

BAR Review Levels

These levels of review are applicable in most cases. Please note that during the administrative review process, Staff may determine that a project requires Board review. Contact Staff at 703.746.3833 to confirm which level of review is required for your project. Also, contact Code Administration at 703.746.4200 to confirm building permit requirements.

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
Replacement of non-historic siding or trim less than 25 square feet	Replacement of non-historic siding or trim greater than or equal to 25 square feet	Replacement of historic siding or trim Capsulation or removal of siding greater than or equal to 25 square feet

Introduction

Siding is one of the principal character-defining elements of a building, as its size and type can indicate both the building’s age and architectural style. Most historic buildings in Alexandria were wood-framed and clad in wood siding. Other siding materials—such as asbestos, Formstone, and faux brick—became commercially available in the early 20th century. Aluminum, modern fiber cement, and vinyl siding were not commonly used until the mid- to late 20th century.

Historically, more decorative “novelty” siding was often used on primary facades, while less expensive clapboard or rough-sawn siding was applied to secondary facades. Unlike in some Southern cities, stucco was rarely used as a finish in Alexandria. Notable local exceptions include the Atheneum, Lyceum, Old Town Community Baptist Church, and St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, where the stucco was scored and faux-finished to resemble stone blocks.

Proper maintenance of siding is important, as deterioration not only affects a building’s appearance but also its overall integrity. An informed and careful analysis of the existing siding condition should be made before any decision to replace historic siding is made.

The color of a building can enhance or detract from both its own features and those of neighboring structures. The Board does not review field-applied paint colors on non-masonry siding. However, it strongly encourages the use of paint colors that are historically appropriate to the building’s architectural style. Staff can provide a color chart identifying historically accurate paint colors for the body, trim, doors, and roof for buildings representative of different architectural periods within the historic districts.

SIDING + TRIM



Guidelines

All Buildings

- o Historic wood siding should be retained and repaired wherever possible, as determined by Staff. If Staff determines that historic wood siding may be replaced, composite siding such as fiber cement can be used on the side and rear (non-street-facing sides). Historic wood siding on the front (street-facing sides) can only be replaced in-kind.
- o Repairs should match the material and profile of existing historic siding.
- o Aluminum and vinyl siding are not appropriate.
- o Wood shingle siding is not appropriate, except on decorative Victorian gables.
- o In some instances, stucco may have been later applied over historic siding. When this is the case, the Board encourages the removal of this non-historic stucco and restoration or replacement of the historic siding.
- o The Board only requires restoration of features that are being altered. Siding materials that existed when the Parker-Gray District was created in 1983 may be retained and repaired in-kind, but if existing siding is removed, these elevations should comply with current guidelines.

Early Buildings (pre-1932)

- o Before siding can be replaced, Staff will inspect a mock-up in the field to determine whether there is any intact historic siding hidden beneath existing siding layers.
- o If Staff finds that existing historic siding is beyond reasonable repair, new siding should match the profile and design of the original. If historic siding is not present, historically appropriate wood siding should be used on the front (street-facing sides).
- o Composite siding such as fiber cement can be used on the side and rear (non-street-facing sides), provided that it has a smooth finish and is paintable. Likewise, synthetic trim can be applied in limited locations that are consistently exposed to moisture, such as the fascia board behind gutters.

Later Buildings (post-1931)

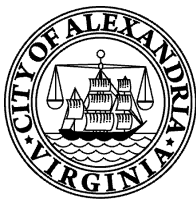
Composite siding such as fiber cement can be used on all sides, provided that it has a smooth finish and is paintable.

Steps for Siding Analysis

Intact historic siding may be hidden beneath layers of siding, such as aluminum, vinyl, artificial brick, or stone. To determine if multiple layers of siding exist, remove at least one portion a minimum of 2 feet by 2 feet to reveal the first layer of siding. Staff will inspect the mock-up in the field prior to any approval. The graphic on the following page gives an overview of this process.

PARKER - GRAY DISTRICT

CITY OF ALEXANDRIA



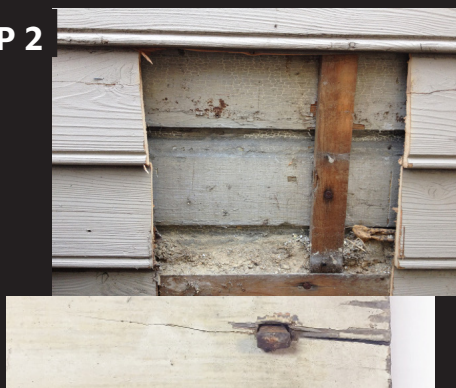
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STEP 1



Carefully remove a 2 foot by 2 foot portion of the surface siding.

STEP 2



Using clues such as the siding profile and the type of nails used, Staff makes a determination on the age of the siding.

STEP 3



^ BEFORE

More of the historic siding is exposed for Staff to assess its condition. In this case, the historic siding is in very good condition and will be stripped and painted for reuse on this building.

STEP 4



^ AFTER

In this case, removal of the contemporary siding also revealed ghost marks in the old paint from which the original window and door trim was able to be recreated.

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Additional Information

- o The Board recommends priming all sides of each clapboard before installation and installing rain screen sleepers to promote ventilation on the back side.
- o The Board discourages blow-in foam insulation that permanently adheres to the historic framing and siding.
- o Restoring historic wood siding is often less expensive and more eco-friendly than buying all new material.

Additional Resources

[National Park Service Preservation Brief #22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco](#)