

# VILLAGE OF KENILWORTH DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS

## I. BACKGROUND

### **Architectural Development of Kenilworth**

- Kenilworth is a community of distinctive character, comprised of homes of the highest quality of design and materials with unique and varied architectural styles.
- Kenilworth was developed in several phases, primarily between 1890 and 1930.
- Several areas were planned and developed as unified parts of the village, often during a short period of time:
  - The area from roughly Melrose to Woodstock and from Cumnor to Warwick is one of the oldest parts of the village and is comprised of a variety of architectural styles, including a large number of Victorian style homes. There are other houses of this style in the Village, particularly at the east end of Kenilworth Avenue and east of Warwick on Melrose.
  - Kenilworth Beach (Robbart /Abingdon/Tudor Ct) developed almost entirely in the 1920s, has a concentration of the European Romantic, Classical Revival and Mediterranean Styles.

“George Maher completed the first two houses on Abingdon. These may have set the stage for the picturesque architectural style for the area with Prairie proportions and features. These were often mixed with Italian and French, but mostly English Revival styles.”<sup>1</sup>

- Kenilworth Community Development (Greenwood, West Kenilworth Avenue, Earlston, part of Sterling and most of the south side of Park Drive). Formerly a golf course, this area was purchased by a group of residents and developed during the period from 1920 to the early 1950’s.

“Most of these (homes) were completed in the 1930’s and are reminiscent of historic styles, but with simplified details, the horizontal massing of the Prairie School and modern steel windows. A few later ones have some Art Modern and Art Deco elements.”<sup>2</sup>

- The Brier Street Neighborhood was developed largely in the 1920’s and contains a variety of architectural styles, including the European Romantic and Classical Revival styles.

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<sup>1</sup>“ The Suburban Ideal: Architecture and Neighborhoods in Kenilworth”, Kenilworth Historical Society, 2004, Melinda F. Kwedar and Lisa Tyminski

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

- Kenilworth was thoughtfully planned in the early 1890's and offered all the modern amenities such as sidewalks, streetlights, buried cables etc.
- Since the Village's original development period from 1891 to about the 1950's, infill/redevelopment has been very limited, and has occurred almost entirely during the past 10 years.

### **Formation of the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Planning**

Created in 2003, The Ad Hoc Committee was assigned the task of preparing a comprehensive plan for the Village and conducting a village-wide survey. In June of 2004, a village-wide survey was undertaken to gauge community opinion about the issues of demolition, new home construction and additions, village character, and long-range planning in Kenilworth. The intent of the survey was to evaluate, in an accurate and unbiased manner, community opinion on these issues. Residents responded with an exceedingly high survey return rate of 55%, giving results a confidence level of +/- 4%, and showing strong representation from all parts of the village. The survey results are attached as Exhibit I to this report.

Based on the results of the community-wide survey, the Ad-Hoc Committee drafted a vision statement as a foundation for the development of the comprehensive plan, with goals and objectives addressing the question of how the village should address the issues relating to teardowns, new construction, and change of Village Character.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

PROTECT THE VILLAGE OF KENILWORTH'S CHARACTER AS A COMMUNITY OF THE HIGHEST QUALITY, THROUGH PRESERVATION OF THE BUILT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, AND THE MAINTENANCE OF HOMES, NEIGHBORHOODS AND SPECIAL PLACES THAT LEND SIGNIFICANT AESTHETIC AND CULTURAL VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY.

### **GOALS**

1. Prevent new homes or additions to existing homes from degrading the neighborhood character or disrupting neighborhood continuity or compatibility among homes, and maintain a suburban vs. an urban feel to the village.
2. Preservation of green space in the Village (Goals 2 and 3 are tied in order of priority)
3. Minimize the loss of older, smaller or historically significant homes to teardowns. (Goals 2 and 3 are tied in order of priority)
4. Preservation and enhancement of the resource of mature trees and attractive public and private landscapes.
5. Minimize the impact of construction activity on the enjoyment of life in the Village

In its effort to develop a strategy for implementing these goals and objectives, the Ad Hoc Committee considered a broad array of tools, techniques and approaches utilized by others communities in addressing similar conditions involving tear downs, new construction and the degradation of community character. The tools considered do not derive from a single community, since none of the communities represent the same unique conditions existent in Kenilworth, and few of the communities have addressed such issues in a comprehensive manner.

In developing a list of tools to address individual objectives, the Ad Hoc Committee came to the conclusion that many of the same tools could be used to address several issues and objectives. As a result, the committee members concluded that the tools fall within six general categories:

- ❖ Dimensional Standards
- ❖ Tree Preservation and Urban Forest Management
- ❖ Construction Management and Permit Review Procedures
- ❖ Design Review
- ❖ Historic Preservation Districts
- ❖ Zoning Incentives

The Ad Hoc committee has addressed dimensional standards, construction management and tree preservation. After careful consideration, the Ad Hoc committee has concluded that a design review program for new construction tailored to the needs of Kenilworth can be an effective tool to achieve the goals and objectives derived from the community survey. The recommendations included in this report focus on design review.

## II. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF DESIGN REVIEW

The design of individual buildings and sites can impact, positively or negatively, the high quality and character of Kenilworth, which the Village has a responsibility to maintain. The Village has an interest in ensuring new buildings contribute positively to Village character as a means of preserving and enhancing the attractiveness of the community. The purpose of design review is to protect the character of the Village, preserve the high quality of homes we enjoy today, and protect and enhance the property value enjoyed by residents.

Each newly constructed house has an immediate and long-term impact on its neighborhood, nearby properties, and their property values. The village has enjoyed and continues to enjoy strong housing values. Encouraging orderly and efficient development, high-quality and compatible design and architectural materials, and architectural variety will enhance the community and sustain property values for all residents.

Currently zoning regulations and the building code are what residents rely upon to protect themselves from adjacent construction. However, zoning is limited to regulating only the “buildable box”, (the maximum parameters of a building’s size and it’s coverage of it’s lot), all quantifiable criteria. Zoning generally regulates a building’s overall dimensions, while design review focuses more upon what happens within the specified dimensions.

Design review uses architectural, ***character-based*** design guideline criteria to insure that what falls within the “box” is compatible with the scale, proportion and quality of architecture that exists within the Village. A home designed to fit into the context of its site strengthens the “visual linkage” between itself and its neighborhood.

Architectural character should not be confused with architectural style. Buildings with very different architectural styles can still be compatible with each other as long as they have fundamental characteristics in common, such as siting, scale, massing, and the rhythm and

proportion of doors and windows. The goal of Design Review is to produce homes that “fit into” the Village and their immediate neighborhood.

Design review would help us avoid the following examples of design problems in new home design that generally cannot be fully addressed through zoning:

- “Boiler plate” or “drawer pull” designs that have been designed for other lots, neighborhoods and/or villages and are context insensitive.
- Architectural plain “boxes” with no particular design elements, shallow-pitched roofs, and wide expanses of uninterrupted building material (stone, brick or stucco) particularly on side walls of homes which can affect the neighbors.

### III. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In order to ensure orderly and efficient development, high-quality and compatible design, and variety of architectural styles, the Ad Hoc Committee recommends that the Village institute a mandatory *Design Review* policy for all New Home<sup>3</sup> construction. The Ad Hoc Committee does not recommend a design review program for additions at this time as (1) the survey did not suggest significant community concern over additions and (2) the inclusion of additions would meaningfully increase the administrative burden on the Village and the time and cost to the homeowner.

#### **Consider the Existing Community**

Three elements should be considered when designing a new home:

**Neighborhood Patterns:** *A new building’s contribution to neighborhood character, and its visual relationship to existing neighborhood and block patterns.(e.g. open front yards, garage placement, pattern of open space etc)*

**Relationship to Adjacent Properties:** *How to best locate, shape and size a house to be complimentary to adjacent homes, minimizing the appearance of bulk to insure architectural compatibility. (e.g. many older homes minimize bulk by utilizing porches, bays, recesses etc. and lowering height and/or recessing parts of the building immediately adjacent to neighboring properties.)*

**Elements of Building Design:** *The quality of design of a building, the design elements that minimize the appearance of bulk and to ensure compatibility with surrounding homes , and the consistency of design elements within the chosen architectural style. (e.g. use of porches and bays, covering all sides with the same material, etc)*

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<sup>3</sup> “New Home” to be defined as the construction of 50 percent or more of the structural elements of the walls, or facade of a building (or buildings on the same lot) in any district zoned R-1, R-2, R-3, or R-4. As used in the description of the design principles, the “home” is intended to include both the principal structure and any detached garage.

In addition, common design principles consistent with the existing character of Kenilworth that work together to address these three elements are incorporated into a design principles framework.

## **Design Principles**

In addition to existing permitting requirements, applicants for demolition permits or building permits for New Homes will be granted permits provided they demonstrate that the plans of the New Home satisfies each of the following design principles, where each applies:

- a. Original Design: The design of the home shall be original relative to properties in its neighborhood.
- b. Height: The height of the home shall be visually compatible with properties and structures to which it is visually related.
- c. Proportion of Front Façade: The relationship of the width to the height of the front elevation shall be visually compatible with properties and structures to which it is visually related.
- d. Rhythm of Solids to Voids in Front Facades: The relationship of solids to voids (punched openings) in the front façade shall be (i) appropriate in rhythm and proportion with the selected architectural style, and (ii) compatible with predominant existing neighborhood patterns where they exist.
- e. Rhythm of Spacing to Homes on Streets: The relationship of a home to the open space between it and adjoining or adjacent homes shall be visually compatible with existing patterns between buildings and open space within its neighborhood.
- f. Roof Shapes: The roof shape(s) of a home shall be (i) appropriate to the design of the building, and (ii) should minimize the appearance of bulk.
- g. Scale and Massing of a Home: The scale and massing of a home, and the appearance of bulk, shall be visually compatible with structures to which it is visually related.
- h. Directional Expression of Front Elevation (vertical or horizontal): A home shall be compatible with structures to which it is visually related in neighborhoods where there exists a predominant directional character.
- i. Consistency of Architectural Design: Building exterior design elements shall be (i) consistent with the chosen architectural style, and (ii) applied to all sides of a building.
- j. Home and Garage Orientation and Placement: The orientation and placement of the home and garage shall be visually compatible with properties in the neighborhood.
- k. Placement of Doors and Windows: The placement of doors, windows, and lighting on a new home should take into account and respect the privacy of neighboring properties, wherever possible.
- l. Materials: Materials used in the construction of new homes should be (i) consistent with the selected architectural style of the home; (ii) of high quality, consistent with the quality and character of the Village; and (iii) constructed using materials and textures used in Kenilworth historically (or are visually similar) and compatible to those of neighboring buildings.

## V. THE DESIGN REVIEW PROCESS

The prerequisite for beginning the design review process is BRC approval of demolition permit, if necessary (resulting from either a 1-2 month BRC process for a non-significant house, or a 8-9 month process for a significant home).

1. Preliminary meeting with Village staff to review Design, Zoning and (if required) Tree approval processes
  - a. No charge to the applicant.
  - b. Review expectations, guidelines and processes with applicant.
  - c. Minimize cost and time for homeowner/builder by sharing information/expectations upfront.
  - d. Make it a collaborative process.
  - e. Discuss the existing architectural characteristics of the Village (i.e. open front yards) and characteristics of the particular neighborhood where the proposed construction will take place.
  - f. Not a review of building design plans or concepts.
  
2. Mandatory conceptual review with Village staff and one member of *Design Review Committee*
  - a. At this point, the Village shall impose a fee on the applicant sufficient to cover all the costs of reviewing the application, in all design phases, for adherence to the design principles.
  - b. A member of the *Design Review Committee* is assigned (referred to herein as the “Advocate”) to the applicant to work with the applicant and to assist in answering questions regarding the principles of design and the application to be reviewed.
  - c. Applicant receives input on the initial design concept.
  - d. Village staff and Advocate shall report back to the *Design Review Committee* at the next regularly scheduled meeting a summary of the design proposed by the applicant and the input or recommendations made by the Village Staff and Advocate. Any issues or concerns raised by other members of the *Design Review Committee* shall be promptly communicated by Village Staff to the applicant.
  
3. Optional intermediate review with *Design Review Committee*
  - a. Feedback on product/result of input from initial review
  - b. Part of regularly scheduled meeting of *Design Review Committee*
  
4. Request for approval by *Design Review Committee*
  - a. **Must** come after:
    - o Zoning Review and receipt of Zoning Summary report
    - o Review of project for Tree Permit(s), if permit required

*Note: These reviews are expected to typically take about one week and would be required to proceed to the review of the design by the Design Review Committee.*
  - b. *Design Review Committee*
    - o Review of all required application material, including elevations and renderings to scale, material selections, etc.

- The Village staff and Advocate shall submit a written recommendation to the Committee regarding the applicant's design and fit with the design principles.
- Decisions shall be communicated to the applicant at the meeting (approval, approval with conditions, or denial)

5. *Design Review Committee*

- a. The Village will establish a *Design Review Committee* that will be responsible for reviewing an applicants' design to ensure that the principles noted above are consistently applied in the design of the New Home.
- b. An existing body of Village government shall be responsible for overseeing the work of the *Design Review Committee*.
- c. The *Design Review Committee* shall be comprised of:
  - Paid professionals, identified from a candidate search performed by a qualified search committee (to be determined) who will:
    - identify potential candidates, review their credentials (architects, designers, builders) or work and/or educational accomplishments (educators, and historians)
    - submit a list of recommended committee members to the Village Board for their approval
  - A total of 4-6 qualified persons:
    - who hold appropriate professional certifications (e.g. board certification)
    - who have high quality reputations for work completed in Kenilworth and/or communities of similar quality or as educators or historians
    - the majority of whom are not residents of Kenilworth.

*Note: The Ad Hoc Committee recommends that at least one qualified resident be a member of the Design Review Committee, but that a majority of members are independent, non-resident professionals.*
- d. The *Design Review Committee* shall meet monthly in regularly scheduled meetings.
- e. The Advocate (member of the *Design Review Committee* assigned to work with the applicant)
  - Shall not have any professional or personal relationship with the applicant
  - Will not vote on the final approval of the application, but will be available to consult with the Committee.
  - Any other conflict of interest issues with any member of the *Design Review Committee* would require the affected committee member to excuse himself from a particular review where a conflict could occur.
- f. The *Design Review Committee* shall establish a specific timeline for the process and specific application criteria.
- g. The *Design Review Committee* shall provide public notification and the opportunity for input from neighbors. Consider staff or committee members soliciting input as part of the review process.
- h. The *Design Review Committee* shall clearly document the review process and the findings, including a conclusion and statement of rationale and applicable criteria or guidelines.

## *VI. KEY ELEMENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROCESS*

Other issues the Ad Hoc Committee suggests the Village consider in creating a process that will be successful include:

1. Education about the process and the design principles for applicants, architects, and realtors. Consider the development of an educational publication regarding design and Kenilworth history. See Exhibit II for an example from Naperville, IL.
2. Training of *Design Review Committee* professionals.
3. The applicant should have a limited time (<1 year) after the final decision to submit a complete building permit application. The building permit and construction management processes should insure that the submitted plans and the actual construction match the plans approved by the *Design Review Committee*. The Village should consider requiring a bond or escrow to ensure compliance.
4. Stress the Community and *Design Review Committee's expectation of finding* a mutually acceptable design solution.
5. The quality of new home compatibility takes precedence over other issues (trees, for example).

A successful process will be one that results in improved quality of design of new homes, and homes that are viewed by the vast majority of residents as compatible with and adding value and enjoyment to their neighborhoods. Further, homeowners or builders who go through a design review process should experience an efficient, clearly understood process that results in a positive outcome.