

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
March 24, 2015, Meeting**

6. **CAR No. 15-038** (L. Chavis)

**873 M 22nd Street  
Union Hill Old & Historic District**

**Project Description:**

**Install New Steps;  
new railing/handrails at the front and rear porches**

**Staff Contact:**

**M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to install new porch railing and stair handrails to the front porch of the primary structure on this property within the Union Hill Old and Historic District. The application also contains a request to install stairs and railing off of the door at the rear of the structure. Instead of the design included in this application, the applicant has opted to pursue the design that was approved by the Commission on April 22, 2014. In addition, the applicant is proposing to paint the structure with Glidden Exterior Premium Paint in Seal Grey (GLN46) for the house and deck, Misty Moonstone (GLN34) for the trim, Red Delicious (GLR30) for the front door, and Bright White for the hand rails.

**Staff recommends approval of the project, with conditions.** When staff initially met with the applicant on site, there was no railing present on the front porch. Pursuant to the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* which indicate that when designing a new railing 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 appropriate (pg. 46); staff recommended to the applicant the use of a standard Richmond rail design. The applicant is proposing to use a standard Richmond rail for both the porch and stair railings. The proposed railing is compatible with the street as there are several porches with Richmond railing on the block in addition to other porches which utilize various styles of railing.

In preparation of this staff report, staff has learned that a historic turned balustrade was present at the time the District was established as it is shown in a picture of the property from 2011 and also noted in the Union Hill National Historic District Nomination application. As the Guidelines recommend that historic material and details of porches should be retained and repaired or replaced in-kind (pg. 67, #8), the original balustrade should have been repaired or replaced in-kind, not removed. As a result of this additional information about this property, this application warrants additional discussion. The Commission may wish to consider whether it would be appropriate to require the applicant to include turned balusters in the proposed design as the guidelines recommend that “when replacing a railing on a historic building which has lost its railing, the first step is to look for documentary evidence which records the appearance of that railing” (pg. 67). Staff recommends the replacement of removed railing with in-kind materials to include turned balusters.

Though the applicant is requesting to move forward with the rear steps and landing as approved by the Commission on April 22, 2014, very little detail was provided on the

landing and stair railings at that time. Staff recommends that the applicant use a standard Richmond rail for a design that is compatible with the district, or that the applicant place the proposed pickets on the inside of the handrail for a more finished appearance.

In regards to paint colors, the Guidelines state that “it is important that color selections blend with and complement the overall color schemes on the street” (pg. 59). The applicant is proposing colors which are comparable to the colors on the Guidelines’ paint palate and are compatible with the color palate of the structures on the street.

In summation, staff recommends the following:

- The removed railing on the front porch should be replaced with in-kind materials to include turned balusters. The Commission may wish to decide whether Richmond rail for the replacement of a missing railing is appropriate in this case as that was the original recommendation of staff during their initial site visit.
- The rear porch and stairs should be designed as was approved by in the Certificate of Appropriateness # 14-023. Staff recommends that the applicant use a standard Richmond rail for a design that is compatible with the district, or that the applicant place the proposed pickets on the inside of the handrail for a more finished appearance.
- The structure should be painted as proposed.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions noted above, is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) of the City Code, and 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.



873 N. 22nd Street with original turned balustrade  
(Google Street View July 2011)



873 N. 22nd Street Current Condition  
(March 12, 2015)