

ADDRESS: 126 DELANCEY ST

Proposal: Legalize replacement of front steps

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Judith & William Breslin

Applicant: Nathan Farris, Ballard Spahr

History: 1810

Individual Designation: 4/30/1957

District Designation: Society Hill Historic District, Significant, 3/10/1999

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:

This application proposes to legalize the new front steps at 126 Delancey Street. The application was prompted by the issuance of a violation in May 2025 by the Department of Licenses and Inspections for the replacement of the steps without the Historical Commission's approval or a building permit. Prior to the replacement, in April 2025, the property owner provided the drawing included in this application to the Historical Commission's staff with a request for a review. The staff deemed the application incomplete and requested additional information from the property owner, but did not issue an approval. The owner was advised that the existing front steps were likely original to the building's 1810 construction and that the staff was authorized to approve an in-kind replacement of the steps but not a new design. The staff explained that, if the design of the proposed steps significantly differed from the original steps, the application would require reviews at public meetings. The staff provided information about the review process to the applicant. Despite the information, the installation of the new steps proceeded without an approval or a permit. A new handrail, which has not yet been installed, is also proposed as part of this submission.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Legalize front step replacement.
- Install a new handrail.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 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.*
 - The new front steps do not match the historic design of the original steps and are not compatible with the building or the Society Hill Historic District. Although the steps are constructed of King of Prussia marble, it does not match the historic materials in color and finish. Therefore, the proposal does not meet Standard 6.
 - The question of the handrail cannot be addressed until the question of the steps is resolved.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standard 6.

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July 8, 2025

By Email

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph. D.
Executive Director
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street
13th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19102

Re: 126 Delancey Street – Stair and Railing Replacement

Dear Dr. Farnham:

We represent Judith and William Breslin (the “Applicant”), owners of the home located at 126 Delancey Street (the “Building”). The Philadelphia Historical Commission (the “Commission”) individually designated the Building on April 30, 1957 and as part of the Society Hill Historic District on March 10, 1999. As described below, the Applicant seeks both to i) retroactively secure approval for the replacement of the Building’s front exterior stairs, and ii) obtain approval for the replacement of an existing, non-historic stair railing with a proposed new railing, as depicted in the attached plans (the “Project”).

The recently completed stair replacement was undertaken to improve the deteriorating condition of the prior front stairs and to create a safer means of ingress and egress to the Building. The Project was made necessary in part by Mr. Breslin’s health; he suffered a stroke recently and was having difficulty using the uneven and failing old stairs. While a misunderstanding surrounding what approvals would be needed for the Project led the Applicant to undertake the work prior to obtaining Historical Commission approval, the Applicant seeks to remedy this mistake and complete the required review process for both the replacement stairs and the proposed railing before the Commission.

In accordance with Section 14-1005(6) of the Philadelphia Code, Chapter 14-1000, and Section 6.7 of the Commission Rules & Regulations, we hereby submit the following, which together with this letter shall constitute the application (the “Application”):

1. A completed application for a Building Permit (RP-2025-005529);
2. Copies of historic photographs of the Property;

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3. Photographs of the previous exterior front stairs and railing;
4. Dimensioned drawings of improved exterior front stairs;
5. Photographs of exterior stairs, as completed;
6. Dimensioned drawings of proposed railing;
7. Photos of nearby properties incorporating similar stair and railing designs.

Background

The Applicant seeks to legalize the replacement of the Building's exterior front stairs located on Delancey Street and also seeks approval for the proposed railing for the exterior stairs. The previous exterior stairs were in a deteriorated condition when the Applicant purchased the Building in 2023 for use as a primary residence. Prior to the replacement of the front stairs, the first step rose more than ten (10") inches above the sidewalk and all of the steps varied in height, making the stairs difficult to traverse. In addition to the concerns voiced to the Applicant by delivery and postal service workers concerning the condition of the stairs, Applicant William Breslin suffered a stroke at the beginning of 2025 and began to experience significant difficulty coming and going from his home due to the condition of the prior stairs.

The Project

The Project, as completed, replaced three (3) marble stone entry steps with four (4) new steps comprised of King of Prussia (Pennsylvania) blue honed marble. The King of Prussia blue honed marble was selected to match the material of the previous stairs. Additionally, renovation includes two-inch thick left and right end walls on either side of the stairs. An existing original landing step providing entry into the Building remains in place.

The Project further involves, and this Application seeks approval for, the proposed replacement of an existing railing, which, based on the historic photos of the Property included in the attached materials, is not historic or original to the Building. The proposed new railing is shown in the attached plans and was designed to mimic a railing design used at another nearby historic property.

We respectfully request that this Application be considered at the July 22, 2025 meeting of the Commission's Architectural Committee, and the August 8, 2025 meeting of the full Commission.

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If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nathanael Farris", with a checkmark at the end.

Nathanael Farris, Esq.
Enclosures

cc: Meredith S. Trego, Esq.



RP-2025-005529: Applicant Revisions (Residential - Addition and/or Alteration)
126 DELANCEY ST, Philadelphia, PA 19106-4303 (MASA Construction)

Issue Date:

Created Date:

Expiration Date:

Completed Date:

[Details](#) [Construction Details](#) [Notifications](#) [Application Documents](#) [Processes](#) [Deficiencies](#) [Fees & Payments](#) [Warnings](#) [GIS / Parcel](#) [Reviews](#) [Inspections](#) [Related Jobs](#) [Project Activity](#) [Conditions](#) [Manage Contacts](#) [Manage C](#)

*Applicant

Applicant

MASA Construction

*Applicant Type: ☐ Owner ☐ Tenant
☐ Equitable Owner ☒ Professional / Tradesperson

*Professional / Tradesperson:

Design Professional:

Legal Name:

License Number:

Existing Design Professional Found: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Qless Ticket:

*Type of Permit: ☒ One-Family ☐ Two-Family
☒ Residential ☐ Commercial

Type of Work:

Work Description

Removal of deteriorating old steps and replace of front exterior steps with marble

Pages Scanned:

☒ Standard Review
☐ Comply with EZ Standard

*Location

Location Type: ☒ Addressed ☐ Non-Addressed

[Navigate to Related Address](#)

Address:

126 DELANCEY ST, Philadelphia, PA 19106-4303
Building 1440623

Owner:

Parcel:

126 DELANCEY ST Philadelphia, PA 19106-4303
BRESLIN WILLIAM J III, BRESLIN JUDITH G

Specific Location

Front, Exterior; Left Side of House

Owner Has Changed: ☐ Non-natural Person Ownership: ☐

Property Owner Contacts

Contact 1 Name:





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Plan Legend

 = King of Prussia Blue (Cubic)

Drawing Notes

1.) Drawing is a Design Intent interpretation. M. Addesso MGW will submit a final Record Set drawing after all red lines and field verification have been completed.

2.) Typical Grout joints is 1/2"

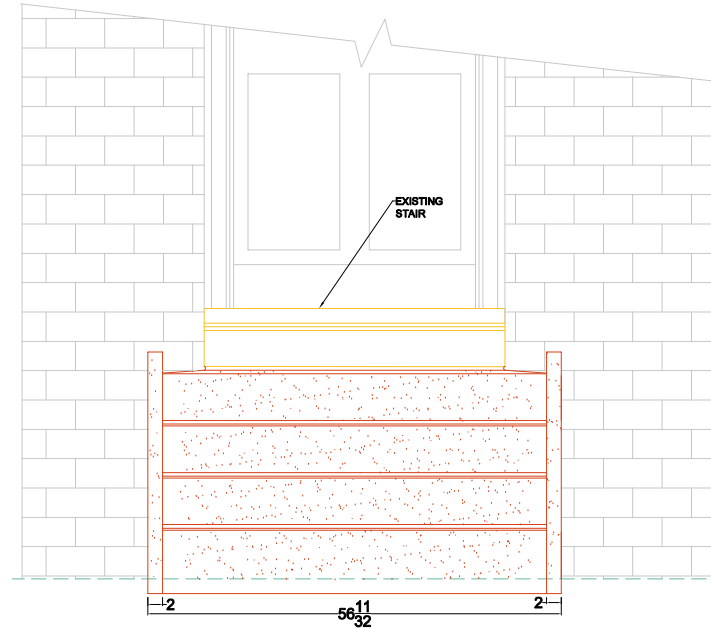
3.) Dimensions were verified in the field.

Finish Notes

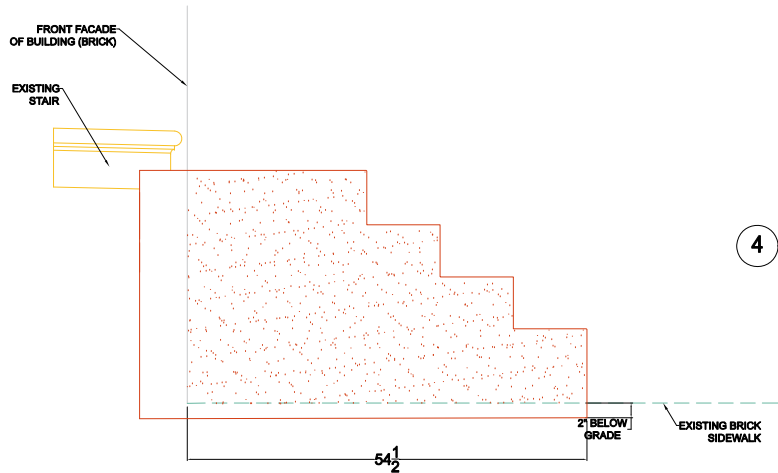
LANDING: King of Prussia Blue (Cubic) Honed w/ Eased Edge on Three Finished Sides and Honed on Bottom

STEPS: King of Prussia Blue (Cubic) Honed w/ Eased Edge on Three Finished Sides

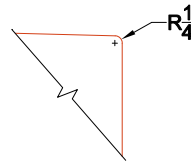
Left and Right End Walls: 2" King of Prussia Blue (Cubic) Honed on Both Exposed Sides



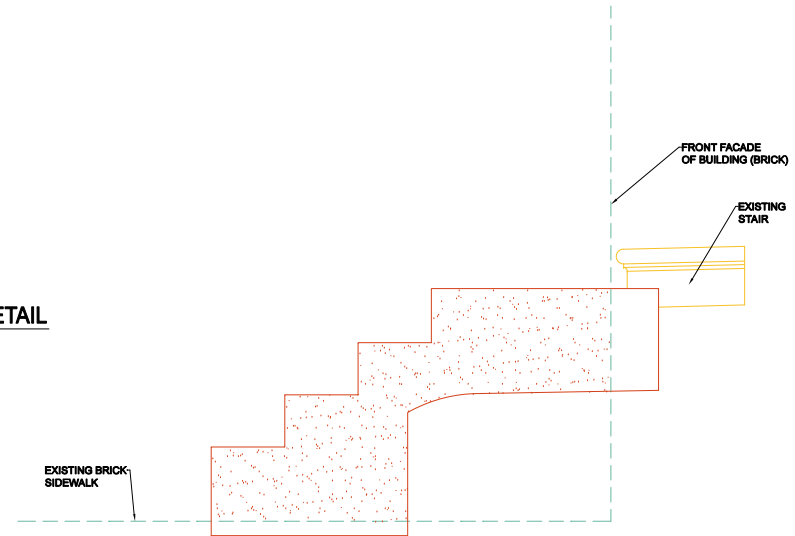
1 FRONT STEPS- ELEVATION FRONT
1-1/2"- 1'-0"



2 FRONT STEPS- ELEVATION LEFT
1-1/2"- 1'-0"



4 FRONT STEPS NOSING- DETAIL
6"- 1'-0"



3 FRONT STEPS- ELEVATION RIGHT
1-1/2"- 1'-0"

MICHAEL ADDESSO
MARBLE & GRANITE
WORLD INC.
282 E. MAIN STREET
NORRISTOWN, PA 19340-1

Project: Aslansan/ Breslin Residence
Location: 126 Delancy St.
Phila. Pa. 19106

Architect - Designer:

General Contractor:

Drawing Date:

- 11-10-24

Revisions:

12-13-24 CHANGE STEP HEIGHT
3-13-25 CHANGE NOSING
5-13-25 CHANGE DESIGN

Drawing:

- Front Exterior Steps

100.1



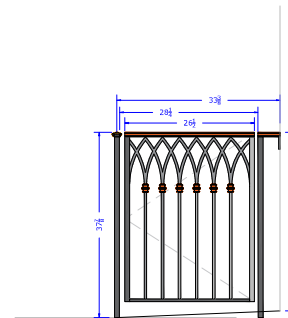
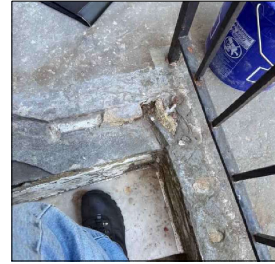




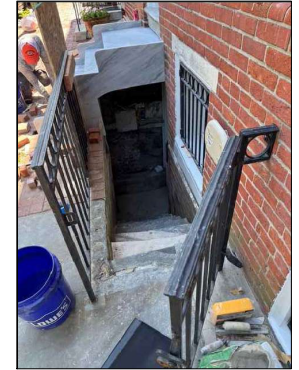




Detail 04: Front Elevation
Scale: 1" = 1'-0"

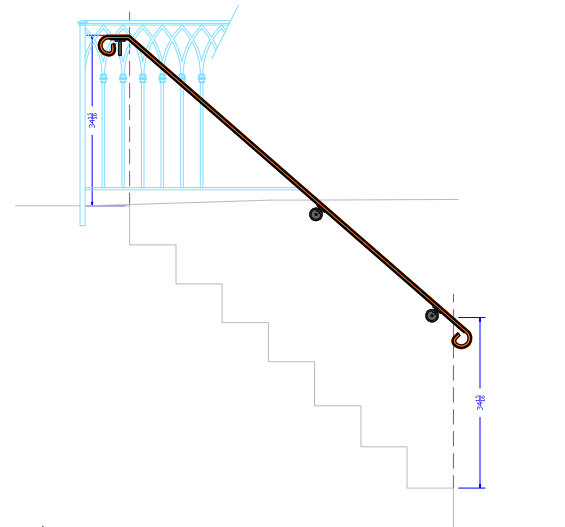


Detail 05: Basement Gate Elevation
Scale: 1" = 1'-0"

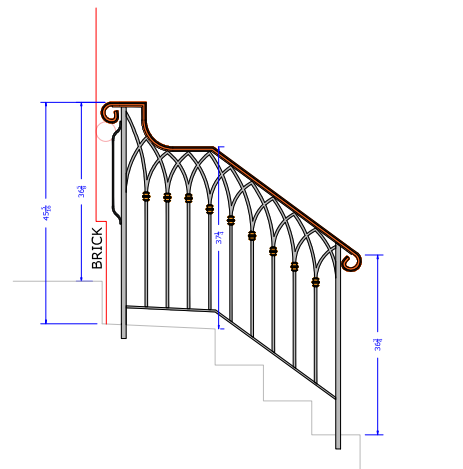


Project Notes:

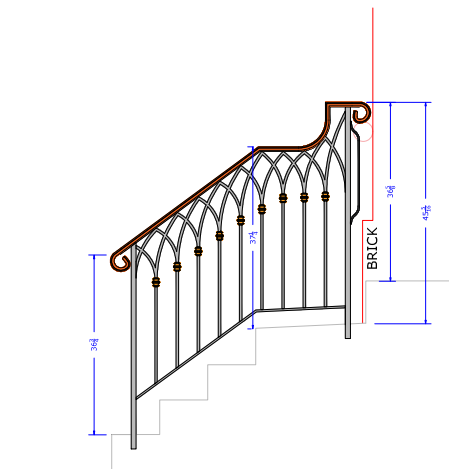
- Railing Frames & Infill are HOI's standard steel materials
 - HOI standard Posts 1" square
 - HOI standard Balusters $\frac{1}{2}$ " square
 - HOI standard Cap Under Bar $1\frac{1}{4}$ " x $\frac{3}{8}$ " flat bar
- Top Molding & Collars are HOI's standard bronze materials
 - HOI #4534 standard bronze profile
 - HOI #EPV-4534 Vertical Volute
 - HOI #184 standard bronze collar
- Gate to be fabricated from the same materials as the railings
- Railings & Gate to be painted HOI's Standard Black
- Bronze to be polished HOI's standard Satin Finish
- Railing Posts to be core drilled and grouted in place



Detail 01: Basement Stair Flight Handrail
Scale: 1" = 1'-0"



Detail 02: Main Stair Railing - Outside View LSA
Scale: 1" = 1'-0" (Left Side Railing)



Detail 03: Main Stair Railing - Outside View RSA
Scale: 1" = 1'-0" (Right Side Railing)



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