

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

16. **CAR No. 16-063** (P. Vaughn)

**1800 West Grace Street
West Grace Street Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Install wrought iron railing on
roof of a single story addition.**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to install a safety railing on the roof of a single story addition to a commercial structure in the West Grace Street Old and Historic District. The existing building is 2 ½ story Colonial Revival structure, and the subject addition is located on the rear and side of the structure adjacent to Allen Avenue. The proposed railing will be 42" in height with pickets spaced 4" on center, a top and bottom rail, and an upper handrail. The plans indicate that the applicant will be installing wooden 2" by 8" as part of the railing installation though staff believes this element will not be visible from the public right of way.

Staff recommends approval of the project as submitted with a condition.

The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* note that "when rooftop railings are required for seating areas or for safe access to mechanical equipment, the railings should be as unobtrusive as possible, in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district" (pg. 45, Materials & Colors #45). The proposed metal railing is simple in design, and because of this, its visual impact on the District will be minimal. As the plans are unclear as to where on the roof the railing will attach, staff recommends the railing be attached aligned with the wall plane below.

Though there is ghosting of a more detailed newel post and finial on the adjacent wall, staff has no photographic evidence of the previous balustrade nor has found any similar balustrades in the District. For this reason, staff supports the installation of the simple metal railing which will be visually unobtrusive instead installing a more detailed balustrade without knowledge of the original balustrade's design.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent, with the above condition, 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.