

OAKLAND MILLS COVENANT ENFORCEMENT PROCESS

A. Goals and Objectives

One of the reasons Oakland Mills is a special place is that all property is subject to the Oakland Mills Covenants. These covenants are designed to, among other things:

- Encourage environmental excellence
- Preserve the design integrity and architectural quality of Oakland Mills land and dwellings
- Maintain aesthetic standards that make Oakland Mills an attractive and desirable place to live
- Prevent the deterioration of neighborhoods by following the original philosophy of enforcing good maintenance and property standards

These objectives are accomplished through the architectural review system and covenant enforcement. The Covenants give the Architectural Committee the responsibility to set rules and procedures, as well as the power to interpret the covenants. There are similar covenants for the other villages in Columbia.

B. Process

Residents who have a complaint regarding property maintenance, concerns about residential exterior changes, and other issues pertaining to covenant enforcement, are welcome to submit a covenant complaint form. This form is available online and in print. The form is completed and dated by the Oakland Mills Covenant Advisor and copies go to the Oakland Mills Village Manager and the Architecture Committee Chair. The Covenant Advisor enters every complaint into a Covenant Complaint Log that tracks in detail the status of each complaint until full resolution. In submitting a complaint, a resident may choose to (1) not give their name, (2) be named only in the Village records, or (3) be named both in Village records and in discussions with the property owner cited in the complaint. Depending on the nature of the complaint, issues may be dealt with by the Covenant Advisor directly or may be referred to the Columbia Association, the Howard County Public Works Department, or another organization.

C. Timeline

1. Receipt of complaint by Covenant Advisor.
2. When a complaint is received, it is promptly* dated, assigned a complaint case number, and entered into the official Oakland Mills data reporting and tracking database, the Covenant Compliance Log. A copy of the complaint is sent to the Architecture Committee Chair and the Village Manager.

3. After the complaint is entered into the log, the Covenant Advisor and an Architecture Committee member visit the site (jointly or individually) to assess reported violations. A copy of the complaint with its validation status is sent to the complainant, who is notified based on their stated preferred method of communication.
4. If violations are confirmed, the property owner is notified by letter, setting firm deadlines for response and/or correction, as follows:
 - A first letter is sent within 5 working days of the inspection via regular mail, notifying the property owner of the violations and setting a deadline for each violation correction. The letter also will indicate that if there is no response within 15 days, a 360° inspection review of the property will be conducted. A 360° review means an inspection of the front yard, side yards, back yard, all visible building exteriors and any other structures on the lot such as decks, sheds, trash enclosures, and proper maintenance of lawns, trees and shrubbery. etc.
 - If there is no response from the property owner within 15 days of the first letter, a 360° inspection is conducted and a second letter is sent, including both the original violations and any discovered during the 360° inspection and re-stating the deadline for correction.
 - If there is no response from the property owner within 15 days of the second letter, a third letter is sent, re-stating the deadline for correction.
 - If there is no response from the property owner within 15 days of the third letter, the Village Board sends a 15-day warning notice via regular mail to the property owner.
5. If there is no response to the 15-day warning notice and if violations are not corrected, the Village Board approves submission of the case to the Columbia Association Architectural Resource Committee (ARC) for action.

Under certain circumstances at the discretion of the Architecture Committee, extensions with respect to any aspect of the process can be authorized by the Architecture Committee Chair, in consultation with the Village Board. Any extensions given to a property owner must be adhered to as the process continues.