



Agenda Item #1

Application 2025-33-CA

DETAILS

Location:

61 N. Reed Avenue

Summary of Request:

Replace six porch columns with fiberglass columns.
Rebuild three double bases.

Applicant (as applicable):

Amanda Edwards/Poplar Home Waterproofing

Property Owner:

Charles Renfroe

Historic District:

Old Dauphin Way

Classification:

Contributing

Summary of Analysis:

- The existing columns show signs of deterioration and loss of structural integrity.
- The Board previously granted conditional approval of two (2) fiberglass replacement columns.
- The proposed replacement columns closely match the dimensions of the existing with the exception of a lack of tapering seen on the existing columns.
- An exact fiberglass replica of the existing wood columns is not possible.

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PROPERTY AND APPLICATION HISTORY

Old Dauphin Way Historic District was initially listed in the National Register in 1984 under Criterion C for significant architecture and community planning. The district includes most nineteenth-century architectural styles and shows adaptations of middle-class domestic designs of the nineteenth century to the regional, Gulf Coast climate. It includes “fine examples of commercial, institutional, and religious structures as well as 20th-century apartments.”

The frame structure at 61 N Reed is a two-story American Foursquare dwelling with classical detailing. A hipped roof with wide overhangs and exposed rafters tops the structure. A full-width first-story front porch sits under a flat roof supported by paired tapered Tuscan columns. Historic Development property files indicate that the home was constructed c. 1908 by a Charles M. Erdman for the first resident, H. Morton Butler. In 1992 a one-story hipped roof addition with an integrated porch was constructed on the west (rear) elevation. In 2001, permission was granted from the Old Dauphin Way Review Board to infill the non-historic rear porch with glazing and to construct a rear open deck.

According to Historic Development records, this property has never appeared before the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

SCOPE OF WORK

Remove and replace all existing porch columns (six in total).

- a. The proposed replacement columns would retain the Tuscan profile of the existing columns, including the base and capital.
- b. The new column design would match the dimensions of the existing porch columns, with a slight difference in profile expression at the capital and base.
- c. The proposed new columns would each sit on a square base which would measure 1' – 1 3/8" wide by 5 1/4" high. The shaft would have a diameter of 10" at the bottom and taper to 8 1/2" at the top. The column height, including base and capital, would measure 8' – 5".
- d. The original columns are wood, whereas the proposed replacements would be fiberglass.
- e. The new columns would be painted to match existing.

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

1. **5.19** Where repair is impossible, replace details and ornamentation accurately.
 - When replacing historic details, match the original in profile, dimension, and material.
 - A substitute material may be considered if it appears similar in character and finish to the original.
 - A measured drawing may be required in these instances to recreate missing historic details from photographs.
 - Do not apply architectural details that were not part of the original structure. For example, decorative mill work should not be added to a building if it was not an original feature. Doing so would convey a false history.

STAFF ANALYSIS

The property under review is a contributing structure the Old Dauphin Way Historic District. The subject application seeks approval to replace six wood round tapered porch with new fiberglass columns with similar profile.

The *Guidelines* state that historic architectural features and elements should be preserved, and repairs should be carried out to deteriorated or damaged areas, instead of replacement. However, they specify that when repair is

not possible, replacement features should match the original in profile, dimension, and material. They further explain that an appropriate substitute material may be considered. (5.19)

The applicant received a COA in February 2025 to replace the larger wood base on which the center paired columns rest. When the columns were removed to carry out the base replacement, significant deterioration was discovered near the base of the columns. In April 2025, the applicant applied to replace the two (2) deteriorated wood columns with fiberglass columns. The staff report and meeting discussion deemed the columns beyond repair. A schematic of the proposed replacement column was submitted which closely matched the profile of the original columns, with a noted slight departure in molding detail at the capital and base. With agreement from the applicant, the Board gave conditional approval for the two replacement fiberglass columns, contingent on Staff approval of a resubmitted replacement column design that matched the original columns (and therefore the remaining four original wood columns) exactly. Over the following months, the applicant attempted to acquire an exact match, staying in touch with Staff. They ultimately discovered that fiberglass columns could not be reproduced to a 100% match to the original design. Additionally, ordering wood columns to be milled identically to the original are extremely cost prohibitive to the owner. The subject application is an alternative solution: replacing all six (6) columns with fiberglass replacements in the previous submitted design which would result in six matching replacement columns that express a very similar profile to the original but are not an exact match. The applicant has determined that this option is much more financially feasible than ordering two duplicate wood columns. Although not identical, the submitted design is an appropriate profile which is consistent with the classical expression of the structure and would minimally impact the stylistic details of the front porch, given the proposal of wholesale replacement.

SITE LOCATION – 61 N. REED AVENUE



Site Photos – 61 N. REED AVENUE



1. View of property, looking NE



2. Location of removed columns, looking E



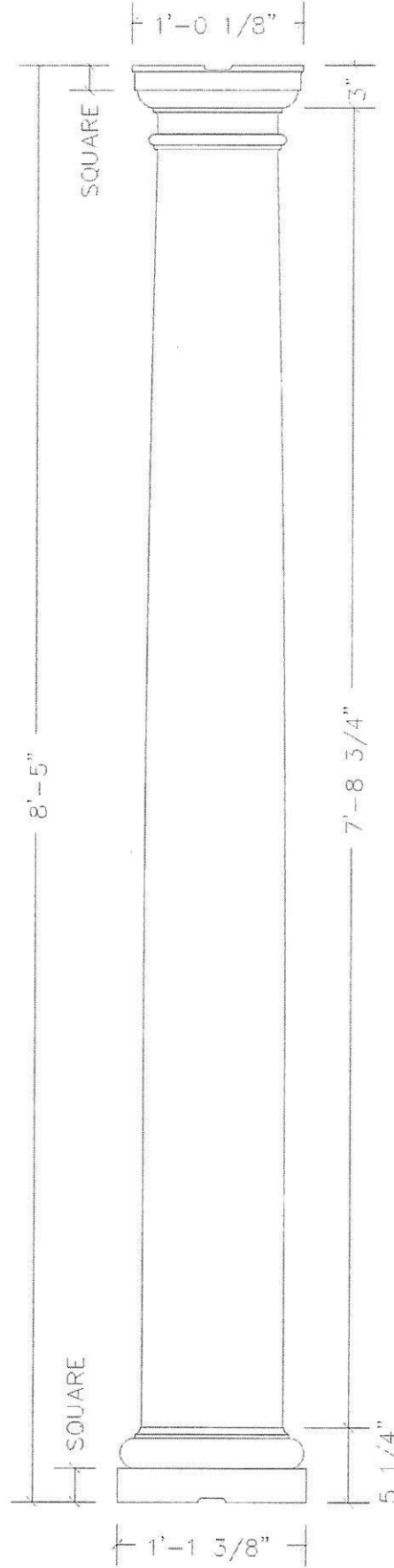
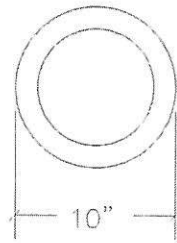
3. Existing paired columns



4. Detail of deteriorated column 1



5. Detail of deteriorated column 2



**PACIFIC
COLUMNS
INC.**

**Tuscan Column
10" x 101" Round, Arch. Taper**

DRAWING #:
SHAFT MATERIAL:
CAP MATERIAL:
BASE MATERIAL:
DATE:
SCALE:

AQ75791
Pine
Poly
Poly
2/14/2025
1" = 1'-0"

Note: Any drawings of ornamental capitals are artistic renderings only. Details, and dimensions may differ from drawing.

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