



# TOWN OF RIVERHEAD ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

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April 28, 2023

Noah Levine, AICP  
Associate Principal, BFJ Planning  
([N.Levine@bfjplanning.com](mailto:N.Levine@bfjplanning.com))

Re: Questionnaire for Boards and Commissions

Dear Mr. Levine:

In response to your request for feedback from Town Boards and Commissions, the Architectural Review Board submits the following:

**Overview:** The Architectural Review Board (ARB), on behalf of the Town Board and Planning Board is charged with reviewing applications referred for architectural review and making recommendations to approve, deny or recommend alternatives relative to a proposed site plan, project or development, is to consider the various aspects of design, with special emphasis on these objectives:

- To prevent the unnecessary destruction or blighting of the natural landscape or of the achieved man-made environment.
- To ascertain that architectural treatments have been designed so as to relate harmoniously to significant existing buildings that have a visual relationship to the proposed development.
- To coordinate compliance with other municipal ordinances that affect visual impact, such as the sign regulations contained in Chapter 301, Zoning and Land Development etc.
- To review applications together with the Landmarks Preservation Commission for alterations or demolition of a designated structure or structures within an historic district.

Additionally, the codified purpose and intent of architectural review within the Town of Riverhead include:

- Promote those visual qualities in the environment which bring value to the community.
- Foster the attractiveness of the community as a place to live and work.

- Preserve the character and quality of our heritage by maintaining the integrity of those areas which have a discernible character or are of special historic significance.
- Protect public and private investments in the area.
- Educate and raise the level of community awareness and expectations for the quality of its environment.

**In regard to the Comprehensive Plan update the ARB offers the following comments/priorities:**

1. Inclusion of design standards for the main road business area (East of 105 on main road) which has been part of an effort to maintain the historic corridor. Right now, the requirement is that commercial buildings have a ‘rural’ appearance, but without any guidance on what it means. There are properties within that zone that may be developed in the future. In 20 years it will likely look very different.
2. Preservation of the Sound Avenue Corridor via signage and design standards.
3. In regard to the Pattern Book: there has been a lot of discussion with the Business Advisory Committee, Town Board and Downtown Revitalization committee to revise what was proposed in the pattern book. The ARB must have input on this discussion.
4. The consideration of a requirement of for ARB and LPC applications to include elevation drawings of neighboring buildings for context, rather than good street view images.
5. Thriving corridor along Route 58: Consider adding trees to medians, pedestrian refuges for those crossing the corridor, and safer pedestrian/bike designs throughout, which also enhance the corridor’s visual softness and richness.
6. Downtown zoning should incorporate setback requirements for upper floors to protect the pedestrian environment in the Downtown area.
7. Table 2-2 and 2-3: There are two existing zones that are not listed on either chart, the Peconic River Community and Riverfront Corridor zones. These are changed to TRC Tourism/Resort Campus on the 2015 Plan, which may only be appropriate for a few large parcels. These areas are also controlled by NYSDEC land use categories. The Peconic River Community Zone has access to both public water and sewers, so should be considered separately. Please note that the zoning has already been changed three times in the past 18 years on these parcels. It may be best to only change the large parcels (five acres?) along this stretch.
8. The transfer of development rights uses a fully-sized acre. This is appropriate for large parcels. Consider a 40,000 SF option for already subdivided parcels (road access).
9. The Zoning chapter does not describe how to enhance pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, especially if it is to use private property.
10. It is necessary to see the proposed changes mapped clearly. Only see the 2015 Proposed Land Use plan on the Town’s website. Need update on proposed zoning compared to

existing zoning to fully evaluate the proposed changes.

11. Much of the zoning seems too restrictive/specific regarding use categories. All residential zones should allow home offices/modest work activities. This is especially true due to changed uses after the pandemic with many people working from home. Each residential area should also have close proximity to walkable “hamlets” or neighborhood facilities. Or, Residential zones should include neighborhood facilities, which promotes less use of vehicle while walkability.
12. Non-residential zones are narrowly defined for their uses, too. The nature of businesses has changed, for instance personal service/wellness/exercise and food related uses should be allowed in almost all of the non-residential zoning categories, including TRC Tourism/Resort Campus. Why is a wine bar specifically listed, but not a brewery or even tea house? Cannabis related uses also need to be recognized. New, unanticipated uses may not fit these old categories as well.
13. Housing categories should be more inclusive to allow for more varied residential building types in a zoning district to avoid the segregation of housing by income or age. Adaptive reuse, the addition to existing residences should be encouraged. Possibly address the allowance of Accessory Dwelling Units. Condensing already developed properties is needed, instead of developing new ones. Residential zones should be flexible for the density, too.
14. The proposed housing zones use R-40 and R-80 sizing, which traditionally support suburban sprawl, not conservation. Instead consider being inclusive of a wider range of sizes, from ¼ acre to 5 to 10-acre parcels. The small parcels will allow for modest homes and promote home ownership, while the 5 to 10 acre parcels will more accurately match a more rural aesthetic.
15. The chapter does not evaluate the changes in use that the North Fork’s popularity has spawned. The assumption that only 9% of the housing stock is seasonal may be a misrepresentation of recent home ownership trends. The percentage of homes owned as second residences, or the number of homes being developed for short-term, summer rentals should be understood. Analyzing the numbers of housing should include the income levels, including young and elderly generations, and low-income workers. How many high-income housings will actually be needed? How many low-income housings are needed?
16. Recently in the East End, many homes are being developed as “commercial” investments. Size is maximized for air B&Bs, summer rentals, and spec. houses, and accompanied by water-guzzling swimming pools and lawn irrigation. The resources used by some of these “single-family” homes are more like B and B’s without the limitations as to number of bedrooms nor the flow evaluations usually associated with commercial uses.
17. In order to further environmental goals, the Zoning proposals need to better reflect carrying

capacities and introduce related aspects to the zoning, such as water use, heat island impact, energy efficiency, carbon load, electrical vehicle charging, waste management, etc. Access to public water and sewer should be carefully considered in the zoning plan.

18. Zoning should identify the desired public realm and determine a fair way to achieve this goal. One owner should not benefit from the devaluation of another property.

Sincerely,

Matt Charters, Planner

On Behalf of the Town of Riverhead Architectural Review Board

