

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW  
STAFF REPORT  
November 25, 2014 Meeting**

3. **CAR No. 14-127** (D. Herring) **2306 E. Marshall Street  
Church Hill North Old and Historic District**

**Project Description:** **Replace porch decking with composite material**

**Staff Contact:** **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests approval to replace the porch decking on this house in the Church Hill North Old and Historic District with a composite material. The composite material, known as Azek, is a tongue-and-groove composite decking product that mimics the appearance of wood, but with increased longevity. The applicant is proposing the "Brownstone" porch board which will match the width and thickness of the existing wooden tongue-and-groove. The applicant states that he is proposing this composite product as the wood decking has been replaced previously but is rotting again.

**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. 51). The *Guidelines* also notes that if in-kind materials are impractical, then substitute materials may be used (pg. 53). 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.