

## DESIGN REVIEW

Design review is often used to enhance aesthetic character. A community may prohibit uses detrimental to the general welfare, as well as developments that are "monotonous" in design and external appearance.<sup>54</sup> As one court put it: "Mental health is certainly included in the public health."<sup>55</sup> Whereas the zoning code usually focuses on the type and intensity of a use, design review focuses on aesthetic and architectural standards. Design review procedures usually rely on deeply held values and beliefs about what is beautiful and what is ordinary. The use of an appointed review board is standard. In larger communities, this is usually a separate "design review board" or an "architectural review committee." In some communities, the planning commission functions as the design review board.

Local design review ordinances are usually folded into the zoning process in some way. The amount of information included in a design review application will vary. An application for a small addition, for example, will probably not have as much information as an application for a large subdivision. Here is a list of some of the information likely to be presented as part of a design review application:

- Color boards showing the site plan, including the shape and size of the building or buildings, their relationship to the site, landscaping, and parking.
- Conceptual color elevations of each wall of the building(s), especially those seen by the public or from off-site.
- Models sufficient to show building mass, form, relationship to the landscape, and effects caused by grading. These can range from simple hand-built models to sophisticated computer-generated analyses.
- Design details, such as plazas, pavement design, window treatments (sills, awnings, etc.), entry gateways, building top (molding) and base treatment, screening details, pedestrian walkways, and lighting.
- Colored landscape plans sufficient to illustrate how landscaping will be used to soften the building's impact on its environment.
- Controls to ensure that signage will fit in with the rest of the development.
- Summary data, including facts on adjacent properties and sight lines.

Design review has some drawbacks. First, it makes it more difficult from the landowner's or developer's perspective to determine what will be an acceptable level of development. Accordingly, the more specific the design standards, the greater the certainty from the developer's perspective. Second, design review can breed monotony (or even mediocrity) to the extent that all buildings must conform to a narrow set of guidelines. The trick is to develop design guidelines that leave enough room for creativity. Finally, in some instances, the design review process may be abused by those who are looking for an opportunity to stop a development.