

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	7100 Sycamore Ave., Takoma Park	Meeting Date:	1/5/2022
Resource:	Contributing Resource Takoma Park Historic District	Report Date:	12/29/2021
Applicant:	Marc Pfeuffer	Public Notice:	12/22/2021
Review:	HAWP	Tax Credit:	n/a
Permit No.:	973888 REVISION	Staff:	Dan Bruechert
Proposal:	Front Porch Alteration		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the HPC **approve** the HAWP application:

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Contributing Resource to the Takoma Park Historic District
STYLE: Craftsman
DATE: 1923



Figure 1: 7100 Sycamore Ave., Takoma Park.

BACKGROUND

On December 15, 2021, the HPC heard a HAWP application at the subject property for work to the front

porch and the demolition and construction of a new rear deck.¹ The consent approval included two conditions, specifically that the front porch decking needed to be wood and that the front porch railing/knee wall needed to be replaced in a matching appearance. The applicant has provided additional information and seeks approval for a new front porch railing.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to remove and replace the existing front porch knee wall/railing and replace it with a wood railing.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and new construction within the Takoma Park 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 and adopted amendment for the *Takoma Park Historic District (Guidelines)*, *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.

Takoma Park Historic District Guidelines

There are two very general, broad planning and design concepts which apply to all categories. These are:

The design review emphasis will be restricted to changes that are at all visible from the public right-of-way, irrespective of landscaping or vegetation (it is expected that the majority of new additions will be reviewed for their impact on the overall district), and,

The importance of assuring that additions and other changes to existing structures act to reinforce and continue existing streetscape, landscape, and building patterns rather than to impair the character of the district.

Contributing Resources should receive a more lenient review than those structures that have been classified as Outstanding. This design review should emphasize the importance of the resource to the overall streetscape and its compatibility with existing patterns rather than focusing on a close scrutiny of architectural detailing. In general, however, changes to Contributing Resources should respect the predominant architectural style of the resource. As stated above, the design review emphasis will be restricted to changes that are *at all visible from the public right-of-way*, irrespective of landscaping or vegetation.

Some of the factors to be considered in reviewing HAWPs on Contributing Resources include:

All exterior alterations, including those to architectural features and details, should be generally consistent with the predominant architectural style and period of the resource and should preserve the predominant architectural features of the resource; exact replication of existing details and features is, however, not required

Some non-original building materials may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis; artificial siding on areas visible to the public right-of-way is discouraged where such materials would replace or damage original building materials that are in good condition

¹ The Staff Report for the December 15, 2021 HAWP is available here: <https://montgomeryplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/LA-7100-Sycamore-Avenue-Takoma-Park-973888.pdf>. It was approved by consent, so there is no audio recording.

All changes and additions should respect existing environmental settings, landscaping, and patterns of open space.

Alterations to features that are not visible at all from the public right-of-way should be allowed as a matter of course.

Montgomery County Code; Chapter 24A-8

- (a) 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
- (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.)

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:

- 2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.
- 5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
- 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.
- 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 shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportions, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
- 10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

STAFF DISCUSSION

The subject property is a one-and-a-half-story Craftsman bungalow with a concrete foundation, clapboard first floor, and shingle second floor. The full-width front porch has a solid, parged knee wall and wood decking.

The applicant proposes removing the existing parged CMU knee wall/railing on the front porch and installing a new wood railing in its place. At a minimum, the left side of the existing railing will be demolished as part of the left column demolition and reconstruction.

The previous Staff Report stated the applicant proposed a pressure-treated wood railing with aluminum balusters. The Staff Report found that railing was incompatible with the house and surrounding district

and recommended a condition that the knee wall/railing needed to be reconstructed to its existing appearance. That information was incorrect. The railing the applicant proposes to install is a wood, painted railing. The proposed railing includes a 1 ½" × 3 ½" (one and a half inches by three and a half inches top and bottom rail with 1 ¼" (one and one-quarter inch) balusters set between the top and bottom rails.

In addition to clarifying the proposed railing, the applicant provided additional quantitative information regarding front porch detailing on Sycamore Ave:

The relevance of our specification for the wood rail and balusters is supported by the survey we performed of all the houses on Sycamore Avenue. Of the 51 houses on that street, 30 houses (58%) employ the use of a wood top and bottom rail with a square wood baluster similar in style to the specification we chose. Of those 30 houses, 15 (30% of all houses) employ the use of wood profiles that are nearly identical to the profiles we propose in our drawings and application - Two of these houses are immediately adjacent to the subject property - 7016 and 7014 - photos are attached to this email. In contrast - and in reference to the details in your report - only 7 houses (14%) employ the use of a railing or knee wall covered in wood or vinyl siding and 5 houses (10%) employ the use of stucco-covered railings or knee walls.

Of the 5 houses on Sycamore Avenue that employ the use of stucco, 3 of them are a continuation of the stucco immediately adjacent to the railing or knee wall - the transition is seamless and continuous. 7100 Sycamore's Front Porch Railings/Kneewalls are covered in stucco that - while continuous with the porch foundation material - "butts" up against wood lap siding and wood corner trim details.

Based on observations conducted at a site visit, Staff finds this information is correct.

Recognizing at a minimum half of the existing knee wall will have to be demolished as part of reconstructing the left-most column due to its severe lean, the question becomes what is the appropriate detail for a porch railing? Staff's preference is reconstructing the existing configuration of the knee wall as conditioned in the HAWP approval. As a replacement in-kind, this work would not require a HAWP and would be eligible for the County Historic Preservation Tax Credit (as will replacing the porch decking with wood and replacing the damaged column).



Figure 2: Proposed front elevation with new wood railing.

However, the applicant proposes replacing the existing knee wall with a new wood railing. Staff finds that the proposed railing is generally consistent with the *Design Guidelines* and 24A-(b)(2) and (d). First, the *Design Guidelines* for Contributing Resources state that the review should consider the impact to the overall streetscape rather than a close scrutiny of architectural features. Second, the *Design Guidelines* state that alterations to existing features should be consistent with the predominant style of the resource and that “exact replication of existing details and features is... not required.” Additionally, Staff finds that while the new railing is a change in design, a wood railing still respects the Craftsman style of the house as required by the *Design Guidelines*. Staff finds that wood railings are common on Craftsman houses from high-style to vernacular.

Staff finds that while the proposal appears to conflict with Standard 6, it is consistent with the *Design Guidelines*; and that where there is a conflict between the Standards and locally-adopted guidance, the local guidance takes precedence. Staff additionally finds that the proposed wood railing is compatible, under a lenient level of review, with the Craftsman style of the subject property per 24A-8(b)(2) and 24A-8(d).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve** the HAWP application; under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(2) and (d) of the *Takoma Park Historic District Guidelines*, 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;

and with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation* #2, 6, 9, and 10;

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 to schedule a follow-up site visit.



FOR STAFF ONLY:
HAWP# 973888
DATE ASSIGNED _____

APPLICATION FOR HISTORIC AREA WORK PERMIT

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
301.563.3400

APPLICANT:

Name: Marc Pfeuffer
Address: 7100 Sycamore Avenue
Daytime Phone: 571-438-3770

E-mail: mspfeuffer@gmail.com
City: Takoma Park Zip: 20912
Tax Account No.: 01079235

AGENT/CONTACT (if applicable):

Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime Phone: _____

E-mail: _____
City: _____ Zip: _____
Contractor Registration No.: _____

LOCATION OF BUILDING/PREMISE: MIHP # of Historic Property 37-03

Is the Property Located within an Historic District? ☒ Yes/District Name Takoma Park Historic District
☐ No/Individual Site Name _____

Is there an Historic Preservation/Land Trust/Environmental Easement on the Property? If YES, include a map of the easement, and documentation from the Easement Holder supporting this application. NO

Are other Planning and/or Hearing Examiner Approvals /Reviews Required as part of this Application? (Conditional Use, Variance, Record Plat, etc.?) If YES, include information on these reviews as NO supplemental information.

Building Number: 7100 Street: Sycamore Ave

Town/City: Takoma Park Nearest Cross Street: Elm Ave

Lot: 17 Block: 21 Subdivision: 0025 Parcel: 0000

TYPE OF WORK PROPOSED: See the checklist on Page 4 to verify that all supporting items for proposed work are submitted with this application. Incomplete Applications will not be accepted for review. Check all that apply:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Construction | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deck/Porch | <input type="checkbox"/> Shed/Garage/Accessory Structure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Addition | <input type="checkbox"/> Fence | <input type="checkbox"/> Solar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demolition | <input type="checkbox"/> Hardscape/Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree removal/planting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grading/Excavation | <input type="checkbox"/> Roof | <input type="checkbox"/> Window/Door |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: <u>Replace guard wall along front porch with wood railing</u> |

I hereby certify that I have the authority to make the foregoing application, that the application is correct and accurate and that the construction will comply with plans reviewed and approved by all necessary agencies and hereby acknowledge and accept this to be a condition for the issuance of this permit.

Signature of owner or authorized agent

Date

7

Dear HPC:

We are in receipt of HPC's Staff Report for HAWP Permit # 973888. We wish to clarify some details that may have been mis-interpreted. The Report refers to the Front Porch Railing specification as "Pressure Treated Wood with Square Aluminum Balusters". This specification is incorrect.

Page A9 of the drawings submitted with our HAWP application include Note A30, which specifies "New Railing - WM-8840 1-1/2 x 3-1/2 Top Rail - WM-8841 1-1/2 x 3-1/2 Bottom Rail and 1-1/4" Square Balusters - Painted White Semi-Gloss". These are standard WOOD profiles - a cut sheet for these wood rails and balusters was included in our submission and appears in page 17 of the report. To clarify, we DO NOT propose to install the Pressure Treated Wood and Square Aluminum Baluster system for the Front Porch.

The relevance of our specification for the wood rail and balusters is supported by the survey we performed of all the houses on Sycamore Avenue. Of the 51 houses on that street, 30 houses (58%) employ the use of a wood top and bottom rail with a square wood baluster similar in style to the specification we chose. Of those 30 houses, 15 (30% of all houses) employ the use of wood profiles that are nearly identical to the profiles we propose in our drawings and application - Two of these houses are immediately adjacent to the subject property - 7016 and 7014 - photos are attached to this email. In contrast - and in reference to the details in your report - only 7 houses (14%) employ the use of a railing or kneewall covered in wood or vinyl siding and 5 houses (10%) employ the use of stucco covered railings or knee walls.

Of the 5 houses on Sycamore Avenue that employ the use of stucco, 3 of them are a continuation of the stucco immediately adjacent to the railing or kneewall - the transition is seamless and continuous. 7100 Sycamore's Front Porch Railings/Kneewalls are covered in stucco that - while continuous with the porch foundation material - "butts" up against wood lap siding and wood corner trim details.

It is our opinion that replacing the existing masonry/stucco "railing" or kneewall with a wood rail and baluster system would be, in congruence with Montgomery County Code, Chapter 23A-8, "compatible in character and nature with the historical, archeological, architectural or cultural features of the historic district in which an historic resource [this house] is located and would not be detrimental thereto or to the achievement of the purposes of this chapter..."

As a result, we request that the existing approved HAWP Permit # 973888 be amended to remove Condition #1 (as shown on Page 6 of the report) "The proposed front porch railing is incompatible with the subject property and the surrounding district. The replacement railing/knee wall needs to match the appearance and dimensions of the existing" and that the originally specified material for the Front Porch Railing be accepted as conforming to HPC's approval.

HAWP APPLICATION: MAILING ADDRESSES FOR NOTIFYING
[Owner, Owner's Agent, Adjacent and Confronting Property Owners]

Owner's mailing address

Marc Pfeuffer
7100 Sycamore Avenue
Takoma Park, Maryland 20912

Owner's Agent's mailing address

Adjacent and confronting Property Owners mailing addresses

DEVAUL DIAN LOUIS REV TRUST
7102 SYCAMORE AVE
TAKOMA PARK MD 20912

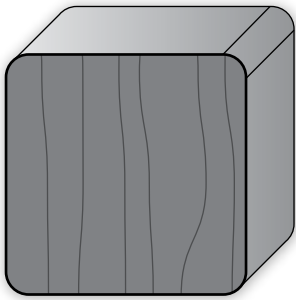
7101 Poplar Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

BAND DAVID M & SUSAN C KLEIN
7101 SYCAMORE AVE
TAKOMA PARK MD 20912

7104 Sycamore Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912

BLOCKSTEIN DAVID E &
DEBRA A PRYBYLA
7016 SYCAMORE AVE
TAKOMA PARK MD 20912

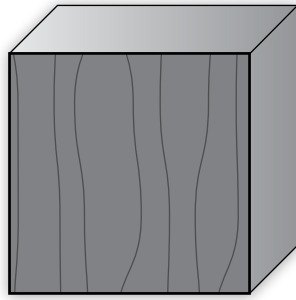
Wood and PVC Balusters



Baluster Stock Eased Edge

WM-237 • $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$

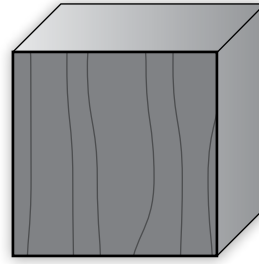
Primed A Grade (Clear), PVC



Baluster Stock Square Edge

WM-237S • $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$

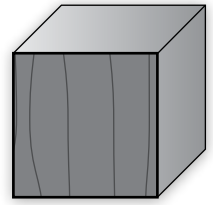
Primed A Grade (Clear)



Baluster Stock

WM-238 • $1\frac{1}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{16}$

A Grade Pine (Clear)

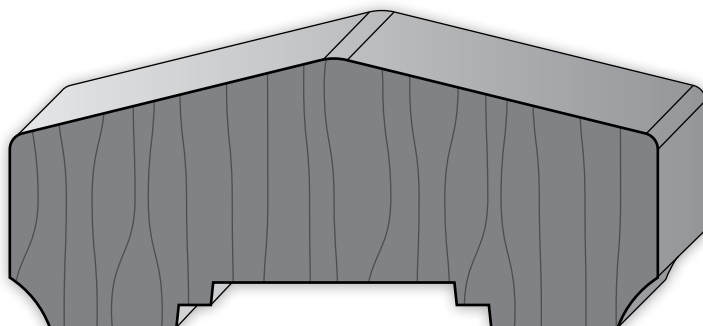


Baluster Stock

WM-239 • $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$

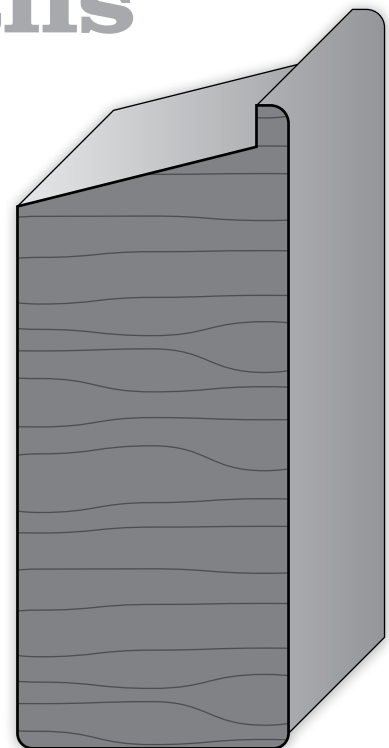
A Grade Pine (Clear)

Wood and PVC Rails



Top Porch Rail • WM-8840 • $1\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$

Primed A Grade (Clear)



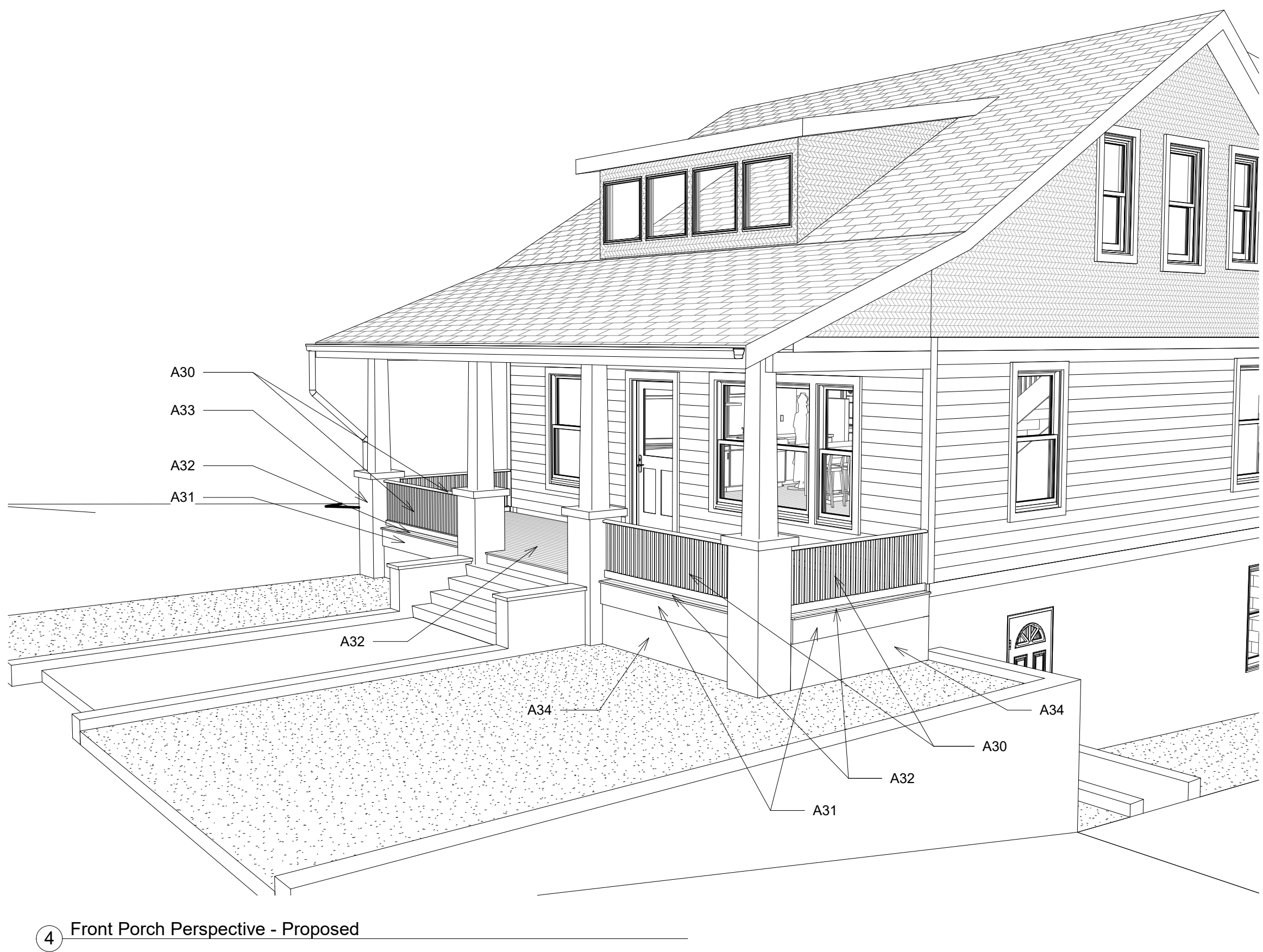
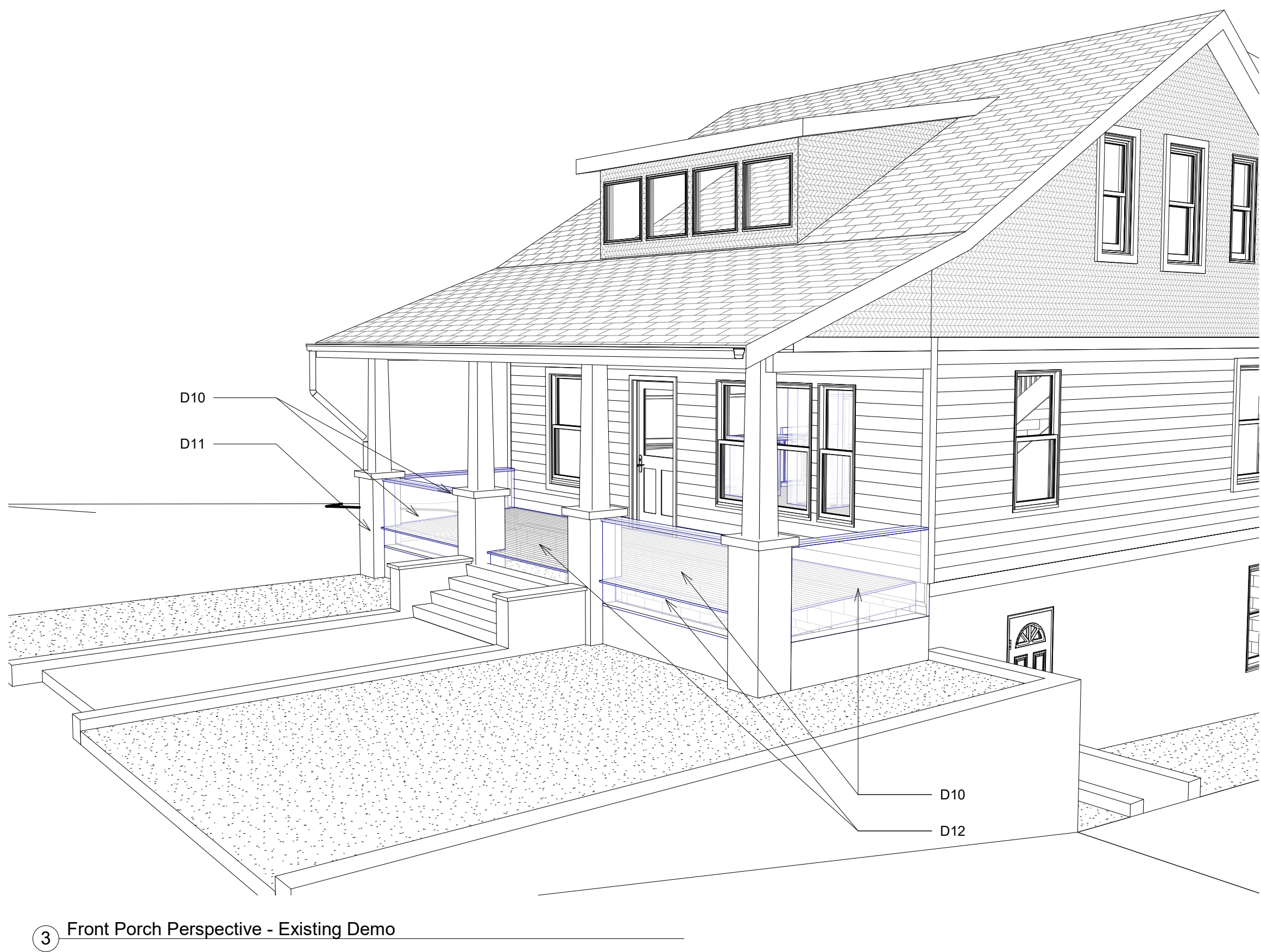
Bottom Porch Rail

WM-8841 • $1\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$

Primed A Grade (Clear)

General Notes

Key Value	Keynote Text
A30	New Railing - WM-8840 866 1 1/2 x 3 1/2 Top Rail - WM-8841 866 1 1/2 x 3 1/2 Bottom Rail - 1-1/4" Square Balusters - Painted White Semi-Gloss
A31	New Porch Framing - 2x10 Joists at 16" o.c. with 1/4" - 12" slope away from the house - with fascia color-matched to porch flooring
A32	New Porch Flooring - Azek Porch 1x4 Tongue and Groove Flooring
A33	New masonry column, rebuilt to be plumb - stucco and painted to match adjacent columns
A34	Existing CMU Block Wall with Stucco Face to remain in place - stucco repaired and repainted to match adjacent exterior finishes
D10	Demolish/Remove existing masonry/stucco barriers/railings
D11	Remove and/or repair existing masonry column to correct leaning/deflection
D12	Demolish/Remove existing porch flooring and floor joists



**Thornton/Pfeuffer
Residence**

Phase II - Front Porch

Project number	2021-043
Date	10/28/21
Drawn by	SPE
Checked by	SPE

A9

Scale	3/8" = 1'-0"
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