

THE TOWN OF HERNDON - BUILDING ON HERNDON'S HERITAGE NEW HERITAGE PRESERVATION DISTRICT GUIDELINES

WHAT WE HEARD

Summary of comments from the public meetings and listening sessions held October 20-21, 2018

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The WPA + CPG team was contracted to update the Herndon Heritage Preservation Overlay District (HPOD) Guidelines, provide training to the Heritage Preservation Review Board as well as Town Council in the use of the new guidelines, and develop educational materials for the public to better understand the role of the HPOD, their responsibilities as property owners, the processes that they can expect to encounter and resources to help them better navigate those processes.

The updated guidelines are intended to clarify what are, and are not appropriate design and material changes within the district, for the benefit of both the applicants, and those reviewing the applications.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As part of this process, the team first needed to meet with those most affected by the guidelines in order to understand how they had been applied in the past so that they could be improved for the future. It was important to talk with users of every level which include:

- Property owners
- Residents
- Business owners
- Town Council members
- HPRB members
- Department of Community Development staff

To address the varying availability and size of each of these constituencies, a multi-day, multi-part engagement process was developed:

Department of Community Development staff discussed their experiences with and use of the guidelines during a project kick-off meeting with the WPA + CPG team.

Town Council and HPRB members were interviewed individually over the two-day period of the Public Meeting held October 20-21, 2018.

Business owners and Downtown property owners met with the team to discuss their particular experiences in the Herndon ArtSpace during a session held the morning of October 20, 2018.

Residents and property owners was invited to drop in to talk with the team during an open-office-hours session the afternoon of October 20, 2018.

Town staff invited everyone to a working session on the morning of October 21, 2018 where the team asked the residents to answer questions about preservation philosophy, the character of the Town of Herndon, materials used in new construction and renovation, and their experiences with the existing guidelines.

This document is a summary of the findings from these sessions and will be used to guide the team towards developing an updated set of guidelines for the Herndon Heritage Preservation Overlay District. Please note that this record is a compilation of the notes taken during the public meetings and is intended to serve solely as such. Statements were recorded and will be reported as they were made; the accuracy of statements made has not been verified by the project team.

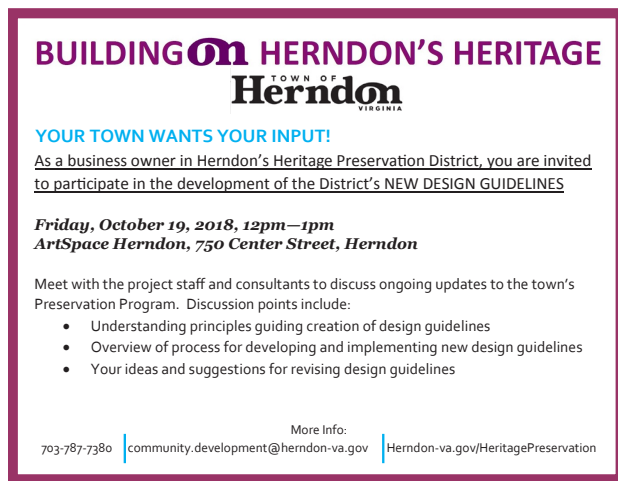
PUBLIC INPUT MEETINGS

Project Kickoff Meeting

The project kickoff meeting was held August 27th and was an opportunity for the WPA + CPG team to hear from Community Development staff their goals for the project, their concerns about the existing guidelines, their analysis of HPRB and Town Council hearings regarding HPOD applications, and their perception of the general public's understanding of the HPOD process and purpose.

Business Community Meeting

The business community, including business owners and property owners who own properties in the downtown area, met with the team as a group. After a short presentation from the team explaining the project, the group of about 15 business and property owners participated in an open discussion for just over an hour talking about their experiences with the existing guidelines and what they'd like to see in the updated guidelines.



BUILDING ON HERNDON'S HERITAGE
TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA

YOUR TOWN WANTS YOUR INPUT!
As a business owner in Herndon's Heritage Preservation District, you are invited to participate in the development of the District's NEW DESIGN GUIDELINES

Friday, October 19, 2018, 12pm–1pm
ArtSpace Herndon, 750 Center Street, Herndon

Meet with the project staff and consultants to discuss ongoing updates to the town's Preservation Program. Discussion points include:

- Understanding principles guiding creation of design guidelines
- Overview of process for developing and implementing new design guidelines
- Your ideas and suggestions for revising design guidelines

More Info:
703-787-7380 | community.development@herndon-va.gov | Herndon-va.gov/HeritagePreservation



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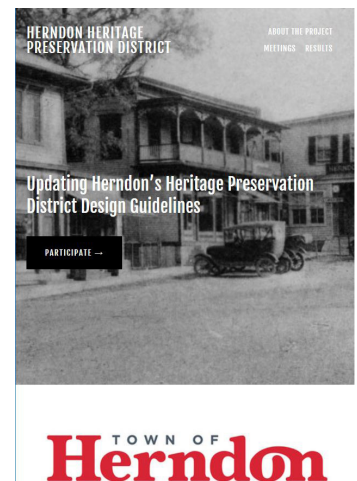
District property owners, residents, & business owners are encouraged to attend!

- UPCOMING PUBLIC EVENTS -
for the
- Development of New Heritage District -
- DESIGN GUIDELINES -

PUBLIC OUTREACH MEETING
Saturday, October 20, 2018
10:00am–12:00pm
Herndon Municipal Center Lobby, 777 Lynn Street
Come meet the consultants, learn about the project and help shape the guidelines! Kids welcome!

CONSULTANT OPEN HOURS
Friday, October 19, 2018
1:00pm–5:00pm
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Stop by to speak with the consultants while they work in town drafting the new guidelines!

TOWN OF Herndon VIRGINIA



HERNDON HERITAGE PRESERVATION DISTRICT

ABOUT THE PROJECT
MEETINGS RESULTS

Updating Herndon's Heritage Preservation District Design Guidelines

PARTICIPATE --

TOWN OF Herndon

OPEN OFFICE HOURS

Following the Business Community meeting, the public were invited to drop by at their convenience through the afternoon to talk one-on-one with team members. About 50 people came by through the day to share concerns and stories, and give suggestions and ideas to help make the updated guidelines more successful.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY MEETING

The business community, including business owners and Downtown property owners, met with the team as a group. After a short presentation from the team explaining the project, the group of about 15 business and property owners participated in an open discussion for just over an hour.

WHAT WE HEARD

By way of introduction, the group started with discussing what brought each business or property owner to Herndon. While one was drawn by the presence of the Washington & Old Dominion Trail, most were attracted by the “small-town feel” or “walkability” of the Downtown. Participants generally felt that this small-town atmosphere should be maintained while still allowing for growth and change. They also felt that in some cases, buildings which they don’t consider to be a historic resource were required to be treated in a way that was incongruent with the quality or significance of the building. In terms of new construction, there seemed to be consensus that new developments should be designed in a way that is complementary to the scale and character of the existing downtown.

The conversation moved on to the process of applying for and receiving an approval for construction or renovation within the district. The consensus seemed to be that the process was slow, burdensome, and unclear. There was even some confusion regarding which types of projects require approval, particularly when it comes to contributing versus non-contributing buildings, interior renovation projects versus exterior renovation projects, new construction versus renovation, and public versus private projects. The participants felt that there was a lack of clear information regarding the time line of the application process and what the actual steps in that time line are, that the number of forms was confusing and the inability to electronically submit them is a burden, and that the deadlines are easy to miss and cause significant delays to projects that are underway. They expressed that more applications should be administratively approved rather than going before the HPRB.

Beyond the application process itself, participants observed a lack of consistency in the decisions of the HPRB from application to application. They also noted that the interpretation of the guidelines has changed as board members have come and gone from the board, leading to inconsistencies from year to year in Board decisions regarding the same matters.

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The matter of notice that a new owner is buying property within the HPOD came up several times. Participants noted that real estate agents frequently fail to inform buyers that a property being considered for purchase is within the HPOD, and the responsibilities that the designation entails.

Finally, there was much discussion regarding modern and historic building materials and products. Generally, the participants were of the opinion that they would support the use of modern materials in new construction and for renovation of existing buildings provided that the materials are of a similar appearance to historic materials, and agreed that modern building systems should be considered in the new guidelines.

COMMUNITY OPEN OFFICE HOURS

The WPA + CPG team made themselves available to the general public to stop by and talk about the project from 1pm to 5pm. Approximately 50 people stopped in during this time and provided input.

WHAT WE HEARD

Many of the comments heard during the open office hours session echoed what was said during the business community meeting, but, naturally, were focused more on the experiences of homeowners.

The participants who dropped in generally seemed to see value in the Heritage Preservation District. They noted that the historic properties contribute to the charm and small-town feeling that Herndon has. Most felt that this character is what is most important to protect; maintaining building massing and scale, streetscapes and walkability, and the “look and feel” of the old homes and old trees were high priorities. They also agreed that new development should fit into the character of the historic town, and that contemporary designs should be permitted, provided they accomplish that goal.

Most wanted to see an updated set of guidelines that streamline the process; administrative approvals for paint colors, windows, and roofs if the applicant is using approved materials and colors, common sense guidelines that are easy to understand, and clear guidance on which properties and projects the guidelines are applicable. One person did note that they like the current guidelines in general.

When discussing the HPRB, participants again discussed the lack of consistency between decisions. There was discussion regarding perceived inequity between homeowners and commercial property owners or contractors, with homeowners being held to higher standards during the application process and having to endure a longer duration review, as well as being more frequently cited for violations than commercial property owners. They felt that builders and contractors are able to get projects approved without full compliance or evade citation because they know the process and can “get around regulations.”

The homeowners also identified a recurring problem with real estate agents not disclosing that a property is within the historic district and new homeowners only finding out when they start work on a home renovation project.

BUILDING HERNDON'S HERITAGE



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Many of the conversations were about materials, with only two participants stating that they do not want modern materials to be introduced to the updated guidelines. Everyone else shared the opinion that they would like to be able to use modern materials and systems as long as those materials had the same or a similar appearance as the original materials. They also brought up the need for the guidelines to allow for green infrastructure such as solar panels, and future materials and systems that have not yet been invented or introduced to the market.

HPRB Listening Sessions

The WPA + CPG team sat down with each member of the Heritage Preservation Review Board to listen to their experiences using the existing guidelines to make decisions.

The same four questions were used to facilitate each conversation, however, these questions were only a guide:

1. What are your greatest frustrations with the guidelines? What is most successful?
2. What are they designed to regulate or protect?
3. How do your goals/mandate as a regulatory board differ/align with the property owners?
4. What are you reviewing that could be delegated to staff?

WHAT WE HEARD

The Board member's greatest frustrations largely came from two aspects of the current guidelines: the lack of clear statements of purview and purpose, and the lack of clear guidance on replacement materials and building components.

The lack of clarification regarding purview and purpose frequently lead to frustration for both the Board members and the applicants. Board members reported numerous occasions where applicants interpreted the guidelines as giving more leeway than the Board's interpretation of the guidelines, which led to contentious meetings and decisions. Additionally, several members noted that ambiguity in the guidelines around what is expected of contributing buildings and non-contributing buildings has also led to frustrations in coming to decisions. Some felt that a statement of purpose or philosophy would alleviate some frustration by providing a touchstone to which they could return when making decisions.

The other great source of frustration stems from unclear direction in the guidelines about how materials and building systems should be used, and in which circumstances. They believe that the material and building system references that are provided are outdated and the Board members are hindered by not having access to an up-to-date list of approved materials and vendors that supply the materials. Several were either in favor of allowing contemporary materials, or acknowledged that the district was already moving in that direction, but, again, have no clear guidance on this from the existing guidelines.

Board members said that the most successful portions of the current guidelines are those describing and detailing the various architectural styles, window details, and roof lines.

The Board was split on what the guidelines were designed to regulate or protect, with some believing that they are intended to maintain the overall look and feel of the community, while others believe that they dictate the preservation of original styles and materials specific to the stated period of significance.

When answering the question regarding the differences between the goals/mandate of the board and those of the property owners, the responses were typically that the HPRB is charged with or has the goal of preserving properties accurately according to their period of significance, while property owners are satisfied with "good enough" or are more interested in preserving or recreating styles or elements that they like, which are not always related to the original style of the building that they own.

Most members said that applications for paint color changes could be delegated to staff, while others extended that to include other elements on the property such as fences and landscaping, provided there were some mechanism for staff to refer applicants to the Board if they were not comfortable making the decision, or if applicants could appeal to the Board if they do not believe that the staff decision is fair.

Some other items noted by the Board members are that they did not believe that they had been given adequate training when they joined the board and felt that they needed more information materials at their disposal in order to make effective decisions. They also reiterated what the team heard at the previous sessions regarding real estate agents not disclosing properties being located within the District and struggling with whether or not to give any leniency to property owners claiming to not have known the status of their property. One also mentioned the confusion caused by properties that were renovated prior to the formation of the District leading to popular belief that certain materials are permitted or that the Board was making decisions counter to past precedent, and is therefore inconsistent.

Town Council Listening Sessions

The WPA + CPG team sat down with each member of the Town Council to listen to their experiences using the existing guidelines to make decisions during the appeals process, and to find out what they are hearing from their constituents with regard to the HPOD.

The same three questions were used to facilitate each conversation, however, these questions were only a guide:

1. How well do the guidelines serve the district?
2. What are they designed to regulate or protect?
3. Why do you choose to regulate construction and renovation works in this district?

WHAT WE HEARD

The Council members felt that the guidelines serve the district generally poorly, fair at best. They noted ambiguity in guidance, unclear language, and lack of purpose or goals as factors in their low rating of the guideline's effectiveness. Several Council members discussed the confusion surrounding what is required of contributing buildings versus non-contributing buildings within the district and said that the current guidelines did not address this difference adequately. It was pointed out that this ambiguity has led to the perception that the guidelines are applied in a discriminatory way, requiring more of some property owners than of others. The council members mostly felt that the ambiguity of the guidelines affected homeowners more than commercial property owners.

Most felt that the guidelines are intended to regulate the "look and feel" of the Town, with only some believing that the guidelines are designed to protect the accurate historic character of buildings. Those that favored the "look and feel" approach were supportive of the use of contemporary materials and construction, while those of the opposite opinion were more likely to believe that the guidelines call for the preservation of and replacement with original materials from the period of significance. Some felt that the vernacular architecture should not be elevated to a level of historic significance that warrants preservation, while others maintain that it isn't a historic district if the buildings from the period of significance are not preserved with period-appropriate materials. Clarifying the guidelines with respect to window and roof materials were a top priority with some mentioning building cladding and trim as well.

Reasons for choosing to regulate construction and renovation works in the district were all related to maintaining or increasing the value of the town, and the downtown in particular. Responses were that the character of the town is what draws both visitors and

new residents since Herndon is a unique town in the D.C. metro area. Keeping this character intact is important to the well-being of the town.

Council members also raised the issue of a lack of disclosure by real estate agents in home sales leading to new residents being surprised to learn that their estimates of what it would cost to make repairs or improvements to their new home fall short of what is required by being located in the district.

Council members that discussed the process indicated that they thought it could be streamlined by making more application types subject to staff review rather than going through HPRB. In particular they mentioned applications relating to colors, emergency repairs, and regular maintenance.

They also frequently discussed a perceived lack of consistency in HPRB decisions which leads to resident complaints about the process. Some felt that this is a result of the ambiguity of the guidelines, while others felt that it stems from the composition and training of the board itself. Another aspect of the process that was raised is the lack of consistency in the enforcement of the guidelines resulting from many factors including lack of enforcement staff training, intentional deception or avoidance of applying for permits on the part of property owners, and staff prioritizing other types of enforcement.

Public Meeting

The WPA + CPG team held a public meeting which was open to everyone. It was designed to be a working meeting, with participants seated in groups holding moderated discussions with the aim of gathering specific information the team needs in order to establish a basis for the new guidelines. The meeting began with a short presentation explaining the project scope and the project schedule, and then followed a format of presenting images and information followed by about 10 minutes of discussion, then a new topic with images and information. Each table had a facilitator who kept the conversations moving, and a speaker who reported a summary of the table's discussions to the room at the end of the meeting. There were approximately 60 people in attendance.

The questions asked of the group were:

1. *What qualities of Herndon do you want to protect?*
2. *What do you love about living/working in the heritage district?*
3. *What do you dislike about working/living in the heritage district?*
4. *What benefits of preservation do you see in Herndon?*
5. *What is your experience with the guidelines? What would make working with the guidelines and the review process easier?*
6. *Visual Question: Which of these material changes do you find to be the most appropriate for use in Herndon? Think about this in the context of the entire district, not just a single building.*
7. *Which of these visuals detracts too much from the character of the district? Think about this in the context of the entire district, not just a single building.*
8. *Visual question: Which of these examples of infill design do you think would best suit Herndon?*
9. *As a group, decide on three words that describe Herndon's district. Please write down all options discussed, but only share the top three.*



Herndon Heritage Preservation District Residents and property owners participating in a group discussion of the District guidelines

WHAT WE HEARD

1. What qualities of Herndon do you want to protect?

Every table included “walkability” and some form of “small-town feel” in their list of qualities that should be protected in Herndon. Other frequently mentioned qualities were the historic character, scale, and massing of buildings, and the small businesses that form the core of the downtown.

Conversations about “historic character” were typically in reference to traditional building forms, traditional fenestration patterns, and traditional trim patterns.

Conversations regarding “scale” were typically about preserving the generally small scale of development in the Downtown area, as opposed to full- or multi-block developments which are generally homogeneous in character.

2. What do you love about living/working in the heritage district?

Again, walkability and having a charming, small-town feel topped the list with nearly every group including these items. Other favorites were the neighborhood experience/close-knit community and the uniqueness of a small town in the predominantly suburban D.C. metro area. Participants see this small-town experience as a significant selling point for Herndon as well as a point of pride for residents.

3. What do you dislike about working/living in the heritage district?

The two most frequent responses were the increasing traffic congestion in town, and the high cost of materials required by the heritage district guidelines. Very nearly as frequent were dissatisfaction with the HPRB process and clarity of the guidelines.

The concerns about traffic congestion were focused on the intersection of Elden St. and Lynn St. where the W&OD trail crosses Elden St. Participants believe that the light timing at this intersection, coupled with increased traffic volume resulting from new developments is causing frequent congestion in this area and causing inconvenience to Town residents.

While participants liked the character that the historic homes impart on the district, they disliked being required to maintain or improve them using original materials which they believe are too expensive for the quality of the buildings. As part of that, they disliked the process of receiving approval from the HPRB due to the ambiguous nature of the existing guidelines and the perceived lack of consistency in HPRB decisions which leads to unpredictability in the process. This unpredictability means that they cannot adequately plan their maintenance and improvement projects.

4. What benefits of preservation do you see in Herndon?

There was no clear consensus among the participants on this question. Responses included preservation being a draw to visitors and new residents, older homes being an aesthetic and cultural resource that can be enjoyed by the community, and also an observation that the benefits have been diminished by the addition of new, non-compliant development. Some questioned whether the District is intact enough to warrant further preservation.

Those that saw preservation being a draw to visitors noted the high participation in Town events such as the Thursday market and summer concert series. They don't believe that these events would be as successful in an environment that doesn't possess a similar small-town feel.

5. What is your experience with the guidelines? What would make working with the guidelines and the review process easier?

The most frequently cited experiences were those having to do with replacing materials on residential buildings. Almost all of those mentioned the replacement materials being too expensive or too difficult to find, and that a list of affordable, readily located materials that would be acceptable would make the most difference in improving the experience. Most of the groups also indicated that the process took too long or was too cumbersome and streamlining it to make it faster and more clearly defined would help significantly. Other comments were that the guidelines themselves are unclear and clarification of them would help applicants and the review board, the process or the materials required cost too much financially, and finally, a few noted that the HPRB members needed more training or don't provide enough guidance to applicants either due to attitude or lack of knowledge.



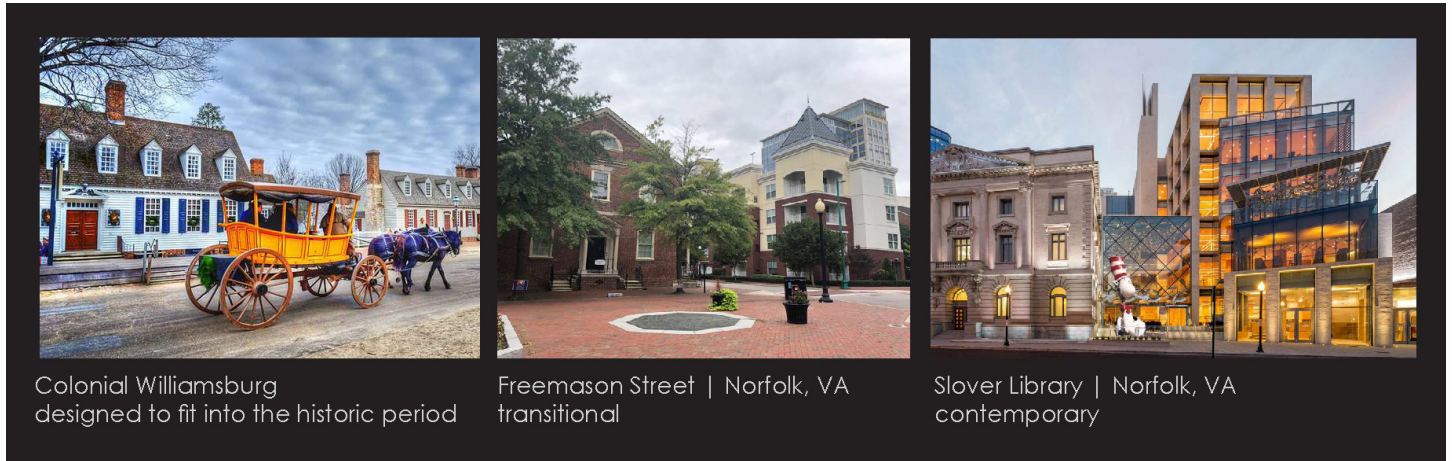
6. Visual Question: Which of these material changes do you find to be the most appropriate for use in Herndon? Think about this in the context of the entire district, not just a single building.

All of the groups reported that they were accepting of the material changes in the images, though one indicated that the metal material defines the character and should be retained whether stamped tin or standing seam metal. All but one group were accepting of chimney removal provided the termination is handled appropriately and there is a supporting financial reason.

7. Which of these visuals detracts too much from the character of the district? Think about this in the context of the entire district, not just a single building.

The only comment here was that making architectural changes (such as chimney removal) are unacceptable.

Question 8 asked the participants to evaluate the images below:



Colonial Williamsburg
designed to fit into the historic period

Freemason Street | Norfolk, VA
transitional

Slover Library | Norfolk, VA
contemporary

8. Visual question: Which of these examples of infill design do you think would best suit Herndon?

All of the tables were in favor of the middle option, which infills new construction in a manner congruent with the scale and form of the historic context, but uses contemporary materials and construction methods. Residents liked that this option retains the small-town look and feel, without requiring historically accurate reconstructions. Most did not like the contemporary building juxtaposed to traditional architecture and thought

that it would look out of place in Herndon.

9. As a group decide on three words that describe Herndon's district. Please write down all options discussed, but only share top three:

Burdensome
Quaint
Haphazard

Inconsistent
Diverse
Small-town

Community
Quaint
Inviting

Inviting
Quaint
Community

Inconsistent
Charming
Open/Walkable