

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
June 24, 2013, Meeting**

6. **CAR No. 14-68** (Morrison Development) **1827 W. Grace Street**
West Grace Street Old & Historic District

Project Description: **Construct new rear deck and stair**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests permission to construct a new upper deck and stair at the rear of this property in the West Grace Street Old and Historic District. This project is part of a larger effort to renovate the structure for habitation, as well as to make the rear egress compliant with building code, which the previous stair system was not. The deck and stair would be constructed of pressure treated lumber. The deck itself would extend off the rear of the property 4' and be 12' wide. The stair would be 3' wide with an intermediate landing of 3' by 3', followed by the second stair, also 3' wide. The upper portion of the stair would run 11'-11" directly from the rear of the property, before meeting the landing, turning right, and running another 11'-11" to the ground.

The railings along the deck would be composed of 2" x 2" balustrades, 42" in height, spaced approximately 3 7/8" apart with a 2" x 4" handrail and 2" x 4" cap. The railings along each side of the stairs would be of the same dimension and spacing but 34" in height instead.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* indicate that, "Decks should not alter, damage or destroy significant site elements of the property," and that, "Decks should complement the architectural features of the main structure without creating a false historical appearance. Decks should be painted or stained a neutral color that complements one or more colors found on the main structure" (pg. 49 # 1-2). The proposed deck and stair do not alter or destroy any historic fabric and will not create a false historical appearance. Staff recommends that the final deck and stair be stained or painted in accordance with the *Guidelines*, and recommends that the applicant work with Commission staff to determine an appropriate stain or paint color.

The *Guidelines* also state that, "Deck design may include vertical picket balustrades or contemporary railing that is in scale with the house and the deck" (pg. 49 #3). Staff would recommend that the applicant use a standard Richmond rail for a design that is more compatible with the district, or that the applicant place the proposed pickets on the inside of the handrail for a more finished appearance.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions noted above, the application is consistent with the Standards for New Construction outlined in Section 114-930.7(c) 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.