AUTHORIZED

The Baltimore County Design Review Panel (DRP) is established by Section 32-4-203 of the Baltimore County Code. The DRP acts in a technical consulting capacity, and its recommendations are binding on the Hearing Officer and on county agencies unless the Hearing Officer or agencies find that the DRP’s actions constitute an abuse of its discretion or are unsupported by the documentation and evidence presented.

PURPOSE

The goal of the DRP is to encourage design excellence through the application of design guidelines contained in the Master Plan, the Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies, adopted community plans and/or Section 260 of the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations, as applicable.

SCOPE

Design review is conducted for all development located within designated design review areas and for alternative site design projects. “Development,” for purposes of the DRP review, includes a minor subdivision but does not include a Planned Unit Development. In addition, “development” includes both new construction and a substantial addition or change to an existing development plan, as determined by the Office of Planning.

A new dwelling proposed for a residential single lot of record within a designated residential design review area is reviewed by the DRP. An addition to a dwelling that is more than 50% of the gross square footage of the existing dwelling is also to be reviewed. The gross square footage calculation includes an attached garage, storage areas and/or the basement, if present.

For residential development, the panel may increase the residential setback requirements for the proposed project.

In the designated commercial design review areas, only commercial projects are reviewed. In residential design review areas, only residential projects are reviewed. Alternative site design projects are reviewed by the DRP regardless of location within the county.

COMPOSITION

The DRP consists of a standing panel of nine professional members who are knowledgeable in matters of design. The panel is comprised of architects, landscape architects and other design professionals, as well as a revolving panel of residential members. For proposed development in residential design review areas, the DRP consists of at least two professional members and one residential member.

APPOINTMENT

The professional members are appointed by the County Executive and confirmed by the County Council. One of the professional members is appointed by the County Executive to serve as the DRP’s chairperson. For a proposed development in a residential design review area, the County Council representative appoints a resident member to serve on the panel to review that project. This member must be a resident of the council district where the development is proposed.

TENURE

The tenure of the DRP members is three years. Members are eligible for reappointment but may not serve more than two consecutive terms.
SECRETARY

The Director of Planning or the director’s designee serves as the Secretary to the Design Review Panel. The secretary is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the DRP, with the responsibility, in regard to each meeting, to notify the members, provide review materials, prepare a staff report (if required) and the minutes. The secretary must also forward the DRP’s recommendations, and maintain the DRP’s records.

MEETINGS AND VOTES

At least three members must be present to constitute a quorum for approving a particular project. For projects in residential design review areas, one of the members must be the residential member. The attendance and votes of each member are recorded in the minutes, which are an open record and available, along with all documents submitted to the DRP, for inspection and copying by the public. In general, the panel meets on the second Wednesday of every month, as needed, except for August.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Members shall not participate in reviewing or voting on any work of which they or any partner or professional associate is the participant or have any direct or indirect financial interest.

RIGHTS OF PUBLIC TO ATTEND MEETINGS

All meetings are open to the public. The meeting dates are posted on the Internet at www.baltimorecountymd.gov/agencies/planning/drp/meetings.

AREAS REVIEWED

The design review areas are depicted on maps at the end of this section.

Commercial Design Review Areas:
- Towson Community Plan Urban Design Study Area
- Essex Revitalization Area
- Catonsville Revitalization Area
- Arbutus Revitalization Area
- Pikesville Revitalization Area

Residential Design Review Areas:
These areas are limited to properties that lie within the boundaries of a community plan that has been adopted by the County Council as part of the Baltimore County Master Plan.
- East Towson Design Review Panel Area
- Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland Design Review Panel Area
- Sudbrook Park Design Review Panel Area

OBJECTIVES

The DRP applies the guidelines and plans specific to the development type or area under review to ensure that projects meet the objectives of Section 32-4-203(c) of the County Code as follows:

1. Site Planning – that a project demonstrates a satisfactory spatial, visual and functional relationship to the topographic and other natural and built features of the site, as well as the surrounding features of the site.
2. **Open Space** – that a primary design consideration is given to the visual and functional integration of streetscapes, pathways, playgrounds, recreational amenities and parks.

3. **Circulation** – that streets and sidewalks are laid out as safe and convenient linkages and that parking becomes a positive design element, which contributes to the overall image of the site.

4. **Building** – that buildings, parking garages and other accessory structures are spatially and visually integrated and are suitable to their surroundings in type, proportion, massing, materials, colors, signage and other design elements.

5. **Landscaping** – that plant materials are selected and placed to define the site, provide a theme or image appropriate to the development, frame views, enhance architecture and street characteristics, develop continuity of adjacent open spaces, improve the micro-climate, provide transitions between dissimilar uses, screen objectionable views and uses, reduce noise levels and glare and provide seasonal colors and other visual amenities.

For all developments plans, the DRP applies the standards and guidelines of the appropriate sections of the Comprehensive Manual of Development Policies and the Master Plan. For residential projects, the panel also applies the standards of Section 260 of the Baltimore County Zoning Regulations.

In addition, the DRP is directed in its review by specific community plans adopted for an area as follows:

**Commercial Areas**

**Arbutus**

In the absence of a specific community plan for this area, the CMDP design guidelines will apply.

**Catonsville**


**Essex**

*Essex Design Guidelines*, 1983


**Pikesville**


**Towson**


**Residential Areas:**

**East Towson**

*East Towson Design Standards*, October 2, 2003
Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland

*Ruxton/Riderwood/Lake Roland Area Community Plan, August 5, 2002*

Sudbrook Park

*Sudbrook Park Community Plan, April 5, 1999*

**PROCEDURES**

The Department of Permits and Development Management notifies an applicant for development review or building permit if a review by the DRP is required.

The applicant requests a DRP review by submitting a DRP application to the Office of Planning. Once the Office of Planning receives the required submittals, the project is scheduled for a DRP meeting. The DRP members who will be attending the meeting are mailed a copy of the plans, drawings or other materials at least 10 business days before the meeting.

All plans and materials submitted for review will be available to the public for examination at the Office of Planning. The applicant provides notice of the meeting to community and business associations and others as identified by the Office of Planning by First Class Mail at least 10 business days before the meeting.


For commercial projects, and for residential projects if requested by the DRP, the Office of Planning prepares a staff report that is provided to the applicant and panel members prior to the meeting.

At the DRP meeting, the applicant presents the plan and responds to questions raised by the DRP. At the direction of the chairperson, any person in attendance may also provide comments or documentation to the DRP. The DRP should note all concerns raised by those in attendance and how they are to be addressed.

The Office of Planning provides written minutes of the DRP meeting within 10 business days of the DRP meeting to the panel members and the applicant, and posts them on the county website.

If a follow-up meeting with the DRP is required, the applicant sends a meeting notification letter and site plan, if revised, to the following by First Class Mail:

a) Individuals included in the original mailing
b) Additional individuals attending the last DRP meeting

The panel may recommend: Approval, Approved with Conditions, Return for Additional Review or Denial. A project may be approved by the DRP with conditions, which require approval by the Office of Planning through an administrative review. For this review, the applicant submits the revised documents to the Office of Planning reflecting the recommendations of the DRP.

Upon final approval of the project by either the DRP or administratively by the Office of Planning, the Secretary will issue an approval letter to the Department of Permits and Development Management and the applicant. For plans being reviewed as a limited exemption, the applicant submits a development plan to PDM for review by all agencies reflecting the recommendations of the DRP.
**Limited Residential Review**

For a residential single lot of record in a residential DRP area that existed prior to June 11, 2004, or an addition to a dwelling exceeding 50% of the existing gross square footage, if the applicant submits a written letter of support from the recognized community association, the project may be approved by the Office of Planning development review staff, the area planner, and the DRP chairperson.

**Pikesville Facade Only Improvements**

Pursuant to County Council Resolution 102-03, new facade treatments for existing buildings within the Pikesville Design Review Area will be reviewed administratively by the Office of Planning staff for conformance with the Pikesville Commercial Revitalization Guidelines. The office will defer to the architect on call program for facade treatments that go through that program. The Director of Planning will have the final decision-making authority concerning review of facade treatments. In the event that the application is not approved, the applicant may apply for a full review by the Design Review Panel.

**Minor Subdivisions**

In the case of a residential minor subdivision where specific architectural elevations are not available until lots are sold, the following note shall be added to the minor subdivision plan and deed:

“As per Bill 56-04, construction of a dwelling on this property is subject to the review and approval of the Design Review Panel prior to the issuance of a building permit. Contact the Office of Planning (410-887-3480) to discuss scheduling, requirements, process and submissions.”

**Schematic Landscape Plan**

The submittals for all projects shall include a schematic landscape plan prepared by a licensed landscape architect. Following approval of the project by the DRP, the County Landscape Architect shall approve a final landscape plan based on the recommendations of the DRP.