



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Karen Burditt
Chair

Date: March 12, 2025

MEMORANDUM

TO: Rabbiah Sabbakhan
Department of Permitting Services
FROM: Devon Murtha
Historic Preservation Section
Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission
SUBJECT: Historic Area Work Permit #1106216

The Montgomery County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has reviewed the attached application for a Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP). This application was **Approved** at the March 12, 2025 HPC meeting.

The HPC staff has reviewed and stamped the attached submission materials.

THE BUILDING PERMIT FOR THIS PROJECT SHALL BE ISSUED CONDITIONAL UPON ADHERENCE TO THE ABOVE APPROVED HAWP CONDITIONS AND MAY REQUIRE APPROVAL BY DPS OR ANOTHER LOCAL OFFICE BEFORE WORK CAN BEGIN.

Applicant: M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks; Jamie L. Ferguson (Agent)
Address: 4140 Wexford Drive, Kensington

This HAWP approval is subject to the general condition that the applicant will obtain all other applicable Montgomery County or local government agency permits. After the issuance of these permits, the applicant must contact this Historic Preservation Office if any changes to the approved plan are made. Once work is complete, the applicant will contact Devon Murtha 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:



REVIEWED

By Devon.Murtha at 11:22 am, Mar 13, 2025

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:

APPROVED

Montgomery County

Historic Preservation Commission

Karen B. Smith

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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	*	*	*	*	*		*



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1. WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

a. Description of existing structural and environmental setting, including historic features and significance.

The Ken-Gar Palisades Recreation Center (31-49) is located in the Ken-Gar Palisades Local Park in Kensington, Maryland. The Ken-Gar Recreation Building consists of two separate rectangular pre-fab structures merged to create an L-shaped facility. This structure is made up of two temporary Federal surplus buildings that were originally used by the U.S. Army during World War II. When the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) received these buildings as a donation in 1953, it altered the exterior appearance to better assimilate this public facility into the surrounding suburbia. The building now is leased as a daycare center.

Located off Wexford Drive, this facility is the focal point of the 19.853 acre Ken-Gar Palisades Local Park (while the environmental setting is 9.8 acres). The site features a playground, softball and baseball fields, multi-use fields, and tennis courts. A trail takes patrons behind the building, and goes along to the location of the former Newport Mill that used to stand further down the valley of the park in the 19th century along Rock Creek. That site is the location where Josiah Henson, an enslaved man, had a spiritual conversation. This connection is the reason that the community has placed a plaque on the façade of the building commemorating Henson. Very little planting up near the building remains, and none of it is believed to reflect the original planting plan.

b. General description of project and its effect on the historic resources and environmental setting.

The project seeks to install a NPS-style interpretive signage along an existing paved trail. The project will not have an Adverse Effect on the historic integrity of the contributing resource.

2. **SITE PLAN:** See below

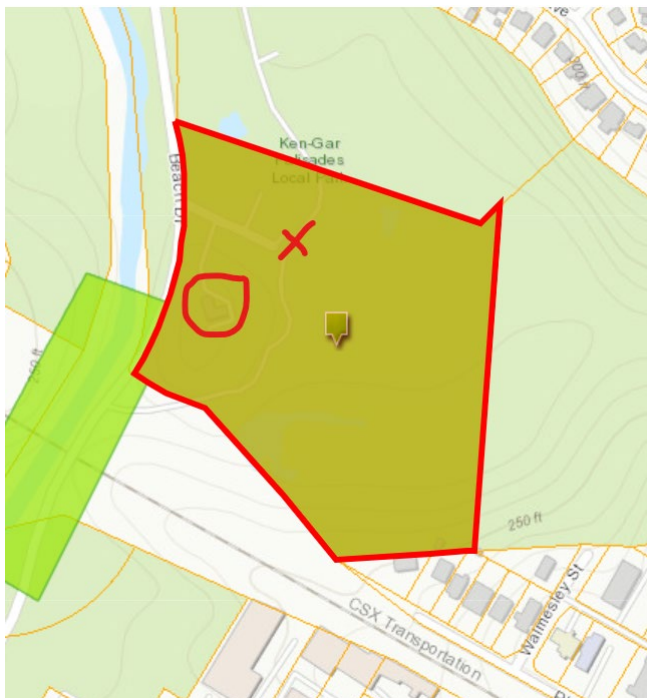


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2021 aerial view – the white star marks proposed signage location. Black arrow from white star points to the Ken-Gar PAB.



9.8 acres covered in the environmental setting for Ken-Gar Palisades PAB (red circle). Red X marks the proposed signage location. It is typically for Parks to put interpretive signs close to parking lots, and/or entry to walking trails because of maximized visibility.



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3. PLANS AND ELEVATIONS: N/A

4. MATERIAL SPECIFICATIONS:

The sign is composed of 36" x 24" embedded fiberglass panels set at a 45-degree angle on brown aluminum posts. The cantilevered exhibit base is set into the ground at an ADA compliant waist height of 28"-32". Cement will be used to anchor the sign posts in the ground to prevent easy removal by vandals and heaving in the winter. The sign will be fabricated by Pannier, a National Park Service approved vendor. The design of the interpretive material follows a standard being set for all historic markers being placed within the county's Parks system.

Below is the signage proof for the project. This project was the result of collaboration between Cultural Resources, Natural Resources, and Resource Analysis staff within Montgomery Parks.

ROCK CREEK'S NATURAL RECLAMATION



Part of the history of Ken-Gar has been the ingenuity of humans to tame the power of Rock Creek and the surrounding landscape. Rock Creek and its tributaries have been harnessed for milling, realigned for development, and now, part of its floodplain has been allowed to regain its function as a wetland within the former stream alignment.

From 1744 until the 1880s, operations at Newport Mill – a structure rebuilt multiple times over generations – relied on the velocity of Rock Creek to turn the machinery necessary to grind wheat into flour and to trim logs into usable lumber. Purchased by local patrons, these custom-made products made Newport Mill a profitable business.

The demise of Newport Mill coincided with the introduction of the Metro Branch of the Baltimore and Ohio (B & O) Railroad line in 1873. Railroad transportation expedited national expansion, but it could not be built without alterations to the natural landscape. For example, the course of Rock Creek as seen today was the result of a realignment to ensure the stability of rail infrastructure, including the nearby ca. 1893 B & O Stone Arch Viaduct. This bridge remains a testament to the engineering needed to traverse Rock Creek.


When M-NCPPC established this park in 1954, the mill remnants were long gone. Original park development plans included baseball fields. Eventually, the popularity of American soccer required additional viable athletic space here. The challenge for users was a perpetually wet soccer field due to its presence within a 100-year flood plain – a circumstance confronting the county's earliest parks where land deemed undevelopable was made available for public green open space.

A relocation of the soccer field in 2020 evolved out of efforts to mitigate the impact to local wetlands resulting from yet another transit project- the Purple Line Light Rail. Ken-Gar provided an opportunity for the expansion of existing wetlands, removal of non-native invasive plants that dominated the landscape, and an increase in diversity of native vegetation and heterogeneity across the landscape to promote ecosystem biodiversity.




How many different birds can you spot?


Functioning wetlands play a significant role in the health of Rock Creek Stream Valley, helping with flood control, sequestration of carbon, and filtering of pollutants from water. Wetlands also support a rich biodiversity of plants and animals




Belted Kingfisher
(*Megascops asio*)



Green Heron
(*Butorides virescens*)



Red-winged Blackbird
(*Agelaius phoeniceus*)



Wood Duck
(*Aix sponsa*)

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Montgomery County

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Karen B. Smith

TOP: Ken-Gar Palisades Local Park today. Courtesy: M Parks Resource Analysis Staff. BOTTOM: The 1893 B&O showing re-alignment of Rock Creek. Courtesy: Collect Maryland State Archives.

5. PHOTOGRAPHS: see attached at end of this document (can provide)

6. TREE SURVEY: N/A

7. ADDRESS OF ADJACENT AND CONFRONTING PROPERTY OWNER:

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By Devon.Murtha at 11:22 am, Mar 13, 2025



Photo 1: View of Ken-Gar PAB (Front façade)



Photo 2: View of signage location from front yard of Ken-Gar PAB



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Photo 3: View of Ken-Gar PAB from proposed signage location



Photo 4: View of proposed Signage Location (on either side of the green

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Karen Bunkin

REVIEWED

By Devon.Murtha at 11:26 am, Mar 13, 2025



DEPARTMENT OF PERMITTING SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Rabbiah Sabbakhan
Director

HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT APPLICATION

Application Date: 2/19/2025

Application No: 1106216
AP Type: HISTORIC
Customer No: 1448159

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 4140 WEXFORD DR
KENSINGTON, MD 20895

Othercontact Ferguson (Primary)

Historic Area Work Permit Details

Work Type ADD

Scope of Work Install a NPS style interpretive sign about Newport Mill within the Ken-Gar Recreation Building environmental setting



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