

Summer 2020

Hourglass Quarterly



CHILD CARE CHALLENGES

SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING

CLEAN WATER EFFORTS

FIRST FRIDAY FORUMS

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Letter from the Executive Director

Hello,

First, let me start by wishing you health and stability as we navigate this pandemic and resulting economic downturn. Hourglass firmly believes that Lancaster will get through this and emerge from it stronger than ever before.



With this landscape at the forefront of our minds, the Hourglass made some substantial changes to position itself for continued success in the future. In July, we moved our physical offices to 922 N Queen Street, Lancaster, PA 17603. We are thrilled with our new space and hope to be here for many years to come. Also, in July, we launched our new website. With a generous sponsorship from Lapp Electric, we were able to give our online presence a much needed refresh so that we can better carry out our mission to “provide local reliable information to Lancaster County leaders, ensuring informed decisions, and making Lancaster a better place to live and work.” When the pandemic started, we retooled our Keeping Lancaster Current virtual newsletter to provide up-to-date information to our mailing list. This newsletter is sent out twice per week and highlights articles of interest to Lancaster’s leaders. We invite you to visit the new website at www.hourglasslancaster.org and to sign up for Keeping Lancaster Current.

I am excited to share with you this Summer 2020 edition of the Hourglass Quarterly. The first article puts a spotlight on the child care challenges facing families in Lancaster County. For the article, we interviewed two child care providers who shared their experiences as they look to reopen in August. The second article explores the critiques of single-family zoning, a much maligned planning designation, and if it should be banned. The next article provides an update on the work undertaken to develop and implement a Countywide Action Plan to clean our waterways. Finally, we include summaries of our First Friday Forums for the first seven months of 2020. Videos of the forums from May, June, and July are available on our website in their entirety.

Happy reading!

Jonathan Russell
Executive Director

END OF SINGLE-FAMILY ZONING?

Increased density is preferred

The embrace of Single-family zoning is widespread among local governments and homeowners.

However, a reckoning with single-family zoning has come to the forefront due to a mounting crises over housing affordability, racial inequality, and climate change in American cities.

So what is single-family zoning? Single-family zoning is a code designation that means that a single family will be expected to live in the home, and it's not zoned as a duplex, triplex, or other multi-family option where there will be more than one unit. 75% of residential land in American cities is designated as single-family zoning.



Despite its seemingly innocuous definition, single-family zoning has a dark underbelly. Zoning laws create separation between different socio-economic groups by ensuring that renters would be less likely to live among homeowners, or working-class families among affluent ones, or minority children near high-quality schools. This further ex-

acerbates racial and ethnic divides in our communities.

Single-family zoning reflects the belief that denser housing can be a nuisance to single-family neighborhoods. Born out of an idea that density brings noise, traffic, and crime, affluent areas of the city sought to protect their idyllic house with a yard. In 1926, even the US Supreme Court came down against high density development saying they detrimentally impact the existing neighborhood "until, finally, the residential character of the neighborhood and its desirability as a place of detached residences are utterly destroyed."

Today environmentalists, planners, and economists view this very density as the savior of American cities. Density is an antidote to sprawling development patterns that feed gridlock and auto emissions, it helps to support public transit, and is the best means of making high-cost cities more affordable.

It may be time to reevaluate our local communities' reliance on single-family zoning.

Article summarized from "Cities Start to Question an American Ideal: A House With a Yard on Every Lot" by Emily Badger and Quoc Trung Bui of the New York Times. June 18, 2019.

