



Agenda Item #4

Application 2024-56-CA

DETAILS

Location:

252 Rapier Avenue

Summary of Request:

After-the-fact: 1. Replace window on second story façade with double doors that do not fit the opening.
2. Replace balustrade above front porch.

Applicant (as applicable):

Richard Davis

Property Owner:

Richard & Patricia Beckish

Historic District:

Oakleigh Garden

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- HDD Staff was notified by the public of work being carried out at the subject property.
- Material of replacement double doors is unknown.
- The balustrade above front porch is not original and did not receive a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). It was added between 1989 and 2007.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Oakleigh Garden Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1972 under Criteria A (historic significance) and C (architectural significance) for its local significance in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning and development. The district is significant for its high concentration of 19th- and 20th-century architectural types and styles and significant in the area of landscape architecture for its canopies of live oaks planted from 1850 to 1910. The district is significant in the area of planning and development as the location of Washington Square, one of only two antebellum public parks remaining in Mobile. The district was expanded in 1984, and an updated nomination was approved in 2016.

The dwelling at 252 Rapier Avenue is a two-story frame American Foursquare plan with classical detailing. According to Historic Development records, the residence was constructed c. 1913 by Louis Lowenstein. Survey photos in the property reveal a minimally altered façade up until 1989. These photos show that previously, there was no balustrade along the roof of the one-story front porch, as there is presently. Photographic evidence reveals that the balustrade was added sometime between 1989 and 2007. Documented engagements with the Architectural Review Board began in 2010, with a Notice of Violation for an unapproved installation of a satellite dish on the front of the house. This action resulted in the denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA). Other recorded COAs were staff level approvals of in-kind replacements between 2011 and 2017.

This property has appeared once before the Architectural Review Board (ARB). In 2010 an application to retain a previously installed satellite dish was denied. This decision was appealed by the property with City Council and the appeal was granted.

SCOPE OF WORK

1. Replace second-story window on north end of east facing façade with single-light double doors that do not fit the opening.
2. Replace balustrade along front porch roof. Replacement will match existing in materials, dimensions, and profile.

APPLICABLE STANDARDS (*Design Review Guidelines for Mobile's Historic Districts*)

1. **5.3** Preserve the key historic walls of a building.
 - Maintain significant historic façades in their original form.
 - Maintain historic façade elements.
 - Pay special attention to maintaining the historic appearance of building walls of corner buildings.
2. **5.20** Preserve the functional historic and decorative features of a historic window.
 - Where historic (wooden or metal) windows are intact and in repairable condition, retain and repair them to match the existing as per location, light configuration, detail and material.
 - Preserve historic window features, including the frame, sash, muntins, mullions, glazing, sills, heads, jambs, moldings, operation, and groupings of windows.
 - Repair, rather than replace, frames and sashes, wherever possible.
 - For repair of window components, epoxies and related products may serve as effective solutions to material deterioration and operational malfunction.
3. **5.21** When historic windows are not in a repairable condition, match the replacement window design to the original.
 - In instances where there is a request to replace a building's windows, the new windows shall match the existing as per location, framing, and light configuration.
 - Use any salvageable window components on a primary elevation.

ACCEPTABLE WINDOW MATERIALS

Materials that are the same as the original, or that appear similar in texture, profile and finish to the original are acceptable. These often include:

- Wood sash
- Steel, if original to structure
- Custom extruded aluminum
- Aluminum clad wood
- Windows approved by the National Park Service

UNACCEPTABLE WINDOW MATERIALS Materials that do not appear similar to the original in texture, profile and finish are unacceptable. These often include:

- Vinyl
- Mill-finished aluminum
- Interior snap-in muntins (except when used in concert with exterior muntins and intervening dividers)

4. **6.5** Repair a porch in a way that maintains the original character.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The dwelling at 252 Rapier Avenue is a contributing structure to the Oakleigh Garden Historic District. The application under review seeks after-the-fact approval to replace a window on the façade and replace an existing balustrade along the front porch roof.


In September 2024, the Historic Development office received a call from a member of the public regarding 252 Rapier, stating that a second story window on the north end of the façade was being removed, doors were being installed, and the balustrade along the porch roof was being replaced. After verifying that no Certificate of Appropriateness had been issued for work at this location, Staff made a visit to the property and issued a Stop Work Order. The contractor at the property was instructed to notify the owner to apply for a COA.

The *Guidelines* instruct that historic windows should only be replaced when they are beyond repair. (5.21) The *Guidelines* further specify, “A new window shall be installed in such a manner as to fit within the original window opening” and should match in light configuration, detail and material. (5.20) The windows on the façade appear to be the original windows or a match of the original. The newly installed double doors clearly do not fit the original window opening and disrupt the historic fenestration rhythm across the façade, which is contrary to the *Guidelines’* directive to maintain historic façades. (5.3) The applicant has not indicated the material of the replacement doors.

As discussed above, the balustrade is not original to the house at 252 Rapier. This addition to the façade was also carried out with no COA. The *Guidelines* direct that the original character of a porch be maintained. (6.5) The balustrade has been extant along the roof of the front porch since a least 2007, and most likely before. It is a feature that is commonly seen on similar style residences throughout the seven local historic districts. In fact, two neighboring properties have undergone similar alterations. Survey photos for 256 Rapier, two lots to the south, show a flat roof front porch with no balustrade along its roof in 1979. The subsequent photo in the file, from 1989, shows a balustrade as it exists today. Likewise, 250 Rapier originally had a one-bay gable roof front porch, centered on its façade. In 1992, a COA was granted, approving plans for a three-bay flat roof porch with a roof balustrade. Two houses boasting flat roof porches with roof balustrades that are either original to the design or a historic alteration are located around the corner at 1206 and 1212 Selma Street. The scale and design of the existing balustrade at 252 Rapier incorporates the classical detailing seen elsewhere on the façade and is compatible with other houses on the street.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD VICINITY MAP



APPLICATION NUMBER <u>4</u> DATE <u>10/16/2024</u>	
APPLICANT <u>Richard Davis</u>	
PROJECT <u>After-the-Fact: 1. Replace railing above front porch. 2. Replace window on second story facade with double doors that do not fit the opening</u>	

Site Photos – 252 Rapier



1. View of property, looking NW



2. View of property, looking SW



3. Detail of work on second-story façade, looking W



4. View of work on second-story façade, looking SW