



Heritage Herald

November/December 2025

The Newsletter of Heritage Hill

Volume MMXXV, No. 6



LOCATION: GRAND RAPIDS
MUSEUM SCHOOL
DECEMBER 2 6:00PM - 8:00PM

CELEBRATE!

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

HEAR WHAT'S COMING
IN 2026

SEE YOU THERE!



ANNUAL MEETING & HOLIDAY PARTY

HERITAGE HILL ELECTIONS
VOTE FOR YOUR BOARD MEMBERS
SEE INSIDE FOR MORE

LEARN ABOUT
OUR 2026
HOME TOUR PLANS
COME FOR THE BIG REVEAL!

DEC. 2 IS GIVING TUESDAY
BRING YOUR END-OF-YEAR
DONATION FOR US & BRING
A CAN FOR OUR FOOD
SHELF DONATION



The Heritage Herald newsletter of
Heritage Hill Association
252 State St SE, Ste 101
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
616-459-8950

Email: heritage@heritagehillweb.org
Website: heritagehillweb.org

Facebook:  @heritagehill

Instagram:  @heritagehillassociation

Hours: 9am-5pm, Mon-Thurs

Contact us to be added to our email alerts on public safety, community engagement, and all things HHA.

HHA's purpose:

- To promote communication, cooperation, and friendship among neighbors
- To help maintain and improve neighborhood property and the physical appearance of our community
- To provide neighbors a way of collectively building a healthy, historically preserved community in which people can live and work in a secure and stable environment
- To identify neighborhood problems and social needs, and to develop and implement solutions
- To initiate neighborhood programs to improve the quality of life
- To develop a spirit of pride and individual obligation to the neighborhood
- To promote and develop a successful multi-racial, and multi-ethnic neighborhood

Heritage Hill Association Staff:

Laska Nygaard, Executive Director
Carly Durham-Bruins, Public Safety Community Organizer
Maria Zache Starkey, Office Manager

Board of Directors:

*Liz Bracken (Treasurer), Union Ave SE
*Denise Cook (Fundraising Chair; Home Tour Co-Chair), College Ave SE
**Jeremy Czubko (Vice President), Morris Ave SE
*Delores Deen, Morris Ave SE
*Chris Ervine (Community Health & Safety Co-Chair), Morris Ave SE
*Michelle Hoexum, Morris Ave SE
*Kim Lucas (Home Tour Co-Chair), Paris Ave SE
*Jim McClurg, College Ave SE
*Jennifer Meeks (Board Minutes), College Ave SE
**Wayne Norlin, Morris Ave SE
*Jeff Phillips (Home Tour Co-Chair), Paris Ave SE

*1st term
**2nd term

The HHA Board of Directors meets at 7pm on the third Wednesday of most months, in the Community Education Room of the Hauenstein Center, Trinity Health, 200 Jefferson Ave SE. Contact us to confirm meeting details and location in any given month.

HHA provides information and encourages neighbor participation to keep Heritage Hill safe and vital, including working on community issues as they arise. As an association of neighbors, we have a strong voice but no regulatory authority.

The Grand Rapids Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) regulates all exterior work and repairs to buildings in Heritage Hill and approval is required before any work begins. HPC: 616-456-3451; rbaker@grcity.org.

Heritage Herald - Circulation @4,000

The Heritage Herald is published by the HHA Board of Directors six times a year (bi-monthly). The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Board of Directors. We reserve the right to edit. Address correspondence to the address above.

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Connecting Community! Annual Membership Meeting & Holiday Party – Museum High School (54 Jefferson SE) Tuesday, December 2, 6:00-8:00pm

Every year's Annual Membership Meeting & Holiday Party is special, and we are especially excited about this one.

- **Home Tour News** - Come meet the new, 2026 Home Tour team and see their presentation on the exciting changes in store for next year. Learn a bit about it all first in this issue.
- **Board Elections** – Look inside this issue to learn about the remarkable, diverse range of neighbors who want to serve YOU on the HHA Board of Directors next year. MAKE SURE to come and vote on December 2 (or follow the absentee voting instructions)!
- Our meeting day is also **Giving Tuesday!** As the grants that keep us working FOR YOU [• Donate here](#) are threatened, we need your support more than ever. Make sure to give to HHA on Dec. 2 (or before!) – more details inside this issue – and **bring your canned goods for local food shelves.**
- We are bringing back the HHA end-of-year **Distinguished Service Awards.** Come to the party to see who is honored.



This and That

by HHA Staff

But before then, contact us with your nominations for distinguished service by an individual in **Crime Prevention** and in **Neighborhood-At-Large** remarkable service.

- Contact us to help setup for the party and to bring an appetizer, salad, vegetable, dessert or other item to share!
- Decorations for the party are being donated by Johanna VanHoutum, a Trinity Health nurse who we were lucky to come in contact with. You can find her on Facebook as Exterior Expression, where she showcases her beautiful porch and entry decorations and we will include pictures in the January-February Herald.

In addition to the Annual Meeting, we are bringing you more ways to engage your community spirit – both individually and with other neighbors! Contact us with any questions on any of these.

- **Dec 1 & 3** – Support HHA, learn more about Heritage Hill history with tour guide extraordinaire Caroline Cook, and make new friends at one of our December **Walking Tours.** Just visit eventbrite.com to search up “**Victorian Christmas Traditions Walking Tour**” and **let your friends know! Makes a great holiday gift.**
- **Seasonal Home Decoration Contest! Starting from Thanksgiving weekend; Judging December 15-19.**



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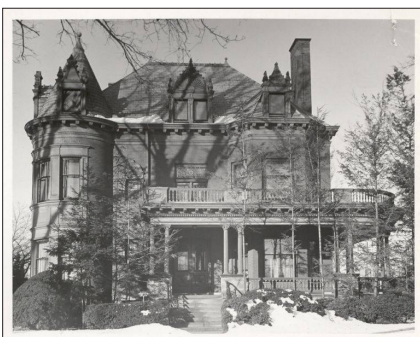
CALL US AT (616) 245-9449 OR VISIT BARTLETT.COM

Decorating your home for the season is always fun. But this year you can win prizes! Decorate your home so our panel of distinguished neighbors can judge your home the week of December 15-19. Winners will be notified by the Community Engagement Committee and results will appear in the January-February Herald. **Call or email us if you'll participate:** 616-459-8950 / carly@heritagehillweb.org.

- **Sunday, Dec 14 @ 6:00pm** – Meet Carly and other neighbors in **Pleasant Park** for caroling, cocoa and other treats. Dress warm, with holiday spirit in mind, and make more friends. End the evening with treats at a welcoming neighbor's home.

HHA Office Holiday Hours

The HHA Office will start its **annual holiday closure** on Tuesday, December 23 and will reopen on Monday, January 5, 2026. Staff will periodically check email over this period. Due to staff vacations, our in-person office coverage will be 9:00am-2:00pm from Tuesday, December 9 through Thursday, December 18. Email and phones will be periodically checked between 3:00-5:00pm on those days. Staff will work at home on December 22.



Two New HHA Committees – Join us! At our October meeting, the HHA Board approved two new committees. The **Voigt House Preservation Committee** will engage neighbors and other stakeholders, such as the City of Grand Rapids and the Public Museum, to work to ensure the active preservation and engagement of this neighborhood, municipal and national treasure, including all of

its historic contents. The **Bylaws Committee** will review the existing HHA Bylaws, which date to 2001, and propose updates or other changes. Any proposed changes will be extensively publicized in advance to HHA Members – neighbors like you – and must be approved at by a majority of HHA Members present at a regular or special membership meeting after due notice, in accordance with Bylaws Section 47. You can find our Bylaws

in the document archive section of our website at: heritagehillweb.org/document-archive/. The HHA Board will name chairs, seek committee members, and begin work in early 2026. **Contact us if you have interest in serving.**

Announcement: Heritage Hill Park Art Selected

After engagement with neighbors

(cont'd on page 4)

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via several surveys and a committee organized by HHA, Parks and Rec has named Matthew Prentice as the artist to create a piece that will be installed in the pocket park at Paris and Logan. We will keep you updated as more details are released and as dates for installation are determined.

Pleasant Park Halloween Fun

HHA, Pleasant Park Pals, and South Hill teamed up again for the annual neighborhood kids' treats and costume parade for Halloween at Pleasant Park. Here's one of this year's pictures! Yay to all who came.



Congratulations Carly!

Congrats to our own Carly Durham-Bruins, crime fighter extraordinaire, for completing her 40-hour GRPD training. Graduation took place in October, with none other than Chief Winstrom presenting her certification.

From home safety assessments, to visiting the 911 dispatch, to code compliance, Carly has learned it all.

Way to go, Carly! (And you can always send her an email to say so: carly@heritagehillweb.org.)



Home Tour Thanks

As you'll read in these pages, the Home Tour Committee has new Co-Chairs. All of HHA cannot express deeply enough our thanks for the decades and years of local, creative, inspiring service by so many neighbor volunteers, with a very special call-out to the 2025 Committee and special partner, Don Dekker of the Steelcase Meyer May House:

- Suzanne De Haan
- Kate Diedrich
- Tom & Chris Truesdale
- Maria Zache Starkey
- Don Rietema
- Tom Postma
- Bryan Cody
- Abi Larimer
- Jeremy Czubko
- Rich App

It is through the devotion and example of you and those who worked with you over many years that Heritage Hill is the incredible place it is and will continue to be for so many. As the new team leaders carry your torch, your legacy lives on.



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----- NOMINEES FOR THE 2026 HHA BOARD OF DIRECTORS -----

Come Cast Your Vote at the December 2 Annual Meeting

This year, there are five, three-year terms up for election and eight candidates have provided written notice of their candidacy per the HHA bylaws.

Because there are more candidates than there are openings, candidates will be elected by majority vote of the membership during the Annual Membership Meeting on **December 2 at 6:00 pm at Museum High School**. See this issue of the *Herald* for more details. Here's what you need to know:

- Members are **strongly encouraged** to attend the Annual Membership Meeting to cast their vote.
- In the event a member cannot attend, an **absentee ballot** will be available at the HHA office starting on **Wednesday, November 19**. The completed absentee ballot must be received in the Association office **no later than 5:00 P.M. on the date of the election, December 2**, in order to be counted. Postmark dates will not be considered.

REMINDER: If you are at least 18 and live within the boundaries of Heritage Hill, you are automatically a member of HHA and can vote.

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

KRIS ALDERMAN

Paris Ave. SE

Heritage Hill is home for my family, and I want to serve to strengthen connection, safety, and stewardship. I bring over 15 years of experience leading construction operations, safety programs, budgets, and volunteer teams. I've managed technology transitions, implemented cloud tools, and built transparent processes that improve service and accountability. As a neighbor, I believe in responsibility and public service, having organized fundraisers, coordinated projects, and served five years as a firefighter/EMT. I'll focus on inclusive engagement, data-informed land use, sustainable fundraising, and supporting technology and safety initiatives with integrity and teamwork. Preferred

Committees: Technology, Land Use, Community Engagement, Fundraising.

CATHY BOSSCHER

Morris Ave. SE

I have loved living in Heritage Hill since moving here in 1983. I've worked in supply chain management for 40 years and have been a VP of Finance for a business non-profit for 14 years. My husband and I raised our 4 children here and we love the hospitality and friendliness of our neighborhood. We've enjoyed opening our home for 2 tours. I've been a part of HH Garden Club where I've learned and gotten to know more neighbors. I hope to be given the opportunity to serve on the HH board to continue to preserve this unique historic community.

DENISE COOK, *Incumbant*

College Ave. SE

I have lived in the Hill for the past six years and have already served one term on the board. I believe deeply in the mission of the Heritage Hill Association and am committed to preserving the character and history of our remarkable neighborhood. My passion for these historic homes and their stories drives my dedication to community engagement through education, events, and collaboration. With my experience and appreciation for our shared heritage, I aim to continue fostering connections among neighbors and ensuring that Heritage Hill remains a source of pride and inspiration for future generations

ARICKA GANNON

Fountain St. NE

I want to serve on the Heritage Hill Association Board because I'm passionate about preserving the neighborhood's unique character while embracing the thoughtful change that comes with our city's growth. As a resident of over 10 years, I care deeply about maintaining Heritage Hill's historic charm and strong sense of community. With my background as a professional campaign specialist and my commitment to being an active listener, I hope to contribute my time, energy, and perspective to support

preservation, encourage engagement, and ensure Heritage Hill remains a vibrant, welcoming place for current and future neighbors.

JULIA HAWKINS

Prospect Ave. SE

I am a passionate advocate for knowing and loving your neighborhood, from the people to the buildings, plants and animals. For work, I am a Licensed Master of Social Work (LMSW) and serve as a therapist in private practice. My husband and I care for a plot at Pleasant Park, and we are members of the Heritage Hill Garden Club (I will admit he is the gardener, and I'm mostly there for the snacks). I would be honored to serve as a Board Member for the Heritage Hill Association.

KATIE HENEVELD

Lafayette Ave. NE

As a five-year resident of Heritage Hill, I feel both gratitude and responsibility to help sustain the character and vitality of our neighborhood. My background in project management, data analysis, and strategic problem-solving – combined with hands-on experience restoring our historic home – has strengthened my commitment to thoughtful preservation and sound governance. I aim to help the Board ensure compliance with governing principles, uphold fiscal integrity, and make informed, transparent decisions rooted in resident input. I care deeply about preserving Heritage Hill's integrity and livability, ensuring thoughtful growth that honors its historic character while strengthening its sense of community.

GRACE JOHNSON

Madison Ave. SE

Since moving here last April from small town Reed City, I have walked and taken in the beautiful architecture, friendly neighbors, and community of Heritage Hill. I live in Madison Lofts, the church repurposed into apartments at 200 Madison. Although I am new to the area, I am answering the call for board nominations and as a first step towards becoming involved

(cont'd on page 6)

CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

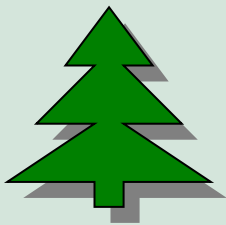
- CONTINUED -

and creating a name for myself in the community! I have experience from past employment attending and learning how monthly board meetings work. I am eager and open to learning all I can about the board and community!

CAIT WISNIEWSKI

Prospect Avenue SE

As a young woman and single mom, I rented on the outskirts of Heritage Hill and dreamed of being part of this beautiful historic community. My husband and I made that a reality when we purchased our Prospect SE home in 2020. We poured our hearts into meticulous restoration and renovation that honors its character. It is a privilege to live here, and vital to preserve the integrity of the neighborhood and carry on the spirit of those who have fought for it. As a local business owner, parent, and neighbor, I would bring energy, creativity, and belief in community.



*Thank You for
Your Donation!*

Robert and Kerry Baldwin

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Dan and Kate Diedrich

Jay Grayson

Mitchell Hagerup

Coleen Hamman

Robert Leunk

Shahin and Jeni Taheri

Chris and Tom Truesdale

Gerald Wheeler

Fred Wooden

Betty Zylstra and David Baak

Heritage Hill HOME TOUR 2026

- A Fresh Look at a Timeless Tradition -

"A community's strength lies in how well it remembers where it came from – and how boldly it builds what comes next"

-- Home Tour 2026 Committee

We can't wait for you to join us for Home Tour 2026, which will take place Friday – Sunday, **May 15–17, 2026**. **Next year's Home Tour** focus is on celebrating our neighborhood's treasured homes and this vibrant community that continues to love and preserve them.

You are **strongly encouraged** to attend HHA's December 2 Annual Membership Meeting & Holiday Party (see cover and *This & That*). That evening, HHA's Home Tour Committee will give an exciting sneak peak of next year's Tour, **which will include the first public REVEAL of major surprise details, such as the several homes already confirmed.**

Introducing the 2026 Home Tour Committee

2026 Home Tour Committee Co-Chairs Denise Cook, Kim Lucas, and Jeff Phillips each brings a deep passion for celebrating the homes, history, and community spirit of this wonderful neighborhood. They have been deeply involved as Board Members of HHA, volunteering at community events and engaging in neighborhood preservation efforts through the years.



Their shared goal for the 2026 event is to balance respect for the Home Tour's long-standing traditions with new ideas that will add to the experience of this year's tour.

"We're excited to introduce three new experiences as part of the 2026 Home Tour," said the co-chairs. "Each is designed to deepen engagement, attract a broader audience, and create memorable moments for neighbors, visitors, and volunteers alike."

New in 2026

❖ VIP Preview Night – Friday, May 15

The weekend will kick off with a special VIP Preview Night, offering exclusive early access to a select group of homes. Guests will enjoy an intimate experience, a celebratory atmosphere, and a first look at the craftsmanship and design that make Heritage Hill homes so remarkable.



Makers Marketplace

The Makers Marketplace will showcase local artisans, sponsors, and food vendors, transforming Tour weekend into a community festival of creativity that gives visitors a chance to take home a piece of local craftsmanship.



Volunteer Appreciation Event

Neighbor volunteers will be honored and celebrated at a Volunteer Appreciation Celebration to take place the weekend after Tour.

Come to the December 2 Annual Meeting to learn more!

Plea\$e \$UPPORT U\$ with an invaluable END-OF- YEAR DONATION!

Especially in these times of grant funds drying up, more than ever we need your financial support so that we can work to keep Heritage Hill the safe, beautiful, thriving, one-of-a-kind neighborhood that has been built by the contributions of neighbors just like you.

We can't do it without you.
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TO DONATE!:

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Neighborhood Spotlight: Captain Brad Bush

transitioned into a Watch Commander role, which I continued through my promotion to Lieutenant in 2021. In December 2024, I was assigned as the commander of Special Events, and in August 2025, I was promoted to Captain and now serve as the Central Service Area Commander.

What made you want to become a police officer?

I chose to become a police officer because I wanted a career where I could help people in times of need. The constant unknown and excitement each day, hour, or minute brings—along with the different challenges that come with this profession—are incredibly rewarding. I've always valued the camaraderie, teamwork, and brother/sisterhood within law enforcement, with everyone working together to improve their community.

What is your favorite part of your job?

My favorite part of this position is being presented with a problem or issue within the community and

working alongside the brave men and women of the GRPD to find solutions. It's rewarding to know that what we do has a direct and positive impact on the quality of life for our residents and visitors.

REMEMBER HERITAGE HILL PROPERTY OWNERS:

There is a City Preservation Ordinance that governs all exterior changes, repairs and/or additions to Heritage Hill properties. Call the Grand Rapids Historic Preservation Commission at 456-3451 for information on approvals. You can access the application form at the City's website, www.ci.grand-rapids.mi.us at the Planning Department section or at the Heritage Hill Association's www.heritagehillweb.org.

This ordinance applies to all exterior changes, repairs, and/or additions to your home and property. Items such as doors and windows including storms, yard structures, driveway and sidewalk approaches, and fences do need HPC approvals.



Tell us about yourself:

I was born and raised in Ithaca, Michigan, and attended Central Michigan University, where I earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice and Sociology with a minor in Substance Abuse. I joined the Grand Rapids Police Department in May 2000 and spent the first four years of my career as a patrol officer assigned to the West Service Area. I then served more than 17 years with the Special Response Team (SRT - SWAT), including six years as one of its supervisors after being promoted to Sergeant in 2015. In late 2020, I



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----- You're Invited to Neighborhood Dinner Parties this Winter -----

More than 20 years ago, a group of motivated ladies in Heritage Hill started a neighborhood dinner program that continues today. As a resident of the Hill, you are invited to join! Called "Heritage Hill Dinners for Eight," this volunteer effort helps neighbors meet one another over small dinner parties with ever-changing guests so we can develop new connections.

Here's how it works.

Once you sign up, you'll be invited to 1) three entertaining monthly dinners, 2) a rollicking kick-off party, and 3) a festive wrap-up party.

For each of the monthly dinner parties, you and your partner (or just you, because that's cool too) either attend or host a party at one of the Eight's homes. The group decides on the date, menu, and everything else. And the next month, the group changes so you end up having dinner at a different home with different people. To help make new connections, the pairings of Eight are pretty much random.

Do you have to host a monthly dinner?

No, you don't have to host, but the program works best when nearly all participants are willing to host. When we run short of hosts, we rely on asking people to host multiple times or dropping non-hosts from a dinner opportunity.

When is it happening?

A Kick-off Party will happen in late November or early December. (A final date hasn't been set as this goes to

print. Use the contact info below to get the date.)

During that party, you'll get the pairings for the monthly Dinners for Eight.

The monthly dinners should happen in January, February, and March. Each party of Eight is responsible for setting its date.

It finishes with a Wrap-up Party in April 2026.

Who can attend?

While the primary focus is Heritage Hill residents, it's slightly expanded to include neighbors in South Hill and Cherry Hill, plus some long-time Hill residents who yearn to be back. Last year, 147 people participated, and we have room for more.

Generally speaking, these are adult-centric dinners. To include children, please consult your dinner pairings. Wonderful nights can happen when you include the kids!

What about last-minute no-shows?

Hosts and guests get frustrated by

no-shows. When you sign up, please recognize this as a commitment to your neighbors. There is an Alternate list if you can only make 1-2 dinners.

You are not obligated to attend the bookend parties, though they are a lot of fun.

How do I sign up?

If you have participated in the past two seasons, you were sent an email or two about the sign up. **The sign-up deadline is Sunday, November 23, 2025.**

If you have not participated before, or it's been more than two years, send an email to hhdinnersfor8@gmail.com and request an invitation. Dave DeJonge, who is again organizing, will send you a link to sign up. You can also call or text Dave at 616-437-0472.

For on-going updates, you can join the Facebook Group called Heritage Hill Dinners for Eight at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/heritagehilldinnersfor8>



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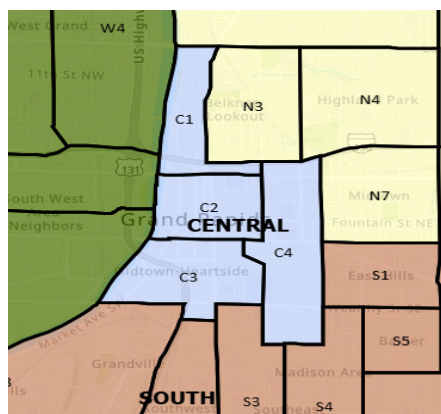
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Neighborhood Potpourri

Grand Rapids Police News

New Service Area and Captain Brad Bush

The Grand Rapids Police Service Areas recently changed, with Heritage Hill being moved from the North Service Area to the more appropriate Central Service Area. Along with this change we welcome our new Service Area Captain,



Captain Brad Bush, who dropped by our October Board Meeting to introduce himself, answer queries, and receive thanks from Staff and Board Members. Brad wants neighbors to know that he is always available to hear from you. Find his contact info below and get to know him better in our Neighborhood Spotlight in this issue.

Captain Brad Bush #537
 Desk Phone: 616-456-3326
 Email: bbush@grcity.us
 Service Area Message Line:
 616-456-4525
 Service Area Email:
CentralServiceArea@grcity.us

Crime Dashboards

Grand Rapids crime statistics are available to the public at grpd-grandrapids.hub.arcgis.com/. Under the Crime Stat Dashboards menu, you can view crimes against persons, property or society, and view them for the entire city or by Service Area. In coming months, we look forward to stats also becoming viewable by neighborhood.

Car Thefts and Break-Ins – Lock it or lose it

While car thefts and car larcenies are down overall year-on-year, we are currently seeing an uptick, including the theft of a car on Washington St SE in late October. Remember the police advice in this graphic: Lock it or you might lose it! Contact us if you would like a FREE steering wheel lock.

HELP US REDUCE CAR LARCENIES
LOCK IT OR LOSE IT

Winter Safety

Here are tips to help keep yourself and neighbors safe this winter. You can also stop by our office for a Winter Preparedness Guide or visit grandrapidsmi.gov.

Clear the Sidewalks

One of the winter complaints that we most get from neighbors is about sidewalks covered in ice. Remember that public sidewalks must be clear of snow **within 24 hours of the end of a snowfall, to ensure pedestrian safety**. Consider checking in with neighbors who have trouble keeping walkways clear – they could maybe use a neighbor's help. **Call 311 to report a**

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recurring issue.

Winter Parking

Seasonal parking takes place November 1 through April 1 of next year. **Look for signs for odd-even parking and one-side parking, to make sure you are not ticketed or towed.** Search for "seasonal parking restrictions" at www.grandrapidsmi.gov to learn more.

Winter Fire Safety

Most house fires occur in winter. Remember to never leave an electric heater unattended and keep them three feet from objects that could be set afire. **All Grand Rapids homeowners can get free smoke alarms and CO detectors from the GRFD by calling 616-456-3933.** Replace all alarms after 10 years. Develop a fire plan for your home including knowing where fire extinguishers are located and how to use them as well as all exits and meeting points for all inhabitants.

Emergency Kit Reminder

Emergencies can happen at any time. The do1thing.com preparedness website reminds us to take time this November to pack an emergency kit for your home:

- Water (one gallon per person per day for several days, for drinking and sanitation)
- Food (At least several days of non-perishable food)
- Medications for your family
- Battery Powered Radio
- Flashlights
- Batteries
- Whistle
- Dust masks
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener
- Anything you can't do without for a few days

Register for Grand Rapids Emergency Alerts

The Grand Rapids Office of Emergency Management and Public Safety Departments encourage all residents and businesses to sign up for emergency alerts. Alerts include evacuation, water boil notices, weather warnings, and other emergency messages. To sign up visit Nixle.com or go to the GRPD web page at grandrapidsmi.gov

Tree Trimming

If your neighbor's tree is invading your yard, remember that the best way to address the issue is to talk with your

neighbor about trimming it. Any limbs in your space may be trimmed by you – but if that tree becomes sick or dies as a result of your trimming, you can be held liable. Contact us to learn more.

Greening the Holidays: Holiday Recycling Made Easy!

Holiday String Lights – Recycle Them at HHA!

Don't throw away those broken or unwanted string lights. Starting the week of November 18, bring your unwanted string lights to the HHA office during normal office hours (Mon-Thurs, 9am-

(cont'd on page 12)



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Neighborhood Potpourri

(cont'd from page 11)

5pm) to be recycled. Simply deposit in the marked bin to save them from the landfill and get the copper, plastic and other materials in the lights re-used.

Natural Tree Disposal

Free drop-off sites are open **December 30 through January 31** annually, during normal daylight hours, at:

- Riverside Park (north entrance)
- Lincoln Park (west parking lot off Garfield NW)
- Jaycee McKay Family Park
- Huff Park (Ball St. Parking lot)

Alternatively, you can do curbside pickup in January, weather permitting. Attach a \$3.75 City bulk yard waste tag (purple) to your tree and place it in your pickup area by 7:00 a.m. on the regular refuse collection day. Visit the Public Works Department at grandrapidsmi.gov for more info.

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Board Notes

Discussion at the June, 2025 Heritage Hill Association Board Meeting included:

Special Use Permit Request - Eric Maring, Senior Architect at Hooker DeJong, Inc., presented renderings and additional information regarding a request for a special use permit for a garage interior renovation at the Fountain Hill Center. He requested official support from the HHA Board before the city's vote on the project.

President's Report: B. Cody emphasized the need to change processes for the Home Tour and inspire more community involvement. He stressed that increased Board member participation is critical to prevent staff burnout and grow the association's largest fundraising event. **Home Tour Roles & Sponsors:** Board members were strongly encouraged to join the Home Tour committee. There is a need for more support, particularly with recruiting volunteers and sponsors. It was noted that sponsors campaign had decreased from \$20,000 to \$16,000, but more volunteers could increase this amount. The board discussed reaching out to new contractors in the area as potential sponsors and the importance of starting the process earlier to meet company timelines.

Committee Name Change: The Board voted and approved changing the name of the "Public Health and Safety Committee" to the "Community Health and Safety Committee."

Standing Committee: The Board voted and approved making the newly renamed

Community Health and Safety Committee a standing committee.

Treasurer's Report: L. Bracken provided a financial update including the specific financials, the cash reserve policy and the 990 tax form. The board voted to continue the cash reserve policy with one dissention.

Financial Planning: J. Phillips advocated for a "true plan" for revenue, stating that the organization's only revenue streams are the Home Tour (and Garden and Walking Tours) and gifting. He stressed the need for a plan to secure employment for the staff and a physical workspace. The board discussed meeting in smaller groups in July to develop a framework and survey questions to gather community feedback on what they want from the HHA.

Committee Reports

Home Tour: S. De Haan scheduled to come to the August meeting with a detailed report on areas for improvement for the Home Tour. L. Nygaard noted that the organization and automation of the tour needs improvement and must involve more people.

Land Use: J. Fowler reported on the CAAP plan and the bike lane work being done on Cherry Street SE.

Community Engagement: M. and A. Azkoul discussed an idea for a dancing event and potential venues for the Annual Membership Meeting.

Fundraising: D. Cook stated the committee is working on new projects. She also reported that no T-shirts were sold at the Home Tour because no one

was available to sell them.

Office Relocation: The committee plans to reconvene to review the Voigt House as a potential new office location once L. Nygaard provides an update on staff priorities. Trinity Health will allow HHA to rent its current space on a month-to-month basis, providing more time to find a permanent solution.

Technology: J. Czubko communicated that the tech committee is waiting for staff input on three items: Phone Migration in preparation for remote operation, CRM Migration - We are awaiting staff input on a requirements list for a replacement CRM system to begin the evaluation process. How To Guides - The technology committee offered to provide video guides to assist with any staff needs regarding ongoing technology usage, and are waiting for any action areas where staff would like to get assistance.

Staff Reports

L. Nygaard is focused on goals and key areas for the **Home Tour**. She emphasized that the current state of operations is not sustainable and that July will be a time for goal setting. J. Meeks offered to work with Laska regarding strategic work, based on past work she has done in other organizations.

Home Insurance: A discussion took place regarding home insurance and the potential for replacement costs for homes in Heritage Hill. The board considered the legality of insurance riders and the need for residents to read their policy endorsements.

Discussion at the August, 2025 Heritage Hill Association Board Meeting included:

Public Comment - **Sylvan Neighborhood:** spoke about an issue about damage occurring from city water main breaks in their neighborhood. Representatives noted issue remains unresolved after one year and reported that NOBL and Eastown neighborhoods associations have approved sending resolutions to the city in support. Creston neighborhood will also review sending a resolution in support.

Austin C. (Voigt House neighbor): Shared concerns about security and strange activity near the property.

President's Report - **Sylvan Neighborhood:** Board reviewed, discussed, voted and approved Sylvan's request that HHA send a formal resolution to the city in support of the Sylvan area neighbors in seeking compensation for damage caused by water main breaks in the city.

Guest Speaker - **Danny Lynum.**

GRAAMA Third Ward Project Manager

(cont'd on page 14)



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Board Notes *(cont'd from page 13)*

D. Lynum presented the Third Ward Legacy Tour Project, a modernized version of an African American neighborhood tour using QR codes. GRAAMA is in the process of collecting community stories, media, and history through drop boxes and postcards. More Information is available at graamma.org. D. Lynum shared that GRAAMA will move to a larger facility (from 2K sq. ft. to 30K sq. ft.) on Sheldon Ave. SE with a soft opening in early 2026. HHA voiced support for GRAAMA and offered to help bring attention to the Third Ward Legacy Tour Project in the upcoming Herald newsletter, as well as promote the use of drop boxes and postcards for collecting stories.

Guest Speaker – Mayor David LaGrand

Future of the Voigt House - Mayor LaGrand stated that conversations regarding the future of the Voigt House are exploratory, and that there is “no immediate crisis.” He emphasized need for community input and vision for property’s future. He shared that he was aware of concerns regarding property maintenance, which would require funding.

HHA Board and staff discussion included:

- *review of existing title and its history
- *the city’s responsibility
- *the need for HHA’s involvement in determining

- next steps
- *security concerns and importance of preserving historic value
- * more research on next steps before decisions are made
- *further gathering of community input through surveys to share with the city.
- *the possibility of the property moving into the City land bank.

Mayor LaGrand stated that determination of future use possibilities (museum, offices, land bank) are still TBD and will require further public input and that there are many possible paths. Public / Neighbor comment included: noting that since the house closed to the public in 2009, much time has passed * asking if the house could be reopened based on the circumstances and ideas shared at the meeting *asking who to contact if security issues arise at the property (Commissioner Melinda Ysasi noted that Kate Berens, Deputy City Manager, was present and clarified that security concerns should be reported to 911, while maintenance issues should be reported to 311.) * noting that the house had been opened once since 2009 in 2019, helping HHA to celebrate its 50th Annual Home Tour *questioning who ultimately decides the house’s fate (The Mayor explained that if the museum no longer wished to oversee the property, responsibility would shift to the city) *questioning if there were any legal

covenants restricting the house’s use *if there is a valid reason for GRPM to have restricted volunteer gardening efforts.

Treasurer’s Report: L. Bracken highlighted the submitted finance committee report. No questions were raised.

Committee Reports

Home Tour: S. DeHaan shared that 2025 expenses were \$3,902 vs. \$11K last year due to not outsourcing marketing efforts. She emphasized the importance of finding a new chair(s) for 2026 tour.

Community Engagement, Health & Safety, Fundraising, Land Use, Office Relocation, Technology: Written reports submitted, no questions raised.

Staff Reports: L. Nygaard shared that HHA’s office lease with Trinity Health has been extended one year (through August 1, 2026) with 60-day notice clause. National Night Out: Successful with strong HHA Board and neighborhood attendance. Staff expressed gratitude to all who participated in planning, preparing and attending the event. Upcoming Dumpster Day: September 6 at Central Reformed Church. Two volunteers needed in two-hour shifts will send emails around for signup.

Additional Public Comment: discussion included *being stewards of the historic homes in Heritage Hill, including the

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Voigt House* describing the Voigt House as the “City’s inheritance” and expressing support for locating HHA offices in the carriage house*considering a partnership with the Grand Rapids Public Museum regarding the future of the Voigt House.

Commissioner Milinda Ysasi thanked HHA and neighbors for sharing their perspectives, including concerns raised about a recent fallen tree on the property. She shared that she has not yet spoken with the Mayor about the Voigt House but recommends that a comprehensive process be developed to determine next steps and noted that over the past 18 months, the City has completed a Facilities Master Planning process following the Community Master Plan. She also shared that non-occupied spaces, such as the Voigt House, fall into a secondary prioritization category for the city, and she respectfully disagreed with the Mayor’s view on its prioritization. While she acknowledged that there may have been “benign neglect” regarding the Voigt House in the past, she expressed confidence that the City has the best intentions for its future.

Executive Session L. Nygaard flagged distribution of a document via email regarding proposed HHA strategic priorities. The September meeting will focus on discussion of possible HHA strategic priorities. Conflict of Interest (COI) Policy - discussion on strengthening and standardizing the Board’s COI policy. The Board recapped the Voigt House discussion during the meeting’s open session and agreed that additional surveys of neighbors for additional input was important.

Discussion at the September, 2025 Heritage Hill Association Board Meeting included:

Approval of August Minutes: W. Norlin asked for clarification regarding Commissioner Ysasi’s remarks during the meeting regarding occupied spaces. J. Meeks responded that occupied spaces would receive priority in evaluation by the city over non-occupied spaces.

President’s Report:

Annual Meeting Venue Discussion: Proposals received from Sweet House, The Commons, and Grand Rapids Child Discovery Center (GRCDC). Discussion included options for potluck style gathering, potential sponsorships or partnerships and logistics. L. Nygaard stated that additional members are needed for the Community Engagement Committee and asked for Board members

to help recruit more neighbors.

Treasurer’s Report – L. Bracken: August financials reviewed; limited income this month but expectation is to break even by year’s end. Discussion included the timing of CDBG grant cycle (city fiscal year July–June). monitoring grant disbursement, where funds are available at the city level. Finance Committee to meet in October for budget planning and goal-setting. M. Rich

(cont’d on page 16)

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Board Notes (cont'd from page 15)

(CPA) joining Finance Committee to assist with filings and accounting oversight.

Committee Reports (written reports for all committees submitted in advance):

Community Engagement:

Dumpster Day: Successful event with many neighbors participating. Holiday Display Competition: Committee developing concept; no updates at this time.

Home Tour – Chairs D. Cook, K. Lucas, and J. Phillips noted that lanning has kicked off. Committee looking into expanding

house recruitment to multi-year commitments, increasing sponsorship and ticket sales, as well as developing a volunteer recognition program. It was recommended that the website and next Herald announce new Home Tour Committee and thank outgoing members.

Community Health & Safety – C. Ervine: Planning “Trunk or Treat” event.

Addressing neighborhood property issues (e.g., improper painting or scraping practices). Building stronger relationships with city departments.

Public Comment

D. Meeks thanked the Board for their service. He shared that he attended a recent City Zoning meeting, and suggested HHA or its Land Use Committee attend or host a zoning information session for residents. Adjournment

Executive Session

Personnel & Transition: Discussion of Treasurer transition: K. Lucas to assume role in December; L. Bracken to assist with transition. M. Rich (CPA) to support bookkeeping corrections and filings. **Leadership Elections:** J. Czubko and J. McClurg were elected as President and Vice President, respectively, serving until the 2026 Officer elections in December. **Strategic Planning** – L. Nygaard: Presented a PowerPoint outlining HHA's operational priorities and organizational structure. She emphasized the need for process development and operational stability to support ongoing initiatives. It was further noted that more work is needed to expand and empower block groups to enhance neighborhood engagement and integrate directly with HHA committees. The HHA Board transitioned to a more detailed discussion on strategic planning and how to further focus the organization's efforts to support its mission to “provide neighbors a way of collectively building a healthy, historically preserved community where people can live and work in a secure and stable environment.”

If you would like an item placed on the Board agenda, please call the HHA office at 459-8950 before 4:00 p.m. of the second WEDNESDAY of the month. If you would like to address the Board regarding an agenda item, public comment is taken at the beginning of each meeting. For non-agenda items, public comment is taken at the end of each meeting. Typically, Board meetings run from 7:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.

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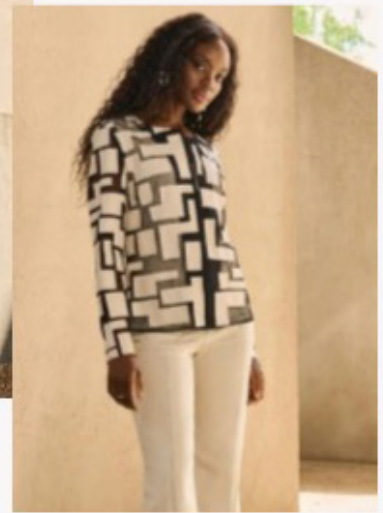
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2025-26 DATES TO REMEMBER

Wednesday, November 19, 2025, January

21 & February 18, 2026 @ 7pm

HHA Board Meeting -

open to Heritage Hill neighbors

Community Education Conference Room

Hauenstein Center of Trinity Health -

200 Jefferson Ave. SE entrance

Friday, November 21, 2025

Herald content & ads deadline -

January / February issue

Monday & Wednesday,

December 1 & 3, 2025

Heritage Hill Victorian Christmas Walking

Tours with Caroline Cook

*Search Heritage Hill Association on

Eventbrite or visit our website and

Facebook

December Home Decorating Contest

Decorate your home to win great gift

card prizes from generous local businesses!

* Judging to take place December 15-19 by distinguished neighbor judges.

Wednesdays, December 3, 2025,

January 7 & February 4, 2026

Heritage Hill First Wednesdays Happy Hours

5-7:00pm at The Commons, @

The Oakwood, 547 Cherry St. SE

HHA Office - Holiday

December 23, 2025 - January 4, 2026

**Staff will check email periodically and*

will return to the office on

Monday, January 5, 2026

Annual Dates

Tuesday, December 2, 2025, 6:00 - 8:00

Annual Membership Meeting

& Holiday Gathering

& give to HHA for GIVING TUESDAY!

GRPS Museum High School /

54 Jefferson Ave. SE

Sunday, December 14

Annual Neighborhood Caroling & Cocoa

(& Carly!)

Meet at 6:00pm at Pleasant Park

Friday, May 15, 2026

First Annual Home Tour VIP Preview Night

Saturday and Sunday, May 16 & 17, 2026

Annual Heritage Hill Home Tour

May 2026

First Annual Home Tour Volunteers

Appreciation Event

Saturday, May 30, 2026 (May 31 rain date)

time TBD

Movie in the Park in Pleasant Park

Saturday, June 20, 2026

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