



Survey Results

Background

The Hill, one of the oldest neighborhoods in Sugar Land, is experiencing an increase in home demolitions and subsequent rebuilds of new, larger homes. In recent years, some residents have voiced concerns regarding the changing character of the neighborhood and expressed a desire to see modifications to the code regulations. However, to date, it has been unknown how far through The Hill community these concerns extend. Therefore, before the City revisits the existing code regulations for The Hill, a better understanding of the community's opinions and thoughts is needed.

After initial public engagement via neighborhood listening sessions and a public meeting, The Hill Neighborhood Steering Committee and city staff released a survey for residents and property owners of The Hill to provide their input on the existing character and opinions of new construction taking place in the neighborhood. The survey was open from Monday, December 17, 2018, through February 1, 2019, via the City of Sugar Land's online town hall platform. Paper copies of the survey were also available at the public meeting on December 17 and upon request thereafter.¹ Residents and property owners were notified by door hanger, property owner letter, postcard, Next Door posts, and email blasts.

The purpose of the survey was to understand whether the current redevelopment that is resulting in new and larger homes is a concern to the community and if so, how it should be addressed. The survey needed to cover several topics to help the Steering Committee develop recommendations. The survey was generally divided into sections aimed at answering the following questions:

- Are you concerned over the recently built homes in The Hill? Why?
- Should current regulations be modified? If yes, which ones? If not, why?
- Should additional regulations be implemented? If yes, which ones? If not, why?
- Should new programs that encourage maintaining the character of existing homes be considered as an alternative and/or in addition to regulations?

The following section provides an analysis of the survey followed by survey response totals by question.

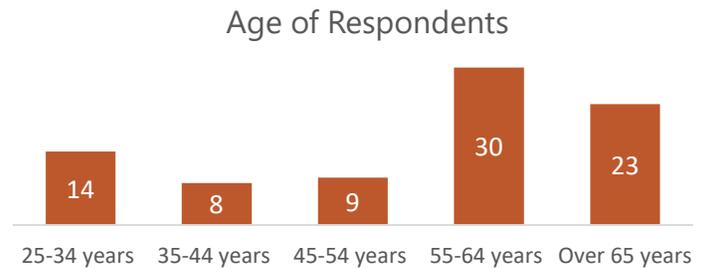
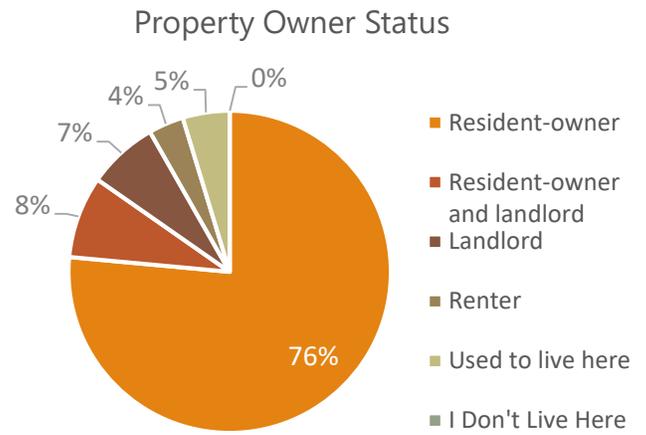
¹ Online and paper surveys were offered as options to respond. Those who responded to the paper survey responded to all questions while online respondents only responded to certain questions. As part of the design of the online survey, online respondents were directed to a different set of questions based on their responses to several key questions in the survey.

Who We Heard From

In total, staff received 84 survey responses – 70 online and 14 paper. Out of the 84 responses received, 76% of respondents were resident owners who both lived and owned property in The Hill. Respondents who both lived and owned additional properties in The Hill made up 8% of respondents. An “I don’t live here” option was included in the question, but no one selected that option. This shows that all respondents have a tie to The Hill neighborhood in some way – whether as a resident, a property owner, or both.

More than half (63%) of respondents were over 55 years of age and have lived in The Hill for over 20 years. However, there were 17% of respondents in the 25-34 age group that could be an indicator of the changing demographic as long-time owners begin to sell.

The survey also asked respondents to list the addresses of homes they own or rent in The Hill. Out of the 84 responses received, 74 respondents provided addresses. Under the assumption that respondents correctly listed the number of properties that they own and accounting for responses from the same household, 30% of property owners responded to the survey, not including those who did not provide an address. However, one property owner may own multiple properties, so out of the 202 properties in The Hill, 35% of properties were represented in the survey.



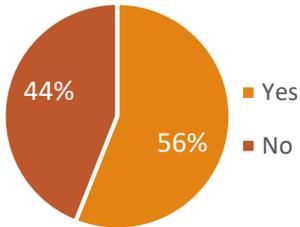
Respondent Analysis

Staff analyzed how people responded throughout the survey to the following overall section questions.

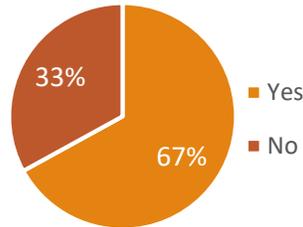
1. Are you concerned about the recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill?
2. Do you think regulations should be modified to maintain the character of the neighborhood?
3. Do you think the City should implement additional regulations to address the changing character of The Hill neighborhood?

It was important to follow and understand a respondent’s train of thought in order to analyze the difference in the response totals per question. For example, 23 respondents (27% out of the total) selected they were not concerned with the recently built homes, but when asked about modifying current regulations and additional regulations, they agreed with either only modifying current regulations, only additional regulations or agreed to both. This group of people may not think the recent homes are out of character but recognize that the current regulations do not prevent a property owner from building a home out of character. This conclusion is also supported from examining the difference in percent ratio from the following three charts.

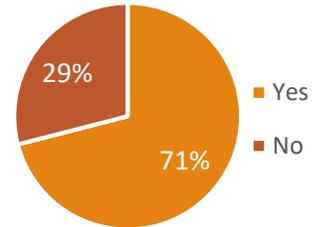
Concern over new homes and additions



Modify Existing Regulations

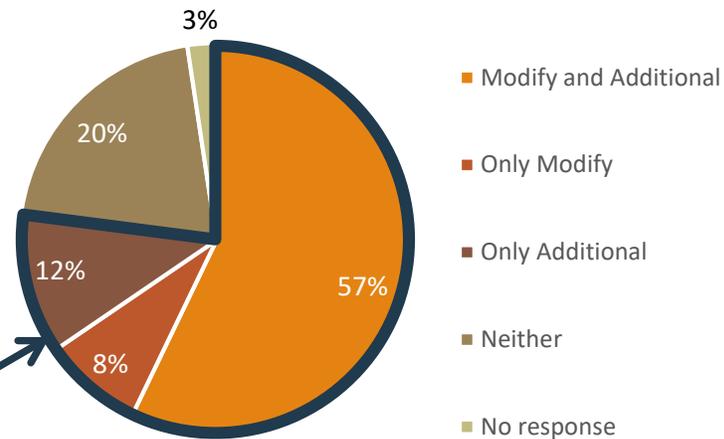


Additional Regulations



By looking at all the possible response combinations between the two questions regarding regulations (questions 2 and 3 referenced above), staff concluded that at least 77% of respondents would like for the City to do something to address the changing character of The Hill (see graph below). This includes both modifying and implementing additional regulations (57%), only modifying current regulations (8%) or only implementing additional regulations (12%). This number provides clear direction for the City and Steering Committee that the community desires to address the changing character of The Hill through changes to the regulations.

Combination of Responses for Regulations



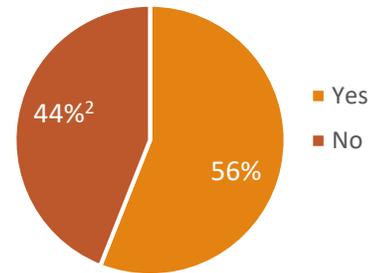
At least 77% of respondents would like for the City to do something to address the changing character of The Hill.

Survey Results – Response Totals

Concern over recent homes and additions

When asked if concerned about the recently built houses and additions in The Hill, 56% of respondents answered “yes” while 44% responded “no.” Respondents that were concerned were asked to select their level of agreement with statements that addressed whether the new homes and additions were too tall, too big or covered too much of the lot, built too far back, and if they fit in with the character of the neighborhood. The statement that respondents agreed with most was “The recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill may be too big or cover too much of the lot compared to other houses in the neighborhood.” However, respondents either disagree or were unsure about new homes and additions built too far back on the lot. Respondents may not have felt strongly about this characteristic or thought that the current placement was appropriate. The number of responses for each statement is shown below.

Concern over new homes and additions



Are you concerned about the recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill?

Please select your level of agreement with the following statements.	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	No Response	Did Not See Question
The recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill do not fit in with the existing character of the neighborhood.	34	14	3	1	32
The recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill are too tall compared to other houses in the neighborhood.	32	17	3	0	32
The recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill may be too big or cover too much of the lot compared to other houses in the neighborhood.	40	9	3	0	32
The recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill are built too far back on the lot compared to other houses in the neighborhood.	10	28	14	0	32

² Five respondents who completed paper surveys responded “no” to modifying current regulations but also responded to the statements in the table. Their responses are reflected above.

The 44% who responded they were not concerned with the recently built houses and additions, were asked to provide an explanation as to why they were not concerned. The most selected reason was "I think the new houses are in character with the other houses in the neighborhood."

I am not concerned about the recently built houses and additions to existing houses in The Hill neighborhood because (select all that apply):

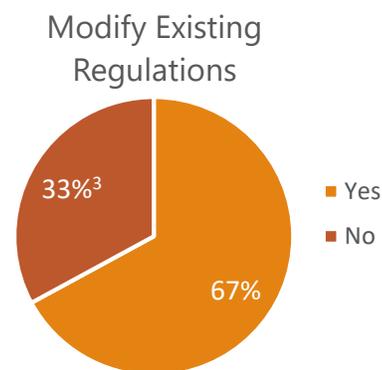
- 11 I believe that the property owner should have the flexibility to decide what to do with his/her house.
- 0 I have no preference on the architecture style of new houses or house additions.
- 28 I think that the new houses are in character with the other houses in the neighborhood.
- 6 Not applicable – I am concerned about the recently built houses in The Hill.
- 10 Other – explain why.

Examples of comments people provided when they selected other.

- *I think most of the homes being built align with the craftsman theme. As long as that continues to be the case, I think owners should have flexibility of build plans, as this area is unique in that regard, and is a huge perk to owners/potential buyers.*
- *So far I don't believe any of the new houses are outrageous but I do think there needs to be some architectural standards*
- *While I feel property owners should have some flexibility, I wish that they respected the character and charm of Sugar Land's history. I moved here because I love the old houses obviously they do not.*
- *The quality of construction is an improvement and property values are increasing. The character of the community is not being damaged when updates are made to existing houses and when new homes are built.*
- *Larger, more updated and newer but following the same architecture*
- *Love the new houses with the front porches. Just seems to fit.*

Modifying existing regulations

The next set of questions addressed the current development regulations for The Hill Area Residential Zoning District (HR-1). The current regulations are largely the same as the City’s standard single family residential (R-1) zoning district with a few exceptions. Therefore, the current regulations do not require property owners to build in character with the neighborhood. The regulations were listed in the survey to provide respondents with context before asking them if and which regulations should be modified. When asked if the regulations should be modified to maintain the character of the neighborhood, 67% of respondents answered “yes” while 33% responded “no.” For those that responded “yes, regulations should be modified,” more than half agreed that height and lot coverage should be further limited. However, respondents were less sure about allowing homes to be closer to the street. About half responded that homes should be closer to the street, but a portion of respondents were unsure how to respond.



Do you think the regulations should be modified to maintain the character of the neighborhood?

In comparison to the recently built houses in The Hill, I think future houses and additions to existing houses should:	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	No Response	Did Not See Question
Be further limited in height	39	18	3	2	22
Be further limited in lot coverage	45	13	1	3	22
Be located closer to the street to match the older homes	31	15	15	1	22

In addition to the above statements, respondents were also asked to provide their level of agreement with modifying regulations for garages. Currently, garages can be built up to two stories and as close as 1.5 feet from the rear and side property line. Generally, respondents seemed to be split on how to modify regulations for garages. No statement had an overwhelming majority of responses. Overall, responses to regulations for garages were inconclusive.

In comparison to the recently built houses with garages, I think future garages should:	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	No Response	Did Not See Question
Be limited to one story	26	32	1	3	22
Be required to be further away from the property line, regardless of their height	35	17	8	2	22
Be allowed to have two stories but be built further away from the property line	29	26	5	2	22

³ Five respondents who completed paper surveys responded “no” to modifying current regulations but also responded to the statements in the tables. Their responses are reflected above.

The 33% who responded “no, regulations should not be modified” were asked to provide an explanation. Respondents thought the regulations are fine as they are now and new homes are in character with the neighborhood.

I do not think the regulations should be modified because (select all that apply):

- 16 I think the regulations are fine as they are now.
- 1 I have no preference on the architecture style of new houses or house additions.
- 16 I think that the new houses are in character with the other houses in the neighborhood.
- 7 Not applicable – I am concerned about the recently built houses in The Hill and think the regulations should be modified.
- 9 Other – explain why.

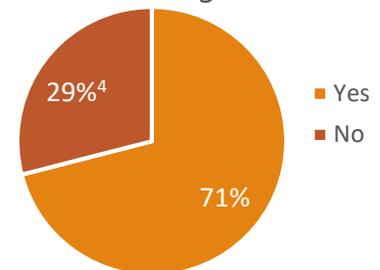
Examples of comments people provided when they selected other.

- *As long as new builds are kept in character of the original look and feel it does not bother me*
- *Most new houses/additions are in character with the Hill. I am unsure of what changes should be made so I opt for no change*
- *As long as the 40% rule applies to all new construction, the current height regulation is fine. The style of new homes should fit within the current cottage/bungalows that make The Hill distinctive.*

Additional regulations

Because the current regulations do not address architecture styles, which affect whether new homes are built in character with the neighborhood, the survey asked respondents whether additional regulations should be implemented to maintain the character of the neighborhood. Seventy-one percent of respondents agreed that additional regulations should be implemented by limiting building materials and architectures styles that are similar to existing houses in The Hill.

Additional Regulations



Do you think the City should implement additional regulations to address the changing character of The Hill neighborhood?

I think future houses and additions made to existing houses in The Hill neighborhood should:	Agree	Disagree	Unsure	No Response	Did Not See Question
Be limited to using building materials that are similar to existing houses in The Hill	57	3	3	1	20
Be built in a similar architecture style as the existing houses in The Hill	61	0	2	1	20

⁴ Four respondents who filled paper surveys responded “no” to modifying current regulations but also responded to the statements in the stable. Their responses are reflected above.

For the 29% who did not agree that additional regulations should be implemented, respondents thought the new houses are in character. They also believed that the current regulations are fine and the property owner should have flexibility on their property.

I do not think additional regulations are needed to address the changing character of the neighborhood because (select all that apply):

11 I believe that the property owner should have the flexibility to decide what finishes and architecture style to use on their house.

11 I think the regulations are fine as they are now.

1 I have no preference on the architecture style of new houses or house additions.

17 I think that the new houses are in character with the other houses in the neighborhood.

5 Not applicable – I am concerned about future houses built in The Hill and think additional regulations are needed.

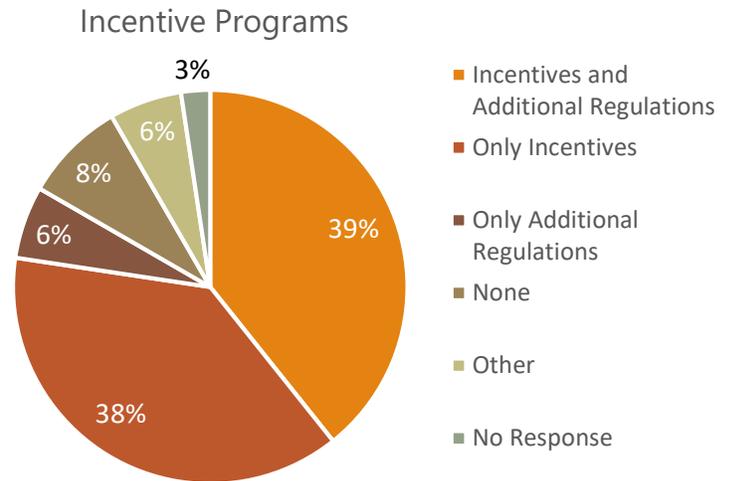
5 Other – explain why.

Examples of comments people provided when they selected other.

- *Regulations that require certain materials be used could be problematic for homeowners who are repairing their homes. Homeowners should be able to select building materials.*
- *Maintain a few houses designated as historically accurate.*

Incentive Programs

Other cities utilize various programs in addition to or instead of regulations to preserve the character of older neighborhoods. Examples include recognition through a plaque or financial incentives such as grants or tax relief. Modifications to existing homes or new construction have to meet certain criteria to qualify for the programs. When asked about new programs, 77% of respondents thought that the City should at least explore incentive programs as an option to maintain the character of The Hill.



Do you believe that the City should consider new program(s) to encourage homeowners to maintain the existing character of their homes? *(2 did not provide a response to this question)*

- 33 Yes, the City should implement additional regulations and explore incentive program(s).
- 32 Yes, the City should explore incentive program(s) instead of additional regulations.
- 5 No, the City should only implement additional regulations.
- 7 No, the City should not implement either additional regulations or incentives.
- 5 Other – explain why.

Architecture Styles

When asked what architecture styles are appropriate in The Hill, respondents found the bungalow architecture style as most appropriate. The least favored architecture style was the new traditional that is typically found in new single family neighborhoods. However, when a similar new traditional style was presented with siding as the main exterior finish, respondents were more receptive to the style. Mediterranean and modern architecture styles were also some of the least liked styles. The following table provides a tally of the architecture styles in ranking from largest to smallest.

Please select the following home style(s) that you think would be appropriate in The Hill. (select all that apply)

80 	80 	68 	58 
52 	45 	36 	20 
20 	15 	15 	3 
2 	2 	1 	1 

Appendix

Paper Survey Questions