

# Trails at Woodlot – Exterior Alteration Guidelines

Updated: September 1, 2022

This list is intended to provide guidance for homeowners on the use of the Exterior Alteration Application. It is impossible to write guidelines to cover all exterior changes. When a guideline is not available for a proposed project, an exterior alteration application is required.

- **ACCESSIBILITY** – an exterior alteration application is required for a new accessible mobility structure or any changes to an existing approved structure. Examples of this type of structure include wheelchair ramps or lifts, stair lifts and railings, as well as changes to walkways or decks to assist the mobility of the resident.
- **AWNINGS, SUN TRELLISES, and GARDEN TRELLISES** – an exterior alteration application is required for all awnings, sun trellises, and garden trellises. Sun control devices should be compatible with the architectural character of the house in terms of style, color, and materials and should be consistent with the visual scale of the house. Awnings should be of straightforward design without decorative embellishments. The location should not adversely affect views, sunlight, or natural ventilation of adjacent properties.
- **BASKETBALL EQUIPMENT** – free-standing, portable units are allowed on private property without submitting an application. They may not be used on HOA property. Permanent basketball poles are not permitted.
- **COMPOST BINS/PILES** - an exterior alteration application is required before a compost bin can be built or a large compost pile can be started. A compost pile is a contained, properly maintained area for decomposition of plant materials such as grass clippings, leaves, and wood. Compost piles should be turned regularly to speed decomposition and to avoid attracting pests and vermin. A compost bin includes any structure built to house composting materials. Compost bins/piles in the backyard should be located within the side lines of the house. Compost bins/piles should be no more than a 4' X 4' square and no more than 3 feet tall and shall comply with the Maryland Extension Service guidelines.
- **DECKS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all decks unless there is no change in material, color, dimensions (footprint), picket style / design, and height of an existing deck. Generally, townhouse deck dimensions should contain a setback of 1 foot (12 inches) from the edges of the unit. Townhouse owners should be aware that there may be additional requirements or restrictions. Decks must be built to meet Howard County Code. A permit may be required.
- **DOG HOUSES AND DOG RUNS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all dog houses, shelters, and dog runs.
- **DOORS: EXTERIOR AND STORM** – an exterior alteration application is required for all exterior and storm doors unless the following conditions are met: the door style matches the color of the exterior door or trim; there is no change in material, color, dimensions, and style of the existing exterior door or storm door; sliders that are converted to French doors (and vice versa) that are the exact same color, style, and size as the existing slider.
- **DRAINAGE AND LAWN/LANDSCAPE WATERING SYSTEMS** – exterior alteration application is not required if the system is not visible after installation. Watering systems must not go past property lines.
- **DRIVEWAYS** – no application is needed if driveways are replaced with the same type material used in the existing driveway and there is no change in material, color, size, shape, or grade of the existing driveway. An application is required for all other situations. Scalloped edging is not permitted along driveways. Residents should contact the county regarding proposed changes to concrete aprons.
- **FENCES** – an exterior alteration application is required for all fences except if you are replacing an existing fence and there is no change in material, color, dimensions (footprint), design, and location. Residential fences must be constructed of wood, low maintenance vinyl or acceptable composite material. Fencing should match existing adjacent neighboring fence style. It should be of same material, height, and railing style. If there are several neighboring fence styles, the proposed fence must match the most prominent, or visible from the street. A completely different style will not be

approved. Gates should match the fence in material, style, color, and height. It is the homeowner's responsibility to ensure that the property lines are established and that no encroachment results.

- **GARAGE DOORS** – no application is needed if garage doors are replaced with the same type material used in the existing door/s and there is no change in material, color, size, shape. An application is required for all other situations.
- **GAZEBOS** – an exterior application is required for all permanent gazebos.
- **GRILLS AND FIRE PITS (PERMANENT)** – an exterior alteration application is required for all permanent grills and fire pits. Grills and fire pits should be located behind the house and must conform to Howard County fire code.
- **GUTTERS AND DOWNSPOUTS** – downspout extensions, including plastic corrugated drainpipes, which are positioned over the property should be no longer than five feet. Residents should ensure that any repositioning of downspouts does not create drainage problems for neighbors. No application is required if all of the following conditions are met: the gutters and downspouts match the color of the house or trim, the gutters are permanently affixed to the house. An application is required if one or more of the listed conditions are not met.
- **HEATING/AIR CONDITIONING SOURCES** – the preferred location for a heat or air conditioning source or tank is behind a chimney or a jut in the wall. Generally, window units will not be approved. Window or wall units are strongly discouraged. An application is required before the location of an outside air conditioner is changed or a window or wall unit is installed.
- **HOLIDAY DECORATIONS** – an application is required for all permanent decorative and string lighting. Any seasonal decorations left up 60 days after the holiday will be considered permanent.
- **HOT TUBS, SWIM SPAS, SWIMMING POOLS, AND WHIRLPOOLS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all hot tubs, swim spas, swimming pools, and whirlpools. Additional screening with fencing and/or landscape buffers such as shrubs may be required to reduce impact on adjacent property owners and to provide more privacy. All hot tubs, swim spas, swimming pools, and whirlpools must be in compliance with Howard County code.
- **LANDSCAPING, RAIN GARDENS, and VEGETABLE GARDENS** –
  - **Landscaping:** an exterior alteration application is required for, but not limited to, the following:
    - a) any planting used as a hedge, windbreak, or for screening purposes;
    - b) landscaping which involves a change in grading or slope, installation of a retaining wall or other structure;
    - c) ponds / water features require plot plan, description of design, dimensions, including depth and type of filter system;
    - d) using decorative objects (rocks, railroad ties, border fences, landscaping edging greater than 6" high) around plantings. The following items are not permitted:
      - a) unnatural materials such as plastic fencing or artificial turf;
      - b) plastic or rubber driveway edging that exceeds more than one inch above the ground. No application is required for the following landscaping:
        - a) individual shrubs (unless used as a hedge), foundation plants, small annual or perennial beds, ground covers, or single specimen trees, which at maturity will be in scale with the house size;
        - b) stepping stones flush with the ground;
        - c) landscaping edging if less than 6" high and made of earth toned wood, wood-like material, brick or stone. An application is required for all other situations.
  - **Rain Garden:** an exterior alteration application is required for all rain gardens.
  - **Vegetable Gardens:** a flower screen should be planted around the vegetable garden if possible. Plant supports and dead vegetation must be removed at the end of the growing season. No application is required if all of the following conditions are met:
    - a) garden does not extend further than fifteen feet beyond the rear of the house;
    - b) the garden size does not exceed 200 square feet;
    - c) garden is not planted on a grade which will cause damage to property below it by the flow of water onto lower property. An application is required if one or more of the conditions are not met.
- **LIGHTING** –
  - **Replacement of existing light fixture:** an exterior alteration application is required for lighting if there is a change in style, size, shape, color, or location or if additional lighting fixtures are to be installed on existing or new structures. No application is required if it is the replacement of existing light fixtures with reasonable match to the old fixture in style, finish and size.
  - **Security lighting:** no application is required for security lighting if there are not more than two sets of security lights, carefully installed to illuminate only a specific area, and angled downward

so as not to shine on adjacent property. An application is required if these conditions are not met.

- **Path lighting:** no application is required for path lighting if all of the following conditions are met: a) the stakes are black, brown, or bronze, b) no closer than 3' from the curb, c) and uniformly installed. An application is required in all other situations.
- **MAINTENANCE** – each owner shall keep all lots owned by him/her, and all improvements therein, in good order and repair, including but not limited to, the seeding, watering, and mowing of all lawns, the pruning and cutting of all trees and shrubbery and the painting (or other appropriate external care) of all buildings and other improvements, all in a manner and in such frequency as is consistent with good property management. Maintenance of sidewalks, the grass area between the sidewalk and the street, cul de sacs, and driveway apron areas, including mowing, trimming, and snow removal, is the responsibility of the adjacent property owner, even though they exist on the county right of way. Trees on personal property must be pruned to allow clearance for walkers / bikers (limbs should be at least 8' from the ground). Refuse and trash, including but not limited to garbage, unusable items, items no longer in use, vehicle parts, dead vegetation, tree branches, and plastic and paper bags, are not allowed to accumulate on any lot. Howard County law requires owners to pickup after their pets and dispose of waste material in a sanitary manner or face possible legal penalties. This applies to dogs and cats, both on and off of one's property, including all open space and public land.
- **MAJOR BUILDING ADDITIONS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all major building additions, including but not limited to additional stories, expanding the home's existing footprint, garages, greenhouses, porches, rooms, screened porches, and deck enclosures.
- **OPEN SPACE** – there is no authorized use of open space for gardens, play equipment, tree removal, motorized vehicles, etc.
- **PAINTING/STAINING** – an exterior alteration application is required when any structure, including decks and fences, or trim is to be painted or stained a color different from the existing color. The new paint or stain is considered to be different if the color itself changes or if, while the color remains the same, it is lighter or darker than the original. No application is required if the paint or stain is the same as the original in both color and shade. An application is required for all other situations.  
**Townhouses:** If a Townhouse owner wishes to paint their townhouse in the original paint colors, the Sherwin Williams color palette (available on our website) should be used as the guide for paint color selection. If the owner wants to change the paint colors, an exterior alteration application, including a color swatch, must be submitted to the Architectural Committee for approval.
- **PATIOS AND WALKWAYS** – an exterior alteration application is required for new or expanded patios and walkways (except for ground-level stepping stones), or for any material changes in existing patios and walkways. All new materials should be natural in color. No application is required if a patio or walkway replaces an existing area of paving with an identical material or a material similar in color, texture, and size or if the patio or walkway would be fully shielded by an existing privacy fence. An application is required for all other situations.
- **PLAY EQUIPMENT** – an exterior alteration application is required for most play equipment and they must be constructed of wood or composite material that looks like wood. No application is required if it is smaller, portable play equipment (such as Little Tykes).
- **RAIN BARRELS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all rain barrels. Rain barrels should be maintained at all times and should be kept free from standing water on or around anything not used as part of the rain barrel system. The number of rain barrels should not exceed the number of downspouts.
- **ROOFS** – no application is required if the existing roof will be replaced with the same shingle material and color or if it will be replaced with an architectural style or shadow accent shingle of the same material and color. An application is required for all other situations.
- **SECURITY CAMERAS** – no application is required if all of the following conditions are met: a) doorbell style cameras installed in the doorbell location; b) wireless cameras no larger than 4" x 4" x 4"; c) the placement of no more than 4 cameras on the property; d) the exterior color should be black, white, or a matching color to the surface to which it is attached. All other situations require an application.
- **SHEDS, TOOL/STORAGE AND DECK BOXES** – an exterior alteration application is required for all sheds. These should be located behind the house as inconspicuously as possible. Deck storage

boxes should be small in scale and placed against a deck rail or rear of the home. Deck storage boxes do not require an application if it is less than 3' in height, 3' in depth, and 5' in length and earth tone in nature. All other deck storage boxes require an application.

- **SIDING**— an exterior alteration application is required if the proposed re-siding material differs in color or texture from existing siding on the structure or if it results in change in architectural style. When changing the color of the siding, the foundation must blend with the new color. Note that it is the responsibility of the homeowner to ascertain whether or not the proposed building material meets the Howard County building and fire codes. No application is required if any of the following conditions are met: a) aluminum siding is being replaced with vinyl siding in the same texture, color, and style; b) vinyl siding is being replaced with vinyl siding in the same color, texture, and style. All other situations require an application.
- **SHUTTER REPLACEMENT** – no application is required if all of the following conditions are met: a) existing shutters are replaced with the same color and style and b) shutter material must be wood, plastic, vinyl, or aluminum. An application is required to add shutters or alter their positions or change the color
- **SIGNS** – the placement of signs, including temporary signs, must be in compliance with Howard County Sign ordinance. No application is required for temporary signs as specifically outlined: a) rental or sale of residential property; b) garage sale signs may be put up two days before the event and must be taken down within 24 hours following the sale; c) candidate's political signs must be placed in accordance to Howard County's guidelines for size and time limits; d) signs advertising contracted work being done on a property may be posted for no more than 30 days and must be removed upon completion of the project, with only one per lot. No application is required for Home Security signs if the following criteria are met: a) a free-standing home security sign no more than 12 square inches; b) free standing sign mounted on a metal stake or wooden post located no further than 10 feet from the front or back door; c) no more than two freestanding signs per property. An application is required for all other signs.
- **SOLAR COLLECTORS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all solar collectors.
- **TEMPORARY STORAGE UNIT (i.e. PODS)** – no application is required if the temporary storage unit (no more than two units) shall remain on the lot for no more than 45 days. All other situations require an application.
- **TRASH AND RECYCLABLES** – trash, recyclables, and yard waste may not be put out before 6pm the night prior to pick up. Receptacles must be collected the same day of the pickup and stored in such a manner so that they cannot be seen from the street.
- **TREE REMOVAL** – when a tree is removed, the stump must be ground down to below ground level if visible from the street. Any large, protruding roots must be removed. The area must then be blended with the surrounding landscaping, with the intent that there should be no sign that a tree was ever there. All wood must be removed promptly following the tree removal. No application is required if a) the tree is dead; or b) the tree is less than 6" in diameter, as measured from two feet above ground level. An application is required for all other situations
- **WINDOWS AND SLIDING GLASS DOORS** – an exterior alteration application is required for all additional windows and sliding glass doors, and replacement windows and sliding glass doors that vary from the existing. Windows should be in keeping with the style and exterior color scheme of the house. Proposed additional windows and sliding glass doors should be uniform with other existing windows (grids, mullions, trim, color, etc.) No application is required if sliding glass doors are converted to French doors (and vice versa) and are the exact same color and size as the existing doors. An application is required for all other situations.
- **WOODPILES** – it is recommended that the wood be stacked off the ground, and next to an existing structure, separated by several inches from the structure to discourage termites and rodents. Screening or plantings may be required. No application is required if the woodpile is not readily visible from the street or a neighbor's view. An application is required for all other woodpile locations.