

# HUNTSVILLE HISTORIC DISTRICTS SURVEY 2019

## *SURVEY OVERVIEW*

### *OUR MISSION & PURPOSE*

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To promote the preservation and appreciation of Huntsville's historic districts.

### *STAFF RESEARCH & OUTREACH*

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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. This ongoing evaluation includes researching best practices from preservation policies in other communities and gathering input from the community.

In Spring 2019, the HHPC hosted a public meeting that included presentations from HHPC members and a SWOT analysis group activity. The passion and ideas shared at this meeting illustrated how much historic district residents want to take an active role in improving their neighborhoods.

The Commission has also been actively engaging with community partners to seek input and ideas by meeting with and listening to the following organizations and individuals:

- 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

### *ONLINE SURVEY*

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To collect further data, the HHPC sent out more than 1,425 letter notices inviting historic district residents to participate in an online survey.

- **363 surveys** submitted online + **2 surveys** submitted by mail = **365 total surveys**
  - Twickenham: **139 surveys**
  - Old Town: **91 surveys**
  - Five Points: **83 surveys**
  - Normal (non-residential district): **0 surveys**

### *COMMON THEMES*

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- Consider guidelines that are tailored to the needs of Huntsville's historic districts
- Continue streamlining the COA process
- Increase district representation on the commission
- Research preservation best practices in other communities
- Consider 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

### **COMPLETED ACTION ITEMS**

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Based on the initial feedback received from the public meeting, the HHPC began an introspective look at its internal operations. To ensure the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process is as efficient as it can be, the Commission has been working with the City's Administration, Urban Development teams in Planning, Zoning, and Inspections, Communication and Legal departments. Some of these improvements include:

1. Establishing a City staff internal review process to ensure applications are complete before coming before the HHPC
2. Reformatting COA presentations
3. Moving the location of the monthly HHPC meetings to the Council Chambers at City Hall

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION ITEMS**

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After carefully reviewing and evaluating data from the survey, interviews and meetings, the City recommends the following action items that can be accomplished in the near future:

1. Develop list of expedited items for staff approval
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**

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We identified the following 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

### **QUESTIONS?**

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