

**The City of Lake Forest
Building Review Board
Proceedings of the September 3, 2025 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Building Review Board was held on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 6:30 p.m., at the Municipal Services Building, 800 Field Drive, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Building Review Board members present: Acting Chairman Eric Lohmueller and Board members, Scott Renken, Sarah Lamphere, Sally Downey, Justin Stamer, and Chris Collins

Building Review Board members absent: Chairman John Looby

Staff present: Luis Prado, Assistant Planner and Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

1. Introduction of Board members and staff, overview of meeting procedures – Chairman Looby

Acting Chairman Lohmueller reviewed the role of the Building Review Board and the meeting procedures followed by the Board. He asked the members of the Board and staff to introduce themselves.

2. Consideration of the minutes from the May 7, 2025, June 4, 2025, and July 10, 2025 Building Review Board meetings.

The minutes of the May 7, 2025 meeting were approved as submitted.

The minutes of the June 4, 2025 meeting were approved with one correction as requested by Board member Lamphere.

Consideration of the minutes of the July 10, 2025 meeting was postponed.

3. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new residence on a vacant lot and the associated hardscape and landscape at 1781 Knollwood Lane. Knoll Drive.

Property Owner: Yuriy Nekrasov

Representative: Matthew Kerouac, architect

Acting Chairman Lohmueller asked the Board members for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Kerouac stated that the lot is challenging because of the heavy tree cover, a 40 foot easement along the south property line, and a tree preservation easement in the southwest corner of the lot which all restrict the buildable area. He pointed out that the land area within the easement is not factored into the calculation for the

allowable square footage for the house and as a result, the house is smaller than what would ordinarily be allowed on a lot of this size. He stated that the residence is proposed as a one story contemporary ranch style home with four pavilions. He reviewed the site plan and layout of the home noting that efforts were made to preserve as many healthy trees on the site as possible. He stated that 39 trees are proposed for removal, adding that some are in deteriorating condition. He stated that steps will be taken during construction to preserve healthy trees, and new trees will be planted once the site is developed. He stated that in order to build a home on the property, trees must be removed. He acknowledged the comment in the staff report suggesting a more natural landscape scheme, with native plant materials. He stated that his client supports that approach. He reviewed the hardscape proposed on the site and noted the two car garage, covered porch, paver patio, and Porte cochere. He reviewed the floor plan. He stated that a long sloping asphalt shingle roof is proposed on the main part of the residence with standing seam metal roofs at the entry, over the connecting corridors, and at the bay. He spoke to the front elevation noting that the Porte cochere is intended to balance the elements at the other end of the house. He described the exterior materials as stone and composite siding with glass connecting corridors which create interior courtyards. He stated that frosted glass is proposed on the garage doors. He stated that the home is well below the permitted 40 foot height at just 20 feet. He pointed out that the house is directly across from the Knollwood Club service area. He presented samples of exterior materials and renderings.

Mr. Prado stated that the proposed residence is a low profile, contemporary ranch style home. He reviewed the limitations on the lot including the 40 foot easement along the south property line and the tree preservation area along Knollwood Lane. He acknowledged that development of the property will require the removal of many significant trees regardless of the siting of the home. He pointed out that the allowable square footage for the home is less than would normally be allowed because the land area of the access easement cannot be factored into the allowable square footage. He stated that an auto turn study prepared by an engineer will be required at the time of submittal for permit to verify that the proposed driveway configuration provides sufficient space for vehicles to maneuver into and out of the garage. He suggested that the frosted garage doors be reconsidered, noting that they may create off site light impacts. He reviewed the exterior materials noting that the Board has required a natural material for the trim in the past. He acknowledged that the petitioner has stated a willingness to work toward a landscape plan with more native plantings and a natural character. He stated that three letters were received from neighboring property owners and were provided to the Board.

In response to a question from Acting Chairman Lohmueller, Mr. Prado clarified that the square footage calculations prepared by the petitioner's representative do not accurately take advantage of the garage and design element allowances. He stated that the calculations provided in the Board's packet were prepared by staff and take into account all of the allowable square footage for various elements.

Acting Chairman Lohmueller invited questions from the Board.

Board member Downey agreed with the staff recommendations. She stated that it could be helpful to minimize the overall footprint of the home to preserve trees on the site but acknowledged that as presented, the house complies with the Code and does not require any variances. She suggested consideration of a darker color palette to allow the house to blend into the site. She stated concern about the potential for the garage doors to be reflective and suggested consideration of an alternate more residential material for the doors. She acknowledged the letters provided to the Board. She stated that the petitioner should be aware that the maintenance area for the Knollwood Club is directly across the street. She commented on the landscape plan and acknowledged that many trees will be impacted no matter what is built on the site. She noted that other properties in the area have manicured lawns rather than naturalized landscapes. She stated support for saving as many trees as possible recognizing that trees will need to be removed. She stated that if a basement is proposed, plans reflecting the basement should be provided to the Board.

Board member Stamer complimented the overall design. He stated that some further refinement of the front facing façade could increase the curb appeal of the house. He encouraged consideration of cladding the wood post at the edge of the front window in stone to match the other stone elements on the window. He encouraged consideration of softening the appearance of the frosted front door noting that it will appear very white adjacent to the darker color palette of the elements around it. He commented that the Porte cochere appears heavy at the side of the house. He suggested dropping the soffit to the height of the garage, noting that it may achieve a less commercial appearance of the Porte cochere.

Board member Renken acknowledged that no variances are requested. He stated that the house is very minimalistic, 20 feet in height, adding that it blends into the surrounding trees. He stated appreciation that the house is not white. He agreed with the other Board member's comments about the one wood post at the edge of the window on the front elevation and about the commercial appearance of the garage door. He encouraged further consideration of the links between the pavilions, noting that the house is very spread out. He stated an understanding of the reason for the link to the primary bedroom but questioned the link to the children's bedrooms. He encouraged the petitioner to shift the house to the south to the extent possible in an effort to preserve large Oak trees along the north edge of the property and on the neighbor's property. He also encouraged consideration of flipping the house and eliminating or shortening the link to the children's bedrooms. He pointed out that the primary bedroom wing extends very far back into the rear yard adding that could perhaps be minimized if the house is flipped. He acknowledged that many trees will need to be removed from the site but stated that it is critical to try to preserve the trees on the north side of the house to protect the character of the neighboring property.

Board member Collins stated that he is familiar with the property from various perspectives. He stated that in the past, there have been drainage issues in the area and encouraged careful attention to stormwater management. He agreed that the garage door appears commercial and encouraged reconsideration to achieve a more residential appearance.

Board member Lamphere agreed with the recommendations presented in the staff report. She agreed that further consideration should be given to the garage doors. She stated a preference for the darker color palette. She commented that there is a tremendous variety of houses in the neighborhood and stated appreciation for the proposed updated style. She agreed with the other Board member's comments about the heaviness of the Porte cochere and the awkwardness of the stone and single wood post around the window on the front elevation. She noted the expansiveness of the footprint of the house adding that it will be expensive to maintain given the expanse of exterior wall and the number of windows. She stated that care should be taken to manage stormwater on the site. She noted that the letter from the manager of the Knollwood Club points out that there is significant activity in the maintenance area across from the proposed house. She stated that it is important that the petitioners are well aware of the activity that occurs in that area.

Acting Chairman Lohmueller agreed with the previous comment about a consistent use of stone around the front window. He asked for a more thorough explanation of why the house is sited on the lot as proposed. He commented that at 10 feet tall, the front door is massive for everyday use. He commented that the standing seam roof above the front door appears too flat and suggested exploring whether the pitch can be increased. He complimented the design overall and stated that with some further refinement, the elegance of the end product could be further increased. He invited a response to the Board's questions and comments from the petitioner.

Mr. Kerouac reviewed the areas where a basement is planned and where crawl spaces will be used. He stated a willingness to consider wrapping the wood post at the edge of the window in stone and using an alternative material for the garage door. He stated that his client likes the tall front door and the resulting interior space, but he agreed to review that element and consider modifications. He explained that the Porte cochere is designed to line up with the volume of the children's wing. He agreed to talk with his client about the scale of the Porte cochere and about minimizing the link to the children's wing. He commented that his client likes the interior courtyards created by the links to the two wings of the house. He agreed to explore the potential for shifting the house to the south. He commented that flipping the house may create challenges with the desired design of the house. He stated that an engineer has been engaged and will prepare grading and drainage plans giving consideration to the history of stormwater in this area.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Acting Chairman Lohmueller invited public comment.

Julius Loeser, 1854 Knollwood Road, stated that his property abuts the subject property. He stated that he would normally not interfere with what is occurring on a neighboring property but stated that in this case, what is proposed is not compatible with the neighborhood. He stated that almost 40 trees are proposed for removal from the site of which a significant number are healthy, mature trees. He stated that the home proposed is part of a "mansionization" trend and is not aligned with other homes in the area. He noted that homes in the neighborhood are well screened by trees. He acknowledged that new trees will be planted but noted that they will take decades to mature. He stated that if a fee is paid to the City instead of replanting on the site, that will not support the environment or the neighborhood. He stated that the size of the home maxes out the permitted square footage for the property. He stated that the four closest houses occupy a much smaller portion of the properties on which they are located than proposed in this case. He asked the Board to deny the petition and direct the petitioner to downsize the house.

Judith Desenis, 1880 Knollwood Road, noted concerns with drainage, flooding, and adequacy of electric service in the neighborhood. She stated that she submitted a letter. She asked how the basement factors into the allowable square footage.

Mr. Nekrasov stated appreciation for the comments offered by the neighbors. He stated his intent to be an active member of the community and welcomed the opportunity to talk to the neighbors.

Acting Chairman Lohmueller invited a response to public comment from City staff.

Mr. Prado reviewed how the allowable square footage is calculated, noting the 800 square foot allowance for a garage and noting that below grade basements do not factor into the square footage calculation.

Acting Chairman Lohmueller stated that overall, the house appears to meet the applicable standards. He stated however that there may be room for improvement in order to make the house the best it can be. He pointed out that no variances are requested. He acknowledged that it is never desirable to lose trees but stated that it is inevitable in this case. He encouraged the petitioner to explore the opportunity to save more trees on the site. He suggested that based on the Board's comments and those of the neighbors, and the willingness of the petitioner to do some further study, continuance may be appropriate. He invited a motion.

Board member Renken made a motion to continue the petition to allow consideration of the comments offered and refinements to the plans in response. He stated that attention should be paid to: the siting of the house to reduce impacts on trees and to provide more distance from the residence to the north, opportunities to reduce the footprint of the house, refining the front elevation and front entrance, reconsideration of the garage doors to minimize the potential for light spillover, the scale of the reducing the Porte cochere, and the landscape plan.

The motion was seconded by Board member Downey and approved by a vote of 6 to 0.

4. Opportunity for the public to address the Building Review Board on non-agenda items.

No additional public testimony was presented to the Board.

5. Additional information from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine J. Czerniak
Director of Community Development