

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** October 22, 2014

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

**FROM:** BAR STAFF

**SUBJECT:** DRAFT PARKER-GRAY DESIGN GUIDELINES

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Attached is the draft Parker-Gray Design Guidelines chapters on mechanical equipment, doors, and stoops and steps. In an effort to streamline the Design Guidelines, staff combined the contents of the chapters on HVAC Systems, Electrical & Gas Service, and Solar Collectors; as well as addressed small dish antennas, generators, and heat pumps in the chapter on mechanical equipment. Likewise, stoops, steps, and railings have been presented as one chapter. Staff looks forward to your feedback on the chapters and asks that you comment on the following:

1. Do you feel that that the items in the mechanical equipment chapter should be broken out into separate chapters, or are you comfortable with all items under one chapter as shown?
2. Does the descriptive paragraph sufficiently summarize the chapter for a homeowner, contractor, and architect?
3. What items would you add to the “do” and “don’t” lists? Are there any that should be removed?
4. What alternate photographs, if any, do you think would better illustrate appropriate and inappropriate interventions?

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1- *DRAFT Design Guidelines: Mechanical Equipment*
- 2- *DRAFT Design Guidelines: Doors*
- 3- *DRAFT Design Guidelines: Stoops & Steps*
- 4- *Parker-Gray Residential Reference Guide*

# MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

APPROVAL MATRIX			
YEAR BUILT	FRONT ( <i>STREET FACING</i> )	SIDE ( <i>NON-STREET FACING</i> )	REAR ( <i>NON-STREET FACING</i> )
Pre - 1932	STAFF REVIEW 	NO REVIEW 	NO REVIEW 
Post - 1931	STAFF REVIEW 	NO REVIEW 	NO REVIEW 

## ROOFTOP EQUIPMENT

The Zoning Ordinance requires screening of rooftop mechanical equipment throughout the city. Regardless of the age of a building, staff reviews all rooftop equipment and screening to determine whether it is visible from a public way. Any equipment or screening that is visible from a public way requires BAR staff approval. In instances where screening is more visually obtrusive than the equipment itself, staff may administratively approve a waiver of rooftop screening.

Mechanical equipment including HVAC units, generators, solar collectors, small dish antennas, gas meters, and electrical panels are an important and practical element of modern living that can have an important effect on the overall visual composition of a building. If not appropriately located, such equipment can create a visual disruption of the skyline or building design. To the extent possible, mechanical equipment should be hidden from view, either ground mounted in rear and side yards; or on a flat roof and set back at least 15 feet from the building face. Staff reviews all mechanical equipment and screening to determine whether it is visible from a public way, with the exception of ground-mounted equipment located in the side or rear yards or on the side and rear of a building. Any visible equipment and screening located on the roof or front of a building, regardless of age, requires BAR staff approval.

## GUIDELINES

### DO . . .

- Locate equipment in the least visible location.
- Screen visible ground mounted equipment.
- Locate rooftop units at least 15 feet from the street facing facade.
- Ensure that the roof structure can support the additional weight and vibration of rooftop mechanical equipment.
- Remove equipment that is no longer in use.
- Install small dish antennas at least 10 feet back from the front building face.
- Paint wall-mounted equipment to match the adjacent wall surface.

### DON'T . . .

- Locate ground-mounted HVAC in the front yard without BAR staff approval.
- Use vinyl materials as screening.

#### REGARDLESS OF AGE OR LOCATION:

\* All projects must comply with the zoning ordinance and building code requirements; a building permit may be required.

# EXAMPLES



*The rooftop HVAC units are strategically placed in the center of a flat roof or in the yard behind fences, to limit visibility from the street.*



*The lattice screening is bulkier and more visually obtrusive than the mechanical equipment itself.*



*Solar panels should be strategically placed in a location that is least visible from a public street or park.*



*The wall-mounted equipment should be located on a non-street facing building wall and must be painted to match the adjacent wall surface.*

## SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST

- A survey plat or aerial image with the location of the new equipment clearly indicated.
- If wall-mounted equipment, a photograph of the building face showing where the unit will be located.
- Specifications and dimensions for the units, including any necessary platforms or risers.
- If screening is proposed, specify the material, dimensions, and design.



# DOORS

APPROVAL MATRIX			
YEAR BUILT	FRONT (STREET FACING)	SIDE (NON-STREET FACING)	REAR (NON-STREET FACING)
Pre - 1932	STAFF REVIEW ✓	NO REVIEW ✗	NO REVIEW ✗
Post - 1931	NO REVIEW ✗	NO REVIEW ✗	NO REVIEW ✗

Exterior doors on the street-facing elevation of pre-1932 buildings must be of an appropriate style and material as they are a character defining feature of any building. Staff will evaluate existing doors, frame, trim, and the transom to determine its authenticity. If no historic material is present, then staff will administratively approve a replacement door in the appropriate style and material. Storm doors do not require approval. Security bars are strongly discouraged on street-facing elevations and require BAR staff review on street-facing elevations.



✓ paneled & wood



✓ full-view storm doors with clear glass



✗ decorative security bars



✗ metal or fiberglass on early buildings

## SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST

- Photograph of door to be replaced.
- Specifications for replacement door (material and design).
- Indicate if the threshold, frame, trim, and/or transom will be replaced.

## GARAGE DOORS

- Replacement of garage doors on pre-1932 buildings that face a public street require staff review.
- Original side-hinged or sliding wood doors and hardware on early garages must be retained and repaired.
- Overhead garage doors on buildings constructed after 1931 can be replaced with high-quality pressed steel or composite materials.

## GUIDELINES

### DO . . .

- Use clear and non reflective glass where appropriate.
- Preserve and restore historic doors, transoms, trim, frames, and hardware.

### DON'T . . .

- Use pressed steel or vinyl.
- Install ornate stained glass on a vernacular building.

# STOOPS & STEPS

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA  
PARKER-GRAY DISTRICT

APPROVAL MATRIX			
YEAR BUILT	FRONT (STREET FACING)	SIDE (NON-STREET FACING)	REAR (NON-STREET FACING)
Pre - 1932	STAFF REVIEW ✓	NO REVIEW	NO REVIEW
Post - 1931	NO REVIEW	NO REVIEW	NO REVIEW

Stoops, steps, and railings provide the transition area between the public street and the private interior of a home and are an integral part of the overall composition of a building. Many historic structures have stoops, steps, and railings that were added later and may or may not have acquired historic significance. For this reason, historic stoops, steps, and railings, as determined by staff, must be retained on the street-face of early buildings. While property owners are encouraged to retain these historic features if present on the other elevations, no BAR approvals are required for their replacement.



✓ Retain historic steps & railings

## RAILINGS

- Must be minimally visible and constructed of post and rail (no balusters or pickets).
- Guardrails required by the building code on the street-facing elevation of early buildings require BAR staff approval.

## SUBMITTAL CHECKLIST

- A plat showing the location of the proposed stoop or steps.
- A photograph of the existing conditions.
- Measured drawings and specs for the replacement items.

## GUIDELINES

### DO . . .

- Choose designs that are appropriate to the style of the structure. Staff can assist you if you are unsure.
- Choose appropriate materials such as wood, cast iron, pre-cast concrete, or stone.
- Look for historic photographs to help inform the type of design that is appropriate.

### DON'T . . .

- Remove or obscure historic features of the building.
- Use suburban deck style guardrails.

# Early Residential Buildings

## Built before 1932

FRONT (street facing)	SIDE (non-street facing)	REAR (non-street facing)
<p><b><u>Demolition/Capsulation</u></b> Demolition of 19th century fences/walls (B) Demolition of chain link and non-historic fences (S) Accessibility features when no longer needed (N)</p> <p><b><u>Site elements</u></b> Fences, except hollow vinyl fences, and those located in the right-of-way (S) Ground mounted HVAC (S) Decks/patios less than 2 ft. above grade (N) Freestanding (permanent) planters and retaining walls less than 2 ft. high. (N) Non-permanent yard features and art (N) Paving (N) Bollards (N)</p> <p><b><u>Exterior finishes</u></b> Painting of, or stucco applied to, unpainted masonry (B) Wood siding, including synthetic trim in limited locations (S) Paint color (N)</p> <p><b><u>Roofs</u></b> Dormers (B) Skylights (B) Rooftop decks (B) Replacement roofing (S) Solar panels (S) Chimneys/flues (S) Visible rooftop HVAC screening (or waiver) if located at least 15’ behind the front façade on flat or sloped roofs (S)</p> <p><b><u>Replacement windows/doors</u></b> Replacement SDL wood windows (if no historic windows exist or cannot be preserved), without tinted or reflective glass (S) Doors and garage doors (S) Security bars (S) Storm doors (N)</p> <p><b><u>Building features</u></b> Vents/fans greater than 1 sq. ft. (B) Dish antennas over 2 feet in diameter (B) Vents/fans less than 1 sq. ft. (S) Shutters (S) Drainage features (S) Dish antennas under 2 feet in diameter (S) Utility meters (S) Awnings (S) Stoops/steps/guard &amp; handrails (S) Light fixtures (N) Window boxes (N)</p> <p><b><u>New construction</u></b> Permanent planters attached to the building (B) Door hoods, porches or porticos (B) Decks and balconies (B) Accessibility features (B) Accessory structures under 50 sq. ft. for corner lots (S)</p>	<p><b><u>Demolition/Capsulation</u></b> Demolition of 19th century fences/walls (B) Demolition of chain link and non-historic fences (N) Accessibility features when no longer needed (N)</p> <p><b><u>Site elements</u></b> Fences, except hollow vinyl (S) Ground mounted HVAC (N) Decks/patios less than 2 ft. above grade (N) Freestanding (permanent) planters and retaining walls less than 2 ft high (N) Non-permanent yard features and art (N) Paving (N) Bollards (N)</p> <p><b><u>Exterior finishes</u></b> Painting of, or stucco applied to, unpainted masonry (B) Siding, including fiber cement siding and synthetic trim (S) Paint color (N)</p> <p><b><u>Roofs</u></b> Dormers (B) Skylights (S) Replacement roofing (S) Visible rooftop HVAC screening (or waiver) (S) Solar panels (N) Chimneys/flues (N) Rooftop decks, provided they are located at least 15’ behind the front façade on flat or sloped roofs (N)</p> <p><b><u>Replacement windows/doors</u></b> Replacement windows of any material but vinyl, without tinted or reflective glass (S) All doors (N) Security Bars (N)</p> <p><b><u>Building features</u></b> Light fixtures (N) Vents/fans (N) Dish antennas and all mast TV antennas (N) Shutters (N) Drainage features (N) Utility meters (N) Window boxes (N) Awnings (N) Stoops/steps/guard &amp; handrails (N)</p> <p><b><u>New construction</u></b> Permanent planters attached to the building (S) Door hoods, porches or porticos (S) Accessory structures under 50 sq. ft. for corner lots (S) Accessibility features (N)</p> <div><p>B = BAR review required at public hearing S= Staff administrative review only N=No BAR or Staff review</p></div>	<p><b><u>Demolition/Capsulation</u></b> Demolition of 19th century fences/walls (B) Demolition of chain link and non-historic fences (N) Demolition and capsulation of 250 or less square feet of rear wall area, below second floor window sills (N) Demolition and capsulation of 100 gross square feet of building area (e.g. existing one story additions) below second floor window sills and accessory structures (N) Accessibility features when no longer needed (N)</p> <p><b><u>Site elements</u></b> Fences, except hollow vinyl (S) Ground mounted HVAC (N) Decks/patios less than 2 ft. above grade (N) Freestanding (permanent) planters and retaining walls less than 2 ft. in high (N) Non-permanent yard features and art (N) Paving (N) Bollards (N)</p> <p><b><u>Exterior finishes</u></b> Painting of, or stucco applied to, unpainted masonry (B) Siding, including fiber cement siding and synthetic trim (S) Paint color (N)</p> <p><b><u>Roofs</u></b> Dormers (B) Skylights (S) Replacement roofing (S) Visible rooftop HVAC screening (or waiver) (S) Solar panels (N) Chimneys/flues (N) Rooftop decks, provided they are located at least 15’ behind the front façade on flat or sloped roofs (N)</p> <p><b><u>Replacement windows/doors</u></b> Replacement windows of any material but vinyl, without tinted or reflective glass (S) All doors (N) Security bars (N)</p> <p><b><u>Building features</u></b> Light fixtures (N) Vents/fans (N) Dish antennas and all mast TV antennas (N) Shutters (N) Drainage features (N) Utility meters (N) Window boxes (N) Awnings (N) Stoops/steps/guard &amp; handrails (N) Alterations below the second floor window sills (N)</p> <p><b><u>New construction</u></b> Permanent planters attached to the building (N) Accessory structures no greater than one story, 256 gross sq. ft. and 11.5 feet high (N) One-story additions no more than 250 gross sq. ft. of floor area and no taller than 2nd floor window sills (N) Decks/patios below the second floor window sills (N) Door hoods, porches or porticos below second floor window sill (N) Accessibility features (N)</p>

1. Unless specifically exempted here, the BAR must approve any alterations, additions, demolition and/or capsulation.
2. All projects must comply with zoning ordinance and building code requirements, and a building permit may be required.
3. All work approved by Staff through the administrative approval process must still be consistent with all BAR Design Guidelines, as amended, and policies.
4. Corner buildings have two street facing elevations (fronts) and two non-street facing elevations (sides).



# Later Residential Buildings

## Built after 1931

B= BAR review at hearing.  
S= Staff administrative review only  
N=No BAR or Staff review required

FRONT	SIDE	REAR
<p><b><u>Demolition/Capsulation</u></b> Demolition of all fences (N) Accessibility features, when no longer needed (N)</p> <p><b><u>Site elements</u></b> Fences, except hollow vinyl fences, <u>and those located in the right-of-way</u> (S) Ground mounted HVAC (S) Decks/patios less than 2 ft. above grade (N) Freestanding (permanent) planters and retaining walls less than 2 ft. high (N) Non-permanent yard features and art (N) Paving (N) Bollards (N)</p> <p><b><u>Exterior finishes</u></b> Painting of, or stucco applied to, unpainted masonry (B) Wood siding, including fiber cement siding and synthetic trim (S) Paint color (N)</p> <p><b><u>Roofs</u></b> Dormers (B) Rooftop decks (B) Skylights (B) Replacement roofing (S) Visible rooftop HVAC screening (or waiver) if located at least 15’ behind the front façade on flat or sloped roofs (S) Solar panels (S) Chimneys/flues (S)</p> <p><b><u>Replacement windows/doors</u></b> Security bars (S) Replacement windows (S): If located 15’ or more from the front property line they may be any material, operation or configuration, without tinted or reflective glass; and, If located less than 15’ from the property line, the windows may be wood, aluminum clad wood, or any high quality, paintable material with permanently affixed simulated divided light muntins. They may not be hollow vinyl, have sandwich muntins, or have tinted or reflective glass. Doors (N)</p> <p><b><u>Building features</u></b> Dish antennas over 2 feet in diameter (B) Vents/fans greater than 1 sq. ft. (B) Drainage features (S) Vents/fans less than 1 sq. ft. 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