

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

1. **CAR No. 15-135** (S. Leibowitz) **1606 West Grace Street
West Grace Street Old and Historic District**

Project Description: **Replace decking with Evolve synthetic decking**

Staff Contact: **M. Pitts**

The applicant requests approval to replace the porch decking on this house in the West Grace Street Old and Historic District with a composite material known as Evolve. The product is a tongue-and-groove composite decking material that mimics the appearance of wood, but with increased longevity. The applicant is proposing light grey porch decking with a similar 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 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.