



EXTERIOR STAIRCASES + FIRE ESCAPES

BAR Review Levels

These levels are applicable in most cases. Please note that during the administrative review process, Staff may determine that a project requires Board review. Contact Staff at 703.746.3833 to confirm which level of review is required for your project. Also, contact Code Administration at 703.746.4200 to confirm building permit requirements.

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
Removal of exterior staircases or fire escapes impacting less than 25 square feet of building wall area	Construction of exterior staircases or fire escapes on non-street-facing sides	Construction of exterior staircases or fire escapes on street-facing sides Removal of exterior staircases or fire escapes impacting 25 square feet or more of building wall area

Introduction

Exterior staircases and fire escapes are usually a second means of egress from upper floors of structures. In commercial buildings, exterior staircases are often required as a safety exit. On residential structures, exterior staircases may be required by the building code for access to an upper story apartment. In addition, exterior staircases are frequently used to provide access to an upper level outdoor deck.

Guidelines

- o Exterior staircases should generally be located on the side or rear elevation of a property.
- o The design of an exterior staircase should be appropriate to the architectural style and/or period of significance of the building.
- o Exterior staircases should be made of a material appropriate to the period of the building. For example, wood staircases are appropriate for 18th- and early 19th- century buildings, while metal staircases are appropriate for late 19th- century buildings.
- o Exterior wood staircases should be painted or stained.



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Additional Information

- o Exterior staircases and fire escapes must meet the requirements of the [Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code \(USBC\)](#).
- o Exterior staircases and fire escapes that are enclosed or have roofs must meet the rear and side yard setback requirements in the Zoning Ordinance.

Example photos will be added here by staff.