

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
June 27, 2017, Meeting**

1. **COA-018232-2017** (B. Friend)

**517 Catherine Street
Jackson Ward Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Construct new accessible ramp.**

Staff Contact: **C. Jeffries**

The applicant requests approval to modify the entryway of this home located at the edge of the Jackson Ward Old and Historic District. The applicant proposes to construct a new ADA compliant ramp at the front of this extensively altered frame structure. The residence is a single family detached structure dating from the 1850s.

The ramp would be generally 3'4" wide and approximately 23' long. It would attach to the existing stoop on the front of the structure. The ramp would turn 90 degrees at the corner of the structure and end toward the rear, to allow access to a rear parking area. Based on a photograph submitted by the applicant, the ramp is presumed by staff to be of pressure-treated lumber.

Staff recommends approval of the project, with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* fully supports adapting historic buildings to accommodate the needs of individuals with physical disabilities. The *Guidelines* note that, "Ramps should be located to minimize the potential loss to historic features such as porch railings, steps and windows and should preserve the overall historic setting and character of the property. Every effort should be made to design the ramp using similar material and design elements that are compatible with the structure" (pg. 69 #8). The proposed ramp would not result in the loss of any historic elements and the proposed materials are compatible with that of the existing structure which is asphalt sided with a concrete stoop. Staff recommends approval of the proposed ramp with the conditions that the railing be a standard Richmond rail design that is more compatible with the district, or the proposed pickets be placed on the inside of the handrail for a more finished appearance and the ramp be painted or opaquely stained a color to be administratively reviewed and approved by staff.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the noted conditions, is consistent 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.