

MONTGOMERY COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT

Address:	7115 Cedar Avenue, Takoma Park	Meeting Date:	4/22/2025
Resource:	Master Plan Site Thomas-Siegler House #37/03-02	Report Date:	4/15/2025
Applicant:	Richard Houston	Public Notice:	4/8/2025
Review:	HAWP	Tax Credit:	n/a
Permit Number:	113226 REVISION	Staff:	Dan Bruechert
Proposal:	Hardscape Alteration and Retaining Wall Construction		

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

SIGNIFICANCE: Individually Listed Master Plan Site (*Thomas-Siegler House #37/03-02*)
STYLE: Queen Anne
DATE: 1884 with 1889 alterations

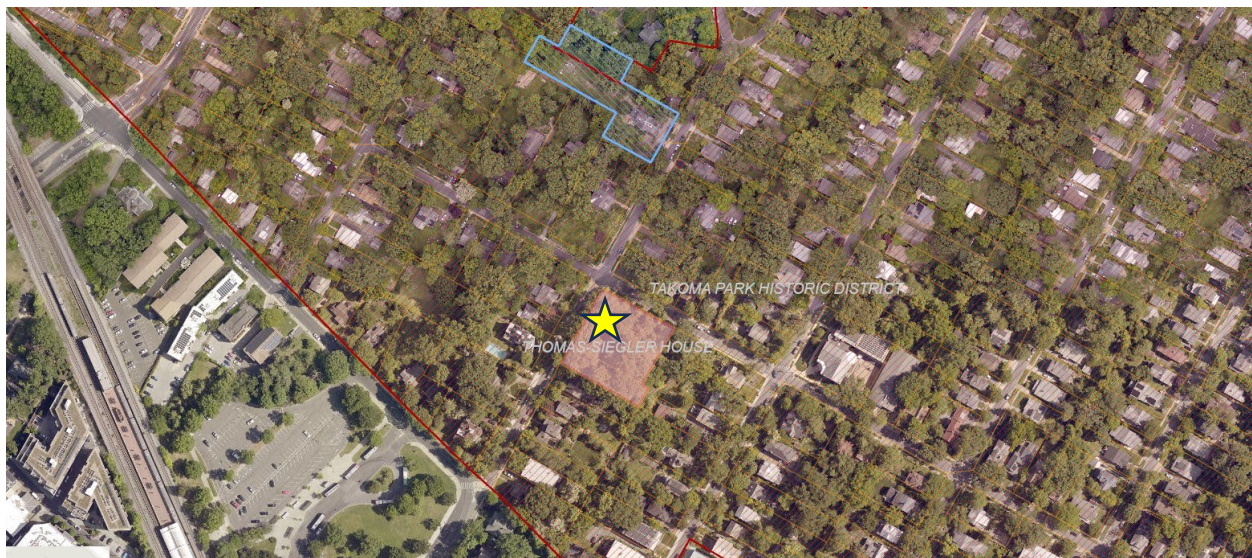


Figure 1: The Thomas-Siegler Master Plan Site is within the larger Takoma Park Historic District.

From Staff files:

“The original structure of the Thomas-Siegler House was completed in 1884 for Isaac L. Thomas – first postmaster, store owner, and station manager for Takoma Park – is historically significant as one of the earliest homes constructed in B.F. Gilbert’s Victorian Suburban development.

The original Queen Anne-style dwelling, oriented toward Cedar Avenue, was remodeled in 1889

with the addition of a simple T-shaped section facing Tulip Avenue, resulting in the structure's complex H shape and duplex design.

Extensively landscaped under the ownership of the Siegler family, the grounds are dominated by large white oak trees with an understory of magnolia, American Holly, laurel, azalea, dogwood, and cherry which aesthetically define the setting for the historic structures and contribute to the overall sylvan environment of Takoma Park.

The Thomas-Siegler property, including the main house, the carriage house, and the landscaped grounds, is historically significant as an early example of the Victorian suburban ideal which greatly influenced early suburban development of Montgomery County.”

BACKGROUND

On October 22, 2025, the HPC approved a HAWP to remove and replace an existing concrete stair, construct a retaining wall, install a railing, and replace a concrete walkway with flagstones. The applicant proposes to revise the railing design.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to install a new railing on either side of the replacement concrete stairs.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES

When reviewing alterations and additions for new construction to Master Plan Sites, decisions are guided by Montgomery County Code Chapter 24A (*Chapter 24A*) and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (*The Standards*). As a resource within the larger Takoma Park Historic District, Staff also consults the Takoma Park Historic District Design Guidelines (*Design Guidelines*) for guidance on the impacts to the historic setting. The Master Plan Historic Site contains additional addresses and is listed as 7119 Cedar Avenue and 201 Tulip Avenue in the property appendix in the *Guidelines*.

Takoma Park Historic District Design 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.

Montgomery County Code, Chapter 24A Historic Resources Preservation

- (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 insure 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
 - (4) The proposal is necessary in order that unsafe conditions or health hazards be remedied;

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.
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 two-story, stucco sided house with Queen Anne and folk Victorian design elements. The unique H-shaped house plan date to the 1889 modifications to the house, which has operated as a duplex for most of its history (the addresses are at 201 Tulip Ave. and 7115 Cedar Ave.). On the Cedar Ave. side of the house, there is a set of degraded concrete stairs with a simple pipe railing. At the top of the stairs, there is a concrete walkway that leads to the house.



Figure 2: The subject property with the stairs and walkway to be replaced to the right.

The October 22, 2025 HAWP approval included replacing the concrete stairs and railing shown in *Fig. 2*, and installing an additional railing on the left side. The applicant's proposed railing was a wrought iron railing with pickets between top and bottom rails, spaced at 4" (four inches) off center. To simplify the

design of the railing, the applicant now proposes to eliminate the pickets and bottom rail. The result is a railing that matches the overall dimensions of the approved railing, but creates a more transparent appearance (see Fig. 3, below).

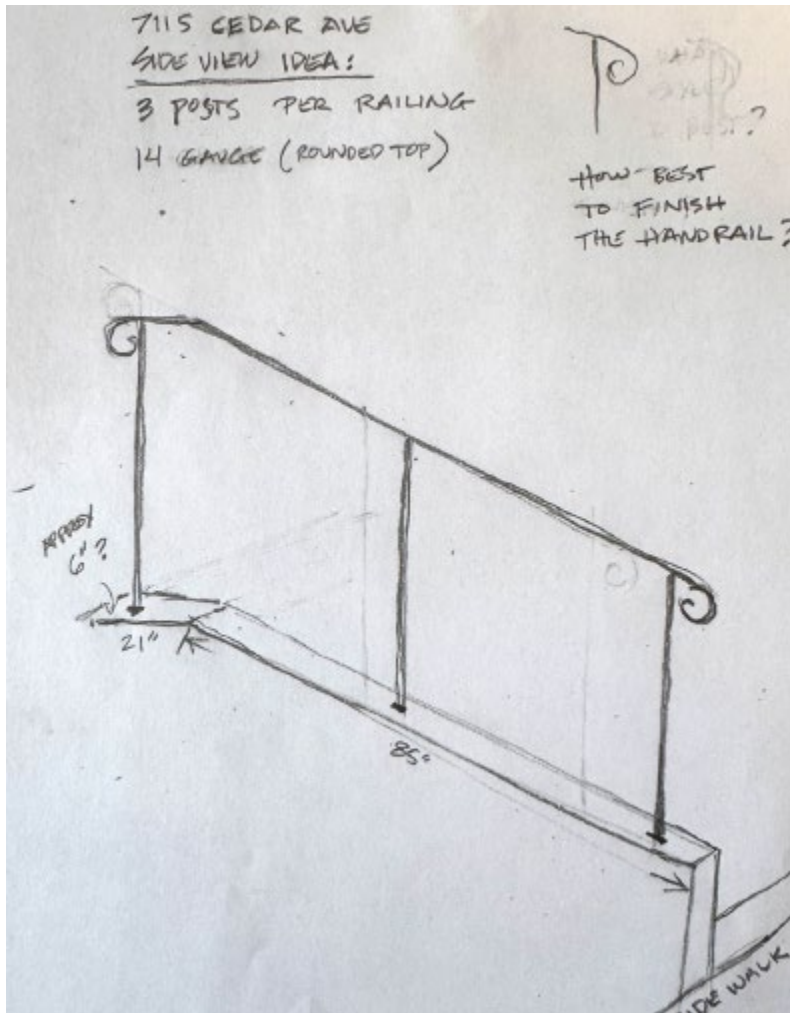


Figure 3: Revised railing design.

Staff finds the revised railing design compatible with the character of the site and surrounding district; and finds its simplified form will better recede visually with the surrounding landscape. Staff recommends the HPC approve the HAWP revision under the *Design Guidelines*; 24A-8(b)(2) and (4); and *Standards* #2 and #10.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Commission **approve** the HAWP application, under the Criteria for Issuance in Chapter 24A-8(b)(2) and (4), 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 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;

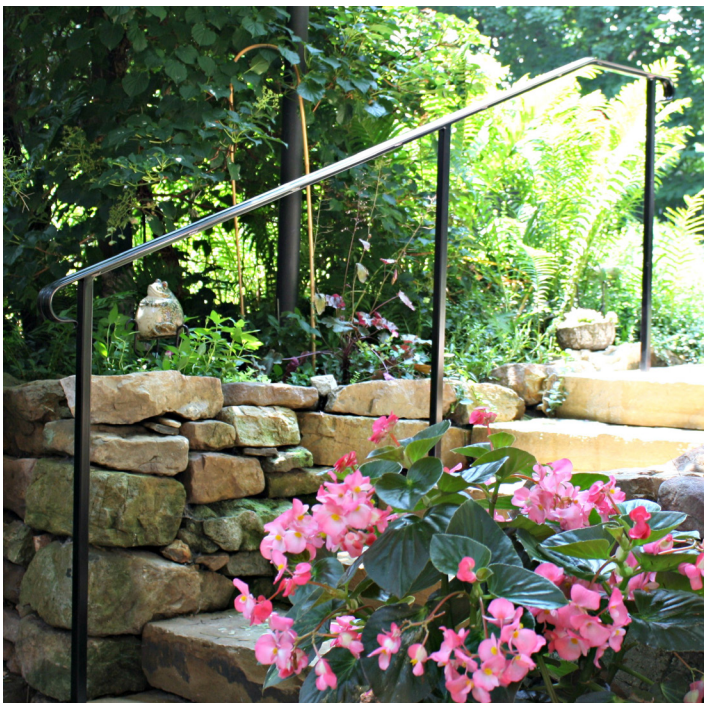
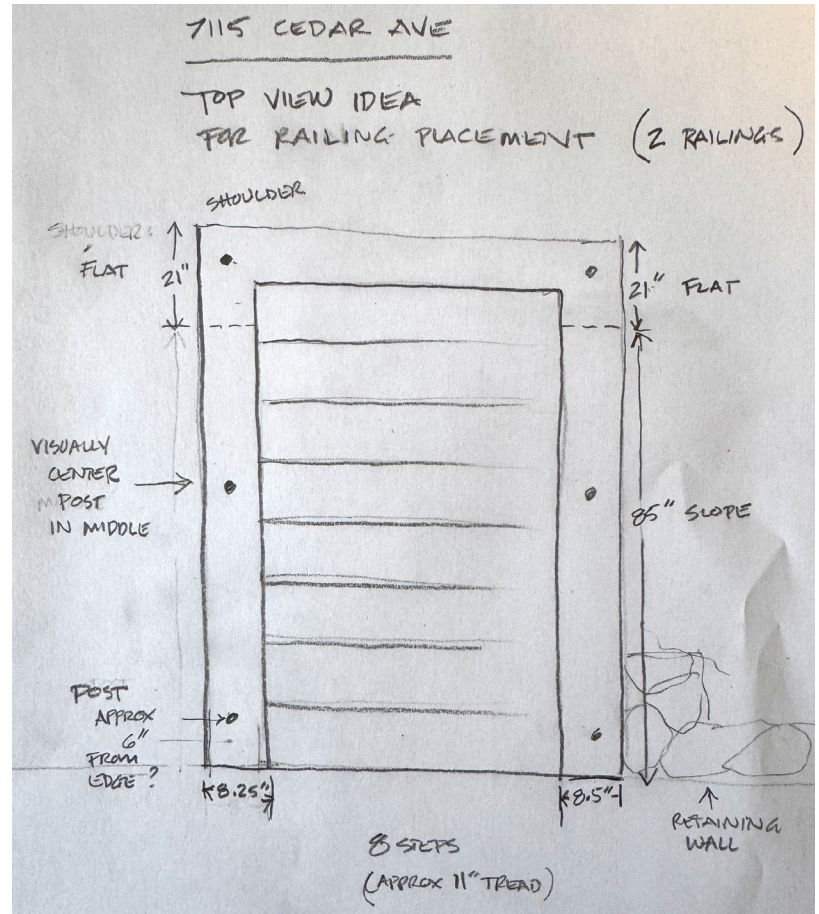
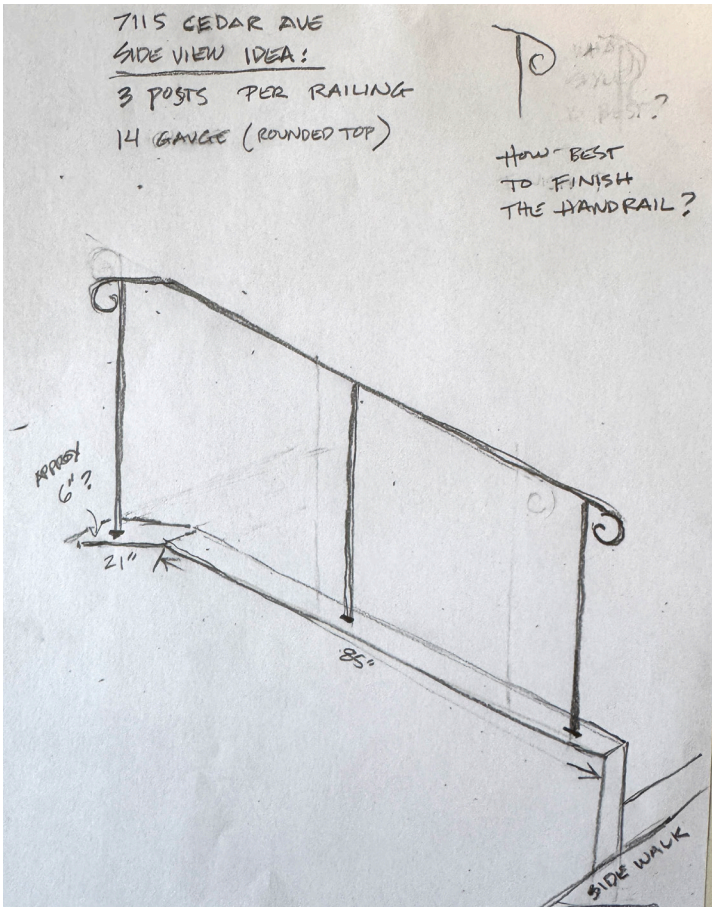
and with the general condition that final project design details, not specifically delineated by the Commission, shall be approved by HPC staff or brought back to the Commission as a revised HAWP application at staff's discretion;

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.

2. Site Plan

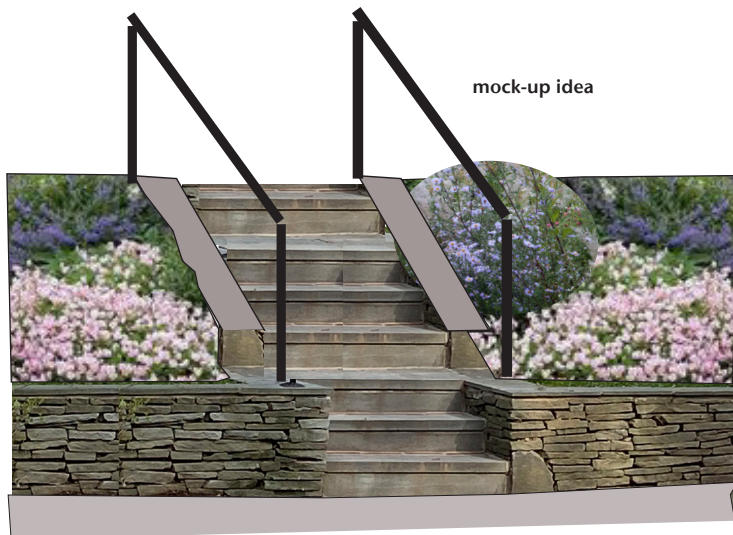
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Cedar site
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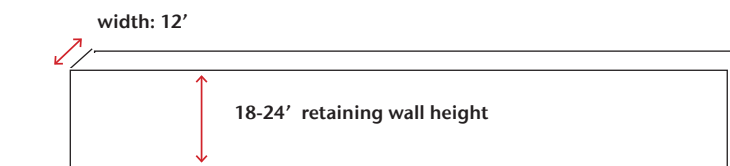


This is the original drawing that was supposed to be submitted - not sure if Rich added this! I was traveling and did not get to help him out!

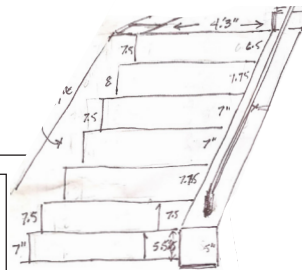


Some ideas for plantings

Existing steps
width: 4'3" x 6-7' high



step width: 4'3"



30' retaining wall length

8' length