



## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD CHARGE - *DRAFT*

February 26, 2007  
November 2011, revised  
March 6, 2014, revised

### Purpose

The purpose of the Design Review Board (DRB) is to promote development in Acton that furthers the goals and objectives identified in the most recent Town Master Plan and other comprehensive planning reports, to enhance the overall quality of life for Acton residents. The DRB serves the Town Boards and Departments in an advisory capacity regarding proposed development.

### Projects to be presented for Design Review

The DRB provides design guidance as follows:

- (1) At the request of a Town Board (Selectmen, Planning, Zoning, or other) for a proposed commercial development, municipal project, exterior renovation, or for a proposed non-commercial development that is within the jurisdiction of the Board or Department requesting such guidance;
- (2) No proposed residential development encompassing fewer than four residential units shall be subject to DRB review.

The DRB's provision of design guidance shall 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](http://www.acton-ma.gov)). The DRB shall develop guidelines for commercial, municipal projects and residential developments of four or more units, including 40B projects, pursuant to broad-based public outreach, via surveys or other appropriate methods, to identify the preferences of Acton residents with respect to such 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.

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## **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 a one-year term. The DRB members shall include:

- One Planning Board member, who will serve as an Associate member, assigned by the Planning Board.
- 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 Chair 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. All DRB meetings shall be open to the public.

## **Project Review Procedure**

Upon referral to the DRB, the Applicant shall submit a Review Package to the DRB. Upon receipt of the review package the DRB shall have 30 days to review the project at a regularly scheduled DRB meeting, with the Applicant invited to be in attendance. A specially scheduled meeting shall be held, if necessary, to accommodate the referring Board or Department's schedule. Applicants are encouraged to submit projects to the DRB for review early in the design process, and need not wait to be referred by permitting authority.

The Review Package should be emailed to [drb@acton-ma.gov](mailto:drb@acton-ma.gov) and two hard copies brought to the review meeting. The Review Package should include each of the following:

1. Full size existing conditions site plan (including contours and trees over 12" caliper)
2. Existing conditions photographs
3. Full size proposed site plans
4. Full Size proposed landscape plan
5. Proposed building elevation concepts
6. Any other pertinent information

During a review meeting, the DRB will review the materials, as presented by the applicant, and work with the Applicant to provide guidance in keeping with the Design Review Guidelines, zoning bylaws and Town master plan. The DRB shall communicate with the referring Board throughout the review process. If the project is revised substantially from the original submittal, additional review meetings may be necessary.

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

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Open Meeting Law.