

The role of the Architectural Control Committee for your homeowners association, or HOA, is to ensure that the community's property values are preserved. Without an architectural control committee your neighbor could easily paint his home bright blue with pink shutters that would be visible from space. Violation of your community's architectural standards creates litigation issues that are costly and creates animosity in your community. By having a set of exterior standards that extends to colors, roof coverings, landscaping materials and fence styles, your community can avoid these ugly distractions.

People purchase homes in deed restricted communities for any number of reasons. They could be attracted to the amenities such as a pool, tennis courts or the restricted access. Or it could be there is a certain comfort in knowing that the homes, while looking very similar, will continue to increase in value because there are certain standards that are demanded within the governing documents. The purpose of the architectural review is to ensure uniformity throughout the community.

Before making any change to the exterior of your home, contact your Board of Directors or association management company to find out the written guidelines for your particular improvement architectural request. These guidelines typically will give you detailed instructions on how to submit your request. Do not assume that if it's not explicitly stated in the Declaration of Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions that there are no standards. The Board of Directors must approve your improvement prior to work starting.

Do not start your improvement prior to receiving written approval from the architectural control committee or Board of Directors. Doing so could cause you to have to remove what you've started and postpone the work. There's also a chance that what you want done does not comply with the exact standards of your community, such as fence styles, designs, materials or location.

When submitting for architectural approval, especially for fences, pools or enclosures, always submit a copy of your boundary survey with your improvement marked on the survey. Along with the survey, make sure you include a detailed description of your improvement and the types of materials used. You can get this information from your contractor. This is very important because your survey will show any easements or right of ways which should not be restricted. For exterior paint colors, include swatches of your paint and trim colors. For roofs, submit a sample of your shingle or roofing material.

Architectural Control Committees exist to preserve the aesthetics of your HOA. Without a set of standards for exterior improvements, a community can quickly decline and you could find the value of your home declining as well. These committees, working at the direction of the Board of Directors, can prevent an adversarial situation from occurring with your neighbor.