

Highland Grove Community Plan

Community Engagement and Recommendations

Prepared for Better Housing Coalition
Prepared by Storefront for Community Design

March 25, 2022





**Brookland
Park**

**Green
Park**

**Northern
Barton Heights**

**Highland Grove
Redevelopment**

**Virginia Union
University**

**Battery
Park**

**Southern
Barton Heights**

**Highland Park
Southern Tip**

Gilpin

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01 | Project Summary



Executive Summary

The proposed Highland Grove community is a 33-acre true mixed-income subdivision encompassing the redevelopment and revitalization of the former Dove Court public housing complex in the North Side of Richmond, VA. The community includes attractive single-family homes with a wide range of price points presenting a unique opportunity to increase homeownership among families of color in the City of Richmond over the next seven years of the development timeline.

Storefront for Community Design was contracted by Better Housing Coalition (BHC) to lead a community engagement process to receive feedback and ideas from residents, business owners, and potential homebuyers regarding specific outdoor elements and architectural elements for the Highland Grove Community Unit Plan (CUP).

The following plans, actions, and recommendations are the result of a six-month long process of the project team working with the community to evaluate existing conditions, review the proposed community plan, and provide recommendations for the neighborhood.

The community engagement initiative and recommendations provide a strong foundation for next steps and decision-making, but this document is only the starting point for Better Housing

Coalition and community partners' work moving forward. As neighborhood improvements are phased in and residents begin to move into Highland Grove, new circumstances may reshape the plan and outdoor elements.

Additional community engagement is critical throughout the lifespan of the construction project to ensure future Highland Grove residents and adjacent neighbors' voices are heard prior to final selection of outdoor elements.



image: Urban Design Associates; April 2019

Project Partners



1. Local Residents
2. Potential Homeowners
3. Local Businesses

Community Stakeholders

Project Team

- Better Housing Coalition
- Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- City of Richmond
- Maggie Walker Community Land Trust
- project:HOMES
- Richmond Metropolitan Habitat for Humanity

NORTHERN BARTON HEIGHTS

HIGHLAND GROVE

HIGHLAND GROVE PLAN

Note: Not to Scale



NORTH AVE

CANNON CREEK GREENWAY

OUTDOOR AREA

OUTDOOR AREA

ALLEY

ALLEY

OUTDOOR AREA

BASEMENTS

OVERBY-SHEPPARD

PROPOSED STREET 3

PROPOSED STREET

PROPOSED STREET

NO NEW GREENWAY CROSSINGS

Bike Parking

Where new space for bikes

Where new space for bikes

OUTDOOR AREA

DOVE STREET

DOVE STREET

OUTDOOR AREA

HIGHLAND PARK SOUTHERN TIP

HIGHLAND GROVE APARTMENTS

HIGHLAND GROVE APARTMENTS

1ST AVENUE

OUTDOOR AREA

RICHMOND HENRICO TURNPIKE

CANNON CREEK GREENWAY

02 | Highland Grove Overview



About Highland Grove

The proposed Highland Grove community is a 33-acre true mixed-income subdivision encompassing the redevelopment and revitalization of the former Dove Court public housing complex in the North Side of Richmond, VA. The community includes attractive single-family homes with a wide range of price points presenting a unique opportunity to increase homeownership among families of color in the City of Richmond over the next seven years of the development timeline. Located in a historically Black neighborhood, the Highland Grove site is north of downtown, adjacent to Overby-Sheppard Elementary School, and nestled in between the neighborhoods of Highland Park, Barton Heights, and Green Park.

As the result of a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RRHA) in 2019, Better Housing Coalition (BHC) was named Master Developer and will manage the development and disposition of the site from initial design to final buildout; oversee the infrastructure implementation; and ensure construction of homes that will be available for sale.

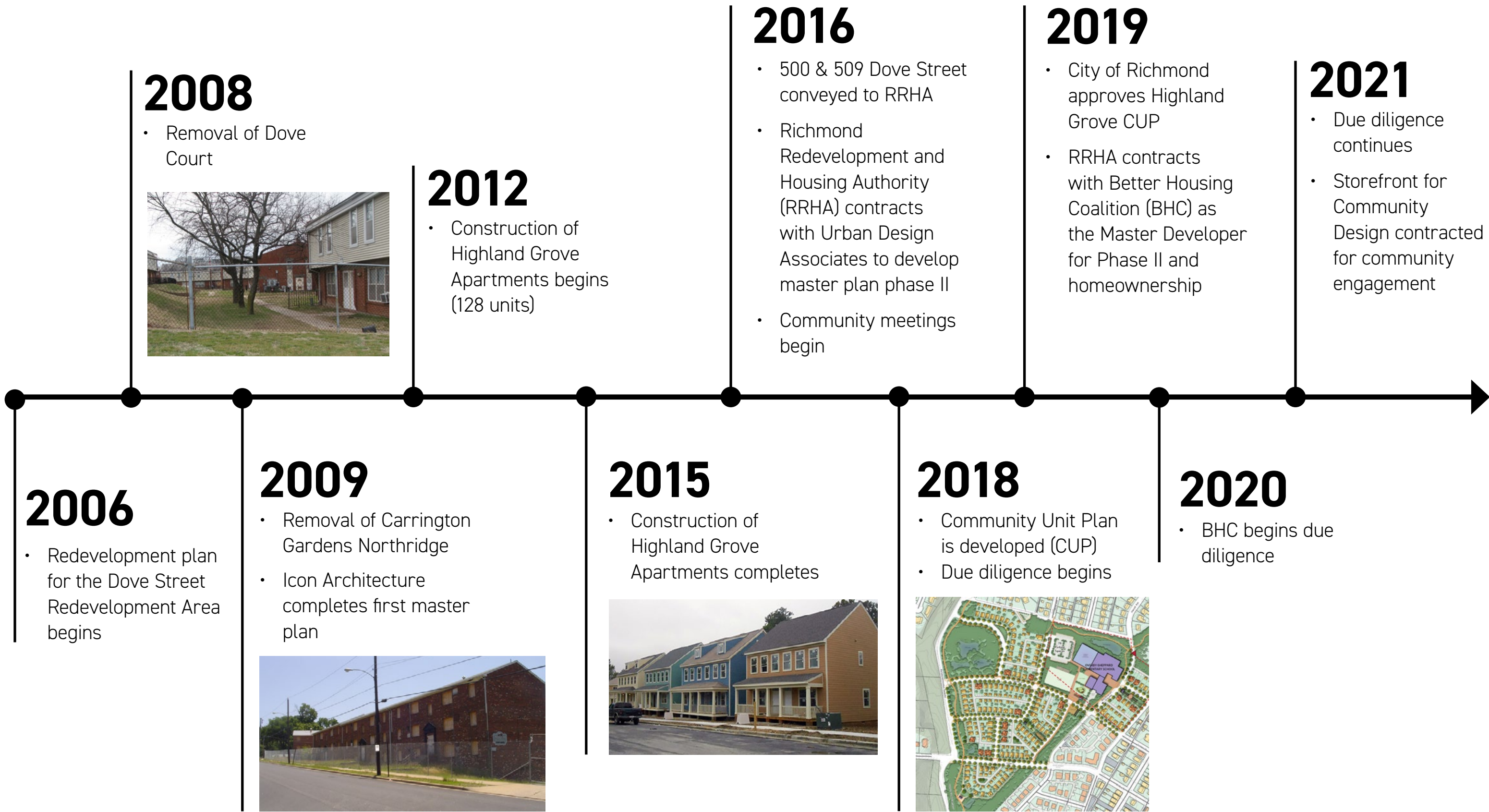
BHC has engaged three additional seasoned community development nonprofit organizations to partner in the Highland

Grove project: the Maggie Walker Community Land Trust, project:HOMES, and Richmond Metropolitan Habitat for Humanity. The partners will work collaboratively to construct and sell high-quality single-family homes to first-time homebuyers. The homes will be compatible with the scale, density, and style of those in the adjacent neighborhoods and include a mix of affordable and market-rate homes.



Aerial Image: 2008

Project Timeline (2006 - 2022)



Approved Community Use Plan

In 2018, the Preliminary Site Plan was developed by Urban Design Associates. In 2019, the site plan was further developed by Timmons Group into a Community Unit Plan that was approved by the City of Richmond. The CUP is the current plan that was used by Storefront for Community Design for community engagement.



Preliminary Site Plan (by Urban Design Associates)



Approved Community Unit Plan (by Timmons Group)

**NORTHERN
BARTON
HEIGHTS**

**GREEN
PARK**

ALLEY

ALLEY

**OVERBY-SHEPPARD
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL**

**HIGHLAND
GROVE**

**HIGHLAND
GROVE
APARTMENTS**

DOVE STREET

**HIGHLAND
GROVE**

**HIGHLAND PARK
SOUTHERN TIP**

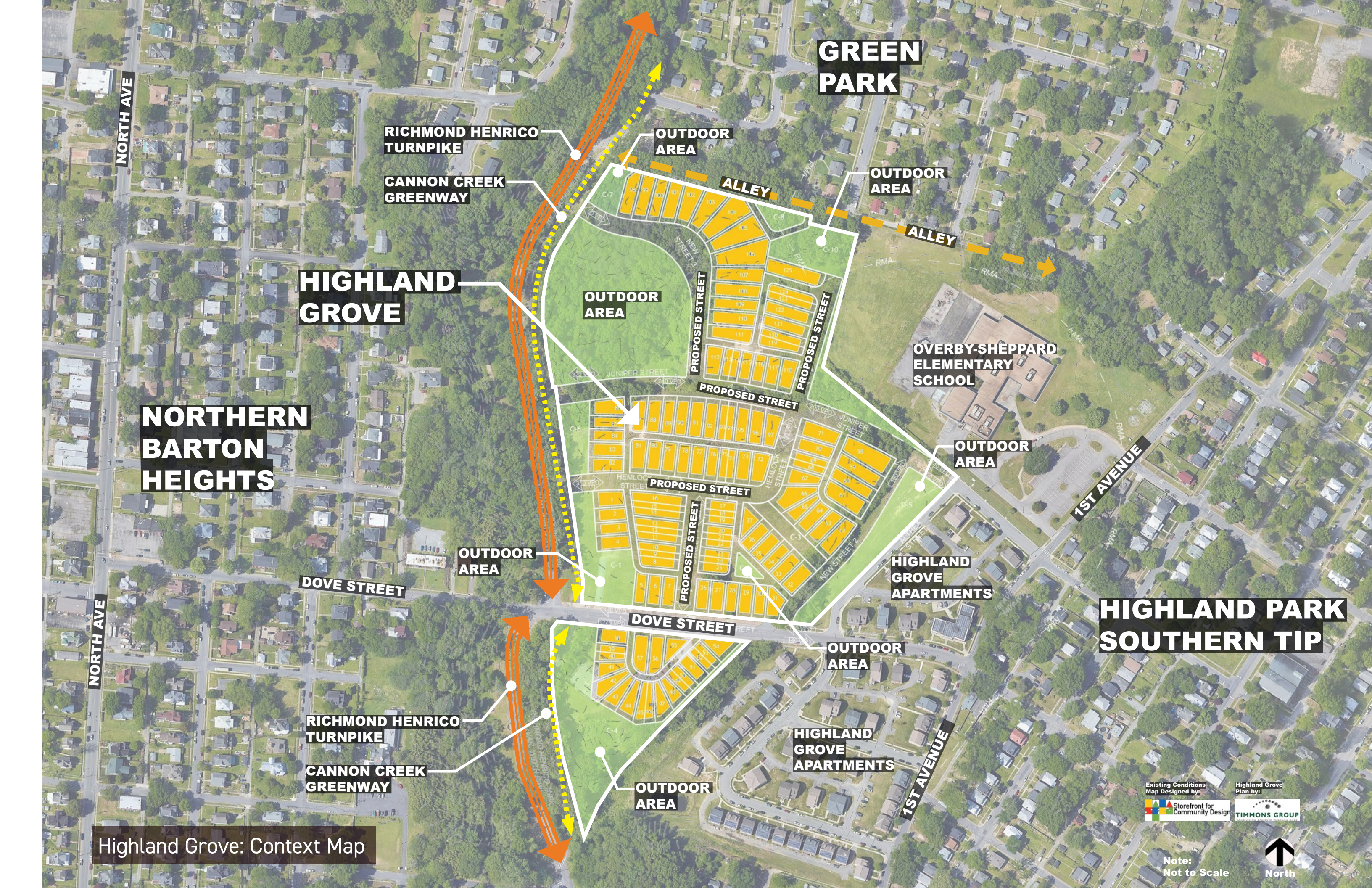
**RICHMOND HENRICO
TURNPIKE**

**CANNON CREEK
GREENWAY**

Highland Grove: Existing Conditions Map

Note:
Not to Scale





GREEN PARK

RICHMOND HENRICO TURNPIKE

OUTDOOR AREA

CANNON CREEK GREENWAY

OUTDOOR AREA

ALLEY

ALLEY

HIGHLAND GROVE

OUTDOOR AREA

OVERBY-SHEPPARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

NORTHERN BARTON HEIGHTS

PROPOSED STREET

OUTDOOR AREA

OUTDOOR AREA

DOVE STREET

PROPOSED STREET

HIGHLAND GROVE APARTMENTS

HIGHLAND PARK SOUTHERN TIP

DOVE STREET

OUTDOOR AREA

RICHMOND HENRICO TURNPIKE

HIGHLAND GROVE APARTMENTS

CANNON CREEK GREENWAY

OUTDOOR AREA

1ST AVENUE

Highland Grove: Context Map

Existing Conditions Map Designed by: Storefront for Community Design
Highland Grove Plan by: TIMMONS GROUP

Note: Not to Scale



03 | Highland Grove Community Engagement



Goals and Timeline

Community Engagement Goals: receive feedback and ideas from residents, business owners, and potential homebuyers regarding specific outdoor elements and architectural elements for the Highland Grove Community Unit Plan (CUP). Feedback and data collection on the following items have been collected for Better Housing Coalition to use as a guide to finalize the design of the site plan and construct the neighborhood.

1 Outdoor elements including recreational and open space, playground(s), seating, connections to adjacent neighborhoods, and additional items proposed by community members.

2 Sustainable elements including existing woodland areas, wildlife, and stormwater management practices.

3 Architectural elements including housing characteristics, signage, lighting, and additional items proposed by community members.



Phase 1

Kickoff Community Meeting
and Community Outreach

October 2021 - November 2021



Phase 2

Community Design
Open House Events

December 2021



Phase 3

Community Survey and
Final Guidebook

January 2022 - March 2022

Kickoff Community Meeting

On October 13, 2021, the project team held a virtual kickoff meeting to present a brief overview of the project, discuss the timeline and goals of the community engagement process, and introduce their work and resources.



Virtual Community Meeting Part I: [Project Overview](#)



Virtual Community Meeting Part II: [Community Partners](#)



Community Partners

Drop-in to celebrate with us at our Open House!

- See plans for the Highland Grove Community
- Discover neighborhood greening and design options
- Explore opportunities for homeownership

Scan QR code to learn more

Note: Face masks are required inside 6PIC

Door hangers were delivered by Storefront Community Ambassadors to adjacent neighborhoods



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Event #1
When: Monday, December 6 from 6pm-8pm
Where: Six Points Innovation Center (6PIC) 3001 Meadowbridge Rd.

Event #2
When: Thursday, December 9 from 6pm-8pm
Where: Six Points Innovation Center (6PIC) 3001 Meadowbridge Rd.

Snacks & Drinks Raffle Prizes

Community Open House Events

On December 6 and December 9, 2021, the project team hosted community events inviting residents to learn about the project, provide feedback for the community plan, grab a bite to eat, and meet their neighbors. In addition to learning about Highland Grove, community partners were in attendance to review their organization's work and discuss affordable housing options with residents.



04 | Community Survey Results



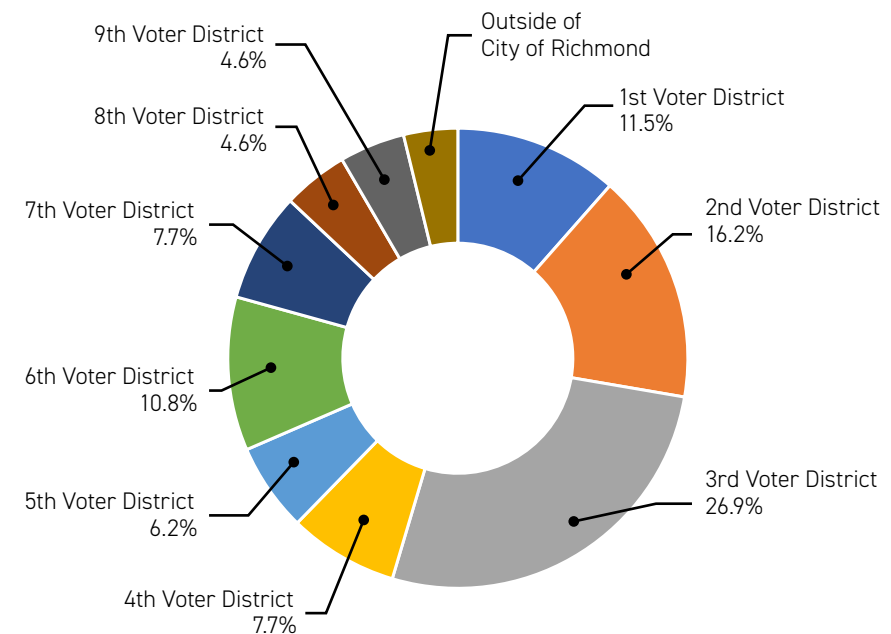
Community Survey Summary and Demographics

Feedback and ideas from the community events were combined to create a community survey for residents, business owners, and potential homebuyers to share final recommendations and ideas. The following results were compiled from the survey to assist the project team in making final recommendations based on community input. Refer to Section 05 for recommendations. The survey results have been segmented into three user groups:

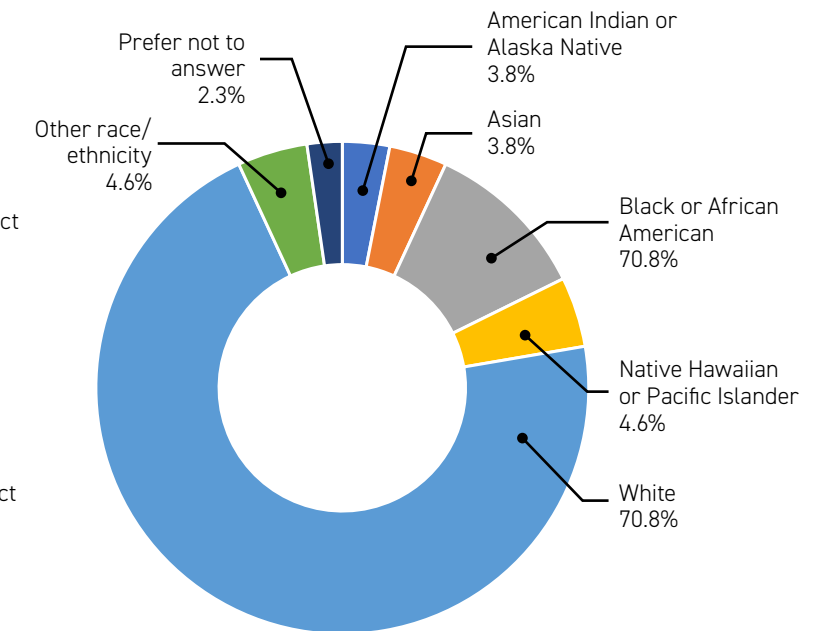
1. Overall Survey Responses (130 responses)
2. Interested Homeowners (86 responses)
3. Adjacent Neighborhoods (94 responses)

*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

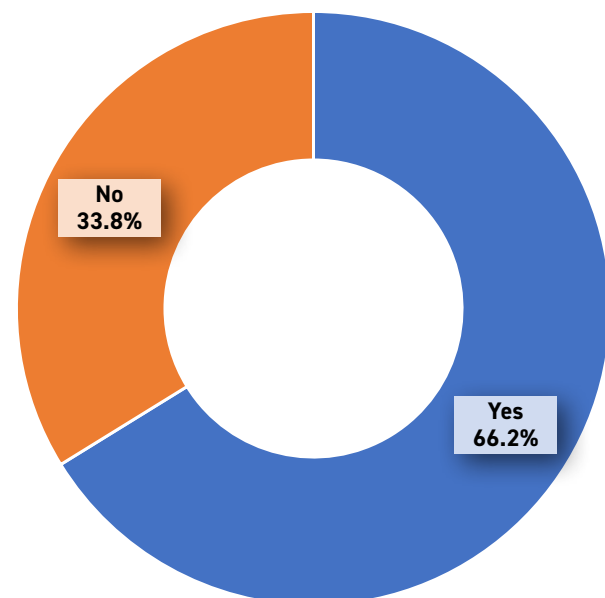
Q: Where is your home located?



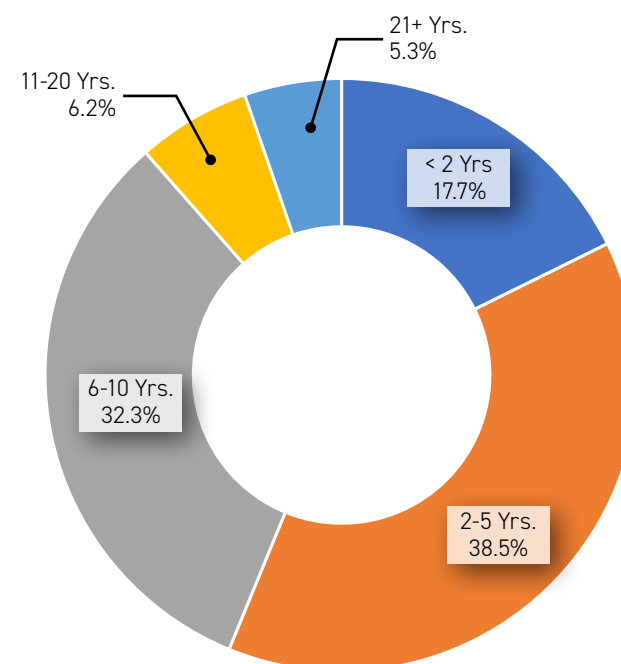
Q: How would you best describe yourself?



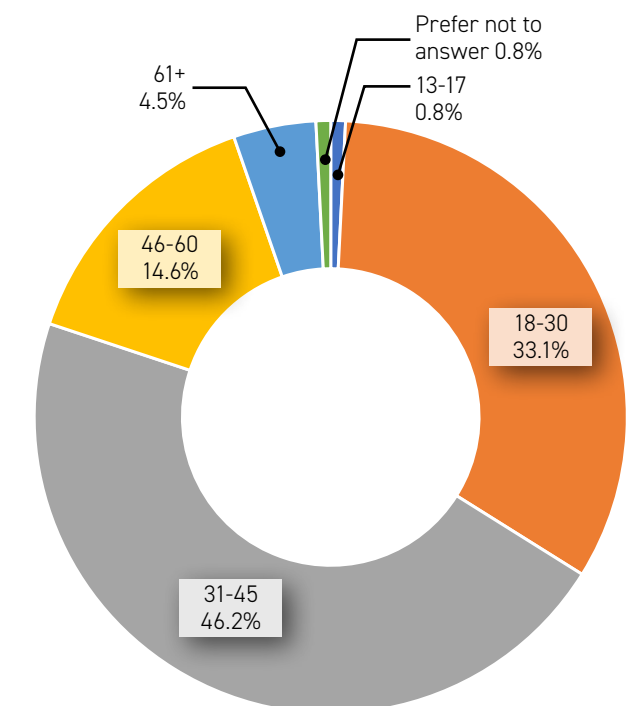
Q: Are you interested in homeownership in Highland Grove?



Q: How long have you lived at your current residence?



Q: What is your age?



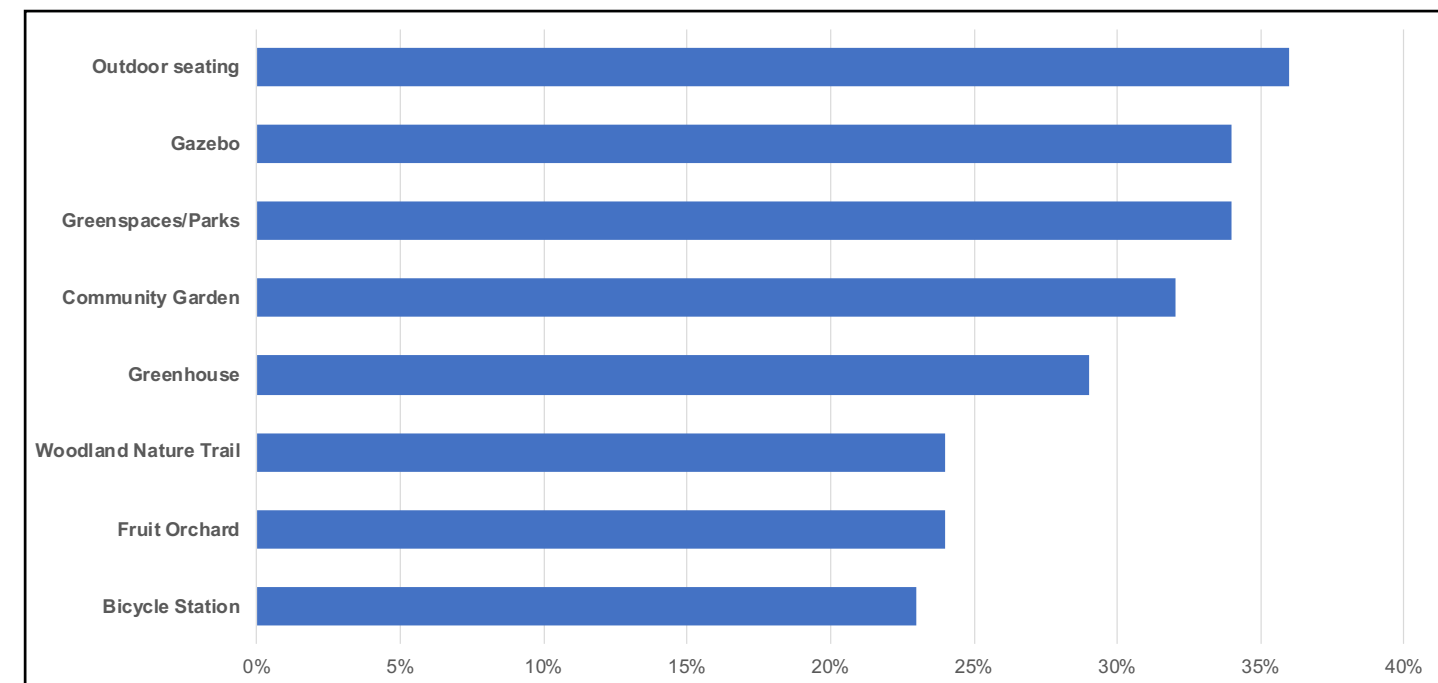
Community Survey Results: Outdoor Elements

Question:

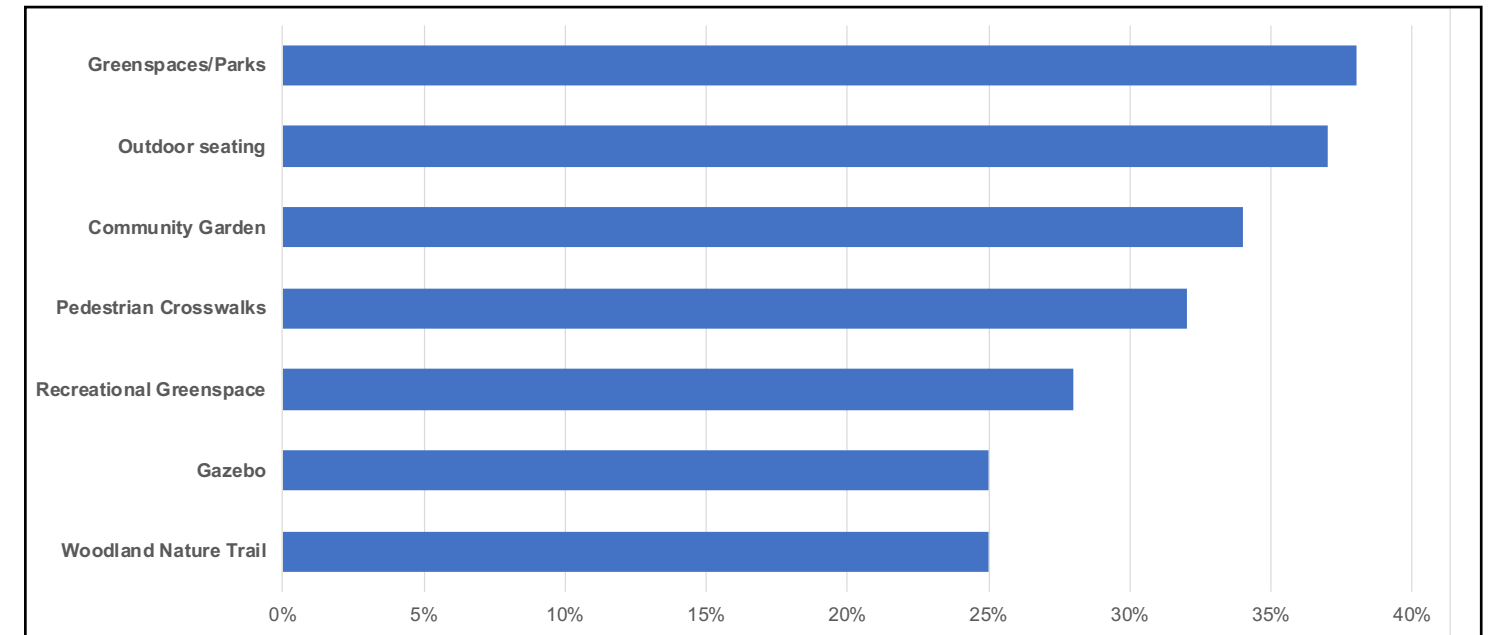
The following recommendations were collected from the community open house events. Select your top five (5) recommendations for outdoor areas in the Highland Grove community.

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Bicycle Station | • Outdoor grills and cooking stations |
| • Car wash station | • Pedestrian crosswalks |
| • Community garden | • Picnic pavilion |
| • Outdoor seating | • Playground / exercise station for adults |
| • Dog park | • Playground for children |
| • Gazebo (restore existing or rebuild) | • Roundabouts to slow vehicular traffic |
| • Greenhouse to grow plants | • Sidewalks throughout community |
| • Green spaces/parks throughout community | • Skate park |
| • Open green space for relaxing and active play | • Tennis courts |
| • Nature path through woodland area | • Trash cans / recycling |
| • Orchard with fruit trees | • Walking trails throughout community |

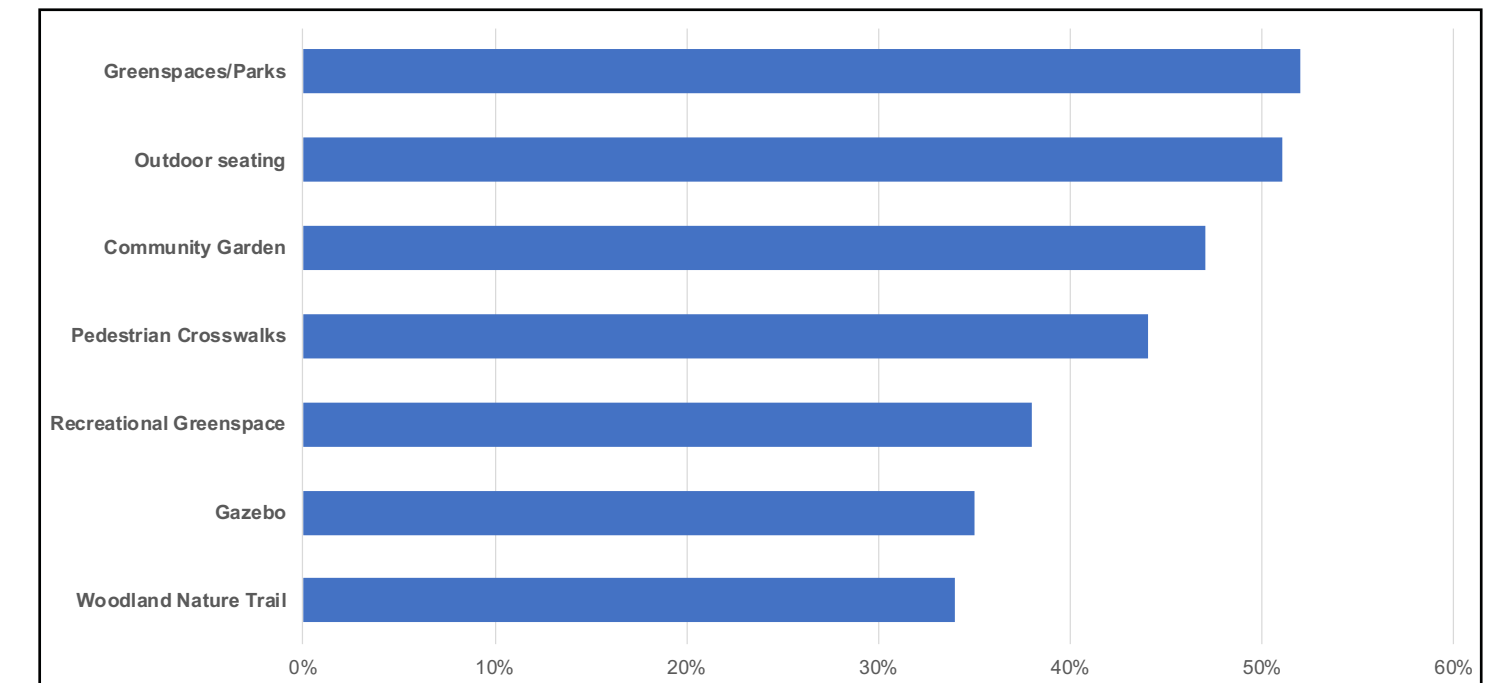
Top Recommendations Interested Homeowners



Top Recommendations Overall Survey Responses



Top Recommendations Adjacent Neighborhoods



*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

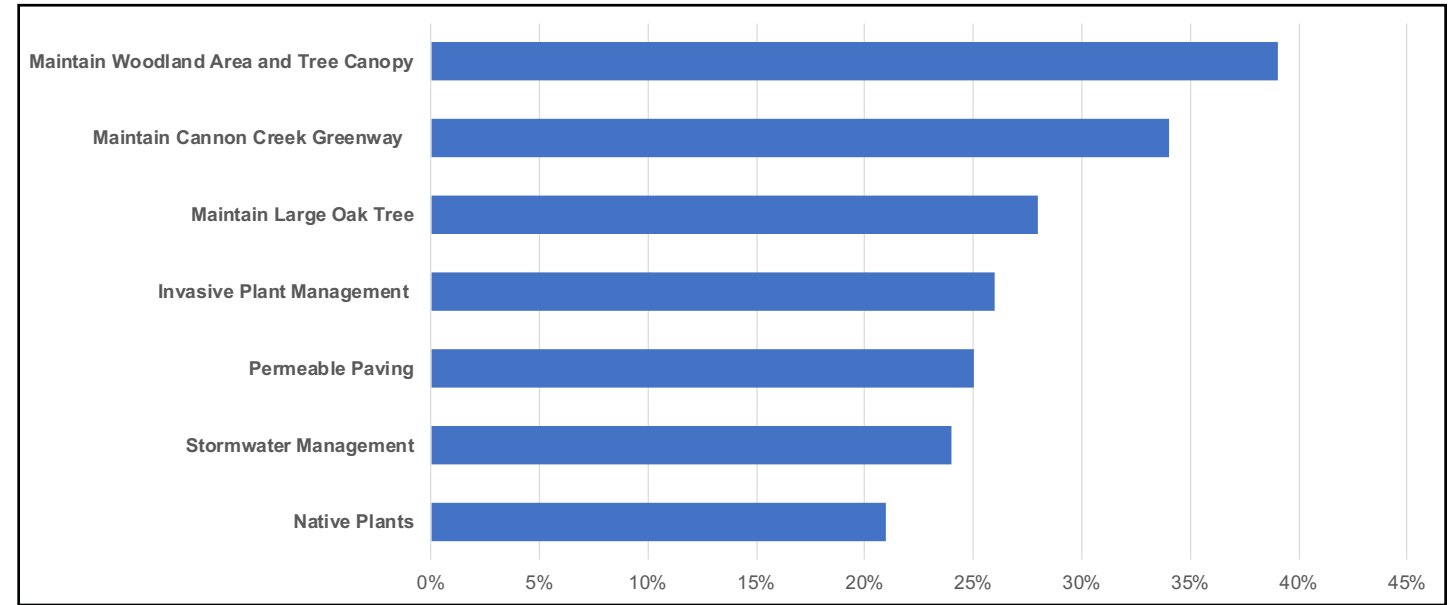
Community Survey Results: Sustainable Elements

Question:

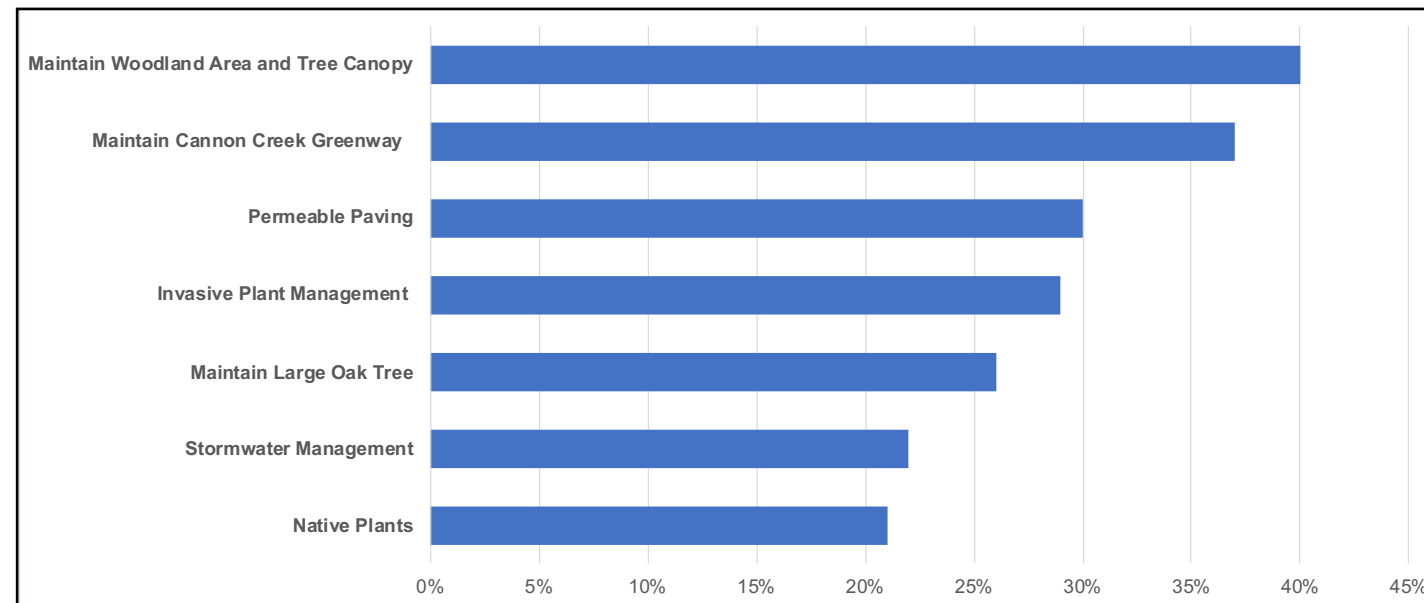
The following recommendations were collected from the community open house events. Select your top three (3) recommendations for sustainable elements in the Highland Grove community.

- Community garden and orchard
- Install plants native to Central Virginia
- Invasive plant management plan
- Maintain Cannon Creek Greenway
- Maintain large Oak Tree
- Maintain woodland area and tree canopy
- Natural pond (not fenced)
- Permeable paving (parking and/or pedestrian areas where water filters through paving)
- Protection of diverse wildlife
- Rain barrels for all residents
- Stormwater management (design for water to drain and filter back into ground)
- Street trees
- Sustainable building materials (i.e., recycled and/or environmentally friendly building materials)

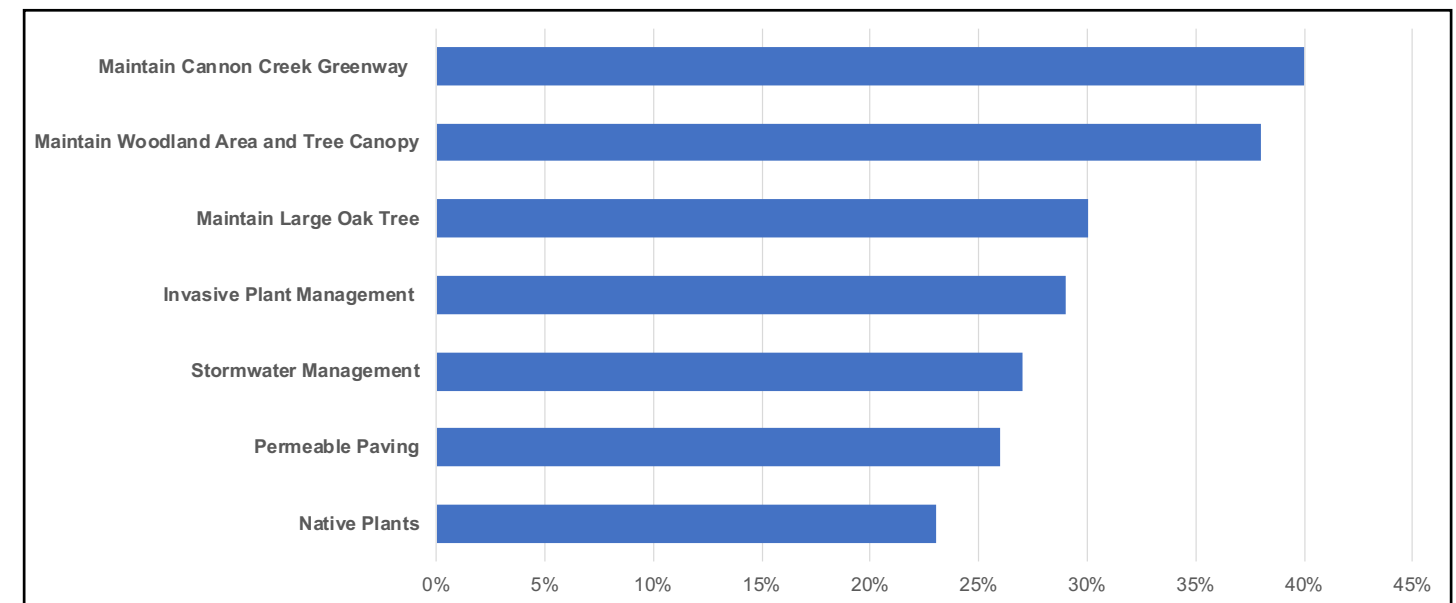
Top Recommendations Overall Survey Responses



Top Recommendations Interested Homeowners



Top Recommendations Adjacent Neighborhoods

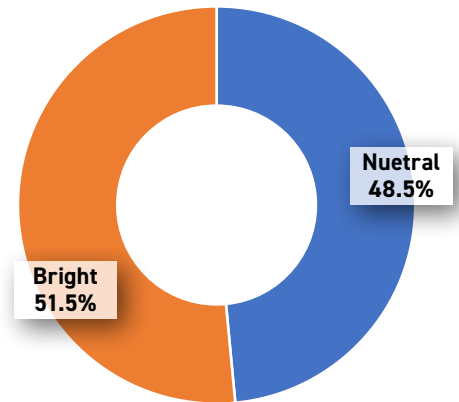
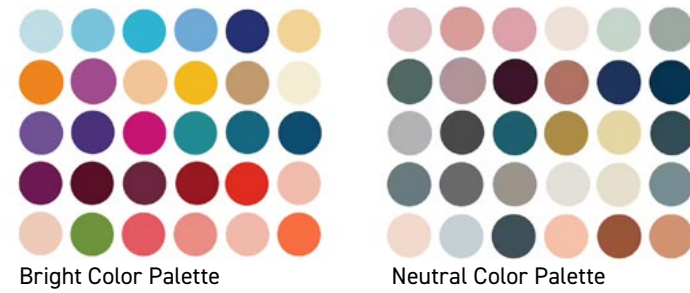


*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

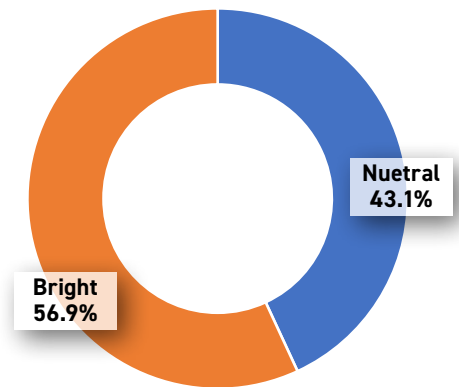
Community Survey Results: Architectural Elements - Colors and Building Materials

Question:

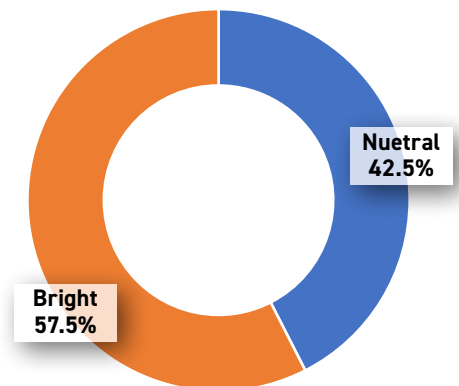
Select your recommendation for the color palette to be used on the homes in the Highland Grove community.



Recommendations
Overall Survey Responses



Recommendations
Interested Homeowners

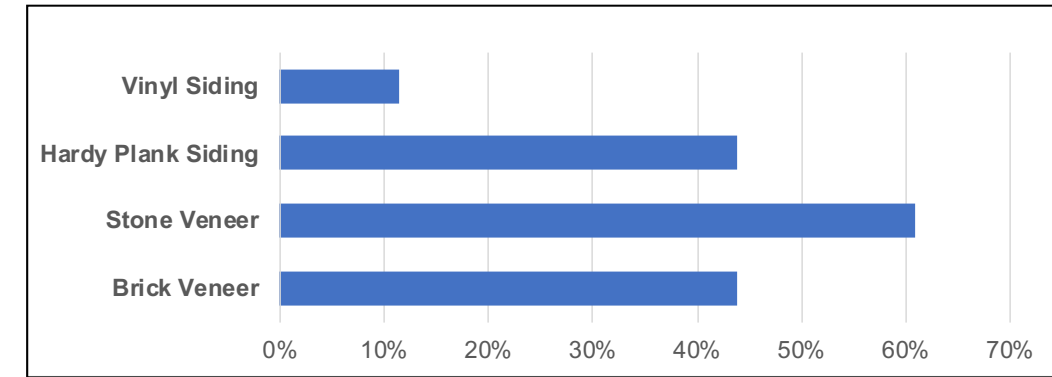


Recommendations
Adjacent Neighborhoods

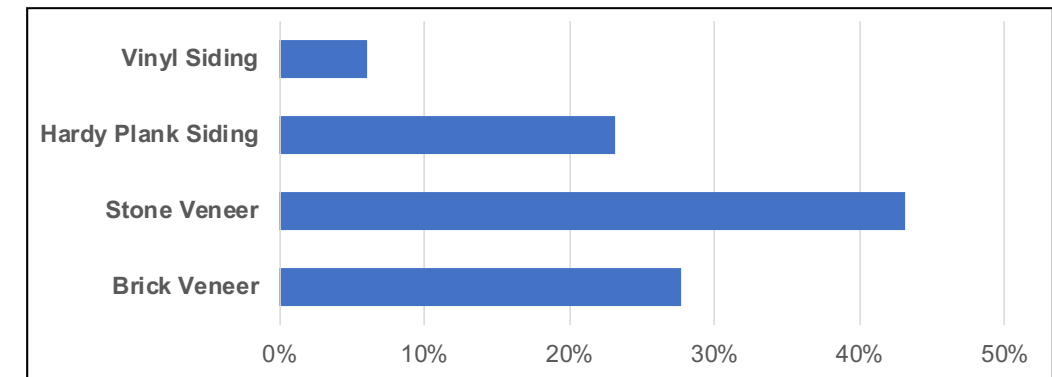
*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

Question:

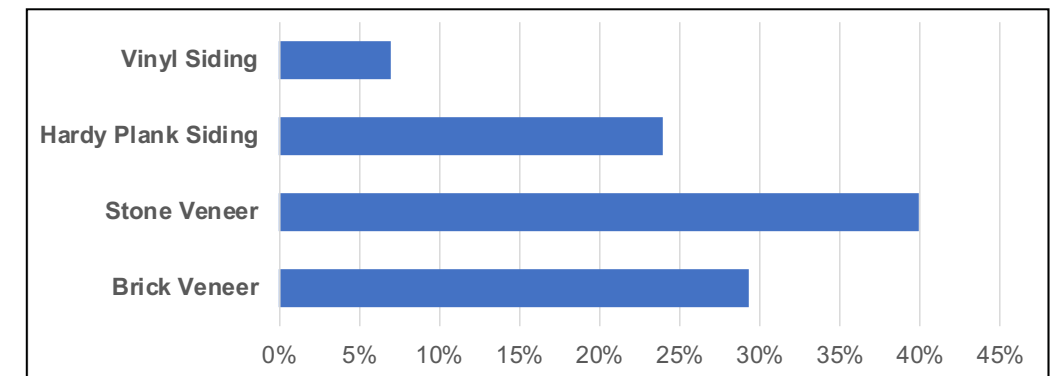
Select your top two (2) recommendations for materials to be used on the homes in the Highland Grove community.



Recommendations
Overall Survey Responses



Recommendations
Interested Homeowners



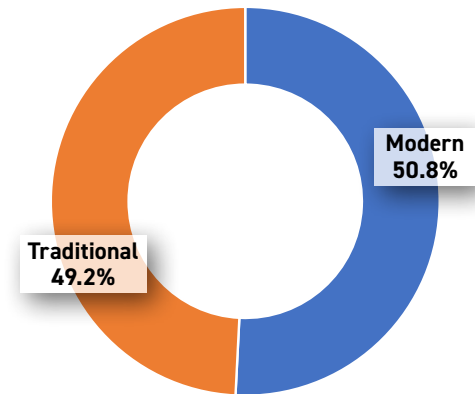
Recommendations
Adjacent Neighborhoods

*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

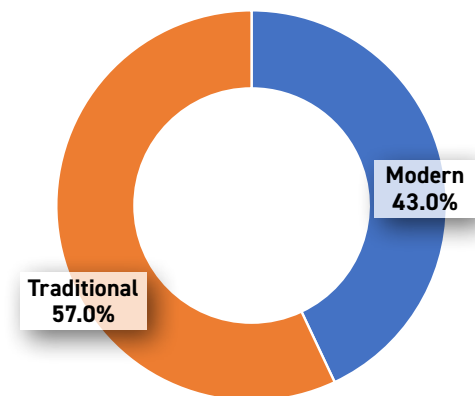
Community Survey Results: Architectural Elements - Lighting and Signage

Question:

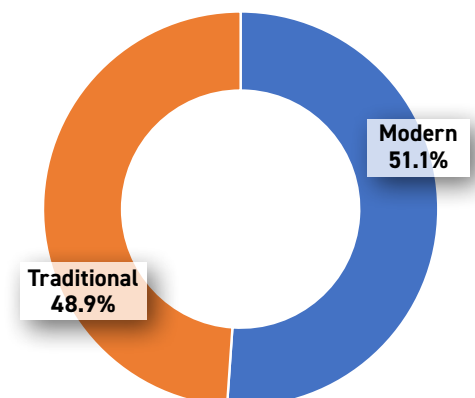
Select your recommendation for signage aesthetics in the Highland Grove community. Signage may include neighborhood signs, street signs, and bike/walking signs. *Note: Modern refers to clean and simple and traditional refers to ornamental.*



Recommendations
Overall Survey Responses



Recommendations
Interested Homeowners

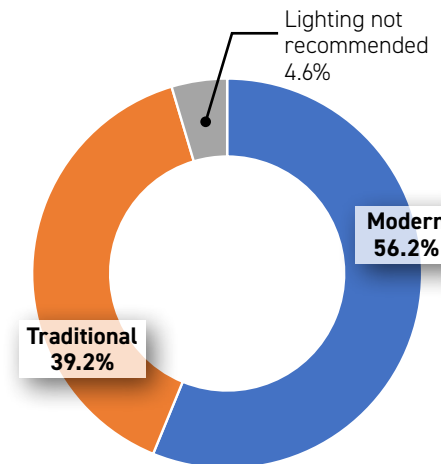


Recommendations
Adjacent Neighborhoods

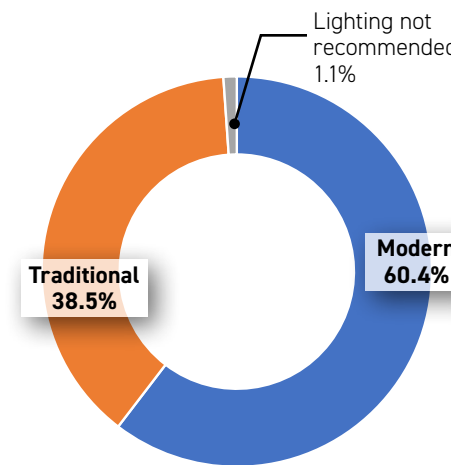
*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

Question:

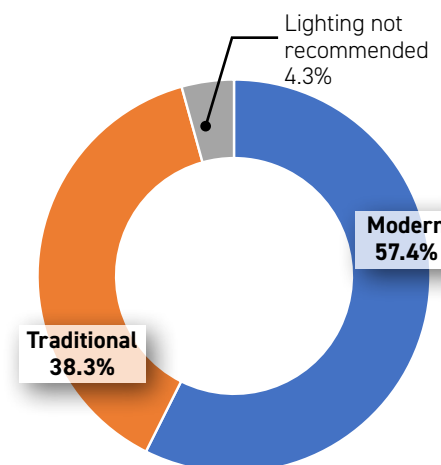
Select your recommendation for lighting aesthetics (modern or traditional) in the Highland Grove community. *Note: Modern refers to clean and simple and traditional refers to ornamental.*



Recommendations
Overall Survey Responses



Recommendations
Interested Homeowners



Recommendations
Adjacent Neighborhoods

*Adjacent neighborhoods include Highland Park, Green Park, and Northern/Southern Barton Heights

Community Survey Results

Question:

What recreational, social, and wellness programs are important in a community?



- Exercise programs, meditation programs, and cooking programs.
- I believe that recreational sports for kids is a great way to bring together the children in the area as well as the parents. In addition, I like the idea of having local markets for people to sell things they have made!
- Nearby parks and playgrounds for activities and exercise.
- Senior focused exercise, ongoing arts programs, dance, "how to" workshops, tool share, little free library, and shaded outdoor seating to read.
- Annual neighborhood watch event and health expo.
- Create a range of destinations appealing to diverse residents (age, race, socioeconomic, active vs. leisure) that is supported by a small number of community led event planning associations charged with creating a series of unique neighborhood scale events/festivals.
- Anything - basketball, tennis, walking, cycling, running, dog walking, or community events focused on health and/or exercise. Kids in my neighborhood love basketball.
- Dog park and neighborhood activities.
- Garden space/green space, exercise trails or sidewalks, and regular maintenance (emptying trashcans/recycling bins, invasive species control, intentional landscaping).
- Clubhouse and inclusive outdoor spaces.
- Student wellness and after school programs; events around pre-existing establishments such as the YMCA and local owned restaurants.
- Community cafe and a place to gather safely.
- Area for intergenerational gathering; place to take walks, playing with children, and let the dogs play.
- Counseling and neighborhood talks.
- Neighborhood Watch, exercise and health classes for all ages, and tax aid services.
- Theater, music, food, and children's play areas.
- Seasonal and community events for all members of family.

05 | Final Recommendations

THIS!
")

A dog park
Pond picnic areas playground
sports complex around/within
trails and greenspace
(basketball, skatepark
tennis...)

adequate street lights at night

corner
store

- lighting/security
- social gatherings
-

Flowers, lights
Nice scenery

A NICE
GATHERING SPACE

Free Community
Events

Community
garden

Final Recommendations

Overall Recommendation #1

After reviewing the demographic results from the community events and survey, it was determined that additional community engagement is critical throughout the lifespan of the construction project to ensure future Highland Grove residents and adjacent neighbors' voices are heard prior to final selection of outdoor elements elements. The community survey results highlighted four outdoor elements that were consistently top recommendations from the three user groups.

1. Green spaces/Parks
2. Outdoor seating
3. Maintain woodland area and tree canopy
4. Maintain Cannon Creek Greenway

During Phase one construction, it is important to consider the top recommendations listed above. It is also essential to identify the target resident populations for the community and ensure that they align with current demographics in Highland Park and the surrounding neighborhoods. As residents begin to move into Highland Grove it will be critical to engage them, along with adjacent neighborhoods, to understand specific outdoor elements that they would like to see in the green spaces and parks.

Overall Recommendation #2

Many recommendations from interested potential residents and adjacent neighbors go beyond the existing scope for the site's redevelopment and it is understood that the Highland Grove Community Unit Plan has been approved by the City of Richmond. As Better Housing Coalition and community partners continue to provide opportunities for affordable homeownership in the future, it is important to envision vibrant mixed-use projects that fit into the existing physical characteristics of the neighborhood.

Considering our region's worsening housing crisis and the inaccessibility of homeownership for an increasing share of Richmond residents, many respondents requested the inclusion of multi-family housing in the plan. Workforce housing for teachers at the adjacent elementary school, senior residences, and affordable apartments were just a few of the specific ideas for including multi-family homes. The inclusion of a corner store or accessory commercial units to allow access to retail in the neighborhood also proved popular. Lastly, many event attendees and survey respondents highlighted the site's lack of safe connections to surrounding areas and suggested expanding sidewalks, improved pedestrian crossings, and a reconnection of the street grid to surrounding neighborhoods.

Final Recommendations

Outdoor Elements

Asked what outdoor elements they would like to see in the coming Highland Grove neighborhood, community members brought forward two strains of suggestions: amenities and shared spaces.

Top amenities included improved pedestrian crosswalks, outdoor seating, a gazebo, and a bicycle repair station. These wished for additions would improve the daily quality of life for residents and those who pass through Highland Grove.

The most popularly requested shared spaces include greenspaces, a community garden, a woodland nature trail, a greenhouse, and a fruit orchard. Such additions to the neighborhood would allow those who live in the area to better gather, make connections, and build a sense of community that extends beyond just residing in the same geographic area.

Sustainable Elements

From climate change to recurrent flooding, prospective residents and adjacent neighbors all showed an awareness of Richmond's environmental challenges and a desire for Highland Grove to break with past building and design customs in order to be more sustainable than the average neighborhood.

Many of the top recommendations focused on maintaining as much of the site's existing canopy and large trees as possible, prioritizing the inclusion of native plants, and managing stormwater via innovations like permeable pavement. One of the top desires from both potential residents and existing neighbors was the preservation of Cannon Creek Greenway as a walking and biking connection for the area.

Final Recommendations

Architectural Elements

Interested residents and existing neighbors largely agreed on the desired aesthetics for the new community although few architectural elements received overwhelming consensus. Faced with a decision between a bright color palette for the homes or more neutral tones, nearly 60% of respondents opted for the bolder set of colors.

The top two materials selected by respondents were stone and brick veneers, however, which do not lend themselves to any specific coloring. Of the materials that could be colorized, hardy plank siding was the clear favorite.

Preferences between traditional and modern signage proved nearly equal with only interested residents showing a slight preference for a traditional style. All categories of respondents favored modern lighting for the community by roughly a 20 percent margin.

Recommendations and Next Steps:

As the initial construction phases of the community unit plan nears, the following action items are recommended to maintain an inclusive process throughout the project life cycle.

- 1. Develop goals and metrics for Highland Grove resident demographics.**
- 2. Maintain proposed outdoor areas as flexible open space until additional community engagement can be completed to finalize outdoor elements and amenities.**
- 3. Once residents for the initial phases are selected, provide community engagement opportunities with those residents to select final outdoor elements in the early phases of buildout.**
- 4. As future phases are constructed, provide ongoing engagement opportunities for existing Highland Grove residents and new residents to provide recommendations and ideas for outdoor elements and amenities.**

Project Team Contact Information



Lynn McAteer
lmcateer@betterhousingcoalition.org

Maria Tabacchi
m.tabacchi@betterhousingcoalition.org



Alicia Garcia
alicia.garcia@rrha.com

Desi Wynter
desi.wynter@rrha.com

Chelsea Jackson
chelsea.jackson@rrha.com

Ofelia Solomon
ofelia.solomon@rrha.com



Shawn Balon
shawn@storefrontrichmond.org



Nikki D'Adamo-Damery
nikki@mwclt.org

Tiffany Haynes
tiffany@mwclt.org

Julia McNelly
julia@hdadvisors.net



Matthew Morgan
Matthew.Morgan@projecthomes.org

Marion Cake
Marion.Cake@projecthomes.org



Amy McDaniel
amcdaniel@richmondhabitat.org

Kristin Vinagro
kvinagro@richmondhabitat.org

Mitchell Danese
mdanese@richmondhabitat.org

Mary Kay Huss
mkhuss@richmondhabitat.org



Mission: To connect community members to design tools and resources that build community capacity and engage the next generation of designers.

We understand that inequities have been built into the physical environment in ways that are both obvious and hidden, yet many people that live in the City of Richmond have not had the opportunity to participate in planning and design processes or understand the complex forces that shape our city. Storefront for Community Design, a non-profit design center in Richmond, Virginia, was founded to bridge that gap and make design tools and resources accessible to all “for the love of our city.”

Since 2011, Storefront has provided low-cost design and planning assistance and design education programming to community members, local businesses, organizations, and neighborhoods. Our community-led projects range from assisting a high school student to envision her idea for an urban mini-farm, to guidance on storefront and facade improvements for small businesses, to collaborating with youth and young adults to create a vision for a neighborhood food forest, and to a community engagement initiative that empowered residents to share their ideas for the new use of an old bank building.



Thank you to our Community Ambassadors and Volunteers for helping us to engage with the community and develop the community engagement and recommendations guidebook.

- Joni Watling, Community Ambassador
- Wyatt Gordon, Community Ambassador
- Lizzie Garrett, Volunteer
- Jim Brown, Volunteer
- Stephen Wade, Volunteer



Scan QR code to learn more about the Highland Grove community engagement initiative and discover additional resources.