

# Understanding the Change Request Process for Existing Home Improvements in Devaun Park

My name is John Komar. I am a fairly new resident of Devaun Park and am currently serving as Co-Chair of the Architectural Review Committee (ARC). Kathy Trimble shares Co-Chair duties with me. She is managing the new construction applications and I am handling the existing home improvements side of the ARC responsibilities.

The addition of the Pulte development in Devaun Park has prompted a renewed interest in our neighborhood. As a result, we are seeing an increase in applications for new construction in the legacy area of Devaun Park. I use the term legacy for the original part of Devaun Park whose development dates back to about 2004. In recent years the addition of the newer Pulte portion of Devaun Park has greatly expanded the neighborhood.

There is a lengthy document – the **Architectural Design Guidelines** that describe in detail the responsibilities of the ARC. It is these guidelines along with the original Devaun Park **Covenants** that we use to guide our committee in approving new homes as well as approving changes to existing homes in Devaun Park. An introduction to the Architectural Design Guidelines describes the original intent of Devaun Park.

***Houses in Devaun Park exhibit architectural interest and detail not found in many neighborhoods. The architectural style of houses in Devaun Park is Historic Southern Architecture reminiscent of Historic Charleston, South Carolina. These homes are characterized by attention to detail, classic proportions with wide porches, raised foundations, distinctive porticos and simple rooflines. Devaun Park was designed to be a Traditional Neighborhood Design community and has won several awards for its design. It is the goal and mission of the ARC to ensure that these traditions continue into the future.***

So how do we accomplish this? The Architectural Review Committee is currently made up of seven volunteer residents of the Devaun Park community.

The ARC is currently comprised of seven members – two Co-Chairs and five members at large. The Co-Chairs divide their responsibilities between New Construction and Existing Home Improvements.

As mentioned earlier, Kathy Trimble and I are sharing Co-Chair responsibilities.

And in no particular order – additional members include Carl Evanoff, Brenda DeLima, Maureen Phillips, Glenn Swartz and Roger Bryan. I believe some of the members are here this morning. I ask those brave enough to stand up and be recognized.

## **EXISTING HOME IMPROVEMENT CHANGE REQUESTS**

This morning we will discuss only the existing home improvement Change Request process. For most of us in attendance, this is the portion of ARC responsibilities that you will encounter.

The Devaun Park Architectural Guidelines, generally discuss the improvements that require approval from the ARC. You can reference this on page 14 of the Guidelines. These are available through the Devaun Park resident's website. Only changes that affect the exterior of your home will require ARC approval because the ARC is charged with preserving those aspects of your originally approved design which are consistent with the Devaun Park Charlestonian theme, are harmonious with surrounding structures, and are in keeping with the originally intended character of the neighborhood.

### **MAJOR CHANGES**

Existing home improvement changes can be MINOR or MAJOR. A major change would include but is not limited to porches, garages, room additions. Generally anything that affects the structure of the home would be considered a major change. The information required by ARC and the design review process for a major change would be similar to that established for new house construction. A design review fee would be required. Devaun Park has retained a consulting architect that reviews all new house plans. A Contractor Application (Form C) would be need to be submitted along with a refundable Construction Deposit. This deposit would be 5% of the estimated project cost capped at \$5,000.

With the majority of homes in Devaun Park being fairly new, we rarely see any major change requests.

### **MINOR CHANGES**

The overwhelming number of Change Requests for Existing Home Improvements in Devaun Park come under the MINOR changes category.

Some of the most common improvements that we see are the addition or expansion of patios or decks, installation of backyard fences and expansion or replacement of landscaping.

Improvements such as repainting your home or replacing dead shrubs do not require ARC approval. Exceptions to this would be changing the original **approved colors** or replacing **original shrubs** with a different variety of planting. Remember that the ARC is charged with preserving those aspects of your originally approved design - so that any

significant changes must be reviewed before a change request can be approved. Remember that your original design approvals took into account a number of factors – architectural style consistent with the Devaun Park Charlestonian theme – with colors and features that are harmonious with surrounding structures.

## **CHANGE REQUEST PROCESS**

Ok – so how does one go about requesting a change to improve your existing home. The first step is to fill out a form. Within the **Architectural Guidelines** is a **“Change Request – Existing Home – Form G”**. This form is intended only for use with changes to existing homes. We ask for your name and address, lot number – phone number and email address. Additionally, if you have a contractor involved in your project, we need his name and address, cell phone # and email address. There is provision for a description of the project on this form. Be sure to include as many details about the project as possible to help eliminate the need for us to get back to you with questions which would delay a prompt response and subsequent approval for your request.

## **HERE'S AN EXAMPLE**

Let's look at an example involving a fence installation request. This is perhaps the most frequent Existing Home Improvement request we receive. In addition to the change request form, we will need a product description of the type of fence you plan to install. Sometimes referred to as “cut sheets”, these can be sourced through your fence installer, or their website. This product sheet should include a picture of the fence and provide product specifications like product material, fence height (maximum 5' high), gaps between the pickets (minimum 1" is required). We also need to know where you plan to install the fence to assure that it will be within your property lines. You should have a plat survey that identifies your lot and property boundaries. If you do not have one provided during your closing, you'll need to secure a copy either from your builder, the surveyor or Brunswick County. Mark this survey to show where the proposed location of the fence is BUA amount and include this with your request. The property boundaries must be marked so that the ARC can determine that you are installing the fence within your property lines. All lots have been surveyed – probably several times during the construction process. If the stakes are still in place, no problem. If not you or your contractor can identify the surveyed property corners by digging down to the rebar (metal) posts buried in the ground by the surveyor to mark the corners. Last resort will require having the surveyor visit and confirm the property corners. Additionally, the actual location of the fence must be staked and flagged to verify that it will be located on your property. Once this has been done, a member of the ARC will do a site visit and verify this. You will be required to sign a “Fence Location Form” to confirm all of this.

After this has been done, the ARC members review your request and vote to approve or not approve. If for some reason your request is not approved, the committee members discussed the reasons for declining the request and determine the modifications necessary to gain approval.

The ARC has a monthly meeting to discuss requests and other ARC issues. However, we do most of the review work using emails so that we can respond as promptly as possible to your requests. We realize timing is important in working with contractors. We do our best not to delay your project.

Because of the increasing number of Change Requests we are receiving, we ask that you allow at least 2 weeks between request submission and approval. I can tell you that the majority of our requests are processed well within that time frame, especially when complete information is included from the start.

### **BUILD UPON AREA (BUA)**

Devaun Park is located within an area of Brunswick County where Stormwater Management by the North Carolina Coastal Stormwater regulations are enforced by the NC Dept of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ). What this means to you as a homeowner is that each lot within Devaun Park has been assigned a maximum amount of square feet upon which you can construct impervious surfaces. That is surfaces that prevent stormwater from penetrating the ground. These surfaces include the house, garage, driveway, sidewalks, patios and HVAC pads. All lots with the Pulte portion of Devaun Park have been assigned 3500 SF. The lots within the legacy portion of Devaun Park vary by lot, from a low of 2900 SF to a high of 5,000 SF. The majority of lots are 3,300 to 3,500 SF.

This is important when considering adding or expanding patios, a swimming pool decking, additional sidewalks or any other surface that will block stormwater. Your original house survey, site plan or house plans include the specific BUA you have used. In the case of the plat surveys provided by Pulte to homeowners this BUA is calculated as “proposed” and often does not include optional patios or other surfaces that were selected during your buying process. Be careful to make sure your survey reflects an “as built BUA calculation. In recent weeks we have had to decline a few requests for patio extensions for this very reason.

### **LANDSCAPING CHANGE REQUESTS**

Perhaps the second most frequent Change Request we receive for Existing Homes involves landscaping. Often the initial landscaping installed is either insufficient or has

died and homeowners wish to replace and expand the landscaping. Depending on which area of Devaun Park you live, you are required to maintain a minimum of either 5 or 3 deciduous trees that measure at least 14' or 12'. The Legacy area is 5 trees 14' high and the Pulte area is 3 trees 12' high. If you are planning to modify your landscaping, be sure to keep this requirement in mind. You are free to add as many trees as you want, palm trees are not counted as part of the deciduous tree requirement. So, you can't remove a deciduous tree and replace it with a palm tree.

If you are merely replacing dead shrubs with a like for like replacement, a Change Request is not required. We are seeing many homeowners adding additional plants to enhance their existing landscaping. A Change Request is required for this type of project.

### **SUMMARY OF THE CHANGE REQUEST PROCESS**

So, let's review the Change Request process for Existing Home Improvements. This process is the same for any project, from fence installations to landscaping changes.

- First, fill out the Existing Home Improvement Change Request – Form G found on Page 61 – 62 of the Architectural Guidelines
- Secure any product descriptions used for your project to allow ARC to understand what you'll be using
- Provide a plat survey marked to show the locations of proposed fences, patios or landscaping
- Where fence installations are involved get property lines and fence locations marked and have ARC make an inspection to confirm proper installation
- Allow at least 2 weeks from submission to approval.

If you have questions in preparing a Change Request, feel free to contact me or anyone on the ARC. We have set up a dedicated email address for ARC.

[arcdevaunpark@gmail.com](mailto:arcdevaunpark@gmail.com) Feel free to reach out to us.