



**CITY OF SAINT PAUL**  
*Melvin Carter, Mayor*

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## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Heritage Preservation Commissioners  
FROM: George Gause, Heritage Preservation Supervisor  
RE: December 11, 2018 HPC meeting – Historic Hill listening session  
DATE: January 28, 2019

We held an HPC listening session for the Historic Hill Heritage District at the Hallie Q. Brown Community Center (270 Kent Street, Saint Paul) on Tuesday, December 11, 5:30-6:30pm. Commissioners Bezat, George, Lightner, Douglas, Peroutka and staff gathered public comment from residents via a survey and two interactive boards. We had 63 individuals attend.

### **Comments:**

We would have lost viable historic resources integral to the heritage of Saint Paul without the HPC. Appreciate that there are people dedicated to preserve the area and the history of the City. Staff and guidelines have been very helpful in improving my property. Without historic preservation Hill would be less interesting and vibrant. Overall HPC and staff do a great job. I support historic preservation of the area. Overall historic preservation is a positive to the community. Appreciate the HPC reaching out to residents and holding listening session.

Frustrated with inconsistent application of guidelines and delays in reviews.  
Be stricter with enforcement and interpretation of standards.  
Need to be more reasonable and flexible-consider costs.  
You should only preserve buildings to the extent it is reasonable.  
Guidelines, cost and time for review need to be reasonable.  
We need clearer guidelines-currently unreadable  
Guidelines are not clear.  
HPC should only be a guide for most properties.  
The HPC should err on the desires of the property owners-HPC should only guide.  
HPC wields too much power over home owners-need to defer to owners.  
HPC needs to take into account modern materials and building options, including energy efficiency.  
Need good examples of work that satisfies the guidelines.

HPC should not review landscaping or driveways.  
Lining a driveway with decorative classic brick enhances our neighborhood, not make it less historic.  
No review of driveways  
Window replacement should be allowed.  
More flexibility on window replacement-consider energy efficiency and composite materials  
Changed so windows can be replaced with today's windows with energy efficient standards.  
Roofing replacement with similar should be approved same day.  
Simulated clay tile roofs should be allowed  
Demolition of most properties should not be allowed.  
Certain interior features should be reviewed.

- Continued -

Would love to see HPC provide consulting early to connect resources.  
Need to work with people who cannot afford professionals.  
HPC needs to do a better job with communicating, current notice is too short.  
Review process is too long- Speed up decisions.  
Review time is too long.  
Need better balance between preservation and repairs.  
Prospective buyers have difficulty in finding information or knowing.  
Residents did not know what the guidelines were for the district, a copy should be sent to the residents.  
Get realtors who work in the district have the guidelines

The purpose is not to preserve in a static sense, but to conserve and use the resource wisely.  
HPC needs to educate, give advice, listen and provide reasonable suggestions.  
Education is key for homeowners.  
Having a champion for HPC from the residents is important with public perception.

Creating heritage preservation districts perpetuates exclusionary policies real estate and land use that put down lower income and minority residents.

The HPC only alienates people and does not build a positive image.  
The HPC is very hard to work with.  
You are not saving us from anything.  
Judgment of historical significance is subjective.  
HPC is driving people out of the area.  
HPC needs to accept broad approach to acceptable, not their personal likes and tastes.  
Give owners a break-this is not a museum.  
I'm terrified to deal with HPC; they make costly unreasonable requirements not based on laws.  
Staff and Commission lack PR with working with people.  
HPC never returns phone calls.  
You are out of touch with property owners.  
You don't acknowledge the work that small property owners do to maintain their homes.  
Members appear arrogant and unwilling to work or support owners.

Would like HPC to not be appointed by the Mayor-need more real estate, business and contractors.  
Commissioner selection process should be more transparent with a possible role for district councils.  
DSI gives out inconstant information on HPC guidelines.  
Like to see financial incentives for designated properties to abate the cost of preservation.  
Get AIA involved somehow.  
Don't forget the history of the Rondo community.

**Survey:**

1. Do you own property in an historic district? **95% yes**
2. Have you heard of or worked with the Saint Paul HPC or staff? **88% yes**
3. When I hear that an old or historic place is threatened with demolition, I:
  - A. Reach out to city officials to save the structure. **28%**
  - B. Am excited for the possibility that there will be a space for something new. **17%**
  - C. Worry about the impacts, such as to the environment, neighborhood character, etc. **55%**
4. Overall, how do you rate the district as a place to work, live or do business? **Very good-57%, Good-43%**
5. Overall, how do you rate the City's existing approach to Heritage Preservation in providing protection for historic areas and buildings in Saint Paul? **Good-29%, Fair-57%, Poor-14%**

6. How do you believe heritage preservation has impacted this district?
- A. Historic preservation has made a positive impact on my neighborhood. **77%**
  - B. Historic preservation has not had an effect on my neighborhood. **2%**
  - C. Historic preservation has made it challenging to improve my neighborhood. **21%**
  - D. I am unfamiliar with Heritage Preservation. **0%**

Attendees were each given two dots and allowed to vote on several different topic areas on two boards as listed below. Percentages are calculated per each board.

**Board: *What area of the existing guidelines needs to be improved or changed?***

- 1. Windows/Doors, Egress, Storefronts **30%**
- 2. Repairs **26%**
- 3. Site work, Fencing, Retaining walls, Planters, Patios, Walkways **11%**
- 4. New Construction **7%**
- 5. Masonry, Chimneys, Tuckpointing **7%**
- 6. Demolition **7%**
- 7. Signage **4%**
- 8. Roofing, Gutters, Soffit, Fascia, Downspouts **4%**
- 9. Mechanical, HVAC, Solar, Mini-Splits **4%**

**Board: *An area that Saint Paul Heritage Preservation needs to improve:***

- 1. The associated costs **27%**
- 2. Inconsistent Decisions **17%**
- 3. Protecting the district character **11%**
- 4. Enforcement **9%**
- 5. Outreach with owners **9%**
- 6. Use of modern materials **6%**
- 7. Support Energy Efficiency **5%**
- 8. Length of review **5%**
- 9. The guidelines **5%**
- 10. Revitalizing the district **3%**
- 11. Why we need preservation **2%**
- 12. I haven't had any issues **1%**