



Commission of Architectural Review

6. COA-176755-2025	Final Review	Meeting Date: 12/16/2025
Applicant/Petitioner	Dave Romero	
Project Description	Replace slate roof of a single family building with synthetic slate shingles	
Project Location		
Address: 2019 West Grace Street		
Historic District: West Grace Street		
<p>High-Level Details:</p> <p>The applicant proposes to replace an existing, original slate roof with new synthetic slate.</p> <p>The extant building is a masonry, Tudor Revival building circa 1911.</p> <p>The existing slate appears to be in poor condition, with many that have been replaced.</p> <p>The applicant also proposes to wrap the existing parapets with copper.</p>		
Staff Recommendation	Deferral	
Staff Contact	Alex Dandridge, Alex.Dandridge@RVA.gov, (804)646-6569	
Previous Reviews	None.	
Staff Recommendations	<p>Staff recommends deferral of this item until the following items have been considered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration level of the sandstone block. True copper coping will be appropriate if the spalling cannot be repaired; however, if the block requires complete replacement, this can be accomplished with cast stone/concrete. • Review of physical samples of the proposed synthetic slate as compared to the existing slate including dimension, color, and sheen. • Cost comparison of repair/replacement of the existing slate with new authentic slate and the installation of synthetic slate. 	

Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for Rehabilitation, Residential Construction, pg. 59	<p><i>4. Retain original roof shape, size, materials and related elements including cupolas, chimneys and weather vanes; if replacement is necessary, consideration for use of slate, wood and metal, with respect to color and patterns, should be given.</i></p> <p><i>7. Repair damaged elements instead of replacing them. Use materials that match the original in type, or use physically and chemically compatible substitute materials that convey the same appearance as the surviving elements or sections. Use available documentation when reconstructing missing elements. Pictorial, historical or physical documentation can be helpful.</i></p>	<p>The application state that the extant roof is “semi-weathering” slate and is in poor condition. Images were submitted that show many broken slate pieces. The images also show that the semi-weathering slate has been replaced in many areas with darker-colored Buckingham Slate.</p> <p>The application also states that the underlayment of the roof may not be adequate as originally installed, and the slate fasteners have likely reached the end of their lifespan due to corrosion.</p>
Substitute Materials, pg. 60	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Unavailability of Historic Materials.</i> <i>2. Unavailability of Skilled Craftsman</i> <i>3. Replacement of Poor Quality Materials</i> <p><i>The demise of a commercial quarry may lead a property owner to seek replacement stone from another quarry. If that source cannot produce an appropriate match, substitute materials such as dry-tamp cast stone or textured pre-cast concrete may be appropriate alternatives as long as the detail, color and texture of the original stone are matched as closely as possible.</i></p>	<p>There are craftsman available to repair damaged slate and replace deteriorated underlayment and fasteners.</p> <p>While the original slate is nearing the end of its lifespan, most of the material remains on the roof and has lasted over 100 years. Fasteners and underlayment/sheathing deteriorate quicker than the actual slate pieces.</p> <p>The applicant also proposes to flash and wrap the existing sandstone blocks that cap the parapet walls on wither side of the building and the front dormer and gable. The images submitted indicate that the sandstone blocks are spalling and deteriorated. It is also noted that the quarry in which the sandstone was collected is no longer in use making replacement impossible. Staff finds that wrapping the blocks will preserve them in place if properly sealed from the elements, and the use of copper is appropriate for the district and the building. However, their level of deterioration is still unclear. If too deteriorated and in need of complete replacement, cast stone/concrete would be appropriate substitute materials for sandstone blocks that can no longer be quarried.</p> <p>If the blocks are not deteriorated beyond repair and it is not feasible to repair the spalling, Staff recommends approval of the copper flashing and coping, and that it be true copper that patinas overtime and installed in a way that does not obscure the sandstone gable ornament on the front gable.</p>

<p>Preservation Brief #16, Substitute Materials</p>	<p><i>Considering the use of a substitute material should begin with the following questions about the conditions and location where it will be used:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Will the significance or visibility of the historic feature require a very precise match?</i> • <i>Is the entire feature being replaced or just a component of it?</i> • <i>Are pre-existing conditions contributing to the failure of the existing material, and, if so, how will they be addressed/corrected?</i> • <i>Is the need for replacement due to inherent deficiencies of the original material?</i> • <i>Will the material need to resist any environmental hazards such as flooding or fire?</i> <p><i>Compelling reasons to use a substitute material instead of the historic material include the unavailability or poor performance of the historic material, or environmental pressures or code-driven requirements that necessitate a change in material. When using a substitute material for replacement it is critical that it match the historic material in all of its visual and physical properties to preserve the historic character of the building and minimize the impact on its integrity.</i></p>	<p>When considering the appropriateness of the synthetic slate selected by the applicant, staff reviewed the CAR's guidelines and the NPS's preservation brief #16 for substitute materials, for guidance on choosing a substitute material.</p> <p>Slate is a traditional building material used throughout not only the West Grace City Old and Historic District, but all the city's historic districts. It is a prevalent material that adds to the character and history of building technologies of the districts.</p> <p>The slate used on 2019 West Grace Street is generally gray in color and is a uniform, rectangular size. There are not and scalloped or triangular pieces. Staff believes that this style of slate would be easily replicated using substitute material.</p> <p>Only the front roof form is proposed to be replaced with synthetic slate.</p> <p>The exact cause of deterioration is unknown; however, the application states that the stone caps on the parapet walls are deteriorating and there may be issues with the installation of the historic underlayment, or lack of a significant underlayment to begin with.</p> <p>Staff believes that the original slate doesn't have any inherent deficiencies, other than being near the end of its usable lifespan.</p> <p>The slate roof is very visible from the public right-of-way and a common material in the district. Staff notes that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The existing slate is disrepair • Slate is still an available material that can be purchased and installed; however appropriate synthetic materials do exist for rectangular slate. <p>Staff recommends deferral of this item to allow the applicant time to present physical examples of the synthetic slate as compared to the existing, including color, sheen, and dimension. The applicant should also submit information on the cost comparison between repair/replacement of the existing slate with new authentic slate vs. installation of synthetic slate.</p>
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It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) 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.

Figures



Figure 1. 2019 West Grace Street. December, 2025.



Figure 2. 2019 West Grace Street. December, 2025.



Figure 3. 2019 West Grace Street. December, 2025.

Historic Features and Substitute Materials

Historic Building Features

		Masonry Stone, terra cotta	Architectural Metals Cast & wrought iron, steel, pressed metal	Siding Wood, asbestos	Roofing Wood shingle, slate, tile	Decking Tongue-and-groove & square-edge wood	Molding / Trim Wood
Potential Substitute Materials	Aluminum	●	●	●			●
	Cast Stone & Precast Concrete	●			●		
	Fiber Reinforced Concretes	●					
	Glass Fiber Reinforced Polymers	●	●				
	Fiber Cement			●	●		●
	Mineral / Polymer Composite			●	●	●	●
	Cellulose Fiber / Polymer Composite			●	●	●	●
	Non-composite Polymers		●			●	●
	Cellular PVC			●		●	●

The above chart lists materials that are sometimes used as substitutes for replacement of historic building features. Even within a given category, all materials may not be equally suitable as a substitute replacement material for the actual historic material or feature. Any substitute material should be selected based on its specific physical and visual characteristics, conditions, and intended application consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Figure 4. Preservation Brief #16 substitute material chart.