




**Staff Report**  
**City of Richmond, Virginia**



**Commission of Architectural Review**

3. COA-112857-2022	Final Review Meeting Date: 6/28/2022
Applicant/Petitioner	Congregation Beth Ahabah
Project Description	Install window security and a rear chain-link fence.
Project Location	
Address: 1121 W. Franklin St.	
Historic District: West Franklin Street	
<p><b>High-Level Details:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant is requesting to install a chain-link fence along the rear property line of 1109 and 1111 West Franklin Street, as well as to make security modifications to an existing fence located between 1111 and 1117 West Franklin Street.</li> <li>The applicant also requests the replacement of three rear facing doors and one front façade door, the installation of metal security bars on 9 existing windows, and the installation of anti-ballistic glass film on several additional windows.</li> <li>The installation of additional bollards along West Franklin Street is also included in this application. However, this request is for improvements located within the right-of-way and is not subject to CAR review.</li> </ul>	
Staff Recommendation	Deferral
Staff Contact	Alyson Oliver, <a href="mailto:alyson.oliver@RVA.gov">alyson.oliver@RVA.gov</a> , 804-646-3709
Previous Reviews	<p>Congregation Beth Ahabah has made several modifications to their property that have come before CAR over the years. Recently, in 2019, the applicant submitted applications to allow additional fencing along the front and rear facades of their properties, which resulted in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Approval of metal fencing under the bridge between 1117 and 1121 West Franklin Street;</li> <li>Approval of metal fencing between 1111 and 1117 West Franklin Street between the front facades (referred to as the “east gate” in the current application);</li> <li>Approval of a metal side yard gate to the southeast of 1109 West Franklin Street; and</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A metal security gate along the rear property line between 1125 and 1121 West Franklin Street.</li> </ul>
<b>Staff Recommendations</b>	<p>Staff is recommending deferral of this application to allow the applicant time to provide additional information on the requests. Prior to the next submission, staff recommends that the applicant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide additional information on the extent to which razor wire will be provided above the new portion of the fence.</li> <li>Consider a fence design that more closely matches the previously approved rear fence that is located between 1121 and 1125 West Franklin Street (COA-048413-2019).</li> <li>Provide additional information on the proposed design of the East Gate modifications (between 1111 and 1117 West Franklin Street), including sketches. Staff is generally not supportive of razor wire that will be visible from a main thoroughfare.</li> <li>Propose to paint the new security doors a color compatible with the exterior of the building.</li> <li>Provide plans for the proposed rehabilitation of the front door of 1111 West Franklin Street.</li> <li>Install metal window bars using fasteners attached to the mortar, rather than the brick.</li> </ul>

## Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for Site Improvements, Fences & Walls, pg. 78 #3	<p><i>If not original to a site, new street-front fences, walls, and gates should be compatible with the historic structure in design, materials, and location, and should be based on physical or documentary evidence from the site. In instances where physical or documentary evidence does not exist, the proposed fence, wall, or gate should be compatible in design, materials, and location, and should look to precedent on the block face or the block face opposite, or within the district, but not outside the district. By following this guidance, in some circumstances, permission for new fences, walls, or gates may be granted.</i></p>	<p>The applicant is requesting one new stretch of fence along the rear property line behind 1109 and 1111 West Franklin Street (referred to in the application as the “lot gate” or “lot fence”), as well as modifications to an existing fence located between 1111 and 1117 West Franklin Street (referred to in the application as the “east gate”). Both requests are being made to enhance the security of the site.</p> <p><u>Lot Fence</u></p> <p>The applicant is requesting to extend an existing chain link fence across the rear property line to prevent unauthorized vehicles from parking within close proximity to the Beth Ahabah properties. Staff was unable to locate any information on when the existing chain-link fence was installed. Staff, however, does note that the addition of the razor wire above the existing chain-link fence was added some time after July 2019.</p> <p>Chain link fences with razor wire are generally not permitted in City Old and Historic Districts. <b>Staff recommends that the applicant provide additional information as to extent that razor wire will be provided above the new portion of the fence. As an</b></p>

		<p>alternative to a chain link fence with razor wire, staff recommends that the applicant consider a fence design that more closely matches the previously approved rear fence that is located between 1121 and 1125 West Franklin Street (COA-048413-2019 -- see Figure 2).</p> <p><u>East Gate</u></p> <p>The applicant is proposing modifications to the exiting fence between 1111 and 1117 West Franklin Street. The requested modifications include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A shield, which “will be extended around the corner of the wall next to the gate to prohibit an intruder from being able to circumvent the gate or reach in to push the emergency exit bar;” and</li> <li>• The addition of razor wire.</li> </ul> <p>It is unclear the extent to which the proposed razor wire will be installed. It is also unclear how the proposed shield will be designed and installed. <b>Staff recommends the applicant provide additional information on the proposed design of these modifications, including sketches. Staff is generally not supportive of razor wire that will be visible from a main thoroughfare.</b></p>
Standards for Site Improvements, Fences & Walls, pg. 78 #7	<i>Fences in Old and Historic Districts located along main thoroughfares shall be painted or opaquely stained a color or colors complementary to the main structure.</i>	<b>Staff recommends that the new Lot Fence be painted dark brown or another neutral color to match the existing buildings and fences on the property. Staff also recommends that the East Gate modifications be painted to match the existing fence.</b>
Standards for Site Improvements, Fences & Walls, pg. 78 #8	<i>Chain-link fences, split-rail fences and concrete block walls are not appropriate in any City Old and Historic District. There may be isolated cases where these materials would be allowed for use in rear yards, but Commission approval would be the exception and not the rule.</i>	<p>The applicant is requesting to extend an existing chain link fence across the rear property line to prevent unauthorized vehicles from parking within close proximity to the Beth Ahabah properties. Staff was unable to locate any information on when the existing chain-link fence was installed. Staff, however, does note that the addition of the razor wire above the existing chain-link fence was added some time after July 2019.</p> <p>As chain-link fences are generally discouraged in City Old and Historic Districts, <b>staff recommends that the applicant consider a fence design that more closely matches the previously approved rear fence that is located between 1121 and 1125 West Franklin Street (COA-048413-2019 -- see Figure 2).</b></p>

<p>Building Elements, Porches, Entrances, &amp; Doors, pg. 71 #14</p>	<p><i>Do not remove original doors and door surrounds. Replacement doors and door surrounds with stamped or molded faux paneled doors are inappropriate substitutes for door types found in historic districts.</i></p>	<p>The applicant proposes to replace three rear facing doors with new security doors, as outlined on pages 15-21 of the submitted application. The three rear doors are not original to the buildings. Staff supports the replacement security doors and <b>recommends that they be painted a color compatible with exterior of the building.</b></p> <p>The application also notes that the front door on 1111 West Franklin Street will be replaced or reconstructed (see page 14-15 of the application). The application does not appear to include information on how this will be achieved. <b>Staff recommends the applicant provide plans for the proposed renovation of the front door of 1111 West Franklin Street.</b></p>
<p>Window Security</p>		<p>The applicant is also requesting to install additional security measures to several windows on the property. These measures will include the installation of decorative metal security bars on nine windows (two of which will face West Franklin Street), as well as the application of Anti-Ballistic Glass Film on several additional windows. The proposed window bars will match existing decorative metal window bars that have previously been installed on the property.</p> <p>The <i>Guidelines</i> do not consider window security measures such as those proposed in this application. However, staff notes that several other properties in the vicinity have installed similar metal window bars for security purposes and the anti-ballistic glass film is not likely to significantly modify the appearance of the existing windows. Staff is supportive of the proposed window bars and anti-ballistic glass film. However, <b>staff recommends that metal bars be installed using fasteners attached to the mortar, rather than the brick.</b></p>

## Figures

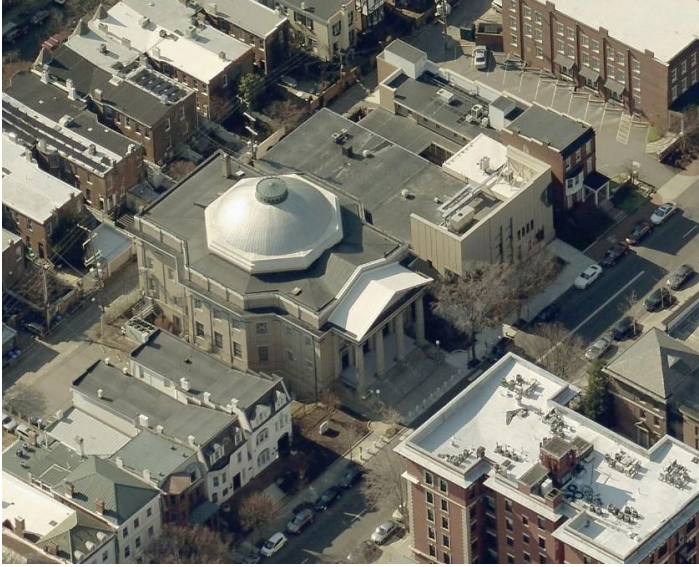


Figure 1. Aerial of Beth Ahabah Campus  
(February 2022)



Figure 2. Existing Rear Parking Fence Between 1121  
and 1125 West Franklin Street