



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

Commission of Architectural Review

7. COA- 142785-2024	Final Review	Meeting Date: 2/27/2024
Applicant/Petitioner	Rodney Young	
Project Description	Replace a steel fire escape with wood.	
Project Location		
Address: 23 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard		
Historic District: Boulevard		
High-Level Details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant proposes to fully remove and replace the south fire escape and the exterior stairs located on the north side of the building. The fire escape on the south side of this building is highly visible, along the north side of West Cary Street. The central stairs, along the north side of the building are only minimally visible from the rear, public alley. This building is a 3-story multi-family apartment building, built in 1922. During a Site Visit on February 8, 2024, staff noticed the concrete floors have been replaced with wooden boards. 		
Staff Recommendation	Partial Approval	
Staff Contact	Annie Delaroderie, anne.delaroderie@rva.gov , 804-646-6335.	
Previous Reviews	None	
Conditions for Approval	Staff recommends <i>denial</i> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of the entire firescape with wood. Staff recommends <i>approval</i> of the below items with the following conditions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the steel is beyond repair, staff recommends the steel be replaced in-kind. Retention of the wooden decking boards The joists of the wooden decking boards must be screened by a smooth finish/underside for a more finished appearance. 	

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards For Rehabilitation: Residential Construction, page 59.	<i>1. Retain original features and materials that define the building style, including but not limited to wood siding, shingles, stucco and masonry.</i>	Due to the inset in the building, this is likely the original location of the fire escape; however, the original material for the fire escapes is unknown. Staff was unable to determine if these are the original fire escapes but believes they are original or they have gained significance overtime.
Standards For Rehabilitation: Residential Construction, page 59.	<i>3. Retain original metal features such as cast iron porches and steps, metal cornices, roofs, roof cresting, window sash, entablatures, columns, capitals, window hoods, and hardware and the color and finish of all original materials.</i>	The steel framing systems create a character-defining element. Installing wooden fire escape in this location changes the visual appearance of this building and is not compatible. <u>Staff recommends denial of replacing the entire fire escape with wood.</u>
Standards For Rehabilitation: Residential Construction, page 59.	<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.</i>	If the steel is in poor condition and cannot be repaired <u>staff recommends replacing the fire escape with steel or a similar material.</u> The fire escape is a significant historic feature on this building, and steel or a similar material would be more compatible. On a site visit, staff noticed that the concrete floor of the fire escape had been replaced with wood. <u>Staff recommends approval of the installation of wooden decking boards, as this element is minimally visible behind a steel fire escape framing.</u> <u>Staff recommends that a smooth material/underside that covers the decking's wooden joists be installed for a more finished appearance.</u>

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as with the Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.

Figures



Figure 1. View of the façade of 23 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard.



Figure 2. View of the center stairs from Arthur Ashe Boulevard.



Figure 3. View of the center stairs, from the rear, public alley.



Figure 4. View of the fire escape on the south side of 23 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard. The new floor boards and their exposed decking can be seen on the second and third floors.



Figure 5. View of the replaced floorboards on the first floor of the fire escape on the south side of 23 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard.



Figure 6. View of the exposed decking on the fire escape on the south side of 23 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard.