HISTORIC DISTRICT
PRESERVATION
PRESENTATION

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I. Our Mission & Purpose

II. Staff Research

III. Outreach
   A. Public Meeting & SWOT Analysis
   B. Community Engagement
   C. Historic District Online Survey
      1. Survey Results & Common Themes

IV. What Comes Next?
   A. Completed Action Items
   B. Recommended Action Items
   C. Further Analysis
Our Mission & Purpose

To promote the preservation and appreciation of Huntsville’s historic districts.
City of Huntsville staff and the Huntsville Historic Preservation Commission (HHPC) are continuously evaluating how its practices and procedures can better serve the needs of Huntsville’s historic districts.

Officials researched and compiled best practices from preservation policies in other communities.
OUTREACH

Public Meeting
April 29, 2019

115+ in attendance

• Presentations by City staff and HHPC members

• Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats (SWOT) group activity
SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Historic District STRENGTHS:

• Asset to the Community (47.37%)
• Charm & Character (34.21%)
• Guidelines & Design Review (15.79%)
• Architectural Diversity
• Appreciation of History
• City Support
• Walkability
• Access to Amenities
• Safe Neighborhoods

Top results from participants.
SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Historic District WEAKNESSES:

- Use of Modern Materials (26.67%)
- Interpretation of HHPC Guidelines (25%)
- Fair, Consistent Rulings & Enforcement (25%)
- HHPC Member District Representation
- Considerations for Economic Hardship
- Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Timeline

Top results from participants.
SWOT ANALYSIS RESULTS

Historic District OPPORTUNITIES:

• Updates to Ordinance & Guidelines (40.63%)
• Streamline COA Process (25%)
• Collaboration & Education (15.63%)
• Preserve & Enhance Home Values
• Underground Utilities
• Identifying Future National Register Districts

Top results from participants.
SWOT ANALYSIS

Historic District THREATS:

- Perception of HHPC Authority (31.71%)
- Unauthorized Projects & Enforcement (21.95%)
- Demolition by Neglect/Absentee Landlords (12.2%)
- Adjacent Commercial Districts
- Unregulated Tree Removal
- Lack of Available Qualified Craftsmen
- Demolitions, Building Scale & Development
- Short Term Rentals

Top results from participants.
OUTREACH

Community Engagement

• City staff met with the following community partners to hear their ideas/concerns and answer questions:
  - City Council Members
  - Twickenham, Old Town, Five Points and Normal Historic District Associations
  - Historic Huntsville Foundation
  - Huntsville-Madison County Historical Society
  - Huntsville Area Association of Realtors
  - Local Architects
  - Local Preservation Advocates
CONSIDERATIONS:
Establish guidelines tailored to the needs of Huntsville’s historic districts.

- Different sets of guidelines unique to each district
- Define when it is appropriate to paint masonry
- Define when it is appropriate to use modern materials
- Define how guidelines apply to contributing and non-contributing structures
FROM THE COMMUNITY

CONSIDERATIONS:
Continue streamlining the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

• Create a list of expedited items for staff approval
• Include an additional week between COA turn-in and the HHPC meeting
FROM THE COMMUNITY

CONSIDERATIONS:

• Research preservation best practices in other communities
• Increase district representation on the commission
• Develop ways to identify and recognize historic sites throughout the City
• Develop new informational materials and training opportunities to educate property owners, design professionals, realtors and the HHPC
ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

1,425 letters and postcards mailed

25% response rate

365 total surveys taken
363 surveys submitted online + 2 surveys submitted by mail
SURVEY RESPONSE

139 Twickenham
91 Old Town
83 Five Points
0 Normal (non-residential)
MULTIPLE CHOICE
OVERALL THEMES

86.36% live in a historic district because of its character and charm
Answered: 310/Skipped: 53

77.52% believe Huntsville’s historic districts are an asset to the community
Answered: 308/Skipped: 55

62.34% live in a historic district because of the unique, quality craftsmanship in my home
Answered: 310/Skipped: 53
OVERALL THEMES

68.30% are engaged with their local historic district neighborhood association

If you answered yes, in what ways do you engage with your local historic district neighborhood association? Check all that apply.

If you answered no, why don’t you engage with your local historic district neighborhood association? Please choose your top three reasons.
OVERALL THEMES

65.55% think it’s very important that HHPC improve its process to streamline routine requests
Answered: 304/Skipped: 59

61.30% want to streamline the COA process
Answered: 292/Skipped: 71

60.96% think it’s very important that HHPC update its historic ordinance and guidelines on the appropriate use of modern building materials
Answered: 304/Skipped: 59

59.93% want to streamline the application process with a pre-approved list of paint colors and fences
Answered: 292/Skipped: 71
OVERALL THEMES

74.75% of respondents have submitted a COA application to the HHPC for alterations to a historic property

Answered: 305/Skipped: 58
TWICKENHAM THEMES

38.8% of respondents were very dissatisfied and felt inadequately informed about historic regulations when purchasing their historic homes

Answered: 132/Skipped: 5

When purchasing my historic home, I was adequately informed about historic regulations that affect exterior home renovations...

Answered: 132/Skipped: 5
OLD TOWN THEMES

54.32% would like to see resources available for affordable craftsmen and appropriate building materials
47.1% were either somewhat dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with perceived consistency of enforcement of HHPC guidelines and regulations

Answered: 90/Skipped: 1

HHPC guidelines and regulations are consistently enforced in my historic district.

Answered: 90/Skipped: 1

- Very Satisfied: 3.4%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 26.4%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 20.7%
- Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied: 23.0%
- Very Dissatisfied: 26.4%
FIVE POINTS THEMES

91.36% live in a historic district because of its prime location and amenities

46.84% would like assistance with planning for historic home projects
OPEN COMMENTS
Q13 Is there anything else you want the HHPC to evaluate with regard to historic district ordinance and guidelines, education, and process?

Answered: 118/Skipped: 245

structures decisions see much preservation common sense go years cost use modern materials enforce everything houses look consistent parts approval Yes changes many better streamlined materials board members meetings property owner commission preserving homes board keeps process people request historic district standards guidelines need historic included residents allowed homeowners way homes seems district historical property considered HHPC asked make Everyone members committee neighborhood want live simple preserve rules important really feel regard ordinances start things follow state current money others Enforcement city value

(Most commonly used words & phrases from open-ended questions.)
Q14 Additional comments?
Answered: 138/Skipped: 225

(Most commonly used words & phrases from open-ended questions.)
WHAT COMES NEXT?

• The City has carefully reviewed and evaluated the data to determine common themes and gather ideas for potential policy changes.

• Based on data from the survey, interviews and meetings, the City will recommend action items that can be accomplished in the near future.
Completed Action Items

Internal Improvements

• Streamlined COA process:
  • Established staff COA review committee
  • Reformatted COA presentations
  • Moved location of monthly HHPC meetings to the City Council Chambers
RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

1. Develop list of expedited items for staff approval
RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS

2. Extend time between application turn-in and HHPC meeting date from 2 weeks to 3 weeks to allow applicants more time to submit required documents

3. Develop new informational materials and training opportunities to educate property owners, design professionals, realtors and the HHPC
FURTHER ANALYSIS

We identified other items as important considerations that will require additional study:

• Increase district representation on HHPC
• Appropriate use of modern materials
• When it is appropriate to paint masonry
• How the guidelines apply to contributing and non-contributing structures
• Considerations for economic hardship
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Huntsville Historic Preservation Commission

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