
From: HUF [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, September 09, 2014 7:23 PM
To: PD - Historic Ordinance; COH - Mayor
Subject: The Protected Historic District Designations Work!

Houston Matters:
regarding Houston's Historic District Ordinance

In the Heights, home owners are invested and work tirelessly to insure that the Heights remains a "Living Neighborhood," with the City of Houston's designation as a "Protected Historic District."

The hard-won Protected Historic Designation insures that town-homes, multi-family development and huge single family dwellings stay in "unprotected" areas of Houston.

To date, Historic Districts represent one percent of the entire area of Houston. Therefore, Developers, and Builders seeking to create huge single family, and multi family construction— have a huge playing field throughout the vast area of Houston to build.

Developers and realtors are great "noise makers" in their attempt to derail the only mechanism home-owners of beautifully constructed original Heights homes, and sympathetically restored and updated original Victorian, Queen Anne and Craftsmen houses, have to insure Our single family neighborhood is filled with beautiful gardens and mature Trees, and "Living Neighborhood."

The Heights is an established and welcoming community. And like many places, may not be a perfect fit for people seeking over-sized residences. The great thing about Houston, is that there remains 99 per cent of the city that has ample "un-protected" space for these huge homes and multi-family developments, that realtors & builders favor.

The protected historic designations work, and stabilize neighborhoods.

Kind Regards,

angela dewree
[REDACTED]

angela dewree
[REDACTED]

From: [redacted] Spencer Howard [redacted]
Sent: Monday, September 29, 2014 8:19 PM
To: PD - Historic Ordinance
Subject: Request to committee

I spoke at tonight's committee meeting, but wanted to followup in writing to memorialize my request:

I would like the dimensions (widths, foundation, porch, eave, and overall heights) of previously measured contributing structures be made available online for public use.

Preservation staff has compiled an amazing database of information and having the dimensions help me serve my clients better by identifying potential roadblocks to their plans before they purchase a property in a historic district. These roadblocks may be that their plans are incompatible with the dimensions of neighboring structures or simply that staff has not measured any nearby structures and there will be a delay in preparing a design and/or application. Knowing this information in the pre-design phase, instead of during the design phase, only expedites the design process and reduces the amount of re-design/review with staff.

Currently, I have to contact preservation staff and request this information for each project. Sometimes I have a client considering multiple properties across several blocks and districts. With the increased workload of staff now, having this information easily available online allows them to strictly focus on reviewing applications and measuring remaining structures, instead of responding to information requests that may never lead to an application. Also, with some clients there is a distrust of the information staff gives out each time in that the dimensions may be incorrect or changed on a per project basis. I know this is not true, but having the information made public serves to legitimize its accuracy and fairness to property owners, designers, and applicants.

Thank you,
Spencer

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From: Doreen Stoller [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, October 01, 2014 6:47 PM
To: PD - Historic Ordinance
Cc: Boesel, Minnette - MYR
Subject: Comment on Proposed Change to Historic Preservation Ordinance

Hello,

Thank you for your work clarifying the Historic Preservation Ordinance. It is important for our city – and will work better when the rules are clarified. I attended the public meeting on September 29, and support the additions that Douglas Elliott proposed in the meeting.

I would like to issue a strong objection to the proposed change described in Issue 6 – Change the designation of a structure located in an historic district. I think it is fine to change a designation for a mistake, but NOT for a structure whose owners have altered it or allowed “demolition by neglect” to change the property. We need to do everything we can to discourage property owners from making unauthorized alterations – and giving them the ability to have the property declared non-contributing because of these alterations or neglect would severely undermine the ordinance.

I also strongly agree with increasing the penalty for illegal demolition (Issue 17).

Thank you again for your work on this important ordinance.

Kind regards,

Doreen

Doreen Stoller
Executive Director
Hermann Park Conservancy
713-524-5876 x331
www.hermannpark.org

From: Dan Piette [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, October 02, 2014 11:06 AM
To: PD - Historic Ordinance
Cc: !!Doreen !!Stoller
Subject: Historic District Ordinance Review

Hi Folks,

I wanted to write a quick note to first of all commend you for taking the time to make sure that the Historic District Ordinance reflects the unique approach that Houston has towards city planning, as well as reiterate my comments made at the first open meeting regarding this review.

When I spoke at the meeting, I pointed out that I would like the committee to keep in mind three overarching goals – Enforcement, Preservation, and Conformity.

In general what I mean by these items are as follows:

1. Enforcement. We need to make sure that the new buildings that go up in the historic districts, and the old buildings that get torn down are done so in accordance with the law. I have seen many cases of “demolition by neglect” in both the Montrose historic districts and the Heights historic districts. I have also seen new buildings or additions go up without any permits, and the property owner’s attitude is essentially “Come and get it”. This works well into the last item on the agenda (#17) which calls for a more substantial penalty for an un-permitted demolition. I would like to see a budget for enforcement, and a plan to insure that the integrity of the historic districts are maintained, and indeed, I would like to see this expanded to any neighborhood that has implemented deed restrictions.
2. Preservation. I know that there needs to be a mechanism by which mischaracterized properties can be correctly labeled. But this should be an arduous and rigorous task. I fear that developers will want to remove “contributing” structures just so that they can tear them down. I believe that this was item #6 on the agenda.
3. Conformity. The addition of design guidelines for all historic districts will be well appreciated. We need to make sure that the issues raised at the open forum by smarted people that I are address. The mass of a building on site, the roof line, and such are very important to keep in mind when addressing issues that may be changed in the ordinance.

Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

Dan Piette
804 Harold (a City of Houston Protected Landmark, in the Audubon Place Historic District)
Houston, TX 77006
[REDACTED]

From: Dan Piette [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, October 10, 2014 10:49 AM
To: PD - Historic Ordinance
Cc: '!!Doreen !!Stoller'
Subject: RE: Historic District Ordinance Review

Hi Folks,

I wanted to make one more point about Agenda Item #6 from the last meeting.

While I believe that there is a need to be able to change the designation of properties that were mis-characterized when the Historic District(s) were created, I think that we should do so very reluctantly.

Additionally (and perhaps more importantly) I believe it is critical to review the status of the property *at the time of the historic district designation*. This way, if a property has degraded since that time, the status will not change solely due to that degradation. (in other words, Demolition by Neglect will not be rewarded by removing a property from the "contributing" category)

Thank you very much.

Best,

Dan Piette

From: jean_taylor [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, October 07, 2014 2:48 PM
To: DuCroz, Diana - PD
Subject: HD ordinance

Diana,

My problem with the Historic District Ordinance as it now stands is the appeals process.

If an applicant is told by the HAHC that they cannot move a house out of a HD, then the applicant goes to the Planning Commission (who is getting better about understanding the ordinance and what it entails). If the Planning Commission upholds the HAHC, then the applicant just goes on to the City Council.

Many of the council members were not on the council, or maybe not even in the area, when the historic districts were enacted. And not around when we had to fight the false and misleading information put out by builders, realtors, and others with financial interests, to keep our districts.

But if the Council Member says, oh just let them move it, the other members have no reason to not go along and vote yes.

What did all this take? 90 days? We believed when we became "protected" that No meant No. Now if they keep appealing long enough they get to do whatever they wanted - just like it was before our "protection". We are right back to the "wait 90 days and do it anyway".

I think that if the Planning Commission upholds the HAHC and denies a COA, that should be it. No means No. Not appeal and appeal until you get a yes. Do we just let them keep appealing until they find someone to agree with them?

We were thrilled when we thought we had protection. Now we find that is just another form of "wait 90 days".

Thanks for your hard work!

Jean Taylor
Freeland Historic District
546 Granberry
Houston, TX 77007

From: Evan Michaelides [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, October 13, 2014 10:54 AM
To: Wallace Brown, Margaret - PD
Cc: Laura Michaelides
Subject: Comment on revisions to Historic Preservation Ordinance

Hello Margaret,

Although I will not be able to attend tonight's meeting on the revisions to the Historic Preservation Ordinance, I would like to provide some feedback.

1. I feel that more should be done to try to avoid situations where the HAHC denies a COA application in contravention of the recommendations of staff.

For a property owner who has followed the recommended path of consulting with staff from the beginning, and has arrived at a solution which he has been led to believe will be approved, this scenario is extremely frustrating. It creates a feeling of having been ambushed. Moreover, to have a COA denied typically involves costs to the homeowner - whether in time, money, or both - and to incur those costs in vain after having carefully worked to avoid an unfavorable outcome is an especially unpleasant experience. It also fosters the perception that staff and the HAHC are not well aligned, and that not enough has been done to reduce subjectivity and unpredictability from the process.

I recognize that there is no simple solution to this issue. I don't know what the right approach is - maybe some joint training, additional guidelines, or a mixture of these and other approaches - but I feel sure that more can be done.

2. I support the suggestion for a process for property owners to apply to have their adjoining properties added to an existing Historic District.

Thanks/regards,
Evan Michaelides