

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
June 23, 2015 Meeting**

7. **CAR No. 15-074** (S. Kiatsuranon)

**1600 Monument Avenue
Monument Avenue Old & Historic District**

Project Description: **Install signage, awning, and planters**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval for the installation of planters to form an outdoor dining area, as well as the installation of an awning and signage at the Stuart Court apartment building located in the Monument Avenue Old and Historic District. The applicant received approval from the Commission in July 2014 for the installation of a concrete patio and fence for an outdoor dining space. The patio has since been installed, but the applicant has decided to use concrete planters as a buffer to the sidewalk instead of the approved fence. As the result of enforcement activity, the applicant is also seeking approval for an awning above the restaurant entrance and for signage in two locations.

Three rectangular, concrete planters are proposed to be installed between the sidewalk and existing concrete patio. The planters will be 60"x16" and 18" in height, and will be planted with boxwood shrubs. A retractable belt barrier system will be installed along the sidewalk from the edge of the planters to the handrail of the restaurant's staircase. The applicant is proposing to install three stanchions to be finished in either a black or silver color.

The awning above the restaurant entrance is rectangular-shaped and red with gray lettering. The awning is 12' wide with a 3' drop and a 5' projection. Previously, a larger, circular, green awning was located above this basement entrance.

The applicant is seeking approval for two signs located on the building. The applicant has recently removed the signs, but is seeking approval to reinstall them. One is located on the façade of the building, behind the proposed outdoor dining area. It is rectangular, and approximately 18" x 6'. It has a black background, a gold border, and red and cream letters with the restaurant's name. The other sign is located on the outside of the right stairwell wall. It consists of multi-colored block lettering with the restaurant's name, mounted on a white background with black border. This sign is approximately 1' x 5'.

Staff recommends partial approval of the project with a condition. *The Richmond Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* notes that the more closely a site feature is located to the front of a property, "the more strongly compatible historic design will be encouraged" (pg. 66). In regard to site improvements, the *Guidelines* are generally more deferential to materials found within the district and the immediate vicinity. The proposed concrete planters are a compatible material as concrete is a prevalent material throughout

the area, including the outdoor dining area on which they will sit. While the proposed stanchion and retractable belt barrier system is unusual to the district in general, staff is not as concerned with their installation as they would not be a permanent element on the streetscape, and would presumably be removed during colder weather when outdoor dining is not feasible. Staff recommends that approval be conditioned on the installation of the black stanchion and belt system, and not the silver-colored option, which appears less compatible within the district.

In regard to the installed awning, *Guidelines* note that awnings should not obscure historic building features, should have colors that coordinate with the overall color scheme, and may have signage applied to the awning's valance (p. 68). The *Guidelines* also discourage the use of awnings with solid colors, wide stripes, or narrow stripes. Despite the awning being a solid, red color, staff feels that the awning meets the requirements of the *Guidelines*. While the Stuart Court building is almost monochromatically white/cream, the red awning does tie in somewhat with the red and white ornamentation found along the top story of the building.

In regard to the proposed signage, the *Guidelines* state that signs should be easy to read, should relate to architectural features of a building, should not display colors that clash or conflict with a building, and should be located in traditional sign placement areas (p. 71). While the sign proposed for the area behind the outdoor dining space is not located in a traditional signage location, staff feels that the sign itself is compatible with the Standards for Signage. However, staff feels that the signage proposed for the outside of the right stairwell wall is not in keeping with the Standards for Signage, in that it is not easy to read and its colors are in conflict with the overall color scheme of the building. For that reason, staff recommends approval of the larger sign behind the outdoor dining space, but does not recommend approval of the smaller sign on the outside of the right stairwell wall.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the condition noted above, the application is partially consistent with the Standards for Site Improvements and the Standards for Signage outlined in Sections 114-930.7(b)(f) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the page cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.