

Architectural review application (any state)

Association: _____ State: _____ Property
type: ☐ Condominium ☐ Cooperative ☐ HOA ☐ Other Committee or board reviewing:
_____ Application number: _____ Date
received: _____

How to use this

Architectural review is the association function most likely to end in a dispute, and almost always for the same reason: the owner did not know what was required, or the association cannot show what it decided and when.

Both are fixable with paperwork. An application that collects the right information at the start prevents the second round of questions that adds a month. A decision record that states the ground for the decision, and the date, prevents an argument about whether the association responded in time.

This form is written for **any state**. Architectural review is governed mainly by the declaration and any design guidelines adopted under it, and those are association-specific rather than state-specific. What state law usually adds is a **response deadline** and sometimes a rule about what happens if the association misses it. Part 0 makes you find that before you use this form, because the deadline is the single provision most likely to decide a dispute.

Fill-in fields appear in square brackets. Delete the guidance boxes marked “Builder note” before you circulate this.

Part 0. Establish your rules before you use this form

- ☐ Does state law set a **deadline** for the association to respond to an architectural application? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ What happens if that deadline is missed: is the application **deemed approved**, or is there another consequence? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ Does state law require the decision to be **in writing**, or to state a reason? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ Does state law give the owner a right to a **hearing or appeal**? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ Does state law protect any improvement from denial regardless of the declaration (common examples include solar devices, flags, antennas, native or drought-tolerant landscaping, electric vehicle charging, and accessibility modifications)? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ What does the **declaration** require: which improvements need approval, who reviews, and by what standard? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ Are there adopted **design guidelines**, and were they adopted in a way the declaration permits? **Answer:** _____
- ☐ Does the association require a **deposit or fee**, and does state law or the declaration permit it? **Answer:** _____

Builder note. The fifth question is the one that produces the most expensive mistakes. Many states override the declaration for particular improvements, and an association that denies one of those on the strength of its own rules can find the denial unenforceable and itself liable for the owner's costs. Get the list for your state from counsel once, and put it in your design guidelines so the committee does not have to remember it.

Part A. Owner and property

Owner name: _____ Property address: _____
_____ Unit or lot: _____ Account number: _____
_____ Mailing address if different: _____
Phone: _____ Email: _____

Is the owner the applicant? ☐ Yes ☐ No, applicant is: _____ If a tenant or contractor is applying, owner's written authorisation is attached: ☐ Yes ☐ Not applicable

Account status - ☐ Assessments current - ☐ No open violation on this property - ☐ No prior application pending on this property

Builder note. Whether a delinquent owner may be denied architectural review is governed by the declaration and, in some states, by statute. Do not assume the association may refuse to consider an application on that ground. Confirm it in Part 0 before you rely on this section for anything more than information.

Part B. What is proposed

Describe the improvement in plain language:

Category (tick all that apply) - ☐ Exterior paint or finish - ☐ Roof - ☐ Windows or doors - ☐ Fence, wall, or gate - ☐ Deck, patio, or hardscape - ☐ Landscaping or tree removal - ☐ Driveway or walkway - ☐ Awning, shutter, or shade structure - ☐ Pool, spa, or water feature - ☐ Shed, outbuilding, or play structure - ☐ Solar or renewable energy device - ☐ Electric vehicle charging equipment - ☐ Antenna or satellite dish - ☐ Flag or flagpole - ☐ Accessibility modification - ☐ Sign - ☐ Exterior lighting - ☐ Mechanical equipment (HVAC, generator, pool equipment) - ☐ Other: _____

Location on the property: _____ Dimensions: _____
_____ Materials: _____
_____ Colour, with manufacturer and code if applicable: _____ Visible from: ☐ Street ☐ Common area ☐ Neighbouring property ☐ Not visible

Estimated start date: _____ Estimated completion date: _____

Part C. Attachments

An application missing any of these is incomplete, and an incomplete application is the most common cause of delay. State clearly whether the review clock starts on receipt or on completeness (see Part 0).

- ☐ Site plan or survey showing the improvement's location and setbacks
- ☐ Drawings or plans, dimensioned
- ☐ Photographs of the existing condition
- ☐ Product specification or manufacturer cut sheet
- ☐ Colour or material sample, or a printed image with the code
- ☐ Contractor name, licence number, and proof of insurance
- ☐ Any permit already obtained, or confirmation none is required
- ☐ Neighbour acknowledgement, if the declaration or guidelines require it

Part D. Owner acknowledgements

Initial each.

- _____ I will not begin work until I receive written approval.
- _____ I will complete the work as approved. Any change requires a new application.
- _____ I will obtain every permit the work requires and will comply with applicable codes.
- _____ I am responsible for any damage to common area or another owner's property arising from this work.
- _____ I understand that approval is aesthetic and against the association's rules. It is not an engineering review, a code review, or a warranty that the improvement is safe, sound, or permitted by any authority.
- _____ I understand that I, and my successors in title, are responsible for maintaining this improvement unless the association agrees otherwise in writing.
- _____ I will complete the work by the date approved, or request an extension before it passes.

Owner signature: _____ Date: _____

Part E. Association use only

Date received: _____ Received by: _____ Application complete on: _____
Response deadline under Part 0: _____

Builder note. Fill the deadline in the moment the application arrives, not when the committee meets. Most missed deadlines are missed because nobody wrote the date down.

Reviewed by: _____ Meeting or review date: _____

Decision - ☐ Approved as submitted - ☐ Approved with conditions (state them below, in full) - ☐ Denied (state the ground below, citing the declaration or guideline section) - ☐ Additional information required (state exactly what, and whether the clock is paused)

Conditions or grounds:

Authority relied on: ☐ Declaration section _____ ☐ Design guideline section _____ ☐ Other _____

Completion required by: _____ **Owner notified on:** _____ **Method:** ☐ Email ☐ Mail ☐ Hand delivery ☐ Portal

Signed: _____ **Title:** _____ **Date:** _____

Part F. Closeout

- ☐ Work inspected on completion, date: _____
- ☐ Built as approved, or variance documented: _____
- ☐ Final permits or inspection certificates received
- ☐ Application, decision, and closeout filed in the official records
- ☐ Any deposit returned or applied, date: _____
- ☐ Ongoing maintenance obligation recorded against the property file

Disclaimer

This is a starting point, not legal advice, and it is deliberately not state specific. Architectural review is governed principally by your association's declaration and any design guidelines adopted under it, which control over anything in this form.

State law commonly adds a response deadline, and in many states protects particular improvements from denial regardless of what the declaration says. Common examples include solar devices, flags, antennas, drought-tolerant landscaping, electric vehicle charging, and accessibility modifications, but the list and its conditions differ by state. Do not treat the absence of a protection here as evidence that your state does not grant one.

Missing a statutory response deadline can, in some states, result in the application being deemed approved. Establish your deadline before using this form, and have the association's attorney review both this form and your design guidelines against your state's law before the board adopts them. Common Elements does not practice law, and using this form creates no attorney-client relationship.