



Commission of Architectural Review

5. COA-181523-2026	Final Review	Meeting Date: 4/28/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	Allison Wingfield	
Project Description	Replace wooden porch columns with fiberglass	
Project Location		
Address: 2735 W Grace Street		
Historic District: West Grace Street		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to replace four existing wooden Corinthian columns on the front of a Colonial Revival Style, three story multifamily building circa 1927.</p> <p>The wooden columns are proposed to be replaced with new fiberglass columns.</p> <p>The extant columns are in poor condition and show evident signs of rot exacerbated by water intrusion.</p>		
Staff Recommendation		
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, Alex.Dandridge@RVA.gov, (804)646-6569	
Previous Reviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review 	
Staff Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of the replacement of the four wooden column shafts with fiber glass. • Extant column capitals be salvaged and reinstalled. • Final dimensions of the fiberglass columns be submitted for staff review and approval prior to installation. • New bases of the columns match the original in design and dimension. • Any other areas of deterioration that need to repaired/ replaced, such as soffit, fascia board, dentils, and missing recessed panel and molding on the front of the second-floor balcony, be repaired/ replaced in-kind to match the original features. 	

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, pg. 59</p>	<p><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></p> <p><i>6. Retain original entrances and porches including doors, frames, fanlights, sidelights, steps, balustrades, pilasters, entablatures, columns and decorative features.</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes the replacement of four two-story wooden Corinthian columns with fiberglass columns. The extant columns exhibit advanced deterioration, primarily due to prolonged water infiltration. Evidence suggests that the roof canopy above the third-story balcony is not original to the structure, though it was likely installed prior to the mid-twentieth century. Its configuration directs water toward the primary façade, and the associated built-in gutter system and downspouts at the second-story balcony level appear to have been modified repeatedly over time, contributing to drainage issues.</p> <p>Deterioration is most pronounced at the column bases and at the upper portions of the shafts adjacent to downspouts, where moisture exposure has been greatest. The westernmost column has been temporarily stabilized with tension straps, indicating structural compromise.</p> <p>The Corinthian capitals appear to retain a high degree of material integrity and craftsmanship. Their preservation should be strongly considered as part of any intervention.</p> <p>In addition to the columns, but not mentioned in the scope of work, <u>staff recommends than any other areas of deterioration that need to repaired/replaced, such as soffit, fascia board, dentils, and missing recessed panel and molding on the front of the second floor balcony, be repaired/ replaced in-kind to match the original features.</u></p>
<p>Maintenance and Repair: Inappropriate Porch Remodeling, page 87.</p>	<p><i>A significant character-defining feature is lost when original porches on historic homes are removed.</i></p>	<p>Many historic houses in the City Old and Historic Districts were constructed with front porches. Staff believes that when historic porches are in bad condition, owners of these homes should carefully maintain them to ensure the preservation of these features.</p>
<p>Substitute Materials, pg. 60</p>	<p><i>Painted PVC decorative features (balusters, balustrades, columns, column capitals, cornice brackets, etc.) may be used as a substitute material for deteriorated wood and metal features. If the feature is missing, the applicant must provide physical or photographic evidence before approval will be granted.</i></p>	<p>The guidelines state that substitute materials may be used in instances where original wooden decorative features, such as columns, are deteriorated beyond repair. Staff finds that the columns appear to be deteriorated to a degree that requires replacement.</p> <p>The applicant proposes to use fiberglass rather than wood. The applicant provided the dimensions of the existing columns but has not yet been able to provide dimensions of the proposed columns. When considering the use of substitute materials on historic buildings, it is crucial that the substitute resembles the original material as closely as possible, including</p>

		<p>design and dimension. Additionally, the preservation of historic materials and decorative elements that are salvageable should be prioritized. The decorative column capitals appear to be in good condition without any visual indication of rot.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the replacement of the four wooden column shafts with fiber glass.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends the extant column capitals be salvaged and reinstalled.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the final dimensions of the fiberglass columns be submitted for staff review and approval prior to installation.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends the new bases of the columns match the original in design and dimension, design submitted for staff approval.</u></p>
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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. Existing Conditions, facade, April 2026.



Figure 2. Historic Photo, facade, 1950s.



Figure 3. Existing condition of western column. April 2026.



Figure 4. Existing condition of eastern column. April 2026.



Figure 5. Existing condition of western column. April 2026.



Figure 6. Existing condition of eastern column. April 2026.



Figure 7. Existing condition of eastern column. April 2026.