



## **DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE: ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

There have been questions that have arisen from actions/issues lately in Sovereign Oaks. To clarify the role of the DRC in all of this...

The Design Review Committee for Sovereign Oaks is tasked with the approval for site design, home placement on said site, design of both the home and landscaping, assuring a high level of builder quality and timely scheduling of the construction process. In Sovereign Oaks the focus on green building, tree preservation and living in harmony with the environment adds more challenges to the DRC as well as the property owners. The current DRC has well over one hundred years of combined experience in design, architecture, landscaping, storm water handling and building. The decisions they make are made from this wealth of experience and adherence to both the guidelines and the original ethos of Sovereign Oaks' aesthetic: diversity and creativity.

No two homes should be the same, and creativity by architects, builders and even home owners should be rewarded. Each of us that owns a lot here can build their dream home knowing that the DRC is acting in the owners' best interest as well as the community's. The DRC may decide that, in some cases, creativity outweighs another person's subjective interpretations of the guidelines. At that time the DRC may then grant a variance in that one particular case. This variance does not need to be registered with any government agency, only recorded by the DRC coordinator, (another professional). As clearly stated in the Guidelines, these variances do not set precedence for other cases. The HOA board has no say in these design decisions nor can they change these decisions or variances at a later date. Lack of awareness of this process does not make anyone a victim; it may merely mean that person is ill informed.

A case may arise where this lack of familiarity with the guidelines leads a lot owner to attempt to affect a neighbor's build, landscaping or both. The DRC assesses each lot and build individually. We do not ask for, nor will we ever ask for input from neighbors regarding their potential neighbor's homes. Should there be issues like storm water drainage potentially causing damage, the DRC may recruit neighbors to work together towards a mutually satisfactory agreement. On the few occasions this has happened, the DRC has found the neighborly solution to be best. After all we will still be neighbors after these issues are settled.

Should there be any questions about the role of the DRC, three of the members are residents of Sovereign Oaks and readily available to talk. The advice the DRC gives to both builders and architects is to ask first, not apologize later. Any and all design questions go through the DRC, not the HOA board. We usually meet on the second Tuesday of the month and schedule thirty-minute blocks to handle our required duties. This thirty-minute block is preceded by hours of research, meetings and e-mails long before the actual meeting. Any plans are due one week prior to the meeting to allow preparation as well as scheduling. To the residents who have already gone through the build process, thank you for your patience and understanding. To those who plan to build, we hope you now have a better grasp of the responsibilities of the DRC.

Mike Newton  
DRC member  
HOA board member