

# Montgomery County Historic Preservation

## Staff Report

<p><b>ADDRESS:</b> 9 Primrose St., Chevy Chase</p> <p><b>RESOURCE:</b> Chevy Chase Village Historic District</p> <p><b>APPLICANT:</b> Alice Keating</p> <p><b>REVIEW:</b> HAWP <u>Revision 2</u></p> <p><b>CASE NO.:</b> 1146371</p> <p><b>PROPOSAL:</b> Porch Railing Replacement</p>	<p><b>MEETING DATE:</b> 5/13/2026</p> <p><b>REPORT DATE:</b> 5/6/2026</p> <p><b>PUBLIC NOTICE:</b> 4/29/2026</p> <p><b>TAX CREDIT ELIGIBLE:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>STAFF:</b> Dan Bruechert</p>
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### Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the HPC approve with **the HAWP** application.

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### Architectural Description

**Significance:** Contributing Resource to the Chevy Chase Village Historic District

**Date:** 1918

**Style:** Colonial Revival

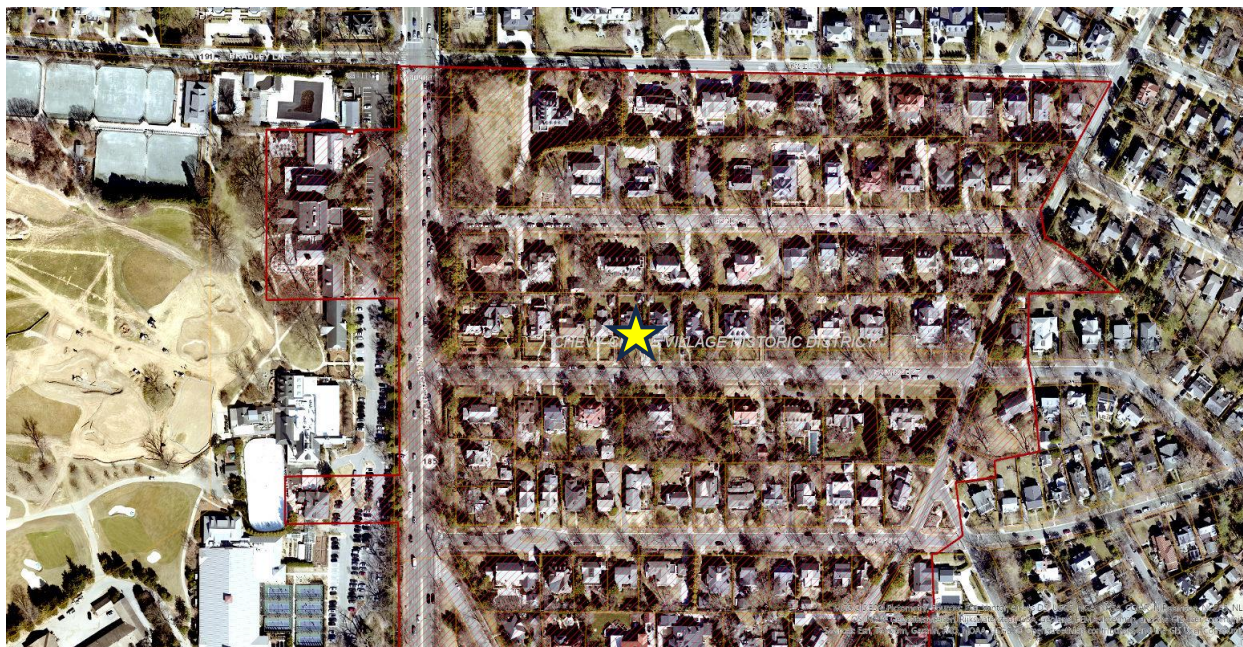


Figure 1: The location of the subject property in the Chevy Chase Village Historic District is shown with a yellow star.

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## Proposal

The applicant proposes to replace the second-story porch railing with a new wood railing.

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## Applicable Guidelines

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Chevy Chase Village Historic District several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These documents include the Approved and Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County Maryland for Chevy Chase Village (*Design Guidelines*), Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8 (Chapter 24A-8), and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards). The pertinent information in these documents is outlined below.

### **Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8**

- (a) The commission shall instruct the director to deny a permit if it finds, based on the evidence and information presented to or before the commission that the alteration for which the permit is sought would be inappropriate, inconsistent with or detrimental to the preservation, enhancement or ultimate protection of the historic site or historic resource within an historic district, and to the purposes of this chapter.
- (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) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied; or
- (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.)

### **Design Guidelines**

The *Guidelines* break down specific projects into three levels of review - Lenient, Moderate and Strict Scrutiny.

“**Lenient Scrutiny**” means that the emphasis of the review should be on issues of general massing and scale, and compatibility with the surrounding streetscape, and should allow for a very liberal interpretation of preservation rules. Most changes should be permitted unless there are major problems with massing, scale or compatibility.

“**Moderate Scrutiny**” involves a higher standard of review than “lenient scrutiny.” Besides issues of massing, scale and compatibility, preserving the integrity of the resource is taken into account. Alterations should be designed so that the altered structure still contributes to the district. Use of compatible new materials, rather than the original building materials, should be permitted. Planned changes should be compatible with the structure’s existing design, but should not be required to replicate its architectural style.

“**Strict Scrutiny**” means that the planned changes should be reviewed to insure that the integrity of the significant exterior architectural or landscaping features and details is not compromised. However, strict scrutiny should not be “strict in theory but fatal in fact” i.e. it does not mean that there can be no changes but simply that the proposed changes should be reviewed with extra care.

HAWP applications for exterior alterations, changes, and/or additions to non-contributing/out-of-period resources should receive the most lenient level of review. Most alterations and additions should be approved as a matter of course. The only exceptions would be major additions and alterations to the scale and massing of the structure, which affect the surrounding streetscape and/or landscape and could impair the character of the district as a whole.

- *Balconies* should be subject to moderate scrutiny if they are visible from the public right-of-way, lenient scrutiny if they are not.
  - *Porches* should be subject to moderate scrutiny if they are visible from the public right-of-way, lenient scrutiny if they are not. Enclosures of existing side and rear porches have occurred throughout the Village with little or no adverse impact on its character, and they should be permitted where compatibly designed.
- The *Guidelines* state five basic policies that should be adhered to, including:
    - Preserving the integrity of the Chevy Chase Village Historic District. Any alterations should, at a minimum, perpetuate the ability to perceive the sense of time and place portrayed by the district.
    - Preserving the integrity of contributing structures. Alterations to should be designed in such a way that the altered structure still contributes to the district.
    - Maintaining the variety of architectural styles and the tradition of architectural excellence.
    - Design review emphasis should be restricted to changes that will be visible from the front or side public right-of-way, or that would be visible in the absence of vegetation or landscaping.
    - Alterations to the portion of a property that are not visible from the public-right-of-way should be subject to a very lenient review. Most changes to the rear of the properties should be approved as a matter of course.

### **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation**

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, space and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

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### **Staff Discussion**

The subject property is two-and-a-half story, stucco sided Colonial Revival house with a two-story front porch. The first floor of the porch has round wood columns and a low wood railing, with balusters measuring 7/8" × 1 3/4" (seven-eighths inch wide by one-and-three-quarters inch deep). The porch's second story has square pilasters covered in paintable PVC with a 33" (thirty-three inch) tall railing and balusters measuring 5/8" × 1 3/8" (five-eighths inch wide by one-and-three-eighths inch deep). The applicants propose to remove the existing railing and to install a new Intex cellular PVC railing on the second floor. No work is offered on the first-floor porch.

The second-floor porch railing has been modified from its original configuration. At some point the posts were covered in PVC, which would have required, at a minimum, shortening the railing to account for the narrower space between the posts. The existing railing shows extensive rot and select areas of repair (see *Figure 2*, below). At some point a 1" × 4" (one by four inch) strip of wood was applied to the face of the

bottom rail which created a dam that allowed water to collect at the railing. There are also areas where the narrow balusters have warped and bowed. Based on Staff's observations on site and the provided photographic documentation, Staff finds the railing has deteriorated to the point it will likely fall apart when it is removed for the new roof, and the railing has deteriorated beyond repair and must be replaced. Staff supports the railing removal under 24A-8(b)(2) and (d) and *Standard #6*.



Figure 2: Detail of the existing second-floor railing condition.

The applicant proposes to replace the existing second floor railing with a new mahogany railing. Baluster dimensions and spacing for the new railing will match the measurements on the first-floor railing. The new railing will be taller than the railing on the first floor, so that it satisfies the 36" (thirty-six inch) code compliant height.

Staff finds wood is the appropriate material for a replacement railing on the front elevation to Contributing and Outstanding Resources in the Chevy Chase Village Historic District under the *Design Guidelines* and *Standard #6*, and 24A-8(b)(1) and (2).

In evaluating the existing second floor railing, Staff determined that the railing is not original to the house and is a later replacement for several reasons (there is no record of a HAWP for this work, so it likely occurred prior to the district's designation). First, the two baluster dimensions do not match. It would have been highly unlikely that two different railings were installed on a house with this high level of design and craftsmanship. Second, to accommodate the PVC wrapped posts, the existing railing would have been removed. Unless the railing was in pristine condition, the railing would likely have been replaced at this time. Third, because the house faces south, the second-floor porch is fully exposed to the sun, and

the house is over 120 years old, Staff finds the second-floor railing would have degraded much faster than the covered first floor porch. While none of these reasons are individually dispositive, Staff finds it highly unlikely that the existing railing is constructed using the historic fabric and that it is just as unlikely that the historic railing design was retained. Staff finds there is a reasonable basis for installing a second-floor railing that matches the first-floor railing and finds the proposed dimensions of the balusters to be appropriate under 24A-8(b)(2) and (d) and the Design Guidelines, considering a ‘moderate scrutiny’ review.

The change in railing height is necessary to satisfy existing building code and Staff supports this design change under 24A-8(b)(4), as the taller railing will remedy a potential hazard.

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## Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the HAWP application under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1), (2), (6), and (d), having found that the proposal is consistent with the *Chevy Chase Village Historic District Guidelines* identified above, and therefore will not substantially alter the exterior features of the historic resource and is compatible in character with the district and the purposes of Chapter 24A;

and with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation #2 and #6*;

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](mailto:dan.bruechert@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:

APRIL 20, 2026

## KEATING RESIDENCE

9 PRIMROSE STREET CHEVY CHASE MD 20815

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### PROJECT SCOPE

The existing front porch painted metal terne roofing will be replaced with new TPO membrane roofing, as per approved HAWP #1142652. In conjunction with this project, the General Contractor has determined that the existing railings along the perimeter of the front porch roof must first be removed to fully access the area of work and to install required flashings. The General Contractor has further determined that the existing railings are in poor condition and are not salvageable for reinstallation. The front porch roof railings require full replacement.

The existing railing at the perimeter of the existing front porch roof is primarily painted mahogany. The bottom rail appears to be assembled from painted 1x pine trim. The railings do not appear to be the original construction and have been replaced within the last twenty years. The existing posts are constructed of plywood boxes wrapped in 1x PVC trim, also likely replaced within the last twenty years.

The existing painted pine and mahogany railing at the perimeter of the existing front porch roof will be replaced with a new 36-inch tall painted mahogany railing, custom milled to match the existing railing profile at the first floor covered porch below. The existing railing at the first floor covered porch is presumed to be the original design.

The existing porch roof railing balusters are 5/8" wide x 1-3/8" deep, with a 3/4" space between. This varies from the original first floor porch below, where the balusters are 7/8" x 1-3/4", with 1" space between. The railing fabricator does not recommend matching the 5/8" balusters as they will bow and eventually fail again. We propose using 1" x 1-3/4" balusters at the upper railing and will match the baluster spacing at the first floor front porch below. Our approach will unify the upper and lower porch railings for a more consistent and improved appearance and will ensure the longevity of the architectural millwork over time.

The existing posts at the existing porch roof are fabricated from plywood boxes wrapped with painted PVC trim. The plywood boxes are not structural. The existing posts will be replaced with new 6x6 structural posts and will be furred out to match the existing post dimensions. The new posts will be wrapped with painted wood. The existing cap, trim, and panel details will be matched. The existing spacer blocks below the midpoint at each railing section will be replaced with new painted wood blocking to match existing to provide additional structural support against railing deflection.

APAC Engineering will provide the required drawings and calculations for the Montgomery County building permit application to confirm that the railing design and posts meet current building code requirements.

## **SPECIFICATIONS**

### GENERAL

Custom Milled Railing System: Painted sapele mahogany.

Custom Posts: 6x6 pressure treated lumber secured to existing roof framing, wrapped with painted sapele mahogany.









1 Exist. Top Rail Dtl., Porch Roof



2 Exist. Cap Detail, Porch Roof



3 Exist. Btm. Rail Dtl., Porch Roof



4 Exist. Bottom Rail Dtl., Porch Roof

Date	Issue Description
01-19-2026	HAWP Set

Sheet Title

Existing Photographs

Sheet Number

A3-3



1 Exist. Baluster Dtl., Porch Roof



2 Exist. Baluster Dtl., Porch Roof



3 Exist. Baluster Detail, Porch  
For Reference Only



4 Exist. Baluster Detail, Porch  
For Reference Only

Date	Issue Description
01-19-2026	HAWP Set

Sheet Title

Existing Photographs

Sheet Number

A3-4