



**Design Review Board  
Town of Acton  
Memo**

**Date of Reviews:** 4/15/09; 2<sup>nd</sup> Review, w/out proponent  
11/5/08; 1<sup>st</sup> review, w/proponent, see DRB minutes on-line

**Project:** **Next Generation Daycare**  
348, 350 & 352 Main Street  
Acton, MA

**Proponent:** Walker Reality, LLC  
**Plans Submitted:** Site Plan (Revised): 3-31-09; Architectural Elevation: 2008

---

Scott Mutch provided the DRB with the updated revised site plan to review. Our comments follow:

The DRB finds the location of this project as shown is deleterious to Town welfare and sets dangerous precedent violating local bylaw. Indeed, it calls into question Acton's very ability to follow its own planning initiatives and respond to citizens' concerns about eroding rural and historic character, which are key quality-of-life issues that many feel keep Acton an attractive place to live.\*

While we understand that the Dover Amendment permits non-profit educational uses in residential zones, we also believe the amendment provides for "reasonable regulations" concerning size, open-space, parking and setbacks, which have yet to be applied here.

Located elsewhere in town, this project as scaled might work; not at Acton's front door, a mere 100-feet from the main Rte 2 exit, where it will come to define, for better or worse, Acton's identity.

Additionally, the DRB notes the traffic engineering required here, including widening of Main St, appears to add yet another new congestion point to an already congested artery a few hundred feet from Acton's new, centralized public safety building. *One has to ask whether this project's current site design could negatively impact the safety of all.*

In terms of specific *Design Review Guidelines for the Town of Acton*, unanimously accepted by the Board of Selectmen in 2007 (and on the Town website), the DRB finds:

- **Building Placement on Site:** The building fails to face the street as the guidelines recommend;

- **Building Massing/Scale:** The 22,000 sf building ignores New England vernacular; this building could be anywhere, contradicting guideline recommendations;
- **Existing Structures:** The proposal fails to re-use the existing 1920's cottage or save mature trees or historic stone walls on site, all defining local characteristics, as recommended;
- **Parking:** The parking lot proposed is located in the most prominent area of the site, again opposing the recommendations; we note its high retaining walls will be highly visible from both Rte 2 and Main Street;
- **Sidewalks:** With its oversized entry drive, and relocation of a Main St. crosswalk at the drive itself the proposal turns the pedestrian experience into an uncomfortable and potentially unsafe one, contradicting both the letter and spirit of the guidelines;
- **Architectural Elements:** As the planning department noted, the architectural plans submitted are incomplete which makes full project review difficult. We note with dismay, however, the placement of the day care play yard, due north, will provide little if any sunlight for children playing outside, another sign, we believe, of an over-scaled project, that has failed to date to consider the real constraints of its location.

The DRB has a history of working with developers to mutual benefit of both their projects and local neighborhoods and we would be happy to meet with the proponent again. We would request additional drawings at that time, including grading, planting plans and sections to enable us to better understand existing and proposed conditions. We welcome any comments or questions.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Design Review Board  
Town of Acton  
[drb@acton-ma.gov](mailto:drb@acton-ma.gov)

\* For a working summary of Acton citizen views, see:

<https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-2176>