

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

11. CAR No. 16-071 (P. Gardner)

**2117 – 2119 Cedar Street
Union Hill Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

**Install guardrails on the exterior
of two 2nd floor doors.**

Staff Contact:

M. Pitts

The applicant requests approval to install guardrails on the exterior of two second floor doors on the front façade of a double house in the Union Hill Old and Historic District as part of the rehabilitation of the structure. The subject house was built between 1855 and 1866 and was constructed as a two-story, double house set on a one-story raised basement. The rehabilitated structure will utilize the ground floor doors which were historically the basement doors as the front doors to the structure. There will be no exterior access to the second floor doors. The applicant wanted to retain the historic 2nd floor door openings and doors and was informed by the building inspector that if the doors were not to be fixed closed a guardrail must be installed on the exterior of the doors. The applicant is proposing to install a 36" tall metal ornamental guardrail with a 4" separation between the palings.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. Though, the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* note that faux balconies which are flat applied constructs with no depth are discouraged (pg. 46, Porches and Porch Details #4), staff does not view the proposed railing as a faux balcony but rather as a guardrail. The Guidelines do not address guardrails such as that proposed, but do note that when safety rooftop railings are required they should be as unobtrusive as possible in order to minimize their appearance and visual impact on the surrounding district (pg. 51, Materials & Colors #5). As staff viewed this railing as a safety guardrail, staff recommends approval with the condition that the proposed design be simplified with less ornamentation and submitted to staff for review and administrative approval.

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