

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
May 26, 2013, Meeting**

5. **CAR No. 15-071** (B. Lewis) **2804 East Leigh Street
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Install new awning**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests permission to install a new awning at the side of this Colonial Revival style house located in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District. The applicant proposes a retractable awning that will span the first floor deck and project from the side of the building. The shed-style awning will be 12 feet wide and project 10'-2" from the house. The awning will be attached to the house with aluminum brackets and roller bars. The applicant submitted the application indicating that the awning would be either constructed of durable woven fabric in Western Red or Red Brick color or constructed of laminated fabric in the Coffee Stripe color which is predominantly a beige color with brown and tan horizontal stripes at the end. Since the application submittal, the applicant has indicated that she would like to use the laminated material in the Coffee Stripe color.

Staff recommends approval of the project with a condition. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* notes that the use of awnings on residential structures should be used to enhance both the property on which the awning is placed, as well as the district as a whole (p. 62). The *Guidelines* recommends placing awnings in a way that prevents important architectural features from being damaged or obscured. Awning colors are to be compatible with the existing colors of the property, and metal, plastic, or overly ornate fabric should not be used.

The National Park Service provides additional guidance with regard to awnings in *Preservation Brief 44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings – Repair, Replacement, and New Design*. Brief 44 notes that historically, the primary purpose of an awning was functional rather than decorative, and were installed only as necessary. The brief notes that traditional shed awnings are an appropriate form. The document also states that it is preferable that the awnings have free-hanging valences, as they are characteristic of most historic awnings. The Park Service recommends against staple-in awning systems, and promotes the use of either retractable awnings or awnings with a covering laced onto a frame.

The retractable awning will not obscure important architectural features, and its installation will not damage historic fabric. Staff recommends that the awning mounted hardware be installed directly into the mortar joints to avoid damage to

the historic masonry. The proposed laminated material and color selection are not appropriate for the historic district as the laminated material feels like and has the appearance of plastic, and the placement of the propose stripe is not in a location typical seen in historic awnings. Staff recommends that the applicant use the durable woven fabric and the Western Red or Red Brick color which both have vertical stripes which are more characteristic of historic awnings and colors compatible with the building's brick façade.

It is the assessment of staff that the application, with the conditions noted above, is 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 page cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.