

Montgomery County Historic Preservation

Staff Report

<p>ADDRESS: 50 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park</p> <p>RESOURCE: Takoma Park Historic District</p> <p>APPLICANT: Sarah Greenberg (Eduardo Acosta, Agent)</p> <p>REVIEW: HAWP</p> <p>CASE NO.: 1153470</p> <p>PROPOSAL: Construction of screened enclosure (catio)</p>	<p>MEETING DATE: 5/13/2026</p> <p>REPORT DATE: 5/6/2026</p> <p>PUBLIC NOTICE: 4/29/2026</p> <p>TAX CREDIT ELIGIBLE: No</p> <p>STAFF: Laura DiPasquale</p>
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Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends the HPC approve the HAWP application.

Architectural Description

Significance: Contributing Resource within the Takoma Park Historic District

Date: c. 1920s-30s

Style: Colonial Revival Cottage



Figure 1: The location of the subject property (outlined in blue with a yellow star) in the Takoma Park Historic District (outlined and hatched in red).

Proposal

The applicants propose to construct a screened enclosure on an existing second-story rear deck. The enclosure would be supported by wood posts and enclosed with wire mesh panels and a corrugated polycarbonate roof. No new penetrations are proposed to the historic building beyond the flashing attachments.

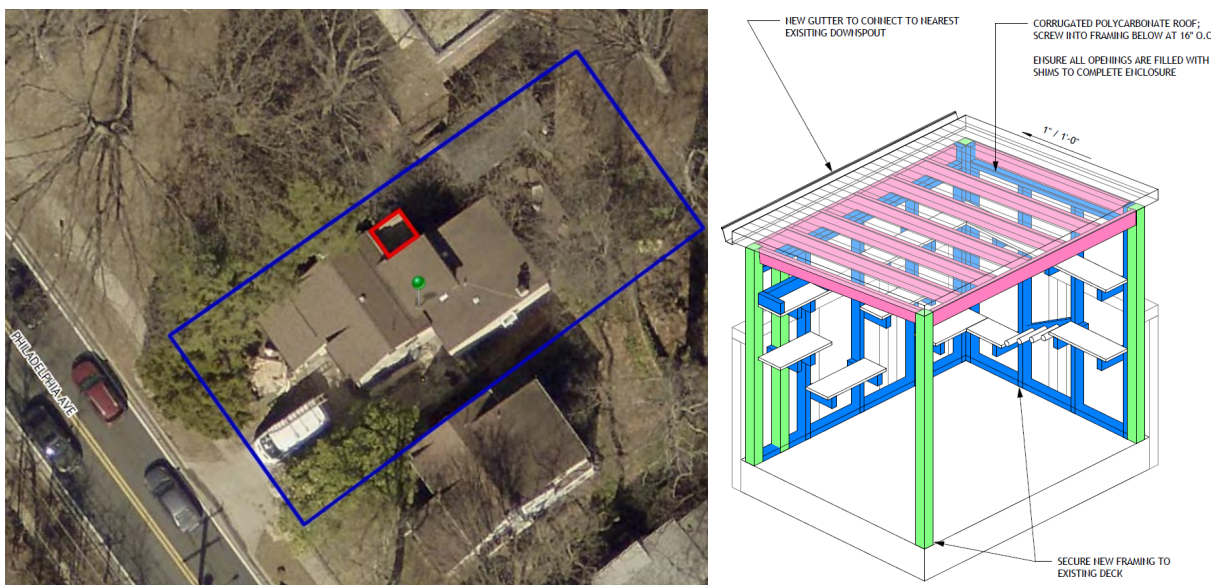


Figure 2: Left, aerial view showing the location of the proposed enclosure outlined in red. Right, isometric design of the proposed enclosure.

Applicable Guidelines

The Historic Preservation Office and Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) consult several documents when reviewing alterations and new construction within the Takoma Park Historic District. 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 broad planning and design concepts which apply to all categories. These are:

- The design review emphasis will be restricted to changes that are 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 historic district.

A majority of the buildings in the Takoma Park Historic District have been assessed as being “Contributing Resources.” While these buildings may not have the same level of architectural or historical significance as Outstanding Resources or may have lost some degree of integrity, collectively, they are the basic building blocks of the Takoma Park district. They are important to the overall character of the district and the streetscape due to their size, scale, and architectural qualities, rather than for their particular architectural features.

Contributing Resources should receive a more lenient level of design 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.

Residential Areas

In Takoma Park, there are a number of elements which define the streetscape and building patterns.

- Use of decorative stone retaining walls (where required by topographic changes) and occasionally fences to define a sidewalk line and separate yards from street.
- Sidewalks and planting strips along the street.
- Orientation of driveways and parking areas to the rear and side of buildings.
- Extensive landscaping, including mature trees and flowering plants (e.g. azaleas).

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

- Minor alterations to areas that do not directly front on a public right-of-way – such as vents, metal stovepipes, air conditioners, fences, skylights, etc. – should be allowed as a matter of course;
- All changes and additions should respect existing environmental settings, landscaping, and patterns of open space.

Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A-8

- (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; 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

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:

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.
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

Staff supports the proposed construction and recommends approval, finding that the proposed project will not substantially alter the exterior features of the historic resource and that the alterations are compatible with the historic resource. Staff finds that the proposed project will be located on a non-historic rear deck and will not require removal of any historic materials that characterize the property, per *Standards* 2 and 9 and Chapter 24A-8(b)(1). Staff finds that, although there may be visibility of the

enclosure from some vantages along the public right-of-way, owing to its limited size and location at the rear of the house, the proposed enclosure will not impact the character of the resource or the district, per the *Guidelines*, Chapter 24A-8(b)(2), and *Standard 9*. Staff also finds that, if removed in the future, the character of the resource would be unimpaired, per *Standard 10*.



Figure 3: View from Philadelphia Avenue towards the location of the proposed enclosure (marked with a red arrow) at the rear of the house.



Figure 4: Left, detail of the 1927 Sanborn Map showing the original footprint of the house. Right, current aerial image of the property showing the non-historic rear addition (March 2025, ConnectExplorer). The proposed enclosure would be located along the rear wall of the historic main block and northwest side wall of the non-historic rear addition.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the HAWP application under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(1) and (2), having found that the proposal will not substantially alter the exterior features of the historic resource and is compatible in character with the purposes of Chapter 24A;

The Takoma Park Historic District Guidelines;

and with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation 9 and 10;*

and with the general condition that the applicant shall present an electronic set of drawings, if applicable, to 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 HPC as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

and with the general condition that the applicant shall notify the HPC 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:

50 Philadelphia Avenue is a two-story, stucco-exterior single-family residence constructed in 1923, located within the Takoma Park Historic District (MIHP No. M: 37-3), which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. The property contains approximately 1,591 square feet of above-grade living area on a 4,888 square foot lot in the Hillcrest subdivision. The structure is consistent with the early 20th century residential character of the district, which features modest two-story homes built following the expansion of streetcar lines through the area. The home includes two fireplaces, wood flooring, crown molding, and a later family room addition with vaulted ceilings. A private driveway provides off-street access. A second-floor deck is located at the rear of the structure, which is the site of the proposed work. The surrounding environment reflects the established residential character of Philadelphia Avenue, with neighboring properties of similar scale, age, and architectural character. The property features mature trees and a wooded rear yard. The street corridor is lined with early 20th century homes consistent with the district's period of significance (1883-1940).

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

Install a cat enclosure (catio) on the existing second-floor deck at the rear of the structure. Work includes attachment of new wood framing to the existing deck, installation of wire mesh panels to enclose the structure, and a corrugated polycarbonate roof with a new gutter connecting to the nearest existing downspout. All framing will be secured to the existing deck without new structural modifications to the building. Flashing and waterproofing will be applied at the roof connection point. The enclosure is fully reversible and does not alter the historic fabric of the structure.

<p>Work Item 1: <u>Cat Enclosure Framing and Mesh</u></p>	
<p>Description of Current Condition: Existing second-floor deck at rear of structure is open and unenclosed. Deck framing and decking are in place with no existing enclosure structures.</p>	<p>Proposed Work: Install new 2x6 wood framing secured to existing deck. Enclose all sides with wire mesh panels attached using a furring strip method. All openings will be filled with shims to complete the enclosure. No modifications to the existing deck structure or building beyond attachment points.</p>

<p>Work Item 2: <u>Polycarbonate Roof and Drainage</u></p>	
<p>Description of Current Condition: Existing deck has no overhead covering. Nearest existing downspout is located adjacent to the deck area.</p>	<p>Proposed Work: Install corrugated polycarbonate roof panels screwed into new framing below at 16" o.c. Apply proper flashing and waterproofing at roof connection to building. Install new gutter connected to nearest existing downspout. No new penetrations to historic building fabric beyond flashing attachment.</p>

<p>Work Item 3: _____</p>	
<p>Description of Current Condition:</p>	<p>Proposed Work:</p>

Written Description

50 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912

Project Information

Field	Detail
Property Address	50 Philadelphia Avenue, Takoma Park, MD 20912
Property Owner	Sarah Greenberg & Heather M. Hamilton
Contractor	Eduardo Francisco Acosta
MHIC License No.	117147-01
Historic District	Takoma Park Historic District (MIHP No. M: 37-3)
Tax Account No.	District 13 / Account Identifier 01069497
Parcel	Map JN42, Grid 0000, Parcel P728, Subdivision 0025

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The structure is consistent with the early 20th century residential character of the district, which features modest two-story homes built following the expansion of streetcar lines through the area. The home includes two fireplaces, wood flooring, crown molding, and a later family room addition with vaulted ceilings. A private driveway provides off-street access. A second-floor deck is located at the rear of the structure, which is the site of the proposed work.

The surrounding environment reflects the established residential character of Philadelphia Avenue, with neighboring properties of similar scale, age, and architectural character. The property features mature trees and a wooded rear yard. The street corridor is lined with early 20th century homes consistent with the district's period of significance (1883–1940).

Description of Work Proposed

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Work Item 1: Cat Enclosure Framing and Mesh

Description of Current Condition

The existing second-floor deck at the rear of the structure is open and unenclosed. Deck framing and decking are in place with no existing enclosure structures.

Proposed Work

Install new 2x6 cedar framing secured to the existing deck. Enclose all sides with wire mesh panels attached using a furring strip method. All openings will be filled with shims to complete the enclosure. No modifications to the existing deck structure or building beyond attachment points.

Work Item 2: Polycarbonate Roof and Drainage

Description of Current Condition

The existing deck has no overhead covering. The nearest existing downspout is located adjacent to the deck area.

Proposed Work

Install corrugated polycarbonate roof panels screwed into new framing below at 16" o.c. Apply proper flashing and waterproofing at the roof connection to the building. Install a new gutter connected to the nearest existing downspout. No new penetrations to the historic building fabric beyond flashing attachment.

Additional Notes

This enclosure keeps cats safely contained, protecting local birds and wildlife, a benefit recognized by conservation groups. Materials are low-profile and reversible with no permanent alterations to the historic structure. Existing deck attachment points will be used. Cedar is a natural, traditional material consistent with the architectural character of the Takoma Park Historic District.

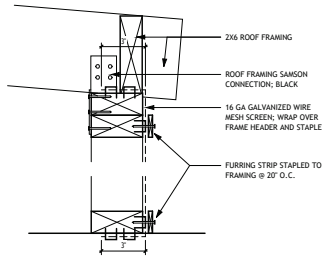
Material Specifications

The following materials will be used for the proposed catio (enclosed cat patio) structure to be constructed on the existing rear deck. All materials are selected for durability, weather resistance, and visual compatibility with the existing property.

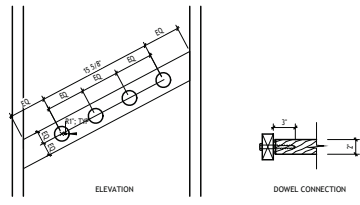
Component	Specification
Framing	2x6 cedar lumber, structural grade. Rafters at 16" o.c. All framing secured to the existing deck structure.
Posts	4x4 cedar posts. Platform-mounted to the existing deck.
Mesh/Enclosure	16-gauge galvanized welded wire mesh panels, attached to framing using furring strip method. All openings filled with shims to complete the enclosure.
Roof	Corrugated polycarbonate panels, screwed into framing below at 16" o.c. UV-resistant, translucent.
Drainage	New aluminum gutter connected to the nearest existing downspout.
Flashing	Metal flashing and waterproofing sealant at roof-to-building connection point.
Fasteners	Exterior-grade galvanized or stainless steel screws and hardware throughout.
Finish	Cedar left natural or finished with a clear exterior sealant. No paint required.

Notes

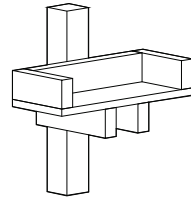
All work will be performed by a licensed contractor (MHIC License No. 117147-01). Materials comply with applicable building codes. No hazardous or chemically treated materials will be used in areas accessible to animals or occupants.



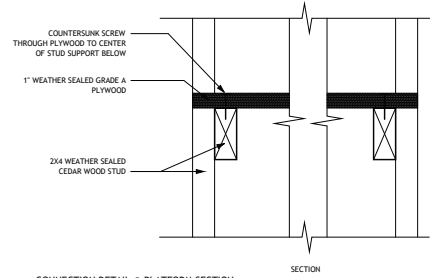
15 TYP WIRE MESH CONNECTIONS
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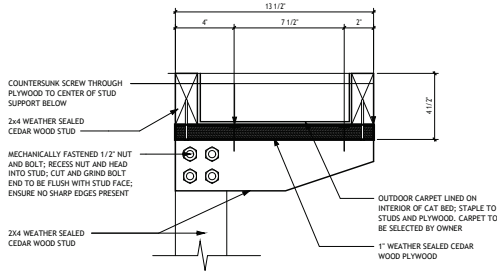
11 RUNG STEPS
1 1/2\"/>



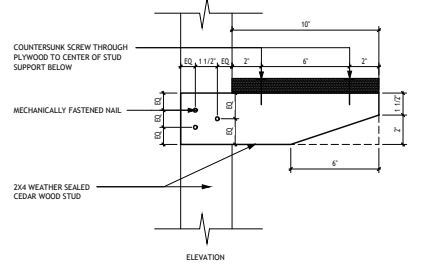
14 CAT BED ISO



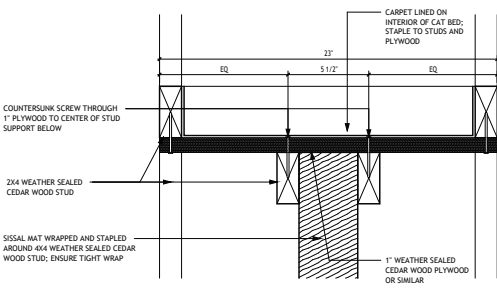
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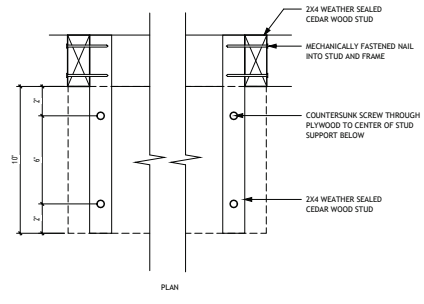
13 CAT BED - ELEVATION
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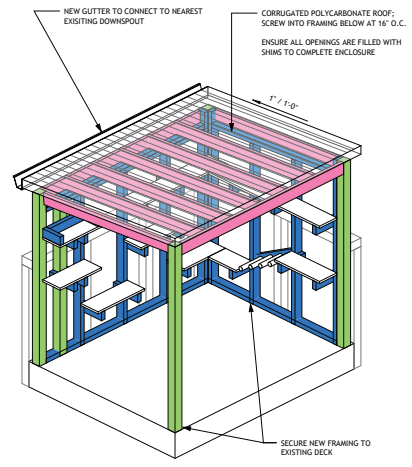
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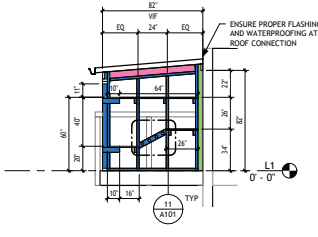
12 CAT BED - SECTION
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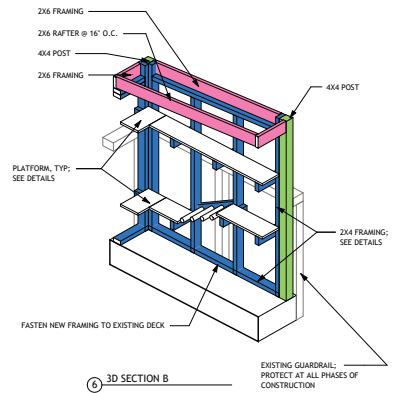
8 CONNECTION DETAIL @ PLATFORM PLAN
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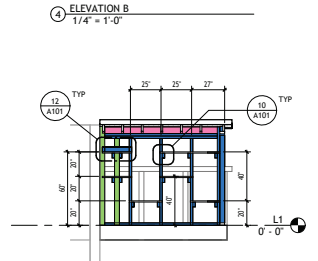
7 ISO



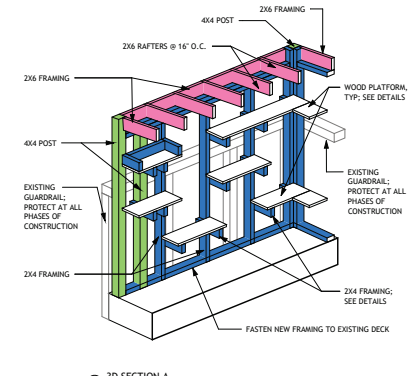
4 ELEVATION B
1/4\"/>



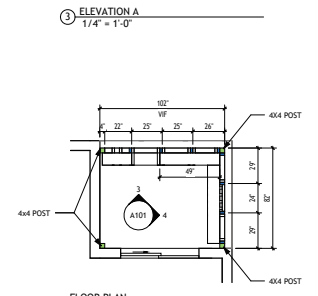
6 3D SECTION B



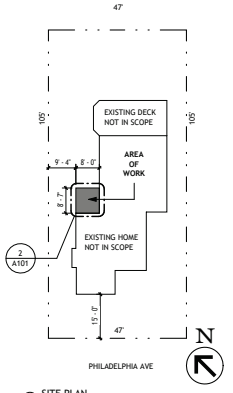
3 ELEVATION A
1/4\"/>



5 3D SECTION A



2 FLOOR PLAN
1/4\"/>



1 SITE PLAN
1\"/>

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

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CONSTRUCTION SET FOR PERMITTING

PROJECT MOOCH

CATIO FOR SARAH GREENBERG

50 Philadelphia Ave., Takoma Park, MD 20912

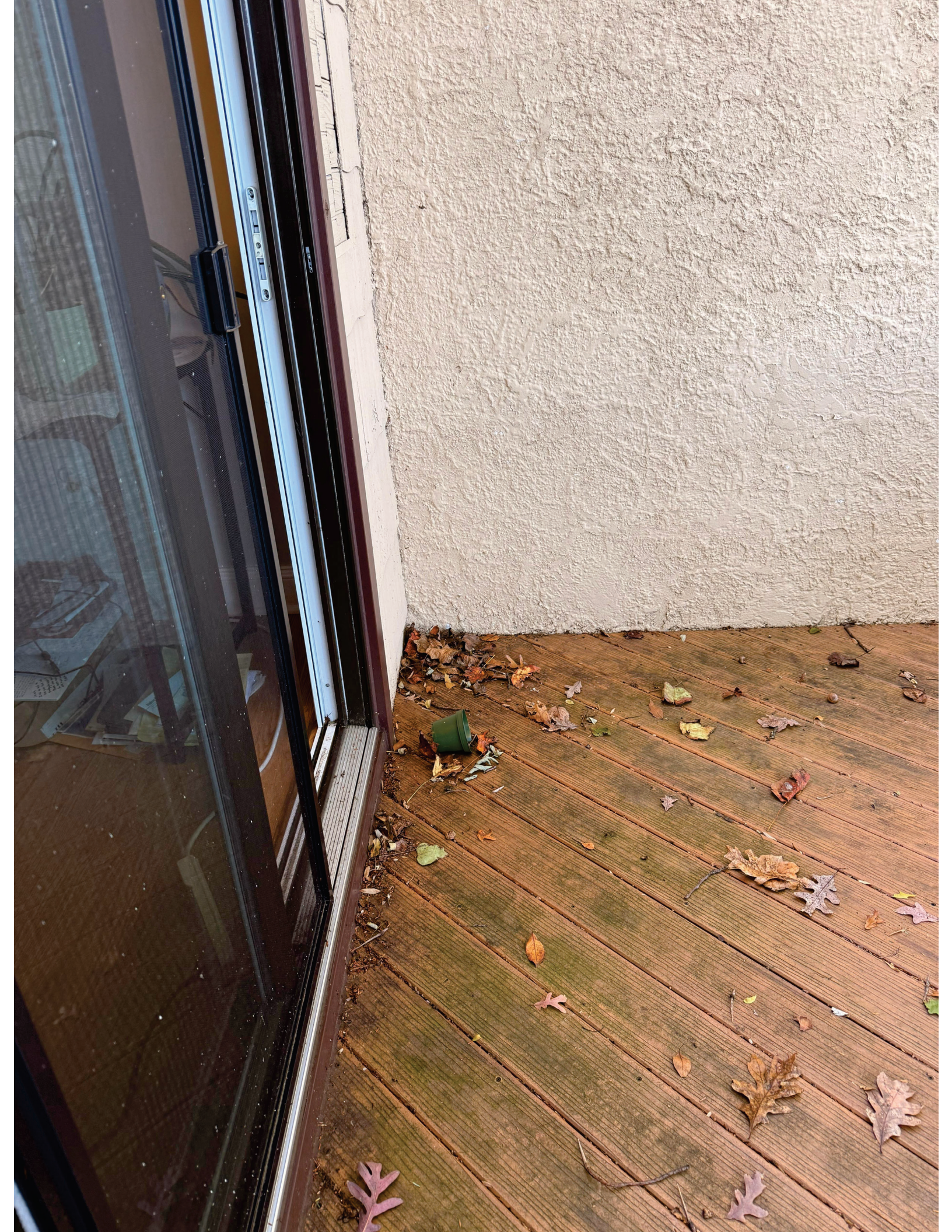
FRAMING COLOR INDEX

Blue	2x4 CEDAR FRAMING
Pink	2x6 CEDAR FRAMING
Green	4x4 CEDAR FRAMING

SECTION, ELEVATIONS, DETAILS

Project number 2503
 Date 04/09/26
 Drawn by DO
A101
 Scale As indicated









KOHLER POWER SYSTEMS