

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: AUGUST 31, 2021

TO: GLORIA SITTON, CITY CLERK
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK AND CLERK OF COUNCIL

THRU: KARL W. MORITZ, DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING & ZONING

FROM: MS. CHRISTINE ROBERTS, CHAIR
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW (BAR)

SUBJECT: FY 2021 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL
REVIEW (BAR)

I am pleased to present this Annual Report for the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) for Fiscal Year 2021, extending from July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021, as required by City Code Section 2-4-7(i)(1). The attached record of membership and attendance shows that all members attended more than 75% of the meetings, or had an excused absence in advance, as required.

BAR Membership and Attendance

The membership of the Board of Architectural Review (BAR) remained the same in FY 2021. On June 9, 2021, City Council reappointed John Sprinkle and James Spencer for three-year terms. Currently, there is one citizen-at-large vacancy on the BAR due to the July 31, 2021 resignation of Lynn Neihardt.

BAR held twenty-two public hearings in FY 2021. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic emergency, all twenty-two hearings were held electronically with BAR board members and staff participating from remote locations through Zoom Webinar. The virtual public hearings were held pursuant to Virginia Code Section 2.2-3708.2(A)(3), the Continuity of Government ordinance adopted by the City Council on June 20, 2020 or Sections 4-0.01(g) in HB29 and HB30, enacted by the 2020 Virginia General Assembly (Virginia Acts of Assembly Ch.1283 and 1289), to undertake essential business. The meetings were accessed by the public through the Zoom teleconferencing platform, broadcasted live on AlexTV (Comcast Channel 70) and streamed on the City's website. Additionally, public comments were received at the meeting via Zoom and telephone. The video and audio recordings were posted the day after the hearing.

Also, the BAR voted to approve the Electronic Participation Policy for Board of Architectural Review Hearings at its June 16, 2021 hearing. The Electronic Participation Policy allows virtual participation by members when a quorum has physically assembled in one location.

Membership and attendance report for the Board of Architecture Review (BAR) is included in Attachment 1.

Regulatory Activities

FY 2021 - Approvals		FY 2020 - Approvals	
BAR	148	BAR	131
<i>OHAD</i>	<i>114</i>	<i>OHAD</i>	<i>110</i>
<i>Parker-Gray</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>Parker-Gray</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>100-Year-Old Building</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>100-Year-Old Building</i>	<i>1</i>
Administrative	298	Administrative	328
<i>OHAD</i>	<i>238</i>	<i>OHAD</i>	<i>284</i>
<i>Parker-Gray</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>Parker-Gray</i>	<i>44</i>
Total Cases	446	Total Cases	459

FY 2020 provided for comparison

From 2020 to 2021, the number of BAR OHAD approvals remained mostly the same while the number of BAR Parker-Gray approvals increased significantly. The number of BAR OHAD approvals went up from 110 to 114, only a 3.6% increase, while the BAR Parker-Gray approvals went up from 20 to 33, a 65% increase. 100-Year-Old Building approval remained the same. Administrative Parker-Gray approvals went up similarly to the BAR Parker-Gray approvals. Administrative approvals for the OHAD went down in FY 2021, from 284 to 238, a 16% decrease, while the Administrative Parker-Gray approvals went up from 44 to 60, a 36% increase. Since the proportion of approvals is heavily weighted towards OHAD, despite the major percentage changes for Parker-Gray numbers, the overall numbers when combined with OHAD are not so extreme. The total BAR approvals went up from 131 to 148, a 13% rise, and the total administrative cases went down from 328 to 298, a 9.1% fall. Cumulatively, the total cases decreased from 459 to 446, a 2.8% decrease. It appears that the Parker-Gray increases offset the OHAD decreases which resulted in this relatively small overall decrease in the total cases. The overall decrease can be attributed to COVID-19 Pandemic.

Examples of public hearing cases are highlighted below:

(1) Examples of Concept Reviews:

In FY21, the Board considered a total of 12 concept reviews, all in OHAD. Of the 12 cases, 4 examined the Heritage development proposed for 431 S. Columbus, 900 Wolfe, and 450 S. Patrick streets. The BAR reviewed the project on July 15, September 2, October 21, and December 2, 2020. The BAR did not reach a final

consensus on the design but will continue to provide input in the Certificate of Appropriateness phase.

On September 2, 2020, the BAR heard two concept reviews regarding the new development at Potomac Yards and the associated Metro Station. They also reviewed a proposal for an addition to the former Mechanics' Hall at 114 N. Alfred Street, converting the second level from commercial to residential. For each case, the BAR advised the applicant that the project does not need to return for another concept review and should proceed to a Certificate of Appropriateness.

A proposal to construct six townhouses on the site of an existing parking garage at 101 Duke Street came to the BAR for three concept reviews: January 21, March 3, and May 19, 2021. The results of BAR straw poll taken at the May 19 hearing: 4 in favor and two against the height; 3 in favor and 3 against the mass; 3 in favor and 3 against scale; 4 in favor and 2 against the architectural character.

The BAR considered concept reviews for a proposed 5-story multi-story residential building at 805, 809, 811, 815, and 823 North Columbus Street on February 17 and May 19, 2021. The Board provided constructive comments regarding height, scale, mass, and architectural character. The proposed development will return to the BAR for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

(2) Examples of Certificates of Appropriateness/Permits to Demolish:

A sampling of the projects approved by the BAR in FY2021 includes the construction of a mixed-use 4-story building integrated with existing buildings at 1300/1310 King Street (BAR2020-00142); a new sign and the retention of the old sign at the Old Town Theatre at 815.5 King Street (BAR2020-00030); the demolition of the movie theater at 3601 Potomac Avenue (BAR2020-00425) and construction of a pump station in its place (BAR2020-00549); the construction of a southern pavilion and egress stair at Potomac Yard Metro station (BAR2020-00479); the restoration of the 1807 Bank of Alexandria Building at 133 North Fairfax Street to include the demolition of an inappropriate 1970s addition (BAR2020-00443 & BAR2020-00444); the replacement of storefront windows and signage at 603, 605, 607 King Street (BAR2021-00052 & BAR2021-00053); the addition of a second floor exterior balcony at 203 Strand (BAR2021-00085); a two- and three-story addition to the former Mechanics' Hall at 114 North Alfred Street (BAR2021-00226 & BAR2021-00227); an electric vehicle charger at 601 Wilkes (BAR2021-00216). Additionally, Certificates of Occupancy for the new development The Lineage at 625 North Patrick Street, formerly Ramsey Homes at 699 North Patrick Street (BAR2016-0406) received final approval in February, 2021.

(3) Appeals to City Council:

Local citizens appealed the BAR September 2, 2020 approval of a Permit to Demolish (BAR2020-00197) four buildings at 900 Wolfe, 450 South Patrick, and 431 South Columbus streets as part of the Heritage development. Council affirmed the BAR approval to demolish on October 17, 2020.

The BAR denied a small cell facility on an existing pole at 215 North Patrick Street (BAR2020-00553) on February 17, 2021. The applicant appealed, and Council overrode the BAR denial on May 15, 2021.

Work Sessions/Training:

VRE gave a presentation on pedestrian safety improvements at Union Station at the July 15, 2020 hearing.

At the November 18, 2020 hearing, Board member Purvi Irwin presented “Diversity and Inclusion in Historic Preservation: Rethinking How We Preserve our Past for the Future.”

At the December 16, 2020 hearing, Board member John Sprinkle presented “From Historic Preservation to Neighborhood Conservation: Displacement, Urban Violence, and Architectural Survey in Alexandria, Virginia.”

Staff reviewed the proposed updated window replacement policies with the Board on January 6, 2021. The Board made edits and approved this updated version to be included in the “BAR Policies for Administrative Approval.” The approval is provisional for one year, until January 2022, when the Board will revisit the document to ensure that the specifications meet expectations.

Staff outlined the revised roof policy language to be integrated into the “BAR Policies for Administrative Approval” at the February 3, 2021 hearing. The Board made minor edits and voted to integrate the roof policy into the inclusive policy document.

Staff led a discussion on updating the BAR bylaws at the April 7, 2021 hearing.

Staff reviewed the small cell policy with the Board on April 21, 2021.

The National Alliance of Preservation Commissions (NAPC) provided their Commission Assistance and Mentoring Program (CAMP) to the Board, preservation staff, some Office of Historic Alexandria staff, and to six representatives of local preservation groups on May 14 and May 20, 2021. Training topics included an Introduction to Historic Preservation, Legal Basics, Standards and Guidelines for Design Review, Due Process and Decision Making, The Role of the Commission and Staff, Public Outreach and Community Engagement.

The City Attorney’s Office provided BAR Legal Training at the June 16, 2021 hearing.

Outreach

BAR staff and BAR member Purvi Irwin participated in the Ramsey Homes virtual symposium “Historic Preservation, Community, and Architecture of Public Housing in Alexandria,” held on February 11, 2021. Ms. Irwin discussed using Building Information Modeling (BIM) for historic interpretation, especially relating to the Ramsey Homes.

Ms. Irwin and BAR member John Sprinkle participated in the virtual “Equity in Preservation” panel discussion with Alexandria’s Race and Social Equity Officer, Jaqueline Tucker, on May 27, 2021. Preservation Architect Bill Conkey moderated the session.

Review of National Register Nominations and Section 106 Reviews

The National Park Service listed the George Washington Middle School on the National Register of Historic Places on May 26, 2021, based on the nomination written and submitted by BAR staff.

BAR staff has performed 28 Section 106 reviews in FY 2021, primarily for cell antennas, one of which was placed in the steeple of Aspinwall Hall at the Virginia Theological Seminary. Additionally, the outside contractor hired to complete an extensive research project as Section 106 mitigation for the demolition of the Church of the Resurrection completed the study and submitted a final report in April 2021.

Goals for the Coming Year

Now that committees may meet again in person, the Design Guidelines committee has restarted the process of reviewing and updating the Design Guidelines. They will begin with the Parker Gray District and then move on to the Old and Historic Alexandria District. They expect to complete many, but not all, of the updates in FY22.

Due to the pandemic, Phase III of the OHAD digital survey was again delayed for lack of volunteers. The Director of Planning & Zoning has requested permission to hire a part-time intern to spend eight months working on the survey. If permission is secured, we expect great progress on the survey.

ATTACHMENT 1

**CITY OF ALEXANDRIA
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
MEETING ATTENDANCE REPORT**

JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021

COMMISSION: Board of Architectural Review (BAR)

CHAIRPERSON: Christine Roberts

Board Member	2020												2021											
	July		Aug	Sept		Oct		Nov		Dec		Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		June		
	1	15	Recessed	2	16	7	21	4	18	2	16	6	21	3	17	3	17	7	21	3	19	2	16	
Christine Roberts (Chair)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
James Spencer (Vice Chair)	E	X		X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E
Robert Adams	E	E		U	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X
Purvi Irwin	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lynn Neihardt	X	E		X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X
Christine Sennott	E	X		X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X
John Sprinkle	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	E	X	X	X	X	X	X

INDICATE: X - FOR PRESENT E - FOR EXCUSED U – FOR UNEXCUSED

Notes:

1. The BAR was in recess during August.
2. July 2020 through June 2021 hearings were held electronically with BAR board members and staff participating from remote locations through Zoom Webinar.

LIST OF THOSE WHO DID NOT ATTEND 75% OF MEETINGS:

N/A**

** All absences were excused and therefore not counted per Section 2-4-7(i)(2) of the City of Alexandria’s Charter and Code.

APPROVED:



Christine Roberts, Chair