

The Heritage Hill Association's – 50th Anniversary
2018 Report to Neighbors

"The purpose of the Heritage Hill Association is to provide neighbors a way of collectively building a healthy, historically preserved community in which people can live and work in a secure and stable environment."

WHO WE ARE:

The **Heritage Hill Association** is the neighborhood organization of the Heritage Hill Historic District. Our boundaries are the northern rear property lines of Crescent Street to the southern rear property lines of Pleasant Street (including the 600 block of Union SE); the eastern property lines of Union Avenue to the western property lines of Lafayette Avenue; also included is a jog down State Street to Jefferson Avenue to Fulton Street. **Everyone who lives within these boundaries is a member of the Heritage Hill Association.** Non-residents can also be members by contributing annual membership dues. **Resident neighbors and businesses are encouraged to support the work of the Association through its annual pledge drive.**



HHA Founder Barbara Roelofs and Jan Earl, HHA Director appropriately celebrate HHA's 50th Anniversary.

Population Stats: There are **1,300 Heritage Hill structures** that are occupied by **3,467 households**. The total population is 4,103 and that averages to 1.2 people per household. Of the total population, 81% are Caucasian, 9% are African American, 4% are Hispanic or Latino, 2% are Asian, the remaining 4% are mixed races; 70% are tenants and 30% are owners (Heritage Hill has the largest concentration of rental opportunities in the city of Grand Rapids) 64% are our residents are moderate to low income; 66% of our structures are either owner occupied or neighbor owned and 34% are absentee-owned. The concentration or density of our housing is over twice the GR average; 19% of our households do not own cars (this trend is growing as residents seek out non-auto alternatives; walking, public transportation, bikes).

The Association's Programs: Heritage Hill is an urban neighborhood and the Association's programs inform, assist and work with neighbors to **address urban problems** -- neighborhood safety, land use conflicts, increasing traffic and parking demands, institutional expansion/construction containment, housing and preservation issues, promotion of neighborhood schools, access to services, and other issues inherent in a densely populated, core city neighborhood. Just as with old houses, a neighborhood is dependent on a good and ongoing maintenance program!

Active, engaged, and mobilized neighbors, working with our neighborhood institutions, the City of Grand Rapids, and all respective community resources, are the best indicators that Heritage Hill is a vital place to live and work. ***(Please be engaged! Email us your email address at heritage@heritagehillweb.org.)***



Neighbor Joe Hubner bulldozes his way to the rescue and spreads mulch at the annual Pleasant Park clean-up.

Heritage Hill is recognized by the American Planning Association as **A Great Place in America**. This *Old House* magazine has named Heritage Hill as one of the **Best Neighborhoods in the United States**.

A LITTLE HISTORY:

**What Could Have Happened –
if not for the formation of the
Heritage Hill Association**



**Proposed Development in HH that would
have demolished 75% of HH structures:**

1. Butterworth Hospital Expansion
2. Calvary Undenominational Expansion
3. Netherlands Reformed Church Expansion
4. College Park Urban Renewal
5. Apartment Development
6. Future College Park Expansion
7. Masonic Temple Expansion
8. Synagogue Expansion
9. Davenport College Expansion
10. Central Reformed Church Expansion
11. Weston Extension
12. Real Estate development
13. Proposed motel
14. Public Museum Expansion
15. Real Estate development
16. Real Estate development
17. Private development
18. Washington Square Urban Renewal
19. Saint Mary's development
20. Board of Education expansion

In 1968, neighbors organized together to stop mortgage red lining (banks would not loan money to buy a house in Heritage Hill) and urban renewal plans that would have demolished over 75% of Heritage Hill structures. The first goal of the Heritage Hill Association was to block the bulldozers. Neighbors worked diligently to invoke national preservation legislation that put Heritage Hill on the National Register of Historic Places. This stopped the demolitions and set a precedent throughout the U.S. that is still cited today. In 1988, the Association was the first Grand Rapids neighborhood to establish its own Master Plan of Heritage Hill. Today this plan continues to be updated and guides the Association and the City regarding life in the neighborhood. A 200-300 Prospect Plan, the State Street Corridor Area Specific Plan, and the 50 College SE development report are additional planning guidelines developed by the Association and neighbors. And in 2018 – We celebrated our 50 years of service to Heritage Hill – and they said it wouldn't last.

OUR SERVICES:



*HHA's Community Organizer, Tansy Harris,
Maria Zache Starkey and Wayne Norlin.*

The Crime Prevention Program is provided to increase neighborhood safety with services that activate neighbors in **Neighborhood Watch and Block Club Organizing**. Key components include free home security surveys, personal safety information, victim assistance, and producing and distributing crime information alert/e-alert notices and fliers. Block Club organizing keeps neighbors working together to prioritize problems, identify resources, and develop and implement action plans to resolve problems. In 2018, this program

was primarily funded by federal Community Development Block Grants that

the **City of Grand Rapids** receives and in turn funds a myriad of community programs, one being the Heritage Hill Association.

The Neighborhood Improvement Program addresses quality of life issues that are not crime related. Its purpose is to generate resident involvement, to educate, train and encourage activism to protect and strengthen the Heritage Hill neighborhood; to bridge commercial development with the residential nature; and to resolve issues of concern. Issues commonly include land use, traffic and parking, institutional expansion, neighborhood schools, etc. Additional elements include educating, referring and assisting residents with available City/community services and resources and implementing needs identified in the **Master Plan of Heritage Hill**. Like the crime prevention program, this program is partially funded by the federal **Community Development Block Grant** funds that the **City of Grand Rapids** awards to the Heritage Hill Association's program.



A ping-pong table blooms in Pleasant Park. Let the tournaments begin.

Apartment and Homes Listing Service: Due to our **large rental community**, the Association produces and publishes a list of available apartments in Heritage Hill whose landlords choose to list with us. It is an extremely popular service and Heritage Hill apartments are in

demand. Our list is free to tenants and available on our Web site (www.heritagehillweb.org) and at the HHA office. To list an apartment, landlords pay a fee: \$45 for a studio apartment; \$50 for a one-bedroom; \$55 for a two-bedroom and \$60 for 3 or more bedrooms. The listing is for 2 months or until the apartment is rented, whichever comes first. The list also includes **Homes for Sale** in Heritage Hill. **For Sale** listings cost \$100 and run for two months. Additional services that we offer landlords and tenants include assistance with their respective rights and responsibilities.

The Heritage Herald: The Association produces and publishes 6 bi-monthly newsletters that are mailed to a combined 4,500 addresses in Heritage Hill, non-resident members, businesses, city offices and other community resources. It publicizes events, issues, and other information of interest and concern to neighbors. The Herald provides information, promotes neighborhood identity and fosters community. The Association also uses **Email alerts and Facebook** to keep people informed and activated. Please forward your email address to us heritage@heritagehillweb.org to be added to this distribution list.

Heritage Hill Website: The Association's website hosts a variety of information regarding our neighborhood. The apartment listing is posted on the website as well as the **guidelines of the City's Historic Preservation Commission** (HPC) and the application for all exterior work. There is information and links to the Federal historic tax credits. Most every house in Heritage Hill has historical, architectural information and photos from 1969 and 2004 posted on our site. Go to the "about" heading on our home page and scroll down to the "house search". The Association's **Facebook** is also easily accessed from the home page of the website.

The Weekend Tour of Homes

(3rd Weekend in May) This is the **largest fundraising and promotional effort** of the Heritage Hill Association. The funds are needed to sustain our Crime Prevention and Neighborhood Improvement programs. It also promotes our architectural heritage and neighborhood as a great place to live, work and visit! The date for **2019 is May 18 and 19**. We still need one more house to complete the line-up. You want to open your home don't you!

The Heritage Hill Garden Tour: A fun-raiser for Heritage Hill gardeners, the Garden Tour is held nearly every year. It is planned for 2019. Please consider opening your quiet space the third weekend in June. Please call or email the office and let's get you on

our garden line-up.



Social Events: The Association hosts two annual neighborhood wide events to gather neighbors together. The **Neighborhood Night Out social** is the first Tuesday in August; the **Holiday Potluck and Annual Meeting** is typically the first week in December. The Association also invites neighbors to hold an annual neighborhood-wide **Yard Sales Day the first Saturday** in June. Beyond the Association's events, neighbors gather for backyard movie nights, evening concerts, yoga, tai chi, dance classes and all kinds of fun at Pleasant Park, block parties and whatever a connected community dreams up.



HH Mascot, Tom the Turkey



The Voigt House opened for Tour in 2018 to the delight of many.

Architectural Files: The HHA office maintains the architectural survey files of each house in the neighborhood that were compiled in 1969. This survey was needed to place Heritage Hill on the **National Register of Historic Places** that effectively saved over 75% of the neighborhood from demolition. Much of the information from these files is posted by address on our website in the house search category under the "About" heading.

Etc, Etc, Etc... The **Heritage Hill Association office** is often the first place neighbors call with numerous requests. Common questions regard historic preservation guidelines, apartments for rent, ... who to call for ... how can I handle "this problem" ... what is that house zoned for, landlord/tenant rights and responsibilities, service provider referrals, ... when is garbage day ... where do I vote, etc., etc, etc. We welcome you to call, email and we welcome you to come visit too.

Make sure you stay in the know and are engaged! If you are not receiving our emails, please send us yours to heritage@heritagehillweb.org. Also like us on Facebook.

THE ASSOCIATION AND NEIGHBORS' ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2018:

LAND USE ISSUES:

Two major Heritage Hill developments, 50 College SE and 54 Jefferson SE, had their end-games in 2018:

- **50 College SE:** The visioning process of this 2.5 acre parcel began in late 2015 with the ground-breaking in the fall of 2017. Fall of 2018 saw the completion and official ribbon-cutting. See the inside on the 2019 Heritage Hill Tour.



- **54 Jefferson SE – GRPS Public Museum School:** The great renovation and reuse of this long shuttered building at State and Jefferson highlighted the fall of 2018. It is again an active gateway into Heritage Hill.

- **Pleasant Park** - is the neighborhood gathering green spot - a true public space embraced by its community. 2018 continued to plant this park in our hearts. Planned and spontaneous events happened

including the Association's Night Out social, tai-chi, yoga, dog trainings, kite flying, sledding, ball games, Frisbee flying, trick or treating and *everything* play for all ages.

Pleasant Park won the City's ping-pong table contest and the table was installed in 2018. A new level of competition at the Park will evolve! HHA again organized the Pleasant Park Tenders to maintain the gardens under the leadership of **Joshlyn Litzenberger**. *We are planning this orchestration again so if you want to adopt a plot this year, call Jan at 459-8950.* Pleasant Park Pals Facebook page is a good way to stay connected to the impromptu happenings or just wander over to the Park.



The GRPS Public Museum School welcomes its first students in fall of 2018 with the ceremonial ribbon cut. The corner of State and Jefferson is back alive.



HHA co-President, Lisa Baars presents the Heritage Hill Association position at the City Commission's Housing NOW public hearing on March 27.

• **Housing NOW – Zoning proposals:** 2018 ushered in proposals to substantially change the City's zoning procedures in approving increased density developments in residential zones. These changes also eliminated neighbors' voices in decision making. The proposals were explained as a way to increase affordable housing however very few guarantees to lower costs were included. It was a major organizing effort across the City to inform and engage neighbors to make their voices heard in opposition to these proposals. Meeting

upon meeting was held with neighbors, developers, city staff, city commissioners to discuss concerns, data

and alternatives. It was a year-long effort. Most recently, segments of the proposals that were not objectional were approved by the City Commission, others are undergoing additional study and language changes and the most problematic will be introduced in the City's Master Plan development with will likely happen in late 2019, 2020.

- **Oakwood Manor – 547 Cherry SE:** Although there was a bit of a delay, both the fitness studio and restaurant were open by the end of 2018 and added fun amenities to Heritage Hill. This had been an active land use discussion with neighbors over the past two years. In easy walking distance, check out the Barre Code Fitness Studio and Commons Restaurant.
- **Potpourri of land use, housing and traffic issues:** The Association reviews and investigates all zoning variance requests, traffic reports, and monitors housing code violations in Heritage Hill. Neighborhood positions are based on the Heritage Hill Master Plan, the City's zoning code criteria, and neighbors' feedback. These are the larger issues address in 2018:
 - **523 Lyon NE – Jellema House:** This former treatment facility was the hot topic of land use issues for near neighbors as new owners proposed options in plans for use. Nine months of meetings and city approvals established the building as a 5-unit apartment building. The lack of on-site parking in this highly populated corridor will require neighbors to be especially neighborly in working out the on-street parking dance.
 - **402 – 430 Madison SE:** Major renovations to the main home at 430 Madison SE are continuing into 2019. There are no firm plans on the use of the 3 vacant parcels fronting Madison as owners concentrate on finishing the "big house".
 - **141 Wealthy SE:** Presented opposition to the demolition of the **McGraw Tire building** for a surface parking lot. Wealthy Street is a vital corridor and active buildings are critical to its health, not an empty surface parking lot. The GR Planning Commission denied the request to demolish. An active development was encouraged.



- **Residential Permit Parking:** Changes to the City's process in establishing permit parking zones will likely see a zone request in Heritage Hill in 2019. Neighbors were notified of the new process. If and when a zone district is proposed, neighbors will be surveyed and a public hearing will be held. Stay tuned.

- **Mobility:** Various public transportation information was published in the Heritage Herald/Facebook. Updates were also provided regarding the **BRT Laker Line**.

- **Maintained a communication network** with each of our neighboring hospitals, colleges and universities, and neighborhood associations, businesses. Met with Mercy Health Saint Mary's to continue strong working relationship on areas of

common interest; met with MaryFree Bed's CEO Kent Riddle to improve communications and strengthen interactions; various GRCC meetings, conversations on the college's development plans and input.

- **Preservation:** Co-hosted with the GR Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) a window's workshop to teach attendees how to fix broken cords, glazing and installation. Also partnered with HPC on a new resident information workshop. Applauded HPC 2018 Award recipients.

Neighborhood Fun and Fund Development:

- Organized and orchestrated the annual **Weekend Tour of Homes** in May. Recruited hosts, house captains and 223 volunteers to staff the homes and welcomed 4000 tourists.
- Compiled and produced 6 issues of the **Heritage Herald** that were distributed to 4,500 neighbors and friends.
- Produced and updated the apartment listings on a minimum weekly basis.
- Organized the Heritage Hill **Night Out Ice Cream social** at Pleasant Park in August; Organized the annual Heritage Hill **Neighborhood-Wide Yard Sale Day** in June; and the **Holiday Potluck and Annual Meeting** in December.
- **Texas Hold-em** - Staffed 4 gaming events throughout 2018.



Hello Amanda Cormier, the Association's new Crime Prevention Organizer. Amanda took over for Tansy Harris when she tearfully moved to Arizona in November.

Plus: Assisted 1000's of calls and requests regarding a multitude of quality of life issues in Heritage Hill

And in 2018 we celebrated our 50 years of working with you to make Heritage Hill the best it can be. Every HHA event in our anniversary year marked this 50th achievement. The celebratory year culminated at the Holiday Potluck where past presidents joined neighbors in honoring one of our key founders, Barbara Roelofs. The 50 Greatest Hits of Heritage Hill were compiled in a power point that is also posted on the Association's website. We have come a long way!

And we go on we welcome all new neighbors in 2018 and encourage you to get active on your block and in your neighborhood. It's your community and our shared place! Plus we encourage all to think Local and in your neighborhood when seeking services and fun gathering places. Many new places to explore too including Marcona on Lyon, a Mediterranean restaurant; Heritage Hill Pizza that replaced GRPD, the Commons in the Oakwood Manor, the Barre Code fitness studio also at 547 Cherry and don't forget the Dollar General at State and Madison.

Crime Prevention in 2018

Neighbors are the heartbeat of Heritage Hill: Board members, Committee members, Block Club Representatives and hundreds of individuals within our community who are invested in helping each other stay safe and healthy within our neighborhood. Without you, we simply could not be the community that we are! We recognize and thank you for all your continued efforts.

New Neighbors: For tips on keeping your home, apartment or business safe from burglaries, give Heritage Hill Association a call and talk to Amanda Cormier, our Crime Prevention Officer, at 459-8950. We offer FREE Home Security Checks to all of our residents, regardless if you rent or own your home.

Crime Issues in 2018:

- One main crime issue in 2018 was the multiple Breaking & Entering reports we had in the fall. An individual entered several homes and stole small items that could be easily sold. Once again, it was a crime of opportunity. Doors that were left unlocked made it easy for the suspect to enter the home and start looking for stuff to grab. Thank you to all of the neighbors who contacted us and the police with information that eventually led to the arrest of the suspect. We cannot stress enough to KEEP DOORS

LOCKED. Although this individual was non-violent, in some rare instances criminals are more confrontational and won't just run away when caught. This individual did not put much effort into breaking into homes that were locked, he just walked in to homes that were unlocked.

- Another typical crime of opportunity we see too much of is items stolen from porches, garages and cars. The best thing you can do is to keep these areas locked and free from valuable items. Petty criminals don't like to put forth a lot of effort, so don't make it easy for them!
- We saw a number of new scams out, some of them look pretty convincing. One looked like an absentee voting card but asked for donations. You should not have to donate anything to vote. And if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is! Feel free to call our office if you receive questionable solicitation and we can help you get to the bottom of it.
- The "indecent exposure" suspect was caught! A man who had too much time on his hands and not enough clothes on his body was seen sitting naked on a park bench near the school on Fountain. He was arrested after several neighbors poured tips into our office and the GRPD.
- We also had an unfortunate case of a death of a woman in 2018 near Logan Street. Although the death itself was due to an overdose, there was a criminal act of moving the body to an alley rather than contacting the proper authorities. This resulted in charges against those responsible for moving the victim's body. What can we do? It is imperative for neighbors to continue to watch out for each other. Report suspicious activity to the police and talk to each other.
 - What to do if you suspect someone has overdosed:
 - CALL 911 – Getting help fast is really important to save the person.
 - Administer Naloxone if available
 - Breathe for the person if they aren't able to themselves
 - Position the person on their side if they are breathing by themselves. They may vomit and you don't want them to choke or inhale vomit into their lungs.
 - Stay with the person to keep them warm until help arrives.

Housing Code Enforcement: While Heritage Hill does not seek out Housing Code Violations in the neighborhood as we believe near neighbors have the best information, nor do we have any regulatory authority, we do help those who come to us with concerns and issues. We can help you learn how to navigate the process and provide information.

- We received trash complaints for neighbors with overflowing garbage bins. We worked with new property owners to make sure they know where to find resources for trash & recycling.
- Other common complaints were concerns over tall grass and weeds. When property owners were brought to attention regarding tall grass and weeds, all complied and corrected the matter within 48 hours of contacting.

Parks

We saw very little crime activity in our parks in 2018 and I think we have continued resident ownership to thank for that. Neighbors near each of our parks have gone above and beyond picking up garbage, pruning bushes, planting flowers and that is what it means to love where you live!

Pleasant Park continues to be an amazing addition to the area. In 2018, we saw a new Table Tennis structure and Friends of GR Parks upgraded the plaques memorials. We also thank South Hill Area Neighbors which border this park for their continued investment in this park. Huge shout out to all the Pleasant Park Tenders and Pleasant Park Pals who continue to care for this park throughout the year.

Landlord Tenant Issues

In 2018, Heritage Hill Association advised both landlords and tenants on a variety of issues and rights. From Tenants not adhering to lease terms to issues with security deposits and apartments with issues, we help both sides. If you have questions or concerns, please contact Amanda at 459-8950 or Heritage@heritagehillweb.org

