

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
October 27, 2015 Meeting**

6. **CAR No. 15-129** (C. Keck)

**512 West 20th Street
Springhill Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Install porch railings on front porch**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to install porch railings to the front and side of an existing front porch. This application is the result of enforcement activity for alterations to the front of the structure which included the removal of the original porch siding and the replacement of the siding, front door and porch posts and columns.

Below is a brief history of the Commission's activity related to this property:

- 03/04/2010 CAR staff sent Mr. Keck letter apprising him of his responsibilities as a new owner of property in a City Old and Historic District
- 08/27/2010 Mr. Keck applied to CAR to remove aluminum siding and install unbeaded Hardie Plank siding with a smooth finish
- 09/28/2010 CAR approved the application for the removal of aluminum siding and the installation of smooth-finish, unbeaded Hardie Plank siding
- 01/16/2015 In response to a call, CAR served Mr. Keck with a Notice of Violation for the replacement of porch piers and columns, removal of picket porch rail, replacement of clapboard siding, removal of attic vent, and painting without the required Certificate of Appropriateness.
- 02/20/2015 Mr. Keck applied for CAR review to address the violations at the property.
- 03/24/2015 CAR deferred action on the application in order to give the applicant, who was not present, the opportunity to provide additional information and clarification to the CAR.
- 05/29/2015 Mr. Keck provided supplemental information for CAR review
- 06/23/2015 CAR denied the application because features that should have been retained and repaired or replaced in kind were removed or replaced with new features of different form and materials. The CAR recommended the installation of smooth unbeaded siding on the front elevation of the building, including the gable, the installation of a simple wooden Craftsman-style door, and the rebuilding of the front porch posts, columns and railings to match the form and materials present at the house in September of 2010.

- 07/08/2015 Mr. Keck filed an appeal with the City Clerk's Office to appeal the CAR's June 23, 2015, decision.
- 09/21/2015 City Council affirmed the CAR's decision as Council failed to modify or reverse the decision of the CAR within 75 days from the date the appeal was filed.

As the decision of Commission to deny the removal of the porch railings and the replacement of the siding, front door, and porch piers and columns has been upheld by City Council due to the unsuccessful appeal; the property is still under violation. The application before the Commission attempts only to address the violation regarding the porch railings. It should be noted that the piers to which the proposed railing is to be attached are under violation. The applicant proposes to install a Richmond rail style railing which he states will match the original railing. The proposed pickets will be $\frac{3}{4}$ " by $1\frac{1}{4}$ " and 36" in height. The proposed bottom and top rails will be $1\text{-}\frac{5}{16}$ " by $3\frac{1}{4}$ ".

Staff recommends approval with conditions. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* state that entrances and porches should not be radically changed as they are important in defining the building's overall historic character (pg. 67, #4). The *Guidelines* further state to look for documentary evidence which records the appearance of an original railing when replacing a railing that is no longer on a structure (pg. 67, #7).

Below is a photograph of the balustrade on the structure from September 2010:



Front porch balustrade of 512 W. 20th Street in September 2010

Per the Guidelines, the proposed balustrade should be designed to match the historic balustrade as seen in this photographic documentation. As noted by Commissioners at the Commission's meeting on June 23, 2015, the home's historic balustrade is not a traditional Richmond rail but is a Craftsman style railing with larger square pickets and a wider handrail. Therefore in order to accurately reconstruct the historic railing, staff recommends approval of the installation of a wooden porch railing with the conditions that the railing include at least 2 inches by 2 inches square pickets and a top and bottom rail of an appropriate width as determined and administratively approved by staff. Staff further recommends that the installation of the porch railing shall occur only after the violation regarding the porch piers and columns has been abated. It should be noted that the property remains in violation until the applicant abates the violations for all modifications to the structure.

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