




Commission of Architectural Review

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| 6. COA-142780-2024 | Final Review | Meeting Date: 2/27/2024 |
| Applicant/Petitioner | Rodney Young, Roofing Innovations | |
| Project Description | Replace a steel fire escape with wood. | |
| Project Location |  | |
| Address: 21 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 north fire escape and the exterior stairs located on the south side of the building.• The north fire escape is only visible from the rear, public alley. The exterior stairs on the south side of the building, are 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 that the north fire escape and part of the south stairs have been replaced with a new wood framing system. | | |
| Staff Recommendation | Approval | |
| Staff Contact | Annie Delaroderie, anne.delaroderie@rva.gov , 804-646-6335. | |
| Previous Reviews | None | |
| Conditions for Approval | Staff recommends: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decking joists underneath not be exposed but covered with a smooth material/cover.• The pickets not be nailed- up but rather built in the Richmond-Rail style.• New wooden fire escape be painted black or a dark color to better resemble to original steel. | |

Staff Analysis

| Guideline Reference | Reference Text | Analysis |
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| 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 escape is unknown. Staff was unable to determine if these were the original fire escapes but believes they were 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 system was likely the original material and created a character-defining element. Installing wooden staircases in this location changes the visual appearance of this building and is not compatible. |
| 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> | <p>The fire escapes on the north side of this building were in poor condition and needed to be removed. Staff notified the applicant about needing CAR approval and they stopped the project. Typically, wood is considered a very different material and should not be seen as compatible. Since, this staircase is minimally visible, wood is an acceptable material in this location. The new wooden fire escape sticks out a bit more from the building than the former, metal fire escape. Staff also noticed that the new fire escape has exposed framing and nailed-up pickets. <u>Staff recommends that all of the decking joists underneath not be exposed but be covered with a smooth material/cover.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the pickets not be nailed-up but rather built in the Richmond-Rail style.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the new wooden fire escape be painted black or a dark color to better resemble to original steel.</u></p> |

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. Façade of 21 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 rear of 21 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard.



Figure 5. View of the replaced staircase on the north side of 21 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard.



Figure 6. Zoomed In View of the replaced staircase on the north side of 21 South Arthur Ashe Boulevard.



Figure 7. Image of the former metal fire escape, photograph from June 2023.