

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
December 9, 2014 Meeting**

10. **CAR No. 14-150** (R. Daub) **2709 West Grace Street
West Grace Street Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Reconstruct missing porch**

Staff Contact: **K. Chen**

The applicant requests approval to reconstruct a missing porch at the front of a residence located in the West Grace Street Old and Historic District. The upper portion of the original porch was removed prior to 1977, though the cast stone base and mosaic floor remain. The applicant proposes reconstructing the porch based on a ca. 1937 photograph of the property and similar details found on neighboring houses. The applicant intends to use painted PVC columns and railing system, and to repair the concrete substrate and replace the mosaic tile floor to match the original.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* emphasizes the importance of porches and front entryways, noting that they not only help to define a building's architectural style, but also serve as the primary focus for a historic structure (pg. 61). The *Guidelines* also notes that an entire porch "should only be replaced if it is too deteriorated to repair or is completely missing; replacements should match the original as much as possible" (pg. 61, #5).

The applicant has proposed restoring an important feature to the front of the residence. The plan, column, and baluster details submitted by the applicant appear to match the appearance of the original porch features as depicted in the ca. 1937 photograph included with the application. The design needs to be revised so all three posts in the balustrade align vertically with the porch columns (see "north elevation" drawing). It is the assessment of staff that the proposal to use painted PVC for the columns complies with the Commission's guidelines for the use of substitute materials, as the proposed synthetic material conveys the appearance of wood when painted. Proposed materials for the balustrade were not indicated on the drawings and should be submitted to staff for final review and approval. The applicant should submit any paint color selections to Commission staff for final review and approval. Since the applicant has not included tile samples for the porch floor, it is difficult to confirm the proposed replacement. As it is the intent of the applicant to replicate the original porch, staff recommends that the applicant submit tile samples to staff for final review and approval.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions noted above, the work outlined in the proposal complies with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114-930.7(c) 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.