

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
May 26, 2015 Meeting**

7. **CAR No. 15-056** (M. Ryan)

**417 Catherine Street
Jackson Ward Old & Historic District**

Project Description: **Installation of new porch railing**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval for work performed at this property in the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District, which includes the installation of a new porch railing. This application is the result of enforcement activity.

The new railing consists of nailed-up stock elements on the outside of the top and bottom rails, which according to the applicant was changed in order to meet building code. The applicant is seeking approval for this new railing and plans to paint it white to match the color of the trim on the structure. The prior railing consisted of two horizontal boards on two sides of the front porch, an example of which can be seen on each of two row houses on either side of this property.

Staff does not recommend approval of the project. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* states that, "When designing a new railing for a new infill building, or for an existing building which has lost its railing and for which no documentary or physical evidence survives, the balusters in the traditional Richmond rail are generally rectangular in section or square. The baluster is fitted into the recess in the top rail and a sloped bottom rail. Typical deck railings, consisting of nailed-up stock elements, are not approved as they are not based on a compatible historic model found in Richmond's Old and Historic Districts" (p. 46 #2).

Staff recommends that the applicant either return the porch railing to what was previously installed on the structure to match the row houses on either side, or if this would not be in compliance with building code, that the applicant return to the Commission with a new porch railing design that consists of Richmond rail.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is not consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) of the City Code, nor with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.