

WHAT IS DESIGN REVIEW?

Design Review is a process where a committee of citizens reviews development plans for proposed new construction projects, rehabilitation projects, repair work, additions, signs, demolitions, and other major modifications to properties in order to ensure that the changes comply with the design guidelines of the particular Commercial Revitalization District or Local Historic District. When plans for non-routine maintenance exterior work are proposed, then the applicant or the applicant's agent must present those plans to the City's Design Review Committee (DRC). This process must occur prior to permit issuance.

WHO ATTENDS DESIGN REVIEW MEETINGS?

Individuals who own or are acting as the agent/representative for properties located within a Commercial Revitalization District or a Local Historic District, and who plan to build new buildings, demolish existing buildings, or make improvements, additions, modifications, or repairs to the exterior of an existing building are required to appear before the Design Review Committee to request approval of the proposed work.

WHEN ARE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD?

The Design Review Committee meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30 a.m. During November and December, the DRC meets once monthly, usually on the second Wednesday. You must file an application and submit all required information to the Urban Design staff no later than two weeks in advance of the meeting date to be placed on the Design Review Committee agenda.

EXAMPLES OF ITEMS NEEDED FOR A DESIGN REVIEW PRESENTATION:

(This list is not inclusive of all required submittals. Please consult an Urban Design staff person for the exact submittal information needed based on the proposed work.)

- Site plan – including parking layout, setbacks, building footprints, etc.
- Building elevations showing all proposed work
- Color rendering of proposed work
- Exterior material samples and color samples
- Signage plan – including dimensions, materials, colors, and mounting details
- Landscape plan

****APPROVAL OF A PROJECT BY THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE DOES NOT SUPERSEDE THE REQUIRED PROCESS FOR ISSUANCE OF A BUILDING PERMIT, NOR DOES IT SUPERSEDE OTHER PROCESSES FOR REZONING OR ZONING VARIANCES.***

****YOU SHOULD ALWAYS CONTACT AN URBAN DESIGN STAFF MEMBER BEFORE STARTING ANY PROJECT LOCATED WITHIN A COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICT OR A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT.***

For information on Subdivision, Zoning, Building Permits, Address Verification, Construction, Driveway, Excavation, Soil Erosion Control, and Blasting Permits, please see other brochures.

**PERMIT COUNTER
ROOM 210, CITY HALL
205/254-2904**

**URBAN DESIGN SECTION
ROOM 500, CITY HALL
205/254-2479**

COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION DISTRICTS and LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS (Design Review)

City of Birmingham

RANDALL L. WOODFIN, MAYOR



**DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING,
ENGINEERING AND PERMITS**

www.birminghamal.gov

Katrina R. Thomas, Director

WHAT IS THE COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION PROGRAM?

Over 27 Commercial Revitalization Districts exist in Birmingham so there is a good chance that your business falls within a district. Every district has its own design guidelines established by its Merchant's Association. In an effort to draw patrons, the merchants and businesses in your area have coordinated to define how they would like the area to look. The area merchants have agreed to be part of a design review process for their district and have invested a great deal of time, effort, and resources into improving the district. This process includes the administration of design guidelines, which are mandatory for most districts. *To obtain a copy of the design guidelines for your Commercial Revitalization District, please contact an Urban Design staff person at 205/254-2479.*

WHAT IS A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT?

Some historic neighborhoods in the City have requested to be designated as Local Historic Districts. Each of these areas has a special historic character and is considered historically significant to Birmingham. This means that all property owners in these districts must comply with the district's design guidelines when they construct new buildings, make exterior repairs, construct additions, and make modifications, including demolition. As part of meeting the guidelines, the property owner making the changes must participate in the design review process. *To obtain a copy of the design guidelines for your Local Historic District, please contact a Historic Preservation staff person at 205/254-2479.*

HOW CAN I DETERMINE IF I AM LOCATED WITHIN A DISTRICT?

Contact an Urban Design staff person of the Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits at 205/254-2479 or come to the 5th Floor of Birmingham City Hall located at 710 North 20th Street, Birmingham, AL 35203.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF DESIGN REVIEW AND DESIGN GUIDELINES?

- Plans for alterations and new construction are reviewed to ensure enhancement to the historic appearance of existing buildings and environments;
- Potential negative impacts on the environment are minimized;
- The typically high quality of construction for historic buildings is maintained;
- Education is provided about rehabilitation & restoration techniques and design; and
- A framework is provided for consistency and uniformity in decision-making.

WHAT TYPES OF CASES REQUIRE REVIEW BY THE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE (DRC)?

Except for routine maintenance work, any proposed change to the exterior of a building, site, or other structure located in a designated Commercial Revitalization District or Local Historic District of the City of Birmingham requires review by the Design Review Committee. Those changes include modifications for which a building permit, sign permit, demolition permit, soil erosion control permit, or driveway permit is required, as well as changes in roof material types and changes involving the painting of originally unpainted surfaces. Additionally, proposed fences that are not consistent with the historic and architectural character of the subject property and the historic district may require review by the Design Review Committee.

WHAT STEPS MUST I TAKE FOR DESIGN REVIEW?

1. Contact the Urban Design Section of the Department of Planning, Engineering and Permits at 205/254-2479, 5th Floor Birmingham City Hall, to determine if your property is located within a Commercial Revitalization District or a Local Historic District.
2. If the property is located within a Commercial Revitalization District and/or a Local Historic District, before any improvements are made, discuss the nature of your improvements with an Urban Design staff member.
3. A member of the Urban Design staff will review with you your proposal/plans and the guidelines for your district, and will determine if your proposal requires presentation and approval by the Design Review Committee (DRC).
4. The Urban Design staff will help you to determine the submittals you need for your presentation to the Design Review Committee, and will schedule your case for an upcoming Design Review Committee meeting.
5. If your property is located in a Local Historic District, then before presenting your proposal to the Design Review Committee, you will need to present the proposal to the local historic district's Local Historic Advisory Committee (LHAC), or to the Neighborhood Association if there is no LHAC, for a recommendation.
6. Next, the Design Review Committee will review your proposal, and if the proposal is approved, then you may proceed with obtaining building and/or other permits.