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# ARCHITECTURAL HELP GUIDE

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**Disclaimer:** All of the information contained in this document is a general explanation or an opinion. Please refer to your community's governing documents and/or applicable law for more specific information.



MAKING COMMUNITIES BETTER - TOGETHER!

## The Architectural Committee:

Are you getting ready to make an addition to your house or build a new shed or fence in your back yard? In general, no matter how large or small, exterior changes require prior approval. Before you break out the miter saw or paint brush, make sure to get your plans and colors approved by your association's architectural committee.

While it may seem arbitrary from an individual homeowner's perspective, the architectural committee looks out for the entire community. Aside from stopping residents from painting pink polka dots on their houses, the committee's job is to make sure that the size and style of the project, the type of building materials being used and the overall look of the new structure or modification adhere to the association's design requirements. Not only does this keep the community looking cohesive, it also helps to keep property values up by preventing individual structures from standing out. The following pages answer the questions most frequently asked by homeowners about the architectural process.



*Who is involved in the process and how long does it take?*



## WHAT ARE THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF AVALON'S ARCHITECTURAL STAFF?

The Avalon Management staff members working on the Architectural process for your community handle numerous plan submittals every day. The staff members working for Avalon Management do not review plans, they only ensure the application has been completed and submitted with your plans, a review fee/deposit check has been submitted (if applicable) and the correct number of plans and material samples/colors have been submitted. This information is then forwarded to the party responsible for reviewing plans on behalf of the community association.

## HOW DO I SUBMIT MY ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION ?

Architectural applications may be submitted by mail to the address indicated on the application. Minor improvements may be submitted by email. The original application should include all items that are indicated as necessary. For example: plans, paint samples, product brochures, material samples, etc. Please refer to your Architectural Guidelines for specifics and ensure that the requested number of copies are submitted. Please do **not** fax applications, pictures, plans or samples.

## WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEWING MY PLANS?

Your community association's CC&Rs and Architectural Guidelines address the architectural process, indicate how many members need to be appointed to a committee and whether or not this task may be delegated to a third party consultant. The committee is appointed by the Board of Directors and the third party consultant is retained by the Board of Directors who works under contract with your community.

## WHO MAKES THE FINAL DECISION ON APPROVAL OR DENIAL?

The designated party responsible for reviewing plans, either the committee or third party consultant issues approvals or denials. Avalon staff members do not review, approve or deny plans.

## HOW DO I FIND OUT HOW MUCH TIME IT TAKES TO REVIEW MY PLANS?

Your community association's CC&R's and Architectural Guidelines will provide this information. Review periods vary from 30 to 90+ days. This means the committee and/or third party consultant may take the full review period before rendering a decision.

## WHERE CAN I FIND THE APPLICATION FORM?

On your community association website, the application form can be found under the documents or forms section. If your website does not have the form on it, please use the Online Homeowner Request Form located on the Contact section of the website to request one.

## WHAT IF MY PLANS ARE NOT APPROVED – DO I HAVE TO WAIT ANOTHER 30 to 90+ DAYS FOR REVIEW?

Yes, each time a plan is resubmitted, the time frame allowed for the review process starts over.

## HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO COMPLETE THE IMPROVEMENTS?

Typically ninety days from approval, but that may vary depending on the project and the individual community. Please take a few minutes to review the Architectural Guidelines and/or CC&Rs - which can be found on your community website.

*I'm in a hurry and want to talk to the decision makers.*



### WHAT IF I DO NOT AGREE WITH THE REVIEWER'S DECISION?

You may fill out a reconsideration/appeal form to request reconsideration of the decision by the Board of Directors at an open meeting. Please contact Avalon Management for the correct form. Plan on attending the meeting so that any questions can be addressed. Visit your community website to find out when the next meeting is scheduled. There are time limits for requesting a reconsideration, so please refer to your Architectural Guidelines and/or governing documents for specific timelines.

### CAN YOU "RUSH" THE REVIEW UPON REQUEST?

As a committee can be up to five volunteer individuals, it would be difficult to change the schedules for all involved. Avalon Management has no control over the time constraints of the committee members and/or third party consultant.

### CAN I PAY FOR A "RUSH" REVIEW?

The process is dependant on non-paid volunteers. The Board of Directors would need to vote at a Board Meeting to approve it and it could only be implemented if a third party consultant were to also agree.

### WHAT DO I DO IF THE PLANS ARE NOT BACK YET AND THE TIME PERIOD FOR REVIEW IS PAST?

Please call or email Avalon Management for an update and guidance.

### CAN I CONTACT THE REVIEWER DIRECTLY WITH MY QUESTIONS?

Third party consultants are not contracted to communicate with individual homeowners. They are contracted to perform reviews in a timely manner. Homeowner committee members are volunteers. Therefore, their personal information cannot be provided. All questions should be submitted in writing and will be forwarded to the appropriate party, a response will be provided to you in writing or by email.

### WHO PAYS FOR THE QUALIFIED CONSULTANT TO REVIEW THE PLANS?

The community association pays for this service. If a third party consultant is contracted to review plans, the fees are often paid from your submittal fee. The CC&R's typically give the community association the right to collect fees in order to offset the costs related to plan review fees when a third party consultant is utilized.

### CAN AVALON MANAGEMENT GIVE ME APPROVAL?

Avalon Management is an independent third party managing agent and has no authority to review, approve or deny plans on behalf of the community association. Our role is to make sure the application has been completed and submitted with your plans, a review fee/deposit check has been submitted (if applicable), material or color samples are provided and the correct number and size of plans have been submitted. This information is then forwarded to the party responsible for reviewing plans on behalf of the community association.

Avalon Management also takes receipt of the plans back from either the committee and/or third party consultant and notifies the homeowner of the decision.

*I have some questions about my plans and the forms.*



### **CAN AVALON MANAGEMENT GIVE ME THE DECISION OVER THE PHONE?**

A plan review usually results in many comments from the reviewing party. In order to avoid any miscommunication, Avalon Management has been directed to make all decisions made by either the committee and/or third party consultant in writing to the homeowner.

### **CAN I PICK MY PLANS UP?**

If you would like to pick your plans up, you will need to contact Avalon Management - every effort will be made to accommodate your request.

### **CAN MY CONTRACTOR CALL AND GET THE INFORMATION, OR PICK UP MY PLANS FOR ME?**

Unless the homeowner provides written authorization for a specific person to receive information on their behalf, Avalon Management can only communicate with the homeowner. All decisions will be mailed to the homeowner's mailing address on file.

### **CAN AVALON MANAGEMENT HELP INTERPRET THE GUIDELINES OR AT LEAST GIVE ME AN IDEA OF WHETHER MY PLANS WILL BE APPROVED?**

Due to the volume of plans being processed for multiple community associations by the Architectural team at Avalon Management, it is not possible to provide guidance or interpret Architectural Guidelines for every community. As a homeowner, you will need to consult with the professional assisting you with your plans regarding any questions you have pertaining to the guidelines.

### **IF I WANT TO MAKE CHANGES TO MY APPROVED PLAN, DO I HAVE TO RE-SUBMIT?**

Yes, any plan changes need to be submitted for approval.

### **IF I AM JUST PAINTING MY HOUSE THE SAME COLORS, DO I HAVE TO SUBMIT FOR REVIEW?**

The safest bet is to submit. Many community association documents require architectural approval regardless of whether or not the existing paint color is being used. Some documents do not require an architectural application to be submitted to repaint the existing color; however, you should refer to your Architectural Guidelines or CC&Rs for the answer to this question or contact Avalon Management.

### **WHY ARE SITE PHOTOS SOMETIMES REQUIRED?**

Depending on the complexity of the improvements, the committee and/or third party consultant needs a point of reference when visualizing the project you are proposing.

### **ARE THERE HARDSCAPE LIMITS?**

Many communities place limits on the amount of rock, concrete, and other non-landscape areas. You will need to review your specific Architectural Guidelines and/or CC&Rs, which can be found on your community website.

*I have to contact my neighbors?*



### **WHAT DOES A NEIGHBOR AWARENESS FORM DO?**

A Neighbor Awareness form is a means of notifying your neighbors that you plan to make exterior modifications to your home. While your neighbor does not have the right to approve or deny proposed modifications, in most cases the neighbor should be notified of the proposed improvement and be given the opportunity to make comments to you and/or the architectural committee. Almost every community requires this form be completed.

### **WHY USE A NEIGHBOR AWARENESS FORM IF IT DOESN'T CHANGE THE REVIEW?**

Some community associations utilize this form as a means to keep homeowners informed. It allows the homeowner the opportunity to modify proposed changes if their neighbor has a concern. There are some community associations that do not require a Neighbor Awareness form. Please refer to your architectural guidelines and/or architectural application to determine whether or not your community association requires this form.

### **HOW MANY SIGNATURES ARE REQUIRED ON THE NEIGHBOR AWARENESS FORM?**

If you are on a single sided street, meaning you have no neighbors across the street from you, then you only need to obtain the signatures of your neighbors to the left, right and behind you.

If you are on a double sided street, meaning you have neighbors across the street, you need to obtain the signatures of your neighbors to the left, right, behind you and across from you. You should obtain the signatures of the owners of any property adjacent to your property on the Neighbor Awareness form.

Please note: In addition to the signatures on the Neighbor Awareness form, some community associations also require you to obtain signatures on the plans themselves.

### **WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF I JUST LEAVE A SIGNATURE OFF THE FORM OR HAVE A NEIGHBOR A FEW DOORS DOWN SIGN, INSTEAD OF MY IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORS?**

Leaving a signature off the form or getting a distant neighbor to sign may void your plan approval if later challenged. Additionally, it may also result in your plans being denied by the committee and you may be requested to obtain the signature that was omitted.

### **WHAT IF MY NEIGHBOR IS A RENTER?**

You may indicate this on the form and you should also mail a letter via certified mail to the address anyway notifying the owner of the property of your intentions to submit for exterior modifications.

It is important to provide a copy of the letter and returned receipt with your application.

Following these steps, may help you avoid delays in your application being processed.

*How do I complete the process?*



### **WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AFTER MY IMPROVEMENTS ARE FINISHED?**

Once your improvements are complete, you need to fill out the notice of completion form and attach photos of the improvements from all angles. You can e-mail these photos in JPEG format, or mail hard copies, to Avalon Management . Please keep in mind that the photos should show any set back requirements have been met (use a tape measure in your photo) and needs to show an overview of the improvements.

The committee and/or third party consultant will take these photos and compare them against your plans to make sure all improvements were installed per your approved plan. Some community associations do visual inspections of the completed improvements. In those cases, you will be contacted by the committee or third party consultant to make an appointment for the visual inspection.

### **WHERE DO I GET THE NOTICE OF COMPLETION FORM?**

On your community association website, the notice of completion form can be found under the documents or forms section. If your website does not have the form available, please contact Avalon Management and request one to be provided to you.

### **HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO GET MY NOTICE OF COMPLETION SIGNED OFF?**

If you installed your improvements in accordance with your approved plans and provided pictures of all your improvements, it is easy to get your notice of completion signed off. If you didn't install a tree that was on your plan, expect to install it - per your approved plans. Failure to install improvements per the approved plans will delay your notice of completion approval. Likewise, if you installed improvements which were not on your original plans you may be asked to remove the improvement and/or resubmit for approval and your Notice of Completion will be denied.

### **WHAT IF MY NOTICE OF COMPLETION KEEPS GETTING DENIED, WHAT DO I DO?**

The best thing to do is to address your concerns in writing to the Board of Directors. If you have no plans to complete all of the items on the list, then you should resubmit your plans showing only what you actually installed. The Board of Directors does have the right to call you to hearing and assess fines, or file suit if you choose to ignore the notification to correct items. Most CC&R's provide homeowners with 30 days to correct issues. Failure to rectify any violations may result in the Board moving forward with hearings and fines and/or court action.

### **HOW SOON CAN I GET MY DEPOSIT BACK ONCE MY NOTICE OF COMPLETION IS APPROVED?**

Community Associations typically cut checks twice a month. If you happened to obtain approval for your notice of completion right after a check run was issued, you may have to wait until the next payment cycle. In that event, the refund of your deposit could take up to 45 days.