

Hillcrest Residents Association Special Meeting
Report of Design Overlay District Committee
January 14, 2019

Summary Minutes

Board members present: President Eric McDaniel, Marian Boyd, Nathalie Coulter, Jim Hathaway, Antoinette Johnson, Barbara Justus, Laurel Lawrence, Barbara Miles, Beth Phelps.
Board members absent: Cliff Anderson, Corey Huffty, Karalyn Kerby, Karen Konarski-Hart.

Call to Order

President McDaniel called the meeting to order at 6:00pm and noted that this was a special informational meeting to hear the initial report of a committee appointed to examine the current status of the existing Hillcrest Design Overlay District. The initial DOD Committee consists of Hillcrest residents Bruce McMath and Chris Parker, and Board member Antoinette Johnson. They were asked to gather factual information regarding the effect of the Design Overlay District since its implementation in 2010.

Presentation by Bruce McMath

Bruce McMath made a presentation. He said he had collected data from Brian Minyard from the City of Little Rock Planning Department on new construction and demolitions in the Hillcrest neighborhood during the roughly ten years preceding the DOD (2000 through 2009) and the nine years after the DOD was implemented (2010 through 2018). Because the DOD is slightly larger than the National Register Hillcrest Historic District, he also broke that data down to account for the DOD overall and the Historic District as a sub-unit. Where he was able to determine it, he also indicated whether a structure that was torn down was a “contributing structure” for purposes of the Historic District designation.

McMath and his wife also photographed the new construction and he shared slides.

McMath noted that the recession that started in 2008 seemed to have an impact on demolition and construction activity.

McMath noted the following in his report:

- New construction in the Overlay District area in the period 2000-2009 (pre-DOD) varied from 0 to 5 units a year with an average of 2.5 new homes per year. After the DOD was implemented, the rate was subdued until 2015 when it reached 5 new builds, and a jump in 2016 to 10 units, falling off to 5 units in 2017 and 2 units so far in 2018, for an average of 3.6 new builds a year, post-DOD.
- The teardown rate in the Overlay district has had peaks and valleys but averaged 3.3 a year both before and after the DOD was implemented.
- Within the Historic District, the new build rate was 1.6 a year pre-DOD and 1.9 a year post-DOD. The teardown rate was 1.2 a year pre-DOD and 1.8 post-DOD.

Bruce noted that there were some limits on the data he had, including an inability to detect from the demolition records whether the structure demolished was a residence or an out building.

Numerous audience members asked questions and a wide-ranging discussion of the DOD ensued over the next thirty minutes.

Scott Smith, who was president of the Hillcrest Residents Association during the Design Overlay District effort, explained that the Overlay District was an attempt to establish numerical limits on the size of houses that could be built on lots within the DOD. He said that if homes looked oversized for the lots, perhaps the DOD formulas should be tweaked to be slightly more restrictive.

Other residents asked for clarification about the National Register Historic District, and the differences between that and a “local ordinance” Historic District. Antoinette Johnson explained that the National Register district made obtaining historic preservation tax credits easier, but that only a local ordinance district would control architectural elements of new development.

Other residents asked for additional information. Beth Phelps suggested we invite Brian Minyard back to present other data he has collected comparing the Overlay District to other neighborhoods in the City.

President McDaniel said he would like to see as much of this information on the HRA website as was feasible and plans were made to do so.

(Jim Hathaway recognized Mayor Frank Scott in the back of the audience and he stood and received a round of applause for his recent election.)

President McDaniel assured audience members that further discussion of the Design Overlay District was planned and encouraged further participation by residents at subsequent meetings. He then adjourned the meeting.