

CHAPTER 7

WASHINGTON STREET GUIDELINES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Building and Zoning Code Requirements	2
Additional Standards for a Certificate of Appropriateness for Buildings Fronting on Washington Street	3
General Guidelines for all Building Activity	5
Guidelines for Washington Street Sectors	
Bashford Lane to Four Mile Run	7
Pendleton Street to Bashford Lane	8
Wilkes Street to Pendleton Street	8
Hunting Creek to Wilkes Street	8
Application Requirements	9
Related Sections	10
Archaeological Considerations	11

INTRODUCTION

The construction of new buildings or renovations or additions to existing buildings on lots which front on the George Washington Memorial Parkway (North and South Washington Street) require the review and approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness by the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review.

Washington Street (both north and south) is part of the George Washington Memorial Parkway extending from the District of Columbia to Mount Vernon. The Parkway was laid out and constructed as part of the celebration of the bicentennial of the birth of Washington in 1932. It is operated and maintained by the National Park Service (NPS). In 1929 the City entered into an agreement with the NPS to maintain the

memorial character of Washington Street as part of the Parkway. Today, Washington Street is one of the principal defining elements of the Old and Historic Alexandria District as well as a central commercial and retail artery for the City.

There is a diversity of architecture and uses along Washington Street ranging from large scale modern office buildings and gas stations to garden apartments. While it is primarily a vehicular street, the historic core area has considerable pedestrian activity. Because of the range of architecture, uses and levels of activity, the guidelines divide Washington Street into four sectors with differing requirements depending upon the prevailing characteristics of the area. These four areas are: (1) the area north of Bashford Lane to the northern city limit at Four Mile Run, including portions of the planned Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard development project; (2) North Washington Street area from Bashford Lane to Pendleton Street; (3) the historic core area of Washington Street from Pendleton Street to Wilkes Street; and, (4) the South Washington Street area from Wilkes Street to the southern city limit at Hunting Creek. Guidelines for each of these sectors are set out in the following pages. In addition to the guidelines for each sector, there are other specific guidelines which apply to all projects along Washington Street.

In the last twenty years, there has been considerable development of office space along North Washington Street. Along most of Washington Street there are now relatively few parcels of vacant land for the development of new buildings without demolishing an existing structure. The approval of the Board is required for the demolition of any structure in the historic

districts and the demolition of an existing historic building to permit construction of a new building is strongly discouraged by the Board. Therefore, most new projects along Washington Street are in-fill construction that make use of vacant land. In these cases, the Board is primarily concerned with the compatibility of a new building with adjacent historic structures and the compatibility of the building with the memorial character of the Parkway.

The issue of development along Washington Street has aroused considerable interest and in 1999 the City Council appointed the Washington Street Task Force to review and develop new standards for the approval of projects along Washington Street. New standards were adopted by City Council as part of the Zoning Ordinance in 2000. The Washington Street design guidelines originally adopted by the Boards of Architectural Review in 1993, have been updated to incorporate the new standards. In addition, the Task Force recommended creation of streetscape guidelines.

REQUIREMENTS

- All applications for new construction must comply with the requirements of the zoning regulations prior to consideration by the Board of Architectural Review. The specific requirements may be obtained from the zoning office (Telephone: 703/838-4688).
- There is a general city requirement that buildings on corner lots must maintain a vision clearance at the corner for purposes of transportation safety. In such instances, structures may be no higher than 42" (3'6") above the curb. There is also a general policy which seeks to maintain the building line in

the historic district. Therefore, the Zoning Ordinance gives the Board the power to waive this requirement as well as other yard requirements in the vision clearance area where it determines that the maintenance of the building line is important to the character of the block.

- Building height along Washington Street is limited to 50 feet, but may be lower depending on the zoning of a particular parcel.
- New commercial building projects over 3,000 square feet in area or which are closer than 66 feet to land used or zoned residential require the approval of a Site Plan by the Planning Commission. The Site Plan must be prepared by a professional engineer or land surveyor and must include building massing studies (see §11-400 of the Zoning Ordinance).
- Construction which requires the approval of a Site Plan must comply with the provisions of the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Code (see §11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance). The specific requirements may be obtained from the City Archaeologist, Alexandria Archaeology, 105 North Union Street, 3rd Floor (Telephone: 703/838-4399).
- Construction of all new buildings and renovation of existing buildings must meet the requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC).
- The issuance of a building permit by Code Enforcement is required for all new building construction and additions as well as renovations of existing structures.
- Construction of new commercial and multi-

family residential buildings must meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

- Tree removal for new construction requires prior approval of the City Arborist and new landscaping must conform to the City's landscape guidelines.
- Generally, new construction must include parking. The requirements vary depending upon the size of the lot and the use of the building. Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance sets forth these requirements. There are also requirements for parking space size and drive aisle widths.
- Construction on lots that involve land disturbance of 2,500 square feet or more of land area must comply with the requirements of the Chesapeake Bay Protection Ordinance.
- In the future, there will be streetscape guidelines. Prior to design submissions contact Staff for guidance on the desired streetscape characteristics, which may involve wider sidewalks, increased building setback or additional landscaping.

ADDITIONAL STANDARDS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS FOR BUILDINGS FRONTING ON WASHINGTON STREET, §10-105(A)(3) OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE

These standards are in addition to the general matters to be considered in approving a Certificate of Appropriateness which are set forth in §10-105(A)(2) of the Zoning Ordinance.

Design Standards:

1. Construction shall be compatible with and similar to the traditional building character, particularly mass, scale, design and style, found on Washington Street on commercial or residential buildings of historic architectural merit.
2. Elements of design consistent with historic buildings which are found on the street shall be emphasized.
3. New buildings and additions to existing buildings shall not by their style, size, location or other characteristics, detract from, overwhelm, or otherwise intrude upon historic buildings which are found on the street.
4. The design of new buildings and additions to existing buildings shall be complementary to historic buildings which are found on the street.
5. The massing of new buildings or additions to existing buildings adjacent to historic buildings which are found on the street shall closely reflect and be proportional to the massing of the adjacent historic buildings.
6. New buildings and additions to existing buildings which are larger than historic buildings which are found on the street shall be designed to look separate and shall not give the impression of collectively being more massive than such historic buildings. This design objective shall be accomplished through differing historic architectural designs, facades, setbacks, roof lines and styles. Buildings should appear from the public right-of-way to have a footprint no larger than 100 feet by 80 feet. For larger projects, it is desirable that the historic pattern

of mid-block alleys be preserved or replicated.

7. The massing and proportions of new buildings or additions to existing buildings designed in an historic style found elsewhere along Washington Street shall be consistent with the massing and proportions of that style.

8. New or untried approaches to design which result in new buildings or additions to existing buildings that have no historical basis in Alexandria or that are not consistent with an historic style in scale, massing and detailing, are not appropriate.

9. Facades of a building generally shall express the 20- to 40-foot bay width typically found on early 19th century commercial buildings characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, or the 15- to 20-foot bay width typically found on townhouses characteristic of the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Techniques to express such typical bay width shall include changes in material, articulation of the wall surfaces, changes in fenestration patterns, varying roof heights, and physical breaks, vertical as well as horizontal, within the massing.

10. Building materials characteristic of buildings having historic architectural merit within the district shall be utilized. The texture, tone and color of such materials shall display a level of variety, quality and richness at least equal to that found abundantly in the historic setting.

11. Construction shall reflect the traditional fenestration patterns found within the Old and Historic Alexandria District. Traditional solid-void relationships exhibited within the district's streetscapes (i.e., ratio of window

and door openings to solid wall) shall be used in building facades.

12. Construction shall display a level of ornamentation, detail and use of quality materials consistent with buildings having historic architectural merit found within the district. In replicative building construction (i.e., masonry bearing wall by a veneer system), the proper thicknesses of materials shall be expressed particularly through the use of sufficient reveals around wall openings.

Procedural Requirements

- No fewer than 45 days prior to filing an application for a certificate of appropriateness, an applicant who proposes construction which is subject to this §10-105(A)(3), shall meet with the director to discuss the application of these standards to the proposed development; provided, that this requirement for a pre-application conference shall apply only to the construction of 3,000 or more square feet of gross building area, including but not limited to the area in any above ground parking structure.

- Applications for projects over 3,000 square feet, or for projects located within 66 feet of land used or zoned for residential uses, shall include a building massing study. Such study shall include all existing and proposed buildings and building additions in the six block area as follows: the block face containing the project, the block face opposite, the two adjacent block faces to the north and the two adjacent block faces to the south.

- No application for a certificate of appropriateness which is subject to this §10-105(A)(3) shall be approved by the Old and Historic Alexandria District board of

architectural review, unless it makes a written finding that the proposed construction complies with the standards in §10-105(A)(3)(a).

- The director may appeal to City Council a decision of the Old and Historic Alexandria District Board of Architectural Review granting or denying an application for a certificate of appropriateness subject to §10-105(A)(3), which right of appeal shall be in addition to any other appeal provided by law.

- The standards set out in §10-105(A)(3)(a) shall also apply in any proceedings before any other governmental or advisory board, commission or agency of the city relating to the use, development or redevelopment of land, buildings or structures within the area subject to this §10-105(A)(3).

- To the extent that any other provisions of this ordinance are inconsistent with the provisions of this §10-105(A)(3), the provisions of this section shall be controlling.

- Any building or addition to an existing building which fails to comply with the provisions of §10-105(A)(3) shall be presumed to be incompatible with the historic district and Washington Street standards, and the applicant shall have the burden of overcoming such presumption by clear and convincing evidence.

- The applicant for a special use permit for an increase in density above that permitted by right shall have the burden of proving that the proposed building or addition to an existing building provides clearly demonstrable benefits to the historic character of Washington Street, and, by virtue of the

project's uses, architecture and site layout and design, materially advances the pedestrian-friendly environment along Washington Street.

GUIDELINES

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL BUILDING ACTIVITY

- Applicants should consult Building Alterations, Chapter 2, regarding guidelines for specific elements of a proposed new building and renovation of existing structures. For example, Chapter 2 provides information on compatible window treatments, paint colors and building materials. Chapter 1 provides specific information about signs for buildings that face Washington Street.

Style

The revised Washington Street standards state that the styles of new buildings must be compatible with existing historic buildings on Washington Street itself. Examples of architecturally and historically important buildings on Washington Street include the Cotton Factory in the 500 block of North Washington Street, the George Mason Hotel in the 100 block of South Washington Street and the Federal Courthouse in the 200 block of South Washington Street.

New construction must reflect historic building construction. This can be accomplished in the following ways:

- New buildings must be *complementary* to historically significant buildings on Washington Street; they may not *detract from, overwhelm, or intrude upon* historic buildings.

- The *massing* of buildings must *closely reflect* and *be proportional* to adjacent historic buildings.
- If new construction includes large buildings, they must be *designed to look smaller*. Specifically, (1) buildings should appear to have a *footprint no larger than 100 feet by 80 feet*; (2) they should include a *change in architectural designs* in the treatment of facades, setbacks, roof lines and styles in order to break up the mass; and (3) large projects should *preserve or replicate mid-block alleys*, thereby breaking up the building mass.
- Buildings designed in a historic style must be *consistent with the historic features of that style*, including with its *massing and proportions, roof form, fenestration and materials*.
- New or untried design approaches that have no historical basis in Alexandria or that are not consistent with the scale, *massing and detailing* of an historic style are not appropriate.
- Traditional fenestration patterns and solid/void relationships must be used on all facades visible from any public right-of-way, including the first floor.
- Design elements (e.g., windows, doors, materials,) must be consistent with historically significant buildings on Washington Street.
- It is the intention of the new language of the standards for Washington Street to promote neo-traditional architectural style for additions and new buildings.

Siting

In general, buildings should be sited so that the front plane of the building is adjacent to the sidewalk. However, siting should relate to adjacent historic building setbacks. Additional setbacks may be required to conform with the streetscape guidelines to promote a pedestrian friendly street.

Parking and Loading

Parking should be provided within or behind a new building. Parking lots to the side of a building and open to the street disrupt the traditional street wall and are strongly discouraged. Additional information is provided in the parking section of Chapter 2, Building Alterations.

Direct access to Washington Street from a parking area is strongly discouraged. Curb cuts to allow vehicular access directly onto Washington Street are also strongly discouraged. Access to parking areas should be provided from a side street.

Building Materials

The predominant building materials for buildings on Washington Street are wood and brick. In addition, there are examples of stone and stucco on architecturally and historically significant buildings on Washington Street. The building materials for new buildings or additions to buildings should reflect these traditional materials.

Roofing materials

Roofing material should reflect the traditional use of metal and slate on buildings found on Washington Street.

Directional Expression

The front entrances of new buildings should be open to the principal street frontage of the

building.

Utilities

While the Board is cognizant of 20th century infrastructure requirements, such items as electrical meters and transformers, HVAC equipment and solid waste management equipment should be visually and acoustically screened from public view.

Color

The color proposed for new buildings or additions should be compatible with those in use on historic buildings in the historic district. The B.A.R. Staff has developed a *Color Chart of Historically Accurate Paint Colors in the Old and Historic Alexandria District and the Parker-Gray District* which can be consulted to help determine appropriate colors which reflect the historic architectural heritage of the City.

GUIDELINES FOR WASHINGTON STREET SECTORS

Bashford Lane to Four Mile Run

• Scale and Character

This sector has largely been undeveloped to date. However, new large scale development is planned on both Potomac Greens and Potomac Yard. This new construction will conform to the requirements of the Potomac Yard/Potomac Greens Small Area Plan of the Master Plan. Some of the area of both Potomac Yard and Potomac Greens will be reviewed by the Board. These guidelines will be used by the Board in their review of these development projects.

• Horizontal articulation is encouraged to visually break up building height. This can be

achieved, for example, by variations in cornice lines, using changes in natural topography to create apparent height differences, creating varying floor levels and differing coursing materials on the facade.

• The required vertical articulation need not be uniform. Bay width can also be expressed through roof form.

• Physical breaks between buildings and/or groups of buildings are encouraged to provide visual access into the remainder of the site and create divisions in the wall of the buildings.

• Building fronts must face the Parkway.

• The preferred building materials are brick with pre-cast concrete and stone trimwork.

• The preferred colors are those which will allow the buildings to blend into the background; therefore, a dark palette is suggested.

• In general, the gable end of a building should not face the Parkway.

• Architectural embellishments on large scale buildings are encouraged to provide roof level interest.

• Buildings should be fully articulated on all four sides.

• All sides of buildings seen from the Parkway must have fenestration. Blank walls are strongly discouraged.

Pendleton Street to Bashford Lane

- New construction and additions must conform to the requirements of the Old Town North and Northeast Small Area Plan chapters of the Master Plan.
- Projects fronting on Washington Street between Oronoco Street and Daingerfield Island will be referred to the Old Town North Urban Design Advisory Committee for comment. The recommendations of the Urban Design Advisory Committee will be provided to the Board (see, §6-505 of the Zoning Ordinance).

- **Scale and Character**

This section is predominantly commercial with a number of modern office buildings and highway oriented uses. New buildings in this area should be oriented to the street, create an attractive pedestrian environment and foster a sense of place, arrival and community.

Wilkes Street to Pendleton Street

- New construction and additions must conform to the requirements of the Old Town North Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan.

- **Scale and Character**

This is the historic core of Washington Street and the Old and Historic Alexandria District and is generally smaller in scale than the other sectors on the street. Design of new construction and alteration of buildings along this sector of Washington Street should reflect the low scale pattern.

- **Spacing Between Buildings**

The spacing between a new building and existing structures should reflect the pattern of

spacing between buildings evident along the blockface to maintain a consistent rhythm. In this sector, there should be little or no space between buildings in order to maintain the historic relationship between buildings. In the northern area of this sector near Pendleton Street, there are a number of gardens and other open spaces. The Board prefers that these area remain as open space and not be intruded upon. In areas where commercial and residential zoning abut, a transition space must be maintained which may affect traditional building relationships.

- **Corner of King and Washington Streets**

This is one of the most important corners in the historic district. As such, the Board believes that this intersection deserves special treatment. The Board encourages the development of monumental buildings on these corners that match the Alfriend Building, ca. 1799 (629 King Street) in height, scale, rhythm and proportion.

Hunting Creek to Wilkes Street

- New construction and additions must conform to the requirements of the Old Town Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan.

- **Scale and Character**

This sector of Washington Street is largely residential in nature with considerable setbacks from the roadway. Projects are specifically encouraged to maintain the open feeling of this area. Many of the existing garden apartments in this area are contributing elements to the National Historic Landmark Alexandria Historic District and are historic in their own right.

- **Spacing Between Buildings**

The spacing between a new building and

existing structures should reflect the pattern of spacing between buildings evident along the blockface to maintain a consistent rhythm. For example, in this sector it is appropriate to have a considerable separation between buildings. In areas where commercial and residential zoning abut, a transition space must be maintained.

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

In order to properly evaluate the appropriateness of a design for new construction, additions and alterations, the Board of Architectural Review requires that an accurate depiction of the design be presented. Sketches are not acceptable. Most designs for construction of new buildings presented to the Board are prepared by design professionals, such as architects and landscape architects; however, a professionally prepared submission is not mandatory. Applicants, however, should be aware that drawing sealed by an architect or engineer licensed in Virginia may be required by the Code Enforcement Bureau prior to issuance of a building permit.

All applications for approval of new construction, additions and alterations along Washington Street must contain the following information:

Alexandria Business License

Proof of a valid Alexandria Business License is required at the time of application for contractors, subcontractors, architects and designers.

Photograph of Existing Conditions

Clear photographs of the site and surrounding properties are required for reference.

Plot Plan/Site Plan

A plot or site plan accurately showing the location and dimensions of the footprint of the new building including property lines, accessory structures, fences and grade lines as well as existing improvements is required. A roof plan showing water drainage and location of mechanical units should also be indicated.

Drawings

Drawings accurately representing all elevations of the proposed structure indicating materials and overall dimensions, including height, are required. In addition, a drawing showing the contextual relationship of the proposed structure to existing adjacent buildings is required. The location of such ancillary items as HVAC units, heat pumps, roof guards, fire hose connections, utility meters and risers should be noted on the drawings. The drawings should have a minimum scale of $3/32" = 1'$; however, larger scale drawings may be required. At least one set must meet the maximum permit size of 24" x 36". Additional copies of the required drawings may be reduced if they are clearly legible.

Floor Area Ratio and Open Space Calculations

Applicants must provide accurate F.A.R. calculations for new construction and additions. In residential zones, open space calculations must be provided. Forms for these calculations are available at the time of application.

Building Code Analysis

For additions to commercial buildings, a building code analysis form must be completed. Forms for this analysis are available at the time of application.

Materials

The materials to be used for the structure must be specified and delineated on the drawings. Actual samples may be provided, if appropriate.

Color

The proposed color of the structure and trimwork must be indicated and actual color samples provided.

RELATED SECTIONS

Introduction

Guide to the B.A.R. Process

Use of the Design Guidelines

Chapter 1 - Signs

Chapter 2 - Building Alterations

 Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

 Accessory Structures

 Awnings

 Chimneys & Flues

 Dormers

 Roof Drainage Systems

 Electrical and Gas Service

 Fences, Garden Walls & Gates

 Gasoline Service Stations

 HVAC Systems

 Exterior Lighting

 Paint Colors

 Parking

 Roofing Materials

 Security Devices

 Shutters

 Siding Materials

 Skylights

 Solar Collectors

 Exterior Staircases

 Stoops, Steps and Railings

 Windows

Chapter 3 - Building Accessories

 ATM Machines

Satellite Antennas

Street Furniture

Vending Machines

Chapter 4 - Demolition of Existing Structures

ADOPTED BY THE OLD AND HISTORIC
ALEXANDRIA DISTRICT BOARD OF
ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW, 1/15/03

ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

New construction may affect archaeological resources. With its rich history, the City of Alexandria is particularly concerned about its archaeological heritage. Archaeological resources in the historic district are great in number and highly diverse in materials. They often consist of ceramic and glass fragments in the backyards of historic properties; however, archaeological resources are also brick-lined shafts in yards and basements; brick kilns; foundations, footings, postholes and builders trenches of non-extant buildings; landscape features such as walkways and gardens; and even American Indian artifacts which pre-date colonial Alexandria. Often these clues to the city's past appear to be unimportant debris, yet when the artifacts and building remains are excavated and recorded systematically, they provide the only knowledge of lost Alexandria.

Every application to the B.A.R. which potentially involves ground disturbance is reviewed by the City Archaeologist to determine whether significant archaeological resources may still survive on the property. Therefore, the potential for additional requirements to protect archaeological resources exist with any project that involves ground disturbing activities.

The applicant can speed along the archaeological review process by requesting a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment from Alexandria Archaeology at the earliest date. Call (703) 838-4399, Tuesday through Saturday. The Alexandria Archaeology Museum is located on the third floor of the Torpedo Factory Art Center.

- **RESIDENTIAL ZONES**

In residential zones, new construction that involves ground disturbing activities is review by City archaeologists. In most cases, the applicant is required to notify Alexandria Archaeology before ground disturbance, so that a City archaeologist may monitor this work and record significant finds. However, when a property has a high potential for containing significant archaeological resources, a City archaeologist may request permission to excavate test squares in the affected areas before the project begins.

- **COMMERCIAL ZONES**

In commercial zones and residential projects involving the construction of three or more houses, the ground disturbing activities associated with new construction may necessitate compliance with the Alexandria Archaeological Protection Procedure (§11-411 of the Zoning Ordinance). Applicants should request a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment to find out what the archaeological requirements are for their particular project. In certain cases, compliance may require the applicant to hire an archaeological contracting firm to conduct an archaeological investigation. Applicants should request a Preliminary Archaeological Assessment as early as possible to avoid project delays.



Figure 1 411 North Washington Street. New accessibility ramp uses architectural detailing from the existing historic building to comply with the Washington Street standards.

BAR Case #2001-268, The Rktectcs Studio



Figure 2 New condominium building at the corner of North Washington and First Streets uses historical styles and modulated massing to meet the Washington Street standards.

BAR Case #2000-270, Heffner Architects, P.C.