

Town of Mount Pleasant

EXPLANATION OF DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the design review process is to review all commercial building, remodeling and/or alteration activity proposed within the Commercial Design Review Overlay District of the Town of Mount Pleasant. Architecture and site design are evaluated based on the Design Review Guidelines found within §156.310 *et al*, as may be applied by the Planning Department staff and the Commercial Design Review Board.

The Design Review process establishes a systematic and uniform review procedure for proposed construction. Owners are encouraged to involve design professionals in the design of proposed projects for improved design quality and assistance to project owners in interpreting Design Review Standards. Design professionals may include a registered architect, landscape architect, civil engineer and other engineering disciplines as needed or required by building code.

REVIEW OPTIONS

Applicants have two options for review of projects: 1) Design Review Board or 2) Minor Projects (less than \$250,000.00) staff review, as is more fully explained in section 156.310(C) of the Town of Mount Pleasant Code of Ordinances.

Projects submitted for Design Review Board review and approval, the board will have the authority to adjust or modify the architectural and site design standards as deemed appropriate by the Board for a particular project. Minor Projects submitted for staff review and approval will require adherence to the architectural and site design standards as provided in section 156.310 (E and F).

PROCESS

Design Review is a three step process consisting of 1) a Pre-application Review, 2) a Preliminary Review, and 3) a Final Approval.

A Pre-Application Review meeting with staff is required at least one week prior to submittal for both Design Review Board or Minor Project review. Planning Department staff will assist applicants in understanding the goals of the Design Review Guidelines. Certain projects, particularly smaller projects, may not require both preliminary and final design review to adequately assess design appropriateness. For that reason, an applicant may request submission directly to the Final Review level. Planning staff can assist in making that determination at the pre-application meeting. Staff may grant approval to minor projects involving repair or alterations to existing buildings or sites if the drawings are sufficiently clear and complete. Minor projects by their nature may not require all plans in the submittal checklists. Staff may determine which plans are necessary for review and approval. Expedited review and approval is left to the discretion of staff and not all small projects may qualify. If not approved for expedited review, projects should be submitted in accordance with established Design Review procedures for either preliminary or final review.

Preliminary Review is the next step in the process. This step allows the applicant to receive input before investing in the preparation of construction drawings for final approval submittals. At the Preliminary Review level, if a project is found acceptable, usually with some minor design modifications, Preliminary Approval would be granted and the applicant may proceed with preparation of a Final Review submittal. If, in the reviewers' opinion, substantial design changes are necessary,

action on a Preliminary Review submittal may result in either Conceptual approval (the design concept is acceptable but sufficient information for a Preliminary Review approval has yet to be presented for consideration) or

Deferral for re-study (the reviewer has determined that substantial design work or modifications must be done to achieve a Preliminary Review approval). In any determination, the reviewer will be specific in identifying the areas of further design study when so required.

The intent of the Final Review is to ascertain that the Preliminary Review comments have been addressed and specific details of the project are reviewed.

SUBMITTALS

Design Review meetings are generally held on the last Wednesday of every month. Please check the Annual Meeting Schedule online in the Planning Department Document Library for meeting and submittal dates. Applications must be made online at www.tompsec.com and must be received no later than two weeks prior to the meeting date. Checklists have been developed for Preliminary Review and Final Review. The number, size, and types of plans to be submitted for each review are listed on the checklist. The checklist may be accessed via hyperlink from the online Commercial Design Review Board application form. All information on the checklist is required for review. Incomplete submittals will be returned and will not be placed on the agenda for review. Changes to plans may not be made once a project has been submitted for review. In the case of some very minor projects, especially additions or modifications to existing sites or structures, all information on the checklist may not be needed or appropriate. Planning Staff may modify the submittal requirements for such projects at the Pre-Application Review meeting.

AGENDAS AND COMMENTS

Agendas will be posted online for DRB meetings once it is determined by staff that submittals are complete. The meetings are at 5:00 in the evening.

Staff comments for projects submitted for DRB review will be hyperlinked in the agenda prior to the meeting. Staff comments for the staff review track projects will be provided to the applicant via email.

APPEALS

A person who may have a substantial interest in any decision of the Staff or Design Review Board as part of the Design Review Process may appeal from any decision of Staff or the Design Review Board as described below.

A Staff Review decision pertaining to interpretation of the design review standards may be appealed in writing to the Zoning Administrator or his designee. The Zoning Administrator will respond to the appeal following receipt of the letter. Please see the Explanation of Appeal from Action of Design Review for information that should be included. If the Zoning Administrator concurs with the applicant, then the applicant may proceed through the design review process as approved by the Zoning Administrator. If the Zoning Administrator concurs with staff interpretation, then applicant can: 1) make changes as necessary to plan to comply; 2) elect to seek DRB approval- this will require a new submittal subject to all DRB meeting schedules and application requirements; or 3) if the applicant believes that the Zoning Administrator has made an error in determination, then the applicant can appeal his decision to the DRB. It should be noted that modification of a guideline can only be

approved by the DRB, not the Zoning Administrator. Requests for modifications to the guidelines may not be considered appeals.

If appealing a decision of the Zoning Administrator, the appeal must be filed within thirty days of when the affected party receives actual notice of the decision of the Zoning Administrator. Forms for appeals are available in the Planning Department offices.

Appeals of the Design Review Board must be made to the circuit court in and for the county by filing with the clerk of court a petition in writing setting forth plainly, fully, and distinctly why the decision is contrary to law. The appeal must be filed within thirty days after the affected party or his or her designated agent receives actual notice of the decision of the Board.

DRB will have the ability to only modify guidelines within section 156.310(E and F). If an applicant would like a variance from any other standards found throughout the Zoning Code, then Board Of Zoning Appeals approval is required.

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