




Commission of Architectural Review

1. COA-137121-2023	Final Review	Meeting Date: 11/28/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Brian Spencer	
Project Description	Replace an existing concrete curb and stairs with brick.	
Project Location		
Address: 313 North 32 nd Street		
Historic District: Chimborazo Park		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new duplex is being constructed at this address. The front steps of the new house do not line up with the extant concrete steps that are built into the east side of the concrete curb of the sidewalk. The owner of the new property plans to replace the concrete retaining wall with a small brick wall and brick steps to match the brick steps at 311 North 32nd Street. 		
Staff Recommendation	Partial Approval	
Staff Contact	Annie Delaroderie, anne.delaroderi@rva.gov , 804-646-6335	
Previous Reviews	<p>This project was presented to the Commission at the October 2023 Meeting. A Commissioner made a motion to defer the project. The commissioner suggested the owner should adjust the size and length of the porch steps instead of altering the historic concrete steps. All members of the Commission agreed to defer the project.</p> <p>Plans for the new construction at this property were conceptually reviewed by the Commission in February and March 2022. The project was deferred to the April meeting to give the applicant more time to modify the building design. The final design for the house was approved in April 2022, with conditions relating to final materials. Final paint colors for the building were approved administratively in June 2022. A new administrative approval for final paint colors was issued in May 2023.</p>	
Conditions for Approval	<p>Staff recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff recommends approval of the request to replace and repair the existing concrete stairs and retaining wall to align with the new construction's front stairs. Staff recommends that the concrete wall and steps be 	

	<p>realigned and repaired/replaced in-kind with concrete. New wall and steps to match the existing dimensions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends denial of the request to use brick for the new retaining wall and steps.
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Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards For Site Improvements: Fences and Walls, page 78.	<p><i>Fences and walls help define property lines and outdoor spaces. 1) Original fences and walls should be retained and maintained whenever possible.</i></p> <p><i>2) Existing brick or stone walls, boxwood hedges wooden picket fences and cast or wrought iron fences should not be removed or replaced with contemporary features.</i></p>	<p>The concrete curb and low concrete step are historic details of this block. An identical concrete curb with low concrete steps is located across the street.</p> <p>These low concrete curbs on either side of the sidewalk are common throughout the St. Johns Church and Chimborazo Park City Old and Historic Districts.</p> <p>Staff was unable to locate an approval for the brick steps and retaining wall at 311 N. 32nd Street.</p>
New Construction: Fences & Walls, page 51	<p><i>1) Fence, wall and gate designs should reflect the scale of historic structures they surround, as well as the character of nearby fences, walls and gates.</i></p> <p><i>2) Fence, wall or gate materials should relate to building materials commonly found in the neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>While the sidewalk on this side of the street is laid with bricks, all of the curbs are made of concrete.</p> <p>The existing, original concrete stairs do not align with the front stairs of the newly constructed 313 N. 32nd Street. The current configuration is not safe and should be aligned.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends approval of the request to replace and repair the existing concrete stairs and retaining wall to align with the new construction's front stairs.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the concrete wall and steps be realigned and repaired/replaced in-kind with concrete. New wall and steps to match the existing dimensions.</u></p> <p><u>Staff recommends denial of the request to use brick for the new retaining wall and steps.</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

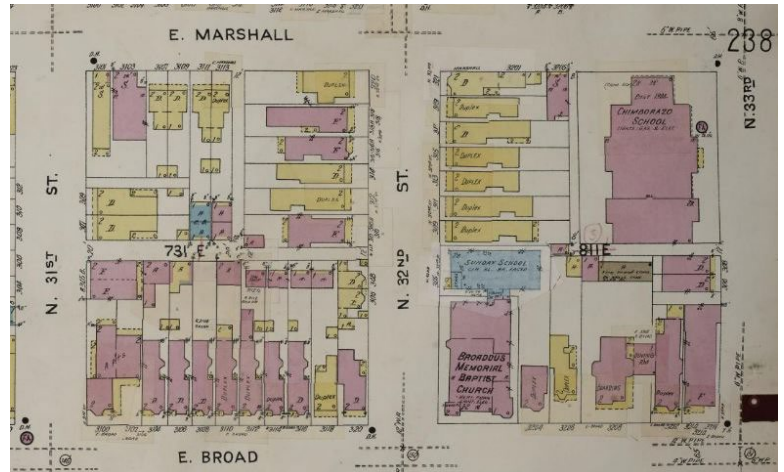


Figure 1. Façade, west side of 313 North 32nd Street.

Figure 2. Sanborn Map from 1950, showing the historic house previously located at 313 North 32d Street.



Figure 3. The staircase of the new house at 313 North 32nd Street does not line up with the historic concrete step and curb.



Figure 4. Staircase with low brick steps and low brick wall at the neighboring 311 North 32nd Street.



Figure 5. Low brick wall west of 311 North 32nd Street.



Figure 6. Extant concrete curb and concrete steps, along the east side of North 32nd Street.