

# VI. WORKING WITH THE APPEARANCE REVIEW COMMISSION

Experience nationwide has shown that communities undertaking design review for construction of new buildings and renovation of older ones generally see higher quality development and stabilization of or an increase in property values as a result. Design review thus becomes a "property value insurance policy" for owners in design review districts. This is because the review process helps to protect against inappropriate new development or building renovation that removes or damages historic or architectural character. It encourages ongoing investment because property owners can feel reasonable assurance that their investment will be protected.

Recognizing the benefits to be gained from a carefully administered design review program, the Bath Township Trustees created the Bath Township Appearance Review Commission on September 18, 1979. The commission's purpose, according to the legislation creating it, is ". . . to protect and stabilize the general appearance of buildings, structures, landscaping, and open areas in all zoning districts in the Township, and to encourage and promote acceptability, attractiveness, cohesiveness, and compatibility of new buildings, developments, remodeling, and additions so as to maintain and improve the established standards of property values within said districts."



The commission has five members serving five-year staggered terms; members are appointed by the Township Trustees. Members must be residents or operators of a business in Bath Township and must have recognized ability in architecture, landscape and land planning, real estate, art design, and/or engineering.

The commission meets regularly on a monthly





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basis. The commission must make a recommendation on the appropriateness, from a design and land-use planning standpoint, of all construction, alteration, repair, moving or demolition of buildings, structures, signs, or uses in business zoning districts and for all conditionally-permitted uses in all zoning districts in Bath Township. Applicants should confer with the Bath Township Zoning Inspector for information on specific application requirements. The commission's role is advisory: it makes recommendations to the property owner, the Township Zoning Inspector and/or the Township Board of Zoning Appeals.

Anyone planning to undertake a project requiring review by the commission should try to meet with the commission as early as possible. "Concept" reviews are strongly encouraged. These are undertaken very early in the design process, when there is maximum flexibility and an applicant has not yet invested time and effort in a detailed

design. Concept reviews afford the opportunity for the applicant and the commission to identify and discuss issues and resolve them before detailed design work begins.

The commission bases its decisions upon plans, drawings, and specifications submitted by applicants. It may request additional information or documentation needed in order to reach a decision. The commission may require testimony, opinion, and recommendations from experts or specialists, the cost of which may not exceed \$1,000, to be borne by the applicant.

Within 30 days of receipt of an application and supporting material, the commission must transmit its recommendations to the Board of Zoning Appeals and/or the Zoning Inspector, unless the applicant agrees to a longer review period.

These guidelines have been written to suggest how projects can be designed in ways that the commission will find acceptable and to ensure that reviews by the commission go as smoothly as possible. Again, applicants are encouraged to begin the application process as early as possible.





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