

Appearance Review Commission Handbook

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There are three different items that require Appearance Review Commission (ARC) review. These categories are Appearance Review Certificates, Consent Agenda Sign Requests, and Sign Variations.

APPEARANCE REVIEW CERTIFICATE

The ARC reviews proposals and issues Appearance Review Certificates prior to the issuance of any permit or certificate of occupancy for **commercial** or **multi-family** (including townhomes) uses that include the following types of work:

- New construction
- Exterior Remodeling
- Construction or renovation of off-street parking areas, including lighting and landscaping
- Installation or alteration of any sign, canopy, or awning
- Installation or alteration of any fence

For Appearance Review Certificates, notification is required for all properties that abut or lie directly across a street or alley from the subject property. New construction requires the petitioner to notify all property owners and occupants within 250 feet. For notification guidelines, please see pages 5-6.

Information concerning the required submittals can be found on page 5 under Application Submission and in Appendix I: Report Submittals on page 8.

Appearance Review Certificates shall:

- Contain any conditions set forth by the Commission in the hearing;
- Reference the case minutes regarding verbal commitments made by the petitioner; and
- Set time limits for conditions to be met when those conditions are not specifically code related or enforced conditions.

CONSENT AGENDA SIGN REVIEW

In an effort to minimize the amount of time required to obtain a Sign Permit, the ARC created the Consent Agenda for conforming signage proposals. If staff review reveals that the proposal is conforming, the case will be scheduled for the next Consent Agenda. No notification to surrounding properties is required by the petitioner.

Submittals Required

The petitioner should submit the following to have their proposal reviewed by Village staff:

1. An Appearance Review Commission application (please see the last page of the ARC handbook)
2. An elevation of the relevant sides of the building, drawn to scale
3. Color samples and material samples for awnings and canopies
4. Sign proposal (see Appendix I, Signs, on page 8)
5. A section showing projection for awnings or canopies
5. Photographs of the existing building and proposed signage location.

VARIATIONS FROM THE SIGN ORDINANCE

The ARC also hears requests for variations from the Sign Ordinance and makes recommendations on their approval to the Village Board of Trustees. Signs requiring a variation require notification for all properties that abut or lie directly across a street or alley from the subject property. For notification guidelines, please see pages 5-6.

For those applicants requesting a variation from the Sign Ordinance, the ARC makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The decision is based on the standards of review for a variation from the Sign Ordinance contained in Section 20-9.18.8 which states:

A sign variation shall be granted only where the evidence presented in the particular case shows that:

- (a) **Unusual Circumstances:** A variation will serve to relieve the petitioner from an unusual difficulty due to the location, topography, or circumstances on the petitioner's property, or a peculiar attribute existing on the neighboring property which directly affects the petitioner's property.
- (b) **Character and Appearance:** A variation will be consistent in design and scale with other signs nearby, and will not alter the essential character of the commercial streetscape in the vicinity of the subject property.
- (c) **Not Self-Created:** The plight of the property owner was not created by the owner and denial of the variation will impose undue hardship or difficulty on the owner's ability to conduct business on the subject property.
- (d) **Health, Safety and Welfare:** A variation will not create a traffic or safety hazard and will not impair the utility of neighboring properties' signage.
- (e) **Purpose of Ordinance:** A variation is in harmony with the purpose and intent of the Sign Ordinance.

Submittals Required

1. **Completed application:** must outline the facts of the case and include authorization from the property owner if different than the petitioner.
2. **Plat of Survey:** must accurately reflect existing site conditions and display a legible legal description of the property.
3. **Variation Letter:** should be included if a variation from the Sign Ordinance is being requested. The letter should explain the need for the variance, and demonstrate how the proposal meets the standards of review.
4. **Evidence of Title:** such as deed, title insurance policy, or real estate tax bill.
5. **Submittals:** depends upon the type of case and may include plans, drawings, photographs, and/or material samples. Please see page 8.

LOCAL SIGN ORDINANCES

A shopping center owner, any association of merchants doing business within a specific area within the Village, or an office park owner may establish specific signage regulations for their specified area. There are currently three local sign ordinances in the Village:

- **Eden's Plaza**, 3232 Lake Avenue
- **Plaza del Lago**, 1515 Sheridan Road
- **West Lake Plaza**, 3217 – 3223 Lake Avenue

For signage that conforms to a local sign ordinance, a sign permit can be issued by Community Development staff without review by the Appearance Review Commission. Applications must contain a sign proposal drawn to scale, a photograph of the existing activity, and the completed ARC application found on the last page of the ARC Handbook.

TIME-LINE

You will be provided with a proposed time-line of events when you first inquire into the process to obtain a Sign Permit or Appearance Review Certificate. The amount of time that will transpire between the submission of your application and the issuance of your sign or building permit depends upon your type of case:

Local Sign Ordinance (1 to 3 days): Once a conforming proposal is submitted, staff can issue the sign permit as soon as they can review the proposal for conformance. This applies only to those in Eden's Plaza, Plaza del Lago, and West Lake Plaza.

Consent Agenda (3 days to 2 weeks): If you are applying for Consent Agenda approval of a conforming sign, you will be placed on the next available agenda for the Commission. The longest you will have to wait to be placed on an agenda is approximately two weeks. The Sign Permit will be issued on the day following the public hearing.

Appearance Review Certificate (4 to 6 weeks): The Zoning Ordinance requires a waiting period of at least 15, but no more than 45, days between the time of public notice and the actual meeting. This 15 day waiting period, plus at least a week for staff to process the application and prepare the petitioner's notice packet, usually mandates that the process takes at least one month. If you are planning to request a preliminary review from the Commission, please add at least two weeks to your time-line. If the case is continued to the next meeting to allow you to provide additional information to the Commission, this will slow down the process as well. Once the Certificate is issued, staff can sign off on the zoning portion of your building permit. The permit request will then be reviewed by the Building, Electrical, and Plumbing Inspectors (if applicable).

Variation from the Sign Ordinance (6 to 8 weeks): A request for a variation from the Sign Ordinance will be heard by the ARC and then sent onto the Village Board of Trustees with a recommendation to grant or deny the request. This can add two to three weeks to the time involved.

THE APPEARANCE REVIEW COMMISSION

Everything you need to know about the ARC

MEETINGS

The Appearance Review Commission meets on the first Monday of every month. The meetings are generally held at 7:30 p.m. in the second floor training room of the Wilmette Village Hall located at 1200 Wilmette Avenue, Wilmette, Illinois. At least four out of the seven members on the Commission must be present for the cases to be heard. If there is not a quorum, the meeting will be cancelled and all of the cases will be continued until the next scheduled meeting.

The following instructions will help you pursue approval for an Appearance Review Certificate, a variation from the Sign Ordinance, or approval for a conforming signage proposal.

PRE-APPLICATION MEETING

It is highly recommended that you schedule a meeting as early as possible with the Department of Community Development staff to discuss the proposal and familiarize yourself with Village requirements and procedures.

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

Upon receipt of the following materials, the case will be assigned to the next available hearing:

- **Completed application:** must outline the facts of the case and include authorization from the property owner if different than the petitioner.
- **Plat of Survey:** must accurately reflect existing site conditions and display a legible legal description of the property. A plat is only required for an Appearance Review Certificate or Sign Variation.

- **Variation Letter:** should be included if a variation from the Sign Ordinance is being requested. The letter should explain the need for the variance, and demonstrate how the proposal meets the standards of review.
- **Evidence of Title:** such as deed, title insurance policy, or real estate tax bill.
- **Submittals:** depends upon the type of case and may include plans, drawings, photographs, and/or material samples.

NOTIFICATION

Village Responsibilities

For requests for Appearance Review Certificates and Variations from the Sign Ordinance, the Community Development Department will provide a legal notice in the newspaper and a legal posting of the property not less than 15 days prior to the hearing. These notices will state the nature of the hearing, the case number, and the date, time, and place of the hearing.

Petitioner Responsibilities

The degree of petitioner involvement in the notification process depends on the type of case proposed by the petitioner. Please see pages 2-3 to see if you need neighbor notification.

When public notice is required, Community Development staff will provide the petitioner with a Petitioner's Packet containing:

- Copies of the Notice of Public Hearing
- A Sidwell Tax Map showing all properties which are to receive notice of the hearing and a list of the Property Identification Numbers (P.I.N.)
- Affidavit of Compliance

The petitioner is required to present, by hand delivery or first class mail, a notice of public hearing prepared by Community Development to all property owners and occupants.

If an adjoining or abutting property is a multi-tenant building, the petitioner may notify the president of the condo/townhouse association or building owner and receive a signed affidavit from this person that the other tenants have been notified by posting the notice in the building, newsletter or association meeting. If the condo association president or building owner is not contacted, then the petitioner shall notify all the building tenants.

After mailing or delivering the public notice, the petitioner will file a notarized affidavit provided by Community Development staff indicating that all the notices have been properly distributed.

STAFF REPORT

During the week prior to the hearing, the Community Development Department will prepare a written report summarizing the facts of the case and including all relevant submittals. The report is distributed to the ARC prior to the hearing.

HEARING PROCEDURE

Attending the Hearing

It is important that the petitioner be represented by someone capable of discussing components of the proposal and someone possessing the authority to make amendments or changes. If the Commissioners request amendments or changes to the proposal, **the petitioner not being properly represented may cause delays.**

At the Hearing

1. The Chairman calls the case.

2. Staff gives a background summary and briefly describes the request to the Commissioners.
3. The petitioner presents their proposal, being sure to state how and why the proposal does or does not conform to the guidelines.
4. The Commission opens discussion of the request with the petitioner. At this time, Commissioners may give an indication of their stance on the proposal and the petitioner may elect or may be requested to amend the proposal.
5. The Commission opens discussion to any interested parties that may be present.
6. The Chair entertains a motion.
7. The Commission will discuss the motion on the proposal relative to its conformance to the guidelines. There is no petitioner involvement in this discussion.
8. A vote on the proposal is called. The ARC can take one of three actions on the case: vote to grant the petitioner's request; vote to deny the petitioner's request; or vote to continue the case in the event that the ARC requires additional facts or the petitioner wishes to present new information.

If the applicant is simply requesting an Appearance Review Certificate, the ARC decision is the final step in the process.

For those applicants requesting a variation from the Sign Ordinance, the ARC makes a recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The decision is based on the standards of review for a variation from the Sign Ordinance contained in Section 20-9.18.8 (see page 3).

Any case that the Appearance Review Commission denies may be appealed by the petitioner to the Board of Trustees.

The Appearance Review Commission has the authority to accept or reject any proposal or request before the Commission based on relevant Ordinance standards.

APPEARANCE REVIEW COMMISSION REPORT

Following the hearing on a variation, a report is prepared which outlines the facts of the case and includes the recommendation of the ARC. The case is placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the Village Board of Trustees. The report of the Appearance Review Commission is forwarded to the Village Board and the petitioner prior to the Village Board meeting.

The Village Board may take one of three actions on a petition: vote to grant the petitioner's request, vote to deny the petitioner's request, or vote to refer the case back to the Appearance Review Commission for further consideration.

THE CONSENT AGENDA

Attending the Hearing

Petitioners are not required to attend hearings for items on the Consent Agenda

At the Hearing

The Commission can take three courses of action with a case on the Consent Agenda.

1. If the Commissioner's have concerns in advance of the hearing, they can remove the case from the Consent Agenda and request that the petitioner be present. Staff will call the petitioner by 1:00 p.m. on the Monday of the hearing if their presence is required. This will give the petitioner the opportunity to answer the Commission's questions directly. If the petitioner is unable to attend the hearing that night, the case will be continued to the next meeting of the ARC.

2. The Commission can approve the case with non-binding suggestions.
3. The case is approved on the Consent Agenda.

If approved, Community Development staff can issue the Sign Permit the next business day.

APPENDIX I: REPORT SUBMITTALS

All drawings must be drawn to scale and be no larger than 11" x 17". Please provide **nine** color copies of all submittals. All sheets shall be legible with a minimum letter height of 1/16". Sheets to be labeled with title, sheet number, date drawn/revise.

No freehand sketches will be accepted. Photographs should be taken of both the subject site and neighboring sites.

Please be prepared to submit any material samples to staff. The samples will be recorded as part of the case record. Any other types of document distributed during a meeting will become part of the public record and will be held at Village Hall.

Site Plan

- Dimensioned and drawn to scale (1:20)
- Include parking layout, lighting fixture locations, building dimensions
- Equipment locations (HVAC, generator, accessory structures)
- Show accessory structures (dumpster, fence, signage)

Landscaping Plan

- Dimensioned and drawn to scale (1:20)
- Planting locations
- Planting types labeled on plan
- Plant schedule (botanical/common name, size, quantity)
- Color photos of proposed plants

Additions/New Construction

- Floor Plans drawn to scale
- Plat of Survey
- Building elevations drawn to scale of all sides indicating material type
- Building Section(s), drawn to scale
- Materials with color samples

New Construction

- Architects drawings showing complete elevations and floor plans
- Site plan showing: parking spaces as proposed, dumpsters and other refuse areas, fences, accessory structures & fixtures, drainage patterns, signage and awnings.
- Landscape plan
- Samples of all construction materials
- Photographs of the existing site

Signs

- An elevation of each visible side of the building drawn to scale showing: the sign relative to the building and the lettering style
- The signage proposal drawn to scale showing: dimensions (in inches), lettering style and size (in inches), colors (using the Pantone system), construction details
- Material sample showing color
- Plat of Survey or site plan showing location

Awnings

- Elevation drawn to scale
- Material sample with accurate color

Fences

- Site plan or plat showing fence location
- Scaled elevation showing fence detail or cut-sheet of proposed fence

Lighting

- Photometric plan
- Cut sheets of lighting fixtures (indicate bulb type and size)

APPENDIX II: STANDARDS OF REVIEW SECTION 20-4.9.6

When reviewing an application for an Appearance Review Certificate, the ARC shall endeavor to ensure that the proposal is designed in accordance with the standards set forth below. **Architectural style is not restricted.** Rather, evaluation of the appearance of a project shall be based on the quality of its design and its relationship to the pattern and character of development on surrounding properties.

Building Design 20-4.9.6(a)

1. All sides of a structure shall receive design consideration.
2. Where the side or rear of the structure faces a street, a residential use, or a property located in a residential zoning district, the exterior materials used on the side or rear shall be comparable in character and quality to the exterior materials used on the façade of the structure.
3. Materials used shall be of durable quality.
4. Mechanical equipment shall be located or screened so as not to be visible from surrounding streets and properties.

Relationship of Structure to Site 20-9.6(b)

1. The scale and the placement of the structure on the site shall be appropriate to the site in terms of the proportion of the site covered by the structure and the location of the structure in relation to lot lines.
2. Building design and placement shall take into consideration natural grade conditions, existing vegetation, and other natural features.

Relationship of Structure to the Area 20-4.9.6(c)

1. Excessive similarity or dissimilarity in design in relation to surrounding or adjoining structures, including but not limited to predominant building height, exterior materials, building mass, roof line, and architectural features, shall be discouraged.
2. Design shall take into consideration the relationship to the street and the pedestrian environment.
3. Parking, storage, and refuse areas shall be located and screened so as not to negatively affect neighboring properties.

Landscaping & Site Treatment 20-4.9.6(d)

1. Landscaping shall be designed to maintain existing mature trees and shrubs to the maximum extent possible.
2. Landscaping shall provide an aesthetically pleasing design and, where applicable, shall provide for the screening of parking, storage, refuse, and utility areas from the street and adjacent residential properties.
3. Selected plant materials shall not include any materials prohibited under applicable State law or regulation, including but not limited to the Illinois Noxious Weed Act (505 ILCS 100/1, et seq.), the Illinois Exotic Weed Act (525 ILCS 10/1, et seq.), and any regulations promulgated thereunder. Selected plant materials shall be suitable to Wilmette's climate and to their location on the site, and the use of invasive species not otherwise prohibited by law shall be avoided. For purposes of this paragraph, "invasive" means a species, usually non-native to Northern

APPENDIX II: STANDARDS OF REVIEW SECTION 20-4.9.6
(CONTINUED)

4. Illinois, that is able to establish itself within existing native plant communities and poses a threat to the integrity of the community, and the Appearance Review Commission shall identify third-party informational resources the Commission reasonably finds to be reliable in making determinations regarding invasiveness, such as the Morton Arboretum, the Chicago Botanic Garden, or similar sources, which may be used by the Commission in its proceedings; and
5. Parking areas shall be designed to minimize dangerous traffic movements and achieve efficient traffic flow.

Signage
20-4.9.6(e)

With regard to signs, the design, color, and placement of signs shall be appropriate to the structure, site, and adjoining properties, in terms of materials, height, setback from the street, and the sign's scale in proportion to the structure.

Sign Restrictions

- Please meet with Community Development staff to discuss the requirements of the Sign Ordinance.
- Box signs are prohibited as wall signs, except in the West Lake Plaza shopping center. Wall signs must be individual letters or individual letters attached to a common base or raceway.
- Neon signage is prohibited within 66 feet of a residential property line.

Awnings

The standard for awnings shall typically be a shed style with four-foot projections, monochrome in color and made from canvas or canvas-like material.

The following are discouraged awning features:

- metal, or vinyl/plastic-looking awnings
- barrel or square awnings
- backlit illuminated awnings
- multi-colored awnings
- inoperable awnings or those that do not give the appearance of being operable
- projections of less than four feet.

Accessory Structures & Fixtures
20-4.9.6(f)

With regard to accessory structures and fixtures, exterior lighting, fences, and miscellaneous fixtures shall complement the overall structure and site design, in terms of materials, size, and architectural character.

Lighting Recommendations

- All free-standing parking lot and internal access route lighting shall be metal halide incandescent or florescent luminaries as per Village Resolution 90-R-33.
- Floodlighting or uplighting fixtures shall be located or shielded so that their presence is minimized and the light source is hidden from view.

APPENDIX III: DEFINITIONS

Appearance: The outward aspect visible to the public.

Architectural concept: The basic aesthetic idea of a building, or group of buildings or structures, including the site and landscape development, which produces the architectural character.

Architectural feature: A prominent or significant part or element of a building, structure or site.

Architectural style: The characteristic form and detail as buildings of a particular historic period.

Berm: A raised form of earth to provide screening or improve the aesthetic character of the grade.

Conservation: The protection and care that prevent destruction or deterioration of historical or otherwise significant structures, buildings, or natural resources.

Graphic element: A letter, illustration, symbol, figure, insignia or other device employed to express and illustrate a message or part thereof.

Landscape: Plant materials, topography and other natural physical elements combined in relation to one another and to man-made structures.

Light cut-off angle: An angle from vertical extending downward from a luminary which defines the maximum range of incident illumination outward at the ground plane.

Mechanical equipment: Equipment, devices and accessories, the use of which relates to water supply, drainage, heating, ventilating, air conditioning and similar purposes.

Miscellaneous structures: Structures, other than buildings, visible from public ways. Examples are: memorials, antennas, water tanks and towers, sheds, shelters, fences and walls, kennels, transformers and drive-up facilities.

Plant materials: Trees, shrubs, vines, groundcovers, grass, perennials, annuals and bulbs.

Screening: Structure or planting which conceals from view from public ways the area behind such structure or planting.

Street hardware: Man-made objects other than buildings which are part of the streetscape. Examples are: lamp posts, utility poles, traffic lights, traffic signs, benches, litter containers, letter boxes, fire hydrants.

Streetscape: The scene as may be observed along a public street or way composed of natural and man-made components, including buildings, paving, planting, street hardware and miscellaneous structures.

Structure: Anything constructed or erected, the use of which requires permanent or temporary location on or in the ground.

Utilitarian structure: A structure or enclosure relating to mechanical or electrical services to a building or development.

Utility hardware: Devices such as poles, crossarms, transformers and vaults, gas pressure regulating assemblies, hydrants and buffalo boxes that are used for water, gas oil, sewer and electrical services to a building or a project.

Utility service: Any device that carries gas, water, electricity, oil, and communications into a building or development.

Village: The Village of Wilmette, Illinois.

Case #: _____

Appearance Review Application

2012 Application for Appearance Review Hearings & Sign Review

Property Address _____
Property Owner Name _____
Home Address _____
Phone Number _____ Fax _____
Property Owner Signature _____ Date _____

Applicant Name _____
Address _____
Phone Number _____ Fax _____
Email _____

Application for:

- Appearance Review Certificate (\$116 fee)
- Sign Review of Conforming Sign
- Sign Variation (\$116 fee)

Description of Request:

Submittals:

**For Appearance Review Certificates
& Variation Requests**

- Application Fee
- Proof of Ownership
- Report Submittals (See Appendix I)

Conforming Sign Requests

- Report Submittals (See Appendix I)
- Eden's Plaza: sq. ft. occupied _____
- Plaza del Lago: bldg. & space # _____
- West Lake Plaza: frontage length _____