



To: Urban Design Committee
From: Planning and Preservation Division
Date: December 10, 2015
RE: **Cellar Door Encroachment into the right-of-way adjacent to 2525 O Street; UDC No. 2015-33**

I. APPLICANT

Deanna Lewis, Heirloom Restorations LLC

II. LOCATION

City right-of-way in front of 2525 O Street

Property Owner:

City of Richmond

III. PURPOSE

The application is for review of a cellar door encroachment into the public right-of-way adjacent to 2525 O Street.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This is a request to review a cellar door encroachment into the public right-of-way in front of 2525 O Street. In the process of recently renovating the building at 2525 O Street, constructed in 1874, it was discovered that there was previously a stairway in the sidewalk in front of the building that connected to the basement. Over the years, this stairway had been covered over by a newer sidewalk, placed over top of the old sidewalk. As part of the renovations, the developer has uncovered the stairway and wishes to enclose it with an angled, above-grade cellar door that would encroach into the public right-of-way.

Staff does not object to the historic stairway being uncovered and encroaching into the right-of-way. However, Staff has surveyed other older corner-commercial buildings in the surrounding area and was unable to find similar examples of above-grade encroachments like the proposed cellar door. Whether former coal chutes or basement window wells, the existing encroachments for corner commercial stores in the neighborhood that were visible to Staff were all at-grade. In addition, Department of Public Works Surveys Division staff were unable to recall any similar above-grade cellar door encroachments and alerted Staff that such an encroachment could possibly also necessitate the use of bollards to alert pedestrians to the tripping hazard, adding additional obstructions to the right-of-way. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Department of Public Works grant approval of the cellar door encroachment, with the following condition:

- That the applicant provides an at-grade cover for the stairway instead of the proposed above-grade cellar door.

Staff Contact:

Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

The subject right-of-way is located at the southwestern corner of the intersection of O Street with N. 26th Street and lies within the R-63 (Multi-family Urban Business) zoning district. The right-of-way is in front of 2525 O Street, which is improved with a two-story, 2,340 square feet corner commercial building that was constructed in 1874 and was recently renovated into a single-family dwelling. 2525 O Street is located just outside (one block east and north) of the Union Hill City Old and Historic District.

The immediately adjacent properties are also zoned R-63 and are improved with single-family attached and detached dwellings. Portions of N. 25th Street north and west of the subject property are zoned UB-PE3 and are improved with commercial buildings. The City's East District Initiative is located one block to the south and is zoned RO2-PE4 (Residential/Office with a Parking Overlay).

b. Scope of Review

The project is for a cellar door encroachment into the public right-of-way adjacent to 2525 O Street. The encroachment process is administered through the Department of Public Works, which has requested that the Urban Design Committee (UDC) provide design advice on certain types of encroachments. The UDC does not have the authority to approve encroachments, but rather provides advice to the Department of Public Works.

The building at 2525 O Street also has existing eave and gutter encroachments, which are not subject to review.

c. UDC Review History

Staff was unable to identify any UDC-reviewed projects for the subject right-of-way.

d. Project Description

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The building at 2525 O Street is set back approximately 31" from the property line. As proposed, the stairway and its enclosure would extend 6' into the sidewalk from the building face (due to the setback, only 41" of that is an encroachment), for a width of 5' 4". The sidewalk on this portion of the block extends from the building face to the back-of-curb, and is 12' in depth. As requested, the encroachment would leave 6' of passable sidewalk remaining.

The sides of the stairway enclosure will taper from 13" above grade at the building to 4" above grade on the sidewalk end and will be composed of brick. This stairway enclosure will be covered with two wooden doors held in place by heavy duty cast iron strap hinges secured to the brick foundation. The applicant has included photographic examples of similarly enclosed openings in Colonial Williamsburg.

e. Master Plan

The park is located in the East Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan, and is designated for Mixed-Use residential uses. The primary uses in category include single, two and multi-family dwellings, live/work units and neighborhood serving commercial uses developed in a traditional urban form.

f. Urban Design Guidelines

There is no language in the Encroachments section of the Urban Design Guidelines pertaining to stairs, but there is language regarding other encroachments that seems appropriate to this proposal. For instance, in regards to door swings into the public right-of-way, notes that "when a recessed entry is not feasible, the encroachment of the door swing into the public right-of-way should be minimized as much as possible" (page 28).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**