

PRINCETON

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER & ZONING INITIATIVE

FAQ

Frequently-Asked Questions

updated June 20, 2016

1. *What is the Princeton Neighborhood Character and Zoning Initiative?*

The Princeton Neighborhood Character and Zoning Initiative is a community planning effort created in response to concerns among many residents about the impacts of home development activities on the character of their neighborhoods.

2. *What is its purpose and goals?*

The goal of this initiative is to create strategies, policies, guidelines, and regulations that will shape future home development activities so their outcomes better complement the traditional character and form of Princeton's residential neighborhoods and streets. In creating a venue for public participation and discussion, associated community values and concerns will be identified, including—but not limited to—impacts on adjacent properties and the local environment, the affordability of housing, and the aspirations of homeowners.

3. *Which neighborhoods will be the focus of this initiative?*

Initially, all residential neighborhoods will be examined, with one of the first and most important steps being to collect, analyze, and map relevant data to understand the geography and scale of residential expansions, demolitions, and development throughout Princeton.

4. *How will they be determined?*

Ultimately, we predict that some types of policy and regulatory changes might benefit all or many residential neighborhoods, while other types of changes might be more appropriate, feasible, or effective for specific neighborhoods.

5. *How long will it take until these policies, guidelines, and regulations are implemented?*

We expect this initiative to recommend and implement short-, mid-, and long-term actions.

- Short-term actions, which are expected to be adopted in the next 4 months, could include “quick-fix” revisions or adjustments to site plan review and zoning standards that will lead to improved outcomes from the demolition of older houses and the siting, design, and construction of new houses and yards.
- Mid-term actions, which could be implemented within 6-8 months, might include master plan amendments or additional zoning adjustments that set the stage for more significant changes that would be implemented in the long-term.
- Long-term actions, such as substantive changes to the structure of residential zoning could be implemented within 10-12 months, while other measures or tools might require further investigation or study before being implemented.

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6. *How can I stay informed?*

- First, visit and bookmark www.princetonneighborhoods.org. This webpage will be the central public portal of information for this initiative.
- Second, make sure to sign up to “Follow” the webpage so that you receive updates when a new post is added to the page. Look for “Follow this Blog via E-mail” on the webpage.
- Third, press releases will be drafted and distributed so that local newsletters and newspapers can publish timely information for their readers during the course of the initiative.
- Fourth, any future workshops or meetings will be announced on the webpage, in addition to any other opportunities for residents to contribute information, opinions, photographs, data, etc.

7. *How can I provide advice, opinions, ideas, strategies, and/or information to contribute to this process?*

An e-mail address, contact@princetonneighborhoods.org, has been established for residents and other interested members of the public to provide input at any time during the process. Commonly-asked questions will be compiled and added to this FAQ periodically.

8. *What if I or one of my neighbors is not able to access information or provide input through online means?*

You or your neighbor may provide input in writing and mail or drop it off in a sealed envelope to *Neighborhood Character & Zoning Initiative, c/o Princeton Planning Department, 400 Witherspoon Street, Princeton, NJ 08540*. Furthermore, any important announcements will be posted on the bulletin board at the Witherspoon Town Hall – 400 Witherspoon Street.

9. *Who is leading this initiative?*

This initiative is being guided by a Planning Board subcommittee, with support from Council and the Mayor. A full list of subcommittee participants is posted on the webpage.

10. *Who will be doing the actual work?*

A team of consultants will be advising the Committee, creating and updating the webpage, collecting and analyzing data, producing outreach materials, engaging residents and other stakeholders, recommending strategies, and drafting policies and regulations.

11. *How was the consultant selected?*

Through a proposal and interview process, the task force selected planning and design firm The RBA Group, Inc. of Philadelphia, PA (formerly Brown & Keener Urban Design, a firm with prior experience in Princeton assisting in developing the concept for Hinds Plaza and the Spring Street Garage). The firm has strong master plan experience in New Jersey and throughout the Northeast and specialized experience in conventional and alternative approaches to zoning. Architects, planners, and landscape architects from the firm will be participating in this initiative. The firm is partnering with Urban Partners of Philadelphia, PA, which will advise on the economic, fiscal, and real estate aspects of this topic. Both firms have worked together on a range of planning initiatives for civic-focused organizations and municipalities in the Northeast.

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12. Are other towns in New Jersey facing similar issues?

Many cities and towns throughout the country and in New Jersey are facing similar issues; Princeton is not alone. Articles and case studies highlighting experiences and practices from other towns facing similar issues will be consulted and may inform the process. Look for the “Research” section on the webpage, which will include links to these references and resources.

13. Is a moratorium on residential development going to be considered?

No. New Jersey municipalities are not permitted by the State to establish moratoria on real estate development except, generally, in cases of a realized or imminent threat to public health.

This document will be updated periodically as additional frequently-asked questions are received at contact@princetonneighborhoods.org