

# heights • forward

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF  
THE HOUSTON HEIGHTS  
HISTORIC DISTRICTS  
(EAST, WEST, SOUTH)  
DESIGN GUIDELINES PROJECT

Issue 2, February 2016



## Next Meeting

Thursday, February 16, 2015  
5:30 a.m.–7:30 p.m.  
St. Andrew's Episcopal Church  
1819 Heights Blvd., Houston, TX 77008



## In This Issue

Welcome to *heights forward*! Every month, we bring you the latest information about the City of Houston's initiative to develop historic preservation design guidelines for Houston Heights Historic District East, Houston Heights Historic District West, and Houston Heights Historic District South. Here's what you'll find in this issue:

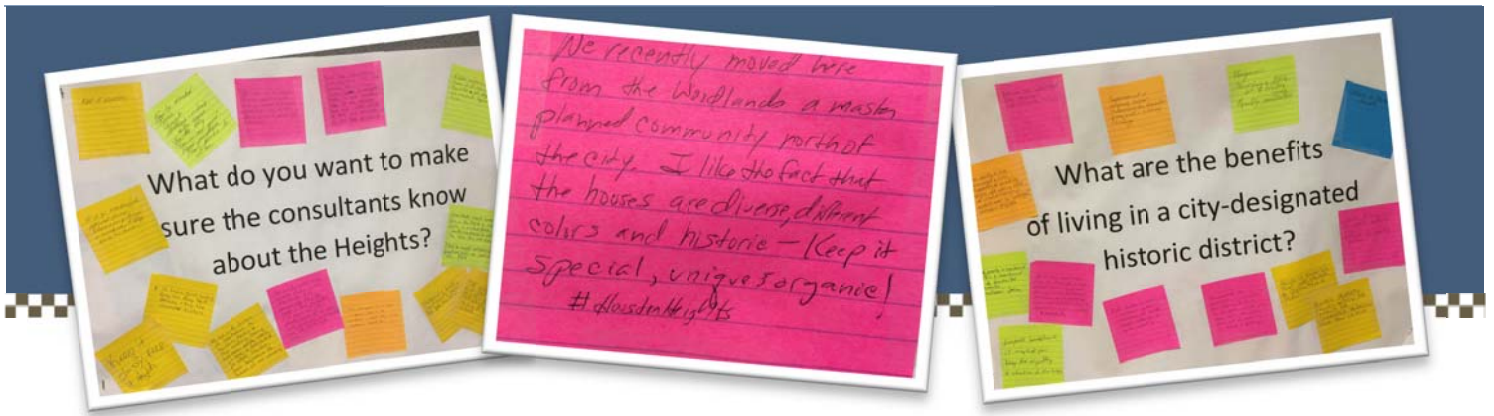
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## Looking for more information?

The latest news and an archive of project information and materials are available online at  
<http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/Design-Guidelines-Heights.html>



**PLANNING &  
DEVELOPMENT  
DEPARTMENT**



# Project News and Updates

## Second community meeting held on January 16, 2016

Forty-five people attended the second Design Guidelines meeting in Houston Heights on Tuesday evening, January 16. All three historic districts were represented fairly proportionally. The focus of the meeting was on *context areas*: the geographic area used for comparison purposes during the Certificate of Appropriateness application process.

This topic affects important aspects of the historic preservation ordinance. While the ordinance defines a context area as “the blockface on which a project is located and the opposing blockface,” it can be defined differently in design guidelines for a historic district.

Project manager Steph McDougal began the meeting with a project update, including information about the process of selecting a qualified consulting firm to develop the design guidelines. She also answered several public-works questions from the first community meeting, before presenting the discussion of context areas. Finally, participants had the opportunity to answer four questions posed at “feedback stations.”

Questions posed at this meeting included:

- What do you want to make sure the consultants know about the Heights?

- Which parts of the Heights today represent what the Heights should look like 10 years from now?
- What are the benefits of living in a city-designated historic district?
- What responsibilities do property owners have in a city-designated historic district?

The complete meeting report, which includes citizen responses to these questions, can be found online at the project webpage: <http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/Design-Guidelines-Heights.html>

## Explain That Term: *Massing*

It’s not just the height or width ... the number of stories ... or the shape... It’s all of those things! Massing is the *combined* effect of the overall arrangement, volume, and shape of a building.

Massing is mentioned in the City of Houston’s historic preservation ordinance in Section 33.241, Criteria 10, which governs changes to Landmarks, Protected Landmarks, archaeological sites, and buildings that have been classified as

Contributing to a historic district. Criteria 10 says, “The proposed alteration or addition must be compatible with the **massing**, size, scale, material and character of the property and the context area.”

Massing can be simple, such as a basic box-like form, or complex (many different forms put together). How those forms are arranged also contributes to the overall effect. Many homes in the Heights are relatively simple in shape and arrangement.



The three dimensions (height, width, and depth) of a building combine to create its volume. Minimizing one or more dimensions, and thereby reducing overall volume, can help a large addition or new house blend into a neighborhood of small historic homes.

Similarly, a house with relatively small volume would not be compatible with or appropriate for a neighborhood of relatively large homes. Compatibility in massing goes both ways.



# Spotlight on Architectural Styles

Each month, this column will focus on the architecture found in historic districts.

In this issue: *Craftsman bungalows*



One of the most common styles of architecture found in Houston Heights is the Craftsman bungalow.

These one-story homes were popular in streetcar suburbs, such as the Heights, where houses were placed relatively close together and single-story buildings provided privacy for neighbors. The Craftsman style was based, in part, on the designs of the architects Greene & Greene, two brothers in California. Their houses were highly publicized, and soon became popular throughout the U.S., thanks to pattern books and kits.



Craftsman homes generally can be identified by their low-pitched roofs with wide eaves, exposed rafter tails, and decorative brackets or braces under the gables, as shown in the illustration above.

Craftsman houses can be divided into four different types, according to the shape of the roof. The most common shapes are the front-gabled roof (above) and the side-gabled roof. Roofs with gables on both the front and the sides are called cross-gabled. Hipped roofs (below right), which were typical of earlier architectural styles, such as Folk Victorian and Queen Anne, are less common.

Porches are also an important design element of Craftsman houses. The front porch can span the full width of the front wall, or just a portion of it. Some porches project forward from the front wall of the house, beneath a front-gabled porch roof, as shown above.

Porch columns are often a combination of square brick piers topped by square or tapered-square wooden columns; full-height brick columns are also common. Porch railings are usually fairly low (short) and may be simple or decorative.

Walls are typically covered with wood siding or shingles. In Houston, #117 “double teardrop”-profile siding is common.

The windows on Craftsman houses are usually wider than the tall, narrow openings common to the earlier Queen Anne style. Two or more windows were often grouped together to create a “ribbon” effect. They were double-hung (to open from either the top or the bottom, for ventilation) and often simple in design, with two single panes of glass (below). This is called a one-over-one window. Sometimes the upper sash would be divided into multiple panes. Less common were “special front windows,” which consisted of a single large pane of glass with a small decorative pane above.

All of these character-defining features can help identify a Craftsman house.



# Heights History: 1890-1910

The independent city of Houston Heights was established by Oscar Martin Carter, a Midwestern banker whose Omaha and South Texas Land Company purchased 1,756 acres just north of the city of Houston in 1891. Carter also purchased two mule-drawn streetcar companies serving the Heights and converted them to electricity, thus making the Heights Houston's first electric streetcar suburb.

Electric streetcars had been introduced in 1887, and quickly enabled the development of suburbs outside urban areas. Houston Heights was one of many small towns that sprang from such development: the trolley line was extended into the countryside, then a town was developed around it by the same company. Streets, blocks, and lots were platted, usually along with parks and schools; infrastructure included water lines, a sanitation system, and street lights.

That was the case in Houston Heights, too. Oscar Carter assigned Daniel Denton Cooley, who had worked in Carter's bank in Nebraska, to manage the development of the town. Between 1891 and 1895, Cooley oversaw the surveying of the town, marketing of lots, and clearing of land to construct Heights Boulevard and other streets.

Cooley built his own home on Heights Boulevard in 1893, where Marmion Park is today. It was one of 17 houses built by the Omaha and South Texas Land Company, mostly on Heights Blvd. and Harvard Street. Some of the grandest homes in the Heights were constructed for company executives, often from the plans of George Barber, an architect from Tennessee who sold house plans through mail-order catalogs published between 1887 and 1907. Three of those houses (at 1802 Harvard, 1102 Heights, and 1348 Heights, pictured below) are still standing.



In Houston Heights, like other streetcar suburbs, housing consisted primarily of freestanding single-family homes, rather than the attached rowhouses often found in cities. Lots were long and narrow, and houses were built relatively close together, with front lawns and porches. City workers who lived in the Heights could easily walk between their homes and the streetcar line. Carter and Cooley marketed the lots to professionals and craftsmen, not just the wealthy.

By 1910, two elementary schools and a high school had been constructed to educate the children of Heights residents, as the community developed and more houses were built. Cooley Elementary School was named for Daniel Denton Cooley, a great supporter of education for all children. The historic Heights High School is now Hamilton Middle School.

*In the next issue: The building boom of the 1910s-1920s*



(Left to right) The historic houses at 1802 Harvard Street, 1102 Heights Boulevard, and 1348 Heights Boulevard.





## Did You Know?

Between 2004-2015, the three Houston Heights historic districts led the city in number of demolitions every year except one.



The exception was in 2006, when only one house in a historic district was demolished throughout the entire city.



Out of the 279 demolitions in historic districts in the past 12 years, 62% have been in the Heights historic districts.

# Meet Your Commissioners

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission (HAHC) is made up of 13 members, who together are responsible for administering the City's historic preservation ordinance. This includes reviewing applications for Certificates of Appropriateness, as well as new Landmarks, Protected Landmarks, Historic Districts, and Archeological Sites; increasing public awareness of the value of conserving historic resources within the city; providing input to city, state, and county officials, as needed; and evaluating the effectiveness of design guidelines for Houston's historic districts.

At least four members of the HAHC must own or live in a historic landmark or a contributing building in a historic district.

Of the 13 positions on the commission, four are set aside for citizen representatives (Ann Collum, Brie Kelman, Charles Stava, and Maverick Welsh). Citizen representatives are required to have knowledge and experience, but not necessarily specific professional experience, in preservation.

The HAHC requires other members to have specialized knowledge and professional experience:

- A professional archaeologist (Jorge Garcia-Herreros)
- A professional historian (Minnette Bickel Boesel)
- An architectural historian (Anna Mod)
- A person with knowledge of and interest in the cultural history of the city (Edie Archer)
- A registered architect (David Bucek)
- A person with commercial interests in a historic district (position is currently open)
- A professional real estate appraiser (John Cosgrove)
- A representative of an organization for remodelers or builders who has knowledge of and interest in restoration, historic building renovation, and compatible new construction (Rob Hellyer)
- A person with professional knowledge in preservation construction and technology (Emily Ardoin)

All 13 commissioners work together to help steward the City's historic resources for future generations.



## Make your voice heard.

Whether you have any knowledge or expertise in building-related matters, we want to know what you would like to see constructed in your neighborhood.



## We're all in this together.

The outcome of this project will affect property owners, building professionals, and City officials can create a product that allows the City and its citizens to effectively preserve historic districts for future generations.

# We Want You! to Participate in the Design Guidelines Process

In order for this project to be successful, it needs to be inclusive and representative of the Houston Heights Historic Districts community. You can help and make your voice heard. Here's how:

- ✧ Attend one or more community meetings. During these meetings, we will share information and gather your feedback. The next meeting will take place on **Tuesday, February 16, 2016** from **5:30–7:30 p.m.** at **St. Andrew's Episcopal Church** at **1819 Heights Boulevard**.
- ✧ Sign up to receive this newsletter via email, or look for it at the Heights Neighborhood Library or the Fire Station community center. Share it with your friends and neighbors.
- ✧ Visit the Houston Heights Design Guidelines website at **<http://www.houstontx.gov/planning/HistoricPres/Design-Guidelines-Heights.html>**
- ✧ Sign up for the Houston Heights Design Guidelines email list to get up-to-the-minute information right in your inbox. To subscribe, visit the website (above) and complete the registration form.
- ✧ Share your input and feedback with Steph McDougal (Project Manager):
  - Email [Steph.McDougal@HoustonTX.gov](mailto:Steph.McDougal@HoustonTX.gov)
  - Call 832-393-6541
  - Send a letter to City of Houston, Attn: Planning/  
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