

**DESIGN REVIEW:**  
***A Guide for Applicants***



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**CLEVELAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION**  
601 Lakeside Avenue - Room 501  
Cleveland, Ohio 44114  
216/664-2210 - FAX: 216/664-3281  
Web Site: <http://planning.city.cleveland.oh.us>

## 1. WHAT IS "DESIGN REVIEW"?

"*Design review*" is a process in which the City reviews the architectural and site planning elements of a development project to ensure that the project meets the highest standards of design and will complement and enhance the character of the surrounding neighborhood or district. Projects are reviewed with respect to [Design Guidelines](#) that are established in [Chapter 341](#) of the Zoning Code (Appendix D), as well as any supplemental guidelines that have been adopted for particular districts.

Although design review may add time to the approval process, it often results in a project that better meets the long-term needs of the applicant, and it protects the applicant's investment by preventing incompatible development on neighboring properties. *It is the City's goal to make the design review process as fast and as "painless" as possible.*



## 2. WILL MY PROJECT BE SUBJECT TO DESIGN REVIEW?

If a project is located in a *Design Review District*, it will be subject to design review – both for new construction and for alterations – unless only *interior work* is proposed or unless the exterior work results in *no change to the appearance* of the building, such as in the case of routine maintenance and replacement of features with identical or very similar materials.

Outside of *Design Review Districts*, a project will be subject to design review only if it involves new construction of a building that is *residential, commercial* or *institutional*, but not industrial. Building alterations or expansions located outside of Design Review Districts are not subject to design review.

## 3. HOW DO I START THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS?

The best way to start the design review process is to contact the City Planning Commission office in Room 501 on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of Cleveland City Hall. The phone number is 216-664-2210 and the email address is [cityplanning@city.cleveland.oh.us](mailto:cityplanning@city.cleveland.oh.us). City Planning staff will give you a [Design Review Application](#) (Appendix A) and information on what you need to submit and what meetings you will need to attend.



## 4. WHO WILL APPROVE MY PROJECT?

Your project will be approved by either the *Cleveland City Planning Commission* or by the *City Planning Director* in an "administrative approval" on behalf of the Commission. Administrative approvals are used typically for smaller projects that are relatively routine with respect to design issues. Before final approval, your project will be reviewed at a meeting of a [Design Review Advisory Committee](#). (See the [Design Review Process Flow Chart](#) in Appendix C).

## 5. WHEN DO THE MEETINGS TAKE PLACE?

The *City Planning Commission* meets on the first and third Friday of each month at 9 a.m. in Room 514 of Cleveland City Hall (unless otherwise announced). The meeting schedule for each *Design Review Advisory Committee* is listed on the City Planning Commission web site or is available from staff at 216-664-2210.



## 6. WHEN DO I NEED TO SUBMIT MY PLANS?

To be placed on the agenda for the *Design Review Advisory Committee*, please submit plans and associated materials no later than 5 p.m. one week before the scheduled meeting. This deadline also applies to follow-up meetings.

## 7. WHAT ABOUT ZONING?

You are encouraged to submit preliminary plans for new buildings or building additions to the City's [Building & Housing Department](#) for a *zoning review* as early in the process as possible. If your proposal fails to meet any zoning requirement, you will have the option of revising your plan or seeking a *zoning variance* from the [Board of Zoning Appeals](#) or, if necessary, seeking a *zoning map amendment* through the City Planning Commission and City Council. The design review process can continue as you seek any necessary zoning-related actions.

## 8. HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE MEETINGS?

Before presenting your project to the *City Planning Commission* and its *Design Review Advisory Committee*, you will be asked to meet with the City Planning staff for a preliminary review of your project. At that meeting the staff will review the project and give you advice on the need to revise or supplement the plans before the meetings with the Committee and the Commission.



If your project is a residential development, you will be asked to contact the City's [Community Development Department](#), which coordinates housing development projects and administers the City's financial incentive programs for housing.

## 9. CAN I SUBMIT A CONCEPTUAL OR SCHEMATIC PLAN?

Yes! We encourage you to submit plans at an early stage to seek direction and to request conceptual or schematic plan approval from the City Planning Commission or its Design Review Advisory Committee.

## 10. WHAT WILL I NEED TO SUBMIT?

Typical submissions include a description of the project (as shown in the [Sample Project Description](#) in Appendix E), a site plan, colored building elevation drawings, context photos, material samples, and details on parking, driveways, landscaping, fencing, signs, lighting, etc. Please review the [Submission Checklist](#) (Appendix B) and other submission requirements found in the Appendix to this guide.



The submission should include *one set of paper copies*, with drawings at a scale large enough to be read, and an *electronic submission* either on disk or sent via email or through a web site link.

## 11. HOW SHOULD I MAKE MY PRESENTATION?

Please make your presentation at Committee or Commission meetings using display boards or electronic displays in a manner that can be read from about 15 feet away. It is best if the project architect and the developer both attend the meeting.



## 12. HOW DOES THE PROCESS END?

The Design Review Advisory Committee or City Planning Commission may choose to approve your project as presented or with changes. Once the project design has been approved, you will submit your final drawings to the Building and Housing Department for approval and for issuance of a Building Permit. City Planning staff will sign off on the Building Permit application if the associated drawings reflect the final approved design.





CLEVELAND CITY PLANNING COMMISSION  
**DESIGN REVIEW APPLICATION**

DATE:  
\_ / \_ / \_

PROJECT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT LOCATION (if no address): \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTACT PERSON** (for design review): \_\_\_\_\_  
**COMPANY:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **EMAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

OWNER: \_\_\_\_\_

ARCHITECT/ CONTRACTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT TYPE:  New Building  Rehabilitation  Addition  Sign  Fence  Parking

USE TYPE:  Residential  Commercial  Industrial  Institutional  Mixed-Use

I, the undersigned, have received a copy of the Cleveland City Planning Commission's "Design Review: A Guide for Applicants" and agree to follow its guidance in proceeding through the design review process for the subject project.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature **and** date

\*\*\*\*\*  
(For staff use only)

Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Design Review District Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Review Case Number: \_\_\_\_\_



## DESIGN REVIEW SUBMITTALS CHECKLIST: For New Building Projects or Major Renovation Projects

### Level of Review:

- Conceptual Approval (*general idea of uses, scale, relationship among uses, and context*)
  - Schematic Design Approval (*placement and configurations of footprints, site layout, structure massing, general texture and design of facades*)
  - Final Design Development Approval (*details of structures and site layout including placement, materials, colors, dimensions, etc.*)
- 
- Any of the above levels of design may be presented as "Information Only" with no approval action requested

### Items Required:

Submissions are required in electronic form as well as hardcopy unless City Planning staff indicates otherwise Electronic submissions up to 20 megabytes can be e-mailed to [Cleveland.planning@gmail.com](mailto:Cleveland.planning@gmail.com)

- Application Form
- Written Project Summary (*including location, scale, investment; number of units, square feet, residents, employees, parking spaces; potential code issues*)
- Site Location Map (*with respect to nearby streets*)
- Site Context Plan (*i.e., site plan showing adjoining properties and buildings*)
- Site Plan (*drawn to scale, with key dimensions marked*)
- Landscape Plan (*with plant list*)
- Parking Plan (*with key dimensions marked for spaces, aisles, curb cuts, etc.*)
- Site Amenities (*locations, details incl. cut sheets - ex. lighting fixtures, benches, trash receptacles, fences, bike racks, art projects, arbors, tables, flagpoles, clocks, recreation equipment, etc.*)
- Color Photographs (*site and context, including nearby buildings*)
- Elevation Drawings (*including color versions, if requested*)
- Floor Plans (*typical floors*)
- Wall Sections/Building Sections (*sufficient to explain the design*)
- Perspective Renderings or Photosimulations (*if requested*)
- Sign Plan (*including wall signs, freestanding signs, illumination, method of attachment, colors, etc.*)
- Lighting Plan (*including locations, fixtures, heights, etc.*)
- Material, Color and Finish Samples and Lists (*for final approval only*)
- Sustainable Building Features Description (*for informational purposes*)

### Due Dates:

Items for submittals (paper and electronic) are required 8 days prior to the Design Review Advisory Committee meeting (*11x17 format is acceptable if legible*)

Presentation boards to be used at Design Review Advisory Committee may be brought directly to the meeting (*and must accurately reflect colors that are proposed are required*)

### Questions to Ask Your Design Team:

- Are my presentation boards legible from 15-20 feet away?
- Do my final design development drawings provide accurate details of the project, including landscaping, signs, lighting, and an accurate depiction of colors?





# DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

(from Chapter 341 of the Cleveland Zoning Code)

## Appendix D

- (a) Design Compatibility.** Alterations, additions and new development should be compatible in scale, material, color, placement and character with the design of the subject property as well as the design of properties that are representative of the area's most valued architectural and environmental qualities. In evaluating compatibility, consideration shall also be given to the value of diversity and individuality in design.
- (b) Contemporary Design.** All buildings are recognized as products of their own time. Alterations, additions and new developments which have no historical basis and which seek to create an appearance characteristic of an earlier time are not required. Conversely, compatible contemporary design is encouraged except where such design would clearly detract from the architectural unity of a grouping of architecturally significant structures.
- (c) Preservation of Features.** The distinguishing original qualities of a property should not be diminished through alteration or removal of distinctive architectural features.
- (d) Replacement of Features.** In the event that replacement of significant architectural features is necessary, the new material should closely match the original material in composition, design, color, texture and all other visual qualities.
- (e) Cleaning.** The cleaning of exterior wall surfaces should be undertaken by the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage facing materials and architectural features shall not be undertaken.
- (f) Fences and Other Accessory Structures.** Fences, walkways, lighting, benches, landscaping and other accessory structures should be compatible in design with adjoining buildings and with the most valued aspects of an area's character. Use of chain-link fences along street frontages is discouraged unless otherwise specified in guidelines for a district.
- (g) Parking Lots.** Use of evergreen shrubbery and trees in combination with low ornamental fences is encouraged in screening parking lots from streets. Use of curbed, planted islands is encouraged to provide visual relief in large parking areas and to control traffic circulation. For districts characterized by buildings set along the street line, parking lots should be located behind buildings whenever possible, with entrances located off of adjoining side streets.
- (h) Sustainability.** Buildings and properties should be designed and constructed to minimize energy consumption and to promote conservation of materials and natural resources.
- (h) Signs.** In addition to meeting Zoning Code and Building Code requirements for signs in applicable zoning districts, signs subject to approval under the provisions of this Chapter shall also meet the following design guidelines.

  - (1) Placement.** Wall signs should be designed to fit within the architectural space intended for signage and should not cover distinctive architectural features.
  - (2) Compatibility.** Signs to be seen as a series should be designed with compatibility in terms of location, size, shape, style, material, illumination and color. As a general rule, uniformity should be maintained in certain characteristics while other characteristics are varied to permit individual expression and identification.
  - (3) Color.** The colors of a sign should complement the color of the building facade to which the sign relates. If a raceway or similar device is used for attachment of a sign's letters or characters, the color of the raceway should match the color of the wall surface.
  - (4) Lettering and Symbols.** The lettering and symbols on a sign should be large enough to be easily read but not overly large or out of scale with the building on which the sign is displayed. An excessive amount of information on signs, creating an image of visual clutter, should be avoided. Use of distinctive symbols or logos on signs is encouraged.

- (5) Projecting Signs.** Where permitted, projecting signs should be no larger than necessary for readability by nearby pedestrians and should contain no internal illumination unless other than in use of exposed neon and similar treatments. Spacing between projecting signs should be sufficient to prevent an image of clutter.
- (6) Wall Signs.** For signs mounted flat against the wall of a building, use of individual letters or characters is preferable to use of panel or cabinet signs in instances where individual letters or characters are less likely to detract from a building's architectural character. Such letters or characters should be attached in a manner that will minimize damage to the wall surface after removal. For buildings lacking appropriately designed wall space for placement of a sign, consideration should be given to use of a projecting sign, window sign or canopy sign as an alternative to a wall sign.
- (7) Billboards.** Billboards or "advertising signs", as defined in Section 325.64(b) of the Zoning Code, shall not be permitted in any Design Review District.
- (8) Design Exceptions.** In accordance with standards of Section 350.16 of the Zoning Code, the City Planning Commission, or its Director on the recommendation of the Local Design Review Advisory Committee, may vary the sign regulations of Chapter 350 as necessary to permit signs that are better suited to the design of the subject property or nearby properties of architectural or historic significance.



## The Written Project Summary

Below is a sample written for a proposed school building:



November 11, 2008

Mound Park K-8 School  
Design Synopsis

**PROGRAM:** The proposed project is for a 450 student K-8 school situated at the corner of Ackley Road and Linton Avenue in the Slavic Village neighborhood, a few blocks north of the existing Mound Elementary School. Major construction is intended to begin Spring 2009 and be completed by Fall 2010.

**SITE:** The site is a series of acquired properties, both commercial and residential along both Linton Avenue and Ackley Road. The topography of the consolidated properties has approximately 14 feet of elevation change across it. The proposed site development places the building to provide for main entry, bus drop and visitors off of Ackley Road. Access for Staff parking and Kindergarten drop off occurs off Ackley further to the NE. Service access is off of Linton Avenue. Separate playgrounds for Kindergarten and Elementary are provided.

Total site area after acquisition – 4.26 acres

Total proposed parking spaces – 60 + 3 bicycle parking space

**BUILDING:** The proposed 64,298 SF school building is a K-8 grade configuration with a student population of 450 and a staff of 50. The floor plan is organized with a 2-story, academic wing oriented east-west to maximize the day-lighting potential. Also in this two story building mass is the Administration area on the first floor and the Media Center on the second floor directly above it. The community portion of the facility (Gym, Student Dining, Stage) is positioned as an intermediate floor level between the first and second floor due to site grades. The Building Services area is also located on the intermediate level with access from Linton.

The major exterior materials are intended to be brick masonry walls, architectural precast panels, aluminum windows and built-up low-slope roofs.

The building is being designed to meet LEED Silver Certification requirements.