

# **BAR POLICIES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL IN THE OLD AND HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT<sup>1</sup> AND IN THE PARKER-GRAY DISTRICT FOR COMMERCIAL USES**

Adopted 3/2/2011; Amended 1/3/2024

## **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:

- 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:

- Alterations not visible from a public right of way.
- Demolition or capsulation of less than 25 square feet, regardless of visibility.
- 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
- Unornamented storm doors; those with scrollwork etc. must go to the BAR.
- Small dish antennas 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

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<sup>1</sup> For residential projects in the Parker-Gray District, refer to the [Residential Reference Guide](#) and adopted Design Guideline chapters instead of this policy.

- Free Little Libraries
- 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. The City's historic preservation website [www.alexandriava.gov/preservation](http://www.alexandriava.gov/preservation) has links to the BAR administrative approval applications.
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.**
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.~~

Many projects qualify as ordinary maintenance and do not require BAR approval, as permitted by §10-109, §10-209, and §10-311 of the zoning ordinance. Applicants should consult with BAR staff prior to beginning any work so that a written determination can be made that the proposed project falls under this category. Examples of ordinary maintenance include, but are not limited to:

- Minor repairs to windows, shutters, doors, roofs, siding materials, stoops, steps, and railings
- Painting or repainting non-masonry surfaces
- Repainting masonry surfaces that are already painted
- Replacing less than 25 square feet of roofing and siding material
- In-kind replacement of electric and gas meter heads

Typically, the full replacement of a material (including in-kind replacements) requires administrative (staff) review.

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. The BAR considers the height of a structure to be the vertical distance measured from average finished grade to the highest point of the building, including all architectural

features such as parapet walls. This policy applies regardless of what is written in §2-154 of the zoning ordinance.

6. 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 public hearing 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).

<b>Accessibility structures (residential)</b>	Removable ramps/lifts which are not located on a permanent foundation, provided that they do not permanently alter the building and are constructed of wood, metal or a millable, solid-through-the-core, paintable composite material.
<b>Antennas</b>	<p>Replacement or new co-located antennas meeting the original BAR conditions and the following criteria:</p> <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> <p><b>Small cell:</b> Replacement or new co-located small cell facilities and required equipment meeting the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complies with the Telecommunications Facility Franchise Agreement approved pole designs and materials.</li> <li>• Painted, coated with film, or otherwise shrouded with a color matching the utility pole.</li> <li>• Not located within the KR (King Street Urban Retail) zone or the Waterfront Small Area Plan boundary.</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

	<p>use. Sun sails located in rear or side yards that are not permanent and may be removed when not in use. Those that are permanently attached to the building require Board approval.</p>
<b>Doors (pedestrian)</b>	<p>Wood doors on buildings or portions of buildings constructed before 1932 on street-facing elevations. If historically and architecturally appropriate, may include glass panels (must comply with the window performance specifications for glass).</p> <p>Fiberglass or metal doors, in the appropriate architectural style and detailing on buildings or portions of buildings constructed after 1931, and on non-street-facing elevations for buildings constructed before 1932, meeting the following criteria:</p> <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 these specifications: <a href="https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/planning/info/2021windowperformancespecifications.pdf">https://media.alexandriava.gov/docs-archives/planning/info/2021windowperformancespecifications.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>Doors (garage)</b>	<p>Original side-hinged or side-sliding wood doors on historic garages must be repaired or replaced in the original material and style.</p> <p>Garages constructed after 1931 may have overhead sectional doors and may use a pressed steel or composite material, provided they have a smooth finish.</p> <p>Glazing on garage doors must be stylistically appropriate.</p>
<b>Electric Vehicle Charging Stations</b>	<p>EV charging stations, provided the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimally visible and located in the side or rear yard.</li> <li>• Cannot exceed 48 inches to operable handle.</li> <li>• All conduits should be painted to match the adjacent structure.</li> <li>• The number of charging stations cannot exceed the number of allowed parking spaces.</li> </ul> <p>All EV charging stations must be located completely on the subject property and comply with zoning setback requirements. A scaled survey plat with the location of the proposed charging station must be submitted with the application.</p>
<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 (4 feet in height and 50 percent open) provided they are historically appropriate in design and constructed of wood, metal or masonry.</p>

	BAR approval of a waiver is required for any fence located in a vision clearance area or if a fence exceeds the height limitations noted above.
<b>HVAC</b>	Minimally visible ground mounted condenser units in side and rear yards. If a unit is visible, screening is required unless it is waived by the BAR at a public hearing.
<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>Roof Replacement</b>	<p>For buildings with historic roofs beyond repair or those with previously replaced roofs, replacement materials should match the original in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. The work should utilize the same materials and installation method to the maximum extent possible. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Original slate or tile roofing must be replaced with the same material, style, color, and shape.</li> <li>• Original metal roofing must be replaced with the same style metal roofing (standing seam, flat seam, or stamped shingle). Pre-formed and pre-finished standing seam metal may replace field installed standing seam if the seams and metal pan are the same sizes. Solid copper may replace painted standing seam metal roofing.</li> <li>• Original composition roofing may be replaced with architectural grade composition roofing or any other stylistically appropriate roofing material. Three-tab composition shingles are not appropriate except where evidence confirms it was the original roofing material.</li> <li>• Original synthetic slate roofs can be replaced with real slate, synthetic slate, or architectural grade composition shingles.</li> <li>• Original wood shingle roofs that had been replaced with standing seam metal roof in the past can be replaced with standing seam metal or wood shingles.</li> </ul> <p>Where the original roof material is missing and cannot be determined from documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence, roofing historically appropriate to the age of the structure must be utilized.</p>
<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>	<p>Shutters, provided the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are historically and architecturally appropriate, sized to fit the opening and operable</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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 1932, the applicant must, working with staff, undertake the following steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To determine 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 1931 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 1932, such as the fascia board behind gutters or a water table, where wood trim is consistently exposed to moisture.</p>
<b>Solar Panels</b>	<p>Solar panels, provided the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mounted directly to the roof slope.</li> <li>• Located on later buildings (constructed after 1932).</li> <li>• If the roof will be replaced, an architecturally compatible and appropriate color replacement material should be used so that the solar panels visually blend-in with the roof.</li> </ul> <p>It is recommended that the roofing material be replaced prior to installation, so that the solar panels do not have to be removed and reinstalled a short time later.</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, not installed by drilling into historic stone steps, and guardrails required by the building code, provided they are constructed in a historically appropriate style.</p>
<b>Utilities</b>	<p>Electrical utility meters on non-street-facing elevations, provided they are painted to match the adjacent wall surface. For gas meters, see the Board’s adopted policy for Administrative Approval of Gas Meters:  <a href="https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/BAR-Admin-Gas-Meter-Policy.pdf">https://www.alexandriava.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/BAR-Admin-Gas-Meter-Policy.pdf</a></p>

<b>Vents</b>	Vents measuring less than one cubic foot, provided that the color matches the adjacent surface.
<b>Window replacement</b>	<p>Buildings or portions of buildings constructed before 1932 with previously replaced windows (not having wood-pegged 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 1931, modern window materials, such as aluminum-clad wood, wood composite or fiberglass (no hollow vinyl), as well as double-glazing, may be used. Aluminum clad and fiberglass windows may generally replace steel sash windows on any building when using the same light configuration and operation.</p> <p>The material, form and design of windows on new construction, and replacement windows permitted on existing buildings pursuant to the <i>BAR’s Policies for Administrative Approval for Windows</i>, must comply with the specifications below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replacement windows approved on Early buildings must be full frame replacements, or sash kits installed in the existing frame, rather than insert or pocket style replacements. Fiberglass windows, where permitted, may be insert - type windows only if they minimally obscure existing historic fabric and closely replicate historic window details such as muntin (grids), jamb, and trim profiles.</li> <li>2. The dimensions and proportions of the window rails, stiles, muntins, frame, sill and exterior trim must match historically appropriate window proportions. Exterior trim on Early buildings may not be mitered at the corners.</li> <li>3. Where permitted, multi-light insulated glass windows must have permanently fixed muntins on both the interior and exterior of the glass, with spacer bars between the glass. These are typically referred to as Simulated Divided Light (SDL) windows.</li> <li>4. Muntins must be sized appropriately and paintable. Muntins that approximate historic putty profiles are preferred.</li> </ol>

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|  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>5. Generally, glazing must be clear, non-reflective and without tint. Where double glazing is permitted, Low-E (low emissivity) glass is encouraged for energy conservation. Low-E 272 glass meets these requirements.</li><li>6. The vinyl weatherstrip portion of wood window jambs should be minimally visible.</li><li>7. The applicant must submit complete window manufacturer technical specification sheets, or “cut sheets,” to BAR staff to confirm compliance with these specifications. All window replacements in the historic districts, except sash kits, also require a building permit from Code Administration.</li></ol> |
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