

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

The Architectural Review Board is the steward of small-town character for Old Saybrook's commercial and multi-family development. This year, the Town marked the tenth year of its efforts to "evaluate applications for site, building or sign development, redevelopment or construction from an architectural and aesthetic perspective with the goal of preserving the quality of our heritage and environment". Over the years, the ARB has "raised the bar" by raising issues that are often not considered by an owner, and therefore, out of the scope of his or her designers, such that they often "fall through the cracks". By taking a pro-active policy in realistically considering each developer's offerings and potential, we have found most all to be receptive to and appreciative of our requests and suggestions for adaptive fine-tuning. Our goal is to pass on to the Zoning Commission a positive recommendation reflecting mutually agreed upon modifications for permitting.

Since 2002, the ARB has used its general *Design Review Guidelines* in conjunction with the Zoning Regulations for signs, landscaping, and parking, to consider each development in terms of its unique neighborhood or historical context in a way that cannot be done in terms of town wide or even zone-wide basis without resulting in a bland sameness. These *Design Review Guidelines* are available at the Town Hall to all applicants for land use permits, as well as on the town website.

From the beginning, the ARB has given special recognition to projects that especially preserve or cultivate the long-standing character of the town. In 1998, the Architectural Review Board established the Design Excellence Award program. This year, the ARB awards its eleventh award for renovations and new constructions with an eye towards appropriate scale, design and use to create an overall sense of respectful neighborliness – a quality inherent in the New England village architecture.

David H. Wight, *Chairman*