

COMMUNITY APPEARANCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

By far the major portion of urban development in the Regional District has been and will continue to be privately conceived and carried out. While it is true that local officials can regulate this development in order to protect the public health, safety and welfare, it is also true that imaginative design cannot be legislated. Excellent architecture and landscaping are the products of private architects, engineers, and landscape architects doing their best work for enlightened clients under a favorable climate of public opinion.

A Community Appearance Advisory Committee, made up of outstanding civic leaders, architects, engineers, and landscape architects, should be established to give advice on trends in architectural style, on the preservation of worthy historical buildings and sites, on ways of improving the unity, contrast, and accent of private building design, to keep a watchful eye on the enforcement of building, housing and zoning ordinances, to sponsor competitions for annual awards recognizing excellent urban design, and generally to fill the gap where legislative control does not apply. The Committee would become, in effect, a community conscience prodding developers and public agencies alike toward excellence in city building.

Subdivision design as well as building and landscape design would benefit. The use of flexible zoning and subdivision controls for aesthetic gains rather than simply economic gain would be encouraged.

It seems to us that aesthetic considerations are relative in their nature. With the passing of time social standards conform to new ideas. As a race our sensibilities are becoming more refined, and that which formerly did not offend cannot now be endured. That which the common law did not condemn as a nuisance is now frequently outlawed as such by the written law. This is not because the subject outlawed is of a different nature, but because our sensibilities have become more refined and our ideals more exacting. Nauseous smells have always come under the ban of the law but ugly sights and discordant surroundings may be just as distressing to keener sensibilities. The rights of property should not be sacrificed to the pleasure of an ultra-aesthetic taste. But whether they should be permitted to plague the average or dominant human sensibilities well may be pondered.

—Supreme Court of Wisconsin

2071000 Report of Community Appearance
Advisory Committee for the Regional District

