

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2021

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

FROM: HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

SUBJECT: REVISIONS TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL POLICY TO ADD SOLAR PANELS AND TO UPDATE THE RAILINGS POLICY

Solar panels:

At the October 20, 2021 hearing staff will present a BAR administrative approval policy for solar photovoltaic panels. The proposed administrative approval policy would allow staff to administratively approve solar panels on later buildings in the Old and Historic District and Parker-Gray commercial properties. The policy will be consistent with the solar panel policy for later residential properties located in the Parker-Gray District. The language in red has been updated based on the Board comments at the September 16th hearing.

The proposed language is below:

Solar Panels	<p>Solar panels, provided the following criteria are met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mounted directly to the roof slope.• Located on later buildings (constructed after 1932).• 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. <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>
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As with all administrative approval policies, failure to meet the requirements does not result in denial but rather requires that the applicant seek BAR approval at a public hearing. In addition, using good judgement, staff may find that a proposed solar panel project may need full Board review, in which case the application would be docketed.

Railings:

Staff will also present an update to the administrative approval policy for railings. The Board directed staff to review the railings' policy for administrative approval to streamline the review

process since there are numerous picket railings throughout the historic districts and metal picket railings were existing and broadly used since the Victorian era.

On February 17, 2021, in reviewing the BAR case # BAR2021-00021, 225 West Street in the Parker-Gray Historic District, the Board found that simpler railings with balustrades are permissible since they do not compromise the building's architectural style and are all over the historic districts. Furthermore, simple picket railings are not associated with any particular era and don't detract from the building's architectural style in most cases.

Therefore, the Board found that vertical balusters are acceptable as long they are simple, thin, well-spaced with no details, with no cap or finials on the post and the number of balusters be limited to the minimum required by Code.

Stoops, steps and railings	<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), <u>not installed by drilling into historic stone steps</u>, and guardrails required by the building code, provided they are constructed in a historically appropriate style.</p>
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Staff looks forward to any questions and feedback from the Board, as well as the public. Following that discussion staff looks forward to the Board's approval of the proposed policy.