

**From:** [Roland Bartl](#)  
**To:** [Acton 2020 Committee](#); [Jim Purdy](#); "Daphne Politis"  
**Subject:** Acton 2020 design review recommendations  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 26, 2011 11:34:47 AM

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Hi:

I am sorry I will miss the meeting tonight.

Before I leave on my family visit to Germany, I wanted to voice my concern about the recommendations regarding design review, and the proposed expansion of design review to residential projects.

Please consider carefully where design review is appropriate and where it is not. As a general matter, I feel strongly that design review, especially for single or two-family homes but also more generally, is an overly intrusive hand of government (or in some cases one neighbor trying to tell the other what he/she can and cannot do). Unless there is an overwhelming body or reason to regulate design, my counsel would be HANDS-OFF.

That said, there is no question that, in areas where the plan will promote centers with higher density development of any kind (commercial, residential, or mixed use), design guidelines - even design regulations - are essential to make the centers successful and to find the residents'/voters' support for higher density.

So, I would like to recommend:

1. That design regulations be limited to the existing and proposed centers with higher density (all area where density increases will be recommended), but not be extended out into the other areas of the Town.
2. That the design review by committee be replaced by clear and illustrated guidelines or regulations that address the basics - placements, massing, ratios of street width to building height, roof pitches, basic facade structures treatments, rhythms and symmetries, context, and siding/roofing materials, but leave as much choices and creativity as possible to the builder and architect.
3. I believe that design guidelines/regulations should be minimally intrusive to achieve their core objective, but that in the end the architectural designs of individual buildings should reflect the times in which they were built, rather than any previous period in history.
4. I am concerned that a process of design review by a committee (i.e. DRB) can too easily slide into subjectivity of the likes and don't likes of individual DRB members, or into an ego contest between architects. Therefore, if we are to recommend a DRB for an expanded role, that DRB must take its cues from very clear and precise guidelines or regulations.
5. The guessing game should be eliminated; in other words an applicant should have a pretty darn good idea ahead of time what designs will find the favorable recommendation of the DRB.

I hope all goes well at at the big public meeting on November 9th.

I will be back after the 16th.

Best -

Roland Bartl, AICP  
Planning Director  
472 Main Street  
Acton, MA 01720  
(978) 929-6631

