



## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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Alexandriava.gov/preservation

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### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS IN ALEXANDRIA'S HISTORIC DISTRICTS AND PROTECTED 100 YEAR OLD BUILDINGS OR STRUCTURES OUTSIDE HISTORIC DISTRICTS**

Dear Residents and Property Owners:

You are receiving this letter because our records indicate that you own or reside in property that is located in one of Alexandria's two regulated historic districts - the **Old and Historic Alexandria District** or the **Parker-Gray District**, or is a designated **100 Year Old Building** located outside a historic district - all of which have special architectural protections. Since 1946, when the City Council passed the preservation ordinance to establish the first locally regulated historic district in Alexandria, the community and the City government have worked diligently together to preserve the historic resources and ambience that create Alexandria's unique character. As property owners in one of these neighborhoods, or of a designated 100 year old structure, the stewardship of your property is crucial to maintaining the historic resources of the City. You not only enjoy the advantage of increased economic value, but also share the City's responsibility to maintain the distinctive qualities that make these historic districts and properties unique.

To assist you in making decisions regarding exterior changes to your property, we are summarizing below the steps you should follow. You are encouraged to visit the City's website at **[www.alexandriava.gov/preservation](http://www.alexandriava.gov/preservation)** for more detailed information. On the website you will find the Design Guidelines, application, and Board meeting schedules. We have also designated staff within the Department of Planning and Zoning to answer any questions you may have and provide guidance. Please call Meredith Kizer, Catherine Miliaras, Michele Oaks, Stephanie Sample, or Al Cox at 703-746-3833.

### **BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW**

Regardless of whether permits are required by the Uniform Statewide Building Code (USBC), in the historic districts, all exterior work visible from a public right-of-way must be approved by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) for that district. The Board for the Old and Historic Alexandria District also reviews projects related to designated 100 Year Old Buildings located outside historic districts. The Boards approve projects by issuing a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for alterations and new construction. The Boards must also approve all demolition greater than 25 square feet, regardless of visibility, by issuing a **Permit to Demolish**. The Certificate of Appropriateness or Permit to Demolish must be obtained **before** a building permit or demolition permit can be issued by the Office of Building and Fire Code Administration and **before** any work can commence. We encourage you to speak to one of our staff early in the planning process in order to provide sufficient time in your construction schedule for the necessary reviews. The staff will be happy to advise you on the review process, including preparation of the application with appropriate submissions, completion of the public notice requirements, and Board procedures.

In approving Certificates of Appropriateness, the Boards examine the compatibility of the changes or new construction with the historic architecture of the districts and the structure. Examples of work requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness include, but are not necessarily limited to the following:

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|----------------------|--|----------------------|
| ■ windows            | ■ fences and gates                         | ■ shutters           |
| ■ doors              | ■ signage and awnings                      | ■ steps and railings |
| ■ roofing materials  | ■ HVAC equipment                           | ■ sheds              |
| ■ pergolas           | ■ exterior lighting                        | ■ decks and porches  |
| ■ exterior vents     | ■ painting of previously unpainted masonry | ■ additions.         |
| ■ siding replacement |  |                      |

In some instances, the staff to the Boards may administratively approve certain alterations. For example, the historically appropriate **replacement** of some roofing materials, windows and doors, exterior lighting, siding materials, or mortar repointing may be approved by staff without review by the Boards. The City Council has also recently authorized administrative approval of certain signs meeting established criteria.

Should you fail to obtain the required Certificate of Appropriateness, Permit to Demolish or Building Permit prior to undertaking a project, you and your contractor may be subject to monetary fines and other penalties as specified in the Zoning Ordinance and the Uniform Statewide Building Code. In addition, you will be required to correct the violation. We encourage you to ask for early assistance to avoid such an outcome.

### BUILDING PERMITS

Owners and residents should be cautious of unlicensed contractors who solicit door-to-door for home improvement work. They attempt to sell improvements that are quick one-day jobs or interior items that are not readily detectable by City inspectors. Some of the “specialty” projects being offered by these contractors include new and replacement windows, siding, roofs, porches and decks. They often incorrectly tell prospective customers that City permits or approvals are not needed to complete these jobs. Having work performed by an unlicensed contractor greatly hinders your ability to recover any portion of your investment should the materials or services prove to be defective. In addition, work performed by unlicensed contractors or without the benefit of issued permits and City approval may affect your ability to sell or refinance your home or to file insurance policy claims. **Information about whether a building permit is required and whether a contractor is licensed to work in the City of Alexandria** may be obtained by calling the Office of Building and Fire Code Administration at 703-746-4200 or from the City’s website at <http://alexandriava.gov/code/>.

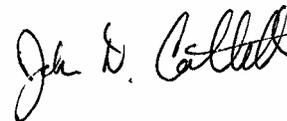
### SHARE INFORMATION WITH NEIGHBORS

By working together we can keep Alexandria’s historic buildings and historic districts safe and beautiful. We hope that you will assist us by sharing this important information with your neighbors, thereby ensuring that everyone knows to obtain the proper approvals and permits before embarking on a project. We also encourage you to sign up for the City of Alexandria’s free *eNews* service to receive updates from various agencies about topics of interest to you, including Historic Preservation, Building and Fire Code Administration, and Construction/Permitting. This is a fast and convenient way to receive new information, changes in procedures, and information about events in the City sent directly to your e-mail account. You can subscribe to eNews at City website <https://enews.alexandriava.gov/>.

Sincerely,



Faroll Hamer  
Director, Department of Planning and Zoning



John Catlett, Director, Office of  
Building and Fire Code Administration