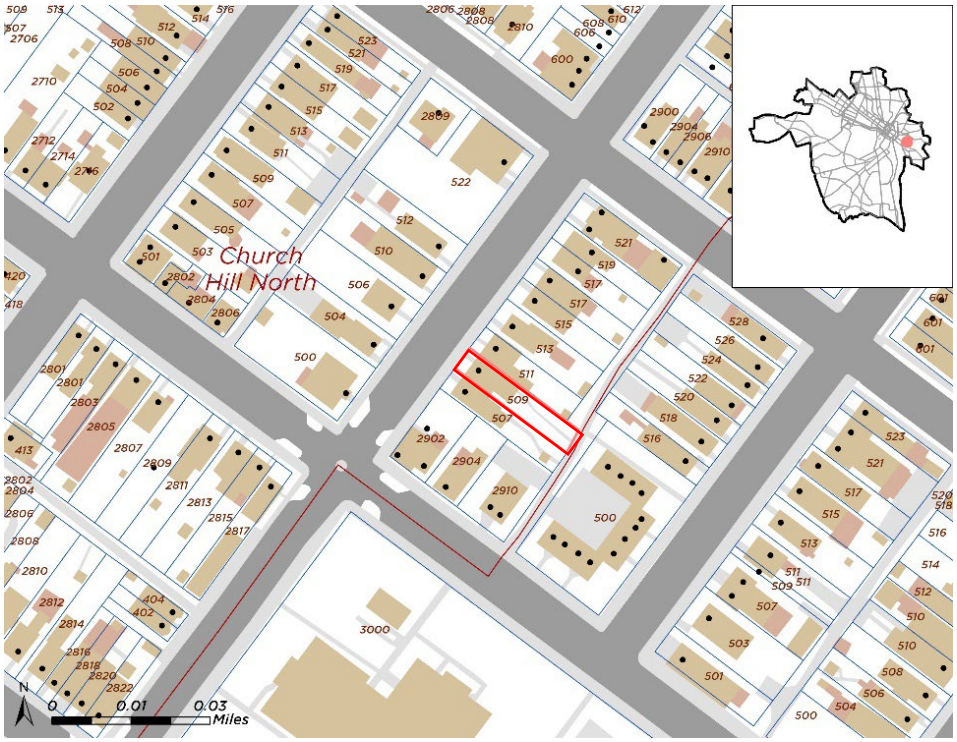
Staff Report
City of Richmond, Virginia

Commission of Architectural Review

RICHMOND PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

6. COA-123343-2023	**Final Review** **Meeting Date:** 1/24/2023
Applicant/Petitioner	Dr. Amanda George
Project Description	Replace deteriorated wooden architectural elements with substitute materials.
Project Location **Address**: 509 N 29th Street **Historic District**: Church Hill North **High-Level Details:** The applicant proposes to replace deteriorated architectural elements with substitute materials. The subject dwelling is a vernacular, frame, Italianate building with a full-width covered front porch circa 1880. It appears that the front porch posts and brick piers are not original to the building. The building also has a large rear addition. On the rear, the applicant proposes to remove a drip cap, fascia, window trim, soffit, and a door; replacing with PVC elements. On the front facade, the applicant proposes to remove the upper crown molding, fascia, and soffit; the front porch crown molding, fascia, and soffit, and replace with PVC elements.	
Staff Recommendation	**Approval, with Conditions**
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, (804) 646-6569, alex.dandridge@rva.gov
Previous Reviews	In 2007 & 2008 the Commission reviewed and approved several exterior alterations to the subject property including: removal of non-original front concrete stairs and the installation of wooden stairs, removal of non-original aluminum siding and the installation/repair of wood siding, replacement of non-original windows (all) with new aluminum clad wood windows, the demolition of a non-original 1-story addition and the construction of new two-story rear addition.

Conditions for Approval	**Rear of building:** • Approval of the replacement of all architectural elements listed in the application with the condition that the PVC be a cellular PVC with a matte finish that can be painted, and that the PVC match the exiting materials in dimension and design. • Final rear door design be submitted to staff for review and approval. **Front of building:** • Front porch and second-story cornice molding, fascia, and soffit be repaired rather than replaced. • Staff recommends that the new front door design be simple and submitted to staff for review and approval.

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, pg. 59, #7	*7. Repair damaged elements instead of replacing them. Use materials that match the original in type, or use physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections. Use available documentation when reconstructing missing elements. Pictorial, historical or physical documentation can be helpful.*	On the rear of the building the applicant is proposing to remove window trim, a drip cap, fascia, window sill, rear porch ceiling, rear door and soffit. These architectural elements will be replaced with PVC materials. Several options of exterior doors were provided in the application. City records indicate that there have been significant alterations to the windows on the rear original massing of the building, and that the rear projection is an addition that was approved in 2008. Staff supports the replacement of the proposed elements listed above, as they're not original to the property and their replacement will not radically alter the appearance of the building's rear. Staff recommends approval of the replacement of the following with PVC on the rear of the building: Window trim on six windows listed in the application, drip cap, fascia, ceiling of rear porch, soffit, and the rear door, with the condition that the PVC be a cellular PVC with a matte finish that can be painted, and that the PVC match the exiting materials in dimension and design, and that a final rear door design be submitted to staff for review and approval.

		On the front façade, the applicant is proposing to replace the existing upper crown molding, fascia, and soffit and the front porch's crown molding, fascia, and soffit. These elements will be replaced with PVC The applicant also proposes to replace the front door. Staff does not believe that the existing front door is original to the property. The front stairs, hand rails, and post are proposed to be removed and replaced with wooden posts, composite wood treads and PVC risers with concealed fasteners. Railings will be TimberTech's Impression Rail Express Aluminum Railing System in white. City records indicate that the existing stairs and railings are not original to the structure and were constructed in 2007-2008. Staff supports the replacement of the front porch stairs with the listed materials.
Substitute Materials, pg. 60	*When and where to use substitute materials is a decision to be reached only after careful consideration for the consequences to an historic structure and not before more appropriate preservation options have been explored.* *The use of synthetic materials that will alter the appearance, proportion and/ or details of an historic structure is strongly discouraged.* *The Guidelines give the Commission guidance, and ultimately the authority, to approve substitute materials, stating that, "substitute materials may be appropriate and economical replacements" in the following circumstances:* *1. Unavailability of Historic Materials* *2. Unavailability of Skilled Craftsman* *3. Replacement of poor quality materials.*	Staff was unable to locate any documentation that demonstrated the front façade materials listed for replacement (other than the front stairs and railing) are not original to the dwelling. On a site visit, staff observed some deterioration on the front porch entablature likely caused by a leaking downspout, but only in the areas that were connected to the face of the building. Paint was peeling on the crown molding due to what looked like excess moisture. The molding details on the front porch and upper cornice are not elaborate and would be easily replicated; however, Staff doesn't believe the entirety of the front porch and upper cornice molding, fascia, and soffit are deteriorated beyond repair and recommends that other preservation measure be explored prior to allowing for their removal and replacement with a substitute material. Staff recommends that the front porch and second-story cornice molding, fascia, and soffit be repaired rather than replaced.

		In addition, staff advises that issues with water drainage from the front downspout be resolved to prevent future deterioration. Staff recommends that the new front door design be simple and submitted to staff for review and approval.
Building Elements, Porches and Porch Details, #5, pg.49	Porch 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 on prefabricated industrial or commercial structures, are not acceptable. Membrane roofs are acceptable substitutes for flat-lock seamed metal roofs.	The applicant proposes to replace the existing front porch roof with black EPDM roofing. Black EPDM is an appropriate substitute material for front porch roofs.

Figures

Figure 1. 509 N 29th Street front façade 2023

Figure 2. *509 N 29th Street front façade 1950's, City of Richmond Office of the Assessor*

Figure 3. 509 N. 29 front porch deteriorated wooden elements.

Figure 4. *509 N. 29 front porch wooden elements.*