

STOOPS, STEPS + RAILINGS

BAR Review Levels

There are different levels of review for buildings constructed before 1932 (Early buildings) and after 1931 (Later buildings). These levels are applicable in most cases. Please note that during the administrative review process, Staff may determine that a project must be reviewed by the Board. 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.

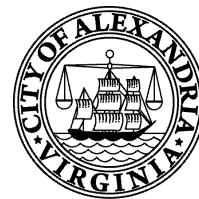
Early Buildings (pre-1932)

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
Construction or modification of stoops, steps, and railings on non-street facing sides Demolition of stoops, steps, and railings less than 25 square feet in area	Construction or modification of stoops, steps, and railings on street-facing sides	Demolition of stoops, steps, and railings greater than or equal to 25 square feet in area

Late Buildings (post-1931)

NO BAR REVIEW	ADMINISTRATIVE (STAFF) REVIEW	BOARD REVIEW
Construction or modification of stoops, steps, and railings Demolition of stoops, steps, and railings less than 25 square feet in area	Not required	Demolition of stoops, steps, and railings greater than or equal to 25 square feet in area

STOOPS, STEPS + RAILINGS



Introduction

Stoops, steps, and railings provide the transition area between the public street and the private interior of a home and are an integral part of the overall composition of a building. A variety of materials have been used for the construction of stoops and steps in the historic districts including brick, wood, stone, and metal. Stoops on most Early (pre-1932) buildings in Alexandria did not originally have railings. Many historic structures have stoops, steps, and railings that were added later which may, over time, have acquired independent historic significance.

Guidelines

- o Demolition of stoops, steps, and railings greater than or equal to 25 square feet in area requires a BAR Permit to Demolish.
- o Historic stoops, steps, and railings should be retained on street-facing sides of Early (pre-1932) buildings.
- o New stoops, steps, and railings should have a design that is appropriate to the architectural style of the structure and be made of materials such as wood, cast iron, precast concrete, or stone. The Board discourages the use of synthetic materials.
- o Handrails should be minimal in appearance and mounted so as not to damage existing historic material.
- o Railings with vertical or horizontal pickets should not be installed unless required by the [Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code \(USBC\)](#).
- o Decorative cast iron steps and railings are appropriate for Victorian buildings.
- o Concrete steps are not appropriate on 18th- and 19th-century buildings, but may be appropriate for 20th-century buildings.
- o Unpainted pressure treated wood is not an appropriate material for stoops, steps, and railings in the historic districts.

Additional Information

- o For guidelines on ramps, refer to chapter on accessibility features.
- o A survey plat may be required to ensure the stoop or railing is located on your property and not encroaching onto a neighboring property or into the public right-of-way, except when in compliance with [§ 5-2-29](#) of the City Code.
- o Elevated walking surfaces may require guardrails. Refer to the [Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code \(USBC\)](#).

STOOPS, STEPS + RAILINGS



Example of historically appropriate cast iron steps and handrail on an Italianate style residence.



Example of historically appropriate stone steps, iron handrail and guardrail on a Georgian style residence.



Example of inappropriate modern brick stoop and iron handrail on an Italianate style residence.