

**ISSUE:** Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations

**APPLICANT:** Matt and Erica Gray

**LOCATION:** Parker-Gray District  
225 North West Street

**ZONE:** RB/Residential Townhouse Zone

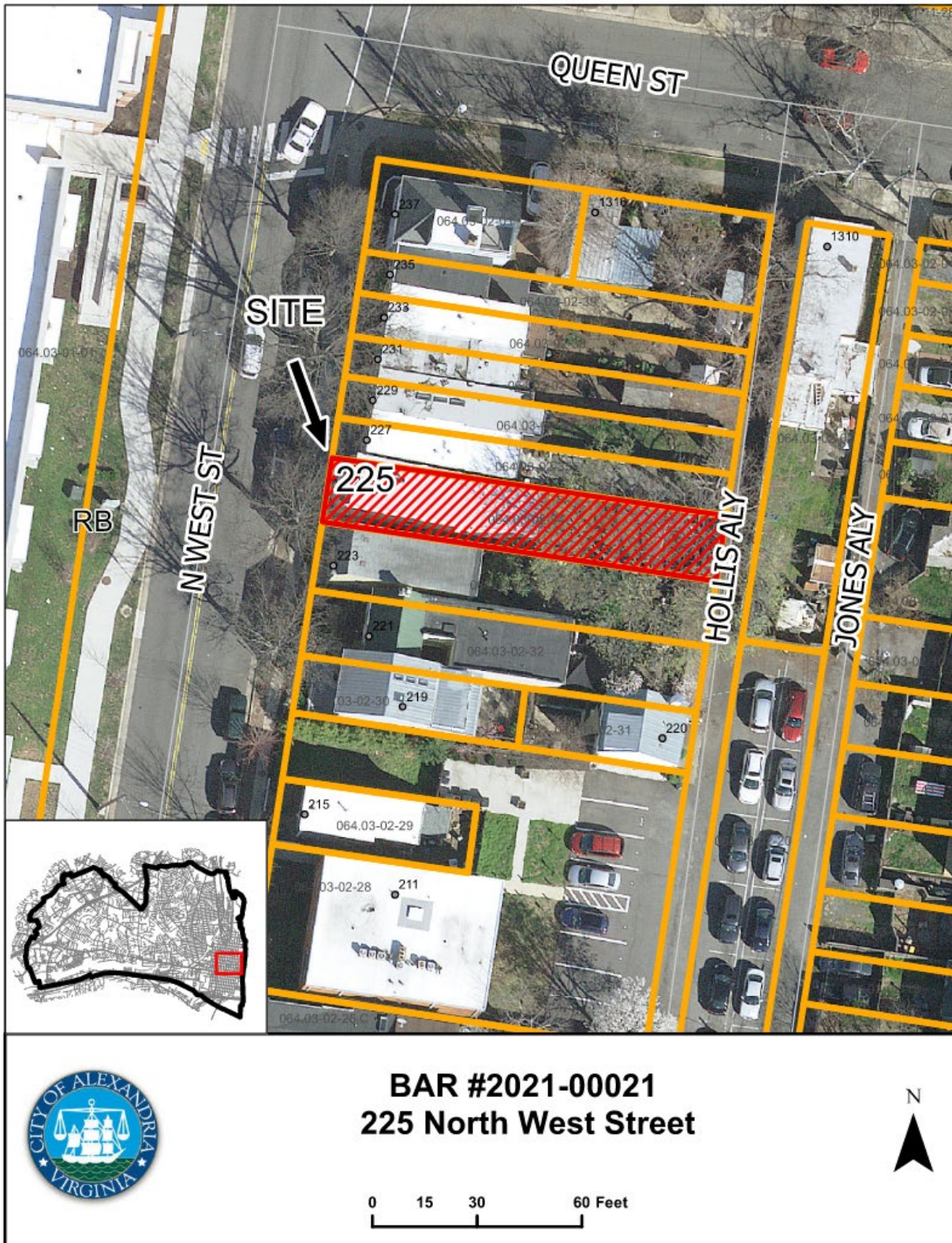
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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations with the condition that the applicant either replaces the existing nonconforming brick stoop with an historically appropriate cast-iron stoop or installs simple post and rail with a middle horizontal bar guardrail on the existing brick stoop.

**GENERAL NOTES TO THE APPLICANT**

1. **APPEAL OF DECISION:** In accordance with the Zoning Ordinance, if the Board of Architectural Review denies or approves an application in whole or in part, the applicant or opponent may appeal the Board's decision to City Council on or before 14 days after the decision of the Board.
2. **COMPLIANCE WITH BAR POLICIES:** All materials must comply with the BAR's adopted policies unless otherwise specifically approved.
3. **BUILDING PERMITS:** Most projects approved by the Board of Architectural Review require the issuance of one or more construction permits by Department of Code Administration (including signs). The applicant is responsible for obtaining all necessary construction permits after receiving Board of Architectural Review approval. Contact Code Administration, Room 4200, City Hall, 703-746-4200 for further information.
4. **ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS AND PERMITS TO DEMOLISH:** Applicants must obtain a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness or Permit to Demolish PRIOR to applying for a building permit. Contact BAR Staff, Room 2100, City Hall, 703-746-3833, or [preservation@alexandriava.gov](mailto:preservation@alexandriava.gov) for further information.
5. **EXPIRATION OF APPROVALS NOTE:** In accordance with Sections 10-106(B), 10-206(B) and 10-307 of the Zoning Ordinance, any Board of Architectural Review approval will expire 12 months from the date of issuance if the work is not commenced and diligently and substantially pursued by the end of that 12-month period.
6. **HISTORIC PROPERTY TAX CREDITS:** Applicants performing extensive, certified rehabilitations of historic properties may separately be eligible for state and/or federal tax credits. Consult with the Virginia Department of Historic Resources (VDHR) prior to initiating any work to determine whether the proposed project may qualify for such credits.



## I. APPLICANT'S PROPOSAL

The applicant requests a Certificate of Appropriateness to install guardrails on the building's entrance stoop, at 225 North West Street.

### Certificate of Appropriateness

The applicant is proposing to install metal picket guardrails (Figure 1) on the existing entrance brick stoop



Figure 1- proposed metal picket guardrails

### Site context

The Subject property sits in the middle of the 200 block of North West street on the east side and is across the street from Jefferson Houston Elementary School.

## II. HISTORY

According to the National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Uptown-Parker-Gray Historic District, 225 North West "...is part of a row of adjoining houses, most which appear to have been built at the same time. The row appears to have been built **shortly after the 1877** Hopkins map was developed." Sanborn Fire Insurance maps support this construction date, as this two-story, two-bay, Folk Second Empire frame house (Figure 2) appears on the maps from 1891 through 1958. It retains the same basic rectangular form throughout its history but appears to have been enlarged at some point between 1907 and 1912.





Figure 2- Subject property

### *Previous BAR Approvals*

BAR Case #2020-00165, 04/01/2020, siding and door replacement, roof repair, and removal of awning/shutters.

BAR Case #2020-00237/238, 05/15/2020, alterations to the rear.

BAR Case #2020-00317, 06/30/2020, window replacement.

### **III. ANALYSIS**

Railings are an important visual and functional element of the entrances to buildings and support the transition area between the public street and the private interior of a building. However, despite their functional importance, railings were not a part of the historic streetscape of Old Town Alexandria. Handrails were generally not installed on stoops in Alexandria until cast-iron stoops and railings became commercially available in the second half of the 19th century. In extremely rare instances where a railing was present, the design was simple and did not include ornate balusters.

While the BAR has strongly supported simple handrails with minimal decoration for safety reasons, the BAR has approved ornate, decorative handrails in rare cases within the past 10 years. Most recently, the Board approved the ornate handrails at 407 Prince Street (BAR2019-00065) and 419 North Columbus Street (BAR2021-00001). The BAR's administrative policy states that new handrails may only be approved by staff if they are visually minimal, such as a post and rail without balusters. The reason is that non-historic railings and balusters should not detract from the architecture of the building.

The subject property features a nonconforming stoop which is steeper and higher than usual, as shown in the pictures below (Figures 3 and 4).



Figure 3 - stoop height



Figure 4 - stoop height

The Virginia Building Code requires guardrails to be installed on *new* stoops that exceed 30" in height. In consultation with Alexandria's Code Administration Department staff was advised that even though the subject stoop exceeds the 30" height threshold, the stoop is legacy and no guardrails are required to be installed, but if guardrails are installed, they will be inspected for safety. Code Administration does not oversee railing design.

Having said that, the BAR is to specify the appropriate guardrail design for the subject property. Historically, vernacular frame buildings as the subject property built in the Victorian era would have wood stoops, usually without handrails (Figure 5). Wood steps were commonly replaced with brick stoops later on.



**Figure 5 - vernacular Victorian houses with wood steps**

Victorian masonry houses usually had metal railings that would be more or less ornate according to their size and style sophistication; vernacular masonry Victorian row houses usually featured a simple metal handrail on stone steps or cast-iron stoops (Figure 6). However, in Alexandria many frame vernacular Victorian houses feature cast-iron stoops which it is an option for the applicant since staff considers cast-iron stoops historically and stylistically appropriate for frame vernacular Victorian buildings.





**Figure 6 – Cast-iron stoops**

When there is no pictorial record showing the pre-existence of historic railings, staff can approve administratively for safety purposes a simple metal handrail as shown below (Figure 7) which does not detract from the historic buildings' architecture style.



**Figure 7 - example of recommended handrail**

However, the applicant has included in the application several pictures of existing picket guardrails throughout the historic district similar to the one being proposed. Even though a few were approved by the BAR, most have no record of approval. Staff finds it relevant to clarify that Parker-Gray was not designated historic until 1984 and alterations that occurred prior to that date are legacies. In addition, the design guidelines date from 1992, again, every alteration that predates the adoption of the Guidelines are also legacies and cannot be used as precedent.

Nevertheless, staff recognizes the homeowner's safety concerns and recommends a less intrusive guardrail design than the metal picket mass produced guardrail being proposed. Staff finds that a simple post and rail with a middle horizontal bar (Figure 8) will prevent a child to fall through, as the applicant fears, and it will be visually less prominent.



Figure 8 - recommended railing

Therefore, with the conditions discussed above, staff recommends approval of the project.

#### **STAFF**

Marina Novaes, Historic Preservation Planner, Planning & Zoning

Tony LaColla, AICP, Land Use Services Division Chief, Planning & Zoning

#### **IV. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

Legend: C- code requirement R- recommendation S- suggestion F- finding

#### **Zoning**

F-1 The proposed guardrail complies with zoning.



**Code Administration**

- C-1 Installation of a guardrail will require a building permit and a building permit plan review prior to construction

**Transportation and Environmental Services**

- R-1 The building permit must be approved and issued prior to the issuance of any permit for demolition, if a separate demolition permit is required. (T&ES)
- R-2 Applicant shall be responsible for repairs to the adjacent city right-of-way if damaged during construction activity. (T&ES)
- R-3 No permanent structure may be constructed over any existing private and/or public utility easements. It is the responsibility of the applicant to identify any and all existing easements on the plan. (T&ES)
- F-1 After review of the information provided, an approved grading plan is not required at this time. Please note that if any changes are made to the plan it is suggested that T&ES be included in the review. (T&ES)
- F-2 If the alley located at the rear of the parcel is to be used at any point of the construction process the following will be required:  
For a Public Alley - The applicant shall contact T&ES, Construction Permitting & Inspections at (703) 746-4035 to discuss any permits and accommodation requirements that will be required.  
For a Private Alley - The applicant must provide proof, in the form of an affidavit at a minimum, from owner of the alley granting permission of use. (T&ES)
- C-1 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Solid Waste Control, Title 5, Chapter 1, which sets forth the requirements for the recycling of materials (Sec. 5-1-99). (T&ES)
- C-2 The applicant shall comply with the City of Alexandria's Noise Control Code, Title 11, Chapter 5, which sets the maximum permissible noise level as measured at the property line. (T&ES)
- C-3 Any work within the right-of-way requires a separate permit from T&ES. (Sec. 5-2) (T&ES)
- C-4 All improvements to the city right-of-way such as curbing, sidewalk, driveway aprons, etc. must be city standard design. (Sec. 5-2-1) (T&ES)

**Alexandria Archaeology**

- F-1 Archaeological oversight will not be necessary for this undertaking.

**V.     ATTACHMENTS**

- 1 – Application Materials*
- 2 – Supplemental Materials*

ADDRESS OF PROJECT: 225 North West St.DISTRICT: ☐ Old & Historic Alexandria ☒ Parker – Gray ☐ 100 Year Old BuildingTAX MAP AND PARCEL: 064.03-02-34ZONING: RBAPPLICATION FOR: *(Please check all that apply)*☒ CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS☐ PERMIT TO MOVE, REMOVE, ENCAPSULATE OR DEMOLISH  
*(Required if more than 25 square feet of a structure is to be demolished/impacted)*☐ WAIVER OF VISION CLEARANCE REQUIREMENT and/or YARD REQUIREMENTS IN A VISION  
CLEARANCE AREA *(Section 7-802, Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)*☐ WAIVER OF ROOFTOP HVAC SCREENING REQUIREMENT  
*(Section 6-403(B)(3), Alexandria 1992 Zoning Ordinance)*Applicant: ☒ Property Owner ☐ Business *(Please provide business name & contact person)*

Matt Gray &amp; Erica Gray

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 225 N. West St.City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314Phone: 571-405-7671 E-mail: mgray@msg.propertiesAuthorized Agent *(if applicable)*: ☐ Attorney ☐ Architect ☐ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Legal Property Owner:

Matt Gray &amp; Erica Gray

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 225 N. West St.City: Alexandria State: VA Zip: 22314Phone: 571-405-7671 E-mail: mgray@msg.properties

- ☐ Yes ☒ No Is there an historic preservation easement on this property?
- ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, has the easement holder agreed to the proposed alterations?
- ☐ Yes ☒ No Is there a homeowner's association for this property?
- ☐ Yes ☒ No If yes, has the homeowner's association approved the proposed alterations?

If you answered yes to any of the above, please attach a copy of the letter approving the project.



**NATURE OF PROPOSED WORK:** *Please check all that apply*

- ☐ NEW CONSTRUCTION
- ☒ EXTERIOR ALTERATION: *Please check all that apply.*
- |  |   |   |                                   |
|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> awning  | <input type="checkbox"/> fence, gate or garden wall | <input type="checkbox"/> HVAC equipment             | <input type="checkbox"/> shutters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> doors   | <input type="checkbox"/> windows                    | <input type="checkbox"/> siding                     | <input type="checkbox"/> shed     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lighting  | <input type="checkbox"/> pergola/trellis            | <input type="checkbox"/> painting unpainted masonry |                                   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other <u>guardrail for front steps</u> |   |   |                                   |
- ☐ ADDITION
- ☐ DEMOLITION/ENCAPSULATION
- ☐ SIGNAGE

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK:** *Please describe the proposed work in detail (Additional pages may be attached).*

We would like to install a guardrail in light of a recent event where my wife fell off our steps and was badly injured. Staff has recommended planters or open handrails which is not a guardrail. Our steps are above 30" above finished grade which require guardrails per International Residential Code (IRC), VA Building Codes & Alexandria's Codes. See attached showing Alexandria's Code Requirements. Installing an open rail system is against code requirements and is a safety hazard to our neighbors children and our family's 1-5 year old neices and nephews. Furthermore, I have a Class A Contractor's license issued by the State of Virginia. I cannot, in good faith, deliberately go against code requirements which would put my license in jeopardy and put my family or others family's children in harms way full well knowing this is incorrect.

**SUBMITTAL REQUIREMENTS:**

Items listed below comprise the **minimum supporting materials** for BAR applications. Staff may request additional information during application review. Please refer to the relevant section of the *Design Guidelines* for further information on appropriate treatments.

Applicants must use the checklist below to ensure the application is complete. Include all information and material that are necessary to thoroughly describe the project. Incomplete applications will delay the docketing of the application for review. Pre-application meetings are required for all proposed additions. All applicants are encouraged to meet with staff prior to submission of a completed application.

**Demolition/Encapsulation :** *All applicants requesting 25 square feet or more of demolition/encapsulation must complete this section. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- N/A
- ☐ ☒ Survey plat showing the extent of the proposed demolition/encapsulation.
- ☐ ☒ Existing elevation drawings clearly showing all elements proposed for demolition/encapsulation.
- ☐ ☒ Clear and labeled photographs of all elevations of the building if the entire structure is proposed to be demolished.
- ☐ ☒ Description of the reason for demolition/encapsulation.
- ☐ ☒ Description of the alternatives to demolition/encapsulation and why such alternatives are not considered feasible.

**Additions & New Construction:** *Drawings must be to scale and should not exceed 11" x 17" unless approved by staff. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- ☐ ☒ N/A Scaled survey plat showing dimensions of lot and location of existing building and other structures on the lot, location of proposed structure or addition, dimensions of existing structure(s), proposed addition or new construction, and all exterior, ground and roof mounted equipment.
- ☐ ☒ FAR & Open Space calculation form.
- ☐ ☒ Clear and labeled photographs of the site, surrounding properties and existing structures, if applicable.
- ☐ ☒ Existing elevations must be scaled and include dimensions.
- ☐ ☒ Proposed elevations must be scaled and include dimensions. Include the relationship to adjacent structures in plan and elevations.
- ☐ ☒ Materials and colors to be used must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided or required.
- ☐ ☒ Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
- ☐ ☒ For development site plan projects, a model showing mass relationships to adjacent properties and structures.

**Signs & Awnings:** *One sign per building under one square foot does not require BAR approval unless illuminated. All other signs including window signs require BAR approval. Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- ☐ ☒ N/A Linear feet of building: Front: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary front (if corner lot): \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ ☒ Square feet of existing signs to remain: \_\_\_\_\_.
- ☐ ☒ Photograph of building showing existing conditions.
- ☐ ☒ Dimensioned drawings of proposed sign identifying materials, color, lettering style and text.
- ☐ ☒ Location of sign (show exact location on building including the height above sidewalk).
- ☐ ☒ Means of attachment (drawing or manufacturer's cut sheet or bracket if applicable).
- ☐ ☒ Description of lighting (if applicable). Include manufacturer's cut sheet for any new lighting fixtures and information detailing how it will be attached to the building's facade.

**Alterations:** *Check N/A if an item in this section does not apply to your project.*

- ☒ ☒ N/A Clear and labeled photographs of the site, especially the area being impacted by the alterations, all sides of the building and any pertinent details.
- ☐ ☒ Manufacturer's specifications for materials to include, but not limited to: roofing, siding, windows, doors, lighting, fencing, HVAC equipment and walls.
- ☒ ☐ Drawings accurately representing the changes to the proposed structure, including materials and overall dimensions. Drawings must be to scale.
- ☐ ☒ An official survey plat showing the proposed locations of HVAC units, fences, and sheds.
- ☐ ☒ Historic elevations or photographs should accompany any request to return a structure to an earlier appearance.

**ALL APPLICATIONS:** *Please read and check that you have read and understand the following items:*

- ☒ I have submitted a filing fee with this application. (Checks should be made payable to the City of Alexandria. Please contact staff for assistance in determining the appropriate fee.)
- ☒ I understand the notice requirements and will return a copy of the three respective notice forms to BAR staff at least five days prior to the hearing. If I am unsure to whom I should send notice I will contact Planning and Zoning staff for assistance in identifying adjacent parcels.
- ☒ I, the applicant, or an authorized representative will be present at the public hearing.
- ☒ I understand that any revisions to this initial application submission (including applications deferred for restudy) must be accompanied by the BAR Supplemental form and revised materials.

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The undersigned hereby attests that all of the information herein provided including the site plan, building elevations, prospective drawings of the project, and written descriptive information are true, correct and accurate. The undersigned further understands that, should such information be found incorrect, any action taken by the Board based on such information may be invalidated. The undersigned also hereby grants the City of Alexandria permission to post placard notice as required by Article XI, Division A, Section 11-301(B) of the 1992 Alexandria City Zoning Ordinance, on the property which is the subject of this application. The undersigned also hereby authorizes the City staff and members of the BAR to inspect this site as necessary in the course of research and evaluating the application. The applicant, if other than the property owner, also attests that he/she has obtained permission from the property owner to make this application.

**APPLICANT OR AUTHORIZED AGENT:**Signature: Printed Name: Matt GrayDate: 01/18/21



# OWNERSHIP AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Use additional sheets if necessary

**1. Applicant.** State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the applicant, unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than three percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. Erica Gray	225 N. North West St. Alexandria, VA 22314	50%
2. Matt Gray	225 N. North West St. Alexandria, VA 22314	50%
3.		

**2. Property.** State the name, address and percent of ownership of any person or entity owning an interest in the property located at 225 N. West Street, Alex, VA 22314 (address), unless the entity is a corporation or partnership, in which case identify each owner of more than three percent. The term ownership interest shall include any legal or equitable interest held at the time of the application in the real property which is the subject of the application.

Name	Address	Percent of Ownership
1. Erica Gray	225 N. North West St. Alexandria, VA 22314	50%
2. Matt Gray	225 N. North West St. Alexandria, VA 22314	50%
3.		

**3. Business or Financial Relationships.** Each person or entity listed above (1 and 2), with an ownership interest in the applicant or in the subject property is required to disclose any business or financial relationship, as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance, existing at the time of this application, or within the 12-month period prior to the submission of this application with any member of the Alexandria City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals or either Boards of Architectural Review.

Name of person or entity	Relationship as defined by Section 11-350 of the Zoning Ordinance	Member of the Approving Body (i.e. City Council, Planning Commission, etc.)
1. n/a		
2.		
3.		

**NOTE: Business or financial relationships of the type described in Sec. 11-350 that arise after the filing of this application and before each public hearing must be disclosed prior to the public hearings.**

As the applicant or the applicant's authorized agent, I hereby attest to the best of my ability that the information provided above is true and correct.

01/18/21

Date

Matt Gray

Printed Name



Signature

Picture showing 31" immediately adjacent.





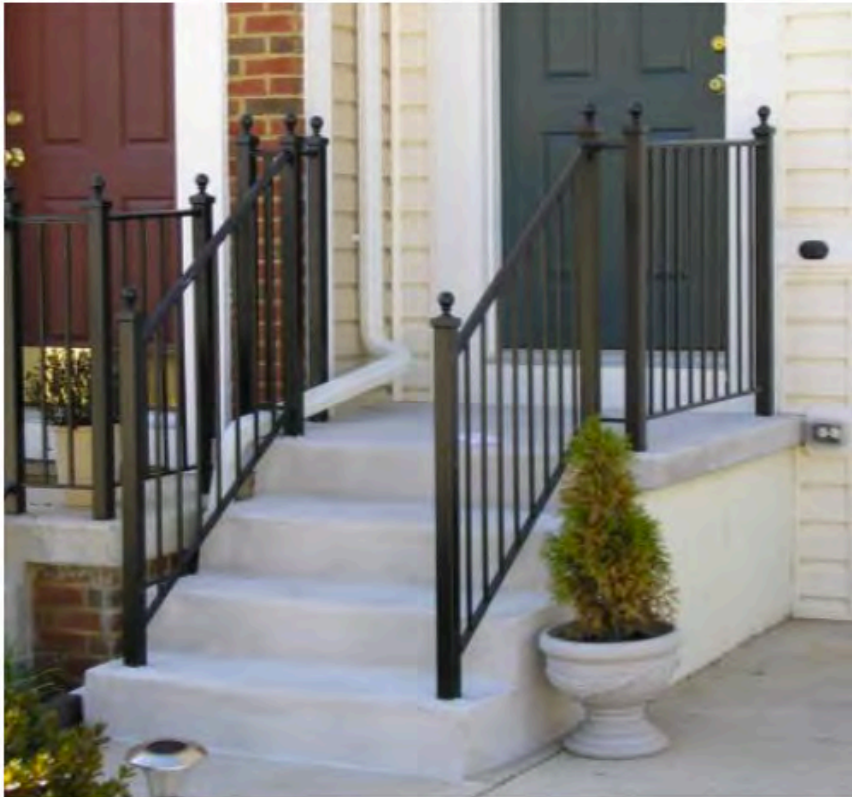
Picture showing 35" which is 36" to any open side per code requirements.





Proposed rail which meets codes compliance.

- Railing is 36" high.
- Guardrails shall not allow anything 4" to pass through.
- \*\*\*Railing shown is example. The house in background is another house from previous project\*\*\*



Examples below are within a 2-block radius of 225 West Street. They are all in Parker Gray and the vast majority are all early buildings.

The proposed railings are clearly and dominantly being used all throughout Historic Alexandria because that is what the code requires.

Alexandria Code Requirements. Also attached hereto.

**Guardrails (Guards)**

*Reference: VRC R312*

- 36" high min. guard required for walking surfaces 30" above adjacent finished grade/floor below, measured at any point within 36" horizontally to the edge of the open side.
- Required guards shall not have openings from the walking surface to the required guard height which allow passage of a sphere 4" in diameter.

**Carbon Monoxide Alarms**

*Reference: VRC R315*

- New Construction: Carbon monoxide alarm must be installed outside of each separate sleeping area(s) in dwelling units within which fuel-fired appliances are installed and in dwelling units that have attached garages.

**Smoke Alarm**

*Reference: VRC R314*

- Smoke detectors are required when a permit is required, or when one or more bedrooms are added.
- Must be powered by interconnected building wiring, and have battery back-up in new construction and additions.
- May be battery-powered in alterations or repairs except when wiring can be installed without removal of interior finishes.
- Required in sleeping rooms, outside sleeping areas, and on other floors (including basements).

**Safety Glazing**

*Reference: VRC R308*

- Glazing in or adjacent to doors (24") and glazing close to the floor - see code for other hazardous locations.
- Glazing adjacent to stairs and stair landings

**6. NATURAL LIGHT REQUIREMENTS**

*Reference: VRC R303*

- Window area for natural light must be 8 percent of floor area (exception for artificially lighted rooms).

**7. VENTILATION REQUIREMENTS**

**Roof Ventilation**

*Reference: VRC R806*

- 1 sq. ft. of venting per 150 sq. ft. of area to be vented - this can be reduced to 1/300 if ventilators are provided in the upper portion of this area to be vented.
- 1" air space minimum required above roof insulation.
- Cross-ventilation required.

**Crawl Space Ventilation**

*Reference: VRC R408*

- 1 sq. ft. of venting per 150 sq. ft. of under floor area.
- Cross-ventilation also required. (See also VRC R317.1 for crawl space clear heights, 18" minimum for joists, 12" minimum for wood girders not preservative treated).

**Mechanical Ventilation/Exhaust Termination**

*Reference: VRC R303.3, R1502, R1503 and R1507*

- Exhaust air from bathroom fans, range hoods and clothes dryers shall exhaust directly outside.















































