

**Describe the scope of the proposed work below or on a separate sheet of paper. Include details of the project such as materials, grading changes, etc. that are not clearly noted on the plans submitted. We MUST have a written description to consider the application complete.**

- Raise retaining wall to be level, which creates a variation in height from 22 inches to 44.75 inches (56.25 inches with added corner column). Material stays the same (stucco) with stone coping added to column that matches the stone at bottom of house.
- Include columns and wingwalls on stairs with stone coping
- Add lights on top of columns; remove existing lamp post by stairs

**Additional information about changes:**

To give some background context, we previously had a staff level approval to redo the stairs from the sidewalk leading up our home. In the process of redoing the stairs, the existing retaining wall was damaged and had to be replaced on the right side of the stairs. It was previously not in good shape and leaning at a significant angle. Below is a "before picture" where you can see the lean. Unfortunately, we don't have one at a better angle.



Here are additional pictures of the old stairs/retaining walls:





The previous wall ranged from 22 inches to 30 inches. Note that our house is located on the peak of a significant hill and is the highest sitting house on the street. Thus, there is a slope in our front yard that has to be taken into account with a retaining wall.

The wall was falling because it is not high enough to keep the grade of the hill. This likely started to fall over time due to the very large pecan and magnolia tree roots growing and pushing toward the wall.



The previous wall was not level and sloped with the slope of the ground to retain a fairly consistent height. When replacing the wall that fell down, our contractor made it level (as it seems most retaining walls are in general and in the neighborhood). They started the retaining wall at the same height on the far right that it was previously (22 inches), but because of the sloped terrain, the height when it hits the stair column is 31.8 inches.

This created a situation where the other existing retaining wall on the left then looked significantly lower and very asymmetrical, as pictured below:



Given that this looks very asymmetrical and unattractive, we felt it necessary to raise the other wall to be level with it.

To keep things in scale, the columns and wingwall were also raised.

Below is the revised wall as it looks currently, with a sketch showing the measurements below. It is stucco (as it was previously) with stone coping:

Center:



Left (east) side:



Right (west) side:



Zoomed out views:





## **MEASUREMENTS**



### Wall:

Far left column: 56.26 inches

Far left end of retaining wall: 44.75 inches

Left side retaining wall height by stair column: 36 inches

Left side stair column height: 46 inches

Right side stair column height: 43 inches

Right side retaining wall height by stair column: 31.86 inches

Far right end of retaining wall: 22.25 inches



Stairs:

- Right (west) side bottom columns: 41 inches plus 2 inch coping
- Right (west) side bottom point of wingwall: 22 inches
- Right (west) side mid point of wingwall: 20.5 inches
- Right (west) side top point of wingwall: 22 inches
- Right (west) side top column: 34 inches plus 2 inch coping



Left (east side) bottom column: 44 in plus 2 in coping

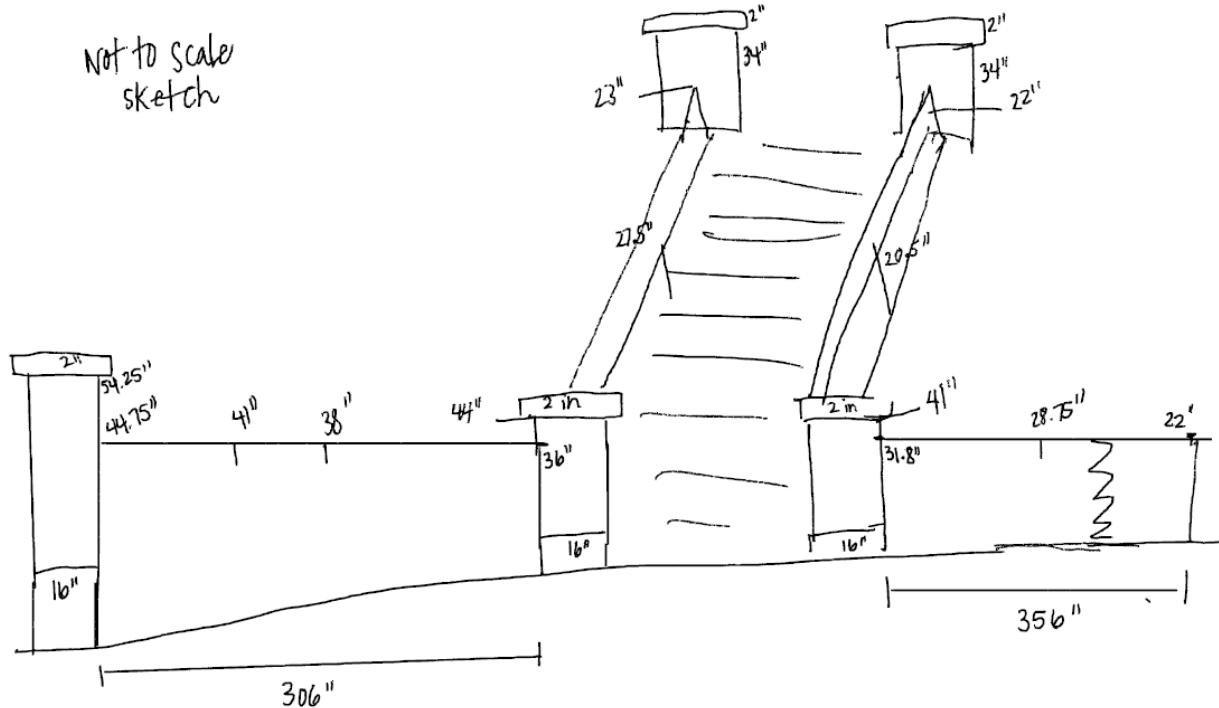
Left (east) side bottom point of wingwall: 23 in

Left (east) side mid point of wingwall: 27.5 in

Left (east) side top point of wingwall 23 inch

Left (east) side top column: 34 inches plus 2 inch coping = 36 inches

Not to scale drawing but provided so you can see everything in one place:



We were given a code violation on 9/24 for the raised height of the wall not being approved, and this approval is in response to that violation.

We also note that there is some confusion in terms of whether columns were approved. Our original COA application included adding columns with stone coping. Our application was approved, but it did not explicitly state an approval of columns with stone coping and Amber Eksew has stated she did not approve this. However, at no point were we told that only part of our application was approved, leading to our confusion and assumption that we were approved for columns (albeit shorter ones). Additionally, although wingwalls were in our plan (albeit it shorter) and are called out in the submitted site plan, our landscape architect who submitted the application failed to explicitly call this out in the summary. Thus, Amber has also stated she did not approve wingwalls. Again, we were under the impression that this was part of the redoing stairs and columns with stone coping approval.

We recognize that the column next to the driveway (far left side of retaining wall) is higher than the 48 inches that necessitates a building permit, which we did not get in advance out of naivete and the nature of these reactionary changes. If that is an issue, we can remove the column by the driveway which would make the wall 44.75 inches at its highest point.

We have also been told that the height of this column violates line of sight requirements from a right-of-way, but that is already largely blocked by the topography. There is a large hill with

mature hedges that the retaining wall is retaining that blocks the majority of this 35 x 25 triangle. The lawn in front of the house is 48 inches taller than the street.

Additionally, there are several examples in the neighborhood of columns at the corner of a driveway and sidewalk that are higher than 30 inches:

284 Bloomfield St - columns are 62 and 61 inches, wall is 38 inches



244 Bloomfield St - 50 inch column





124 W. Cloverhurst Ave - 30 inch column



Please note challenges associated with reducing the wall to 30 inches on the far left side. If this side is reduced to that height and we keep the retaining wall level, because we are on a large slope, that would make the far right side of the retaining wall only 8 inches, which is clearly not enough to retain the hill. The landscape can not be changed there due to the large pecan and magnolia tree root systems that the wall is helping retain.

Please see images below – the line shows a level wall that is 30 inches at the far left.



If we are to keep the retaining wall on the right at the height where it needs to be to actually retain (at least 22 inches on the far right) and reduce the wall on the left corner to start at 30 inches, then we will again face the situation of extreme asymmetry where the walls hit the columns.

A retaining wall that varies from 22.25 inches to 44.75 inches, but is under 38 inches for most of it, is in line with the height of other walls in the neighborhood. These are pictured below:

500 Bloomfield St, 48 inches



219 W Cloverhurst Ave, 36 inches:



180 Rutherford St, 34 inches:



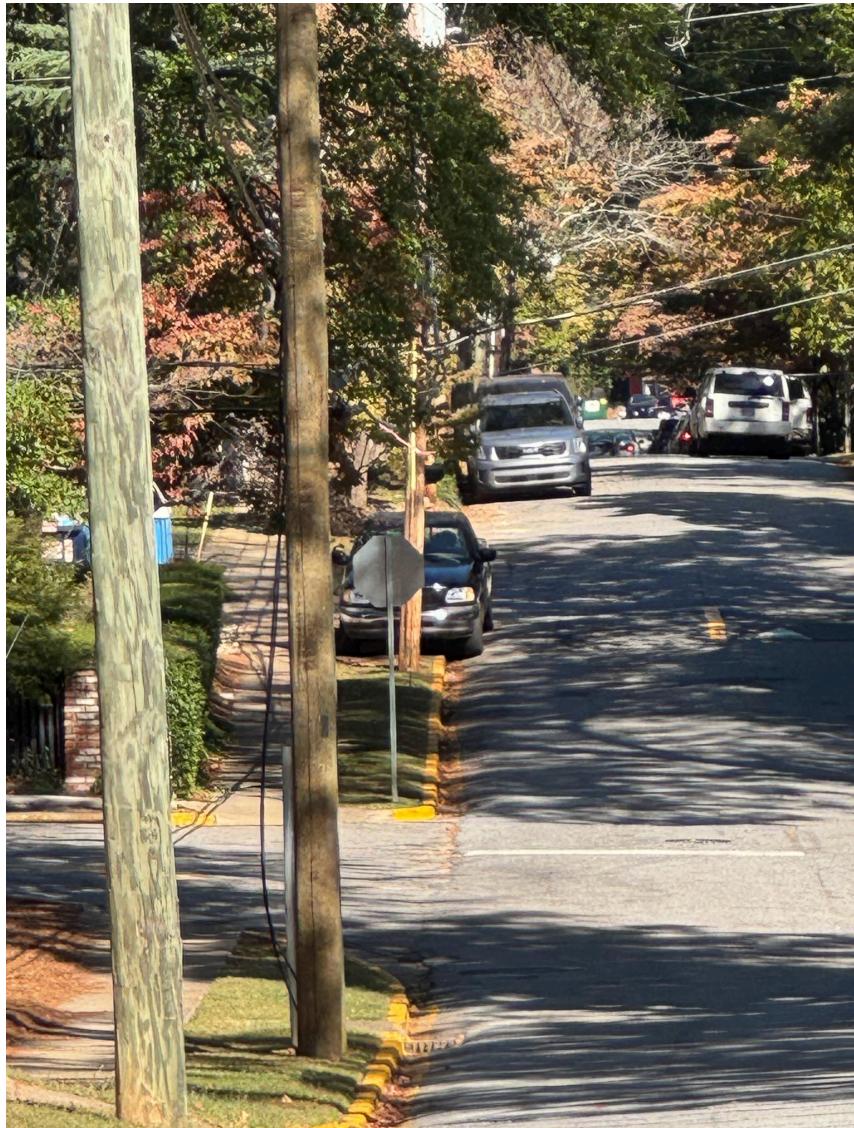
120 Cloverhurst Pl - 36 inches



Lastly, here is another example of a house on a hill (125 Wilcox St) that has columns and wingwalls on the front stairs. We understand that our columns and wingwalls are larger than these, and they were originally not intended to be as large as they are, but were made larger in reactionary changes to the larger wall. The height of their bottom column, including the decorative sconce is 36 inches.



We also note that there are no comparisons that we could find in the neighborhood in terms of a property that has a retaining wall, stairs, and is on a slope, necessitating a retaining wall that has to vary in height. The size and scale of the stairs/columns/wingwall is also difficult to find comps for, as we are one of the highest (if not the highest point) in the Bloomfield district. Our stairs are by the gray car. This picture is taken one block away to the East.



Lastly, we would like to add lights to the top of the column, with a similar look as these, and remove the existing light post as its placement is odd with the new stairs.



