



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ZONING

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT PROPERTY IMPROVEMENTS IN ALEXANDRIA'S HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Dear Residents and Property Owners:

Your property is located in one of Alexandria's two regulated historic districts - the **Old and Historic Alexandria District** and the **Parker-Gray District** - that have special architectural protections. As property owners in one of these neighborhoods, 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 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** for more detailed information. We have also designated staff within the Department of Planning and Zoning to answer any questions you may have. Please call Holly Dammann, Peter Smith, Elizabeth Hannold or Lee Webb at 703-838-4666.

BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

In the historic districts, exterior work visible from a public right-of-way must be approved by the Board for the district. The Boards approve projects by issuing a **Certificate of Appropriateness** for alterations and new construction. The Boards must also approve all demolition, 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 Code Enforcement Bureau 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. Examples of work requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness include:

- windows
- doors
- roofing materials
- pergolas
- exterior vents
- siding replacement
- fences and gates
- signage and awnings
- HVAC equipment
- exterior lighting
- shutters
- steps and railings
- sheds
- decks and porches
- additions

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 a Certificate of Appropriateness.

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.

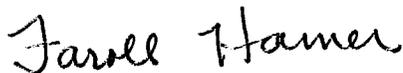
BUILDING PERMITS

Owners and residents should be aware 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 Code Enforcement Bureau at 703-838-4360 or from the City’s web site at www.alexandriava.gov/city/codeenforcement/.

SHARE INFORMATION WITH NEIGHBORS

By working together we can keep the buildings in Alexandria’s 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, Code Enforcement, 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.

Sincerely,



Faroll Hamer
Director, Planning and Zoning



John Catlett
Director, Code Enforcement