

To: Members of Dublin City Council
From: Dana L. McDaniel, City Manager
Date: June 8, 2021
Initiated By: Megan O'Callaghan, Deputy City Manager/Chief Finance and Development Officer
Jennifer M. Rauch, AICP, Director of Planning
Re: Architectural and Design Review and Support

Summary

City Council has requested architectural expertise be provided to supplement staff reviews and to inform Board and Commission actions. Staff has evaluated options to meet the need for additional ongoing professional architectural reviews and support.

Background

The Planning Division has used consultant services, including architectural support on an as-needed basis to provide training and to conduct design reviews for a number of years. These support services are used in a variety of capacities, both to supplement internal staff reviews and for Board and Commission support. Initially firms such as Ford & Associates Architects (2018), Design Group (2015), F5 Design Architectural (all Tartan Ridge reviews), Jonathan Barnes Architectural Design (2013), and Meleca Architectural (2013) were used for a project specific purpose and review. In addition, the Planning Division has been under contract with several design consultants on an on-going basis to provide consistent support, Guide Studio (2014), Preservation Designs (2016), and LandPlan Studio (2017).

Guide Studio, a graphic design firm, performs qualitative and quantitative reviews of all signs located within Bridge Park and Bridge Park West to ensure the intent of the district, which is to encourage creative, engaging, one-of-a-kind sign designs, is met. The consultants are graphic designers who provide sign review as part of the zoning review portion of the sign permit process. The annual contract value is \$4,500.

Preservation Designs, a historic preservation firm, provides historic architectural services including historical analysis for existing structures and sites, and review of architectural appropriateness of exterior modifications and new construction for Historic Dublin and outlying historic properties. The consultant is a registered architect who provides detailed written reviews with graphics and extensive historic background for significant development applications for the Architectural Review Board. The annual contract value is \$14,000.

LandPlan Studios, a planning and urban design firm, provides professional services for design and technical review for larger development projects primarily focused on Bridge Street District and West Innovation District applications. The consultant is a certified planner and a registered landscape architect who provides written reviews and analysis with graphics for development applications for the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Administrative Review Team. The

annual contract value is \$36,000.

Each of these consultant's reviews occur within the planning review process and appears seamless to an applicant. The review process is streamlined to the point where upon receipt of applications the materials are provided to the specific consultant for review and their review deadline is incorporated into the overall timeframe.

Options

Potential options to meet the needs of City Board and Commission members to provide additional ongoing architectural support are summarized below. Each option could include training, support and design review for development applications. Staff recognizes a need to balance thoughtful architectural input with a user-friendly development review process. Additionally, staff recognizes that it is imperative to select design professionals who can provide honest critiques of their peers' work. The budget to provide these professional services within the Planning Division's operating budget is up to \$50,000.

Integrated Design Review (Subject Matter Experts)

The first option is to establish a formalized Integrated Design Review (IDR) within the existing development review process by consulting with multiple design professionals having experience in various specialties including: historic preservation, mixed-use development, office/institutional development, landscape architecture, and residential development. The design professional would be asked to make independent recommendations informed by their expertise in the form of a written report to City Boards and Commissions and they would participate in Board and Commission meetings. Additionally, specialists could provide on-going professional development for Board and Commission members.

The approach provides a seamless development review experience for our external customers. Additionally, the volume of proposals is distributed across consultant teams facilitating timely reviews. This approach aligns with the Planning Division's existing case coordination procedures and would not require significant additional staff resources to implement and facilitate. Our current contracted architectural firms are largely utilized on projects within the Bridge Street, West Innovation and Historic Districts. With the formal IDR model, contracted architectural support would also be utilized for projects outside these geographic areas. This approach would allow for a more robust method to engage architectural expertise and support, and more meaningful collaboration with the Board and Commission members.

Additionally, Planning staff would engage the consultants to provide guidance and information about new building materials and products when they are included with individual applications. Planning would also consult these professionals at least one a year to proactively provide the Board and Commission members with information about recent trends in materials and identify materials that should be considered with future development proposals. This information would be presented and discussed with the Board and Commission members.

Design Review Committee

The second option is to establish a new Design Review Committee (DRC) body and process to review development proposals across the City as an added component to the development review processes. The DRC would be comprised of three members including two architects and

one landscape architect. The DRC would meet regularly in accordance with a published schedule. Projects requiring design review would need to be submitted by a deadline, in advance of the DRC meeting, to afford the group adequate review time.

The establishment of a DRC would be a new process that would precede Board and Commission reviews. Staff would not make recommendations to the DRC, but rather the DRC would make independent recommendations to staff and the Boards and Commissions. Proposals reviewed by various professional experts would be forwarded to the DRC. The DRC would require additional staff support as a standing body. This process would also add time and additional steps in the review process, which would impact the developer and their timeline.

Recommendation

Planning recommends establishing a formalized Integrated Design Review process to ensure reviews are conducted in alignment with areas of professional expertise and continue to ensure a seamless user experience for applicants when interfacing with City Boards and Commissions. Establishing this formalized process would not create additional steps or add more time to the overall development review process. In addition to the individual application review, a consultant could also provide support, information, and training to the Board and Commissions, as needed. Staff recommends City Council refer this matter to the Community Development Committee for further consideration.