

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
March 24, 2015 Meeting**

4. **CAR No. 15-035** (M. & K. Olgas) **2701 E. Grace Street**
St. John's Church Old and Historic District

Project Description: **Replace deck frame and decking with AZEK**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval to replace the porch deck frame and decking on this house 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 dark gray porch decking which will match the width and thickness of the existing, deteriorated wooden tongue-and-groove.

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 114-930.7(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.