

September 7, 2021

Dear Architectural and Historic Board of Review:

We would like to thank you for the opportunity to comment on the staff report about our proposal and offer some information to help you in making a decision. According to the City Planner's report to the Architectural and Historic Board of Review:

“a) Architectural Design Standards states fence materials shall be compatible with their site location and surrounding development. Azek material would not be compatible with surrounding fences and fencing in the Historic District in general.

b) The submitted information of azek fencing does not demonstrate that it is in kind replacement to wood. Secretary of the Interior's Standards requires replacement materials to match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.”

As you are aware from our application, we would like to replace our wooden scalloped picket fence with one made from Azek, a synthetic material. The Azek fence is virtually identical to cedar fencing in appearance, grain, and even actual touch.

It does, in fact, match “the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.”

However, it is **superior** to the 200-year-old technology in:

- **rigidity & workability;**
- **waterproofness & freeze-thaw capabilities;**
- **long-term evaporation;**
- **mold-resistance;**
- **insect resistance;**
- **density, saw-ability, nail-ability;**
- **uniformity;**
- **paintability & color-fastness;**
- **naturally white,**
- **spray-washability;**
- **environmental acceptability;**
- **and most importantly—durability & lifecycle visual quality.**

It is not less-expensive than wood—it is more expensive. While it is identical to “the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities,” (and, indeed, will retain its design, color, texture, and other visual qualities much better **over its entire material lifecycle**), it is superior in all other respects, except for cost.

Azek has the look and feel of natural wood materials, however it is naturally decay resistant, rot resistant and does not warp, bow, shrink, twist, flake or peel like natural wood materials.

The Azek fence has distinct advantages over cedar fencing in appearance and reliability. The paint alone has a 25-year guarantee, meaning it doesn't need to be repainted for an entire generation, and Azek gives a **lifetime** warranty. It also never rots. Both of these challenges - the need to repaint and constantly repair or replace wooden fencing - are expensive, burdensome to the homeowner, and often are not performed in a timely manner.

Just examining our neighborhood will reveal many wooden fences in a state of discoloration and disrepair. That harms the appearance of the neighborhood and results in constant maintenance, shedding paint flakes, and frequent disruption of landscaping for fence replacement. The use of Azek as an alternative to wooden fencing would eliminate these problems. And the quality of wood available today has plummeted compared to previously.

You have already allowed the use of Azek for other architectural details, including trim, columns, railings, adornments on the exterior of houses in the historic district. (e.g. at 16 Baldwin Street 2006, 128 Hudson Street 2018). It would seem that extending the use of Azek for fencing, which is not altering the historic home, would be entirely consistent with the use of other Azek architectural elements you have allowed for many years.

Azek is good for our planet as well. It is made from a combination of recycled plastic and post-production wood material. It thus has the advantage to our environment of promoting recycling and vastly decreasing the repeated reconstruction of fencing made from forest products. At a time when our overuse of resources is of paramount concern, alternative products like Azek boost our local sustainability commitments without compromising the architectural integrity of our neighborhoods. At least twenty old-growth cedar trees would need to be felled to provide the wood necessary for our fence.

Azek is not the only alternative to traditional materials that this board has granted. Other substitutes include the use of aluminum decorative fencing to appear as wrought iron, which is not as strong or as beautiful as iron and considerably less expensive. Why not allow Azek fencing to replace wood? It is visually indistinguishable from wood. It supports a less expensive and more reliable repair and/or replacement program. And it adheres to the visual and aesthetic values that this board defends. That's good for everyone.

Although Azek is already allowed in the historic district, to our knowledge, it has not been proposed for fencing. Please allow our home to be the first to install it. We believe you will find samples of the material, which we hope to provide at the meeting, to be virtually identical to wood fencing and entirely consistent with the historic elements of the neighborhood. And we believe that our neighbors, many of whom struggle with the constant demands and costs of fence maintenance, repair, and replacement, will be strongly in favor of this expanded use of Azek.

Several Historic Commissions and Districts that have approved the use of Azek:

- **French Quarter, New Orleans**
- **Historic Knoxville Zoning Commission, Baton Rouge, LA**
- **Williamsburg, VA**
- **Waukesha, Wisconsin**
- **Beach Haven, NJ**
- **Nantucket, MA**
- **Essex, New Hampshire**

Sincerely,

Erin Poskocil and Sid Nelson
52 Aurora Street
Hudson, OH 44236

Azek is Considered a Major Quality Feature in the Hudson Historical District

This house at **16 Baldwin Street**—just 2 blocks away from 52 Aurora Street and also in the Historic District—built in 1923, is currently for sale for almost \$800,000.

Below is what the realtor is highlighting on the web as its sales features:



Source: <https://www.remax.com/oh/hudson/home-details/16-baldwin-st-hudson-oh-44236/3273850821619723854>

“A rare opportunity to live on one of Historic Hudson’s most ideal streets! Close to WRA and downtown 16 Baldwin St. is the perfect location to enjoy all that Hudson has to offer. In 2006 this home underwent a major renovation, the result is a 3,254 sqft 5 bedroom 3 full bath home **that is built to last!** It was taken all the way down to the studs and completely re-built. A 2nd story, 1st floor master and large sun room were added. At this time all of the systems were replaced and upgraded. **Some of those upgrades include Hardiboard siding with Azek trim**, whole house foam insulation, efficient and comfort controlled in-floor heat, tankless water heaters and all new flooring. As you approach the home, notice the large covered porch with space for outdoor entertaining.”

1. So Azek material is **already being used** on upgrades to Historical Hudson homes.
2. Azek is considered such a desirable upgrade that it is being **featured as a major commercial selling point.**

Other Hudson AHBR Actions on Azek Railing Materials

City of Hudson, Architectural & Historic Board of Review
Meeting Minutes - Final October 10, 2018 - Docket 4882
128 Hudson Street (Historic District) Alteration (Front Porch)



Historic District - recommend referral to Historic District Subcommittee pursuant to LDC 1203.12 - no recommendation.

a) Architectural Design Guidelines require replacement materials to be compatible in proportion, size, style, composition, design, color and texture with the existing historic materials.

Staff questions the use of AZEK composite material for replacement of wood posts and railings.

Mr. Sugar introduced this application to replace decking, posts, steps and railings on the front porch.

Ms. Barb Lochridge, homeowner, was present for the meeting.

Ms. Lochridge brought in a sample of the proposed Azek material that will be used to bring the porch back to its original design. Following discussion of the choice of materials for the rebuild of the deck, the Board decided to conduct a site visit. The Board encouraged Ms. Lochridge to have samples of the decking material, **railing system and all other materials to be used**, for examination at the Board's site visit. This application was continued.

Mr. Sugar, site visit week of October 6th. Noted the use of the Azek material for replacement of deteriorated materials. Three season room on the rear of the home using the same materials.

Board commented that the Azek material matches the existing material of the house.

Ballisters will be 1/4 inch wider and deeper than the existing. Columns to be wrapped for greater depth. Will frame the lattes used at the base of the porch.

Historic subcommittee, issue certificate of approval. Davis/Caputo. **Approved.**

After approving extensive use of Azek material on the front porch—which, unlike an exterior feature like a fence that can be taken down at will, is permanently physically attached to the historic structure itself—the following exchange took place between the homeowner and the AHBR (see the video on file at 21:40):

Ms. Lochridge, homeowner:

“And I just wanted to add briefly, I was talking with Lynn Kendall [?] today, who I guess was on this [Hudson AHBR] Committee for quite a while, and she told me now that in [Historic] Williamsburg that they have approved Azek to be used like this.”

David Drummond, the Chair of the Hudson AHBR at the time:

“It’s also heavily used in Boston now too.”

SKOKIE, IL—A leader in the outdoor décor industry since 1933, Walpole Outdoors has set the standard for outdoor products for contractors and homeowners. Another outdoor living powerhouse, AZEK® Building Products, prides itself on high-quality, low maintenance and long-lasting exterior building products. With the goal of honoring beauty and creating sustainability of historic landmarks, **Walpole and AZEK have partnered on landmark restoration projects, creating the perfect balance of old world charm and modern technology.**

For nearly a decade, Walpole has used AZEK Trim products. Initially, it was used only for a select number of products. Through the years, AZEK's use was expanded to include nearly all items manufactured due to its durability and long lasting beauty.

One of the areas in which Walpole Outdoors excels is the restoration of historical buildings including mansions, hotels and even schools. One of the most notable projects recently completed was the Miss Porter's School iconic fence rehabilitation in Farmington, Conn.

“What Miss Porter's was looking for was an exact reproduction of their existing fence,” said Jim Gottier of Walpole Outdoors. “When we created a sample of the fence using AZEK material, the school and city officials fell in love with the idea of a durable and long-lasting fence that looks and feels like real wood.”

Historical societies were initially hesitant to allow the technologically formulated, high quality materials on historic properties. But due to the natural look of AZEK's cellular PVC trim product, municipalities across the Northeast have approved the material on a variety of Walpole Outdoors' projects.

“In the past, when we met with historical commissions for approval, I've had people insist that the samples are wood instead of synthetic material because it looks so natural,” said Earle Pitt of Walpole Outdoors. “It has been great to educate the public about utilizing AZEK to make these historical landmarks more sustainable while also preserving their natural beauty.”

Walpole has also used AZEK Trim to reconstruct other high profile historical properties in the Northeast – ranging from The Ocean House in Rhode Island to The Lindens House (also known as the King Hooper house for its original owner) in Washington DC.

<https://www.timbertech.com/news/walpole-outdoors-and-azek-trim-partner-for-historic-reproduction-projects-high-tech-materials-add-durability-and-preserve-natural-integrity-of-storied-landmarks/>

Historic Buildings of Connecticut

<https://historicbuildingsct.com/tag/miss-porters/>

**The iconic fence at Miss Porter's School, "Humphrey," (1800),
Farmington CT**

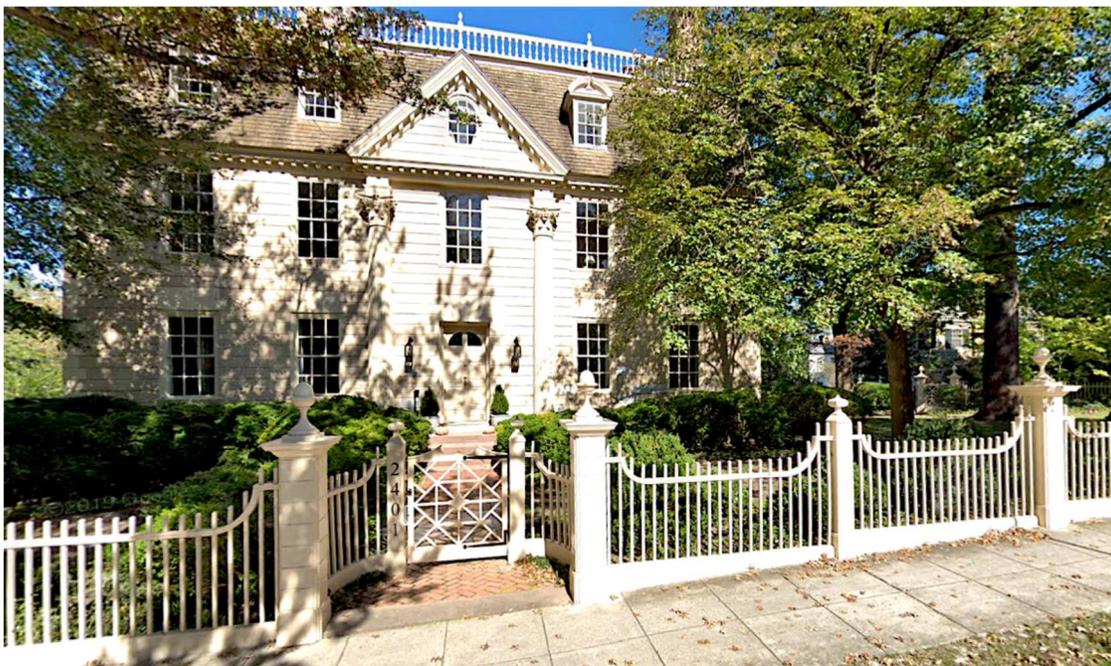


Historic “Ocean House” in Westerly, Rhode Island



Linden House, Kalorama Historic District (Embassies area), Washington D.C.

(The Linden House is the oldest all natural wood residence in DC.)



Examples of Walpole Outdoors Picket Fences in Azek

See: <https://walpoleoutdoors.com/custom-projects/fences-and-gates/>







