

ISSUE: Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations

APPLICANT: Carlos and Lisa Cecchi

LOCATION: Old and Historic Alexandria District
407 Prince Street

ZONE: RM/Townhouse zone

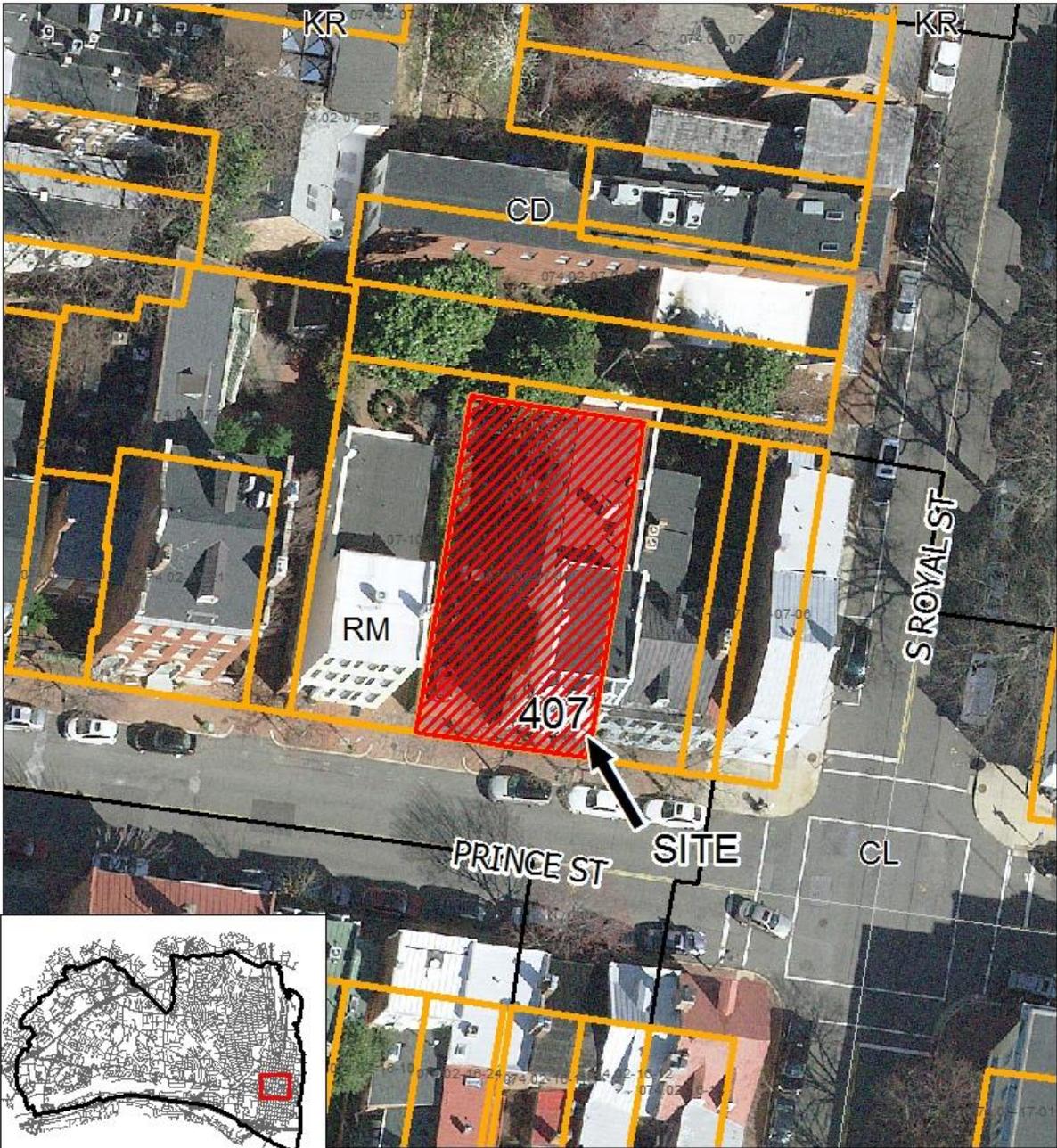
STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1. The railing cannot penetrate the historic stone steps and must be mounted into the sidewalk;
2. Work with staff to refine the railing design to be architecturally appropriate to the Victorian period.

GENERAL NOTES TO THE APPLICANT

1. **ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS AND PERMITS TO DEMOLISH:** Applicants must obtain a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness or Permit to Demolish PRIOR to applying for a building permit. Contact BAR Staff, Room 2100, City Hall, 703-746-3833, or preservation@alexandriava.gov for further information.
2. **APPEAL OF DECISION:** In accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, if the Board of Architectural Review denies or approves an application in whole or in part, the applicant or opponent may appeal the Board's decision to City Council on or before 14 days after the decision of the Board.
3. **COMPLIANCE WITH BAR POLICIES:** All materials must comply with the BAR's adopted policies unless otherwise specifically approved.
4. **BUILDING PERMITS:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Department of Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further information.
5. **EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B) and 10-206(B) of the Zoning Ordinance, any official Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.
6. **HISTORIC PROPERTY TAX CREDITS:** Applicants performing extensive, certified rehabilitations of historic properties may separately be eligible for state and/or federal tax credits. Consult with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) prior to initiating any work to determine whether the proposed project may qualify for such credits.



BAR #2019-00065
407 Prince Street



0 15 30 60 Feet

I. APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to install new railings at 407 Prince Street. The proposed iron railing will include 1" square solid posts, ½" square solid balusters with center collar every other baluster, 1 ¾" molded top railing with powder coated finish and bronze finial. The proposed railing will be attached to the existing steps.

II. HISTORY

The three-story Victorian Second Empire rowhouse at 407 Prince Street was constructed before 1877, according to the Hopkins Atlas of Alexandria and likely in the **mid-19th century**. The 400 block of Prince Street was first mapped in the 1885 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. The building on the 1885 Sanborn map consisted of a two-story main block with a two-story and one-story rear ells. Between 1896 and 1902 the third-story was added to the main block of the building.

The mansard roof and smooth face brick with thin joints confirm that the building was constructed as a Victorian Second Empire building. During the late 1960s there were significant alterations made to the exterior of this building. These alterations were probably in anticipation of the country's bicentennial, when many Victorian buildings within the historic district were "early-ed up" with colonial and federal elements, such as the 6/6 windows and shutters. The front stoop however is original; the use of Seneca sandstone steps was consistent with other Victorian townhouse of this stature.



**Photo 1: Historic photo of 403-407 Prince St. from the early 20th century.
407 Prince is outlined in red and shows the steps without railings.**



Photo 2: 403-407 Prince St. in April 1959 prior to 1960s alterations

Previous BAR Approvals

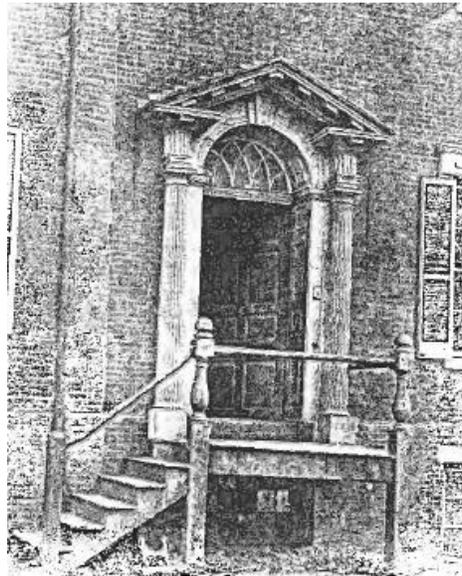
6/16/1971 – Approved for a new brick wall.

5/8/1968 – Approved for replacement of doors.

4/10/1968 – Approved for exterior alterations.

III. ANALYSIS

Railings are an important visual and functional element of the entrances to buildings and support the transition area between the public street and the private interior of a building. However, despite their functional importance, railings were not a part of the historic streetscape of Old Town Alexandria. Handrails were generally not installed on stoops in Alexandria until cast iron stoops and railings became commercially available in the second half of the 19th century. In extremely rare instances where a railing was present, the design was simple and did not include ornate balusters. An example of this is the 1792 wood stoop and railing on the north side (Cameron Street) of the American Legion wing of Gadsby's Tavern (Photo 3 below). Even primary entrances to high-style buildings such as the City Hotel or Carlyle House do not show railings on Civil War era photos. Many wood steps or cast iron stoops and railings were replaced in the mid-20th century with red brick steps and iron guardrails with vertical pickets but these have no historic precedent and it is unlikely they would be approved today. While the BAR has strongly supported simple handrails with minimal decoration for safety reasons, the BAR has very rarely approved ornate, decorative guardrails in the past 10 years. None of the guardrails shown in the precedent images in the application materials are original to those buildings and staff was unable to determine that they had been approved by the BAR.



**Photo 3: ca. 1792 doorway and wood railing at 400 Cameron St.
(now the American Legion wing of Gadsby's Tavern).**

While no handrails are required by the Virginia Residential Code for existing steps, handrails are required on new construction only if there are four or more risers but even then only on one side of the steps. Guardrails (those railings with pickets or balusters below the railing) are not required by the building code unless the stoop is more than 30" above the adjacent grade.

Therefore, the BAR's administrative policy states that new handrails may only be approved by staff if they are visually minimal, such as a post and rail without balusters, and guardrails may only be approved where required by the building code. An example of a simple handrail recently approved by staff is shown in Figure 4. The reason is that non-historic railings and balusters should not detract from the architecture of the building, in this case the historic Seneca sandstone steps and door surround, or cumulatively, should not visually clutter the historically open sidewalk. Staff notes the simple iron railing on the museum property in Williamsburg shown in Photo 10.

In the present case, staff has no objection to the installation of iron handrails but recommends a simpler and stylistically appropriate design consistent with the *Design Guidelines*, which recommend that:

- Stoops, steps and railings should be appropriate to the historic style of the structure; and
- Stoops, steps and railings should not hide, obscure or cause the removal of historic architectural details. (Stoops, Steps & Railings – Page 3)

Staff supports the installation of handrails in this case for safety reasons but recommends the applicant work with staff to refine the design of the proposed railing. The railing should be either a visually minimal handrail (post and rail without balusters) or an appropriate Victorian period handrail design. There are many examples of Victorian handrails in the district, including the following examples at 211 North Columbus Street and 208 South Pitt Street (Photos 5 & 6).



Photo 5: 211 North Columbus Street

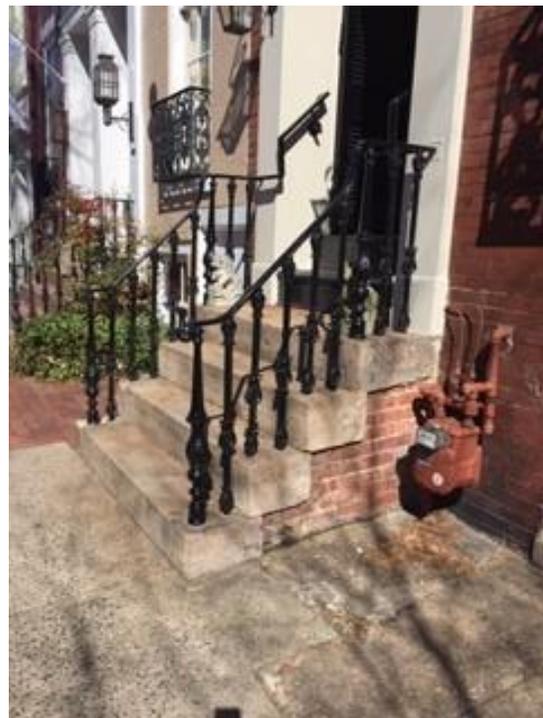


Photo 6: 208 South Pitt Street



Photo 7: Tubular bronze rail on stone steps



Photo 8: 405 Cameron: simple iron handrail

Finally, wherever possible iron handrails should be mounted into the sidewalk and from the building wall, rather than the brick or stone steps, to prevent damage to the historic masonry from expansion of rusting iron, as shown in Photo 9. The new guardrails currently being installed at the Carlyle House museum are stainless steel, as the base of the similar iron railings, first installed in 1975, rusted and severely damaged the stone steps on all four sides of the

building. Fortunately, neither those stone steps or iron railings were from the first period of construction. As noted previously, Carlyle house did not originally have handrails.



Photo 9: Damage to stone steps from rusting iron railing



Photo 10: Simple iron railing at Williamsburg

Staff recommends approval of the application as amended with noted conditions.

STAFF

Amirah Lane, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning
Al Cox, FAIA, Historic Preservation Manager, Planning & Zoning

IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C- code requirement R- recommendation S- suggestion F- finding

Zoning

F-1 Proposed railings do not project any further into the public right-of-way than the existing stoop and stairs.

Code Administration

No Comments received.

Transportation and Environmental Services

- R-1 The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition, if a separate demolition permit is required. (T&ES)
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-3 No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (T&ES)
- F-1 The applicant should provide a determination of disturbed area per City Guidelines to T&ES prior to submitting for permits. If the land disturbance meets or exceeds 2500 square feet, a released grading plan will be required prior to submitting for permits. (T&ES)
- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99). (T&ES)
- C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line. (T&ES)
- C-3 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)
- C-4 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (Sec. 5-2-1) (T&ES)

Alexandria Archaeology

- F-1 No archaeological oversight necessary for this project.

V. ATTACHMENTS

1 – Supplemental Materials

2 – Application for BAR 2019-00065: 407 Prince Street

ADDRESS OF PROJECT: 407 Prince St.

TAX MAP AND PARCEL: 074.02-07-09 ZONING: _____

APPLICATION FOR: *(Please check all that apply)*

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

PERMIT TO MOVE, REMOVE, ENCAPSULATE OR DEMOLISH
(Required if more than 25 square feet of a structure is to be demolished/impacted)

WAIVER OF VISION CLEARANCE REQUIREMENT and/or YARD REQUIREMENTS IN A VISION CLEARANCE AREA *(Section 7-802, Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)*

WAIVER OF ROOFTOP HVAC SCREENING REQUIREMENT
(Section 6-403(B)(3), Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)

Applicant: Property Owner Business *(Please provide business name & contact person)*

Name: Carlos + Lisa Cecchi

Address: 407 Prince St.

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: 703-548-3862 E-mail: carloscecchi@hotmail.com

Authorized Agent *(if applicable)*: Attorney Architect _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Legal Property Owner:

Name: Carlos Cecchi + Lisa J. Rivas

Address: 407 Prince St.

City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314

Phone: 703-548-3862 E-mail: carloscecchi@hotmail.com

- Yes No Is there an historic preservation easement on this property?
- Yes No If yes, has the easement holder agreed to the proposed alterations?
- Yes No Is there a homeowner's association for this property?
- Yes No If yes, has the homeowner's association approved the proposed alterations?

If you answered yes to any of the above, please attach a copy of the letter approving the project.

NATURE OF PROPOSED WORK: *Please check all that apply*

- NEW CONSTRUCTION
- EXTERIOR ALTERATION: *Please check all that apply.*
 - awning
 - doors
 - lighting
 - other *railing, front steps*
 - fence, gate or garden wall
 - windows
 - pergola/trellis
 - HVAC equipment
 - siding
 - painting unpainted masonry
 - shutters
 - shed
- ADDITION
- DEMOLITION/ENCAPSULATION
- SIGNAGE

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK: *Please describe the proposed work in detail (Additional pages may be attached).*

Installing iron railings, front steps, both sides. One inch square solid posts; half inch square solid pickets with center collar every other picket; one and 3/4 inch molded top bar. Above railing with powder coat finish and small bronze finial.

SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:

Items listed below comprise the **minimum supporting materials** for BAR applications. Staff may request additional information during application review. Please refer to the relevant section of the *Design Guidelines* for further information on appropriate treatments.

Applicants must use the checklist below to ensure the application is complete. Include all information and material that are necessary to thoroughly describe the project. Incomplete applications will delay the docketing of the application for review. Pre-application meetings are required for all proposed additions. All applicants are encouraged to meet with staff prior to submission of a completed application.

Electronic copies of submission materials should be submitted whenever possible.

Demolition/Encapsulation : *All applicants requesting 25 square feet or more of demolition/encapsulation must complete this section. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- ^{N/A} Survey plat showing the extent of the proposed demolition/encapsulation.
- Existing elevation drawings clearly showing all elements proposed for demolition/encapsulation.
- Clear and labeled photographs of all elevations of the building if the entire structure is proposed to be demolished.
- Description of the reason for demolition/encapsulation.
- Description of the alternatives to demolition/encapsulation and why such alternatives are not considered feasible.

Additions & New Construction: *Drawings must be to scale and should not exceed 11" x 17" unless approved by staff. All plans must be folded and collated into 12 complete 8 1/2" x 11" sets. Additional copies may be requested by staff for large-scale development projects or projects fronting Washington Street. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- N/A Scaled survey plat showing dimensions of lot and location of existing building and other structures on the lot, location of proposed structure or addition, dimensions of existing structure(s), proposed addition or new construction, and all exterior, ground and roof mounted equipment.
- FAR & Open Space calculation form.
- Clear and labeled photographs of the site, surrounding properties and existing structures, if applicable.
- Existing elevations must be scaled and include dimensions.
- Proposed elevations must be scaled and include dimensions. Include the relationship to adjacent structures in plan and elevations.
- Materials and colors to be used must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided or required.
- Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
- For development site plan projects, a model showing mass relationships to adjacent properties and structures.

Signs & Awnings: *One sign per building under one square foot does not require BAR approval unless illuminated. All other signs including window signs require BAR approval. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- N/A Linear feet of building: Front: _____ Secondary front (if corner lot): _____.
- Square feet of existing signs to remain: _____.
- Photograph of building showing existing conditions.
- Dimensioned drawings of proposed sign identifying materials, color, lettering style and text.
- Location of sign (show exact location on building including the height above sidewalk).
- Means of attachment (drawing or manufacturer's cut sheet of bracket if applicable).
- Description of lighting (if applicable). Include manufacturer's cut sheet for any new lighting fixtures and information detailing how it will be attached to the building's facade.

Alterations: *Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- N/A Clear and labeled photographs of the site, especially the area being impacted by the alterations, all sides of the building and any pertinent details.
- Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
- Drawings accurately representing the changes to the proposed structure, including materials and overall dimensions. Drawings must be to scale.
- An official survey plat showing the proposed locations of HVAC units, fences, and sheds.
- Historic elevations or photographs should accompany any request to return a structure to an earlier appearance.

OWNERSHIP AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
Use additional sheets if necessary

1. Applicant. State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1.		
2.	N/A	
3.		

2. Property. State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the property located at 407 PRINCE ST. (address), unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than ten percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. CARLOS CECCHI	407 PRINCE ST.	JOINT
2. LISA RIVAS	407 PRINCE ST.	JOINT
3.		

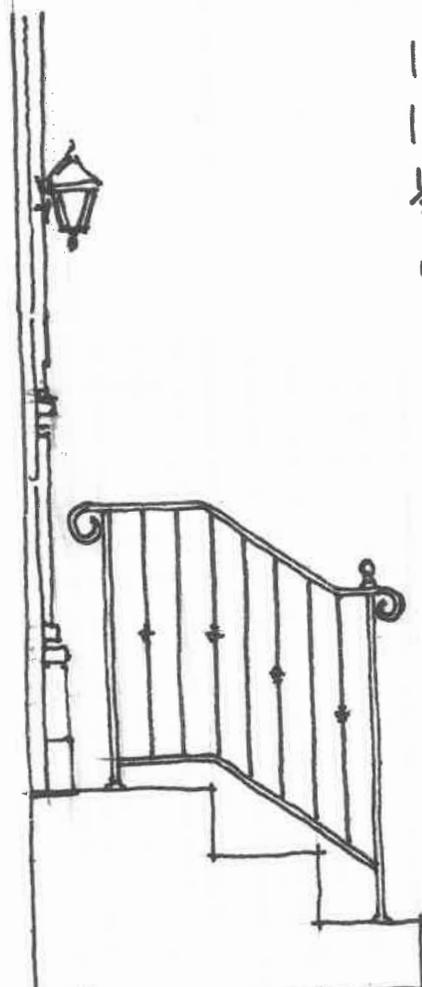
3. Business or Financial Relationships. Each person or entity listed above (1 and 2), with an ownership interest in the applicant or in the subject property is required to disclose any business or financial relationship, as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance, existing at the time of this application, or within the 12-month period prior to the submission of this application with any member of the Alexandria City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals or either Boards of Architectural Review.

Name of person or entity	Relationship as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance	Member of the Approving Body (i.e. City Council, Planning Commission, etc.)
1.		
2.	N/A	
3.		

NOTE: Business or financial relationships of the type described in Sec. 11-350 that arise after the filing of this application and before each public hearing must be disclosed prior to the public hearings.

As the applicant or the applicant's authorized agent, I hereby attest to the best of my ability that the information provided above is true and correct.

2/19/19 CARLOS CECCHI 
 Date Printed Name Signature



IRON RAILINGS, BOTH SIDES.
1" SQUARE SOLID POSTS,
 $\frac{1}{2}$ " SQUARE SOLID PICKETS
WITH CENTER COLLAR EVERY
OTHER PICKET,
 $1\frac{3}{4}$ " MOLDED TOP BAR ABOVE
RAILING WITH POWDER COATED
FINISH AND BRONZE FINIAL.

407 PRINCE ST.
FRONT STOOP W/
PROPOSED RAILINGS

SCALE: $\frac{1}{2}$ " = 1'-0"
FEB. 19, 2019



02/19/2019 - Proposed Railing Style for 407 Prince Street:

1" solid square posts; ½" square solid pickets with center collar every other picket; 1 ¾" molded top bar above railing with powder coated finish and small bronze finial.



02/19/2019 407 Prince Street, Alexandria: Front Stoop



02/19/2019 407 Prince Street, Alexandria: Height of Step = 8.5"



02/19/2019 407 Prince Street, Alexandria: Height of Stoop = 26.5"



02/19/2019 407 Prince Street, Alexandria: Precedent Image 1



02/19/2019 407 Prince Street, Alexandria: Precedent Image 2



02/19/2019 407 Prince Street, Alexandria: Precedent Image 3

Mar 12-19

To Members of B A R —

Some writing in regard to the
application to installation
walkways on front steps of
407 Prince St.

The steps, are high, causing
a risk of falling for elderly
or young children, members of
the family living there.

I have no objection and
fully approve —

Janet Watkins
407 Prince St