

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	7124 Willow Avenue, Takoma Park	Meeting Date:	3/25/2026
Resource:	Outstanding Resource Takoma Park Historic District	Report Date:	3/18/2026
Applicant:	David Zelinsky and Dorothy Lee (Rick Leonard, Agent)	Public Notice:	3/11/2026
Review:	HAWP	Tax Credit:	Partial
Permit No.:	1150526	Staff:	Laura DiPasquale
Proposal:	<u>Porch alterations</u> , hardscape alterations and handrail installation		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Outstanding Resource to the Takoma Park Historic District
STYLE: Colonial Revival
DATE: 1910-15

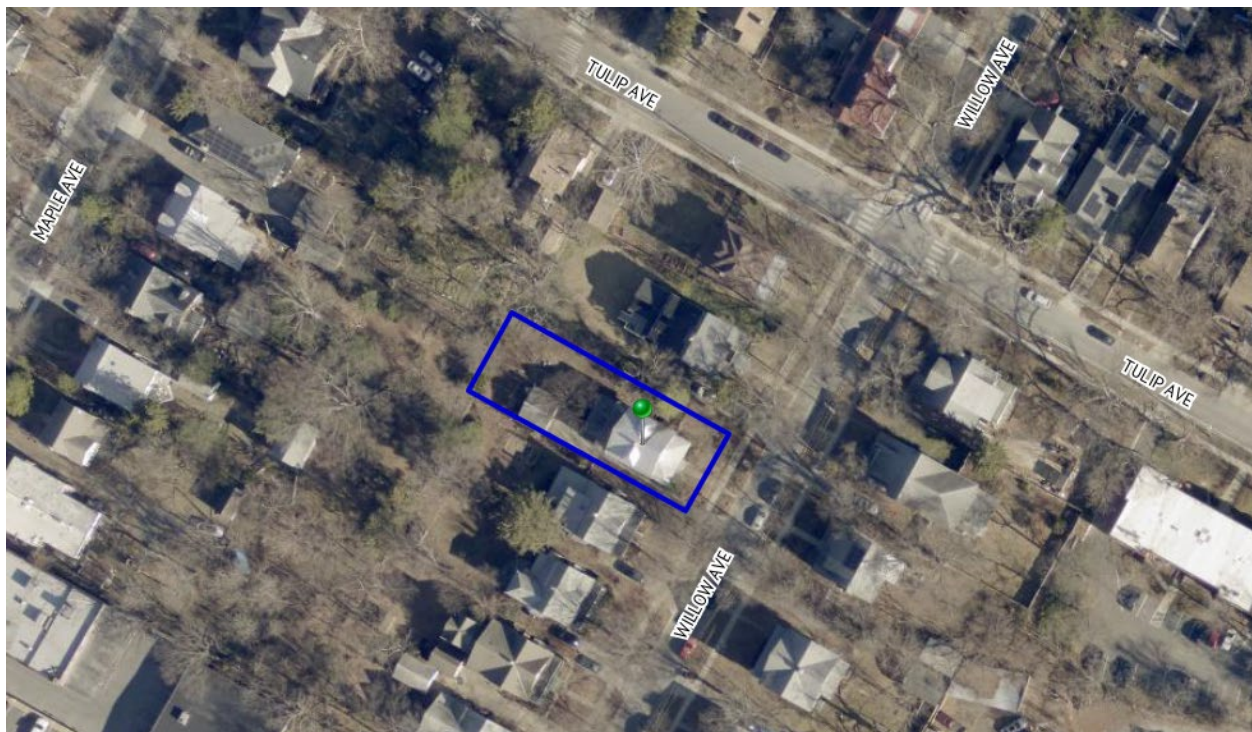


Figure 1: 7124 Willow Avenue, outlined in blue.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to replace the existing concrete front walkway and steps leading to the sidewalk with a new bluestone paving over concrete walkway and steps and new concrete cheek walls. A round steel handrail would be added along the steps leading to the sidewalk. The applicant also proposes to replace the existing front porch steps with new Sapele wood risers and railings and new Ipe treads. One existing concrete step would be replaced with a wood step. New, taller, newel posts would be installed with pyramidal wood post caps.

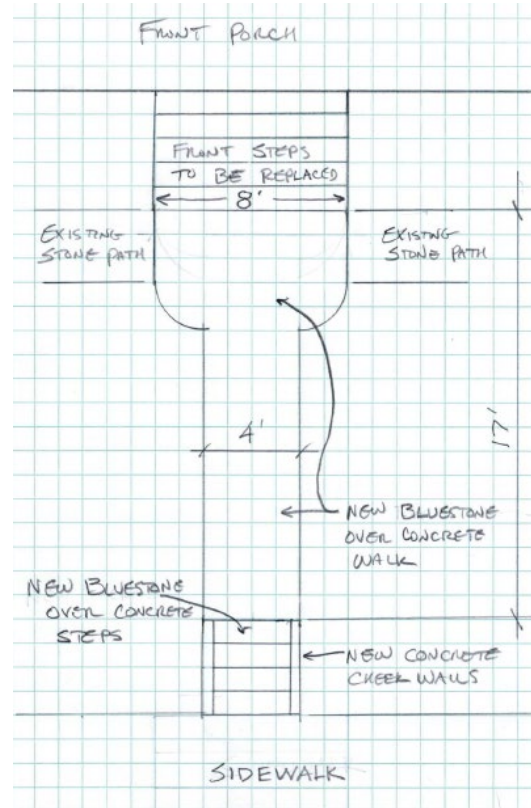


Figure 2: Existing front elevation photo, left (March 2025, Historic Preservation Division); and proposed site plan, right.



Figure 3: Details of the existing concrete steps and existing porch steps (March 2026, Historic Preservation Division).

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)* and the *Historic Preservation Commission Policy No. 24-01: Policy for the Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Porch and Deck Flooring*. 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.

Outstanding Resources have the highest level of architectural and/or historical significance. While they will receive the most detailed level of design review, it is permissible to make sympathetic alterations, changes and additions. The guiding principles to be utilized by the Historic Preservation Commission are the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*

Specifically, some of the factors to be considered in reviewing HAWPs on Outstanding Resources:

- plans for all alterations should be compatible with the resource's original design; additions, specifically, should be sympathetic to existing architectural character, including massing, height, setbacks, and materials
- preservation of original and distinctive architectural features, such as porches, dormers, decorative details, shutters, etc. is encouraged
- preservation of original building materials and use of appropriate, compatible new materials is encouraged
- all changes and additions should respect existing environmental settings, landscaping, and patterns of open space.

Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8

The following guidance that pertains to this project are as follows:

- (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;

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

The Secretary of the Interior defines rehabilitation as “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features, which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.” The applicable *Standards* are as follows:

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.

Historic Preservation Commission Policy No. 24-01: Policy for the Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Porch and Deck Flooring

3. Outstanding Resources/Primary – These resources have the highest level of architectural or historical significance in the historic district and the objective for Outstanding/Primary resources is to preserve the historic and architectural character to the greatest extent possible. Wood should be used on all porches and decks for Outstanding/Primary resources. The wood should be painted and installed in a historically appropriate method. Porches on building additions and new construction to Outstanding/Primary resources will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. As with Master Plan Sites, the HPC does not evaluate wood species and the applied finish needs to be appropriate for the material selected.

STAFF DISCUSSION

Hardscape Alterations and Railing Installation

Staff supports the proposed hardscape alterations and recommends approval. Staff finds that the existing concrete steps and walkway are not original to the construction of the house and that its replacement does not constitute removal of historic fabric or substantially alter the exterior features of the resource, per *Standards* 2 and 9 and Chapter 24A-8(b)(1). Staff further finds that the proposed bluestone paving is compatible with the historic resource, per *Standard* 9 and Chapter 24A-8(b)(2). In addition to the paving replacement, the applicants propose to install a round metal handrail along the steps leading from the walkway to the sidewalk. Staff finds that this work likewise will not have a substantial impact on the resource and is compatible with the character of the property and district, per *Standard* 9 and Chapter 24A-8(b)(1) and (2).



Figure 4: Proposed handrail between the sidewalk and front walkway, left; and proposed bluestone walkway and step material, right.

Porch Alterations

Staff supports the proposed porch alterations and recommends approval. Staff notes that the original scope of work included replacement of the risers with Boral, but that the applicants have agreed to Sapele wood, in keeping with the HPC's Policy 24-01, which identifies wood as the appropriate material for porch and deck replacement on Outstanding resources. Staff finds that the railing replacement will largely be in-kind, with new top and bottom rails and square balusters to match existing, but that the proposed newel posts will slightly differ from the existing. With the first concrete step removed, the newel posts will be slightly longer than the existing newel posts, extending to grade rather than terminating on the top of the first step. The proposed caps are also slightly different from the existing tiered caps, with a wider pyramidal shape. Staff finds that the proposed scope does not remove historic materials that characterize the property and is compatible with the resource, per *Standards 2 and 9*, and Chapter 24A-8(b)(1) and (2). Staff notes that this portion of the scope is eligible for the County's historic preservation tax credit.



Figure 5: Existing newel post and railing detail, left; and proposed newel post cap, right.

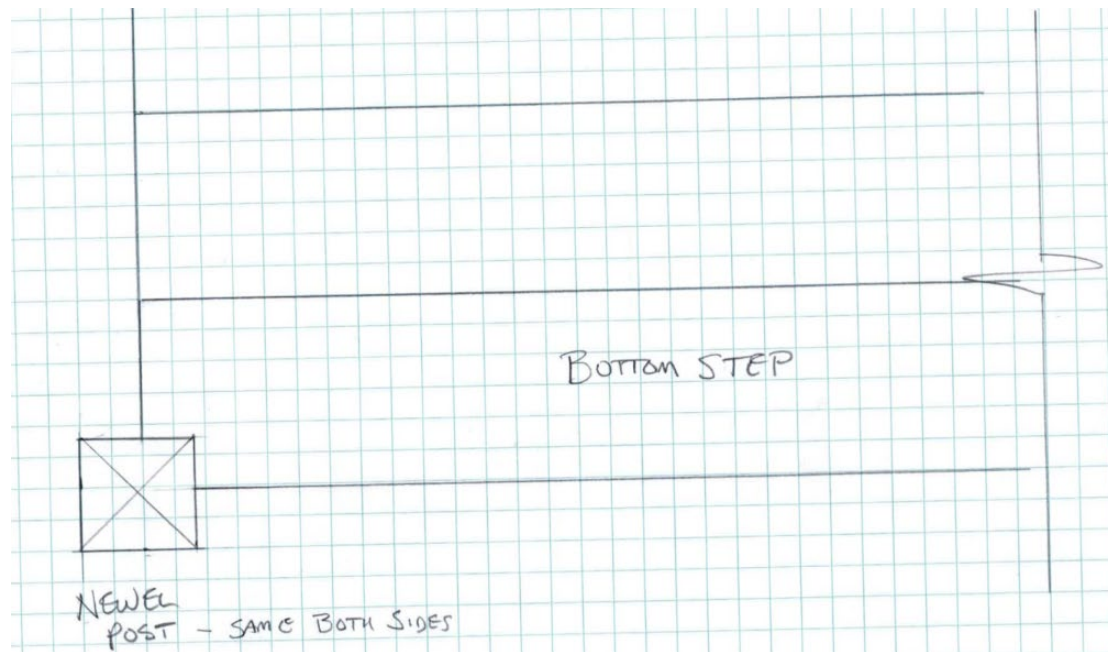


Figure 6: Proposed plan sketch showing the newel post location relative to the bottom step.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve** the HAWP application under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1), (2), of the *Takoma Park Historic District Guidelines*, having found that the proposal, as modified by the condition, 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 and 9;

and the *HPC's Policy 24-01, Policy for the Appropriateness of Substitute Materials for Porch and Deck Flooring*;

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 301-495-2167 or laura.dipasquale@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:

C. 1910-15 COL REV, CAT. 1

Description of Work Proposed: Please give an overview of the work to be undertaken:

I. Front Porch Steps—

A. Apply for HAWP:

B. Front Porch Steps: -- NOT ORIGINAL

- Demolish deteriorated wood steps, bottom concrete step and newel post.
- Build new steps with p.t. (pressure treated) carriages at 16" maximum spacing.
- Assume 5/4" ipe treads (5/4 x 6 + 5/4 x 8) for a 12-inch tread. Round over exposed edges of treads.
- Install Boral Tru Exterior Trim risers. ****to be Sapele per applicant email to staff 3/8/2025**
- Fabricate new posts: Pressure treated posts—trimmed with Sapele 7 1/4" square finished dimension—with Cedar Specialties pyramid post caps.
- Replace railings both sides to match porch—WM-8840, 8841 with square balusters. Railing parts to be fabricated from sapele.
- Paint posts, railings, stair carriage sides and risers. Oil ipe treads.

2. Front Concrete Steps—Replace concrete curbs and replace steps

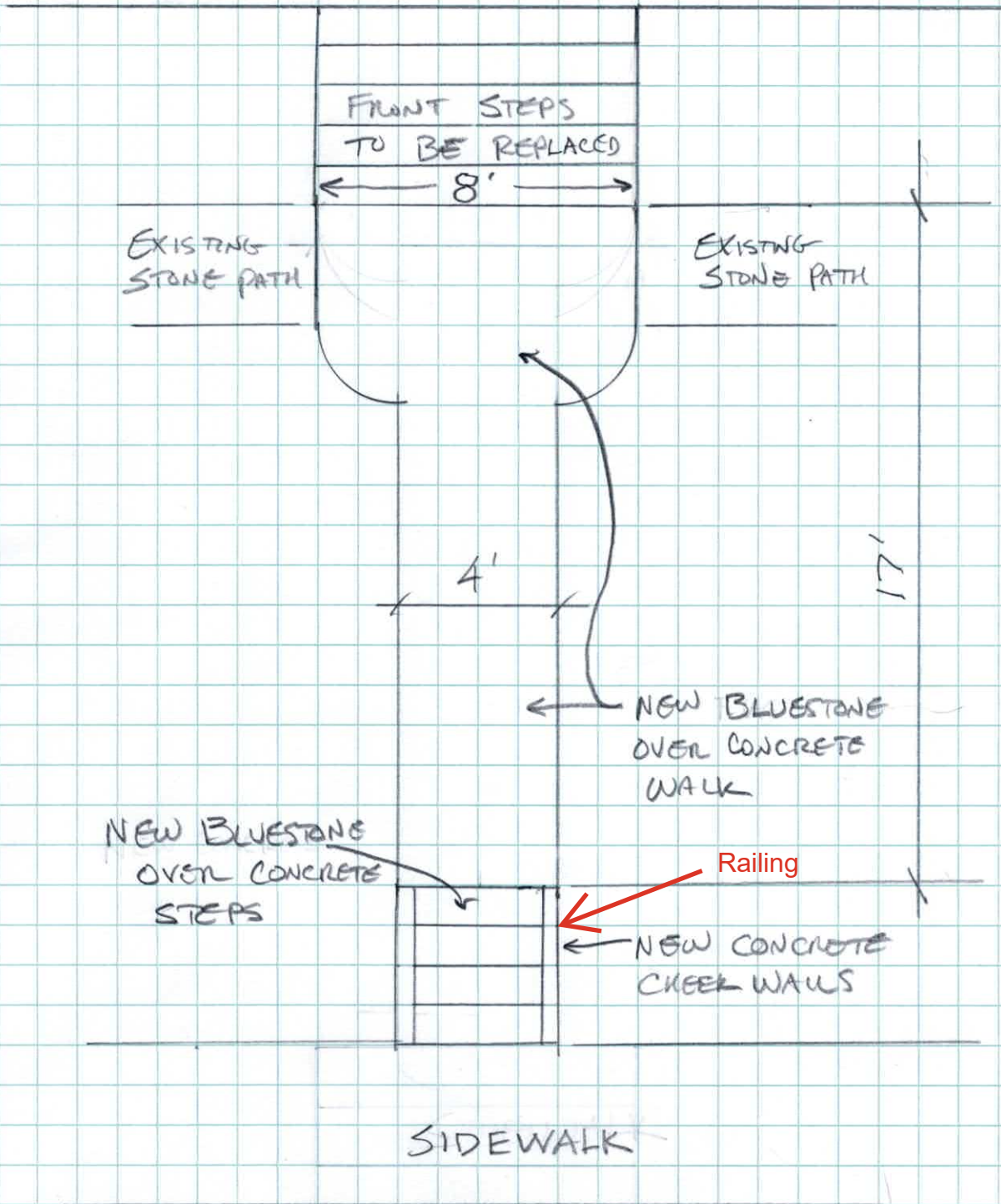
- Remove existing steps
- Form and pour concrete steps and curb – adjust risers to comply with code. Assume 12-inch treads.
- Install 2-inch thermal Pennsylvania Bluestone treads with bullnosed front edge to simulate existing. Risers to be Thermal Bluestone.

- Install new round steel handrail on one side.

3. Lead Walk—

- Replace concrete walk between masonry steps and front porch steps.
- Remove existing concrete
- Excavate, form and pour new 4" concrete walk over 4" gravel.
- Install 1-1/2" Thermal Bluestone in a random square and rectangular pattern. Set stones in mortar and fill joints.

FRONT PORCH

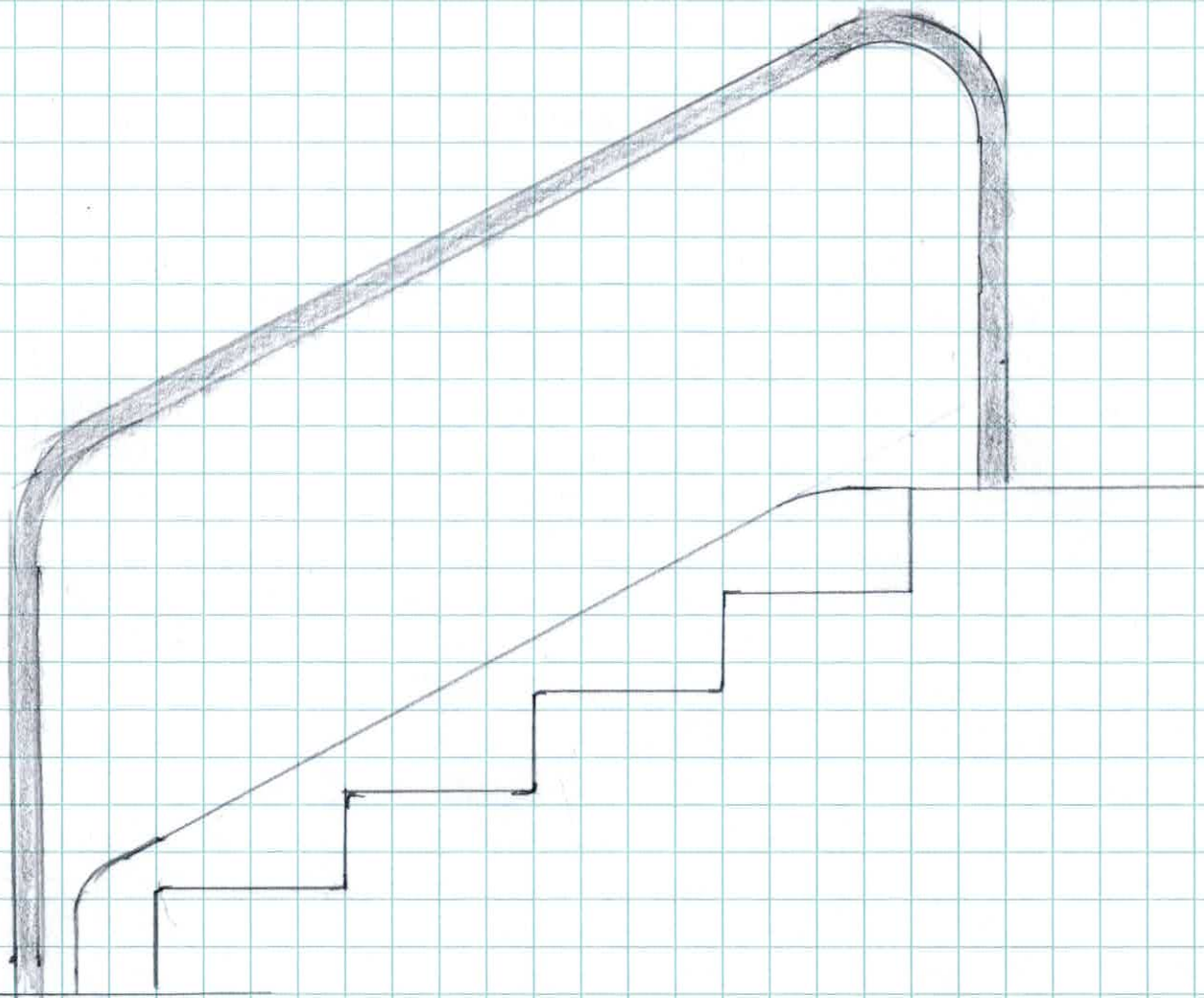


712A WILLOW AVE

SCALE: $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'-0''$



Proposed railing from sidewalk to walkway



7124 Willow Ave.









CEDAR SPECIALTIES



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NEWER POST CAP

CEDAR SPECIALTIES

Pyramid Specialty Size Post Cap

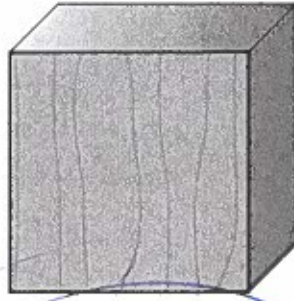
The Pyramid specialty size post caps are available in sizes from 4X4 to 8X8. They are made in the USA from solid cedar. There are options to fit nominal size and full-size posts.

Available in the following sizes:

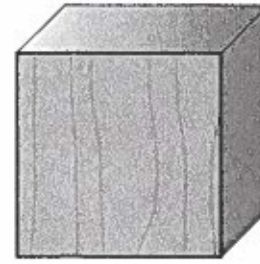
Balusters



Baluster Stock Eased Edge
 WM-237 • $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$
 Clear Primed Fir (A Grade),
 PVC



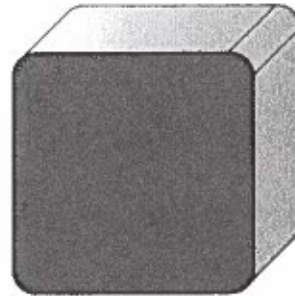
Baluster Stock Square Edge
 WM-237S • $1\frac{1}{4} \times 1\frac{1}{4}$
 Primed A Grade (Clear)



Baluster Stock
 WM-238 • $1\frac{1}{16} \times 1\frac{1}{16}$
 A Grade Pine (Clear)

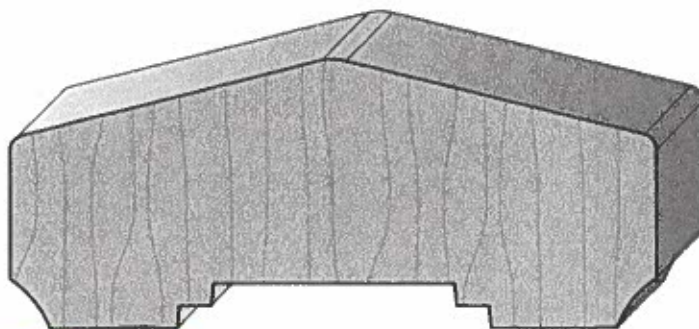


Baluster Stock
 WM-239 • $\frac{3}{4} \times \frac{3}{4}$
 A Grade Pine (Clear)

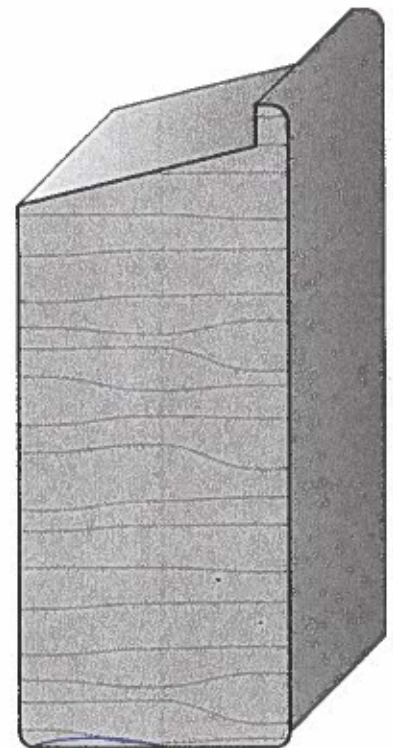


PVC 237
 Baluster Only - 15'
 PVC

Rails



Top Porch Rail • WM-8840 • $1\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$
 Clear Primed Fir (A Grade)



Bottom Porch Rail
 WM-8841 • $1\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$
 Clear Primed Fir (A Grade)