

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
October 27, 2015 Meeting**

5. **CAR No. 15-128 (S. Brooks)** **3 N Boulevard  
Boulevard Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Install new upper front porch railing**

**Staff Contact:** **K. Chen**

The applicant seeks approval for the installation of a balustrade on the front balcony of this structure in the Boulevard Old and Historic District. The balcony measures 8'x19' and currently has a door which leads out to it. Photographic evidence shows the existence of a balustrade on this front balcony soon after the building was constructed. A similar, if not identical, but altered balustrade can be found on the adjacent building at 1 N. Boulevard. The property owner has 15 of what they believe to be the original balusters, but they are too short to meet modern building code. The applicant proposes installing a balustrade that incorporates the historic balusters and modern elements for a total height of 42".

New 10.25" square pedestals will be aligned with the columns below and a balustrade composed of a paneled base and the historic balusters will engage with the piers. The new composition will be 42" in height. The sides of the balcony will be enclosed with solid paneled sections. The applicant is proposing to construct the new elements out of custom composite millwork.

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**Staff recommend denial of the project.** The proposed balustrade does not meet the guidance contained on page 67 of *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* – Building Elements: Porches, Entrances and Doors especially item #11 that cautions against alterations that give an appearance that was not originally intended. There is both physical and documentary evidence of the original appearance of the balustrade. The guidelines also states on page 47: "Porch railings and balustrades are important character defining features of a structure. The proportions of these railings are an important element to the appearance of both their structure and the rhythms of the entire neighborhood." The proposed railing does not maintain the historic proportions for balustrades found in the area, the recreation is not based on the physical and documentary evidence, and creates an appearance that was not originally intended. A replacement balustrade with a backer rail that meets the guidelines and code, as illustrated on page 47 of the Guidelines, was approved at the May 26, 2015 meeting.

It is the assessment of staff that, the application is not consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation outlined in Section 114-930.7(b) 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.