



DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Frequently Asked Questions

What items require review and approval?

Most exterior alterations no matter how small, including the removal of live trees, require review and approval by the Design Review Board (DRB) prior to implementation.

What should be included with my application?

A complete application includes a detailed written description of the proposed exterior modification and specification of the materials and colors (i.e. a manufacturer's brochure, catalog cut or detail sheets) as appropriate. The Design Guidelines for the proposed change may also require elevation drawings to scale, a site plan showing its size and location, photographs of the existing condition and signatures from neighboring property owners (see the next question).

Why do I have to notify my neighbors? And, whom do I have to notify?

Neighboring property owners, including cluster associations and the Reston Association, may be affected by additions or alterations to your property. As a means of communication about your proposal, you are required to notify neighbors who will be most affected by your project. For certain types of applications additional notification may be required. **The signatures are required to attest that your neighbors have been notified of your project, not whether or not they approve of it.** Please show your neighbors all the plans and material that you will be submitting to the DRB for review when you approach them for their signatures. Any property sharing a property line with yours should be notified.

In clusters, the applicant is required to notify at least two closest (most affected) neighboring property owners, one of which must share a property line with your property, and an Officer on the Cluster Board. For single family detached houses, the three most affected neighboring property owners must be notified. The Design Guidelines may require that you notify any neighbor sharing a property line with yours and for certain projects you may be required to notify additional property owners.

If a neighboring property owner is unavailable or has concerns about signing the application, please contact Reston Association Covenants staff for assistance in resolving this matter. There are alternate methods of notification that may be required.

Who is an "affected party?"

An affected party is a neighboring property owner whose property is materially affected by the application, who has officially registered with the Reston Association as an affected party, and whose request has not been denied by the DRB. While an affected party cannot prevent the review of your application, the affected party has the right to speak at the DRB review, be informed of the DRB's decision(s), and appeal the final decision within seven (7) days of the date the decision is mailed.

Do all applications have to be reviewed by the DRB?

The level of review is determined by the proposed alteration. Certain types of alterations such as swimming pools and additions, applications with affected parties, appeals, and applications from a builder, Condominium, Apartment, Cluster Association, Reston Association and Fairfax County must be reviewed by a DRB Panel or the Full DRB. Other applications can be reviewed by the Covenants staff, either at the staff level or in consultation with one DRB member. Staff and consultation levels of review do not require the applicant to attend an evening Panel meeting.

How often does the DRB meet?

A DRB panel meets every Tuesday evening to review applications with the exception of one Tuesday a month, which is reserved for Full Board meetings. Holidays and inclement weather may cause postponement. Complete applications will be scheduled for review at the next available panel meeting, and must be received at least one full week prior to the meeting. The panel usually reviews ten (10) applications that were scheduled in advance at each meeting. Due to the limited agenda, it is possible that the next available meeting will not be for several weeks. This is dependent upon the number of applications which have been received.

If I have an application scheduled for a DRB Panel review, can I attend the meeting?

Yes, you may attend and present your application at a DRB meeting. The Covenants Advisor assigned to your property will schedule the review of your application for a date and time to your convenience. Please be aware that during the busiest seasons agendas fill up quickly and it may be several weeks before your application can be scheduled for a panel review.

Who serves on the DRB?

The DRB is comprised of nine volunteer members who all live in Reston. Six members are architects/design professionals and three are lay members. The Reston Association Board of Directors appoints DRB members for 3-year terms after completing an interview process.

Can you explain how a DRB meeting is run?

Each Panel meeting of the DRB begins at 7:00 pm with general member comments regarding the DRB process or other concerns not specifically related to a member's property or an item on the agenda for review. After general member comments, personal presentations are heard regarding applications scheduled in advance by the DRB staff. Personal presentations consist of the applicant's explanation of the application and affected party comments (if applicable). The DRB members then discuss the information and come to a decision. There is no specific time limit to the presentations. If an applicant is not present when their address is called, they will be moved to the end of the agenda and called again after all other applications have been reviewed.

How long do I have to wait for the DRB decision?

Final decisions on applications reviewed at the consultation level will be released as soon as possible, usually three (3) days after of the meeting. Final decisions on applications reviewed by a DRB Panel or by the DRB Full Board will be mailed one week after the meeting. This allows the draft minutes to be circulated among all the DRB members for review and comment. *Please do not undertake any construction related to your project, including tree removal, until you are in receipt of the final written decision.*

How long is the DRB decision valid?

Implementation must commence within six (6) months of receiving DRB approval and must be completed within 18 months of when the project was started. An applicant whose approval is no longer valid because the project was not started within six (6) months, must re-apply to the DRB for approval.

Is it possible to have an application re-heard by the DRB if the applicant or affected party objects to the decision?

The applicant may request in writing that a decision made at the consultation level be scheduled for review by a Panel of the DRB.

An applicant or affected party may submit a written appeal of a decision made by a Panel. The appeal will be heard by another Panel of the DRB consisting of at least two DRB members who did not review the original application. To file an appeal, the applicant or affected party should be able to show that the Design Guidelines were misapplied in the initial decision or that there is new information that was not available at the time of the previous review.

****For any questions, contact the Covenants Staff at 703-435-6530****

The Design Guidelines may be found at http://www.reston.org/Design_Review/d_designguidelines.html