

August 16, 2021

To: Georgette Cole, Planning Commissioner

Re: Letter on the Comprehensive Plan provided by Marc and Peggy Hansen 7/27/21

Georgette:

The HPC wishes to address some of the issues in the comments on the Comprehensive Plan provided by Marc and Peggy Hansen.

We recognize that there can be concerns about the possible impacts of certain mandated preservation procedures that have been used in other historic districts on our own unique situation. As mentioned in the Plan and the letter, the eclectic nature of our houses is one of the character-defining elements of our historic district and as such is an element that must be preserved. Each house tells its own story by the aggregated additions and renovations over time. It is a record of how each resident made it their home during their stewardship and is valued for the contribution.

At the same time, each house is part of an assembly of structures that together impart a certain common scale and character that contributes to the unity and integrity of the historic district. As the letter mentions, there is a good track record of homeowners respecting that common scale and character in their modest modifications and this process should not be impeded. The Town, however, currently has few tools to protect its character from demolition of our modest houses and/or construction of the over-scaled new ones we see having grave impacts on other neighborhoods. We are especially vulnerable to outside developers that do not share our fondness for the eclectic assemblies that defines our Town. This vulnerability has been pointed out by the Maryland State Planning Department in their review of our draft plan.

Not every preservation ordinance must contain the draconian measures mentioned in the letter, nor are financial burdens necessarily their byproduct. As to the voluntary nature of any burden, all our current zoning requirements already impose involuntary limits on construction, and both zoning and preservation legislation has stood the test of time in good community planning.

We should not close the door on consideration of tools to help the Grove plan and manage its future. Any ordinance developed by the Town will by nature reflect its intrinsic values, including preservation easements.

Thanks for your consideration,



Robert Booher
Chair, Washington Grove HPC