

Montgomery County Historic Preservation

Staff Report

<p>ADDRESS: 3930 Washington Street, Kensington</p> <p>RESOURCE: Kensington Historic District</p> <p>APPLICANT: John Schwabe (Jodi Longo, Agent)</p> <p>REVIEW: HAWP</p> <p>CASE NO.: 1157677</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Construction of ADA lift</p>	<p>MEETING DATE: 6/10/2026</p> <p>REPORT DATE: 6/3/2026</p> <p>PUBLIC NOTICE: 5/27/2026</p> <p>TAX CREDIT ELIGIBLE: No</p> <p>STAFF: Devon Murtha</p>
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the HPC **approve with one (1) condition** the HAWP application, with final design details designated to Staff:

1. The porch must be restored to its original condition once the ADA lift is no longer in service.

Architectural Description

Significance: Primary Resource within the Kensington Historic District

Date: c. 1898

Style: Shingle



Figure 1: The location of the subject property (outline in blue) within the Kensington Historic District (outlined and hatched in red).



Figure 2: View of the subject property from Washington Street.

Proposal

The applicants proposed to install an ADA lift on the right side of the front porch of the subject property. As part of this proposal, a section of the wood railings will need to be removed and a concrete footer will be installed. The applicant has indicated that they plan to restore the railing when the lift is no longer needed.

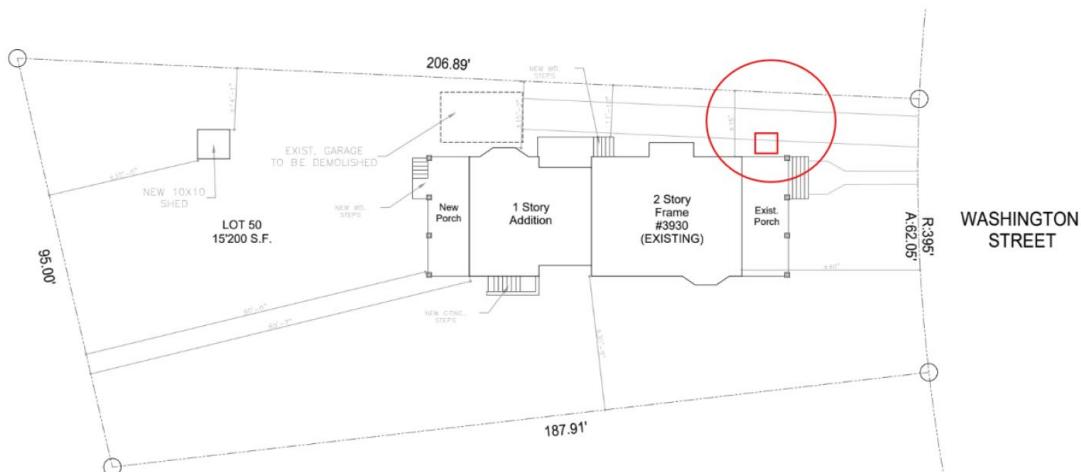


Figure 3: Site plan showing location of the proposed lift.

Traveler

The Traveler personal elevator keeps your life moving with a safe and smooth, high-quality lift. Perfect for every person – grandparents, grandkids and grandpets, too.






-  **14** Travels up to 14 feet
-  **Moves up to 500 lbs**
-  **Basket: 54.25" x 54.25" x 87.0"**
-  **5** 5 Inch I-Beams
-  **150 mph** wind rating



Figure 4: Specifications for proposed lift. I-beams will be sized to the height of the porch.

Applicable Guidelines

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Kensington Historic District, several documents are to be utilized as guidelines to assist the Commission in developing their decision. These

documents include the historic preservation review guidelines in the *Approved & Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Kensington Historic District, Atlas #31/6 (Amendment)*, *Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan (Vision)*, *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.

Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan

The HPC formally adopted the planning study, *Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan*, and is directed by the Executive Regulations, which were approved by the County Council, to use this plan when considering changes and alterations to the Kensington Historic District. The goal of this preservation plan "was to establish a sound database of information from, which to produce a document that would serve the HPC, M-NCPPC, their staff and the community in wrestling with the protection of historic districts amidst the pressures of life in the 21st century." (page 1). The plan provides a specific physical description of the district as it is; an analysis of character-defining features of the district; a discussion of the challenges facing the district; and a discussion of proposed strategies for maintaining the character of the district while allowing for appropriate growth and change.

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.
 - (3) The proposal would enhance or aid in the protection, preservation and public or private utilization of the historic site or historic resource located within an historic district in a manner compatible with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural value of the historic site or historic district in which an historic resource is located; or
 - (4) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied; or
 - (5) The proposal is necessary in order that the owner of the subject property not be deprived of reasonable use of the property or suffer undue hardship; 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.

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, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

Staff Discussion

The subject property is a Shingle Style house with a cross Dutch gambrel roof with a one-story front porch. It is a Primary Resource in the Kensington Historic District, and subject to the strictest level of review.

Staff supports the proposal to install an ADA lift on the right side of the existing porch. Although Staff finds that the removal of a portion of the existing railing does constitute the removal of historic fabric, contra to Chapter 24A-8(b)(1), Staff finds that the impact will be minimal and reversible and that the historic character of the property will still be retained, per *Standard 2*. Staff finds that these railings that will be removed are simple in profile (*Figure 5*) and can easily be replicated once the ADA lift is removed. The applicant has indicated that they plan to restore the railings to their original appearance once the lift is no longer needed.



Figure 5: Detail of the existing railing (left) and view of the porch with approximate location of the proposed lift outlined in yellow (right).

Staff looked to the *National Park Services Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible (NPS Brief 32)* for additional guidance on interpreting the *Standards*.¹ *NPS Brief 32* focuses on accessibility for public buildings, but has some useful guidance that can be applied to a private residence as well. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring that modifications are as reversible and minimally intrusive to the resource as possible. Although the preferred ADA modification for wheelchair accessibility is generally a ramp, the authors of *NPS Brief 32* also highlights the possible uses of a wheelchair lift, writing that “they tend to be visually intrusive, although they are relatively reversible. Platform lifts can be used when there is inadequate space for a ramp.” In this case, a ramp to the front porch of the subject property would be much larger than a lift, and will have a larger visual impact on the private resource. Staff also finds that the wheelchair lift is more appropriate than a ramp due to the specific needs of the property owners and the site conditions. The current owners have cited mobility issues that necessitate the use of the lift for access into the house.

Staff is supportive of the location of the lift. The owners have indicated that they need to install the lift on the front porch, as opposed to the rear porch, due to the length of their driveway. During snow and other bad weather conditions, they are unable to access the rear of their house by car, which would severely limit the applicant’s ability to safely enter their house. Staff finds that public is better served by the ADA accessibility improvements and that the owner of the subject property will have reasonable use of the property with this improvement, per Chapter 24A-8(b)(4) and Chapter 24A-8(b)(6).

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the HPC **approve with one (1) condition** the HAWP application, with final design details designated to Staff:

1. The porch must be restored to its original condition once the ADA lift is no longer in service.

under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1), (2), (4), and (6), having found that the proposal 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;

Approved & Adopted Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Kensington Historic District, Atlas #31/6 (Amendment),

Vision of Kensington: A Long-Range Preservation Plan (Vision),

the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation #2 and #9;*

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;

¹ See [Preservation Brief 32](#).

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 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:

I am requesting a permit for the installation of the Traveler, a personal elevator lift that will provide safe access to my house, which currently requires climbing five front steps.

Due to my health condition, which has led to disability and mobility limitations, this lift has become a necessity for my daily safety and independence. The Traveler is a safe, smooth, and high-quality accessibility solution that will greatly improve our quality of life.

We are proposing to install the lift on the west side of the front porch. This location is the best and safest option because, due to the nature of my disability, I am unable to independently maneuver a wheelchair and my wife must assist by pushing it. For this reason, a ramp would not be the most practical or safe solution. In addition, our long driveway would make ramp access especially difficult during rainy or snowy weather conditions

Work Item 1: _____

Description of Current Condition:
Accessing to my house currently requires climbing five front steps.

Proposed Work:
Installation of the Traveler, a personal elevator/protected passenger lift.

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	*	*	*	*	*		*



DEPARTMENT OF PERMITTING SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Rabbiah Sabbakhan
Director

HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT APPLICATION

Application Date: 5/11/2026

Application No: 1157677
AP Type: HISTORIC
Customer No: 1553819

Comments

Homeowner health and physical abilities are deteriorating rapidly and he's having trouble walking and has very limited mobility.

Affidavit Acknowledgement

The Contractor is the Primary applicant authorized by the property owner
This application does not violate any covenants and deed restrictions

Primary Applicant Information

Address 3930 WASHINGTON ST
KENSINGTON, MD 20895

Othercontact Longo (Primary)

Homeowner Schwabe

Historic Area Work Permit Details

Work Type ALTER

Scope of Work Install wheel chair lift to the right side of the existing front porch.

Submission for 3930 Washington Street, Kensington

From Jodi Longo <jlongo@renovationstudio.biz>

Date Mon 5/11/2026 10:27 AM

To HAWP <HAWP@montgomeryplanning.org>; Bruechert, Dan <Dan.Bruechert@montgomeryplanning.org>

Cc Iris Schwabe <iris.schwabe@gmail.com>

 5 attachments (1 MB)

image.png; image.png; image.png; Historic Area Work Permit 1157677.pdf; HAWP-Application-Fillable-7-29-2022 (1) (1).pdf;

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] Exercise caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding.

Good afternoon - attached is our HAWP and supporting documentation for an urgent situation faced by Mr. John and Iris Schwabe. Mr. Schwabe's mobility and health is deteriorating and a lift is needed to get him in and out of the home to doctor's appointments, etc. The owners are committing to restore the porch railing to its original condition with original materials once the lift is no longer needed.

The lift process is costly and takes more than several weeks. Do you have any emergency review process for temporary work to a historic property? As waiting to go through the full HAWP process with the commission will delay Mrs. Schwabe from putting her large deposit down and placing the order with confidence. She is also looking at a temporary ramp as a backup, as the situation is getting more difficult by the week. Mr. Schwabe is over 6ft and it's become very challenging and dangerous for Mrs. Schwabe to transport him from the house to the car.

Review the attached and please give us your guidance on how to handle this and possibly expedite?

Much appreciation.

Jodi Longo - 240.374.2525

Iris Schwabe - 301.332.4130

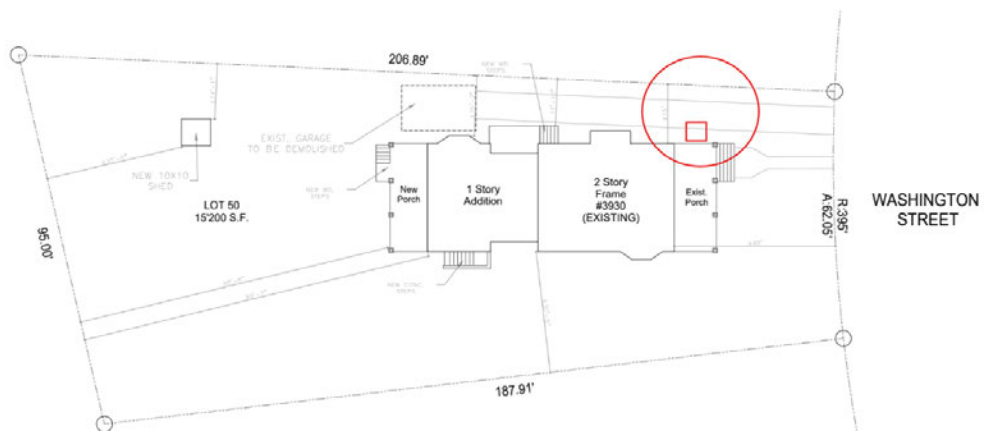
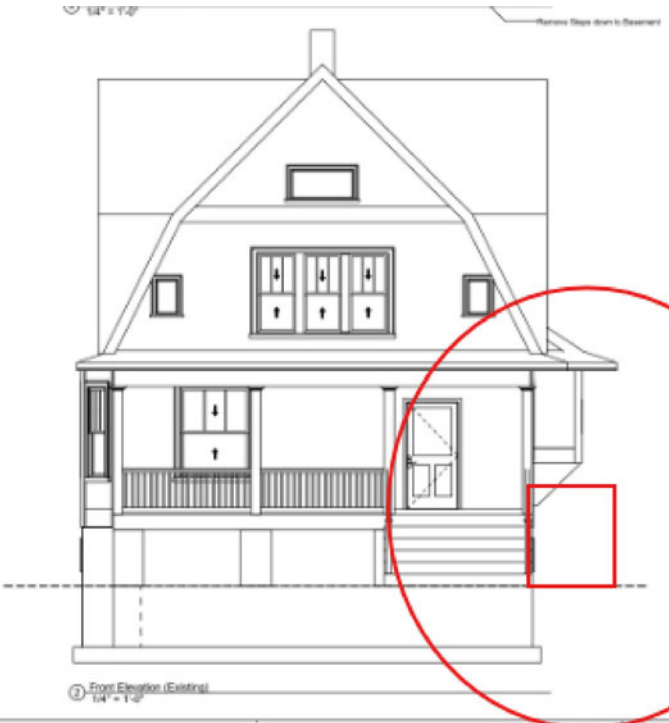
Proposed Lift:

<https://galaxylifts.com/platform-lift/traveler/>

Galaxy Lift Proposal:

<https://24336588.hs-sites.com/baf58411de61491ffef3>

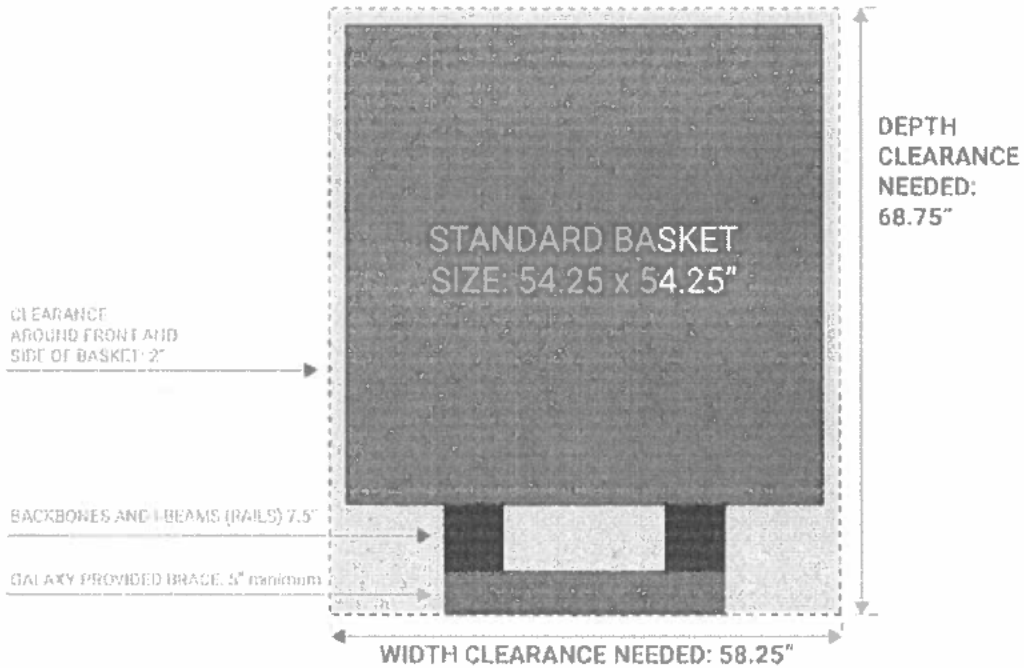
<https://galaxylifts.com/galaxy-lifts-brochure.pdf>





CLEARANCE REQUIREMENTS

Voyager & Traveler





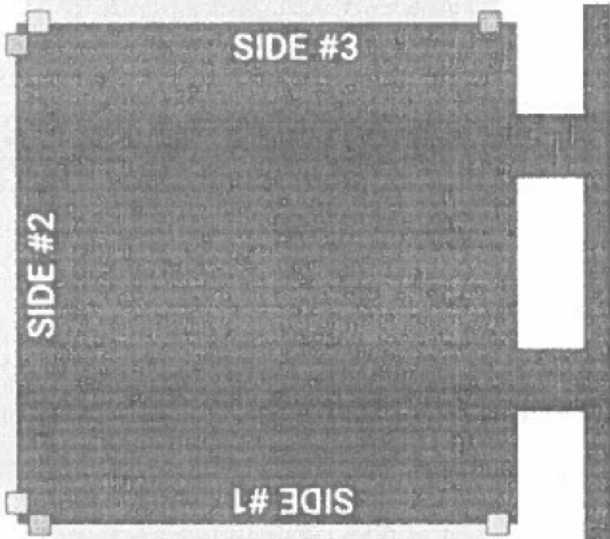
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Gate Options



-  Hinge Location A
-  Hinge Location B



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Cargo lifts and passenger lifts for your home and business





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<https://galaxylifts.com/galaxy-lifts-brochure.pdf>

