

## **Trinity Park/“Expanding Housing Choices” Survey Summary – February 2019**

### **Method:**

The “Expanding Housing Choices” (EHC) UPC subcommittee of TPNA, conducted an on-line survey of Trinity Park neighbors from Monday, February 11<sup>th</sup> to Saturday February 16<sup>th</sup>. The survey link was posted on the Trinity Park listserv and the TPNA Facebook account, and was shareable. Additionally, an attempt was made to leaflet every residence explaining how to take the survey (including how to get assistance, if necessary). Just over two hundred respondents took the survey, 63% of whom were current TPNA members.

The survey consisted of three multiple choice questions and two open-ended questions. No specific information was given about the EHC proposal, and no specific questions were asked about its provisions to avoid leading the respondents in any direction.

### **Disclaimer:**

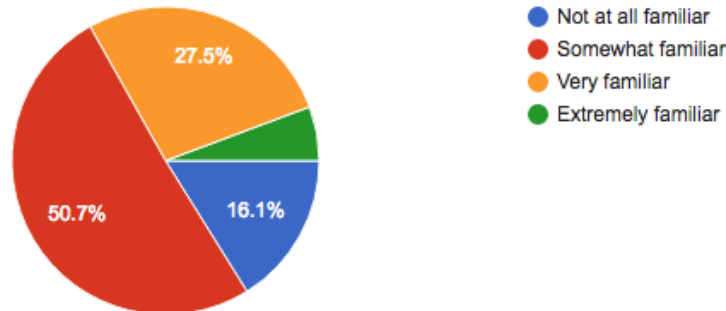
This study was not scientific or quantitative. We could not check for duplicate emails and had no way to confirm if respondents live in Trinity Park, or North Carolina, or are owners/renters/landlords or developers. No information about the EHC proposal was provided. A pointer to the City materials was provided, but they alone are not sufficient for a person to foresee impact to Trinity Park or other neighborhoods. However, the results may be useful in understanding general attitudes.

### **Results:**

First residents were asked how familiar they are with the initiative and when they learned about it. Less than a quarter reported being very or extremely familiar with it.

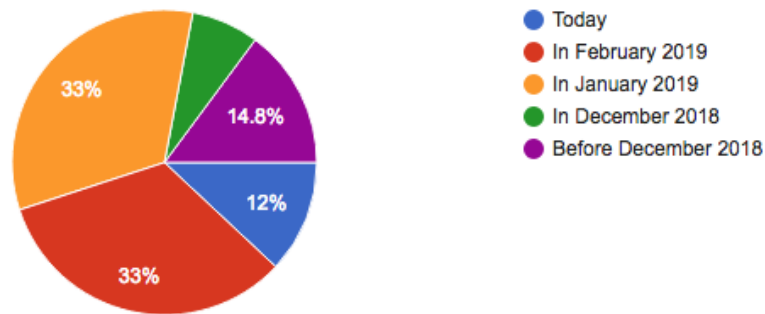
## How familiar are you with the “Expanding Housing Choices” initiative, proposed by the Planning Department?

211 responses



## When did you first find out that there were proposed changes that would affect Trinity Park and other neighborhoods?

209 responses



About half found out about the initiative in February and less than a quarter knew of it in 2018.

The open-ended questions elicited a wide diversity of opinions. A significant number listed "none" to the concerns, and similarly a number responded "none" to the benefits." Most respondents listed both benefits and concerns.

### **Concerns:**

Those who noted concerns provide details which we grouped in three tiers.

1. Tier One
  - The largest concern was from people who worried that there would be many teardowns in the neighborhood, which would lead to destruction of historic

structures and a loss of the livability element that Trinity Park residents enjoy and why housing in Trinity Park is so popular. This was by far the most common response.

2. Tier Two

- Parking was the second most frequently mentioned concern.
- That there would be a substantial increase in density. Many respondents just left it at that, but many spoke specifically about the proliferation of small houses/small lots, skinny houses, and the worry that many thin lots could have a duplex and an ADU.

3. Tier Three

- Traffic
- Increased noise, mostly from groups of students moving back into the neighborhood.
- The belief that this proposal does not truly address the issue of affordable housing or that it will be ineffective at its stated goals. Several people also said the process was too rushed.

Finally, the following concerns were said by 10 to 20 people:

- Worries about abuse by developers/slumlords
- Concerns about water and loss of permeable surfaces
- Tree loss
- Concerns about housing prices, although the concerns were divided about whether it would lead to an increase or decrease in prices
- An increase in rentals and/or AirBnBs
- General impacts on infrastructure

**Benefits:**

Benefits noted by respondents were grouped into these three tiers: (Some people perceived no benefits.)

1. Tier One

- The largest benefit seen was that EHC would provide more housing diversity (the addition of more housing units in a variety of types ).

2. Tier Two

- A general increase in density
- Improving affordable housing (some spoke of the neighborhood while others spoke of Durham or just generally)
- More walkability in the neighborhood
- The ability to have more onsite rentals and for those of fixed income to get rental revenue and for seniors to “age in place.”

3. Tier Three

- General benefits to the city and surrounding neighborhoods

- More ADUs/infill
- Fighting sprawl
- Good for the neighborhood
- Good for diversifying the makeup of the neighborhood (age, income, race)

### **Conclusion:**

The study shows that there is a diversity of opinions, and varied awareness of the specifics of the EHC proposal draft. We think the results are sufficient for us to guide our initial efforts to influence some details of the proposal to improve it in areas of biggest concerns, attempting to find balance between preserving and protecting the physical character of the neighborhood with the realities of the citywide need for more housing choices.

### **Appendix: Respondent's Verbatim Comments**

The following list provides a sampling of the responses just as written.

#### *More Concerned*

- ADU's should count towards density. ADU's are used as apartments, and sometimes short term rentals (i.e. AirB&B), therefore ADU impact infrastructure and quality of life.
- The ability of developers to overlay multiple new tools within the EHC proposal could result in lots with huge micro densities beyond the spirit of the intended changes (i.e. divide a lot into three skinny strips, put a duplex on each, and an ADU behind each.) kind of like three circus bears on a bicycle with a backpack on each.
- Allowing 25 ft wide lots by right is too skinny, especially when side yard standards are factored into the model. More illustrations are needed to convince me that a 15 foot wide residence can work in congruence with our existing downtown neighborhoods as infill.
- The proposed "increase in density plan" has not been shown to be an effective solution to the housing shortage in other cities (Nashville, Chicago, Atlanta, Portland, Miami).
- A density plan allows an established and historic neighborhood to be cut up, homes to be torn down and replaced, and our community opened up to developers/speculators; it will essentially put an end to what all of TPNA has worked together to create.
- I also don't understand why this significant land use change is being rushed through just before the City is beginning its major Comprehensive Plan update, which will involve major community engagement efforts around these issues.
- Accessory dwelling should not be allowed on duplexes built on small lots.
- Street parking will become very difficult without requiring off street parking for new construction.

- Can there be a limit of units per block? Seems like 1-2 new duplexes/triplexes per block would already be a significant change in Trinity Park, and could be reasonable; more than that could be hugely negative in terms of quality of life, parking, stormwater, etc. Trinity Park already has a great mix of housing stock, why mess with it?
- While it sounds 'logical' that offering more properties in TP would keep people from looking at East Durham, I'm not sure that will be the case. If people want historic homes with yard space, they aren't going to buy a duplex crowded into a lot with another duplex and a couple of garage apartments. They will go east anyway.
- I want the character of Trinity Park and Durham preserved (historical homes, tree-lined streets, no cookie cutter apartment buildings) but I do agree that there needs to be more affordably priced housing options in Durham. I would love to buy a house here someday but there aren't many options that I like in a walkable area that I can afford.
- My main concerns is that it will attract more Duke Student housing into the neighborhood, contributing to overall problems with noise, trash, and illegal parking. Secondary is that it will further aggravate the horrendous parking situation in the neighborhood
- I am concerned about excessive lot division, building duplexes and also allowing Accessory Dwelling units on these smaller partitioned lots, allowing 3 small houses on 3 25' lots divided from the original 75' width, losing greenery and tree canopy, increasing traffic and parking issues when we have little public transportation, and the basic mathematics of these proposed changes.
- Flexibility and more options for housing are great, but changes should be made in a way where the "worst case" for neighbors in terms of the number of homes torn down and lots subdivided is unlikely to occur. More ADUs are great. Duplexes can create more rental opportunities. The ability to put smaller more affordable houses on smaller plots is good. But these should be restricted from being combined so that the instances of one single family home being turned into 2 lots each with a duplex and ADU are extremely rare.
- I worry about the loss of trees and greenery and sunlight as larger houses get built on small lots

#### *More Positive*

- My only concern is that the rate of changes will likely be higher in neighborhoods that were undervalued for many years such as Walltown, Southside, and West End and that these neighborhoods may have been engaged in the process the way wealthier, whiter neighborhoods have.
- I am excited about the prospect of keeping Durham diverse, lively, and integrated, and I think the proposed changes will help foster an ongoing rich urban environment in Durham's future.
- Not allowing expanding housing choices in Durham will only continue to gentrify the downtown(ish) neighborhoods and make it extremely difficult to

- find even affordable housing for the middle class let alone the lower middle or lower class. The expanding housing choices could give the incoming "richer" new Durhamites other options than tearing down or remodeling homes in East Durham for example. I like Durham "dirty" and would hate to see the loss of the middle class and lower in downtown.
- Changing the zoning codes to increase density and missing middle options is the right thing for Durham. Let's just make sure that we are taking the time to get it right.
  - Less "house rich and cash poor" elderly residents who end up feeling trapped
  - No doubt it will attract more businesses around Main St / Brightleaf. Hopefully Northgate will get redeveloped into something that could combine housing and retail - as opposed to more Duke office buildings.
  - Enabling more people, with differing levels of income to join our neighborhood and other city neighborhoods is a benefit.
  - Trinity Park should stand with other neighborhoods and the rest of the city to be part of this initiative that is larger than any one house, block or neighborhood. This is about the future of the entire city. We should also continue advocating to implement additional measures to help with the affordability crisis (e.g., subsidized affordable housing, inclusionary zoning reform at the state level, etc.). Just because this initiative cannot solve the entire problem does not mean it is not an important step to take; doing nothing or fighting the initiative so that the City does not implement is a choice to continue the status quo that is pushing families to the edge of the city, county, and region.
  - I can see that more alternatives for young people and people coming to the area looking for a walkable environment would be beneficial.
  - I think Trinity Park should be denser than it currently is. I feel there is a lot of wasted space, particularly so close to downtown. I think it will be good for the environment if we can get more people into walkable communities.