

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

Adopted 03/02/2011; Amended 07/16/2025

## **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 of exterior building material, where not visible from a public right-of-way
- Public Art (as defined in the zoning ordinance), except for the painting, staining, or limewashing of unpainted masonry
- 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
- Window planter boxes
- Retaining walls less than 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 sides
- Security cameras measuring less than one cubic foot each

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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 on the historic preservation [website](#), instead of this policy.

- Security light fixtures (no more than two) on each non-street-facing side
- Portable planters, as defined in the City Code
- 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
- Ordinary maintenance projects (see section II)

## **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](#) 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. 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 any 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. 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](#) 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 pages 1-2).

<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 + Canopies</b>	Refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a> .
<b>Chimneys + Flues</b>	Refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a> .

<b>Doors (pedestrian)</b>	<p>Wood doors on buildings or portions of buildings constructed before 1932 on street-facing sides. 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 sides 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, they must comply with the glass specifications found on pages 7-8.</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. BAR staff may require that a scaled survey plat with the location of the proposed charging station be submitted with the application.</p>
<b>Fences, Gates + Walls</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> <p>BAR approval of a waiver is required at a public hearing for any fence located in a vision clearance area or if a fence exceeds the height limitations noted above.</p>

	<p>All new fences must be located completely on the subject property. BAR staff may require that a scaled survey plat with the location of the proposed fence be submitted with the application.</p> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
<b>HVAC</b>	<p>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.</p>
<b>Lighting</b>	<p>New and replacement exterior light fixtures that are architecturally and historically appropriate.</p>
<b>Masonry repointing</b>	<p>Paint removal and repointing must protect existing masonry and new mortar must match the historic mortar color, composition, texture, and profile. BAR staff must inspect a mock-up in the field.</p> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
<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 or composition roofing 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> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</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. All accessory structures must be located completely on the subject property. BAR staff may require that a scaled survey plat with the location of the proposed structure be submitted with the application.
<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> <li>• They are constructed of wood or a solid-through-the-core, millable composite material with a smooth finish</li> </ul> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
<b>Signs</b>	Refer to the Administrative Sign Policy on our <a href="#">website</a> .
<b>Siding + Trim</b>	<p>For buildings or additions constructed prior to 1932, the applicant must, working with BAR 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 side 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> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
<b>Skylights</b>	<p>New skylights on non-street-facing sides, if less than 10 square feet in area.</p> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>

<b>Solar Energy Systems</b>	Installation or replacement of solar energy systems requires Board approval if visible from the public right-of-way. For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a> .
<b>Stoops, Steps + 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> <p>BAR staff may require that a scaled survey plat with the location of the proposed structure be submitted with the application.</p> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
<b>Utilities</b>	Electrical utility meters on non-street-facing sides, provided they are painted to match the adjacent wall surface. For gas meters, see the Board’s adopted <a href="#">policy</a> for Administrative Approval of Gas Meters.
<b>Vents</b>	Vents measuring less than one cubic foot, provided that the color matches the adjacent surface.
<b>Window Replacement</b>	<p>On buildings or portions of buildings constructed before 1932 (Early buildings) 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 BAR staff in the field and confirmed in writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historically appropriate multi-light sash must be single-glazed wood windows on street-facing sides.</li> <li>• Non-historic one-over-one and two-over-two windows may be replaced with historically appropriate double-glazed wood windows on any side.</li> <li>• Double-glazed (insulated) windows, either wood or aluminum-clad wood, in a historically appropriate configuration, may be installed on non-street-facing sides.</li> <li>• Original window frames and trim must be preserved and repaired.</li> </ul> <p>On buildings or portions of buildings constructed after 1931 (Later buildings), modern window materials, such as aluminum-clad wood, wood composite or fiberglass, as well as double-glazing, may be used. Hollow vinyl and vinyl cladding are not appropriate.</p> <p>Fiberglass windows may generally replace steel sash windows on any building when using the same light configuration, color, or operation, except where staff</p>

	<p>believes an architecturally significant building has existing intact and restorable steel sash.</p> <p>The material, form and design of windows on new construction, and replacement windows permitted on existing buildings, must comply with the specifications below.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Replacement windows must be full frame replacements, or sash kits installed in the existing frame, rather than insert or pocket style replacements.</li> <li>2. The exterior architectural style, dimensions, and proportions of window rails, stiles, muntins, frame, sill, and exterior trim must match historically appropriate window appearance. Exterior trim may not be mitered at the corners.</li> <li>3. Multi-light single-glazed windows must have multiple pieces of glass separated by muntin bars. These are typically referred to as True Divided Light (TDL) windows.</li> <li>4. Where permitted, multi-light double-glazed (insulated) 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>5. The exterior of sash muntins must have a putty-glazed profile; the interior of sash muntins may have any profile.</li> <li>6. Generally, glazing must be clear, non-reflective and without tint. Where double-glazed windows are permitted, Low-E (low emissivity) glass is encouraged for energy conservation, but the glass must have a minimum 72% visible light transmission (VLT) with a shading coefficient between 0.87 – 1.0 and a reflectance of less than 10%. Low-E 272 glass meets these requirements.</li> <li>7. The vinyl weatherstrip portion of wood window jambs should be minimally visible.</li> <li>8. 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> <p>For more information, refer to the Design Guidelines chapter on our <a href="#">website</a>.</p>
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