

MEMORANDUM

March 23, 2022

TO: Planning, Housing, and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

FROM: Pamela Dunn, Senior Legislative Analyst

SUBJECT: **Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Potomac Overlook**

PURPOSE: Review the resolution to amend the Master Plan for Historic Preservation

Participants:

Gwen Wright, Director, Montgomery Planning Department
Rebecca Ballo, Supervisor for Historic Preservation, Planning Department
John Liebertz, Historic Preservation Planner Coordinator, Planning Department

The Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation for the Potomac Overlook Historic District contains the text and supporting documentation for the amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation in Montgomery County, Maryland (1979), as amended; Bethesda-Chevy Chase Master Plan (1990), as amended; and The General Plan (on Wedges and Corridors) for the Physical Development of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery and Prince George's Counties (1964), as amended.

The Amendment covers nineteen houses located approximately two-and-a-half miles to the southwest of downtown Bethesda and overlooking the Potomac River. In July 2019, the majority of Potomac Overlook residents signed a petition and requested evaluation of the subject properties for potential listing and protection under Section §24A of the Montgomery County Code.

This proposed historic district meets four Designation Criteria of the Historic Preservation Ordinance as listed in Section §24A-3 of the County Code. The district is a significant example of a residential development resulting from the collaboration of merchant builder Edmund J. Bennett and the architecture firm of Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon (KLC). Potomac Overlook was the first major subdivision built by this collaborative partnership. Bennett and KLC espoused the aesthetic design, functional advantages, and untapped commercial potential for modern architecture in tract housing. In addition, the subdivision reflected the development team's recognition of the importance of site development and land planning in creating communities respectful of the natural surroundings, topography, and tree canopy. The contemporary-styled dwellings are recognized as outstanding examples of situated modernism. In addition, the contributions of several of the first homeowners in

Potomac Overlook augment the historic significance of the district. This amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation recognizes the achievements of six owners who influenced local, state, and national affairs.

On June 9, 2021, the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) recommended that the Planning Board list the subject property in the Locational Atlas and Index of Historic Sites. On November 18, 2021, the Planning Board held a public hearing, worksession, and action on the subject plan. The Board listed the property in the Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites and recommended to the Council amending the Master Plan for Historic Preservation to list the subject properties as a Master Plan Historic District. Resources designated in the Master Plan for Historic Preservation are subject to protections under the Historic Preservation Ordinance and may qualify for certain benefits including historic preservation tax credits.

The Plan documents can be found here:

1. [Potomac-Overlook.Amendment.Planning-Board-Draft.Winter2022.pdf \(montgomeryplanning.org\)](#)
2. [Potomac-Overlook.Design-Guidelines.Planning-Board-Draft.Winter2022.pdf \(montgomeryplanning.org\)](#)
3. [Potomac-Overlook.Appendix.Planning-Board-Draft.Winter2022.pdf \(montgomeryplanning.org\)](#)

The Council held a public hearing on the Amendment on March 1, 2022. There was only one speaker. This speaker testified in favor of the Amendment. Attached (© 3-4) is a draft resolution approving the Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Potomac Overlook Historic District. The resolution is consistent with the Planning Board Draft Amendment.

Staff recommends the Committee support the approval of the resolution.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
THE MARYLAND-NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION

December 22, 2021

The Honorable Gabe Albornoz
President, Montgomery County Council
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

SUBJECT: Planning Board Draft Amendment for the Potomac Overlook Historic District: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation.

Dear Mr. Albornoz:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Planning Board, I am pleased to transmit printed copies of the *Planning Board Draft Amendment for the Potomac Overlook Historic District: An Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. This Plan will amend the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation*. The Planning Board Hearing Draft is available also online at:
<https://montgomeryplanning.org/planning/historic/research-and-designation/potomac-overlook-neighborhood/>.

Potomac Overlook meets four Designation Criteria of the Historic Preservation Ordinance as listed in §24A-3 of the Montgomery County Code. The district is a significant example of a residential development resulting from the collaboration of merchant builder Edmund J. Bennett and the architecture firm of Keyes, Lethbridge, and Condon (KLC). Potomac Overlook was the first major subdivision built by this collaborative partnership in Montgomery County. Bennett and KLC espoused the aesthetic design, functional advantages, and untapped commercial potential for modern architecture in tract housing. In addition, the subdivision reflected the development team's recognition of the importance of site development and land planning in creating communities respectful of the natural surroundings, topography, and tree canopy. The contemporary-styled dwellings are recognized as outstanding examples of situated modernism.

The contributions of several of the first owners at Potomac Overlook augment the historic significance of the district. This amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation recognizes the achievements of six owners who influenced local, state, and national affairs. Their achievements reflect the following themes: Asian American heritage, Jewish American heritage, women's history, law, and mathematics, science, and engineering.

The Honorable Gabe Albornoz

December 22, 2021

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Historic Preservation staff prepared this amendment at the request and support of the majority of the property owners at Potomac Overlook. On November 18, 2021 the Planning Board held a public hearing, worksession, and action on the subject plan. The Board listed the property in the *Locational Atlas & Index of Historic Sites* and recommended amending the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* to list the subject properties as a Master Plan Historic District. Resources designated in the *Master Plan for Historic Preservation* are subject to protections under the Historic Preservation Ordinance (§24A of the Montgomery County Code) and may qualify for certain benefits including historic preservation tax credits.

If you have any questions concerning the Amendment, please do not hesitate to contact the following staff: Rebecca Ballo, Historic Preservation Supervisor at Rebecca.Ballo@montgomeryplanning.org or 301-563-3404.

Sincerely,



Casey Anderson
Chair

CA:RB:aj

Resolution No.: _____
Introduced: _____
Adopted: _____

**COUNTY COUNCIL FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
SITTING AS THE DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THAT PORTION
OF THE MARYLAND-WASHINGTON REGIONAL DISTRICT
WITHIN MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND**

Lead Sponsor: County Council

SUBJECT: Approval of the Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Potomac Overlook Historic District

Background

1. On December 22, 2021, the Montgomery County Planning Board transmitted to the Council the Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation: Potomac Overlook Historic District (hereafter referred to as the Amendment).
2. The attached Planning Board recommended amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation would designate the Potomac Overlook subdivision (#35-157) located at 7205, 7209, 7211 MacArthur Boulevard, 5300 Mohican Road, 6600, 6601, 6602 6604, 6605, 6606 Rivercrest Court, 6608, 6612, 6613, 6609, 6604, 6601 Virginia View Court, and 6525, 6541, 6551 Wiscasset Road in Bethesda, Maryland, 20816, as an historic district.
3. On March 1, 2022, the County Council held a public hearing on the Planning Board Draft Amendment. All public testimony favored the historic designation of the Potomac Overlook Historic District (#35-157).
4. On (date TBD), the County Council reviewed the Planning Board Draft Amendment.

Action

The County Council for Montgomery County, Maryland, sitting as the District Council for that portion of the Maryland-Washington Regional District in Montgomery County, Maryland, approves the following resolution:

The Planning Board Draft Amendment to the Master Plan for Historic Preservation, Potomac Overlook Historic District (#35-157), is approved.

This is a correct copy of Council action.

Selena Mendy Singleton, Esq.
Clerk of the Council