

## **Carderock Springs County Historic Designation: Community FAQ**

Prepared by the Carderock Springs Citizens Association,

Updated 9.19.2025

### **Q: Why is County Historic Designation being pursued in Carderock Springs?**

A: Currently, 352 homes in Carderock Springs are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (since 2009), but this designation does not provide protections against private demolitions, tear downs, or major alterations.

A county historic designation would:

- Protect the original architectural character and identity of the neighborhood by shifting enforcement of current guidelines from neighbors to the county.
- Prevent incompatible new construction, tear-downs and rebuilds that could erode the Situated Mid-Century Modern integrity that makes Carderock Springs unique
- Offer financial incentives, such as 25% tax credits for exterior rehabilitation
- Manage change in a consistent and thoughtful way, using guidelines that support the neighborhood's character. Still allow for renovations, additions, and green technology (e.g., solar panels)—as long as proposed changes follow clear design guidelines.

### **Q: How much community support is required to apply for County Historic Designation?**

A: We need at least 51% of the 352 households located in North CS, included in the National Register Historic District. We are aiming for at least 182 votes, one vote per household. Owners only, no renters.

### **Q: How do I cast my vote?**

A: You can go online directly [here](#) or go to

<https://www.carderocksprings.net/our-history-and-historic-status> to find the link or a pdf of the ballot. Paper ballots were distributed to all 352 households between 9/18 and 9/19, 2025.

If you cannot access voting form online for or do not have a paper copy of a ballot please email Maja Husar President of CSCA at [CSCApres@gmail.com](mailto:CSCApres@gmail.com) or at 240-641-3815.

Return your ballot to one of the following locations:

- a) Carderock Springs Clubhouse (mailbox)
- b) Maja Husar's house: 8104 Fenway Rd
- c) Charlie Heidlage's house: 7904 Park Overlook Dr
- d) Kote Lomidze's house: 8012 Lilly Stone

**Q: Does this only apply to Bennett homes?**

**A:** It applies to all homes. Meaning everyone is subject to some level of design review (though this can be very lenient for non-contributing homes, or only covering something big like a demolition, etc.) These homes also qualify for the property tax credit even if they are non-contributing.

**Q: Will this prevent homeowners from making changes or improvements to their properties?**

**A:** No, historic designation does not prohibit changes or improvements. It does not require restoration to original condition and does not prohibit development outright. The goal is not to freeze properties in time, but to manage change respectfully and equitably.

**PROCESS**

**Q: What is the paperwork/submission process? How long will it take?**

**Who “decides?” And what knowledge of MCM homes do they have?**

**A:** The permit process is simple and online, with a short PDF form plus photos/plans; there are no fees. Routine projects can be approved by staff in about 5 days, while others go before the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), which must decide within 45 days. The HPC is a nine-member body of preservation and architecture experts appointed by the County. Many members and staff have specific expertise with Mid-Century Modern homes and work closely with homeowners on practical design solutions.

**Q: What would the new approval process look like?**

**A:** For exterior changes to all properties within the historic district::

- 1) ARC Review (as per covenant)
- 2) Historic Area Work Permit (HAWP) through the HPC. The permit is evaluated based on ARC design guidelines that help ensure changes are compatible with the overall neighborhood character. The more specific design guidelines the faster the approval process.
  - Many smaller exterior jobs will be able to obtain an approval within a few business days.
  - For larger renovations, the county is obligated to conduct a review and make a decision within 45 days. Prior ARC review will help facilitate swift approval by HPC.
- 3) County Building Permit via the Department of Permitting Services.

The county is working to streamline coordination to avoid duplicated effort.

**Q: Originally, residents were told that major external home improvements would require both ARC and county approval, while minor exterior improvements would only require approval from the ARC. After discussions in the CSCA chat, it was determined that residents undertaking major home improvement projects could bypass ARC approval altogether and seek approval directly from the county. Is that true? Is ARC approval mandatory, optional, or can be bypassed when county approval is required?**

A: ARC review is not mandatory under County law. The community can decide whether ARC review happens before, after, or not at all when a project goes to the County for approval. Many neighborhoods keep ARC involved as a helpful “first step,” but it’s optional. Homeowners could go straight to the County if that’s the process the community agrees on.

**Q: Carderock Springs has their own Design Guidelines. How will they differ from MoCo’s HDDG?**

A: Carderock’s current guidelines will be the starting point for County Historic District Design Guidelines. The County may add details where our rules are silent, but they will be crafted with ARC and resident input. The main change is that the new guidelines will become legally enforceable under County law, while today’s ARC rules are voluntary. This way, our neighborhood standards remain central but gain added protection.

**Q: What is the process if a neighbor disagrees with the opinion of the ARC?**

A: Today, disagreements with the ARC are handled internally by the community under CSCA’s rules. If the neighborhood becomes a County historic district, the County’s Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) has the final say. ARC could remain advisory, but HPC decisions can be formally appealed to the Montgomery County Board of Appeals (and even to court). This gives homeowners a clear outside appeals process that doesn’t exist now.

**Q: What qualifies as a minor vs major project that needs county approval?**

A: Projects fall into two categories:

- Minor projects (staff approval): These are routine changes that don’t significantly affect historic character. Examples include replacing a roof with the same material, adding an egress window, small walkways, or certain accessory structures. They use the same paperwork process but are approved by staff within about 5 business days.
- Major projects (HPC review): Larger changes that alter the home’s appearance or site are reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) at a public hearing. Examples include new additions, significant façade changes, demolition, or major landscape/hardscape changes. These must be submitted 3 weeks before a hearing and are decided within 45 days by law

**Q: Which specific outside elements will need county approval? How about the following:**

- Driveway
- Mailbox
- Roof
- Garage door or front door,
- Repainting the exterior of the house
- Change of hardscape

A: Most exterior changes will need County approval, but the details depend on the final design guidelines. Driveways, roofs, front/garage doors, and major hardscape changes (like patios or new walkways) usually require review. Mailboxes and most repainting do not—unless painting unpainted brick or stone. The neighborhood can shape guidelines to decide exactly how strict or flexible these rules will be.

**Q: What role will ARC play? Will the ARC guidelines be amended in any way during the process of review for County Historic Designation?**

A: The Architectural Review Committee (ARC) can continue to play the same role it does now if the community wishes. The County uses existing ARC guidelines as the starting point when drafting Historic District Design Guidelines, working with the ARC and residents to adapt them so they align with preservation standards. ARC review can either come before or after the County's review—this is flexible and determined by the neighborhood. ARC review could serve as a kind of pre-approval, helping ensure projects meet all county requirements smoothly.

**Q: Is there an arbitration or appeal process if you disagree with a rejection decision?**

A: Yes. Any HPC decision can be appealed to the Montgomery County Board of Appeals within 30 days. The Board holds a new hearing and reviews whether the HPC acted appropriately and within the law. If still disputed, the case can be taken to circuit court.

**Q: Will we have the flexibility to select any contractor of our choosing, or will there be a mandatory County-Approved, historic- certified contractor list to choose from? If so, this could have serious added costs implications to any minor projects that can be performed by a regular contractor.**

A: HCP does not mandate any particular contractor for any work. The only requirement is to be licensed in MD.

**Q: What is the cut off or threshold for having to submit a county permit or historic preservation approval? Anything the County reviews implicates time and added fees. Is there a dollar amount, minimum area, etc. that we should be aware of where the county would need to get involved for approval?**

A: There is no fee for the HAWPs. The neighborhood decides with their design guidelines which exterior modifications need to seek County Historic Preservation approval. Montgomery County has standards for building permit approvals that are not related to the Historic Area Work Permits.

**Q: How do emergency repairs work? How are emergency conditions handled (i.e., a tree falling on a house or a fire or flood)? Do I need county approval in those circumstances before commencing exterior repairs?**

A: In an emergency, your first priority is safety—stabilize the property right away. You do not need County approval before removing a fallen tree or addressing fire/flood damage. Once safe, contact Historic Preservation staff to review next repair steps. Insurance typically requires restoring the house to its prior condition, and staff can help with documentation and approvals afterward.

**Q: Do contractors need special certification and approval by the boards to be able to do the work?**

A: No. Contractors don't need special certification from the County or Historic Preservation boards. They just need to be properly licensed, as required for any Montgomery County building permit. While not required, using a contractor experienced with MCM homes can make projects smoother.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

**Q: What financial incentives are available?**

A: For all properties in a designated local historic district: 25% County property tax credit on approved exterior work. That is in addition to up to 20% state tax credit from the National Register for approved interior and exterior work.

- Must spend \$1,000 minimum
- Work must be done by a licensed contractor
- Credit is **\*\*applied the year after completion\*\*** and can carry forward up to 5 years.

**Q: We were wondering if this additional designation will have any effect on property taxes. Should we expect any increases in state/county or federal taxes?**

A: No, historic designation does not raise property taxes at the County, State, or Federal level. Taxes only go up if your home's value increases, just like any other property. There are no new fees or surcharges tied to the designation. The only tax impact is positive—eligibility for credits that can lower County property taxes or State income taxes for approved rehab work.

**Q: What is the impact on homeowner's insurance? Our understanding when procuring insurance for our house was that a house with a historic designation needs different and more expensive insurance.**

A: For mid-century modern homes like those in Carderock, historic designation does not typically raise insurance costs. Higher rates are more common for much older homes with slate

roofs or outdated systems. Insurers mainly look at the age and condition of the house (1960s construction), not its historic status. In practice, most designated MCM neighborhoods haven't seen insurance impacts.

**Q: Can the state tax credit be carried forward (amortized over future years) for the state tax as well?**

A: The Maryland state tax credit is taken as a refund on your state income tax in the year the work is completed. Unlike the County credit, it generally cannot be carried forward into future years. There is also a five-year "recapture" period, meaning if you undo the approved work within five years, the credit may have to be repaid. For exact rules, homeowners should check with the Maryland Historical Trust, which runs the program.

**Q: Is the tax credit above the line or below the line adjustment?**

A: The local Historic Preservation Tax Credit is credited against your Montgomery County property taxes. This *above or below the line* is not applicable for property taxes, only for income taxes.

**Q: How would the County Historic Designation impact the value of our homes?**

A: Historic designation protects home value rather than negatively affecting it. In addition to highlighting the cohesion of the neighborhood and the mid-century situated modernism architecture, historic designation protects a style of house that is a draw for many. Losing this cohesion would negatively impact the value of the homes that do follow the currently established covenants, not to mention the further loss of a unique architectural style presented in a largely original context.

**Q: You mentioned before you expect no impact to property values. What data are you using to come to this conclusion? Have you looked at similar communities in the area and what the impact was there? If so, can you please share?**

A: Research shows historic designation does not lower property values. National studies find it often helps stabilize or even raise values by protecting neighborhood character. Locally, places like Chevy Chase Village and Takoma Park show no difference in home prices between historic and non-historic areas. Montgomery County hasn't done its own full study, but local comparisons and national data both point to no negative impact.

See more at:

<https://www.placeeconomics.com/resources/measuring-the-economics-of-preservation-recent-findings/>

**Q: Question about socioeconomic disparity. What happens if a resident doesn't have the means to rebuild to historic requirements after a house fire or other unintentional destruction of property?**

A: Presumably people have homeowner's insurance that will cover rebuild in the case of a total loss or other catastrophic property damage. The insurance

requirements, depending on your policy, would be to rebuild the house as it was but does include mandated update of codes. For higher level of finishes, not covered by insurance, it is then an added work order at the owner's expense. Everything that is rebuilt the same on the exterior/same footprint does not need historic review or approval. It could qualify for the tax credits.

## **OTHER QUESTIONS**

### **Q: Does this affect my property rights?**

A: Yes, but only in terms of external alterations. Historic designation does not require restorations, and it does not prevent renovations or new construction.

- Exterior changes follow approved design guidelines (developed with ARC), internal changes are not regulated.
- You can still add solar panels, decks, or additions, with appropriate approvals.

### **Q: How will existing additions be seen and considered (or not) when the county makes decisions about proposed future additions? What restrictions will be made regarding additions?**

A: The County will consider existing additions when reviewing new ones but will focus on whether the house's original character remains clear. Additions must not overpower the original structure; size, scale, and visibility from the street are key factors. Designs should be compatible, but less visible additions may get more flexibility. Small accessory structures (like pergolas) can often be approved by staff if modest in size.

### **Q: What do current covenants and ARC guidelines say about county historic designation?**

A: Regarding our existing covenants, local historic designation does not override them. Instead, it adds another layer of review focused on architectural and historical integrity. We are coordinating to ensure that these systems are complementary and not conflicting. Regarding the covenants, they don't address historic designation directly but stipulate ARC oversight and architectural standards.

### **Q: What are the limitations for homeowners under the designation?**

A: The main limitation is that exterior changes (like roofs, doors, additions, or major landscaping) require a free County permit and review to ensure they fit neighborhood character. Interiors are not regulated, and additions are allowed as long as they don't overwhelm the original house. Demolition is possible but reviewed carefully. Overall, the designation adds an extra review step, not a ban on improvements.

**Q: Do you provide technical advice on how to rehabilitate a mid century modern home?**

A: Yes. County staff and the Historic Preservation Commission can provide technical advice on MCM homes, from windows to rooflines and materials. They also maintain contacts with architects and contractors who specialize in this type of work. Homeowners can reach out informally for early feedback, so projects run smoothly. Carderock's ARC remains another valuable resource for design guidance.

**Q: Will this new designation also cover trees, since it is part of the historical character? I thought it was just the building structure that was being discussed? Also surprised to hear the fence being mentioned.**

A: Yes, the designation can also cover trees and fences if the community wants, since they're part of Carderock's character. Most districts do include tree removal and fences in their guidelines, but it's optional. The neighborhood can decide whether to regulate only large trees or not at all. Final rules will be written into the Design Guidelines with resident input.

**Q: I read that the County Historic Preservation did not allow for renewable/solar photovoltaic panels on the roofs or anywhere on the property, however, FAQ's states the contrary, which is correct?**

A: Solar is allowed at all properties. County Historic Preservation approved nearly 150 solar projects in the last 7 years. We have Illustrated Design Guidelines and an adopted policy for solar panel installation to help guide property owners.

<https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Solar-Panel-Interactive.pdf>  
[https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HPC\\_SolarPolicy.pdf](https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/HPC_SolarPolicy.pdf)

**Q: Is there a dollar threshold of what needs to be submitted?**

A: For permits, there is no minimum dollar threshold—any exterior project that changes the house must be submitted. Even small, inexpensive projects need approval if they affect the outside appearance. Proposed work entailing ordinary maintenance must exceed \$1000 in expense and be subsequently certified as being consistent with the purposes of Chapter 24A, the County's historic preservation ordinance, at the time the HPC reviews the tax credit application.

**Q: What are the downsides of pursuing County Historic Preservation?**

A: The main downside is the extra step—County review is required for exterior changes, which means more paperwork than now. Some projects may face limits if they don't fit the neighborhood's historic character, especially large or highly visible changes. While the process is free and often quick, not everyone wants added regulation. In short, it's more oversight in exchange for stronger protection.

**Q: Other than the tax credit, what would you summarize as the 1-2 main benefits of being part of a MoCo historic district?**  
A: Other than tax credits, the two main benefits are protection and recognition. Designation gives stronger legal safeguards to preserve Carderock's unique

mid-century modern character. It also raises the neighborhood's profile as one of the County's most significant historic communities. This brings both pride and long-term assurance that the community's look and feel will be valued and protected.

### **What sources could I use to get more information?**

- Visit <https://www.carderocksprings.net/our-history-and-historic-status> for updated FAQs, presentations, and relevant documents. FAQs are also distributed via the Carderock Springs chat.
- Contact the Montgomery County Historic Preservation Office:  
Rebecca Ballo: [Rebecca.Ballo@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:Rebecca.Ballo@montgomeryplanning.org); 301-563-3404  
John Liebertz: [John.Liebertz@montgomeryplanning.org](mailto:John.Liebertz@montgomeryplanning.org); 301-563-3405
- Contact the CSCA Board for local updates and guidance:  
Maja Husar, President of CSCA at [CSCApres@gmail.com](mailto:CSCApres@gmail.com)