

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
April 26, 2016 Meeting**

2. **CAR No. 16-046** (G. Berida) **308 North 23rd Street**
St. John's Church Old and Historic District

Project Description: **Install synthetic decking on rear 2nd story porch**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to replace the porch decking on the second story rear porch of a home in the St. John's Church Old and Historic District with a composite material known as Azek. The product is a tongue-and-groove composite decking material that mimics the appearance of wood, but with increased longevity. The applicant is proposing slate grey, tongue and groove porch decking that is 1" by 3 3/16". The previous wood decking was removed prior to this application; therefore staff was unaware of the condition and dimensions of the original decking.

Staff recommends approval of the project. The *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* states that synthetic tongue-and-groove porch flooring may be a reasonable alternative to the use of wood tongue-and-groove decking (pg. 57). The *Guidelines* also notes that if in-kind materials are impractical, then substitute materials may be used (pg. 57). Staff recommends approval of the proposed composite decking, understanding that modern wood decking is much less durable than the first-growth timber that was historically used for porch flooring.

It is the assessment of staff that the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation in Section 30-930.7(b) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.