



Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia



Commission of Architectural Review

COA-103051-2021	Final Review	Meeting Date: 12/21/2021
Applicant/Petitioner	Sharron Smith	
Project Description	Rebuild a previously removed covered front porch.	
Project Location		
Address: 2311 Venable Street		
Historic District: Union Hill		
High-Level Details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The applicant proposes to rebuild a previously-removed covered front porch on a ca. 1915 two-story attached home. The applicant proposes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Install new tongue-and-groove porch decking, columns and Richmond railing; Install a new TPO roof with a built-in gutter lining; and Replace the deteriorated soffit on the second story of the front of the house. Staff notes that the front porch had deteriorated over time and was completely removed sometime prior to December 2021, without review and approval by the Commission. 		
Staff Recommendation	Approval, with Conditions	
Staff Contact	Alyson Oliver, alyson.oliver@RVA.gov , 804-646-3709	
Previous Reviews	<p>While the Commission has not previously reviewed a COA application for this property, staff has been in touch with the applicant regarding a property maintenance violation that was issued in February of 2020. In order to abate the violation, the following work was to be completed: the decorative features (i.e. facial boards, trim, soffits, rake boards, etc.) that were removed from the property were to be repaired/replaced; all peeling, flaking, and chipping paint was to be eliminated prior to any painting; all rotten or damaged wood was to be replaced prior to any painting; and all exterior wood surfaces (including but not limited to doors, windows, front porch handrails, pickets, and decking) were to be power washed and have a protective treatment applied.</p> <p>It appears that when the violation was issued, the original front porch was still intact. The front porch was removed around March 2021 without CAR approval.</p>	

<p>Conditions for Approval</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recommends that the reconstructed front porch match the original design as closely as possible. The details to be retained have been ranked by priority below. If it is not feasible to make all of the repairs at this time, the lower priority elements may be added in the future as resources come available. Final drawings and material specifications should be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ High Priority: Repair and retain the existing turned posts that are attached to the front façade. ○ High Priority: Incorporate turned post columns matching the existing turned posts into the porch design. ○ Lower Priority: Incorporate architectural details matching the original front porch, including spindle work frieze and sawn brackets. If submitted at a later date, approval to be completed administratively. • Staff recommends the use of a Richmond Rail design for the new porch balustrade. • Staff recommends that the new TPO roofing be a dark color, submitted to staff for review and approval.
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Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
<p>Building Elements, porches, entrances, and doors #4 pg. 71</p>	<p><i>Do not remove or radically change entrances and porches important in defining the building's overall historic character. Front and side porches are architecturally more ornate than utilitarian back porches.</i></p>	<p>Based on photographic documentation of 2311 Venable Street, the original front porch featured decorative spindle work, sawn brackets, and turned posts. This design is also present on other unaltered front porches on the adjacent attached residences. Staff notes that the entirety of the front porch has been removed with the exception of the turned posts that are attached to the front façade.</p>
<p>Building Elements, porches, entrances, and doors #5 pg. 71</p>	<p><i>The entire porch should only be replaced if it is too deteriorated to repair or is completely missing; replacements should match the original as much as possible.</i></p>	<p>Based on photographic evidence and past code cases for this property, staff notes that the porch suffered from a lack of maintenance, rendering it deteriorated beyond repair and was subsequently removed. The newly proposed front porch does not match the original design. <u>Staff recommends that the reconstructed front porch match the original design as closely as possible.</u></p>
<p>Building Elements, porches, entrances, and doors #8 pg. 71</p>	<p><i>Do not strip entrances and porches of historic material and details that should be retained in any repair or partial replacement.</i></p>	<p>The applicant has removed the entirety of the original front porch, with the exception of the turned posts that are attached to the front façade. <u>Staff recommends that the applied turned posts on the front façade be retained.</u></p>
<p>Porches, Doors and Entrances,</p>	<p><i>Whether as a result of lack of maintenance or change in architectural fashion, the removal of a porch can result</i></p>	<p>On a site visit, staff noted that 2311 Venable street was one of several attached row homes along this portion of Venable street. Of the</p>

<p>Porch Removal, pg. 101</p>	<p><i>in a complete alteration of the building's historic appearance. In several Districts the design integrity of entire blocks has been adversely affected by the elimination of porches.</i></p>	<p>residential units that compose this row of attached residences, some of the individual porches have been altered or are lacking detail.</p> <p>The porch at 2303 Venable features box columns and no other significant architectural detailing. The porches on 2305 and 2307 feature turned columns, but are lacking other detail such as sawn brackets and spindle work friezes. The dwellings on either side of the subject property (2309 and 2013 Venable) feature porches with turned post columns, spindle work friezes, and sawn brackets, similar to the features of the porch that was removed from 2311 Venable. These features are arguably one of the most character defining elements of this block.</p>
<p>Porches and Porch Details, pg. 49 #1</p>	<p><i>Porches railings and balustrades are important character-defining features of historic buildings. The proportions of these railings are a significant contributing feature to the appearance of both the individual structure and the character of the entire neighborhood.</i></p>	<p>The newly proposed front porch design does not include any of the original front porch elements, but rather will be a simplified design that uses Doric columns and Richmond rail. The new front porch, as proposed, does not replicate the appearance of the original front porch.</p> <p><u>Staff recommends that the front porch be reconstructed to incorporate the decorative, character defining elements of the original front porch based on the photographic documentation and the existing applied turned posts, including the spindle work, brackets, and turned posts. Final drawings and material specifications should be submitted to staff for administrative review and approval.</u></p>
<p>Porches and Porch Details, pg. 49 #2</p>	<p><i>When designing a new railing for a new infill building, or for an existing building which has lost its railing and for which no documentary or physical evidence survives, the balusters in the traditional Richmond rail are generally rectangular in section (with the narrow dimension facing the street) or square. The baluster is fitted into the recess in the top rail and a sloped bottom rail. Typical deck railings, consisting of nailed-up stock elements, are not approved as they are not based on a compatible historical model found in Richmond's Old and Historic Districts.</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes installing new Richmond railing. <u>Staff was unable to locate photographic documentation of the original railing design on the porch and recommends approval of the new railing.</u></p> <p>A photo of the dwelling dating to 1993 indicates a latticework balustrade, but there is insufficient evidence to suggest that this detailing was original. An earlier, low-quality image of the dwelling, which was acquired from the City of Richmond Assessor's Office, indicates a balustrade with detailing similar to the proposed Richmond railing (exact date unknown).</p>
<p>Porches and Porch Details, pg. 49 #5</p>	<p><i>Porches roofs are encouraged to utilize standing- or flat-lock metal seam roofs that are hand-seamed, or closely approximate handseaming. Seams that, in section, are large, rectangular seams, reminiscent of pre-formed seams utilized</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes constructing a new TPO membrane roof. <u>Staff recommends that the new TPO roofing be a dark color, submitted to staff for review and approval.</u></p>

on prefabricated industrial or commercial structures, are not acceptable. Membrane roofs are acceptable substitutes for flat-lock seamed metal roofs.

Figures



Figure 1. Current photo of front façade

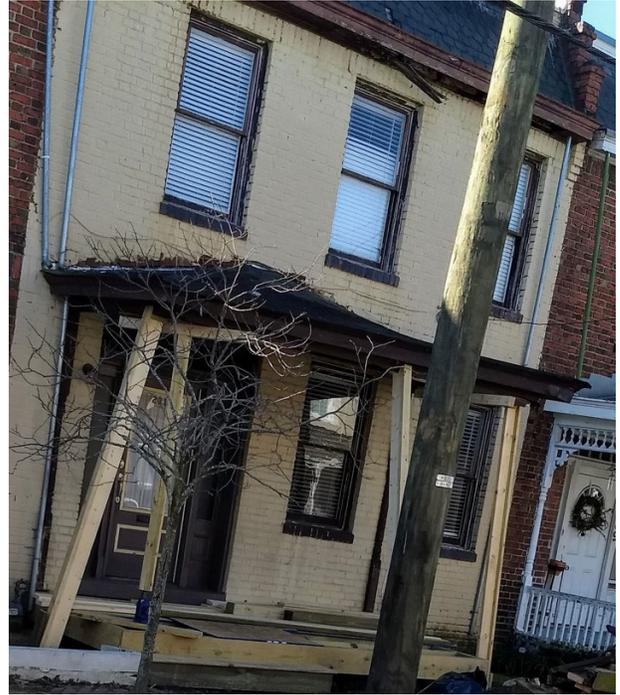


Figure 2. Photo from March 2021 showing the unstable front porch that has since been removed



Figure 3. Historic photo from VCU archives showing front porch with latticework balustrade (1993).