
FW: Written Submission for BAR Hearing 05/20/2026 re: BAR2026-00134

From William Conkey <william.conkey@alexandriava.gov>

Date Mon 5/18/2026 9:35 AM

To Luke Cowan <luke.cowan@alexandriava.gov>; Ashley Casimir <ashley.casimir@alexandriava.gov>; Kendra Jacobs <Kendra.Jacobs@alexandriava.gov>

See the attached letter regarding the 806 N Columbus Street case going to the Board on Wednesday.

Bill Conkey, AIA
Historic Preservation Architect
City of Alexandria, Virginia
Dept of Planning & Zoning
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From: Kate Zernes <kate_zernes@yahoo.com>

Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 8:06 AM

To: Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>; William Conkey <william.conkey@alexandriava.gov>

Subject: Written Submission for BAR Hearing 05/20/2026 re: BAR2026-00134

To: The Members of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR)

From: Kate Zernes, homeowner, 814 N Columbus Street

Date: May 18, 2026

Re: BAR2026-00134 - Parker Gray

I am writing to respectfully object to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed four-story, three-townhome development to be inserted between two existing two-story historic townhomes within the historic district.

The BAR's governing standards are clear that proposed construction must be evaluated for its height, mass, scale, architectural relationship to adjacent structures, and overall compatibility with the historic streetscape and surrounding environment. Section 10-105(A)(2)(e) of the Alexandria Zoning Ordinance specifically requires the Board to consider "[t]he relation of the features... to buildings and structures in the immediate surroundings," while Section 10-105(A)(2)(f) requires consideration of "[t]he extent to which the building or structure would be harmonious with or incongruous to" the historic district. These standards exist to ensure that new construction complements rather than overwhelms adjacent contributing historic structures and the established streetscape.

This proposal does not meet that standard.

A four-story structure inserted between two historic two-story townhomes is not compatible in height, massing, or scale. It does not preserve the rhythm or visual continuity of the streetscape. Instead, it overwhelms the adjacent historic structures and fundamentally alters the character of the block.

What is particularly concerning is that this issue has already been identified repeatedly during prior BAR hearings. After the first hearing, the applicant reduced the height by only approximately three feet. After the second hearing, the applicant apparently made no meaningful reduction at all. In practical terms, the applicant has declined to substantively address the Board's stated concerns regarding excessive height and massing.

At some point, continued requests without meaningful compliance cease to be an effective review process. The public relies upon the BAR to enforce the standards adopted by the City and to exercise independent judgment in protecting the integrity of Alexandria's historic districts. If an applicant can repeatedly disregard the Board's expressed concerns while still ultimately obtaining approval, it creates the appearance that the standards are negotiable rather than binding.

I recognize that the Board must balance preservation concerns with property rights and development pressures. However, the purpose of the historic district regulations is not merely procedural. The regulations exist to ensure that new construction is genuinely compatible with the historic environment and does not diminish the architectural integrity of the surrounding streetscape.

Approving this application in its current form would be difficult to reconcile with the Board's own governing standards regarding harmony, compatibility, scale, and contextual appropriateness. It would also send a troubling message that repeated noncompliance with BAR guidance carries little consequence.

I therefore respectfully urge the Board to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness unless and until the proposal is materially redesigned to achieve genuine compatibility with the surrounding historic townhomes and the established character of the district.

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued service in preserving the historic character of Alexandria.

Respectfully,

Kate Zernes

Fw: [EXTERNAL]Comments for BAR Docket item BAR2026-00134 - Parker Gray

From Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>
Date Mon 5/18/2026 12:24 PM
To Ashley Casimir <ashley.casimir@alexandriava.gov>

FYI

From: Eric Bodley <ebodley@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, May 18, 2026 11:47 AM
To: Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Comments for BAR Docket item BAR2026-00134 - Parker Gray

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Please see my below comments for the BAR Docket Item 7. - BAR2026-00134 - Parker Gray

Thank you

To: City of Alexandria Board of Architectural Review
Regarding 806 N Columbus St

Board Members:

I am writing to respectfully object to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed four-story, three-townhome development to be inserted between two existing two-story historic townhomes within the historic district at 806 N. Columbus St. I am in opposition to the scale, size and massing of the project proposed for 806 N Columbus St.

There are several reasons why the Board needs to encourage the developer to significantly adjust their proposed structure to better align with the current conditions of the proposed location. Specifically.

In referencing the Design Guidelines for the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the Parker Gray district, the guidelines clearly disagree with the developers design as presented.

1. Referencing Page 165, the guidelines say the following on massing.
“**Massing:** Building massing is the enclosed volume which constitutes a building's exterior form. In the historic districts, new residential construction should reflect the building massing prevailing along the blockface. For example, uneven massing should be avoided along a blockface which has buildings of uniform massing.”
 - When reviewing guidelines to compare massing, you see things like “**Height & Stories:** number of floors.” In this case the proposed project is 42.5 feet tall and 4 stories. The two adjacent buildings are both 2 stories with a total height of 32 Feet for the building to the South and 25 Feet for the building to the north. The proposed project has a significantly greater mass.

- Guidelines for comparing massing also references “**Streetscape**: How it fits with neighboring buildings (scale, form). The project as proposed would put at 42.5 Foot tall Brick faced building between two wood sided buildings 32 feet tall and 25 feet tall. Again this seems like a significant massing difference to the existing streetscape.
- The staff report references the new 5 story building across the street, but I will highlight that the referenced guidelines use the term “blockface” specifically, and we should consider this project in the context of the West side of the street of North Columbus.

2. Referencing Page 165, the guidelines say the following on Height.

“Height: Building height should generally reflect the existing heights of buildings in the immediate vicinity of the proposed new construction. Single family houses Most single family houses in the historic districts are 2 or 3 stories in height. New single family residential construction should generally reflect this prevailing pattern.”

- In this case the proposed project is 42.5 feet tall and 4 stories. The two adjacent buildings are both 2 stories with a total height of 32 Feet for the building to the South and 25 Feet for the building to the north. The proposed project has a significantly greater height and would not be in alignment with the “prevailing pattern” as referenced by the guidelines.
- The city staff report and recommendation included the following rationale in justifying their concern to the board. “When considering the appropriateness of the proposed townhouses it is important to consider all of the nearby building context. The immediate blockface contains mostly two story buildings, including the ones directly adjacent to the project site.”
- Additionally, while there is a new 5 story building directly across the street from this proposed project, that property sits outside of the Historic Parker Grey district, and this project sits within the district. Columbus street is the dividing boundary for the Parker Grey District, with the West side of the street being inside the district and East side of the street being outside the district. I would argue that using a property outside the district as justification for a project inside the district is questionable and arguably not valid.

Moving beyond the Design Guidelines for the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the Parker Gray district we look to past precedence set by the Board of Architectural Review. In 2009, while considering the James Bland development, now called Old Town Commons and directly adjacent to this proposed project location, the BAR stated that “If there is a historic home, the max height for an OTC home directly next door is a recessed three stories..” This project is proposing a recessed four stories and is in contradiction to precedent previously set for this neighborhood. The BAR should maintain the previous standard and limit this project to two stories with a recessed third story.

Sincerely,

Eric Bodley

718 N Columbus St

Alexandria VA 22314

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Fw: [EXTERNAL]BAR2026-00134 - Parker Gray

From Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>
Date Tue 5/19/2026 3:32 PM
To Ashley Casimir <ashley.casimir@alexandriava.gov>

FYI

From: Todd Kelly <toddchristopherkelly@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 19, 2026 2:26 PM
To: Preservation <Preservation@alexandriava.gov>
Cc: Kate Zernes <kate_zernes@yahoo.com>
Subject: [EXTERNAL]BAR2026-00134 - Parker Gray

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I'm writing to register an objection to granting a Certificate of Appropriateness for the subject proposed construction on the 800 block of North Columbus Street. The proposed construction is for townhouses that are far higher than the adjacent buildings and are not complimentary to the existing structures on that side of the street. This height mismatch is clearly evident in the rendering on page 25 of the proposal request document. Eliminating the 4th story would achieve the staff recommendation to reduce the height of the project and would put the new townhouses on par with the existing townhouses. I request the proposed townhouses be restricted to no more than three stories to match the relative height of the adjacent buildings.

Todd Kelly
822 N Columbus Street
Sent from my iPhone

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