

**Historical Architectural Review Board
COA Final Review Sheet**

HDC-2023-00063

Address: 619 N. Park Street

District: Old Fairgrounds Historic District

Applicant: Luis Rodriguez, owner

Proposal: Legalize installation of porch header, posts, and railings

Building Description:

This 3-story brick row house was constructed c. 1890. The mansard roof has slate shingles, a single dormer with two 1/1 sash windows. The first- and second-story windows are 1/1 double hung sash with segmentally arched brick lintels. Brick corbeling and a dentilated cornice separate the second and third stories. The main entry has a paneled door with a transom. The porch is concrete with metal posts and railings. There are bull-nosed concrete steps, and a basement window with a metal grille.

Project Description:

On August 30, 2023, a city inspector contacted staff about alterations to the front porch of the property at 619 N. Park Street. The inspector noted that the porch header, posts, and railings were recently replaced without permits. Such an alteration is structural and requires both a building permit and a certificate of appropriateness. Staff also notes that the porch has been carpeted. A formal notice of violation has not been issued to the owner, because the owner completed an application to obtain a certificate of appropriateness. This application proposes to legalize the porch header, posts, railings, and carpet.



**Front façade of 619 N. Park Street, 2018.
(Google StreetView)**



**Metal posts and railings prior to replacement, 2018.
(Google StreetView)**



**Porch following replacement of the posts and railings, 2023.
(Applicant)**



**Rear of 141 N. 10th Street following removal of the porch roof, 2023.
(HARB files)**

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.7 – Porches & Steps

3.7.3 Repair and restore existing porches and steps whenever possible. Salvage, repair, and reuse existing components including deck floor boards, railings, balusters, posts, and decorative trim. Repair and restore basement level windows or metal grates that are part of the porch base.

3.7.4 Replace individual deteriorated components in-kind with new materials matching the original in material composition, size, shape, profile, dimension, appearance, and finish. Custom fabrication is encouraged and may be necessary to provide an exact match. Where an exact match of the historic element cannot be found or fabricated, the new element should match the original as closely as possible.

3.7.5 Retain and repair original handrails or railings. Replace in-kind if repair is not feasible. Replacement handrails should match the existing in material, size, and appearance as closely as possible. Installation of handrails where they did not previously exist is generally not recommended due to the visual and physical impact on historic fabric; however, installation of a simple, compatible design may be acceptable for the purpose of safety and ease of access.

3.7.6 Consider restoration of previously altered porches with historically appropriate elements. Consult historic photographs to identify the original appearance. If the building is part of a pair or an attached row that was designed together, consult nearby buildings for examples.

3.7.8 If in-kind replacement is not feasible, replace with appropriate alternate materials that respect the original appearance and are durable. Composite wood decking is an appropriate alternate for tongue-and-groove wood floors if boards are similar to the original dimensions. Ceramic, tile, carpet, or cementitious coatings over wood are not appropriate floor materials. Steel, iron, and aluminum railings are acceptable replacements. Vinyl railings and trim are not appropriate alternate materials for wood elements. Use of dimensional lumber for visible parts of a porch is not appropriate.

Observations & Comments:

The applicant purchased the property in June 2023 and contends that the work was done prior to the sale. The historic wood porch had been altered at some point in the past and metal posts and railings were installed, and the porch floor was changed from wood to concrete. The current alteration removed the inappropriate metal railings and posts. Three of the metal posts were replaced with wood, and one metal post remains. The railings were replaced with wood pickets. While the work does not replicate the historic appearance of the porch, the guidelines recommend but do not require a full

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restoration to the porch's original appearance. Guideline 3.7.6 states that applicants should “*consider* restoration of previously altered porches with historically appropriate elements.” Staff finds the installation of wood to be more appropriate than metal but contends that the materials do not reflect the architectural style of the building. The guidelines advise against altering the architectural style of the porch (p. 67). Staff suggests installing turned wood columns and balusters, and installing post brackets that approximate the porch's historic appearance and better relate to the style of the original porches in the row.

The carpet does not comply with Guideline 3.7.8 and should be removed.

Revisions Submitted for October 2, 2023 Meeting:

The applicant has revised the application and is proposing to correct some of the work completed without permits by the previous owner. The application proposes to replace the railings with more appropriate wood railings and to install brackets at the top of the posts to approximate the brackets at the adjacent properties. The applicant is requesting to leave the existing wood posts in place rather than replacing them for a more appropriate post. Staff notes that the porch post shared between 619 and 621 N. Park Street was existing and matches the new posts installed at two locations within the porch of 619 N. Park Street. Staff further notes that the southernmost column was not recently replaced and is metal.

Staff contends that because the porch posts do not currently match, installing two more appropriate posts would not improve the overall appearance of the porch and would result in three different types of posts. Staff recommends installing only the proposed wood railings to legalize the work. Staff further suggests that the brackets and decorative elements proposed to be installed at the existing posts be left out of the scope, since those details are intended for turned wood columns and not the existing utilitarian posts.

Staff notes that the applicant previously agreed to remove the carpet.



Proposed spindles for the porch railings.
(Applicant)



Proposed brackets for the porch posts.
(Applicant)

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Staff Recommendation:

Approval of the proposed wood railings and legalization of the existing columns, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps.

HARB Discussion:

Mr. Lichtenwalner stated that this issue with the railings is similar to another property where that property owner installed similar railings that caused the violation. In that case, he continued, the HARB allowed the owner to turn the railings around to create a different look. He asked that the existing spindles be inserted into the top rail. He then suggested that the applicant replace the metal post with a wood post to match the others that were installed. He also added that the carpet would need to be removed to correct the violation. Mr. Huber agreed with Mr. Lichtenwalner's suggestion, adding that the applicant would need to purchase a top and bottom rail, and then insert the existing spindles into them.

Action:

Mr. Lichtenwalner moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 10/2/2023 to legalize the installation of the porch header, posts, and railings, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, provided the following:

- The corner metal porch post is replaced with a solid wood post;
- The existing spindles are reused and inserted into the top and bottom rails;
- The top rail is of an appropriate size and form to fit the spindles as presented in the application;
- All wood elements are painted; and
- The carpeting is removed to expose the concrete porch floor.

Mr. Encelewski seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.