



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: February 2, 2017

PROJECT Fence Replacement – Phase 1 White House Complex 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 7776
SUBMITTED BY United States Department of the Interior National Park Service	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.31(38.40)44488
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of final site development plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve final site development plans with comments
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Staff Presentation

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the United States Secret Service, has submitted final site development plans for a new perimeter fence and gates at the White House. The planned improvements follow the existing fence alignment and will retain current gate access points. The first White House fence was installed around 1803 and has evolved over time to become the design currently in place. The fence piers will be reconstructed to be similar to the existing historic piers; however, the scale of these elements will be adjusted to accommodate the new proposed fence height. The existing light fixtures will be retained and reincorporated into the fence design. Anti-climb measures are also proposed for the top of the fence.

The Commission approved temporary improvements to the fence in 2015. Since that time, the National Park Service (NPS) and United States Secret Service (USSS) evaluated a number of permanent security measures. In addition to security requirements, the proposed improvements consider the historic setting of the White House, a National Historic Landmark, as well as views to and from the grounds. The improvements intend to balance security needs with the visual quality of this nationally-significant public space. The Commission reviewed a mock-up of the proposed fence, and subsequently in December 2016, approved the preliminary site development plans for the proposed project with recommendations to be addressed prior to final review.

KEY INFORMATION

- The White House is the official residence and executive office for the President of the United States.
- The White House complex covers an area of approximately 18.65 acres.

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- The Commission approved temporary improvements to the White House fence in May and July 2015.
 - The Commission approved the preliminary site development plans with recommendations in December 2016.
 - The proposed fence height is 10'-7" on an approximately 18" stone base, with 1'-0" tall anti-climb measures.
 - The total assembly height, including base, fence and anti-climb measures, remains 13'-1". This is unchanged from the design approved during preliminary review.
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RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the final site development plans for Phase 1 of new perimeter fence and gates at the White House, located in Washington, DC.

Requests that NPS and the USSS provide an update on the anticipated schedule and scope of future phases of security improvements at President's Park.

Notes the unique character and condition of the public spaces surrounding and adjacent to the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and Treasury Building may require different security solutions, including fence height.

Supports the NPS and USSS preferred design for the vehicular gates along Pennsylvania Avenue, in conjunction with the vertical picket option for the adjacent pedestrian gates, as they best balance design with maintenance and operational needs.

Previous actions	July 2016 – Approval of Comments of Concept Design December 2016 – Approval of Preliminary Site Development Plans
Remaining actions (anticipated)	– None

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

NPS, on behalf of the USSS, has submitted final site development plans to install a new perimeter fence and gates at the White House. Staff has analyzed the submission considering principles related to historic preservation, urban design and visitor experience, as well as the comments and recommendations provided by the Commission at the time of the preliminary approval. The proposed improvements are the first phase of comprehensive security improvements that will ultimately include the Treasury Building and the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. Phase 1, currently under consideration, and the perimeter gate and fence surrounding the approximately 18.65-acre White House grounds. The fence is approximately 3,500 feet long, and generally follows along Pennsylvania Avenue, NW to the north, East Executive Avenue, NW to the east, E Street, NW to the south, and West Executive Ave, NW to the west.

The proposed improvements seek to meet contemporary security standards while recognizing the historic and symbolic importance of the White House and the surrounding grounds. At the time of preliminary approval, the Commission provided a series of comments and recommendations to be addressed prior to final review and approval. The analysis that follows will highlight those recommendations and describe the applicant's response, as well as the revised design. After review of the proposed refinements to the fence design in response to the Commission's preliminary approval, staff recommends the **Commission approve the final site development plans for Phase 1 of new perimeter fence and gates at the White House, located in Washington, DC.**

The Commission reviewed and approved temporary improvements to the fence in May and July 2015. Temporary security measures for the White House fence were previously approved by the Commission, with the understanding that a more lasting solution would be developed. Other temporary site security measures, including bicycle racks, continue to be employed across the site at varying times. The Commission has previously noted its support for comprehensive, permanent measures to address the security needs of the White House complex. Because future phases will require additional consideration, staff recommends the **Commission request that NPS and the USSS provide an update on the expected schedule and scope of future phases of security improvements at President's Park.**

Analysis

The proposed improvements seek to meet contemporary security standards while recognizing the historic and symbolic importance of the White House and the surrounding grounds. At the time of preliminary approval, the Commission provided a series of comments and recommendations to be addressed prior to final review and approval. The analysis that follows will highlight those recommendations and describe the applicant's response, as well as the revised design. In addition, the final plans were evaluated considering issues related to historic preservation, urban design and visitor experience.

Fence Height

The existing White House fence is currently 6'-0" on a 2'-0" stone base, for an overall height of approximately 8'-0". The USSS has evaluated the fence height and current security requirements. As a result, the proposed fence height is 10'-7" on an approximately 18" stone base. Anti-climb features measuring 1'-0" in height would be installed at the top of the fence, and the entire assembly measures 13'-1" from the ground. The fence generally follows the topography of the site, and the existing fence piers would be increased in scale to accommodate the new fence height. The proposed height reflects the USSS evaluation of the security needs at the White House, and remains consistent with overall assembly height previously reviewed by the Commission.

Picket Size & Spacing

The size and spacing of fence pickets affect the visual transparency of the fence and the visitor experience along Pennsylvania Avenue and E Street, NW. In general, a more open fence can preserve views of the White House and reduce the feeling of enclosure or obstruction resulting from a taller fence. The current fence has 7/8" diameter pickets with 4-5/8" of clear space between each. Upon review of the mock-up and project renderings, the Commission approved the fence designs which included a 2" picket with 5-1/2" spacing. A review of the mock-up and renderings generally affirmed that the wider picket spacing was appropriate in preserving views to the White House grounds, while the height of the fence is balanced by the width of adjacent public space, particularly along Pennsylvania Avenue. However, as NPS and the USSS evaluate future phases, it will be important to consider changing conditions and the surrounding context. As such, staff recommends the **Commission note that the unique character and condition of the public spaces surrounding and adjacent to the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and Treasury Building may require different security solutions, including fence height.**

Fence Top & Base

The elements at the top of the fence provide additional design details, while accommodating anti-climb measures which are intended to deter climbers from grasping the top bar. At preliminary review, the fence design included a single spear finial set atop a decorative ball. The design also formed the basis for the full-size mock-up. Further, at the time of preliminary review, the Commission supported the use of "pencil point" anti-climb measures, as they best balanced security and design in an unobtrusive manner. Those elements have been retained as the basis of the proposal, with several improvements. First, the large post-top finial has been revised to add additional volume, while the fence post itself has been refined to include an inset. Staff believes both of these changes provide an additional level of detail appropriate to the design. The applicant also proposes a distinct post-top design at the pedestrian gates. This element will appear similar to an urn with a light or flame.

In all options, the field stone base will be replaced with a more finished ashlar, similar to that currently in place on the south side of the White House grounds. In addition, the pickets will extend into a stone cap at the top of the base. At concept review, the Commission requested the fence base and foundation be designed to avoid unnecessary impacts to the root zone of any significant or

specimen trees. The applicant provided additional information that indicates the protection and preservation of trees on the White House grounds.

Fence Piers

As noted previously, the existing stone piers would be increased in scale to accommodate the new fence height. Piers are generally located at fence corners, and they are used to frame vehicular entrances to the White House grounds. Along Pennsylvania Avenue, piers also frame the pedestrian entrances at both end of the circular driveway. Given their large size and massing, at preliminary review the Commission requested the applicant consider reducing the size of the piers, where feasible. In response, the width of the piers has been reduced from 4'-0" feet to 3'-9" feet. The pier "cap" which projects above the fence, and pier base have each been reduced 2" in height. In addition, the pier joints have been minimized. In total, staff believes these adjustments have appropriately reduced the scale of the piers while preserving their overall proportions.

At preliminary review, the Commission further requested the applicant consider eliminating piers from the pedestrian gates as a way to reduce the massing of these large-scale features along the fence. In response, the applicant has revised the design to eliminate the piers from the pedestrian gates. Staff supports this change as it opens up views to the White House grounds and allows the vehicular entrances to stand distinct from the pedestrian gates.

Fence Gates

Pedestrian and vehicular access points will be replaced as part of the project. Nine pedestrian and six vehicular gates are proposed to be replaced in their current locations. The vehicular gates will have a standard width of approximately 16'-0", and where existing, the adjacent stone piers will be raised to accommodate the new fence height. The existing light fixtures will also be retained. Crash protection is also required at the vehicular gates. At preliminary review, several options for protection were proposed, including a crash-rated gate; a non-crash rated gate with crash-rated retractable bollards; and a non-crash rated gate with crash-rated wedge barrier. The crash-rated gate design requires substantial structural supports, and therefore results in a solid fence base. The other two options, including the wedge barrier and the retractable bollards, do not require additional structural supports, allowing the gate design to be somewhat more open.

At preliminary review, the Commission indicated its support for a vehicular gate design that minimizes solid elements, reduces visual clutter and maintains open views to the White House grounds. The Commission also did not support the use of crash-rated wedge barriers as they would be highly visible from the surrounding public sidewalks and streets. In response, the applicant has eliminated the wedge barrier from consideration.

The non-crash rated option includes decorative metal scrolling, but bollards are required at the inside of the gate. The crash-rated gate includes a solid base, but no bollards are necessary. As such, the crash-rated vehicular gate with a solid base is the applicant's preferred design as it eliminates the need for bollards and the associated equipment and maintenance. Several designs were also considered for the adjacent pedestrian gates, including a solid base, arched trefoil, and

vertical pickets. Because a solid base is not required for structural purposes, a more transparent design can be utilized. In this case, simple vertical pickets appear preferable to the more ornate trefoil pattern for the pedestrian gates. Staff therefore recommends the **Commission support the NPS and USSS preferred design for the vehicular gates along Pennsylvania Avenue, in conjunction with the vertical picket concept for the adjacent pedestrian gates, as they best balance design with maintenance and operational needs.** Staff notes that the Commission of Fine Arts also approved this recommendation at their January 23, 2017 meeting.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

Staff finds that this proposal is not inconsistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital* (Comprehensive Plan). Specific policies were evaluated from the Parks and Open Space, Visitors, and Preservation and Historic Features Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

White House and President's Park Comprehensive Design Plan

NPS completed the White House and President's Park Comprehensive Design Plan in 2000. The proposal is consistent with the policies and vision of that plan with respect to visitor services and cultural resources. Policies in the plan encourage high quality care and treatment of cultural and natural resources within President's Park as well as the White House.

National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan

In general, the project is consistent with the National Capital Urban Design and Security Plan Objectives and Policies. Adopted by the Commission in May 2005, these objectives and policies address planning and design issues associated with risk management strategies that impact the public realm. The objectives and policies reinforce the importance of design quality in the nation's capital where it is important to respect community identity and a culture of democracy. They are intended to balance the need for security measures with the function and visual quality of public space.

National Historic Preservation Act

Pursuant to the Section 107 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the White House and its grounds are exempt from Section 106 consultation and the requirements of NHPA.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NPS determined on September 28, 2016 that the proposed action would not be expected to individually or cumulatively have significant effects on the human or natural environment, that no environmentally controversial changes to existing environmental conditions would be expected, and that no circumstances would require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement under NEPA, and as such, the proposed action qualifies as a Categorical Exclusion. NPS identified Categorical Exclusion Citation C.17 - "Construction of fencing enclosures or boundary fencing posing no effect on wildlife migrations."

Given its approval authority over the project, NCPC also has an independent responsibility to satisfy the requirements of NEPA in accordance with NCPC's environmental policies and procedures, along with CEQ regulations. Based on a review of the information provided by NPS, staff has determined that the proposed action meets the criteria of NCPC's Categorical Exclusion 8(C)(2), which states "Repair, replacement and routine installation of components such as windows, doors, roofs; and site elements such as site or building identification signs, sidewalks, patios, fences, retaining walls, curbs, or gates." Prior to applying this categorical exclusion, NCPC staff determined that no extraordinary circumstances were present.

Coordinating Committee

On January 11, 2017, the Coordinating Committee forwarded the proposed final site development plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal has been coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were NCPC; the National Park Service; the District of Columbia Office of Planning, The District Department of Transportation, the DC SHPO, the General Services Administration; and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

US Commission of Fine Arts

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) provided comments on the concept proposal at their November 17, 2016 meeting. Subsequently, on January 23, 2017, the CFA approved plans for the fence and delegated final modifications to staff. As noted previously, CFA supported the applicants preferred crash-rated vehicular gate option. In addition, CFA supported the simpler vertical picket design in lieu of the arched-trefoil option for the pedestrian gates on Pennsylvania Avenue.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online:

- Submission Letter
- Submission Package

Prepared by Matthew J. Flis
01/26/2017

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

NCPC File: #7776

New Perimeter Fence and Gates

White House Complex
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC

National Park Service

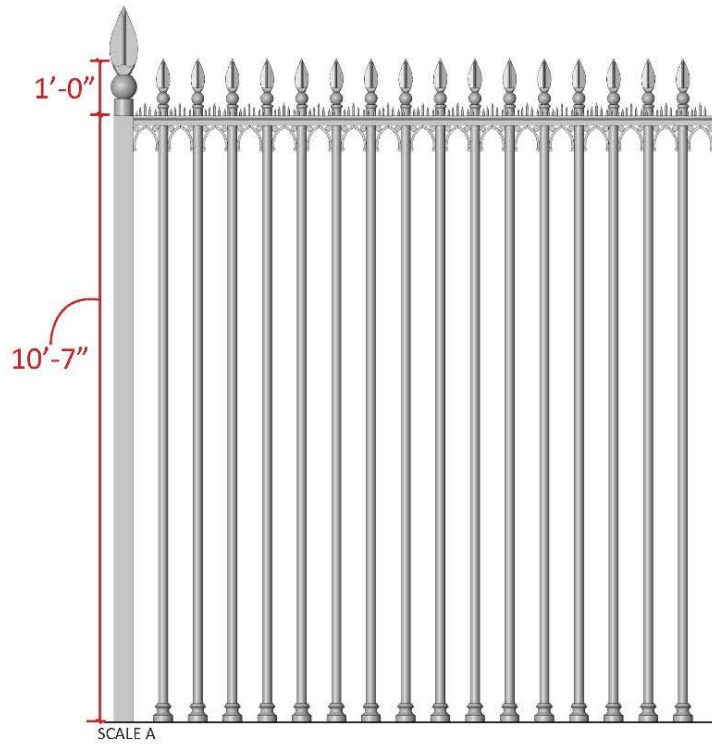
Final Review
Site Development Plans

Pennsylvania Avenue, NW



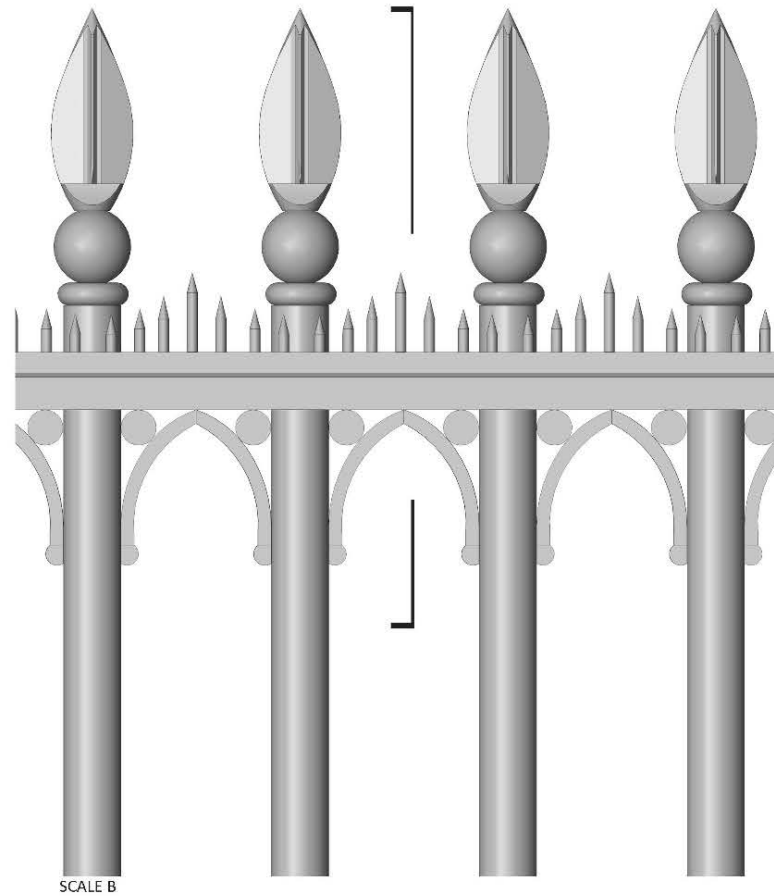
E Street, NW

- Fence Height
- Picket Size & Spacing
- Fence Top & Base Details
- Pedestrian & Vehicular Gates



2" dia. Pickets with 5-1/2" Clear Space

- BEST BALANCE OF PROPORTION AND PERFORMANCE
- WIDEST OPEN SPACE BETWEEN PICKETS
- COMPARABLE METRICS TO OPTION WITH 1 3/4" PICKETS
- LEAST DENSITY OF PICKET FINIALS
- MOST EFFECTIVE PROTECTION

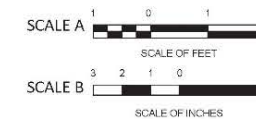


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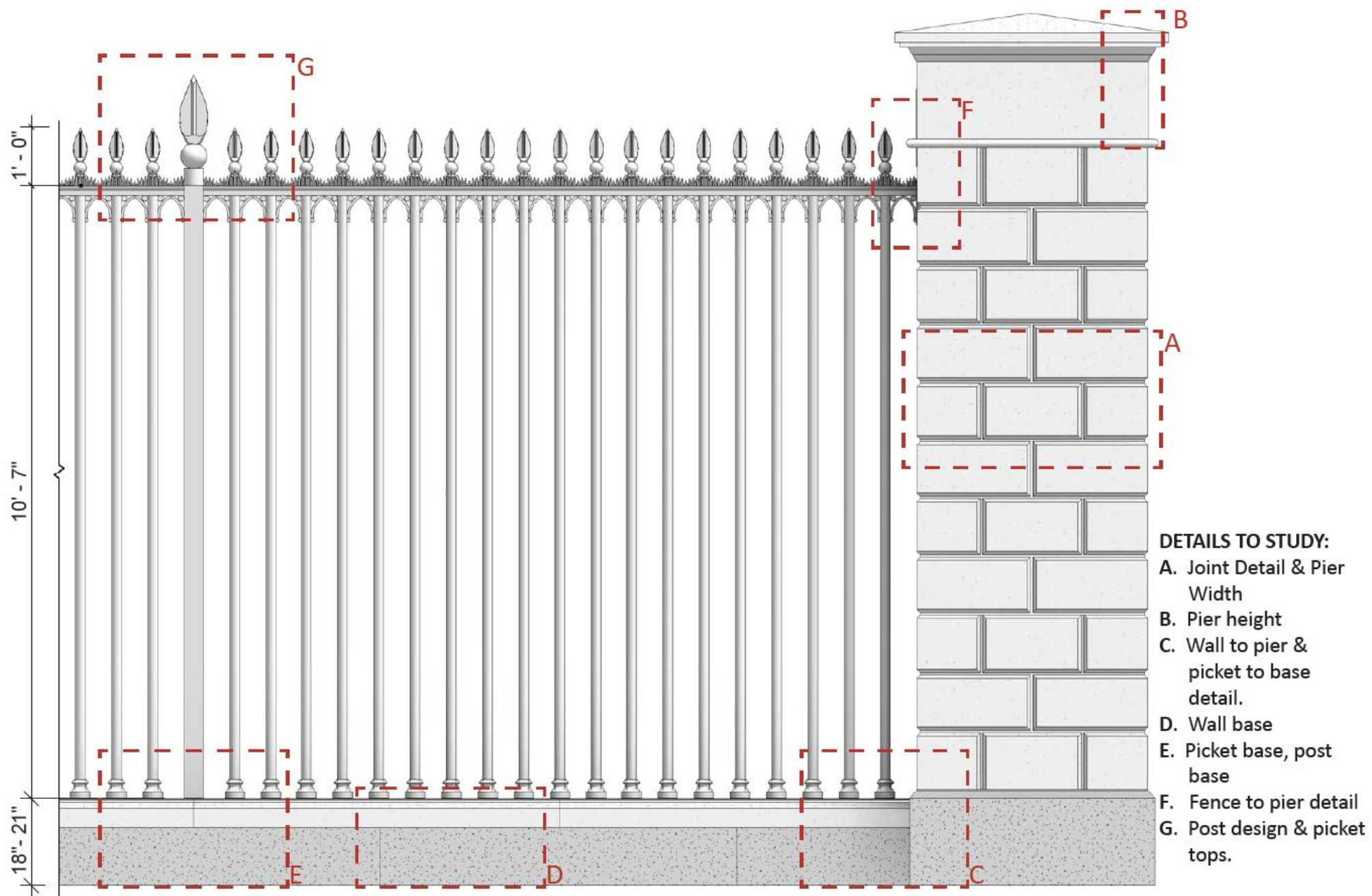
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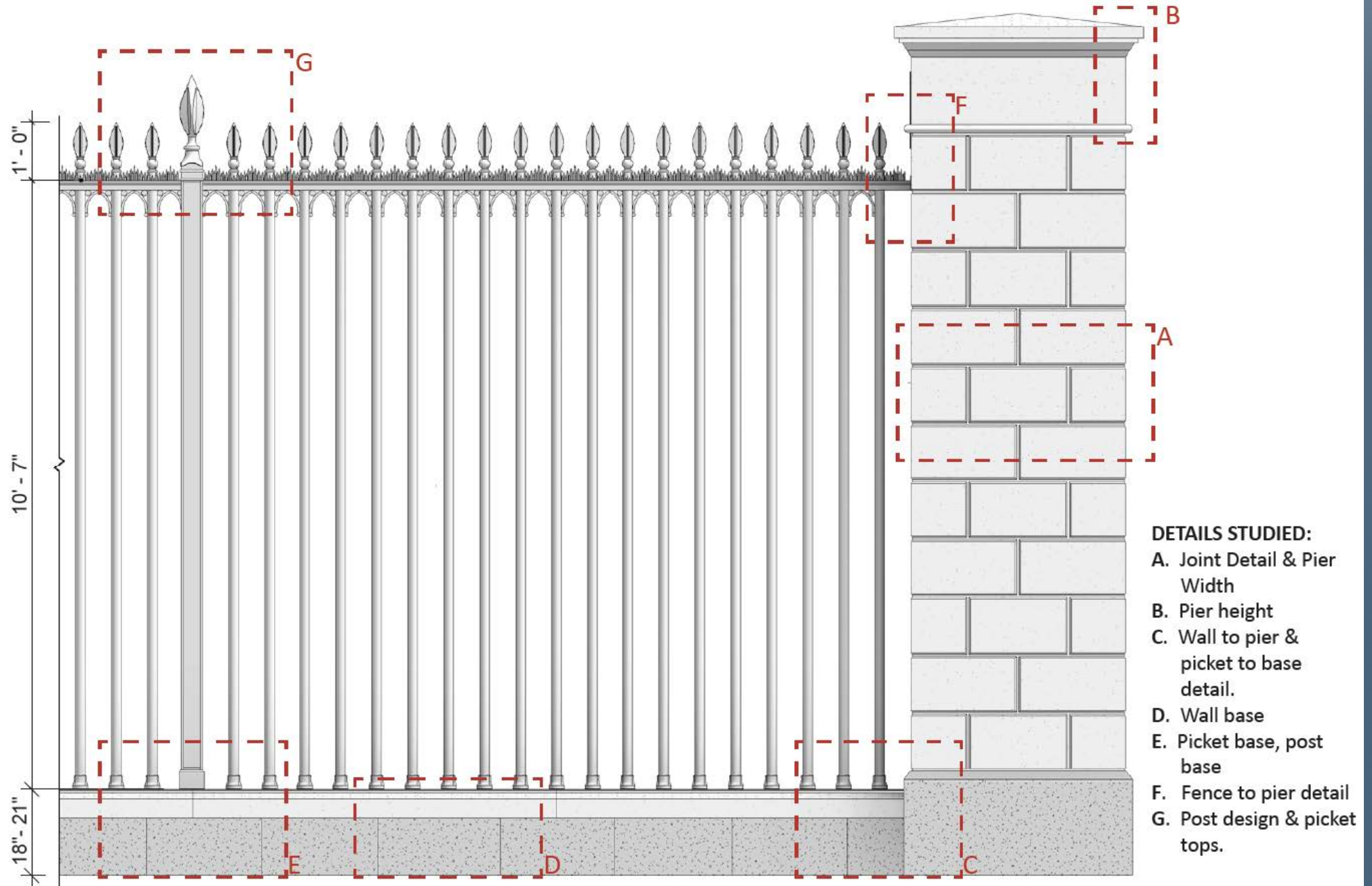


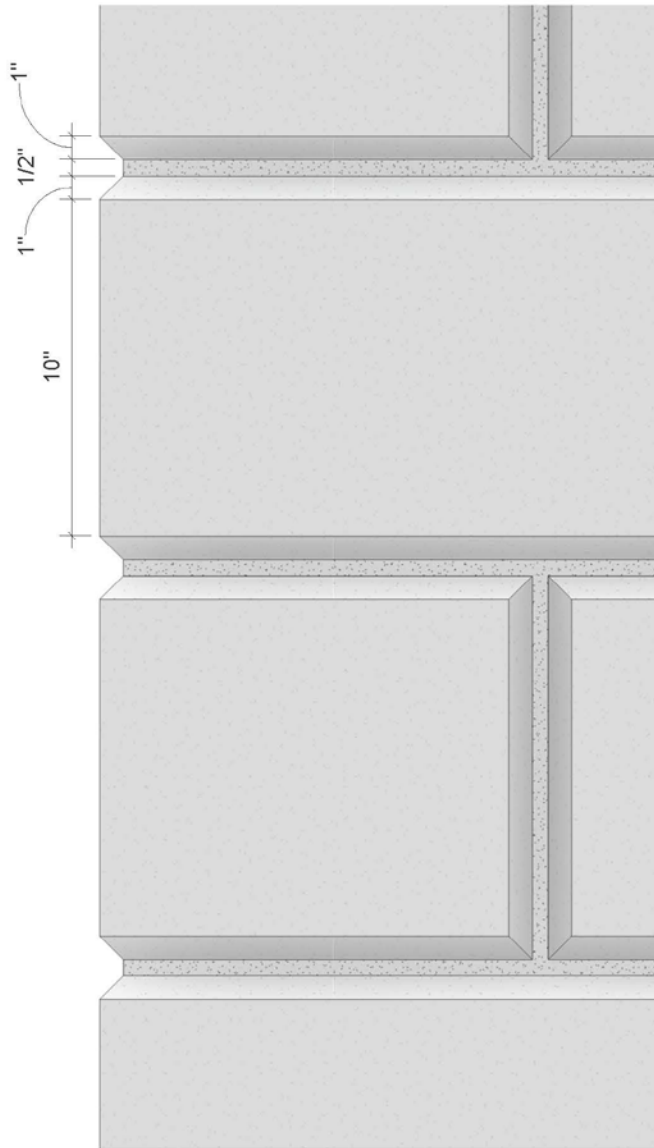
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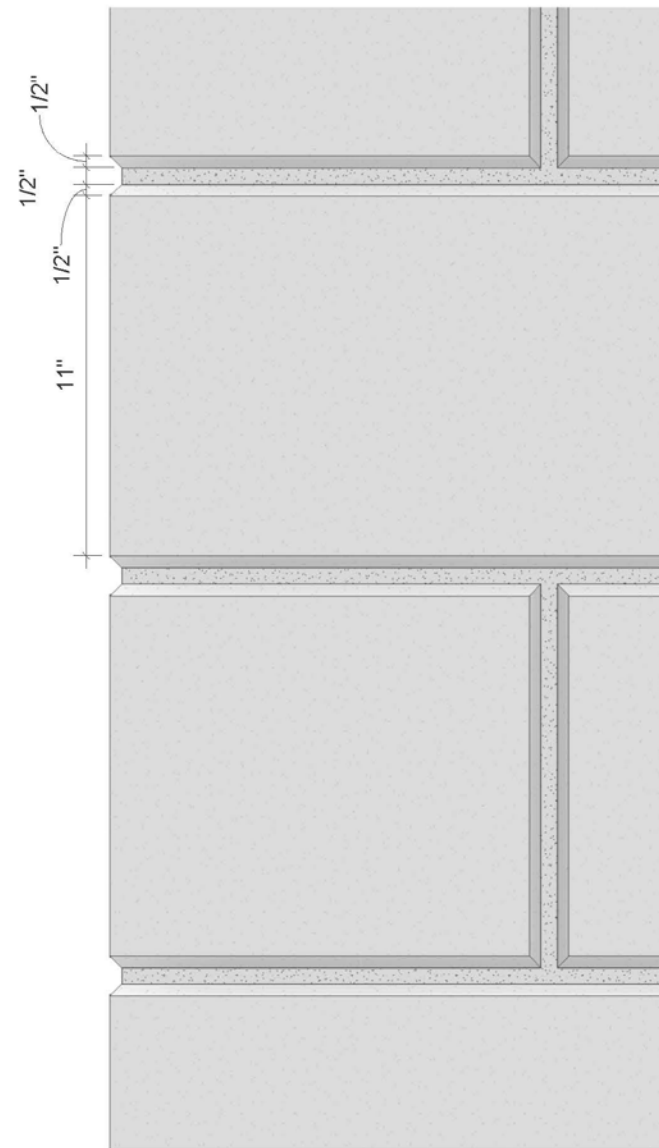
- Post design and picket tops
- Fence-pier connection detail
- Pier height, width and base
- Pier joints
- Picket base
- Base-pier connection detail
- Wall base



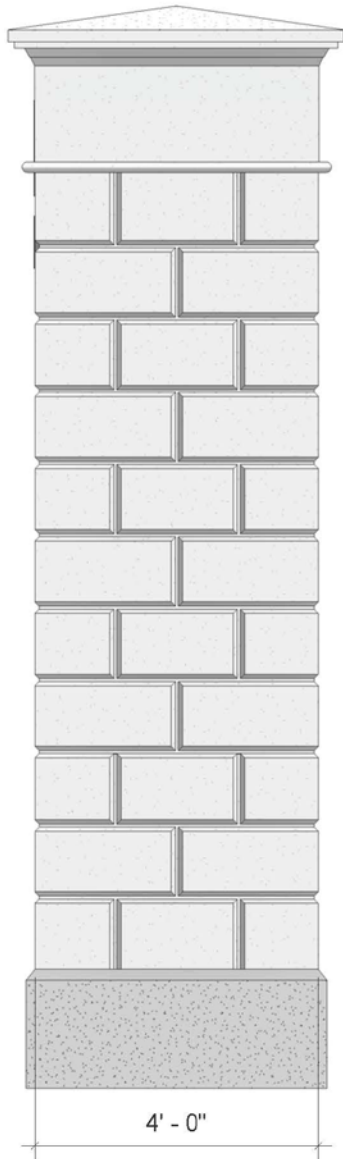




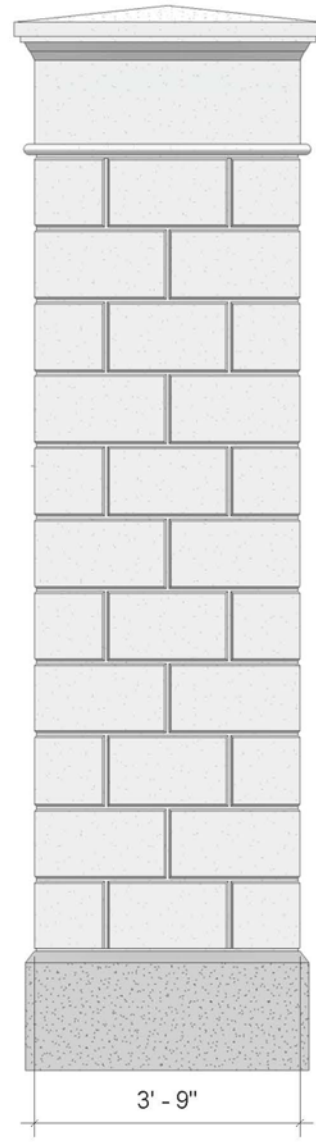
Previously Proposed



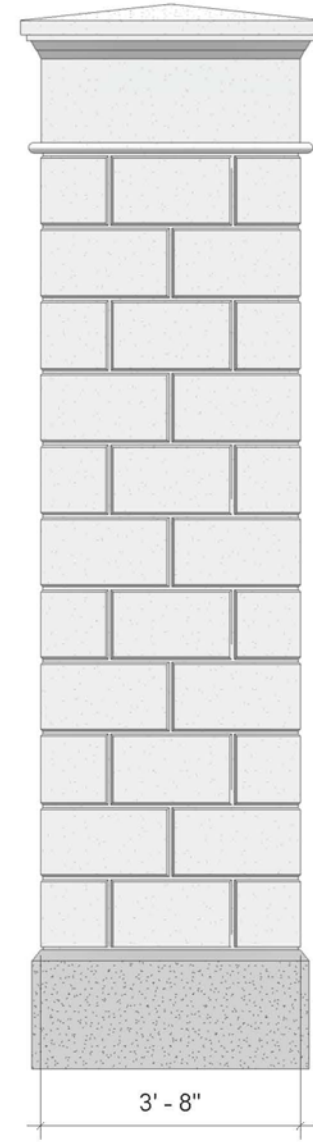
Current Proposal



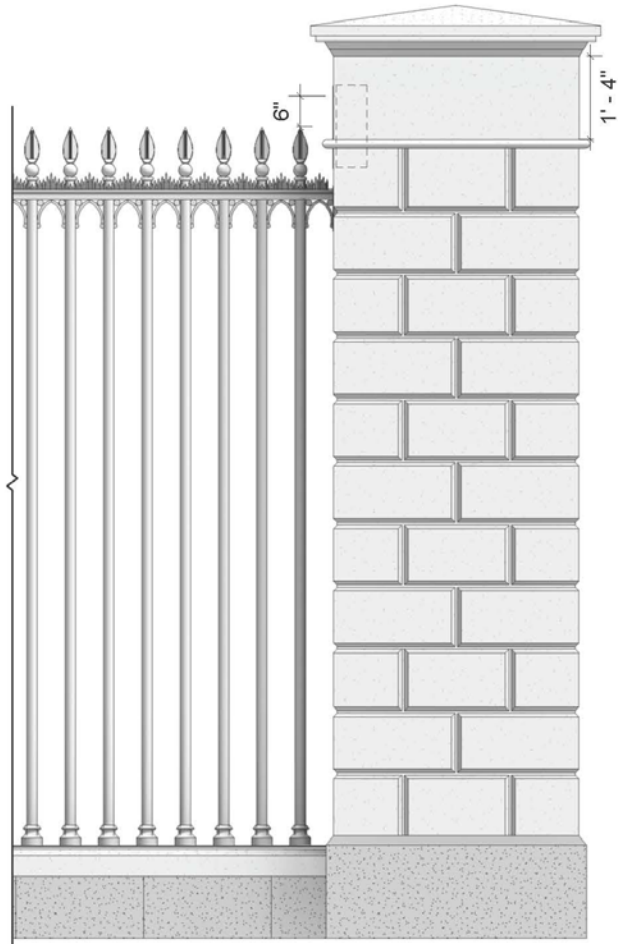
Previously Reviewed



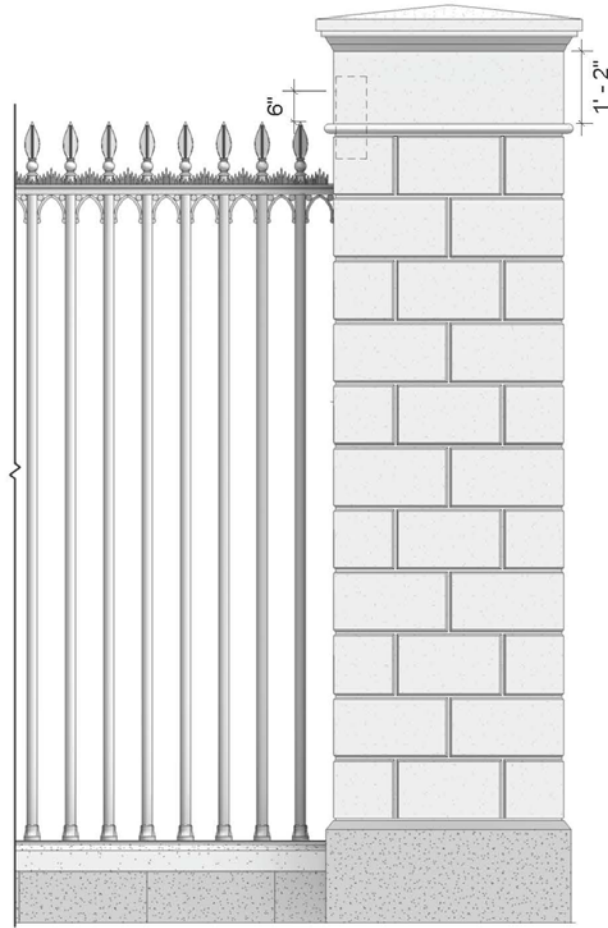
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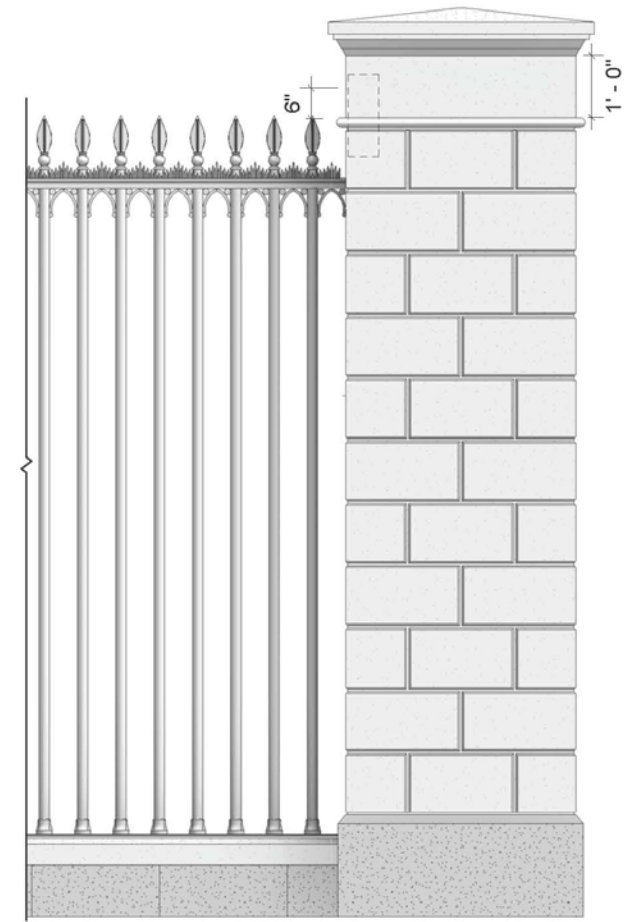
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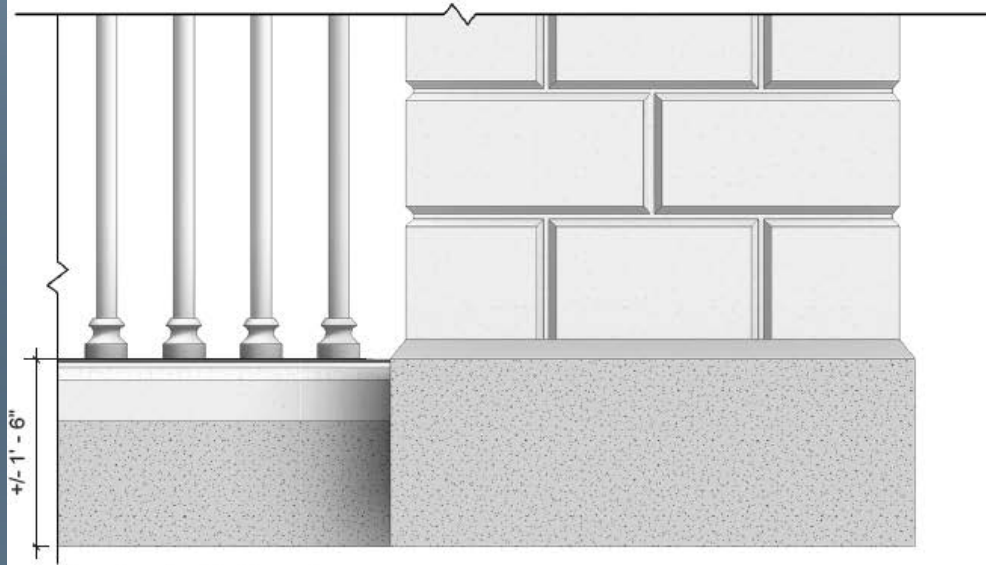
Previously Reviewed



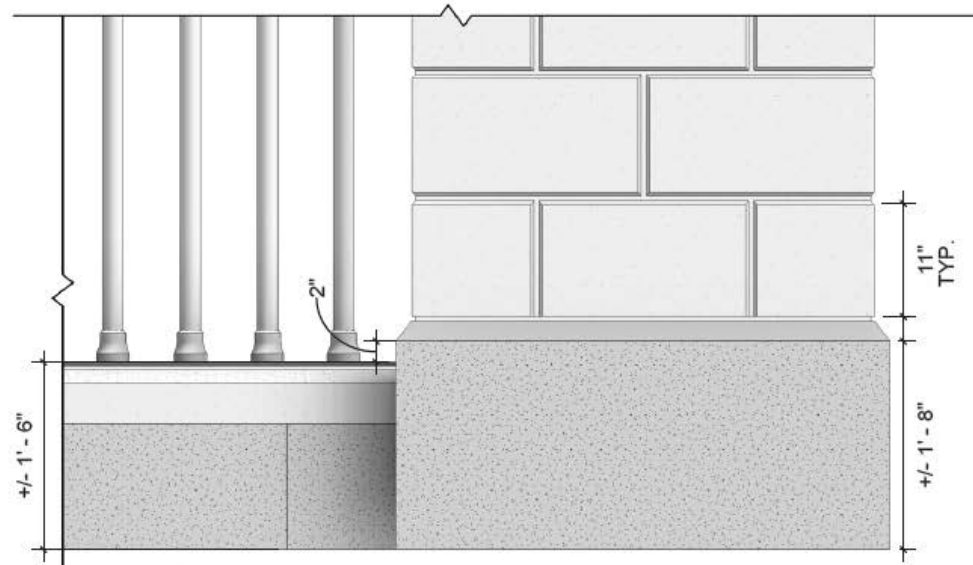
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**Preferred Design*



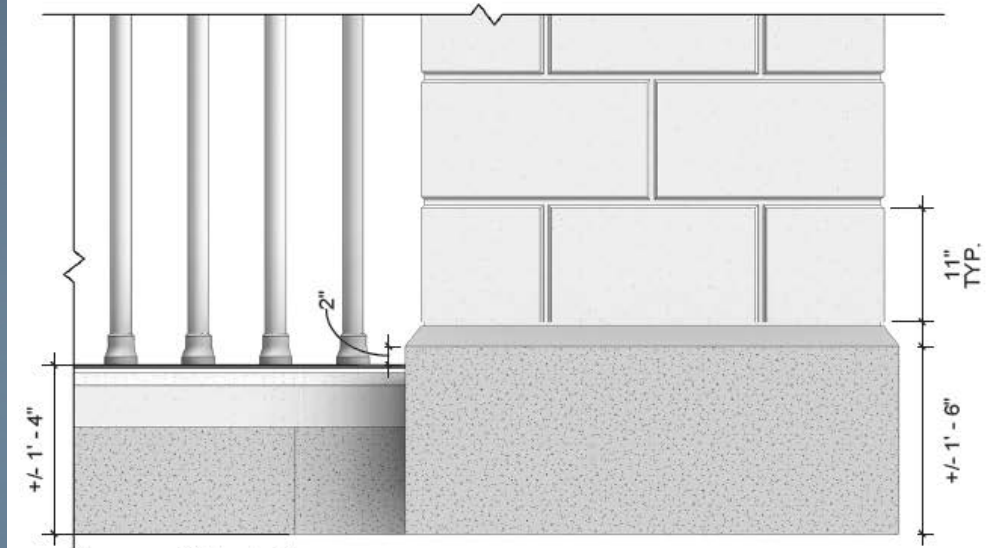
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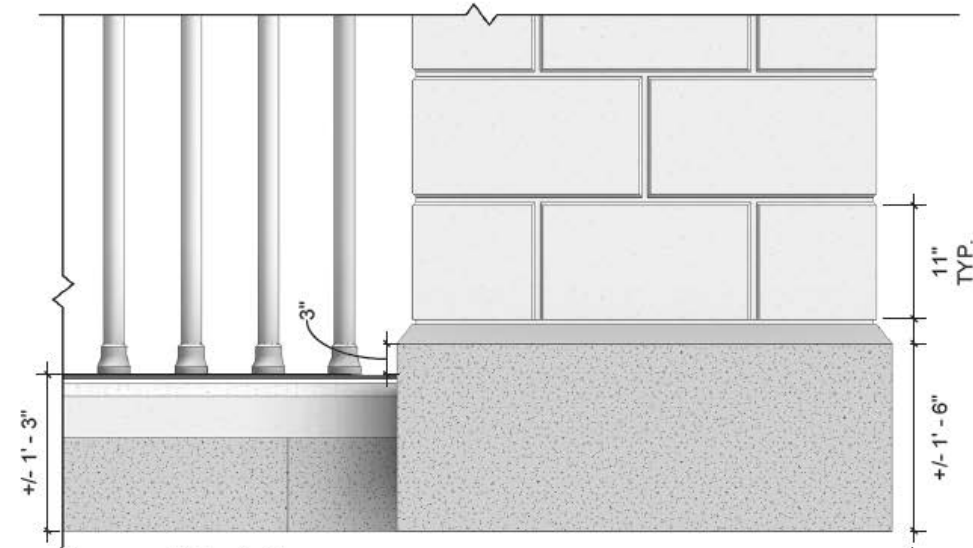
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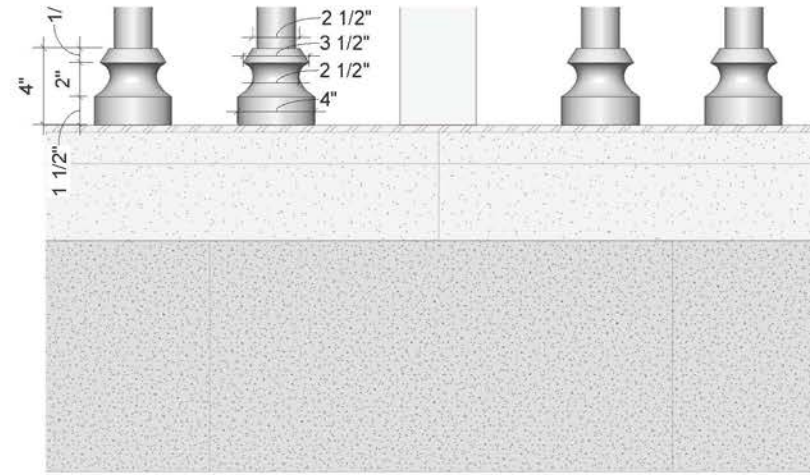
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*Preferred Design



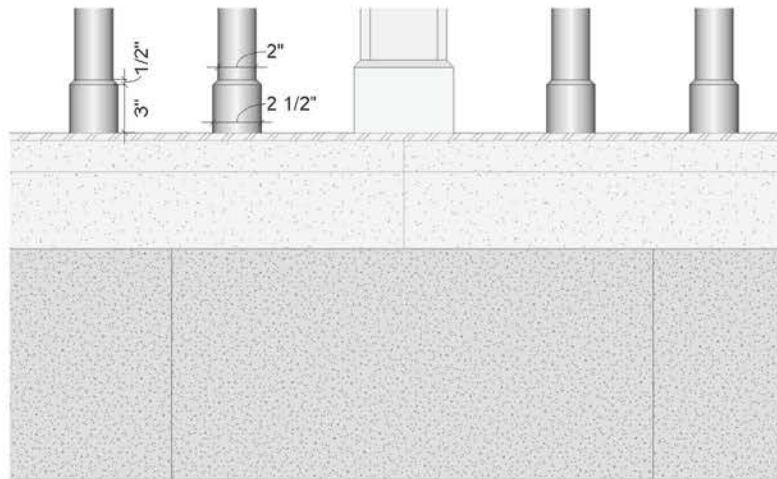
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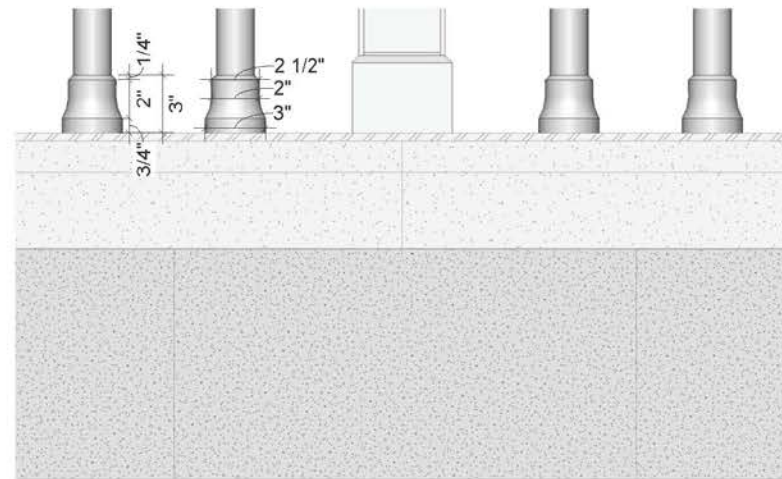
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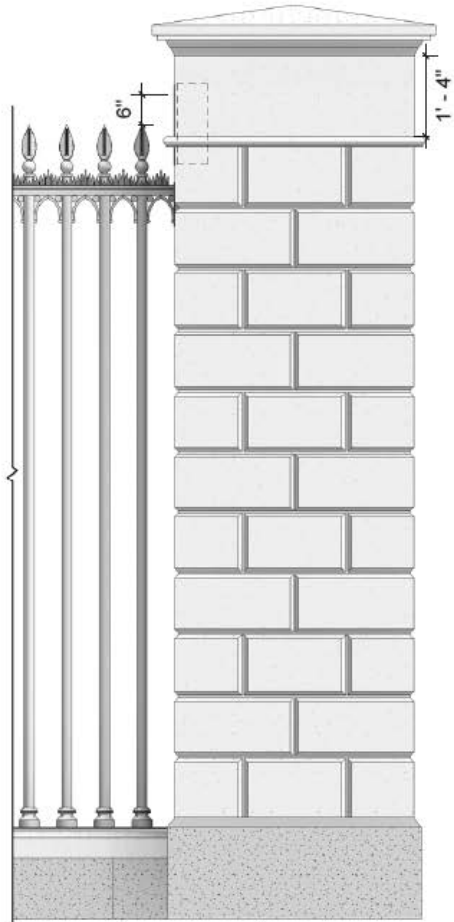
Previously Reviewed



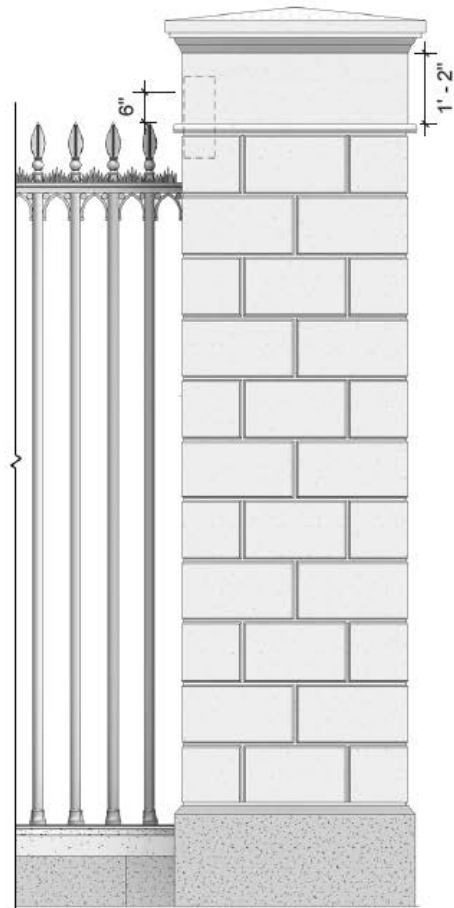
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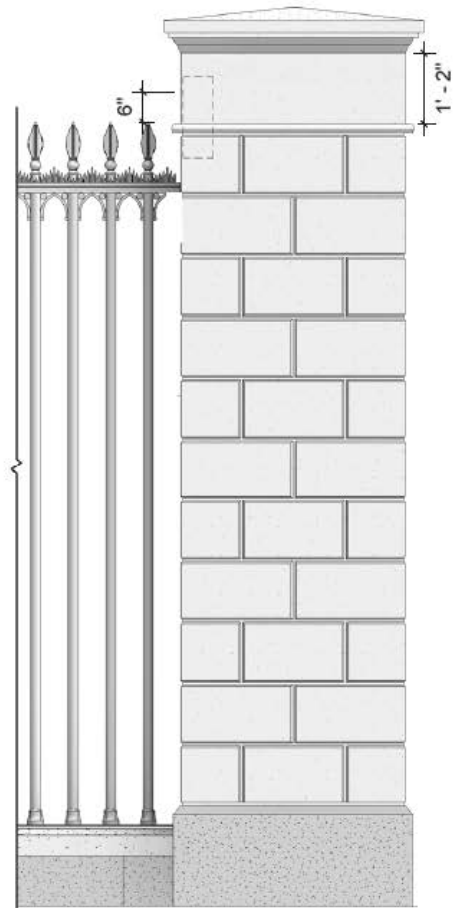
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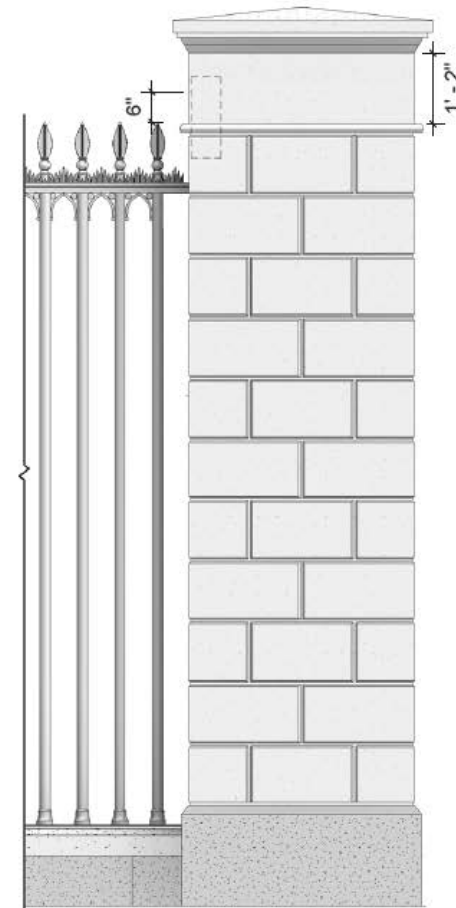
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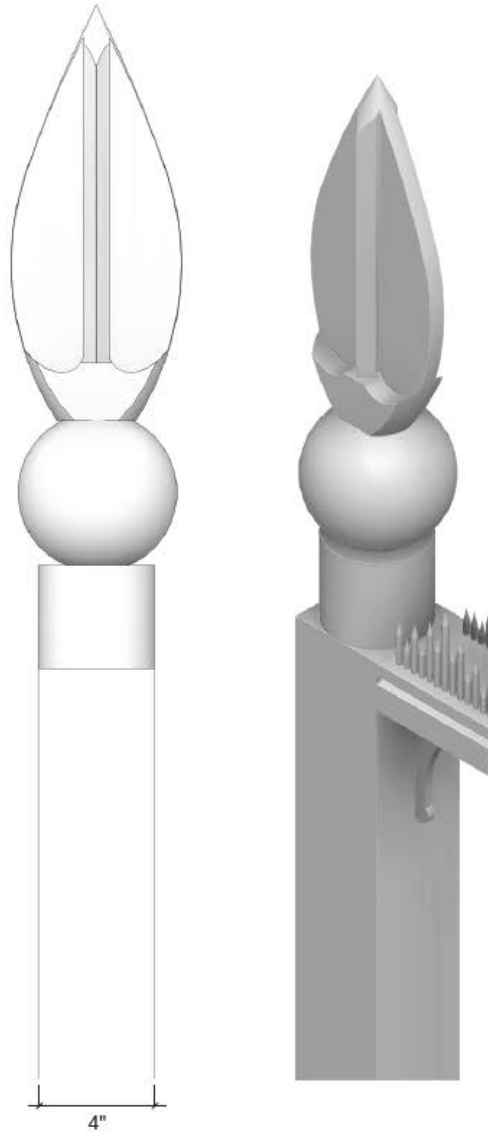
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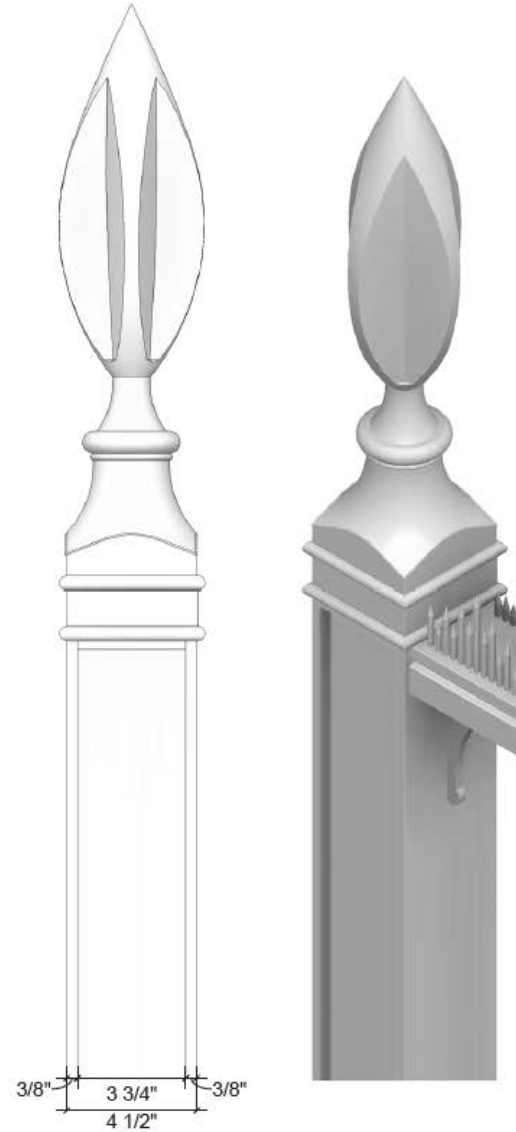
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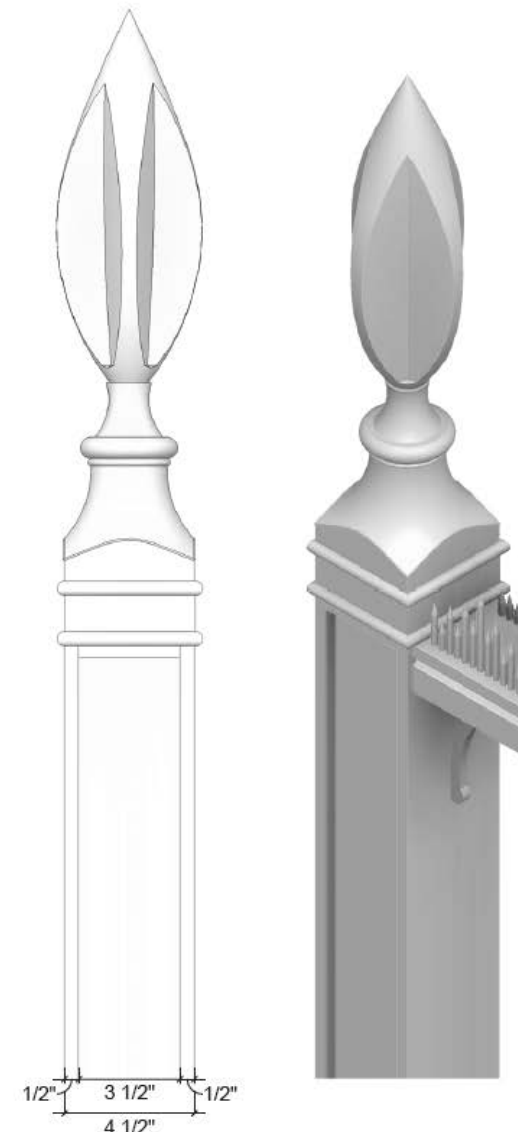
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Preferred Design



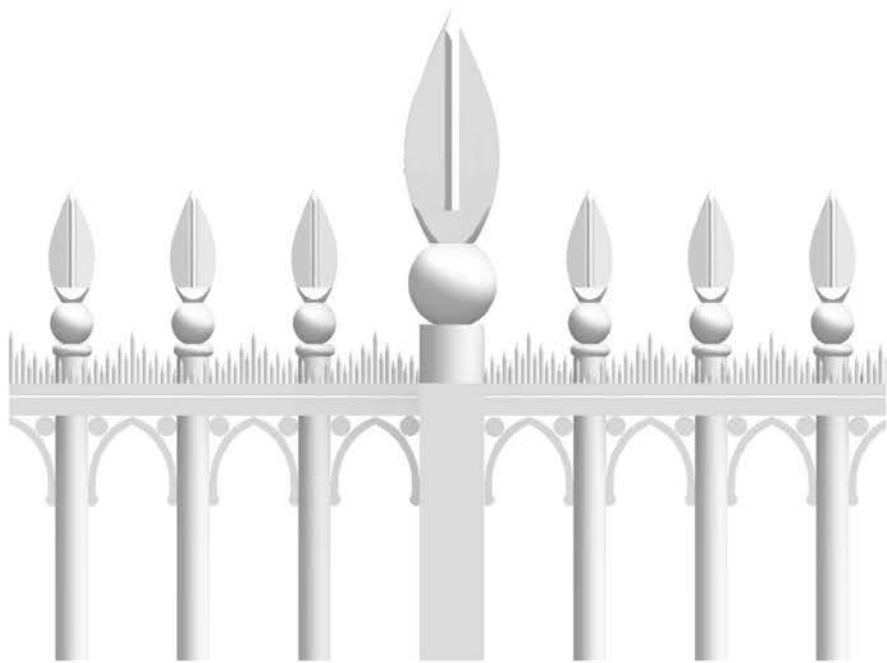
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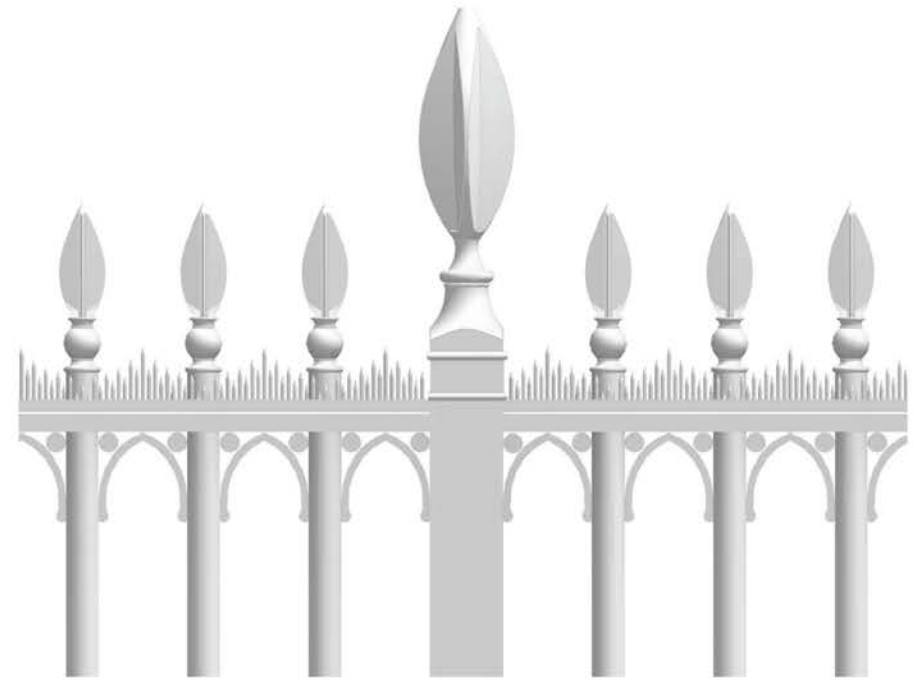
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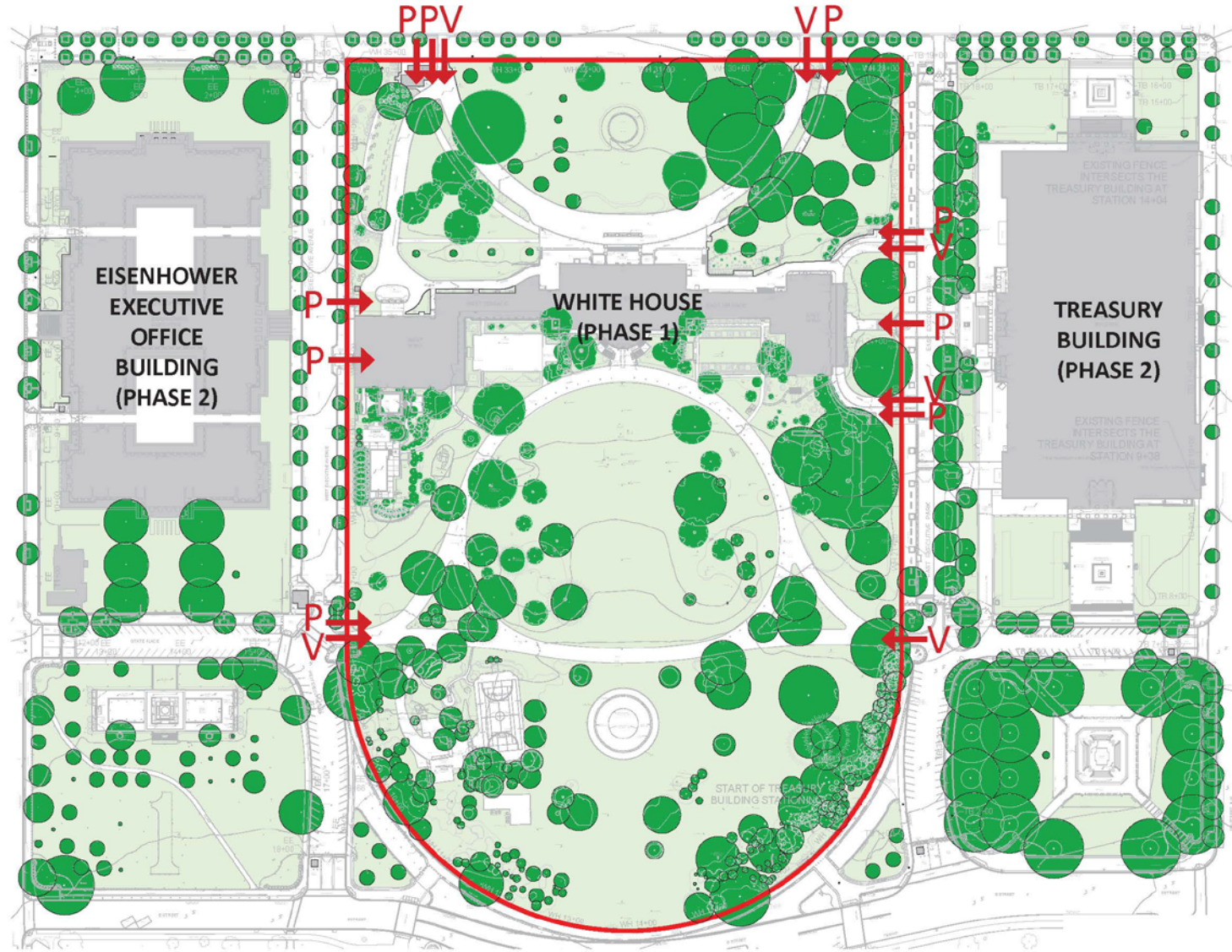
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Preferred Design



Previously Reviewed



Current Preferred Design



P- Pedestrian Gate **V**- Vehicle Gate



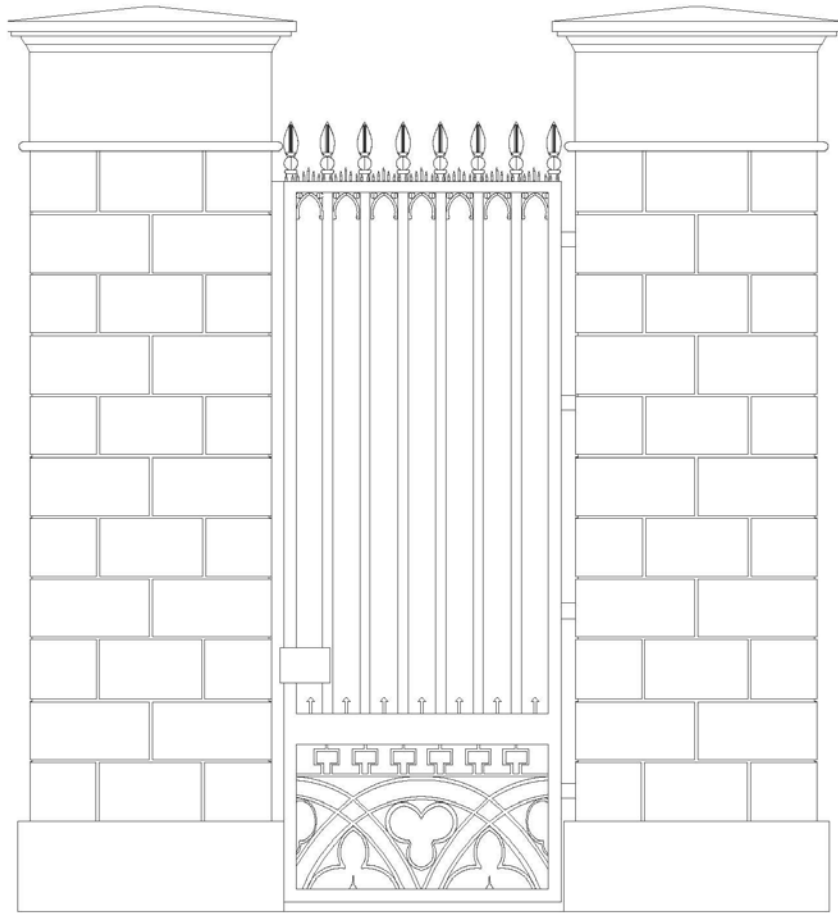
Pedestrian Gate
Pennsylvania Ave



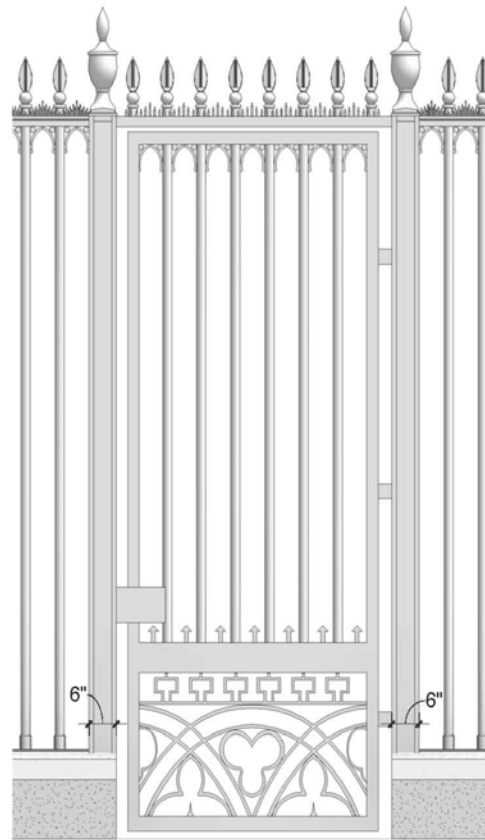
Visitor Entrance Gate
East Executive



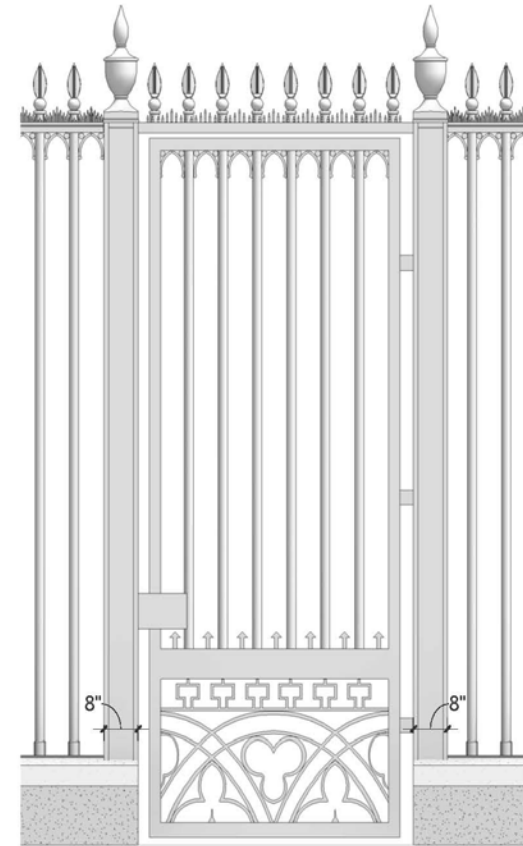
Vehicle Gate
Gate to circular drive from Pennsylvania Ave



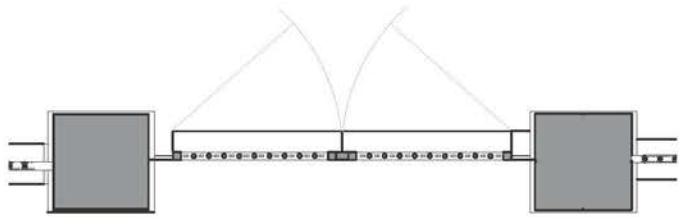
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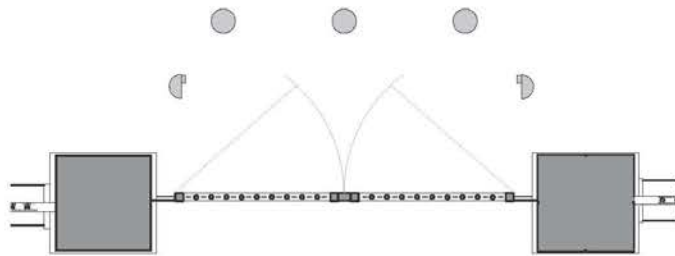
Proposal/Study 1
**Preferred Design*



Proposal/Study 2



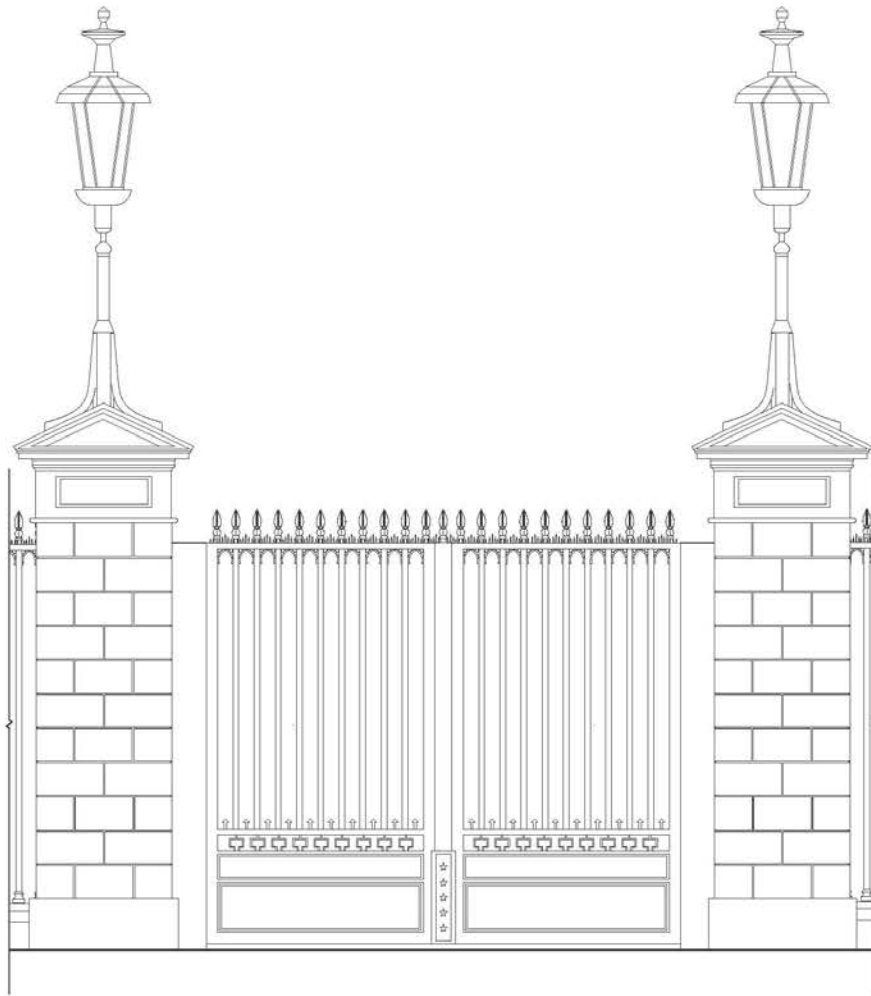
Option 1: Crash Rated Gate



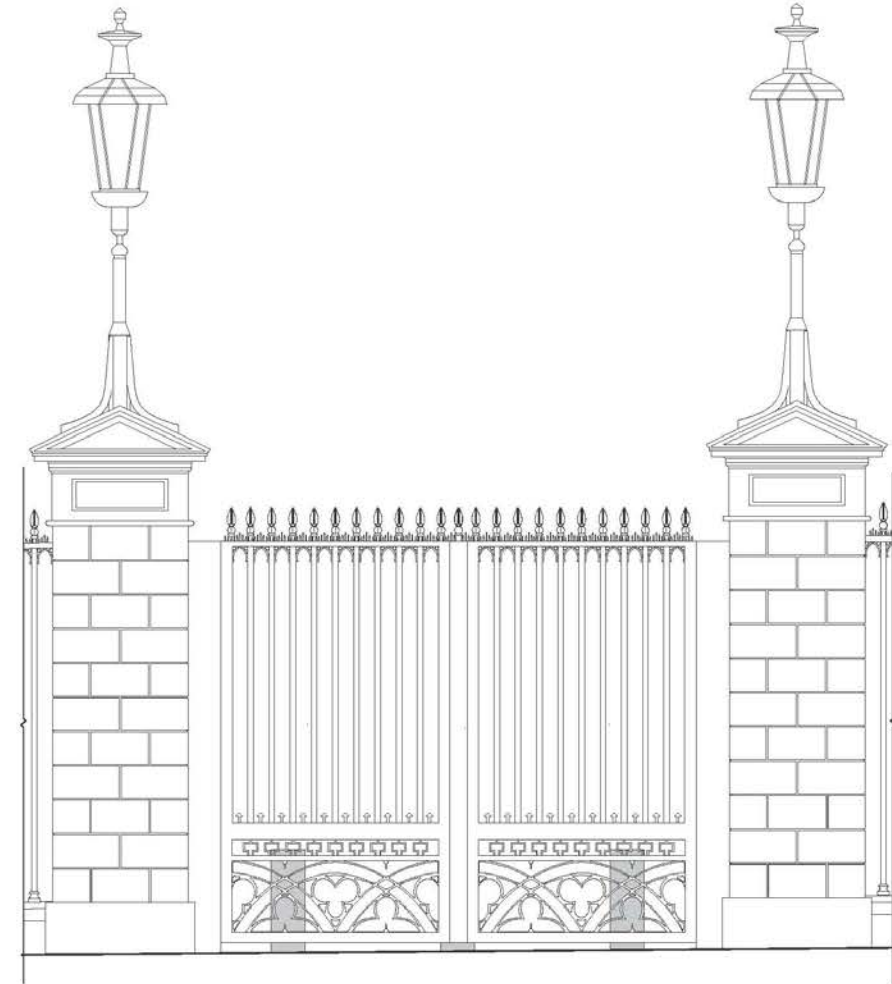
Option 2: Non-Crash
Rated Gate with Crash
Rated Retractable
Bollards



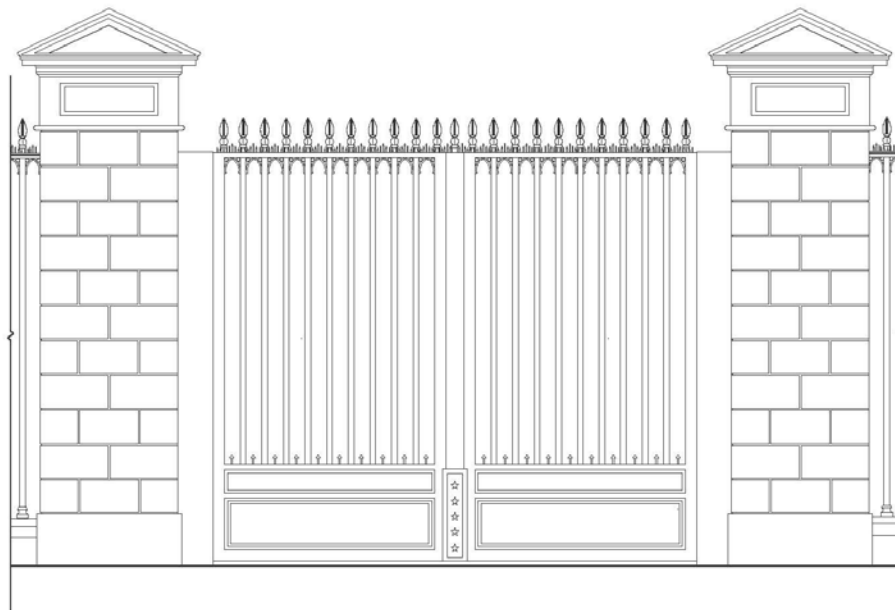
A-Retractable Bollards



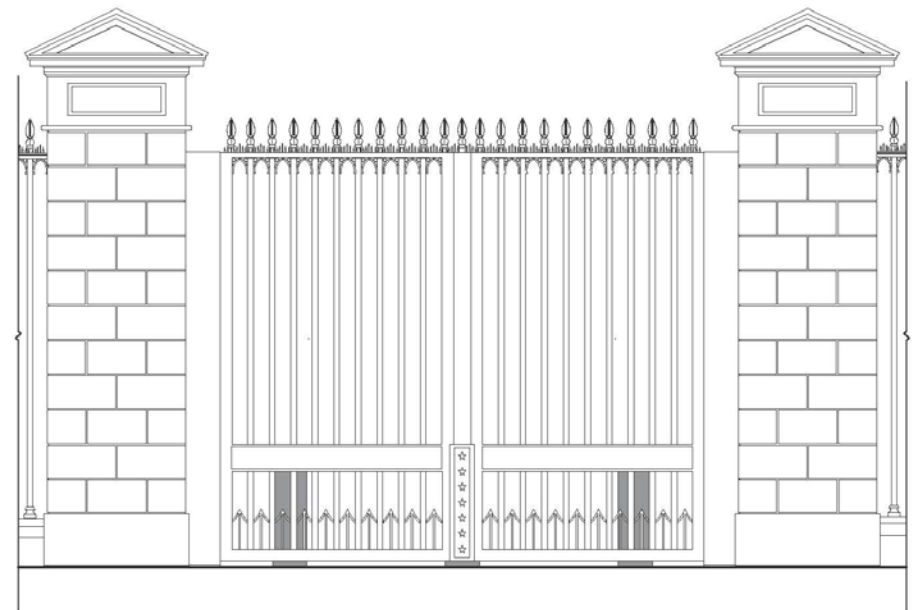
Option 1: Crash Rated Vehicle Gate
Pennsylvania Ave.



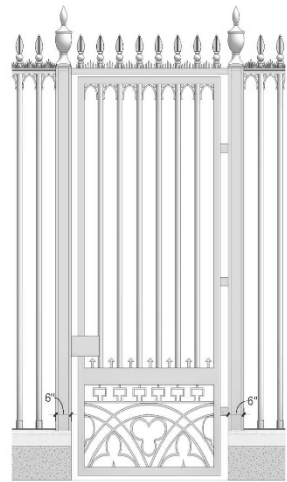
Option 2: Non-Crash Rated Vehicle Gate w/Bollards
Pennsylvania Ave.



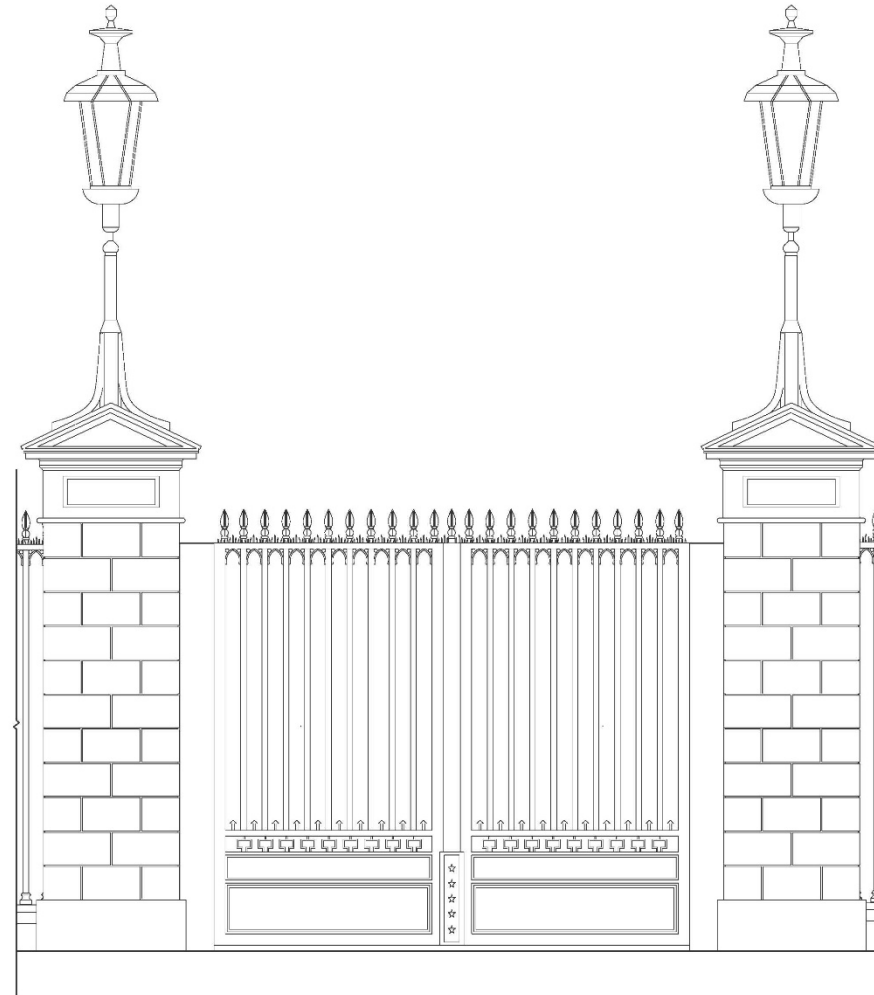
Option 1: Crash Rated Vehicle Gate
East & West Executive



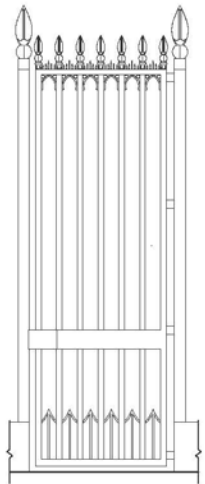
Option 2: Non-Crash Rated Vehicle Gate w/Bollards
East & West Executive



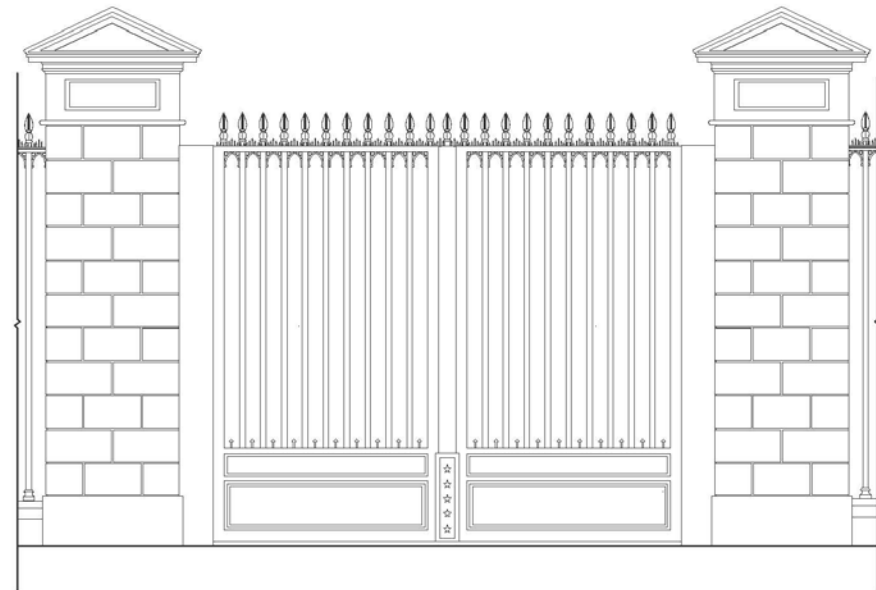
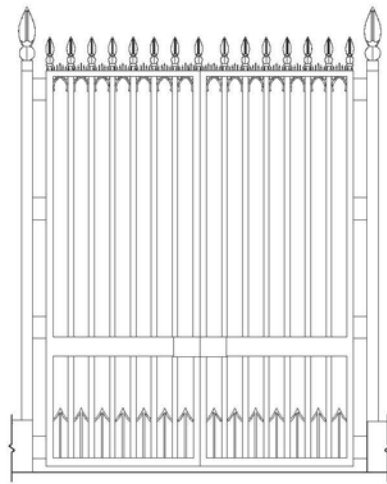
Pedestrian Gate Concept
Pennsylvania Ave.



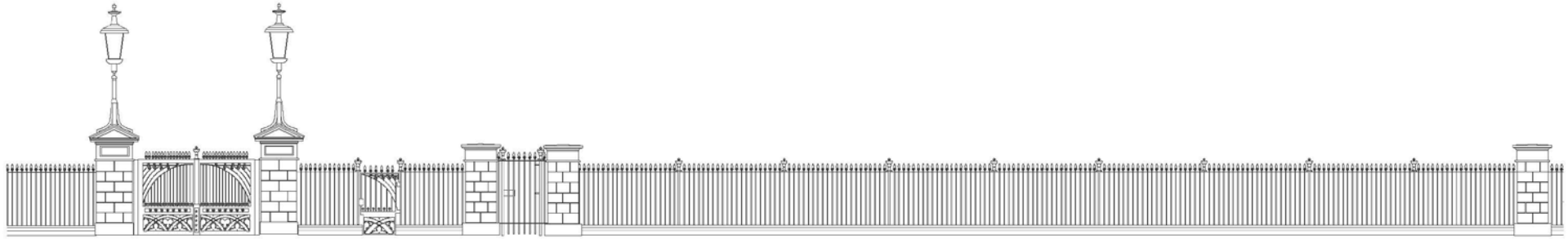
Crash Rated Vehicle Gate Concept
Pennsylvania Ave.



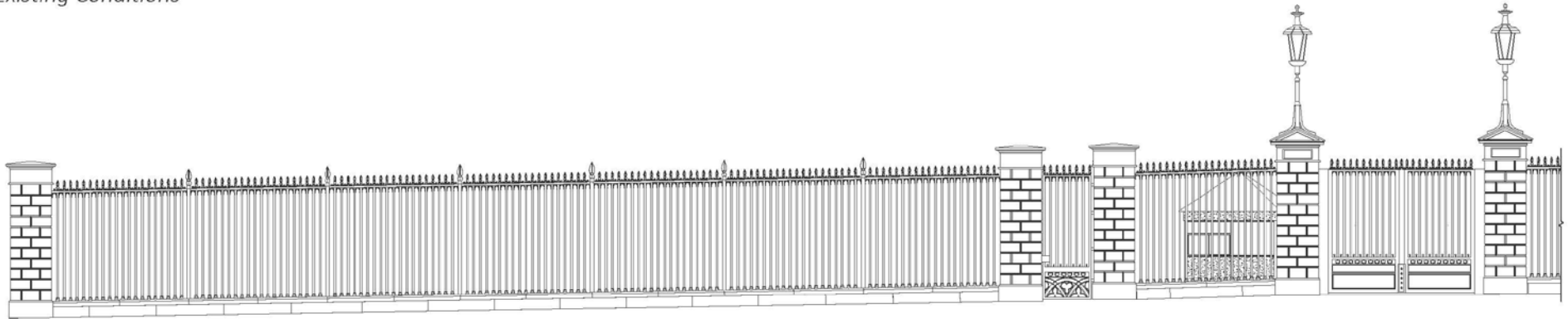
Pedestrian Gates Concept
East & West Executive



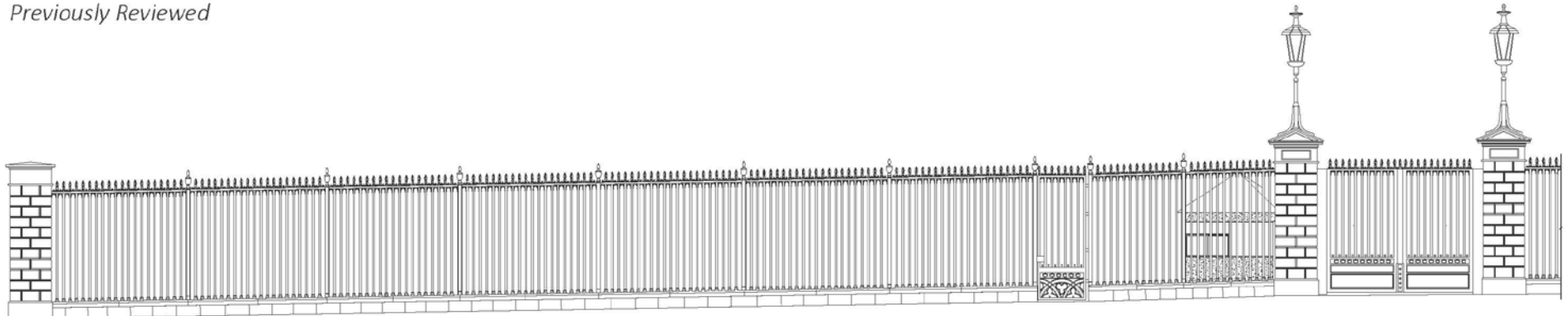
Crash Rated Vehicle Gate Concept
East & West Executive



Existing Conditions



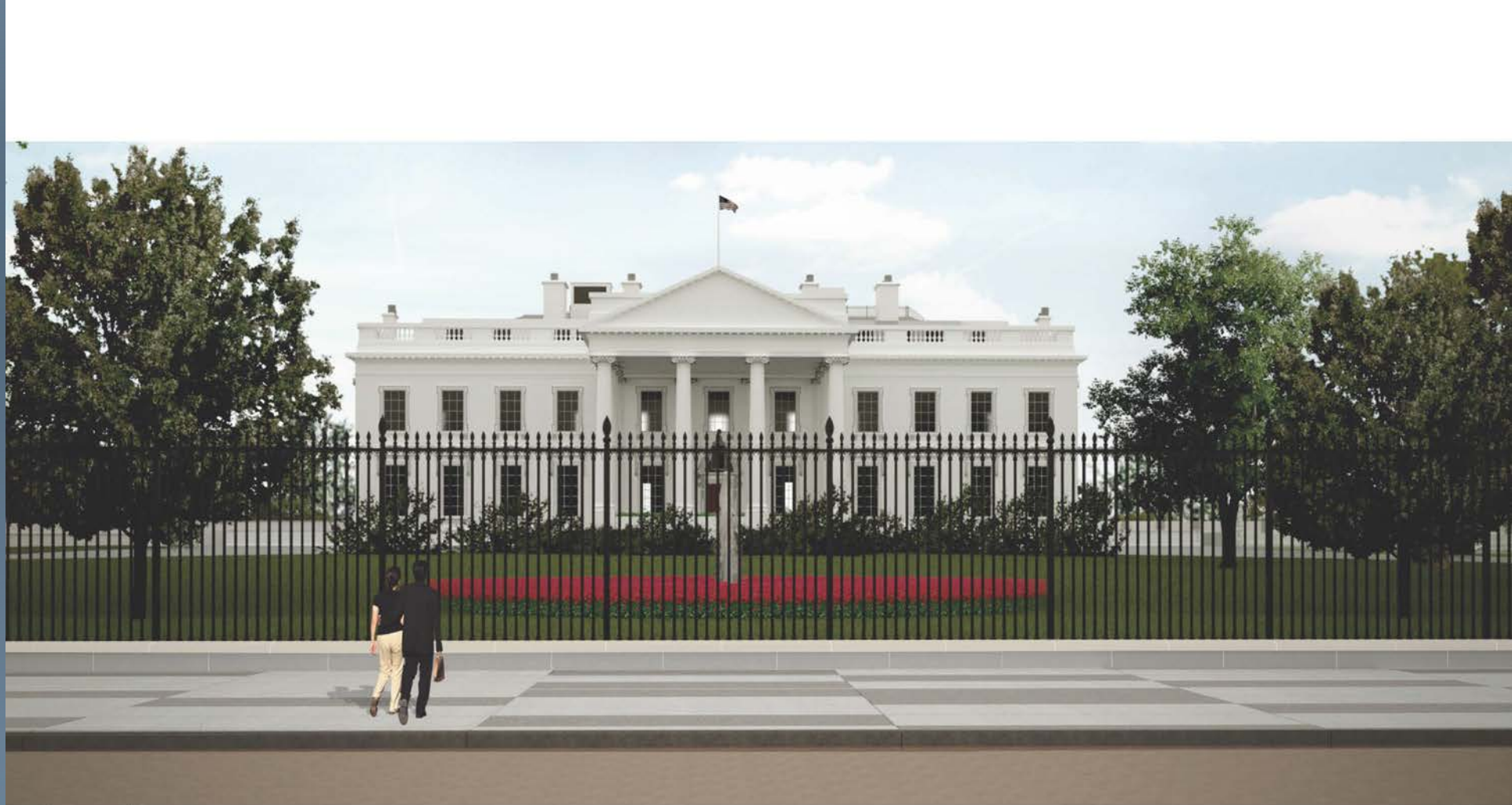
Previously Reviewed



Current Preferred Design



Existing Conditions



Proposed Fence



East Gates



East Gates



East Gates



North side along Pennsylvania Avenue
Existing Conditions



North side along Pennsylvania Avenue
Proposed Fence



Proposed Fence



Proposed Fence



Existing Conditions



Proposed Fence



Proposed Fence