

## **Proposed Revisions to the Hillcrest Design Overlay District (DOD)**

Spring 2023

These proposals are the work of the DOD Committee of the Hillcrest Residents Association, along with participation and input from many Hillcrest Residents. These proposals would modify the existing Hillcrest DOD, and would only have an effect on additions and new construction requiring a building permit from the City of Little Rock Planning Department.

### **Proposal 1**

Incorporate Side Yard Setbacks:

- **Modify HDOD to include minimum combined side yard setback equal to 28% of the average lot width, with a minimum side yard setback of 10% of lot width per side, the minimum requirement not to exceed a total of 17.5'.**

#### Interpretation:

*Typically, an original home will have a driveway to one side and a few feet between it and the neighbor's driveway creating a rhythm of space-to-structure. When new homes do not follow this rhythm, it disturbs the historic streetscape. Wider side yard setbacks will ensure new structures or additions will not be built side setback to side setback, much like the original houses in the neighborhood.*

### **Proposal 2**

Modify FAR for Reuse of Existing Structures.

- **Add definition for “reuse existing structure” as the reuse of the existing front three (3) sides and associated roof framing.**
- **Modify HDOD to establish FAR for Additions to Existing Structures, as follows:**
- **Single story - 37% (currently 37%)**
- **Two story – 45% (currently 50%)**
- **Basements and attics located within the reused portion of a structure are not counted against the FAR.**

#### Interpretation:

*Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) is designed as a way for a property to be measured for size compliance by the planning department. It compares the amount of structure to the amount of land on its lot. After reviewing many new-builds and additions, it became obvious that the current HDOD allowed homes and additions to be built too large and out of scale with their historic neighbors.*

*This proposal provides a distinction between reusing existing structures and building new structures (i.e. tear downs and significant changes from street view). “Reuse existing structure” is defined by the reuse of the front three sides of the existing structure, meaning additions would need to be primarily to the rear. The intent is to maintain the existing street view of the property. Greater floor area is allowed by reusing existing structures.*

*The square footage of basements and attics will not be counted in projects where the existing structure is reused, which in some cases allows even more area than was allowed under the current DOD requirements.*

### **Proposal 3**

Create Floor to Area Ratio (FAR) for Sites Without Existing Structures, or for Sites where there is not a “reuse of the existing structure” as defined in Proposal #2, as follows:

- **37% for single-story, and 40% for multi-story structures, to include all heated and cooled space other than basements, or the size of the immediately preexisting structure, whichever is greater.**

#### Interpretation:

*This is designed to encourage reuse of existing structures over tear downs, and to maintain the historic pattern of the street. An owner or developer could get more square footage by adding on to an existing structure under Proposal 2 than demolishing one for a new build. At the very least, this will encourage retention of the historic scale of the community.*

## Proposal 4

Establish Typical sidewalk Width and Location:

- **Repair or replace any existing sidewalk as per municipal code sec. 30-48.**
- **Install a sidewalk if half or more of the block, determined in linear feet, has a sidewalk, the width to be 4' or to match existing walk, whichever is greater.**

### Interpretation:

*Hillcrest's character is in part a function of it being built when neighborhoods were intended to be walkable. Yet there are blocks where sidewalks are not complete. The purpose of this proposal is to promote the maintenance and improvement of the neighborhood's sidewalk infrastructure.*

## Proposal 5

With regard to any non-residential zoned property:

- **The HDOD should require an entrance facing the street. When a building is located with frontage on two streets, the entrance shall face the street having the higher classification according to the city master street plan. In the instance that development occurs at the intersection of two collectors and one being Kavanaugh Boulevard, the entrance shall face Kavanaugh Boulevard.**

### Interpretation:

*This proposal is intended to keep commercial buildings oriented toward the main street they are located on. By requiring an entrance on the street, we ensure that the building will not be built with its back to the commercial corridor, which would discourage walking and street strolling—important aspects to our pedestrian-oriented community.*

## Proposal 6

With regard to the existing DOD ordinance § 36-434.14 (A), it appears there is a drafting error that would allow unlimited floor area for houses on lots larger than 10,000 sq. feet, which was never intended. The committee recommends deleting the last sentence in that section to rectify the problem, which currently reads:

- **Any lot of record or any combination of lots creating a zoning lot of record exceeding 10,000 sq. feet in existence at the time of the adoption of this section shall have a FAR as described for lots exceeding 8,000 sq. feet.**

### Interpretation:

*This proposal addresses a drafting error in the existing DOD and was requested by staff - it does not actually change the requirements of the DOD. There was some confusion that houses on lots over 10,000sf could have unlimited area.*

## Other Points of Consideration

Keep in mind that these proposed amendments will not change the boundaries of the existing Design Overlay District. Also remember that it is very difficult to come up with measurable solutions that will fit EVERY building in Hillcrest. Because of the uniqueness of our neighborhood, no two lots or buildings are the same. Our HDOD regulations must be measurable instead of subjective because the viability of a building project will be decided at the planning desk at the city. The clerk there will be checking each building proposal to make sure it meets our criteria. Therefore, the DOD Committee came up with recommendations that will work well for MOST Hillcrest properties. There will be exceptions: odd shaped lots, lots with no other homes in view, lots in the middle of other extremely large historic homes, etc. It does not mean that these applications will be denied. It does mean that these owners will have to submit an application to the city planning department to deviate from the regulations, as has always been the case.

**TYPICAL 4 SQUARE (Original Construction)**

2 Stories, No Finished Attic

(Pre-D.O.D. Zoning)

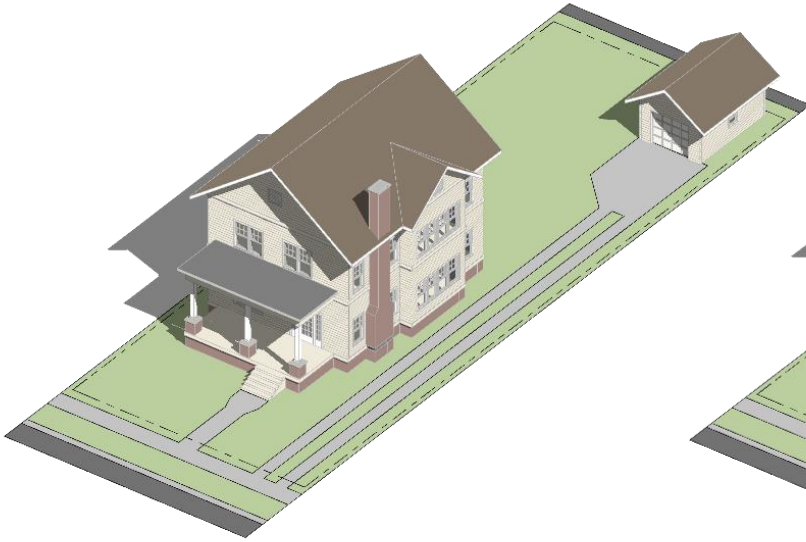
Area: 2,310 s.f.  
No. Stories: 2  
Lot Size: 7,000 s.f.  
FAR: 33%  
Building Height: 35'  
Side Setbacks: 5' Min.

**TYPICAL 4 SQUARE (With Addition)**

2 Stories with Finished Attic

(Existing D.O.D. Zoning)

Area: 3,850 s.f.  
No. Stories: 2.5  
Lot Size: 7,000 s.f.  
FAR: 55%  
Building Height: 35'  
Side Setbacks: 5' Min.



**TYPICAL 4 SQUARE (With Addition)**

2 Stories w/ Finished Attic (not counted in FAR)

(Proposed D.O.D. Zoning)

Area: 3,938 s.f.  
No. Stories: 2.5  
Lot Size: 7,000 s.f.  
FAR: 45%  
Building Height: 35'  
Side Setbacks: 5' Min.

**NEW CONSTRUCTION**

2 Stories without Finished Attic

(Proposed D.O.D. Zoning)

Area: 2,800 s.f.  
No. Stories: 2  
Lot Size: 7,000 s.f.  
FAR: 40%  
Building Height: 35'  
Side Setbacks: 5' Min (17' combined)