

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
January 26, 2016, Meeting**

4. **CAR No. 16-012** (S. DeMagistris) **2510 Monument Avenue  
Monument Avenue Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Replace railing system on four third story balconies with a new Fypon railing system**

**Staff Contact:** **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to replace the third story balcony railings on two brick multi-family buildings in the Monument Avenue Old and Historic District. The existing balcony railings were severely deteriorated due to their exposure to the elements and have been removed. The railings on each of the four balconies consisted six square 32" tall newel posts which are aligned with the columns below, a balustrade with 3 ½" by 19" turned posts, and an eight inch modern extension placed above the handrail to obtain the railing height as required by code. The applicant is proposing to install new high-density urethane (Fypon) system which will maintain the proportions of the historic railing system and include turned balusters. The applicant is proposing to maintain the layout of the historic porch railing by installing similar but simpler square newels at the same location as the historic railing system. The height between the top handrail and the bottom rail will be 27" to match the existing. In order to meet the requirements of the building code which requires the railing to be at 36", the applicant intends to raise the whole section up as a whole and fill the space below the bottom rail with a 1.5" round pipe painted white. Due to the height of the balconies, the white pipe will be minimally visible from the public right of way.

**Staff recommends approval of the project.** The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* states, "when the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials" (p. 67 #7). The existing railing systems were severely deteriorated the applicant has shown in photographs of the deteriorated elements. The *Guidelines* further state that porch railings and balustrades are important character defining features of a structure, and the proportions of these railings are an important element to the appearance of both their structure and the rhythms of the entire neighborhood (pg. 47). The applicant will maintain the proportions of the historic railing by maintaining the height of the pickets and newels and maintaining the historic layout of the newels. The proposed pipe and taller newel bases will be minimally visible from the public right of way. The *Guidelines* also provide for the use of substitute materials in cases of unavailability of skilled craftsmen or where newer growth wood would cause deterioration at a faster rate than first-growth timber (p. 57). Staff finds that the Fypon material would be a successful substitute for wood, especially given the

fact that there is no porch roof over the railing, and it would therefore be more susceptible to deterioration by the elements.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 30-930.7(b) 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.