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# Member Evaluation Report

## Housing Density Discussion Sessions; November 2023

On Wednesday, November 1 and Saturday, November 4, 2023, the Heritage Hill Association and its Land Use Committee hosted two discussion sessions focused on the issues of housing density in the neighborhood at Central Reformed Church. To advertise the sessions, the Association posted invitations on social media and sent postcards to households in Heritage Hill. Roughly 150 people attended the two sessions.

Each session consisted of two parts. The first part was a presentation given by a member of the Land Use Committee. In the second hour, attendees were asked to work in small groups and discuss the benefits of housing density and their concerns about housing density. For more information about these sessions and the results of these discussions, please refer to the separate report titled "Heritage Hill: Housing Discussions," dated 11.29.2023.

At the conclusion of the sessions, participants were encouraged to complete an evaluation of the session. This feedback will be used to plan and improve future information and discussion sessions. Participants had the option of filling out a paper questionnaire or using an on-line survey tool. This report summarizes these evaluations.

### Summary:

#### Participation Rate

- Number of session participants: 150
- Number of evaluations received: 33
- Participation Rate: 22%

#### Length of tenure ("How long have you been a resident of HH?")

- Total: 581 years
- Average (mean): 17.6 years
- Average (median): 10 years
- Maximum (longest): 47 years

#### Tenancy ("Do you own or rent your home?")

- Own = 30 (91%)
- Rent = 3 (9%)

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**OVERALL SESSION EVALUATION**

	First Half Session Rating		Second Half Session Rating	
	Number	Percent	Number	percent
<b>1 - EXCELLENT</b>	17	51	11	33
<b>2 - GOOD</b>	11	33	11	33
<b>3 - NEUTRAL</b>	0	0	3	9
<b>4 - FAIR</b>	2	6	2	6
<b>5 - POOR</b>	0	0	1	3
<b>DNA - DID NOT ANSWER</b>	3	9	5	15

**Question: Would you attend another community forum in the future?**

- Definitely = 22 (66%)
- Probably = 9 (27%)
- Not Sure = 1 (3%)
- DNA = 1 (3%)

**Question: How Useful did you find this community forum?**

- Extremely Useful = 6 (18%)
- Very Useful = 17(52%)
- Somewhat Useful = 2 (6%)
- Not Very Useful = 5 (15%)

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## Comments Recorded

### Compilers notes

- 1) *Comments have been recorded verbatim. No attempt has been made to correct typos, spelling etc.*
- 2) *The evaluation questionnaire did not identify which session the participant attended (Wed vs. Sat).*



### Comments regarding the first half sessions (presentation)

very educational, good first session

just not enough time to get to all questions

Very well prepared and delivered especially for those who needed a primer on the system and process. My only regret is that we don't have more information, especially as it relates to the real density baseline that we're working from in HH. I would like to know the exact density (Rowen's formula) of Heritage Hill so that we have a baseline from which to assess threats vs advantages. Perhaps this could be something a volunteer group planning experts could develop?

need a mic!



### Comments regarding the second half sessions (discussion and group reports)

More time needed

could have been longer

4+

I attended on Wednesday. I did not feel that there was clarity about the specificity of the question on density - current density or increasing future density? We did not discuss more ADU's, just the number of residents.

For (2) meetings of neighbors, all coming with different degrees of understanding of the text changes, processes to change them, personal experiences, and motivations, I thought they went ok. It would have been helpful to have Ryan Kilpatrick's projections of housing gains for each proposed text change. It would give us a much better perspective of what's likely to happen to Heritage Hill. Also - much bigger issues weren't addressed - such as absentee landlords.

left at 8pm/felt discouraged

My table had productive conversation on the benefits of density. When it came to shareouts, however, only the drawbacks were given space to be aired. And table representatives gave monologues to their group's top

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three. There was ample time to also share out the benefits. It left me feeling like the group that got airtime in the space were long timers who wanted to air their grievances or fears about the neighborhood changing, whether or not tied to density.

Conversation overcrowded by participants with inaccurate information or unrelated concerns.

**Question:** "Would you attend another community forum in the future? **Comments:**

Thanks for setting this up. I thought it was going to be a bit more of a city-led session-kind of glad it wasn't. Just wanted to pass along my expectation.

I love getting together with neighbors to talk about issues affecting us. City officials should attend, to at least listen to concerns of residents.

Useful information. Would have been good to have this info before Guiding Light bought into our neighborhood.

Rotating meeting days allowing for easier access to those with more varying work schedules can make adjustments to attend

Informative

Very interested in have visibility to the process. The city will go through, and how to have input to the results.

Please clarify if sessions are for information only and not for action. Please share more complete info on who & How to contact city officials for individuals to take action.

need more-information ongoing

It's my neighborhood, and I want/need to know what the pressures on it are.

"There seems to be a real misconception that zoning text changes would somehow positively impact affordable housing. Ryan stated that he expects no more than 1,000 units in 10 years from increasing # of unrelated occupants. That's not much for all the problems it would cause in high density neighborhoods. In any case, landlords charge unrelated tenants by the head, so increasing unrelated occupants doesn't reduce rental cost per person. Where's the gain compared to the increasing in problems?"

The Planning Commission seems to think that ADU's won't help much because of the costs involved, even if they take away the owner occupied requirement. Taking away the parking requirement is designed primarily to help clear the way for new construction. HH is already built. Where are the significant housing increases going to come from by eliminating parking restrictions in HH? And the day it's proposed to be chopping up houses again is the Heritage Hill residents will protest with pitchforks! We need real solutions to address the housing crisis, not bandaids that cause more problems than they're worth."

This was a very important subject!

We need this type of community building

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### Question: How useful did you find this community forum? Comments:

I appreciated the speaker being neutral and informative. Very useful and educational.

Monthly or quarterly workshops. Landlord and tenant discussion groups.

My thanks to the moderator!

As a household with a rented apt. upstairs we have opinions/pros/cons for both sides of the discussion. Helpful to hear from others in this situation.

Excellent use of time.

I learned some new information. I agree with many of the participants that Heritage Hill is already as dense in population as it should be and that a city wide "by rights" increase in resident density enforced on HH would negatively effect the quality of life for residents and cause some to leave the Hill & most likely higher absentee ownership.

How much future data is being used to guide these zoning changes- ie climate + cars/parking

It was useful for it's intended purpose, I think neighbors have other concerns that aren't specific to density, it's difficult to separate these concerns from the density conversation.

It gave me confirmation that I'm not alone in my skepticism about positive outcomes and the lack of negative impacts of the (5) text changes to HH. The neighbors attending both meetings were overwhelmingly against most of the text changes. If City Planning has estimates of the projected gains of each and the process used to come to their decisions, I'd like to see them. This information would be helpful for determining real vs feared impacts in the Hill.

New information I was not aware of.

"I thin this process helped calm people down so they could think & talk about the issues rationally ... though opinions are still passionate.

- Are teh proposed zoning changes supported by the current G.R. Master Plan?
- Why are the proposed Zoning changes preceding the Master Plan update process?
- some people get anxious about asking thier questions, can't wait for end of presentation.
- how is an ""internal"" ADO differnt from just dividing up a house into smaller apartments? Are they specifically defined as converted basement or attics?
- how do all the busy one way streets in H.H. effect the housing type/density allowed on those streets?

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- I wish the City Commissioner had not ""jumped"" in on the agenda. It interrupted the flow and distracted from the purpose of the meeting. It was self serving.

- Higher density does not necessarily equal affordability, more often it pushes rents/sale prices up. The benefits have more to do with livability, which is great ..., but also tends to increase desirability ... and cost.

### Additional comments

- Thank you, again, for the well-coordinated community conversation last weekend. Thank you, too, for keeping neighbors up-to-date with other city-wide planning information. It is greatly appreciated. I simply want to share a couple thoughts related to the Heritage Hill Master Plan which I didn't have time to discuss at the community conversation on Saturday. In multiple neighborhood meetings, and during public comments to the Planning Commission, I have heard Heritage Hill neighbors make reference to the neighborhood Master Plan goals. There are two goals which I suggest may be challenged, or perhaps better expressed in a different way in a Master Plan update: Goal 4: "Increase parking availability for neighborhood residents." There is little evidence (anecdotally or in present-day urban planning best practices) to support the idea that more car parking correlates to healthier neighborhoods. Walking, cycling, and good mass transit, in contrast do have evidence which indicates their use improves neighborhood quality and wellness. I wonder if this goal is more backward-looking than it is imagining future realities. In the present-day, yes, a large portion of people own or use cars and need to store them. Yet, would it not be more appropriate to prioritize other modes of transit, too? Or, as the City Planning staff has suggested, make good use of neighborhood parking permit programs? I strongly believe that any forward-looking master plan should not make an increase of parking among its stated goals. Goal 10: "Maintain or decrease current population density." Again, with exception to extreme examples of over-population, there is little evidence (anecdotally or in present-day urban planning best practices) to support the idea that decreasing the population density of an urban area is a good thing. In fact, quite the opposite. Sustainable land use, economic resilience, efficient transportation of goods and people, effective crime deterrence, full life cycle housing options, and community cohesion all improve with a greater density. I realize that "density" is a sensitive word for many, even if such density is actually quite gentle and at an appropriate neighborhood scale. For that reason, I wouldn't necessarily advocate a new Master Plan goal to increase density, but I find a stated goal to decrease density to be very much a misdirected effort in our context. Furthermore, such a goal is directly at odds with other goals and themes of the plan (Goal 8: "Encourage compatible new improvements on vacant lots;" Theme 4: "The diversity of people, housing styles and types, housing costs, and land uses are all valued."). Instead of the two above goals, I would rather our neighborhood Master Plan formulate a goal which is focused on sustainability with a serious consideration for the unavoidable future challenges of housing and resource use. To the extent that any of these comments are appropriate to include in your report to the City, or to forward to those charged with updating the Heritage Hill Master Plan, please feel welcome to do so. Thank you, again, and I hope you enjoy a wonderful Thanksgiving! Michael