



## DESIGN REVIEW BOARD CHARGE - *DRAFT*

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

### Purpose

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

### Projects ~~to be presented for~~Requiring Design Review

The DRB ~~provides~~shall provide design guidance as follows:

~~(1)-~~

- ~~(1)~~ (1) At the request of a Town~~the~~ Board ~~(Selectmen, Planning, Zoning, or other)~~ for a proposed commercial development, mixed-commercial-residential use project or municipal project, ~~exterior renovation, or for a proposed non-commercial development that is within the jurisdiction.~~
- ~~(2)~~ (2) At the request of the Planning Board or Department requesting such guidance; for a subdivision, multi-family residential project of four (4) or more units, or other proposal requiring the Planning Board's approval. [this needs Planning Dept input]
- ~~(3)~~ (3) (2) At the request of the Planning Department for a preliminary project proposal that ultimately will require the Board of Selectmen's or Planning Board's approval
- ~~(4)~~ (4) At the request of the Board of Selectmen, Acton Community Housing Corporation or Zoning Board of Appeals for an affordable housing proposal under Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws.

~~No~~ proposed residential development ~~encompassing fewer than four residential units~~ shall be subject to DRB review, except as provided herein.

### Projects for Which Design Review Is Discretionary

The DRB's ~~provision of~~DRB may provide design guidance ~~shall require and be consistent with Design Review Guidelines, at the request of an applicant or prospective applicant.~~

### Design Review Guidelines

The DRB ~~publishes~~shall 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 guidelines shall apply to

- ~~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~~Commercial projects and
- Municipal projects
- Mixed residential-commercial-use projects
- Multi-family residential developments of four or more units, including
- Affordable housing proposals under Chapter 40B projects, pursuant of the Massachusetts General Laws

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 reports. 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. ~~These guidelines are subject to periodic review.~~The DRB shall ensure that the current guidelines are available on the Town website ([www.acton-ma.gov](http://www.acton-ma.gov)) and shall review the update them 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 applicant

~~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 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~~three-year ~~term~~terms. The DRB members shall include:

- One Planning Board member, ~~who will serve as an Associate 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 ~~Chair~~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.

## Project Review Procedure

**Review Pursuant to Referral.** Upon referral of a project to the DRB, the ~~Applicant~~applicant shall submit a ~~Review Package~~review package to the DRB. Upon receipt of the review package the DRB shall ~~have 30 days to~~ review the project within 30 days at a regularly scheduled DRB meeting, ~~with the Applicant invited to be in attendance. A specially scheduled meeting.~~ The DRB shall be held, if necessary, to accommodate the referring Board or Department's make reasonable efforts to 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; its discussion of the project at a time when the applicant is able to attend.

The ~~Review Package~~applicant should ~~be emailed~~email the review package to [drb@acton-ma.gov](mailto:drb@acton-ma.gov) and provide two ~~hardpaper~~hardpaper copies ~~brought to for~~ 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 ~~at the~~ review meeting, the DRB will review the materials, as presented by the applicant, and work with the ~~Applicant~~applicant to provide guidance in keeping with the Design Review Guidelines, ~~zoning bylaws~~ and Town master comprehensive community plan, and other applicable standards. The DRB shall communicate with the referring ~~Board~~committee throughout the review process. If the applicant makes substantial changes to the project is revised substantially from the original submittal, ~~the DRB may require~~ 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~~Town committee, if applicable, the Applicant, other Town committees and/or Town Departments if appropriate, and the Town website manager for posting on the Town website.

**Review Without Referral.** Applicants or prospective applicants are welcome to submit proposed projects for DRB review early in the design process, without referral by a permitting authority. The standard Project Review Procedure shall apply to review without

| [referral.](#)

## **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~~[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.