



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD CHARGE

February 26, 2007
November 2011, revised

Purpose

The mission of the Design Review Board (DRB) is to promote attractive development in Acton that furthers the goals and objectives identified in the Town Master Plan and other comprehensive planning reports, and enhances the overall quality of life for Acton residents. The DRB serves the Board of Selectmen in an advisory capacity regarding proposed commercial development and may, at the request of other Town Boards, provide design guidance on certain non-commercial development within the jurisdiction of the other Town Boards.

Projects for Which Design Review Is Available

The DRB may provide design guidance as follows:

- (1) At the request of the Board of Selectmen as to a proposed commercial development or municipal project;
- (2) At the request of another Town Board as to a proposed non-commercial development that is within the jurisdiction of the Board requesting such guidance; no proposed residential development encompassing fewer than four residential units shall be subject to DRB review.

The DRB's provision of design guidance will require and be consistent with Design Review Guidelines.

Design Review Guidelines

The DRB publishes Design Review Guidelines, subject to the Board of Selectmen's approval, that are the basis for its review of proposed development projects. The Design Review Guidelines, in turn, draw upon and reflect the goals and objectives in the Town Master Plan and other comprehensive planning reports.

The DRB's Design Review Guidelines are posted on the Town website (www.acton-ma.gov). The DRB shall develop guidelines for municipal projects and residential developments of four or more units, pursuant to broad-based public outreach, via surveys or other appropriate methods, to identify the preferences of Acton residents with respect to such non-commercial projects. These guidelines are subject to periodic review.

The DRB aims to work with project Applicants to achieve results beneficial to both Applicant and Town. The Guidelines do not rigidly prescribe certain styles of architecture or other design details, but suggest ways for development to be contextually sensitive, respecting the Town's unique past and historic building traditions while at the same time being open to all styles of design and architecture. The DRB shall make copies of the Design Review Guidelines available to Town departments and Boards for distribution to Applicants and potential Applicants.

Membership

The DRB shall have eight members, consisting of five voting Members, two Associate Members and one Alternate Member, all appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Members shall serve staggered three-year terms; Associate Members and the Alternate Member shall serve one-year terms. The DRB members shall include

- Two Planning Board members,, one of whom will serve as the Alternate
- A local businessperson/commercial property owner
- Five Acton residents representing diverse professional backgrounds or general interests in the following areas:

- Architecture or 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.

Meetings

The DRB shall meet on a regular basis twice a month. All DRB meetings shall be open to the public.

Project Review Procedure

Upon referral to the DRB of a development proposal, the DRB shall invite the Applicant to appear before the DRB at a regularly scheduled DRB meeting convenient for the Applicant, to present drawings and renderings of the project as well as photographs showing the existing conditions and context. While, the Board of Selectmen and other Boards encourage developers to meet with the DRB because it may lead to expedited official reviews, this process is voluntary. The DRB encourages Applicants who are willing to meet with the DRB to do so as early as possible in the development process.

During an Applicant presentation, DRB members shall make suggestions regarding the design of the project with reference to the Design Review Guidelines and, if appropriate, the Town of Acton Master Plan and other comprehensive planning reports. If the Applicant agrees, the DRB may schedule additional review meetings. The DRB shall communicate regularly with the referring Board throughout the review process, and conclude its review in accordance with any deadline that the referring Board may set for the DRB's review.

Upon completion of its review of a project proposal, the DRB shall prepare an advisory opinion, summarizing its review of and comments about the project, and forward the advisory opinion to the referring Board, the Applicant, and the Town website manager for posting on the Town website.

Administrative Provisions

Advisory opinions of the DRB shall be consistent with the intent and purpose of the Design Review Guidelines and Town of Acton Master Plan and other comprehensive planning reports. The DRB may periodically revise and amend the Design Review Guidelines, subject to Board of Selectmen approval.

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

The DRB Chair shall keep the assigned Board of Selectmen Liaison apprised of the DRB's activities.