

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
September 28, 2018 Meeting**

4. COA-041127-2018 (J. Baron)

**515 West Clay Street
Jackson Ward Old and Historic District**

Project Description:

Install a new front yard fence.

Staff Contact:

C. Jones

The applicant requests approval to install a vinyl picket fence along the front and partial side yard of a residential property in the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District. This application is the result of enforcement activity as the vinyl fence was installed without prior approval. The application to fix the violation was originally submitted for administrative approval and the applicant was informed by staff via email (08/23/2018) that vinyl is not an appropriate material for City Old and Historic Districts.

Relevant Guidelines:

Pg. 51, Fences & Walls #s1 & 2	1. Fence, wall, and gate designs should reflect the scale of the historic structures they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls, and gates. 2. Fence, wall, or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.
Pg. 78 Fences & Walls #2	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.
Pg. 78 Fences & Walls #3; 10 and Guidelines for Administrative Approval of Walls, Fences, and Gates #3. Wooden Picket Fences and Gates	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. 10. Wooden fences should be repaired and painted as needed. Existing picket designs should be matched when replacement is necessary.
Pg. 78 Fences & Walls #6	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.

Staff has photographic evidence of a wooden picket front yard fence that was recently at this location (January 2018). There are also examples of wooden picket front yard fences on both sides of the 500 block of West Clay Street.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. Staff cannot recommend approval of the proposed front and partial side yard picket fence as the fence does not meet the Commission's *Guidelines* for front yard fences (pg. 78, #2). The *Guidelines* note that if not original to the site, new street-front fences should be compatible in design, materials, and location (pg. 78, #3). The proposed

vinyl picket fence is not compatible in terms of design or materials as the vinyl does not effectively convey the appearance of wood and the picket and post design is not consistent with the design of historic front yard fences.

The proposed fence heights comply with the Zoning Ordinance which requires front yard fences be no taller than 48 inches. However, the new fence is not of a material or design appropriate to the district (pg. 78, #6), and staff recommends the Commission approve the re-installation of a front and partial side yard picket fence with the conditions that the existing vinyl fence be removed and the new front yard fence be constructed of wood, be of a design that matches the historic fence, and be painted or opaquely stained a color to be administratively approved.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with acceptance of the noted conditions, is consistent with the Standards for Site Improvements outlined in Sections 30-930.7(e) 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.



Figure 1. Previous fence



Figure 2. Previous fence



Figure 3. Current fence.