

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

10. **CAR No. 15-029** (A. Fountain)

**635 N. 27th Street
Church Hill North Old & Historic District**

Project Description: **Replace historic posts; paint**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval for work performed on the front porch of this structure located in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. This application is the result of enforcement activity.

In early 2014, the property owner received a notice from the Code Enforcement & Property Maintenance division of the Department of Planning and Development Review informing them that their property was under violation due to their deteriorating front porch. According to the division, the front porch posts and railings were significantly rotted, and some columns had fallen off the porch. The property owner installed new columns and railings on the front porch. The Code Enforcement & Property Maintenance division confirmed that the work had successfully abated the violation. However, the property owner failed to apply for a building permit, and as a result the project was not reviewed by the Permits & Inspections or Planning & Preservation divisions. A Notice of Violation of the Old & Historic District requirements was issued to the property owner on January 16, 2015.

The work completed consists of the removal of the historic porch columns, and the installation of stock, turned columns. The historic capitals were preserved and reused. The historic half columns still exist against the body of the house. New posts for the handrails were also installed. The porch railings were replaced with Richmond rail that is very similar to what existed previously on the porch. The porch decking was replaced in-kind with tongue and groove wood.

Painting was also performed to the structure. This included painting the window trim white, painting the new porch columns white and red, painting the capitals red and gray, painting the bottom and lower handrails red, and painting the pickets of the handrails gray.

Staff does not recommend approval of the project. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* emphasize the need to retain, repair, or replace in-kind historic elements of a structure. Specifically the *Guidelines* state:

- “Do not remove or radically change entrances or porches in defining the building’s overall historic character. Front and side porches are architecturally more ornate than utilitarian back porches” (p. 67 #4).
- “Do not strip entrances and porches of historic material and details that should be retained in any repair or partial replacement” (p. 67 #8).

- “Retain original entrances and porches including doors, frames, fanlights, sidelights, steps, balustrades, pilasters, entablatures, columns and decorative features” (p. 55 #6)

In a case where exterior elements of a house are deteriorated, staff would typically recommend the retention and repair of said elements, or their in-kind replacement. Oftentimes, structural instability of porch columns is caused by the deterioration of the column bases, porch decking, or the supporting porch piers. Photographs taken from Google Streetview in June 2011 (see attached photos) appear to show the columns as intact but with some deterioration at their bases. If this were the case, staff would have recommended that as much of the historic columns be preserved as possible. If one or more of the column were beyond the point of repair, staff would have recommended that it be replaced in-kind to match the existing columns.

In regards to the painting work, elements of a column would not have historically been painted different, contrasting colors. The *Guidelines* state that, “Individual details in cornices and columns should not be emphasized with additional color” (p. 59 #5).

Staff recommends that the applicant submit a new application which proposes to replace the new, stock columns with turned columns whose design is replicated from the surviving half columns against the main structure. Staff also recommends that the applicant submit a painting plan where the columns are painted a uniform color as would have typically been found on an historic structure.

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, 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.



June 2011 (Google Streetview)



April 24, 2014



October 30, 2014



October 30, 2014