

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** JULY 18, 2018

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE PARKER-GRAY DISTRICT  
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

**FROM:** HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

**SUBJECT:** ADOPTION OF *BAR POLICIES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL FOR COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES IN THE PARKER-GRAY DISTRICT*

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As the Board is aware, the 2012 Parker-Gray Residential Reference Guide (RRG) allowed for reduced regulations and streamlined the process for alterations and minor new construction for residential properties. Since its adoption, most projects are able to be approved by BAR staff and there has been a significant reduction in the number of cases needing approval a full Board hearing. However, any changes to commercial properties in Parker-Gray require BAR approval at a public hearing.

Since the Parker-Gray changes, the Old & Historic Alexandria District (OHAD) BAR has revised some of their policies to more closely align with Parker-Gray's policies. Some policies continue to be jointly used by both Boards, including:

- Roof Policy
- Sign Policy
- Alexandria New and Replacement Window Performance Specifications

On May 16, 2018, the OHAD Board significantly updated the *BAR Policies for Administrative Approval* (formerly Minor Architectural Elements Policy), clarifying which alterations and minor new construction (sheds) can be approved administratively, as well as enumerating many elements not requiring BAR review. All properties in the OHAD – both commercial and residential - are covered by this document.

While Parker-Gray has a much smaller commercial building stock, primarily along Queen Street, Henry Street and in a handful of other locations, there are occasional requests for minor alterations other than signage that would require Board approval. Many of these commercial properties are Later buildings. Staff, therefore, suggests that the Parker-Gray BAR consider adopting the *BAR Policies for Administrative Approval* (attached) so that the commercial properties in Parker-Gray are held to the same standards as commercial properties in the OHAD.

# **BAR POLICIES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT<sup>1</sup>**

## **Including commercial properties in the Parker-Gray District**

Adopted 3/2/2011  
Amended 2/21/2018, 3/22/2018, 5/16/2018, [7/18/18 \(PG\)](#)

### **THE BAR PROCESS**

The primary purpose of the BAR is to preserve historic material, which in many cases can be retained and repaired, rather than replaced.

There are three different levels of BAR approval in the historic districts: Old and Historic Alexandria District (OHAD)

- No BAR approval
- BAR staff administrative approval (as outlined in the attached table)
- BAR approval at a public hearing

Please contact BAR staff to determine what type of approval your project requires. BAR staff can be reached at [preservation@alexandriava.gov](mailto:preservation@alexandriava.gov) or 703-746-3833.

All work Must comply with the Zoning Ordinance. Zoning staff can be reached at [pczoning@alexandriava.gov](mailto:pczoning@alexandriava.gov) or 703-746-4333.

### **I. No BAR Approval**

The items listed below do not require BAR approval:

- Art (as defined in the zoning ordinance)
- At-grade paving not used for alleys, drives or parking
- Removable chimney caps
- Door hardware, mailboxes and house numbers
- Play equipment (not including playhouses)
- Plant materials
- Retaining walls under 2 feet in height
- Storm windows
- Storm doors (full view)
- Small dish antennae less than 2 feet in diameter on non-street-facing elevations
- Security cameras measuring less than one cubic foot each
- Security light fixtures (no more than two) on each non-street-facing elevation
- Portable planters, as defined in the City Code
- Free Little Libraries

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<sup>1</sup> For one and two family residential projects in the Parker-Gray District, refer to the 2012 Residential Reference Guide and adopted Design Guideline chapters instead of this policy.

- Seasonal holiday decorations
- Below-grade features, such as basement stairs and window wells on private property
- Roof drainage elements such as snow guards, gutters and downspouts

## **II. BAR Staff Administrative Approval**

1. The policies in the attached table identify the alterations and/or repairs that may be administratively approved by BAR staff and are also used by the BAR when evaluating requests at a public hearing.
2. BAR staff must visit the subject property to determine whether the proposed alteration is visible from a public right-of-way and whether it is eligible for administrative approval. **Any proposal to remove historic material that staff believes can be reasonably repaired and preserved will not be approved administratively.** A link to the BAR administrative approval application may be found [here](#).
3. Historically appropriate repair and in-kind replacement of materials, such as repointing and siding repair, requires a written finding by staff that it is in compliance with the criteria found in Zoning Ordinance section 10-109 [or 10-209](#). There is no fee associated with a repair, but the standard [BAR administrative approval application](#) form must be completed for tracking purposes.
4. Administrative approvals must comply with all City codes and ordinances and may require separate approval of permits from other City departments. It is recommended that the applicant obtain BAR administrative approval prior to applying for a building permit to avoid possible delays at the [Permit Center](#).
5. These policies may be amended by the BAR at any time but will be reviewed and updated at least every five years.

## **III. BAR Approval at a Public Hearing**

Proposed projects not in compliance with these adopted policies, or not architecturally compatible or historically appropriate in the opinion of staff, require review and approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the BAR at a public hearing. The City's historic preservation website [www.alexandriava.gov/preservation](http://www.alexandriava.gov/preservation) has links to the BAR application.

Please contact BAR staff with any questions or for help completing the BAR application at [preservation@alexandriava.gov](mailto:preservation@alexandriava.gov) or 703-746-3833.

## **BAR POLICIES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL**

The following alterations can be approved administratively by BAR staff. If not specifically listed below, the alteration may require approval by the BAR at a public hearing or may not require BAR approval (see list on page 1). For help, contact BAR staff at [preservation@alexandriava.gov](mailto:preservation@alexandriava.gov) or 703-746-3833.

<b>Accessibility structures (residential)</b>	Temporary ramps/lifts which are easily removable and are not located on a permanent foundation, provided that they are on a non-street-facing elevation, do not permanently alter the building and are constructed of wood, metal or a millable, solid-through-the-core, paintable composite material.
<b>Antennae</b>	Replacement or new co-located antennae meeting the original BAR conditions and the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Penthouse Wall mount: may not project above the wall on which they are mounted and must be painted to match the adjacent wall surface</li><li>• Flat Roof mount: must be on a freestanding tripod set back a minimum of 10 feet from the building face</li></ul>
<b>Awnings</b>	Retractable wall mounted awnings (without legs or supports), provided that they are located on non-street-facing elevations and are retracted when not in use.
<b>Doors (pedestrian)</b>	Wood doors on buildings or portions of buildings constructed before 1935 on street-facing elevations. If historically and architecturally appropriate, may include glass panels (must comply with the window performance specifications for glass).  Fiberglass or metal doors, in the appropriate architectural style and detailing on buildings or portions of buildings constructed after 1934, and on non-street-facing elevations for buildings constructed before 1935, meeting the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Must have a smooth finish</li><li>• If glass panels are architecturally appropriate, the glass must comply with the <i>Alexandria Replacement Window and Door Performance Specifications</i>.</li></ul>
<b>Doors (garage)</b>	Original side-hinged or side-sliding wood doors on historic garages must be repaired or replaced in the original material and style.  Garages constructed after 1934 may have overhead sectional doors and may use a pressed steel or composite material, provided they have a smooth finish.  Glazing on garage doors must be stylistically appropriate.

<b>Fences and gates</b>	<p>New and replacement rear and side yard fences up to 6 feet in height and constructed of wood, metal or masonry.</p> <p>New and replacement front yard fences (3 1/2 feet in height and 50 percent open) provided they are historically appropriate in design and constructed of wood, metal or masonry.</p> <p>BAR approval <u>of a waiver</u> is required for any fence located in a vision clearance area or if a fence <u>exceeds the height limitations noted above</u>. <del>requires a waiver of fence height.</del></p>
<b>HVAC</b>	Minimally visible ground mounted condenser units in side and rear yards. If a unit is visible, screening may be required <u>or may be waived by the BAR at a public hearing.</u>
<b>Lighting</b>	New and replacement light fixtures that are architecturally and historically appropriate.
<b>Masonry repointing</b>	Paint removal and repointing must protect existing masonry and new mortar must match the historic mortar color, composition, texture and profile.
<b>Sheds and accessory structures *</b>	A shed or small accessory building limited to 65 square feet and 8 feet maximum height, provided it is not located on a permanent foundation and may be easily removed.
<b>Shutters</b>	Shutters, provided the following criteria are met: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>They are historically and architecturally appropriate, sized to fit the opening and operable</li> <li>They are constructed of wood or a solid-through-the-core, millable composite material with a smooth finish</li> </ul>
<b>Siding and trim</b>	<p>For buildings or additions constructed prior to 1935, the applicant must, working with staff, undertake the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If multiple layers of siding exist, remove at least one test patch a minimum size of 2 feet by 2 feet on each elevation in order to reveal the first layer of siding</li> <li>BAR staff must visit the site to determine whether any extant historic siding can be retained and be reasonably repaired and patched</li> <li>If staff finds that the existing historic siding is beyond reasonable repair, new siding must match the profile, exposure and design of the original. If historic siding is not present, historically appropriate wood siding must be used.</li> </ul>

	<p>Buildings and additions constructed after 1934 may use fiber cement (e.g. HardiePlank) or composite (e.g. Boral) siding and trim with an architecturally appropriate profile, provided it has a smooth finish.</p> <p>Composite trim in certain limited locations on buildings constructed before 1935, such as the fascia board behind gutters or a water table, where wood trim is consistently exposed to moisture.</p>
<b>Stoops, steps and railings</b>	<p>New stoops, provided that they are constructed with historically appropriate materials and design.</p> <p>New handrails if they are visually minimal (post and rail without balusters), and guardrails required by the building code, provided they are constructed in a historically appropriate style.</p>
<b>Utilities</b>	Electrical utility meters on nonstreet-facing elevations, provided they are painted to match the adjacent wall surface. For gas meters, see the Board's adopted policy for <i>Administrative Approval of Gas Meters</i> .
<b>Vents</b>	<p>Vents measuring less than one cubic foot, provided that the color matches the adjacent surface.</p> <p>Requests for vents on street-facing elevations must include documentation that there is no reasonable alternative.</p>
<b>Window replacement</b>	<p>Buildings or portions of buildings constructed before 1935 with previously replaced windows (not having wood-peggued mortise and tenon sash joinery or cylinder "wavy" glass), or historic windows too deteriorated to repair, as determined by staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically appropriate multi-light sash must be single-glazed wood windows on street facing elevations (energy panels may be used). On non-street-facing elevations, wood windows may be double-glazed (insulated).</li> <li>Historically appropriate one-over-one and two-over-two windows may be replaced with double-glazed wood windows on any elevation.</li> <li>Original window frames and trim must be preserved and repaired.</li> </ul> <p>On buildings or portions of buildings constructed after 1934, modern window materials, such as aluminum-clad wood, wood composite or fiberglass (no hollow vinyl), as well as double-glazing, may be used.</p> <p>Aluminum clad and fiberglass windows may generally replace steel sash windows on any building when using the same light configuration and operation.</p>

	Replacement windows must comply with the <i>Alexandria Replacement Window and Door Performance Specifications</i> .
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