

## **Commission of Architectural Review Guidelines for Administrative Approval of Handrails and Porch Railings**

**Introduction:** Handrails and porch railings are typically minor modifications that are often required by the building and property maintenance codes. The following guidelines are intended to allow staff to approve simple handrails and porch railings administratively and be clear about what staff may not approve.

### **A. Items delegated for staff review**

The porch railings and handrails guidelines in this section shall, upon adoption by the Commission of Architectural Review (CAR), constitute items delegated by the CAR to Commission staff for administrative review in accordance with Sec. 30-930.6(h) of the Code of the City of Richmond. Unless the Commission Secretary deems it desirable, for particular reasons, to present the items listed below to the Commission for review, Commission staff may approve them administratively. All such approvals shall be reported monthly to the Commission in accordance with Sec.30-930.6(h). These guidelines shall serve as a supplement to and be deemed consistent with the *Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*. Administrative approvals may be granted for porch railings and handrails as follows:

1. Staff may approve up to two metal handrails for any type or location of porch, deck, or stoop as long as the railings are a simple wrought iron design and installed in such a way as to have a minimum impact on historic materials. Such railings shall be painted black, black green, or a color complementary to the primary structure on the property. The following are examples of this type of installation:



2. Staff may approve simple wooden handrails on a wooden porch or deck. Such railings must have a bottom rail, balusters, and a top rail in the manner of a Richmond Rail. Such railings may employ details such as moldings, caps, newels, and balusters that are copied literally or abstracted from the historic porch or deck to which they are attached. The following is an example of this type of railing:



3. For the installation of a porch railing on a deck or porch where none exists staff may approve installation of a Richmond rail unless staff deem it to be inappropriate for a particular circumstance. Such railings shall conform to the Richmond Rail design shown on page 46 of the Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines.

4. Staff may approve any porch railing or handrail for which the placement and/or design is substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence. Such evidence shall be specific to the particular historic property.

5. Staff may approve unornamented pipe railings or unornamented wrought iron handrails on the stairs of a commercial building, warehouse, or industrial building. Simple metal railings with top and bottom rails and pickets may be approved for use at stairwells and loading docks of commercial, industrial, or warehouse buildings. Examples of these kinds of railings are shown below:



6. Pipe handrails may be approved for use on the rear stairs of any residential building and on any front stairs where they are commonly found in similar application in that vicinity of the Old and Historic District.

7. All wooden railings will be opaquely stained or painted a color that complements one or more of the colors found on the main structure. Metal railings may be painted black, dark green, black green, or color that complements one of the colors found on the main structure.

8. In conjunction with wooden railings staff may approve painted wooden lattice to screen the underside of a porch or deck. Such a lattice treatment is shown on the following page.



## **B. Items Ineligible for Administrative Approval**

The following items shall ***under no circumstances be approved administratively*** and will require a certificate of appropriateness from the Commission of Architectural Review. It will be necessary for the Commission to determine if they are in compliance with the *Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*.

1. The installation of any type of gate or fence in conjunction with a porch or stair railing not specified in the “Guidelines for Administrative Approval of Walls, Fences and Gates.”
2. The installation of handrails that would substantially damage or modify existing landscape features including walks, curbs, retaining walls, porches or other contributing features.
3. The installation of ornamental handrails or porch rails without adequate documentary, physical, or pictorial support for their installation.
4. The installation of wooden stair rails without balusters and a bottom rail.
5. The construction of an altogether new porch, deck or ramp not authorized in other administrative guidelines.

## **C. Adoption and Effect**

These guidelines for administrative approval were adopted by the Commission of Architectural Review on **October 14, 2008** as being in accordance with and consistent with Sec. 30-930.6(h) of the Code of the City of Richmond. These guidelines are deemed to be consistent with and a supplement to the *Old and Historic District Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*. These guidelines shall be in full effect and force until amended or rescinded by the Commission.