

ATTENTION TO
Detail
Design Review Process & Guidelines

The City Of Oxnard
PLANNING DIVISION

305 West Third Street
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Design Review Process & Guidelines

THE CITY OF OXNARD

JANUARY 1992

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City of Oxnard, Planning Division • 305 West Third St. • Oxnard, CA 93030 • (805) 385-7858

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXNARD

RESOLUTION NO. 10,321

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OXNARD DECLARING ITS INTENTION TO REQUIRE THAT ALL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ACHIEVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE.

WHEREAS, over the years the City Council and Planning Commission have insisted that new development in the City be of very high quality; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has prepared design guidelines and has established high standards for all development; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has established a Design Review Committee to review new developments and make recommendations to insure community design compatibility; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has adopted a Community Design Element of the General Plan which mandates that development design be of high quality and which directs the preparation of additional design guidelines; and

WHEREAS, surveys and study by City staff, the Planning Commission and City Council fully demonstrate that design excellence can be achieved in all types of development, including various types of residential, public, commercial, and industrial development; and

WHEREAS, the natural attributes of the City warrant the highest quality of design of new development, public works, and building projects;

NOW, THEREFORE, the City Council of the City of Oxnard hereby declares that the policy of the City Council is to require the highest quality of design excellence in all new private development projects and City public works and building projects. The City Council further directs staff and the Planning Commission to make all efforts to insist on the achievement of design excellence in architecture, landscape architecture, and site planning. The City Council also declares that if a project does not achieve design excellence, the Planning Commission and City Council may consider denial of the project application.

Passed and adopted this 18th day of February, 1992, by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members: Plisky, Takasugi, Furr, Lopez & Maron

NOES: Council Members: None

ABSENT: Council Members: None


Nao Takasugi, Mayor

ATTEST: 
Mabi Plisky, City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

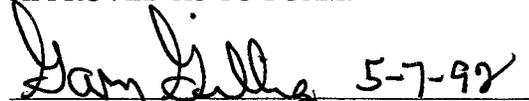

Gary L. Gillig, City Attorney

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ATTENTION TO Detail

Design Review Process & Guidelines

What is Design Review?

Design review is one of the procedures the City of Oxnard uses to guide development in the interest of the public's health, safety and general welfare. It is a part of the planning process associated with approving planning permits, including use, planned development, coastal development, and design development review permits, among others. Design review must be completed before most projects receive final approval from the Community Development Director, Planning Commission or City Council.

As its name implies, design review is the process of reviewing the *design* of a development project. This includes looking at the site plan (how the project is laid out), landscaping,

building design, signs and how the project functions. Put another way, the design review process considers how the project *looks* and how it *works*.

In reviewing each project, the City looks at measurable and not-so-measurable parts that make up the entire project. Some parts of the project, such as a driveway entrance, will meet or not meet the prescribed city standard. Other parts, such as the how the project design "fits" in an area, are not as easy to measure. We examine how the project fits on its site. We also try to judge the quality of the experience people will have living, working or shopping in the development. And we evaluate what effect the project will have on the overall quality of life in Oxnard.

All of this means that design review involves both objective and subjective determinations. But the subjective determinations are not arbitrary. They are based on a written series of guidelines and standards. They are also

based on recognized principles of design, planning and aesthetics.

In most areas of the City, we do not dictate specific styles of architecture or design. We want variety – variety that is in harmony – not "cookie-cutter" uniformity.

Design review is a two-way process between the City and the applicant. We don't want to "fight" with applicants and designers over design review. Rather, we want this process to inspire designers' creativity while informing them about the community's character. To do this, the City encourages creative design, new ideas in the use of building materials and innovative construction methods. If design review works as we intend it to, it helps the developer build a project that reaches the best possible balance between his preference and the public interest. The goal is well-designed development that "fits" in Oxnard. The City's goal in requiring design review is the same as the applicant's – to build a successful project.

While we encourage creativity, we want to be sure that the appearance and design of each project has a worthwhile purpose. A project should do what it is supposed to do – and do it well. It should also be an asset to the neighborhood and the city. And its appearance should fit its location and function.

Purpose of This Brochure

We wrote this brochure to help you through the design review process and the permit process in general. We want everyone to start with the same basic assumptions. So this brochure explains why the City requires design review, what the benefits are, how it works and what the rules are. We hope this will make it easier for developers to prepare plans and save them money by preventing unnecessary revisions. And the process is easier if we all understand the rules from the beginning.

Who Does Design Review?

The Design Review Committee was established in 1982. It has five members, each appointed by the group they represent. The members represent the City's Planning Division (2 members) and Parks Division (1), the local architectural community (1) and the Oxnard Planning Commission (1). Each of the members has experience in designing and reviewing projects, though each may be from a different perspective. The committee members bring their individual expertise and experience together to review projects from component and "holistic" standpoints. That is, the committee reviews individual features of each project, but they also look at the entire project and how it "fits" in Oxnard.

[By the way, the Design Review Committee is usually referred to by its initials, DRC (D-R-C; not "derk"). But the Staff Advisory Committee, Oxnard's other project review committee, is called SAC ("sack"; not S-A-C).]

A Planning Division staff planner coordinates and chairs DRC meetings. The chair runs the meetings, sets the agenda and records DRC's findings and recommendations. The written minutes are distributed to each project planner, who gives them to the applicant.

The purpose of the DRC is to administer design review in a way that creates a pleasant environment, maintains and enhances property values, preserves the City's overall character, and ensures orderly and harmonious development.

The primary tasks of the committee are:

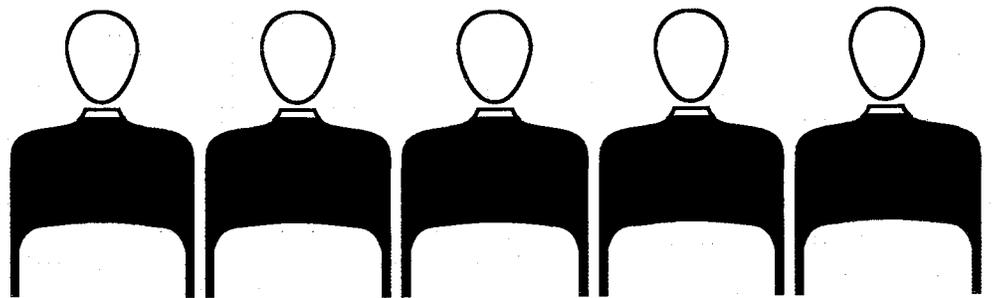
- Review development proposals to ensure the City's design goals, objectives and standards are followed.
- Develop design standards and guidelines for developers to use while preparing projects.

The guidelines and standards are official policy, adopted by the Community Development Department and Design Review Committee, based on direction from the Planning Commission and City Council. They help implement the Oxnard General Plan, as a way to achieve

the Community Design Element's goals and policies. These Design Guidelines also implement the Community Development Department's mission.

As information, here's what DRC does not do. DRC doesn't approve or deny planning permits or building permit applications. DRC is an advisory body to the City Council, Planning Commission, Community Development Director, and City Planner, depending on what type of project the committee is reviewing. The DRC makes recommendations to the Council, Commission, Director, and City Planner.

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE



PLANNER

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

PLANNER (CHAIR)

ARCHITECT

PLANNING COMMISSIONER

Which Projects Need DRC Approval?

Design review is required for most development projects that require the City Council's, Planning Commission's, Community Development Director's or City Planner's approval. If the project consists of a new development that involves a "planning" permit, it will probably require design review.

Examples of projects the DRC reviews include:

- new housing subdivisions
- condominium developments
- most new apartment projects
- most new commercial and office buildings
- all new industrial buildings
- Public Works buildings and other structures
- and alterations to these types of projects

If a project applicant requests a change in the color scheme or other minor change for a project approved under a "planning" permit, the Design Review Committee reviews the proposal and recommends approval or denial.

In most cases, the DRC does not review:

- patio covers
- other additions to single family residences

But there are some exceptions to this rule. It's best to call the Planning Division (805-984-4658) to make sure before planning an addition or other alteration.

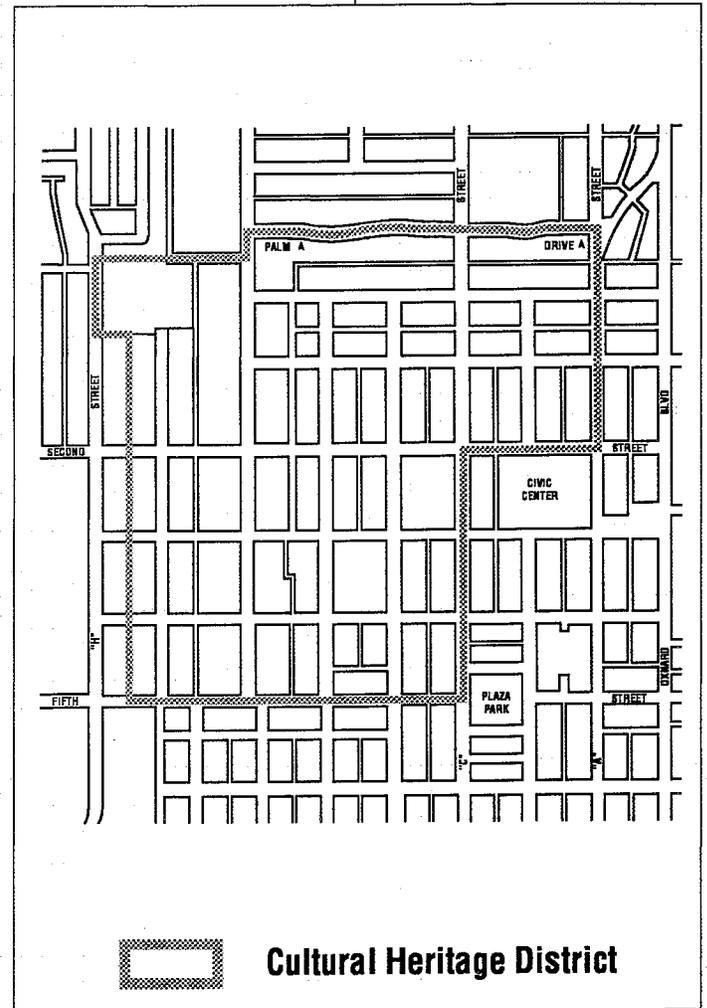
Some signs also require design review. Specifically, signs proposed in the Central Business District and new sign programs (for projects in other areas of the City) require design review. The DRC also reviews any sign which doesn't match a project's adopted sign program.

Sometimes the Planning Commission or City Council requires review by and a recommendation from the DRC as part of the approval process. For example, the Planning Commission may approve a project subject to the Design Review Committee's approval of the final colors or a change in the colors.

The City has also adopted design review requirements for alterations to structures in the "Cultural Heritage" area of the City. This area includes much of the Wilson neighborhood and has many of the City's oldest houses. The City Council has decided that these houses represent Oxnard's history and deserve to be treated as important elements of the City. The City Council has therefore given the DRC the responsibility of keeping these houses in their historic state. This means that additions or other changes to these houses should maintain their historic character

and DRC must review and approve these alterations before a building permit may be issued to begin construction. (See map for the boundaries of this area.)

The Design Review Committee also reviews projects proposed by the City of Oxnard, such as city buildings, (fire stations, water pump stations, bridges), area improvement plans (such as the Downtown Improvement Plan) and "street furniture" (public benches, trash cans, etc. meant to be placed on public sidewalks).



Design Review Guidelines

The Design Review Committee uses both specific and general criteria when evaluating plans for a development project. The general criteria and specific design guidelines the Design Review Committee has established are contained in this part of this booklet. The DRC reviews each project using the questions in the General Criteria section of this booklet. The Design Guidelines cover building design, site planning, landscaping, signs and maintenance. The last section lists important details and considerations that designers sometimes overlook, but the Design Review Committee and staff rarely do.

The design guidelines aren't intended to stifle a designer's imagination or require substantial additional cost. We don't want any particular architectural style to be predominant or unacceptable in the City as a whole. (Certain styles may predominate in specific areas of the City, but aside from these areas, we're open to looking at many architectural styles—pro-

vided they generally harmonize with surrounding development.)

The City's guidelines were written to help designers meet the Design Review Committee's standards, by providing as clear as possible directions to follow when designing new projects and changes for existing buildings. These guidelines also help the City achieve its General Plan Community Design goals and the goals for the Design Review Committee. The guidelines should be used as a checklist of items each applicant should address in the plans he prepares and submits to the City. The applicant should also be ready to discuss these items with the DRC. But the guidelines cannot spell out every detail. The City and the community therefore rely on the developer's initiative to use common sense and sensitivity to design a functional and attractive project.

We realize every building can't be perfect in every way. Usually trade-offs must occur between different ideals. The DRC will weigh relevant considerations against each other, and will want to know why a designer makes the choices he or she does.

The applicant should also keep in mind that the City takes a broad view of design. Design is more than good looks. As these

guidelines try to make clear, things such as the suitability of the building for its purposes, how the project functions, its relationship to its surroundings and the appropriate use of materials are as important as structural design.

And keep in mind that design review happens *within* the Planning process. The Design Review Committee assumes each project meets other City requirements, and doesn't have the authority to grant exceptions to these or other requirements.

General Criteria

The DRC and city staff asks these questions about each project as a whole:

1

Does the project contribute to the quality of life in Oxnard?

The DRC assesses the project's overall effect on life in Oxnard. What will the project be like to look at, to live in, to live next to, to work in, or to shop in? Will it add to or detract from the pleasures of living in Oxnard? Will it be something that the community is glad to have?

2

Does the project suit Oxnard and its proposed location?

The DRC evaluates each design on its contribution to the city's unique character as a whole and within the area where the project is proposed. The DRC looks at suitability of the proposed location as well. Stock building plans are not likely to be acceptable, even though they represent a national or corporate image, or are the only design an applicant has or uses.

3

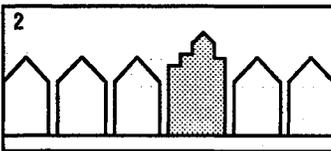
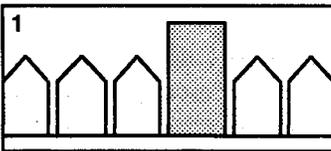
Does the project respect history?

The DRC and the City Council encourage protection and enhancement of buildings that have historic value because of their architectural character, historic association or age. For example, in converting a Queen Anne style house to offices, the Design Review Committee would not accept replacing existing wood-sash windows with aluminum windows; proposed signs need to respect the style of building and its neighborhood.

4

Will the project be a good neighbor?

The new project should not impair—directly or by the possible total effect of several projects like it—the use, enjoyment, value, or orderly and attractive development of neighboring public and private property. A project should be designed to minimize interference with the privacy, quiet and views of its neighbors. The design should also minimize traffic problems and damage to the natural environment.



5

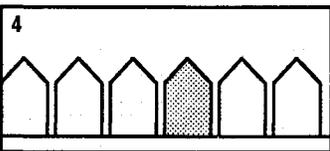
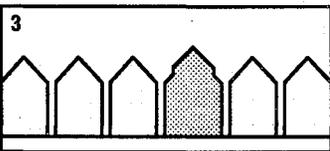
Does the project give occupants and the public variety and something interesting to look at?

For example, is there sun and shadow? Does the project have a change in level, plane, elevation or roof line? Or does the project offer only expanses of blank wall, a flat roof line, and uninterrupted rows of parking?

6

Does the project follow the basic principles of good design?

Harmony, unity, variety, simplicity, proportion, rhythm, balance and scale should exist in all aspects of a project. Whether it's a shopping center consisting of several buildings or a single sign, its different elements should be compatible. The project's appearance should fit with its surroundings in a pleasing way. The project should be designed as a whole. Variety should be used to create interest, not just used for the sake of



- 1. No Contextual Response
- 2. Some Contextual Response
- 3. Strong Contextual Response
- 4. Total Contextual Response

difference. Monotony in form, detail and siting should be avoided. Elements should be in balance, and in proportion to one another and their environment. Design should be simple and readily understood. The design should not attack the senses.

7

Does the project suit its purpose? And do the parts do what they are supposed to do?

For example, does an apartment building look residential? Is it livable? And if families are expected to live in the project, are there usable outdoor play areas for children?

8

Does the project make good use of the site?

For example, are interior spaces oriented to take advantage of outward views? Does the site plan make use of an odd-shaped parcel by creating an employee seating area or landscape feature?

9

Do different elements fit together logically?

For example, is parking located so a person can easily walk from his or her car to the building entrance? Are walks provided between individual condominium units or buildings and their recreation facility? Between public sidewalks and entrances to the building? And disabled people must be able to use these walkways, too. The Federal Americans with Disabilities Act requires that disabled people be able to enter buildings where everyone else does. So, as an example, if a building has stairs leading to the front door, it needs a ramp also, or maybe an alternate design solution to eliminate the stairs entirely.

10

Are materials, forms and other elements of the project suitable for their uses?

For example, will exterior finishes require a lot of maintenance? Will trees provide shade in desired areas? Do parapet walls screen mechanical equipment? Is an outdoor seating area shielded from the wind and located where it will receive sun most of the day?

Design Guidelines

Building Design Principles



Harmony and Unity

Different structures and parts of structures should “fit” together. When new construction is proposed where structures already exist, the new should harmonize with the old, in most cases. In the case of an existing structure with a proposed addition or alteration, the old should be remodelled to harmonize with the new. (The exception to this is in historical areas. We’re not encouraging historic structures to be “modernized.”)

A unifying theme or common denominator should run through the elements and entire design, blending component parts together into a whole. The basic architectural design should be the guide for choosing details, roof lines, materials, colors and landscaping.



Scale

An individual building should be similar in scale to the buildings near it; and parts of the building should be appropriate in scale for the size and style of the building. Scale also relates to the building’s size on a lot, architectural style, design details, and materials. Location of architectural features (such as doors, windows, roof elements, balconies and trim) on a building also result in scale relationships. Color, textures, and patterns should also be chosen for appropriate scale.



Proportion

Proportion includes ratios of height-to-height, width-to-width, height-to-width, and height or width to mass. The Design Review Committee evaluates proportion within a single building, between a group of buildings within a single project, or between a new project and neighboring existing buildings. The Design Review Committee

also looks at proportion relationships between each new proposal and its proposed location, particularly in terms of existing structures.



Balance

The design of a project should be balanced, whether symmetrical, asymmetrical or radial (based on a circle). Symmetrical balance, in which identical objects or shapes are placed on either side of an imaginary line, is the easiest type of balance to achieve. Asymmetrical balance is subtle, more difficult to design and more subjective to judge. Examples include two smaller objects balancing a larger one, a smooth surface balancing a rough texture, a bright accent color balancing a neutral background. In radial balance all elements of the design radiate from a central point. Radial balance is not frequently used in building design. Building and site design most often use a combination of symmetrical and asymmetrical balance.



Rhythm

The rhythm of the project should be easily recognized on the site plan and elevations. The project’s design should assist the viewer’s eye in easily moving from one portion of the building to another; from one portion of the site to another. Typical principles of rhythm include repetition, gradation (or progression), opposition, transition and radiation (lines extend outward from a central axis).



Materials

Use materials honestly. Simulated wood or masonry, for example, are generally not acceptable. Materials chosen should be consistent with the architectural style of the building.

7

Concern for pedestrians

At street level, structures should be sensitive to the pedestrian. A building's design should make a pedestrian feel comfortable when he or she walks past it. The spacing of shops and pedestrian scale fountains, planters and other elements should make the pedestrian want to explore by walking rather than driving to his or her next destination. Building entrances should be as close as possible (and connected by walkways) to public sidewalks and other buildings; a building shouldn't be surrounded by a "sea" of asphalt. Walkways must be provided between the building entrance and the public sidewalk. Decorative pavement, such as scored colored concrete, should lead from the parking lot to the building entrance.

Remember, "pedestrians" include disabled people and people with strollers. Keep them in mind too when designing walkways.

8

Energy conservation

Buildings should be designed to minimize mechanical heating, cooling and lighting. Use sunlight for direct heating and illumination whenever possible. Natural ventilation and



Architectural detail is essential to pedestrian comfort and visual interest at street level. Entries, windows, sills, columns and signage are all opportunities to enhance the pedestrian character of a building.

shading should be used to cool a building. We encourage both active and passive solar heating.

9

Finishes, Textures, Colors

Exterior treatment should be restrained—not harsh or garish—and selected for ease of maintenance, durability, and wear characteristics as well as initial beauty. For primary exterior materials (such as building walls), choose a color that represents the

natural color of the material and complements the colors of surrounding buildings. Do not use extreme colors for building walls. In general, use light or subdued colors for the main building elements, and brighter or darker colors for trim. The colors should respect the architectural style of the building and surrounding development.

10

Mechanical equipment and utilities

Mechanical and utility service equipment, including roof equipment, meter boxes and utility vaults, should be screened from view. Screening should be part of the building design; accessory structures added for screening are not acceptable. Solar heating equipment need not be screened but must be as unobtrusive as possible. For commercial and industrial buildings, down spouts from roof drains must be placed within the building elements, unless they are an integral part of the building design.

Site Planning

1

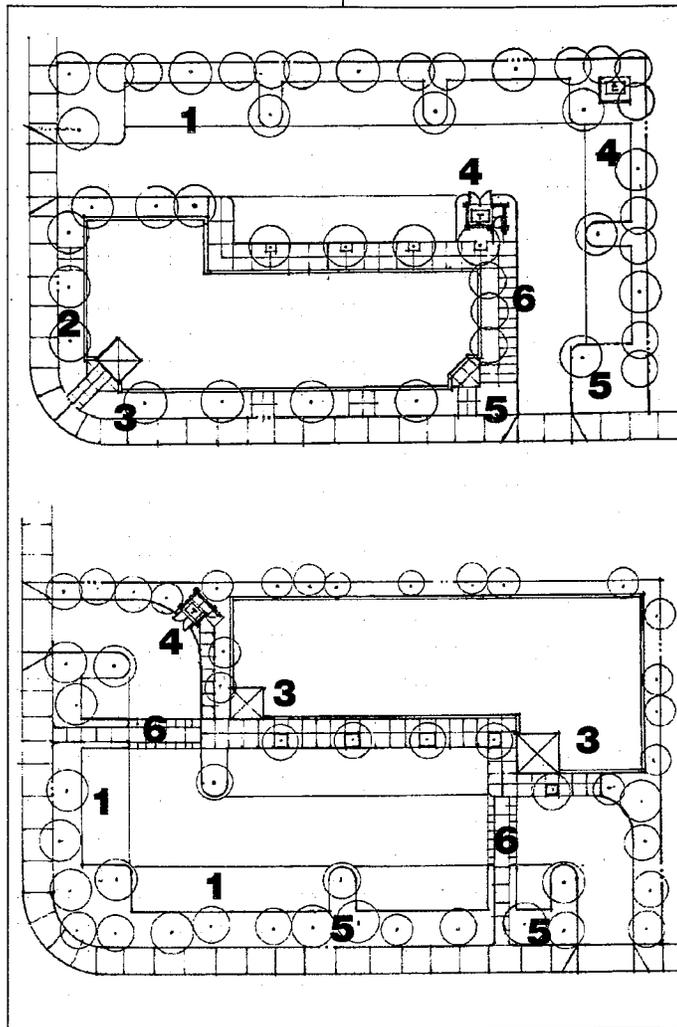
Suiting the site

Generally a designer should plan a project to fit a site's natural conditions rather than altering a site to accommodate a stock building plan. A project designed to fit an irregular-shaped site is almost always more interesting than a stock design crammed onto a site. The building should be placed on the site to take advantage of sun and shade, wind conditions and views.

2

Functions

A site's various activities and elements should be logically located, so the project operates efficiently. The project should work for people who work there, shop or visit it.



1. Parking screened by building or landscape.
2. Building fronts on street.
3. Architectural element at corner.
4. Trash and equipment screened by walls and landscape.
5. Landscape area.
6. Walkways from sidewalk to building entrance.

3

Transition

Between the street and the building should be a pleasing transition that provides adequate landscaping, walkways and parking. (Exception: the Central Business District, where buildings are sometimes located right up to the sidewalk.)

4

Parking areas

Parking areas should be screened from public ways and divided with landscaping, walls, fences, landscape berms or other elements. In large parking lots, the City Parking Ordinance requires landscaped islands and trees at specified intervals. Parking lot signs should be part of the design theme,

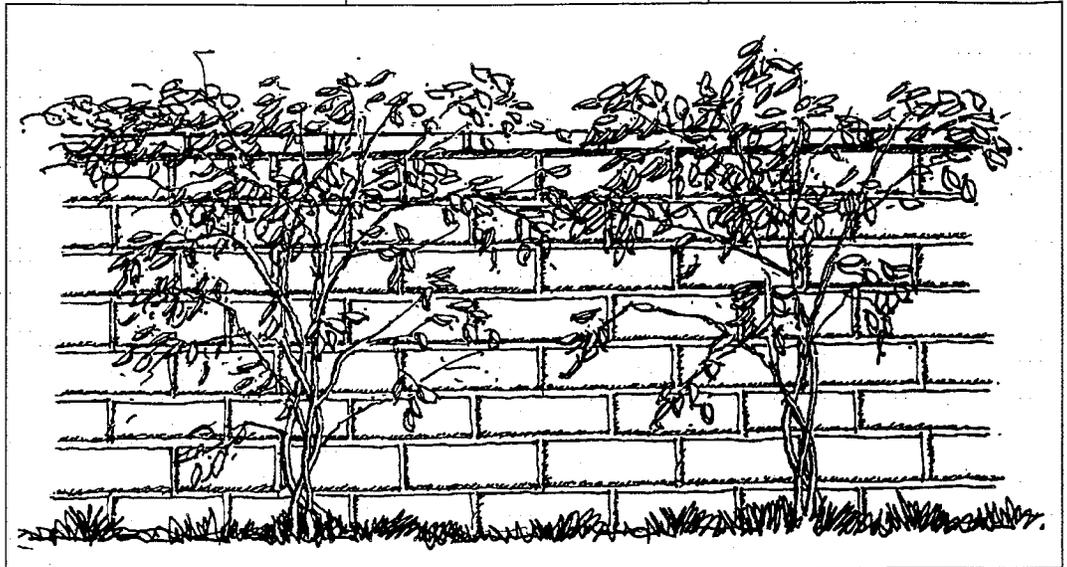
with ornamental posts or bases and sign backing. Metal signs on galvanized metal posts are not acceptable.

4

Selection

The purpose of landscaping—shade, screening, erosion control or appearance, for example—should be a determining factor in what types of plants are selected. Thickness, height, color, shape (or *habit*), seasonal characteristics, leaf and fruit droppings, and ultimate growth should be considered. A generous amount of vegetation should be planted. Where landscaping is intended to perform a specific function, such as screening or shading, its initial size should be selected to achieve its purpose within two years, or else it should be supplemented by architectural features, such as screen fencing or an arbor.

Choose landscape arrangements and materials to minimize maintenance, especially irrigation. Since lawn uses much more water than other ground cover plants, it should be avoided unless its use can be justified.



Vines will soften and enhance the “hard edges” of walls where landscape areas are limited or too restricted for larger, denser planting.

5

Placement

Plants should be placed with respect for their life cycles—for such factors as their ability to maintain and reproduce themselves, deciduous versus evergreen type, size at maturity and life span. Placement also should respect the environmental requirements of plants, such as temperature, sun exposure, moisture, soil, drainage, and wind.

6

Maintenance

Permanent *automatic* irrigation systems must be provided for all landscaping. Systems must be designed for efficient and conservative use of water. Automatic sprinklers are to be set to water at night. Moisture sensors and rain sensors must also be used.

7

Parking Areas

The parking requirements in the Zoning Ordinance require specific amounts of landscaping on parking lot perimeters and within

parking lots. In general, parking lot planters (finger planters) should be provided at the ends of parking rows, in addition to intermediate locations. When they mature, trees must provide visual relief and shading. Landscaping may not block a driver's view within the parking lot (especially at ends of parking rows) and when entering or leaving a parking lot.

8

Protection for Planters

Planters must be protected by six inch wide and six inch high concrete curbing when in parking lots. Raised planters may be provided adjacent to walkways and buildings.

5

Lighting

Exterior lighting, when used, should be subdued. It should enhance and accent building design and landscaping, as well as provide safety and security. It must not create glare for occupants on neighboring properties or on adjacent streets. Lighting fixtures should be durable and compatible with building design and landscaping. The lighting should be appropriate for what it lights. That is, lighting for walkways should be lower height and intensity than lighting for a shopping mall parking lot. If a fixture has been chosen for an area or master-planned development, new projects are to use it also.

6

Trash Collection and Other Service Areas

Trash containers, service areas and loading docks should be conveniently located and big enough, but cannot interfere with other circulation or parking on the site. Trash containers for commercial, industrial, apartment and condominium projects must be within permanent enclosures (Engineers call them "refuse enclosures"). These should be located away from public streets and

building entrances, and must be built of materials compatible with the building exteriors. The enclosure's gate must be sturdy and made of metal (chain link gates with redwood lath are *not* acceptable!) painted to match the building. If the top of a trash enclosure will be visible from an adjacent building two or more stories tall, its top must be screened by a trellis, pergola or other attractive element compatible with the building material, finishes and style. Recycling areas must be provided within the trash enclosures or in separate enclosures for multi-family, commercial and industrial projects. The Public Works Department has specific requirements for trash enclosure design.

Landscaping

1

General Considerations

Landscaping must be included on all developed sites. The City's Landscape Standards, Parking Ordinance and Zoning Regulations provide general minimum require-

ments for landscaping, which these design guidelines expand upon. Drought tolerant and other low water using plants must be used. *Xeriscape* should guide the design of all landscape plans. The landscaping must be in proportion with the whole development, be integrated with the building design, enhance the appearance and enjoyment of the project, and soften the effect of buildings and pavement. The landscaping must be a combination of trees, shrubs and ground cover plants; vines are required on exposed perimeter, screen and trash enclosure walls. A project's landscaping should blend with vegetation on nearby property if the neighboring greenery is healthy and appropriate. We encourage innovation.

Landscaping, with up to three years growth, may be shown on colored elevations. The species shown on the elevations must match the species and locations of plants shown on the landscape plans.

2

Existing Trees

Healthy existing trees should be kept and incorporated into landscape plans whenever possible.

If healthy specimen trees must be removed to build a project, the DRC will require that these trees be relocated or replaced, or both. They must be replaced with specimen trees that are larger than is normally required by the City Landscape Standards, and more trees will be required than the Standards specify. This rule applies to tree rows as well.

3

Extent

A site should be adequately landscaped on all sides and in its interior. Trees must be planted along streets in accordance with the City Landscape Standards. The trees should be selected from the Parks Division's Master Street Tree Plan, or the area's specific plan plant list. Trees not on the appropriate list may be used if approved by the Parks Division and the DRC. Trees should also provide screening functions. All areas not used for a building, parking, drive aisles, or walkways must be landscaped.

Signs

1

Design compatibility

Signs—their materials, size, color, lettering, location and arrangement—must be an integral part of the site and building design, and must be compatible with their surroundings. For example, a plex-faced cabinet sign¹ is generally not consistent with an “Early Oxnard” style building.

2

Types

Wall signs, individual letter building signs, graphic symbol signs and low profile freestanding signs are encouraged. Distinctive architectural features, landscaping, window displays and merchandise can be used to communicate some of the image and identity traditionally conveyed by signs. In general, we discourage use of generic “can” or “cabinet” signs with plastic faces and no dimensional character. We also rarely approve flat plywood signs or signs painted directly on the building. The DRC and

Planning Commission prefer individually mounted letters, sand-blasted wood and other similar sign styles.

3

Consistency

Signs within a development must be consistent in location and design. Signs for shopping centers and multi-tenant industrial buildings must show this consistency.

4

Restraint

Signs should be simple, restrained and subordinate to the overall project design. Sign sizes should show good use of proportion and scale relationships between the sign and its background.

5

The Message

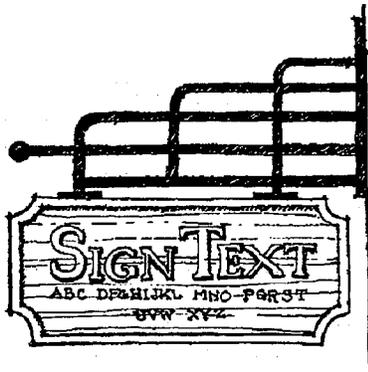
Text should be kept to a minimum. Location, size, materials and other features of a sign should be selected to achieve appropriate visibility.



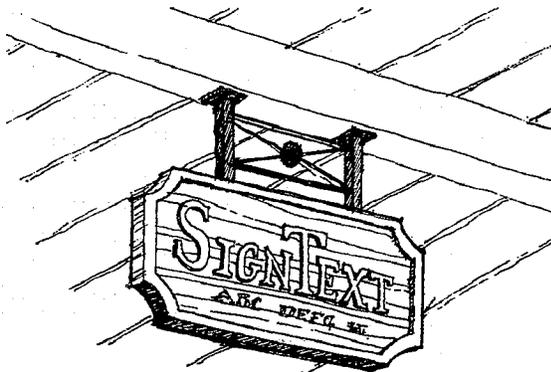
- 1. Monument (low profile) sign
- 2. Under-canopy sign
- 3. Awning sign
- 4. Building sign area
- 5. Building sign, individual channel letters
- 6. Window sign
- 7. Door sign

¹ A cabinet or “can” sign is a box (usually rectangular-shaped) with painted aluminum sides and a flat “plex” (plexi-glas) face, on which the sign text is applied.

Depending upon the allowable sign area and the location of the buildings, various types of signs may be installed.



PROJECTING



UNDER CANOPY

Well-designed, pedestrian oriented signage can make finding a business easier, and add to the character.

6

Lighting

Lighting for signs should harmonize with the sign and project design. If outside (exterior) lighting is used, it should be arranged so the light source is shielded from view, or the lighting should be designed as an architectural feature of the building or sign. We discourage internally illuminated can signs.

7

Pedestrians

We encourage signs for pedestrians. Typically, these are located perpendicular to a storefront and eight to ten feet above sidewalk level. These usually hang from a canopy and are particularly important in shopping malls and downtown commercial areas. Graphic symbols are especially good for pedestrian signs.

8

The Sign Ordinance

All signs must conform to the standards set by the current City Sign Ordinance. The City ordinance specifies limits on the type, size and location of signs. The City Ordinance allows the Planning Commission to approve signs not normally allowed if they are part of a sign program, if unusual circumstances exist and if the proposed signs are consistent with the *intent* of the sign regulations. The Planning Commission relies on the Design Review Committee's recommendations for approval or denial of unusual sign programs.

Maintenance Planning

1

Planning for Regular Maintenance

A good looking and efficient project won't stay that way without regular maintenance. That's why proper structural and landscaping maintenance is an implied and expressly stated condition of the City Council's, Planning Commission's, or Community Development Director's approval. Diseased vegetation must be treated and dead plants must be replaced. Irrigation systems must be kept working.

2

Built-in Protection

Protection against the elements, neglect, accidental damage, and abuse should be incorporated into a project's design. For example, vines planted against perimeter walls discourage graffiti.

3

Dirt Catchers

Avoid configurations that tend to collect dirt and trash.

4

Easy Maintenance

Consider ease of maintenance in selecting forms, fixtures, materials and finishes.

Special Tips

Through its guidelines, the DRC tries to make the city's criteria clear without dictating design. Occasionally, however, designers fail to understand the importance DRC attaches to specific items, including details of design. Misunderstandings occur regularly on several points in particular. We've written this section to put special emphasis on the considerations that developers and designers frequently skip over.

1

Historic Structures

The DRC and the City are especially concerned with preserving Oxnard's heritage. The DRC's concern is broad, encompassing all structures, including recent ones, that contribute to the city's character. Its concern is not limited to the more prominent buildings and places associated with particular historic events and persons. A developer must be sensitive to the history not only of the site he or she is working with, but also of the neighborhood around the site. On sites where structures exist, every effort should be made to preserve or enhance any structure that deserves it. A remodelling should respect a structure's original style. Signs in particular *must* re-

spect historical values. (For more on this, see "Does the Project Respect History?" on page 6.)

2

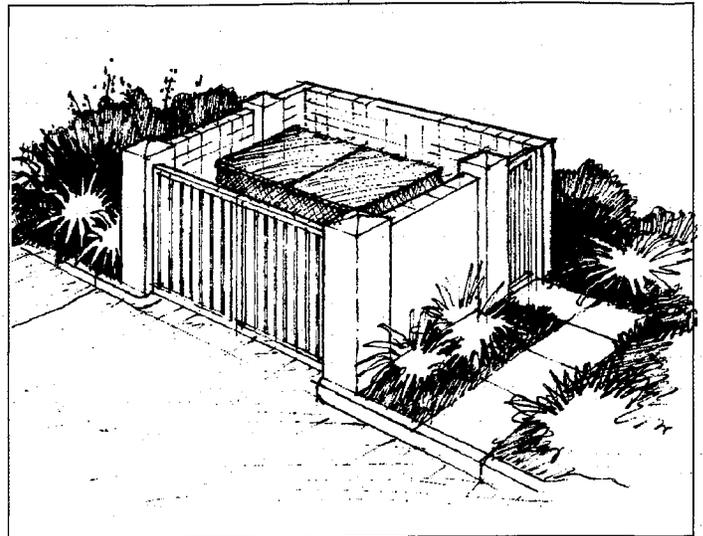
Signs

The DRC wants to know *exactly* what signs will look like. The committee's concern extends beyond the scope of the City's sign regulations. In addition to the size and location of the sign, the DRC wants to know what message, lighting and letter style will be used. Materials, colors and sign construction must be included on the plans. As indicated in the guidelines for Signs (page 13), the signs must be an integral part of the building design, *not* an afterthought. We often see signs proposed by tenants which are not in context with project design and surroundings (especially in terms of scale, proportion, color and materials). Signs must be designed by the building designer, with a local sign company representative used as a resource.

3

Metal Buildings

The Design Review Committee evaluates metal buildings using the same basic criteria applied to other types of buildings. But metal buildings often present difficult design problems, and because of that, get particularly close scrutiny by DRC.



The committee generally does not accept metal buildings with only metal components. Metal buildings must not be massive and monotonous. They must be relieved by softening design features and conventional materials. Designing these buildings in context with their surroundings is a special concern. For more help in designing metal buildings, see the publication written by the California Systems Builders Association, *Systems Buildings: California Planning and Architectural Guidelines.* (209-948-9333). This booklet generally matches the city's feelings about metal buildings. Please note that some of the City's industrial parks specifically prohibit metal buildings.

4

Trash Enclosures

As the *Site Planning Guidelines* say, trash containers must be in decorative masonry enclosures, built as required by the

Trash enclosures should be finished to match the building in color, texture and materials. Where visibility from above is of concern, other covering may be required

Public Works Department and screened by landscaping as required by the Parks Department. The enclosure must match the building's finish materials and detailing. The Public Works Department has an exhibit ("a standard plate") which establishes minimum standards for building trash enclosures.

5

Art in Public Places

The City Council requires that large commercial and industrial projects install public artwork to enhance the quality of the built environment in Oxnard. Specifically, any commercial or industrial project with at least 100,000 square feet of building area must design

into their project a work of art, usually a sculpture. This artwork must be located where it is easily viewed by the public. The City has established a formal process for selecting the artwork. Contact the Cultural Arts Commission staff at 385-8157 for more information.



Utility Fixtures

An otherwise attractive project can be ruined by a thoughtlessly placed utility meter, box or vault, a back-flow preventer and other service or utility equipment. Plan utility connections as part of the design; don't wait for the construction phase. DRC insists that plans show exactly where meter boxes and other utility fixtures will be located and how they will be integrated into the building design. If a free-standing utility meter box must be located in front of a building, screen it with landscaping and landscape berms. (See #10 under **Building Design Principles**.)



Outdoor Seating Areas

Oxnard has nice weather almost all year and the people who live and work here enjoy being outside to eat lunch and take breaks. Some of the City's adopted specific plans require out-

door lunch areas for industrial buildings. DRC has gone a step further and requires outdoor seating areas for all office and industrial buildings and shopping centers.

Permanent seating is required as part of the lunch area design and must be installed by the builder before the Planning Division will approve a final inspection of the building. You can pick up a copy of the standard outdoor lunch area exhibit from the Planning Division.



Industrial Buildings

Just because a building is planned for an industrial use doesn't mean it shouldn't be attractive. Attractive industrial buildings *can* be achieved through variations in roof lines, building wall articulation and at least two different surface treatments. In addition, the main entry to the building should have some special treatment to signify that it is the entrance. The City Council and Planning Commission have stated that many industrial buildings should have been designed to a higher level of

architectural quality. To help designers propose industrial buildings which meet the City's expectations, the DRC developed guidelines for new industrial developments (see Industrial Design Guidelines, on this page). As in the rest of the design review process, the DRC is somewhat flexible in using these guidelines. But the bottom line is more attractive and interesting industrial buildings. The important thing is meeting the intent of these guidelines. And remember that code requirements such as screening loading areas can't be waived, so they might as well be included in the plans at the start.

Industrial Design Guidelines

- Building design must meet applicable specific plan architectural and landscape guidelines
- Buildings should have visible variations in roof line, or an illusion of variation.
- All buildings should have substantial architectural treatment, window glass and detail, particularly on street elevations.
- Provide at least two surface treatments (i.e. reveals, sandblasting, etc). Paint is not considered a surface treatment.
- Buildings should have visible variations in form, massing and articulation.
- Building entrances must project a formal entry statement through variation of building forms, decorative pedestrian plazas and/or accent landscaping.
- Sides and rear of buildings must have architectural treatment similar to front of building.
- Chain link fencing is not acceptable along or visible from any street.
- Screen walls must be decorative masonry or tilt-up construction to match building.
- All loading areas and loading doors must be screened from street(s) by building or decorative masonry walls.
- Roof section exhibits must show that roof equipment will not be visible from adjacent streets. Roof equipment must be screened by building parapet or a separate decorative screen. If a separate screen is used, it must be an integral part of the building design.
- Show enhanced entry driveway paving on site plan per City (or specific plan) standard.
- Show outdoor lunch area location and details designed per City standard on site and landscape plan.
- Provide master sign program, including building and monument signs. Show building signs on building (in correct colors and sizes) and show location, color, design and materials of monument signs. No "can" or "cabinet" signs are permitted; signs must be individual letters and openwork, with the building wall providing the sign background.

How the Design Review Process Works

The Planning Division of the Community Development Department coordinates the design review process as a part of the planning permit process. The Planning Division offices are located on the second floor of the west wing of City Hall. If you have any type of a development project in mind, come to the Planning Division Counter and discuss your ideas with a planner before preparing an application and final plans. We recommend you call the Planning Division [(805) 385-7858] and make an appointment.

A planner can tell you what procedures will be required for your project and whether they include Design Review Committee consideration. This planner can also give you a rough idea of how long the process will take, and which steps happen when. To save time, the Planning Division can simultaneously coordinate several steps. Pick up your application materials at this time.

This flow chart illustrates the planning process. No time frames are included since the permit process varies by project.



Pre-application

Before drawing detailed plans, a developer or designer should discuss his or her ideas and concepts with one of the Planning Division project planners. Please phone ahead of time (385-7858) to set up an appointment. This meeting, which will alert a project's designer to the City's concerns, is optional, but highly recommended. For large projects (such as residential subdivisions, major commercial or industrial projects) or projects in "sensitive areas," the developer should file a Pre-application package with the Planning Division for the Design Review Committee's and Staff Advisory Committee's review. Your project planner will send you a letter as a written report indicating how

your project does or does not comply with the City's development regulations, standards and policies.



Submit Application Package

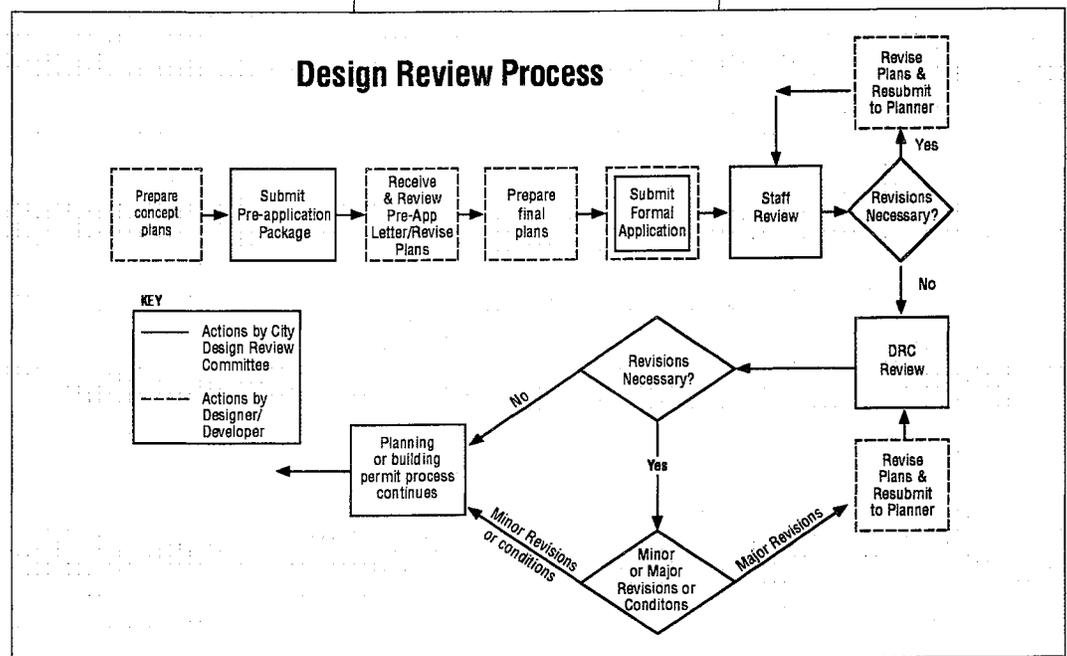
Before you call the Planning Division to make an appointment to submit your application package, double-check your materials to be certain you have *all* the required plans and other documents, and that *all* information on the submittal requirements checklist is included on the appropriate plan or other document. The Planning Division staff and DRC are adamant about *all* of the information required by the application checklists and the way it's presented. If you don't have a complete package when you submit

your application, the planner will not accept it and you'll need to come back again when you do have everything. And if your plans don't have all of the required information (or something is not clear), processing of your permit will not begin until the plans are corrected.



Staff Review

The planner assigned to review your development proposal will first review your application materials to be certain that all of the required information is on your plans and in the other materials required, and that this information is clear. The planner will also review your project for its compliance with the applicable City Code sections. (And if the design of your project is clearly un-



acceptable, the planner will tell you at this time.) If everything is satisfactory, the planner deems your application "complete," which starts the "time clock" running for the permit process. At this time the planner will notify you when your project is scheduled to be reviewed by the DRC and Staff Advisory Committee (the other city staff committee which reviews development proposals). Usually the planner will tell you the meeting dates one week ahead.

During this time you can be preparing other exhibits for the Design Review Committee's use in reviewing your project. Examples include massing or study models, streetscape elevation drawings, colored site plans, details of cornices and trim, and perspective renderings. These materials may not become official exhibits as part of the file, and are not always required. But they are helpful to the DRC in understanding your project.

If your project for design review is or includes a sign or sign program, you'll need a colored elevation (to scale) of the proposed sign(s), shown installed on the building. If your project is in the Central Business District, DRC will want to see how your proposal relates to buildings on either side of it, so you should prepare drawings showing this.



Design Review Committee Meeting

The Design Review Committee meets every Thursday morning (when there are items to review), in the Planning Division conference room. The DRC will usually review your project about two to three weeks after you submit your application (assuming your package and plans are complete to begin with). On the Wednesday before the meeting, call the Planning Division to find out the approximate time your item will be considered by the Design Review Committee. Unless yours is the first item (usually at 8:45 AM), plan to arrive a few minutes early in case the Committee is running ahead of schedule.

The first review of your project usually goes like this: You will have provided all of the supplemental and corrected information (if any) to the project planner before the DRC meeting (usually during the week before the meeting, so the planner has time to review it before the meeting). First, the project planner will explain and present a preliminary review of your project to the Design Review Committee, who will evaluate it to see if it meets the Design Standards and

Guidelines. As was explained in the beginning of this booklet, the DRC looks at both the details and the big picture of your proposal. The DRC will then reach a consensus about any design issues which do not clearly fit into the design guidelines and standards. After the DRC discusses your project, your planner invites you and *one* other representative (two of you *only*) to hear the DRC's findings. Usually the applicant and the designer are chosen to attend the DRC meeting. The applicant attends because he or she usually approves the building changes (as the representative of the money); the designer understands and can respond to design comments. Please don't put the DRC and yourself in the embarrassing position of asking some of your representatives to leave the meeting. Since the DRC usually has a full agenda, keeping the meeting on schedule is important. And we don't like to keep people waiting in the lobby. By limiting the number of applicant representatives for each item, we've found that the meetings do go faster. As an applicant for items after the first one, you'd really appreciate the cooperation of everybody to stay on schedule.

The Committee chair will explain the DRC's recommendations about your project and then give you a chance to ask questions about DRC's comments. Sometimes design issues

can be conceptually solved at the first meeting. Other times an issue may take more study. The DRC chairperson will also tell you if the Committee needs to review your project again, after you change the plans in response to their recommendations.

Your project planner will send you a copy of the DRC's recommendations (the meeting minutes) about one week after the DRC meeting.



Plan Revisions

After the DRC meeting, you should make any revisions to your plans as soon as possible so the DRC can review your plans further and the permit process can resume. When you receive your copy of the DRC minutes, you should double-check your plans to be sure you've addressed each item that the DRC commented upon. It's especially helpful to your project planner if you use marginal notes on a copy of the minutes to indicate where you addressed each comment in your plans. By the same token, if you choose not to revise your plans in response to a specific DRC recommendation, please give a letter to your project planner explaining your reasons. "It costs more" is usually not an acceptable reason.



DRC reviews your project again

If the revisions recommended by DRC are *minor*, your project planner may be able to review them and then skip this step. Some minor revisions may become project conditions of approval and not require plan corrections until you prepare construction drawings. And if DRC recommends approval of your project at the first review, this step is obviously not required.

When you resubmit the revised plans to your project planner for further DRC review, he or she will tell you when the DRC will evaluate them. This meeting will usually be scheduled within one week of the date you submit the revised plans. As with the first meeting, the planner will explain your plans and the revisions to the DRC, the members will make their comments and then invite you in to discuss their determinations. Our goal is to resolve all design issues by the second meeting. For larger projects, more than two meetings may be necessary.

Sometimes you and the DRC won't be able to agree on a particular point. For example, DRC recommends that a site planning feature or building color be changed, but

you feel your reasons for *not* changing it are more important than the DRC's reasons for changing it. In these cases, the applicant and the committee can only "agree to disagree" on that issue. Your planner will then note this as an issue in the staff report for your project. If major design problems cannot be resolved at the second meeting, Planning Division staff reserves the right to recommend denial of the project to the Community Development Director, Planning Commission or City Council (depending on the type of permits). Whoever is the approving body for your project (the Community Development Director, the Planning Commission, or the City Council) makes the final determination on the issue. It is up to you to convince the relevant approving authority that the DRC's recommendation is inconsistent with the City's design guidelines and standards.

DRC review usually occurs concurrently with Staff Advisory Committee (SAC) review. DRC's second review can be completed while the SAC prepares the conditions of approval. In other words, a second review by DRC will normally not delay the permit review process.

What Happens Next?

If DRC recommends approval...

For planning permits requiring a staff report, if the DRC recommends approval of your project, the project planner will include that recommendation in the staff report.

If the project is a minor modification, the City Planner will factor DRC's recommendation into his decision on your request. If the City Planner approves your request, you must still obtain any building permits or other approvals required by your proposal before you begin work in the field.

If your project is a sign permit, your project planner will be able to give the Planning Division approval after DRC recommends approval. But the Building Division must issue your sign permit before you can install your new sign.

If DRC requires more corrections...

As described earlier in this booklet, the DRC may recommend changes to your project. These are often minor changes to the plans that can be made on

the construction drawings. Your project planner will include these as conditions in the draft resolution of approval or minor modification letter for your project. In the case of sign permits, the plans must be revised before the planner can approve your sign permit.

If the corrections affect the appearance of the project or involve design issues that are primarily subjective, or otherwise considered major, DRC will usually ask you to return revised plans to the project planner for further review by DRC.

If you have more questions...

Call the Design Review Committee chairperson at (805) 385-7858 if you want more information about the process, if you don't understand a comment in the minutes or if you just want to discuss the committee's procedures.

We hope this booklet answers most of your questions about design review in Oxnard. Please feel free to give us your written comments on how you feel it could be improved.