

**Public Input Meeting**  
**Historic District Zoning Ordinance Amendment #49**

**January 9, 2020**

**6:05 pm -7:25 pm**

Kali Casper, Assistant Planning Director with the Town of Blacksburg, provided an overview of the Zoning Ordinance Amendment timeline, the boundaries of the Historic District, background information on surveys, types of historic review and the changes that Town Council has asked staff to address with this Zoning Ordinance Amendment. Ms. Casper also explained that this is the second public input meeting and that the Historic or Design Review Board (HDRB) and the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (ZORC) have reviewed the proposed language and provided feedback. Maeve Gould, Comprehensive Planner and liaison to HDRB, was in attendance as well as Larry Spencer, Town Attorney.

- An attendee asked if the Hill Studio Survey is available.
- A citizen asked who elects the HDRB members and if there has ever been a board member whose background is only in building and development. The attendee commented that they have off-street parking behind their house in the Historic District. They asked if they were to have issues with this parking, if they need to get permission from the Town to put up a “No Parking” sign.
- A citizen asked what is meant by infrastructure for a site design concept in the revised text regarding the redevelopment plan criteria.
- A citizen asked if a contributing structure in the Historic District burns down, is it true that nothing bigger than the footprint of the previous structure can be rebuilt. The citizen expressed concern about existing parking in the Historic District not meeting the standards proposed in the revised text. They asked if it would be permitted to build a parking lot if a contributing structure burned down. They wondered if the parking and redevelopment restrictions are unique to the Historic District.
- An attendee asked for clarification of the statement “a concern for loss of historic development pattern to parking” from the PowerPoint presentation.
- A citizen asked if they could build a new driveway in the Historic District.
- Another citizen asked, if you have a gravel driveway and parking area to the rear of a residential use, is there a special process to go through to pave it?
- A citizen asked if they have parking for two vehicles that is not visible from the street behind a house in the Historic District and they do not change the driveway width, would they need a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).
- Regarding the new criteria for proposed parking in the Historic District, a citizen asked if the size of the parking lot is currently considered, without these changes.
- An attendee asked if all the criteria for a CUP for proposed parking in the Historic District must be met. They asked how many criteria must be met, and who decides this. The citizen commented that when the

original contributing structures were added, it was because they were at least 50 years old and had a recognizable style of architecture. They asked if this is the same criteria being used now. They asked for clarification on what the historic “fabric” is. They commented that this seems subjective. They asked if any thought has been given to the structural integrity of the buildings being added to the list of contributing structures.

- Bruce Wicker, the property owner at 508 Lee Street, asked if there is a way to get his property off the list of proposed contributing structures. He stated that he would like for it to be deleted from consideration as an additional contributing structure in the historic district. He stated that he believes it does not have any historical significance.
- A citizen asked if the Town has the right to add properties as contributing structures.
- A citizen asked if the proposed changes mean they cannot install a window that is more energy efficient if their property is a contributing structure.
- An attendee asked if they owned a contributing structure that is in disrepair, could they demolish it and redevelop. They asked what this process would be and if they have to wait a year before they can demolish it.
- A citizen asked to receive a copy of the survey for their proposed contributing structure. They asked if one of the reasons for being added is the address.
- An attendee asked that given discussions with Development Strategies about density downtown, and now this amendment, whether these are contradictory and if we, as a town, are pulling in two different directions.
- A citizen asked if the list of proposed structures and map can be found online.
- A citizen asked if their property is already a contributing structure and in the Live/Work/Sell Art District, do these proposed changes impact whether they can add a studio on their property.
- A citizen asked if the density bonus and residential on the ground floor in the Historic District only apply to properties zoned Downtown Commercial, or also to properties with residential zoning. They asked if this could be added to the residential zoning districts. The citizen asked if there has ever been a survey of the residents on their opinion of the Historic District. The attendee asked if there has been a greater good or benefit from the Historic District, since it was founded. They asked if there are incentives for residential property owners to improve their properties in the Historic District. They stated that they are concerned that adding more contributing structures is going to disincentivize people from improving their properties in the Historic District.
- A citizen responded stating that they own a contributing structure in the Historic District and they do not see it as adding many restrictions, and that the primary challenge would only be if they wanted to demolish it.
- An attendee stated that the Town should consider some sort of low-income loan scheme to create incentives for improvement of properties in the Historic District.

- A citizen stated that when the Historic District was first proposed, the public was told that it would improve the neighborhood. They asked if these proposed changes are going to improve the neighborhood.
- An attendee expressed concern that adding more processes and restrictions to make changes to properties does not incentivize people to improve them.
- A citizen expressed concern that if they sell their property in the 16 squares, a family will not move in after them, because it is surrounded by fraternities and partying students. They stated that the only option will be to rent to students.
- Another citizen stated that most of the successes talked about tonight in the Historic District are on Main Street. Given this, they stated, when more restrictions are added to areas that are less monetarily competitive than Main Street, they doubt that there will be successes.
- A citizen suggested adding more contributing structures on Draper Road because they believe it is actually historic.
- A citizen stated that it would be nice to have these discussions with Town Council members, and to have Town Council members in attendance at these public input meetings. They stated that they would like to have an informal meeting where there is public input with the people who are making these decisions, such as two Town Council members, perhaps the mayor, and two Planning Commissioners.
- An attendee commented that everyone is thinking about the price of his or her own house, rather than the integrity of the Town of Blacksburg as a whole. They stated that many citizens talk poorly of the students, but they believe that without the students many people would not have jobs or live in town. They stated that it is important to also think about the integrity of Blacksburg. The attendee said that the Town is doing the best they can, but maybe Town Council should be more selective about the developments approved.
- The owner of 207 N. Main Street stated that their property is already a contributing structure in the Historic District and that they would like their property deleted from the current list of contributing structures.

Thursday, January 9, 2020, 6:00 PM

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