

Holmes Run Acres Community Meeting: Potential Historic Overlay District Information Session

11/7/19 - 7pm

Woodburn Elementary School Cafeteria

3401 Hemlock Drive, Falls Church VA

Presenting:

Nicole Brannan (NB), Heritage Resource Planner, Fairfax County Dept. of Planning and Zoning

Edith MacArthur (EM), HRACA Current Board Member and Past President

Also present: Friends of HRA (FoHRA) members Rob Davis, Mel Laney and Christiane deJong

Agenda:

- Introductions
- Audience Questions Recorded
- Slide Presentation on HOD
- Presenter Question Response

EM began by sharing the impetus for a reconsideration of adding HOD designation to HRA at this time to protect the architectural and planning character of the neighborhood:

- HRA vulnerable to home developer interest by virtue of location and high land value - tear downs have recently occurred at the top of Holmes Run Drive
- HRA currently experiencing high turnover rate due to residents aging out
- HRA vulnerable to road widening resulting from robust development in the surrounding area
- Hollin Hills is currently exploring an HOD through a study w/Fairfax County Dept. of P&Z

EM recapped the previous consideration of adding HOD designation to HRA in 2016:

- HRACA Board formed an Ad-hoc "Historic Overlay Committee" comprised of neighbors both for and against HOD to investigate the topic
- HRA residents questioned necessity for HOD at a Community Meeting on the subject held at Woodburn Elementary School
- HOD conversation truncated in reaction to mis-information over potential design requirements
- "Historic Overlay Committee" evolved to become "Friends of HRA" committee to investigate other means to protect the character of the neighborhood - i.e. Engaging the interest of realtors with speciality in Mid-Century Modern (MCM) homes

Despite the best efforts of many on the FoHRA committee, tear downs and replacement with out-of-character homes are becoming common place in HRA. This is even more concerning because teardown/replacement approach is occurring at the top of Holmes Drive near Gallows Road, an area that is particularly vulnerable to road widening and developmental pressure from adjacent development.

EM introduced NB who explained that their office is currently mid-way through a HOD study for Hollin Hills (HH). This the first study to add a Historic Overlay in Fairfax County in 33 years. The HH study, as is typical, was the result of a community request to their district's Board of Supervisor representative. After an HH resident majority interest it was confirmed by neighborhood petition, Supervisor Storck proposed the motion to the Board of Supervisors citing the architectural and site design significance of the Hollin Hills neighborhood to the history of Fairfax County. The Board of Supervisors approved the motion on July 31, 2018, that

directed staff to evaluate the establishment of a Historic Overlay District for HH, and to pursue the necessary steps to establish an HOD, if one is recommended.

Next up NB solicited questions from the audience to be answered following the slide presentation:

1. What are the downsides of an HOD?
2. What affect would adding an HOD have on the process of securing a building permit?
3. Who is in charge of enforcing HOD standards during construction?
4. Who determines the design requirements for the HOD? What is the architectural review process? What is the appeals process?
5. How does the county deal with development that may be considered obtrusive to neighbors? How does the HOD apply to houses that may be part of HRA but are not MCM style?
6. What materials would be acceptable under HOD guidelines? How does the HOD affect tear downs? Can you build a new house in the MCM style?
7. Are permits required for a broader array of builds under an HOD (i.e., would zoning compliant sheds that would not normally require a permit now require one)?
8. Do we, as homeowners, have any protection during the design review process?
9. How prescriptive are the design and/or material guidelines?
10. Would HOD regulate/require or inspire property up-keep?
11. Are there other communities in Fairfax County that have HOD designations?

Slide Presentation given by NB next. A full version of this presentation will be posted on the HRA website.

NB reviewed the basis for, structure of and value of an HOD as follows:

HRA has historic significance:

- Built 1951-1958 as a part of the post-war DC Metro housing boom
- Well known architects planned community with uniquely sited, architect design homes
- HRA homes are exemplary in design - modular, low cost and have a strong identity
- HRA listed on the Virginia Landmarks Register in 2006
- HRA listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2007

Use of the term “Historic” in the context of an HOD generally indicates cultural significance or embodiment of the ideals, values and physical characteristics of a particular point and place in time.

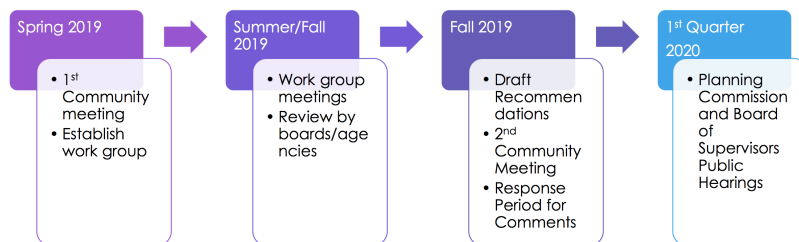
An HOD ensures that new development is appropriate to the context in which it sits. It is established via a process that includes a current condition analysis that includes a description of boundaries, a description of existing structures, identification of present trends and objectives as well as present endangering uses and/or threats to the character of the neighborhood.

What does HOD mean for your house? HOD reqs. do not apply to interior alterations or any work not currently requiring a building permit. Roofing replacement, window replacement, fences under 6', driveways, other hardscaping and landscaping are all exempt from HOD guidelines.

How long does the process to establish an HOD take? The Hollin Hills HOD process is taking about a year to reach the point at which the work group can issue draft recommendations for community review in a community meeting.

Here is Hollin Hills' HOD Study Schedule:

Timeline/Schedule Review



What is an ARB? ARB stands for Architectural Review Board and a body of 11 individuals appointed by the County Board of Supervisors. The ARB is made up of architects, architectural historians, historians, an archaeologist, landscape architect, a lawyer and real estate broker.

What is the ARB process? The ARB approval is sought as a part of the permitting process. It includes a request to be included in the monthly ARB meeting (2nd Thursday of each month) docket, submitting an application package of drawings two weeks prior to the monthly meeting, attendance at an informal “workshop” meeting and then a follow on “action” meeting. A permit can be applied for the day after approval is granted in an action meeting.

The process is described in detail in this PDF:

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/sites/planning-development/files/assets/documents/compplanamend/hollinhillshod/july23_meeting/arb_slides_7.23.19.pdf


What do design guidelines typically look like? Once defined, vetted by the HRA community, and approved by the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors for zoning amendment the County will make the Design Guidelines available online for homeowners seeking information while planning permit requiring changes to their property. An example of this can be seen here:

https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-development/sites/planning-development/files/assets/documents/historic/centerville_dg.pdf


DESIGN GUIDELINES III

Elements Guideline
Follow the guidelines for the district located in Section A4 of this chapter. In addition:

- Consider the use of building techniques and features characteristic of historic and contributing structures in the district such as:
 - deep overhangs and porches
 - transoms
 - operable shutters and double-hung sash windows
 - align openings for cross-ventilation
 - chimneys



Six-over-six light windows are seen on the eighteenth-century Mount Gilead and on the Spindle Sears House.



Full-width porches are found on several residences within the district, such as the Havener House example pictured here, and can provide the benefit of a shaded outdoor living space and connection with neighbors.

Although not MCM architecture, slides included a screen shot of the Design Guidelines for Centerville as an example

Frequently Asked Questions cited in slide show:

FAQ 1 - Is there an appeals process? Yes. The ARB does not flatly deny approval of designs. They will work with homeowners and their architect, if they have one, to develop a mutually satisfying solution. If a design receives comments in the first round of review the homeowner would be encouraged to return for a second review after making modifications. There has not been a single appeal in the past 15 years.

FAQ 2 - Will the HOD add time to the permit process? Yes. The additional review will require a minimum of two weeks more, on average approximately six weeks more and, potentially, longer if agreement requires several go arounds.

FAQ 3 - Can design guidelines be written in a way that would allow an ARB review to be avoided? Yes, it is possible. I.e. - if the guidelines approve installation of a certain type of skylight or roof and that is the only change indicated on the permit application.

FAQ 4 - Are tax credits available to homeowners if they are complying w/HOD design guidelines? Yes. Rehabilitation Tax Credits are dollar-for-dollar reductions in income tax liability for taxpayers who rehabilitate historic buildings. Credits are available from both the federal government and the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Virginia Department of Historic Resources requires compliance with Title 36 - Parks, Forests, and Public Property/ Chapter I - NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR in order to receive the credit.

NB then closed with a response to audience Questions from earlier in the session:

1. What are the possible down sides to adding HOD designation to HRA?

It will take slightly longer to get a permit - see #2 below. The changes you wish to make to your property will be subject to review and possibly affected if the ARB suggests modifications to your approach. If a home owner wishes to tear down the existing home and build anew, the proposed design must demonstrate compatibility with HRA design guidelines.

2. What affect would adding an HOD have on the process of securing a building permit?

It will take slightly longer to secure a building permit but this delay, if anticipated, can be built into your project schedule. If you have to pay an architect or a contractor for their assistance with the ARB review there will be cost associated with their time. There are no additional fees required for ARB review during permitting.

3. Who is in charge of enforcing HOD standards during construction?

A permitted construction project requires regular inspections by county officials during the course of construction. Officials check for compliance with the County approved drawings that are legally bound to the permit. (There was a sideline conversation about house under construction on HRD currently here and interest expressed in taking action on violations).

4. Who determines the design requirements for the HOD? What is the architectural review process? What is the appeals process? (The last two questions were answered in the FAQ 1 above) Design requirements are developed jointly by a "Work Group" comprised of community members, two Historic Commission members, two Architectural Review Board Members and County Staff. Draft guidelines will then be shared with HRA in a community meeting for community review followed by a comment period.

5. How does the county deal with development that may be considered obtrusive to neighbors? Current zoning restrictions dictate the maximum building envelope through both property line setback requirements and maximum building height above grade. The term “obtrusive” can be investigated through the course of establishing recommended guidelines.

6. How does the HOD apply to houses that may be part of HRA but are not MCM style? This is something that can be established in the draft design guidelines. Likely existing non MCM homes would be exempt from the majority of the design criteria but that remains to be determined. Tear downs and new construction on those lots may be required to comply. This too must be determined by the work group and approved by HRA.

7. What materials would be acceptable under HOD guidelines? How does the HOD affect tear downs? Can you build a new house in the MCM style? Recommended materials would be identified during development of the design guidelines. Tear downs are still allowed but new construction must comply with design guidelines.

8. Are permits required for a broader array of builds under an HOD (i.e. would zoning compliant sheds that would not normally require a permit now require one?) No.

9. Do we, as homeowners, have any protection during the design review process? See description of appeals process described in FAQ 1 above.

10. How prescriptive are the design and/or material guidelines? See typical guideline from Fairfax County for Centerville earlier in the minutes. Roof pitches and types, fenestration (windows), percentage of openings/glass, proportion of building massing, etc. are all common to other County guidelines.

11. Would HOD regulate/require property up-keep? HOD guidelines regulate up-keep work that requires a permit - i.e. deck replacement but would not stipulate general upkeep schedules.

12. Are there other communities in Fairfax County that have HOD designations? Yes. There are thirteen Historic Overlay Districts in Fairfax County that provide regulations over and above the regular zoning protection to better protect those unique areas, sites, and buildings that are of special architectural, historic, or archaeological value.

13. What does HRA need to have happen in order to pursue and HOD Study? In order for Supervisor Smyth to recommend to the Board of Supervisors that a County study be executed HRA will need to demonstrate clear majority of residents have interest in this. This means “YES” votes on the circulating petition for at least 70% of HRA households - roughly 265 households. Hollin Hills had 70% in favor of their study. Linda Smyth, outgoing Supervisor, must receive evidence of 70% approval in time for her last board meeting on 3 Dec. 2019 in order to request funds for the staff required to complete the study.

14. Does signing the petition mean an HOD will happen? No. The HOD study is a feasibility study. The County will draft a report of their recommendations including the design guidelines that residents on the work group will help develop and submit to the board of Supervisors and the Planning commission for their consideration. If at any point in the process the community expresses withheld support or resistance the request for zoning amendment will not proceed.

15. Can we meet with an ARB member to discuss what this means for HRA? Yes. Monthly meetings are public, on the 2nd Thursday of the month and anyone may attend.