



Commission of Architectural Review

4. COA-169005-2025	Final Review Meeting Date: 7/22/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Brian Spencer
Project Description	Construct a new masonry and stone front porch
Project Location	
Address: 17 N Arthur Ashe Boulevard	
Historic District: Boulevard	
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to reconstruct a full-width front porch. This property is part of a consistent early 20th-century row of houses on the east side of the boulevard. Archival documentation confirms the existence of a full-width porch historically. The reconstruction will involve new masonry piers, a terracotta tile floor system, granite coping and steps, and a new wooden balustrade. The original columns and roof structure are to be retained and repaired with in-kind materials if necessary.</p>	
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031
Previous Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A
Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff recommends approval of the proposed reconstruction of a full-width front porch, with the following conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve the porch reconstruction as it is supported by photographic and documentary evidence indicating the presence of a full-width porch historically Approve of proposed materials; final material specifications and color selections to be submitted for staff review and approval Final details and turning profiles of the balustrade and posts to be submitted for staff review and approval All construction and installation work shall follow best preservation practices; special care to be taken when anchoring the new balustrade to the existing historic columns to avoid damage Ensure that historic fabric is retained wherever feasible.

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, pg. 59	<p><i>6. Retain original entrances and porches including doors, frames, fanlights, sidelights, steps, balustrades, pilasters, entablatures, columns and decorative features.</i></p>	<p>The national register of historic places inventory from 1986 describes the property as having a “1-story, 1 side bay porch with Doric columns”. A photograph from 1984 (Figure 1) shows a one-side bay porch as well, although a discernable difference in material can suggest some scarring on the façade which may have been from a previously removed porch. Current conditions also suggest that a previous porch has been removed.</p> <p>Staff has located a 1950s Assessor’s photograph cards that confirm that a full-width porch once existed on this building (Figure 2). This earlier porch featured brick piers with a balustrade attached directly to the piers, rather than to the columns. Additional documentation from the 1925 Sanborn Maps also indicates a full-width porch on the property at that time. Collectively, this documentation substantiates that the existing side bay porch is a later alteration, and not the original porch configuration.</p> <p>The proposed reconstruction is therefore restoring a character-defining feature, and mirrors adjacent historic porches in material, height, and footprint.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the reconstruction of the full-width porch based on photographic and documentary evidence.</u></p>
Materials & Colors, page 53	<p><i>2. Materials used in new construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the surrounding neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>The proposal includes terracotta tile flooring, granite treads and coping, and brick piers, which are compatible materials that are found on the porches of the 00-block of AA Blvd.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approving the material selection; final colors and specifications to be submitted for staff approval.</u></p>
Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, page 59	<p><i>7. Repair damaged elements instead of replacing them. Use materials that match the original in type or use physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections. Use available documentation when reconstructing missing elements. Pictorial, historical, or physical documentation can be helpful.</i></p>	<p>The application specifies that the column height and detailing will remain unchanged, and the railing system will mimic those found at 11–23 N. Arthur Ashe, consistent in height, layout and profile. The balustrade will feature wooden turned posts which is an adequate recreation of the historic porch.</p> <p>While the proposed railing is generally consistent with historic documentation, staff notes a discrepancy between the balustrade turned posts shown in the façade elevation and those illustrated in the detail drawings, specifically regarding the turning profile.</p>

		<p><u>Staff recommends submitting final details and profiles of the balustrade and turned posts for staff review and approval.</u></p>
<p>Porches & Porch Details, page 49</p>	<p><i>1. Porch railings and balustrades are important character-defining features of historic buildings. The proportions of these railings are a significant contributing feature to the appearance of both the individual structure and the character of the entire neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>The proposed balustrade will be anchored into the existing column, which is a significant architectural element of the building's historic façade. The existing simple Richmond railing will be removed and replaced by a turned post balustrade. While this configuration is common on the block, any attachment method must be carried out with caution to avoid damaging historic fabric or compromising the column's structural and visual integrity. Additionally, the proposal includes an in-kind replacement of existing porch materials where necessary.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that all construction activity, including the connection of new balustrade components to existing columns and the removal of the existing railing, be carried out using best preservation practices. Existing historic material should be protected and retained where feasible.</u></p>

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as 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.

Figures



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



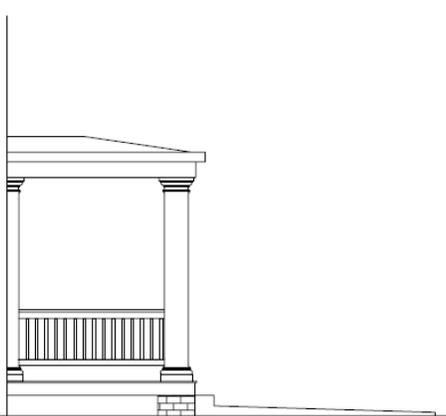
Figure 4



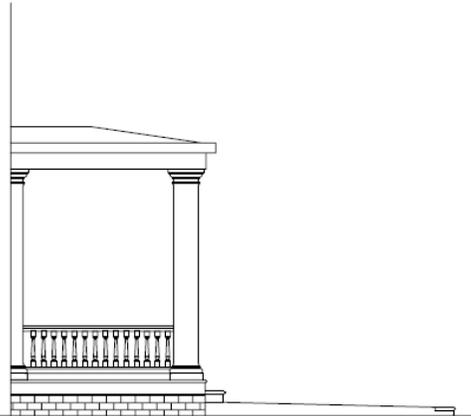
Figure 5



Figure 6

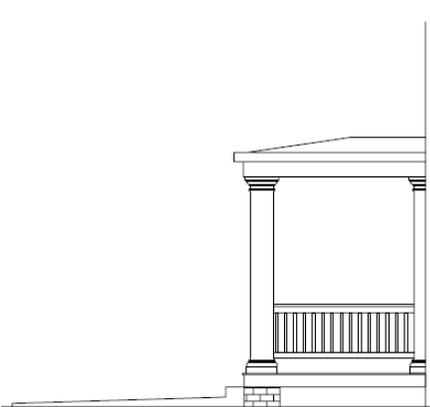


North Elevation - Existing $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'$

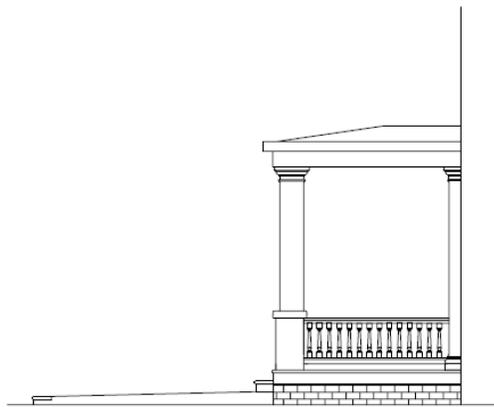


North Elevation - Proposed $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'$

Figure 7



South Elevation - Existing $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'$

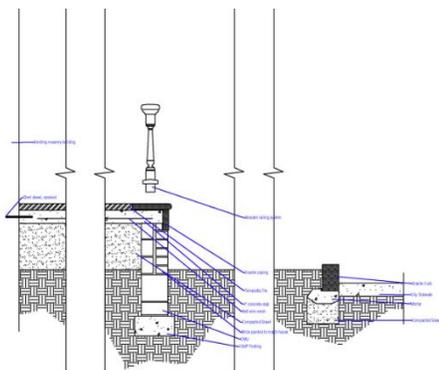


South Elevation - Proposed $\frac{1}{4}'' = 1'$

Figure 8



Figure 9



Section - Proposed $\frac{3}{4}'' = 1'$

Figure 10