



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

3. COA-107852-2022	Final Review	Meeting Date: 3/22/2022
Applicant/Petitioner	Samuel Daniel	
Project Description	Reconstruct a front yard retaining wall, front steps, and landing.	
Project Location		
Address: 3203 Monument Ave.		
Historic District: Monument Avenue		
High-Level Details: <p>The applicant proposes to replace a front yard retaining wall, steps, and front porch floor of a circa 1910, Georgian Revival residence</p> <p>The existing, brick retaining wall will be replaced with a lower brick wall of 1'6" with 3' brick piers all capped with 4" granite units.</p> <p>The existing concrete steps will be replaced granite treads.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Partial Approval	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, alex.dandridge@rva.gov	
Previous Reviews	None.	
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new brick retaining wall and piers not feature granite caps, but a brick with a rowlock bond or another simple brick bond. • The new granite font porch floor be installed to resemble the seams of the existing concrete porch floor, installed in four units. • Staff recommends denial of the accent granite ribbons on the front porch floor 	

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Fences & Walls 1 & 2, pg.#	<i>1. Fence, wall, and gate designs should reflect the scale of the historic structures</i>	Low, brick retaining walls are common features found on the 3200 block of Monument Avenue. The proposed brick retaining wall will be unpainted, unlike the

	<p><i>they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls, and gates.</i></p> <p><i>2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>existing, and will have 3' brick piers at end points of the wall. There is an example of a brick retaining wall adjacent to the subject property that features brick piers.</p> <p>The proposed brick wall, steps, and piers will feature granite caps. Staff notes that granite caps on brick retaining walls is not a design or material commonly found in the district. Other examples of brick walls on this block do not feature granite caps, but rather a rowlock course brick pattern as a cap. <u>Staff recommends that the new brick retaining wall and piers not feature granite caps, but a cap brick laid in a rowlock bond or another simple brick bond.</u></p>
Standards for Site Improvements, Fences and Walls, 1-3, pg. 78	<p><i>1. Original fences and walls should be retained and maintained whenever possible.</i></p> <p><i>2. Existing brick or stone walls, boxwood hedges, wooden picket fences and cast or wrought iron fences should not be removed or replaced with contemporary features.</i></p> <p>3. If not original to a site, new street-front fences, walls, and gates should be compatible with the historic structure in design, materials, and location, and should be based on physical or documentary evidence from the site.</p>	<p>Staff was unable to find photographic documentation demonstrating the existing wall is not original to the property. However, on a site visit, Staff noticed that the brick used in the retaining wall features wider mortar joints with a different reveal than the brick used on the front façade of the dwelling. The brick type also appeared to have a different, rougher finish. There was also evidence that the masonry retaining wall could have been built on top, and in front of a lower concrete retaining wall which is visible along the side the front yard (see figure 3.)</p> <p>The proposed, new retaining wall will feature brick and granite. Granite is not a common material utilized in front yard retaining walls on this block of Monument Avenue. Staff finds that existing walls on this block are constructed of brick or concrete alone.</p>
Standards for Site Improvements, Fences and Walls, pg. 78	6. A new fence or wall should be constructed using materials and designs appropriate to the District. Height restrictions are governed by the Zoning Ordinance.	<p>Brick is a common material used for retaining walls throughout the district.</p> <p>Granite isn't a common material found on front yard retaining walls within the district.</p> <p>The new retaining wall will be similar in height to the adjacent brick retaining walls, and will be in compliance with height restricts set forth in to City's zoning ordinance.</p>
Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, 1, 6, 7, 9, pg. #59	<p>1. Retain original features and materials that define the building style, including but not limited to wood siding, shingles, stucco and masonry.</p> <p>6. Retain original entrances and porches including doors, frames, fanlights, sidelights, steps, balustrades, pilasters, entablatures, columns and decorative features.</p> <p><i>7. Repair damaged elements instead of replacing them. Use materials that match the original in type, or use physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections. Use available documentation when reconstructing missing elements.</i></p>	<p>Staff finds that the existing brick retaining wall does not contribute to the architectural style of the dwelling.</p> <p>The existing porch roof, columns, door, sidelights and balustrade will be retained, and not impacted by the scope of this project.</p> <p>The applicant has demonstrative that the existing concrete steps and porch are damaged and unsafe. The concrete stairs show sign of deterioration and the concrete porch floor is cracking and sinking.</p> <p>On a site visit staff observed that the front stairs are not deteriorated beyond repair, however do appear to be uneven and cracked. The applicant requests to replace the concrete stairs with granite. Staff believes that granite will resemble concrete in appearance</p>

	<p><i>Pictorial, historical or physical documentation can be helpful.</i></p> <p><i>9. Do not remove or radically alter fundamental architectural features such as windows, roofs or porches.</i></p>	<p>and the work will create a more consistent and safe stair tread. Staff recommends approval of the replacement of the front stairs with granite.</p> <p>The front porch floor is much higher than street level and will be minimally visible from the street and sidewalk. On a site visit Staff observed the sinking of the front porch floor and has analyzed the photos of cracks and chipping submitted by the applicant. Staff recommends replacement of the concrete front porch floor with granite, which will resemble concrete in appearance.</p> <p>Staff finds the diamond design for the front porch floor created with granite accent ribbons is ornate, and doesn't resemble the existing floor. There isn't evidence that a design such as this existing in the past. <u>Staff recommends denial of the accent granite ribbons on the front porch floor.</u></p> <p>To more accurately resemble the existing concrete front porch floor, <u>Staff recommends that the new granite front porch floor be installed to resemble the seams of the existing concrete porch floor, installed in four units.</u></p>
<p>Building and Site Accessibility, Regrading, 6, pg.#79</p>	<p>Regrading is any adjustment made to the slope or land leading up to any exterior entrance to a property.</p> <p>6. Regrading is appropriate in cases where the change in elevation between an existing slope and a step or steps is not great and meets ADA requirements. Appropriate regrading efforts should cover, but not remove or eliminate, original masonry steps.</p>	<p>The front yard of the existing dwelling will be regraded in order to align with the lower height of the proposed retaining wall.</p> <p>Existing Steps will not be removed due the regrading of the site.</p>

Figures



Figure 1. Front facade



Figure 2. Condition of front stairs



Figure 3. Cement retaining wall connection to the existing masonry wall.



Figure 4. Sinking of front porch floor. View from sidewalk.



Figure 5. Retaining walls adjacent to the property.