



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD CHARGE

February 26, 2007
November 2011, revised
May 2015, revised

Purpose

The purpose of the Design Review Board (DRB) shall be to promote development in Acton that furthers the goals and objectives identified in the most recent Town comprehensive community plan and other comprehensive planning documents, and to enhance the overall quality of life for Acton residents. Under the authority of the Board of Selectmen, the DRB shall serve Town committees and departments in an advisory capacity regarding proposed development and as a general resource on development-related design issues.

Projects Requiring Design Review

The DRB shall provide design guidance, consistent with its Design Review Guidelines and the respective jurisdictional authority of the Town's permit-granting authorities, as follows:

- (1) At the request of the Board Selectmen for a proposed commercial project, mixed commercial and residential use project, multi-family residential project or municipal project.
- (2) At the request of the Planning Board for a proposed subdivision project or proposed special permit project requiring the Planning Board's approval.
- (3) At the request of the Board of Selectmen, Acton Community Housing Corporation or Zoning Board of Appeals for a proposed affordable housing project under Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws.
- (4) At the request of the Planning Department for
 - a project application pending before the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals; or
 - a project proposal at the pre-application stage that ultimately will require an application to and approval by the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals.

Discretionary Design Review

The DRB may provide design guidance, consistent with its Design Review Guidelines, at the request of an applicant or prospective applicant.

General Design Guidance

The DRB may provide general design guidance at the request of any Town committee or Town department. DRB also may present educational workshops for the public about its Design Review Guidelines and design issues.

Design Review Guidelines

The DRB shall publish Design Review Guidelines, subject to the Board of Selectmen's approval, that are the basis for its review of proposed development projects. The guidelines shall apply to:

- Commercial projects
- Municipal projects
- Mixed residential-commercial-use projects
- Multi-family residential developments
- Subdivision projects
- Affordable housing proposals under Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws
- Other development projects falling under the purview of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals

The Design Review Guidelines shall reflect and be consistent with the goals and objectives in the current comprehensive community plan (Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan) and other comprehensive planning documents. The Design Review guidelines also shall be consistent with the current design-review guidelines of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development for Chapter 40B projects ("Handbook: Approach to Chapter 40B Design Reviews," January 2011) and the provisions of the current Town comprehensive permit policy, also addressing Chapter 40B projects ("Town of Acton Comprehensive Permit Policy," April 2006).

The development of the Design Review guidelines shall involve collaboration with Town committees and departments, and broad-based public outreach, via surveys or other appropriate methods, to identify the preferences of Acton residents with respect to such projects. The DRB shall ensure that the current guidelines are available on the Town website (www.acton-ma.gov) and shall review and update the guidelines from time to time. The DRB shall make copies of the Design Review Guidelines available to Town departments and committees for distribution to project applicants and potential project applicants.

Project Review Procedure

Review at Request of Planning Department or Town Committee. Upon referral of a project to the DRB, the applicant or prospective applicant shall submit a review package to the DRB. Upon receipt of the review package the DRB shall review the project within 30 days at a regularly scheduled DRB meeting. The DRB shall make reasonable efforts to schedule its discussion of the project at a time when the applicant or prospective applicant is able to attend.

The applicant or prospective applicant should email the review package to drb@acton-ma.gov and provide two paper copies for the review meeting.

- (1) Project pending before the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals: The review package should include, at minimum:
 - Full-size existing conditions site plan (including contours and trees over 12" caliper)
 - Existing conditions photographs
 - Full-size proposed site plans
 - Full-size proposed landscape plan
 - Proposed building elevation concepts
 - Any other pertinent information in the application to the permitting entity
- (2) Project proposal at the pre-application stage: The review package should include as much detail as is practicable, if not to the same degree required of a project applicant.

During the review meeting, the DRB will review the materials that the applicant or prospective applicant has submitted. The DRB shall provide guidance in keeping with the Design Review Guidelines and comprehensive community plan and other applicable standards. The DRB shall communicate with the referring department or committee throughout the review process. If the applicant or

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prospective applicant makes substantial changes to the project, the DRB may require additional review meetings.

Upon completion of its review of a project proposal, the DRB shall prepare an advisory opinion, summarizing its review of the project, and forward the advisory opinion to the referring Town department or committee, the applicant or prospective applicant, and the Town website manager for posting on the Town website.

Discretionary Review at Request of Applicant or Prospective Applicant. In the event that the DRB agrees to the request of an applicant or prospective applicant, the standard Project Review Procedure shall apply.

Membership

The DRB shall consist of five Members (voting) and two Associate Members (non-voting), all appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Members shall serve staggered three-year terms; Associate Members shall serve three-year terms. The DRB members shall include as is practicable:

- One Planning Board member, assigned by the Planning Board to serve as an Associate member.
- A local businessperson/ commercial property owner
- Acton residents representing diverse professional backgrounds or general interests in the following areas:
 - Architecture
 - Planning
 - Real Estate Development
 - Landscape Architecture and Design
 - Interior Design
 - Graphic Design
 - Civil Engineering
 - Land Use Law
 - Building/Construction

The DRB shall elect annually a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and Clerk. The DRB Chairperson shall keep the assigned Board of Selectmen Liaison apprised of the DRB's activities.

Meetings

The DRB shall meet twice a month, on the first and third Wednesdays, or other regularly scheduled days convenient for the members. All DRB meetings shall be open to the public.

Administrative Provisions

Advisory opinions of the DRB shall be consistent with the intent and purpose of the current Design Review Guidelines.

The DRB shall comply with all applicable Town bylaws and State laws, including the requirements of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.