact replication of existing details and features is, however, not required;
- minor alterations to areas that do not directly front on a public right-of-way -such as vents, metal stovepipes, air conditioners, fences, skylights, etc. -should be allowed as a matter of course;
- alterations to areas that do not directly front on a public right-of-way which involve the replacement of or damage to original ornamental or architectural features are discouraged but may be considered and approved on a case-by-case basis;
- major additions should, where feasible, be placed to the rear of existing structures so that they are less visible from the public right-of-way; additions and alterations to the first floor at the front of a structure are discouraged but not automatically prohibited
- while additions should be compatible, they are not required to be replicative of earlier architectural styles
- second story additions or expansions should be generally consistent with the predominant architectural style and period of the resource (although structures that have been historically single story can be expanded) and should be appropriate to the surrounding streetscape in terms of scale and massing
- original size and shape of window and door openings should be maintained, where feasible; some non-original building materials may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis
- artificial siding on areas visible from the public right-of-way is discouraged where such materials would replace or damage original building materials that are in good condition
- alterations to features that are not visible at all from the public right-of-way should be allowed as a matter of course
- all changes and additions should respect existing environmental settings, landscaping, and patterns of open space

Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8

The following guidance that pertains to this project are as follows:

- (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;

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior defines rehabilitation as “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features, which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.” The applicable *Standards* are as follows:

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
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.

Historic Preservation Commission Policy No. 24-01: Policy for the Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Porch and Deck Flooring

4. Contributing Resources – These are significant for their contribution to the district as a whole and prioritize retaining the architectural style, overall volume, and size. Porch floors on ‘Contributing’ resources may be a compatible substitute material (discussed below), provided the material matches the building’s historic character and construction methods. Historic rear porches for ‘Contributing’ resources may be constructed using a compatible substitute material. Non-historic porches and decks on ‘Contributing’ resources that are not visible from the public right-of-way may be constructed using substitute materials.
6. Compatible substitute materials for replacement porch flooring/decking – On buildings where a substitute material is acceptable under this policy, the material must satisfy the following criteria
 - It must match the dimensions and installation method (i.e.) of the existing material or historically appropriate porch flooring, (e.g., boards must run perpendicular to the house for porches);
 - It must be millable;
 - It can be painted without voiding the product warranty; or, o Has a uniform appearance consistent with painted wood;
 - It has a minimal (or no) stamped or embossed texture on the surface; and,
 - It has a finished edge that appears as a cut solid board.

STAFF DISCUSSION

Staff is generally supportive of the proposal, with some minor recommendations regarding the material palette.

The existing metal landing and concrete stairs are not historic, and Staff supports demolition and

reconstruction of a new landing using the same footprint. Per the *Standards*, the new construction will not destroy historic materials that characterize the property, and if removed in the future, it will not impact the overall form and integrity of the property.

Staff is supportive of the proposed Trex decking, if they are installed with an edge board. Per *Policy 24-01*, porch and deck floors on Contributing resources may be constructed using compatible substitute materials, and non-historic porches and decks that are not visible from the public right-of-way may be constructed using substitute materials. Trex boards do not meet the criteria for compatible substitute material, as they are not paintable without voiding the product warranty and have a heavily embossed texture, but are typically appropriate on a non-historic rear deck with limited visibility from the right-of-way. In this case, the Trex is proposed on the rear elevation, and generally conforms to the spirit of the policy. The Trex *would* be visible from the right-of-way, but Staff finds that this rear elevation clearly reads as secondary due to its relatively simple articulation and function as an entrance for vehicles (*Figure 6*). Additionally, Staff finds that the site conditions minimize the visual impact of the Trex decking. The landing is set back from the street and the grade slopes upward towards the house, minimizing the visibility of the embossed planes.



Figure 6: View of the west (rear) elevation and the metal landing (right).

Staff find that the visibility from the right-of-way may be further mitigated by installing edge boards. Trex boards are identifiable as an obviously non-historic material by their odd edge condition (*Figure 7*). Staff recommends that the HPC add a condition requiring the installation of an edge board to conceal the edges (*Figure 7*). Similarly, Trex boards used as stair treads should be installed to hide the edge condition, either with the installation of end caps of mitered corners on the risers (*Figure 7*).



Figure 7: Edges of Trex decking (left), installation of edge boards (center), and installation of boards with mitered risers to obscured edges of stairs (right).

Staff is not supportive of the proposed Trex fascia boards as the material for enclosing the area underneath the porch, the Trex railing, or the Trex risers for the new stairs. Unlike the decking boards, the fascia boards, railings, and risers will be installed upright and will be highly visible from the right-of-way. Trex products are not paintable and do not effectively replicate the appearance of wood or historic materials. Staff finds that the fascia boards will function as a cladding, and that the HPC typically requires that artificial cladding, such as fibercement, have a finish consistent with painted wood to retain some compatibility with the historic material palette. Staff recommends that the applicant return with an updated specification for both the fascia boards/cladding, railings, and risers. The updated specifications should be for materials with a painted finish and not an embossed texture.

Staff is supportive of the proposal to remove the existing rear slate patio and replace it with permeable pavers, finding that this will have no impact on the historic resource. The pavers will be located in the rear yard, and their visibility is further limited by the site topography, which is several feet above the street.

Staff is also supportive of the replacement door. The existing rear door is not historic and its replacement does not constitute a removal of distinctive materials, per *Standard 2*. The replacement door is a compatible style for the Craftsman resource, and Staff finds that the fiberglass material is appropriate for a non-historic door replacement on a secondary entrance.



Exterior

Figure 8: Existing door (left) and proposed replacement door (right).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission **approve with two (2) conditions** the HAWP application with final approval delegated to staff.

1. The Trex decking boards must be installed with an edge board to conceal decking edges. Trex boards used as stair treads must be installed to hide the edge condition, either with the installation of end caps of mitered corners on the risers.
2. The applicant cannot install Trex-brand fascia boards, railings, or stair risers, and must submit updated specifications for paintable materials.

under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1) and (2), and Chapter 24A-8(d) and the *Takoma Park Historic District* having found that the proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of

the historic resource and is compatible in character with the purposes of Chapter 24A;

with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* # 2, 9 and 10;

with *Historic Preservation Commission Policy No. 24-01: Policy for the Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Porch and Deck Flooring*

and with the general condition that the applicant shall present an electronic set of drawings, if applicable, to 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 HPC as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall notify the HPC 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 301-495-1328 or devon.murtha@montgomeryplanning.org to schedule a follow-up site visit.

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:

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

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

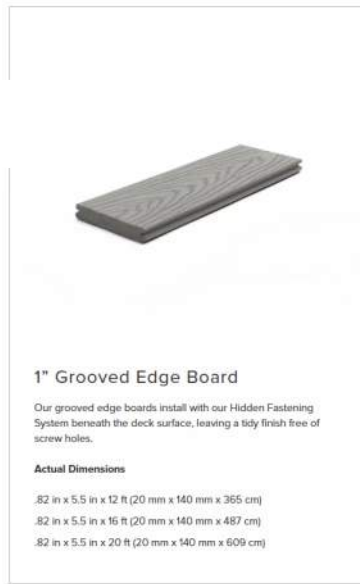
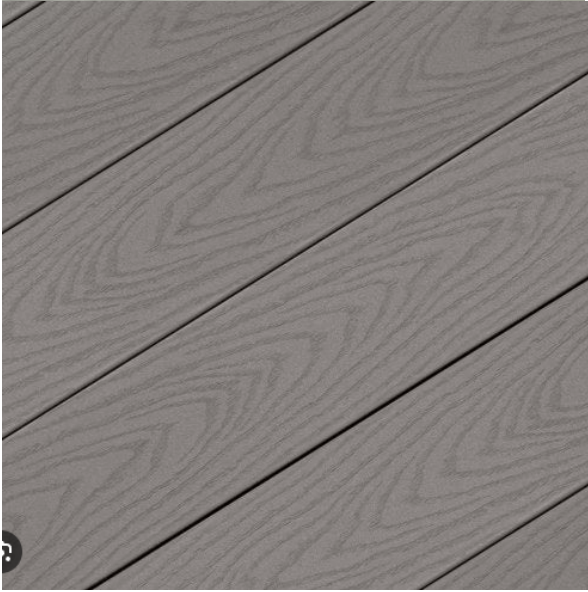
Work Item 3: _____	
Description of Current Condition:	Proposed Work:

**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	*	*	*	*	*		*

MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS

TREX SELECT COMPOSITE DECKING TO BE USED AS DECK BOARDS AND FOR AREA UNDER DECK



TREX SELECT COMPOSITE RAILING



TREX FASCIA BOARD TO BE USED AS A FASCIA AT DECK



BELGARD AQUALINE SERIES PERMEABLE PAVERS



DIMENSIONS
4-1/2 in. x 9 in. x 3-1/8 in.

PATTERN
Herringbone



EXISTING REAR STAIRCASE & SLATE PATIO



EXISTING REAR STAIRCASE & SLATE PATIO



PANEL STYLE 402 ARTS AND CRAFTS



Interior



Exterior

Summary

Configuration	Single Door
Interior Color	White
Glass	Low-E4® Glass
Hardware	Newbury®, Oil Rubbed Bronze
Grille Pattern	None
Exterior	White

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