

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
PLAN AND DESIGN COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, October 21, 2025

MEETING LOCATION: Council Chambers, City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL

CALL TO ORDER

At 7:02 p.m., Chairperson Moore called the meeting to order. Staff was asked to call the roll.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Fettner, Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, Mantis & Nanus

Councilmember Present: Ross

Student Council Present: Fallas

Staff declared that a quorum was present.

Guests Present: Kerry Leonard, Owner's Representative for Keshet/Kerry Leonard LLC
Alec Thornton, Architect/LCM Architects, LLC
Seth King, Managing Counsel/Lucid Motors
Alex Malecki, Owner/Stalwart Development
Michael Ezgur, Attorney/Acosta Ezgur, LLC
David Goldman, Founder/Structa LLC

Staff Present: Fontane, Burhop, Coleman, & Mistretta

Others Present: Marcus Martinez, Corporation Counsel/Elrod Friedman LLP
Gale Cerabona/Recorder

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of the Plan and Design Commission – September 16, 2025

Commissioner Fettner moved to approve the September 16, 2025, PDC regular meeting minutes.
Commissioner Henry seconded the motion.

On a voice vote

Voting Yea	Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Fettner, Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, & Nanus
Voting Nay:	None
Abstain:	Commissioner Mantis

Chairperson Moore declared that the motion passed 6-0.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

1 1. Public Hearing #PUD-2025-00057 for an Amendment to a Special Use Permit in the Nature of a
2 Preliminary & Final Planned Development with Design Review & Sign Package Amendment for a Conditional
3 Land Use, a new or used motor vehicle sales &/or storage lot, freestanding; request includes Modifications
4 from City Code (2000-2060 Skokie Valley Road)

5
6 Chairperson Moore advised this case has been withdrawn. Senior Planner Burhop stated the Applicant's
7 email is in the packet.

8
9 2. #DES-2025-00075, Design Review, Sign Package, and Variations from the City Code (791-799 Central
10 Avenue)

11
12 Planner Mistretta reviewed the proposal:

- 13 • Recommendation
 - 14 ○ review changes
- 15 • Consideration
 - 16 ○ Certificate of Approval/COA approval occurred at the September 16, 2025, PDC meeting
- 17 • Project Summary
- 18 • Revised Site Plan
 - 19 ○ landscaping island was added
 - 20 ○ there is existing landscaping on the west side
- 21 • Elevations were shown
- 22 • Staff Review Comments on September 16, 2025
 - 23 ○ Petitioner addressed same
- 24 • Sign Package
- 25 • Renderings were illustrated
 - 26 ○ dimensions were provided
- 27 • Standards for Sign Packages
- 28 • Approval Process & Recommendation
 - 29 ○ proposed amendment – City Staff does not regulate nor enforce content and signage of B2

30
31 Corporation Counsel Martinez said this is a freedom of speech, First Amendment issue and explained
32 same.

33
34 Commissioner Mantis referred to Page 30 noting, there are backlit signs. He asked if that is consistent.
35 Planner Mistretta advised backlit and halo-lit signage are virtually the same. Senior Planner Burhop read a
36 portion of the code addressing backlit, and halo-like signage in the B3 district.

37
38 Mr. Kerry Leonard, Owner's Representative for Keshet, said they wish to bring uniformity. He noted the
39 building was purchased in 2023.

40
41 Mr. Alec Thornton, Architect with LCM Architects, LLC, said the monument/ground sign is not new (was
42 formerly a bank sign). He noted an SUV turning radius was added. Tenant signage was dropped down.

43
44 Chairperson Moore asked if anyone in the audience wishes to speak on this matter. There was no one.

45
46 Commissioner Kerch moved to approve the design review package with the amendment that City Staff does
47 not regulate nor enforce content of signage as stated B(2) on the Applicant's Signage Standard page (see

Attachment 4 of the packet). Commissioner Henry seconded the motion.

On a roll call vote

Voting Yea Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Fettner, Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, Mantis & Nanus
Voting Nay: None

Director Fontane declared that the motion passed unanimously.

3. #DES-2025-00076, Sign Package Amendment, Design Review, and Variations from the City Code (1200 Old Skokie Road)

Senior Planner Coleman reviewed the proposal:

- Existing Conditions (formerly Tesla)
- Prior Commission Consideration
 - vote was continued
- Design Review – Façade with Sign
- Existing Sign Package
- East Façade
- South Facade
- Proposed Ground Sign Option 1

Councilperson Ross arrived at 7:31 p.m.

- Lucid Illuminated Graphic Print Example (at Torrance, CA location)
- Proposed Ground Sign Option 2
- Renderings were shown
- Proposed Sign Package Amendments
- Standards for Sign Packages
- Approval Process & Recommendation
 - COA is in packet

Commissioner Kerch asked if:

- Option 2 appears to be less of an increase because it's not V-shaped. Senior Planner Coleman said yes. Chairperson Moore said it will have two sides whether it is V-shaped or not.
- a car would be on either side. Senior Planner Coleman said just on one side.
- there are variations. Senior Planner Coleman replied just two additional wall signs.

Mr. Seth King, Managing Counsel with Lucid Motors, highlighted:

- Two ground sign options
 - wall sign is flush with the building
 - proposed option is not pie-shaped
- Monument Sign
 - no graphic
 - back-to-back sign
- Other dealership signs were displayed

Some PDC comments are.....

- Commissioner Kerch asked if:
 - this is a static sign. Mr. King concurred.
 - it would not be distracting. Mr. King said it would not.
- Chairperson Moore asked if standards would apply with Option 2 lighting the car. Senior Planner Burhop said yes, a variation would be needed for an uplight.
- Commissioner Fettner likes Option 1.
- Commissioner Henry concurred, and said Option 2 isn't less distracting.
- Commissioner Kerch said the PDC shouldn't be dictating to Petitioners.
- Commissioner Mantis prefers Option 2.
- Commissioner Nanus concurred.
- Commissioner Ihnchak concurred, and said Option 1 looks like a billboard.
- Chairperson Moore is more in favor of Option 1.

Chairperson Moore asked if anyone in the audience wishes to speak on this matter. There was no one.

Commissioner Kerch moved to approve the sign package Amendment with the signage as Option 1 as presented. Commissioner Fettner seconded the motion.

Commissioner Nanus said he is not a huge fan of the graphic sign and would defer decision on sign to City Council.

On a roll call vote

Voting Yea	Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Fettner, Henry, Kerch, & Mantis
Voting Nay:	Commissioners Ihnchak & Nanus

Director Fontane declared that the motion passed 5-2.

4. Public Hearing #PUD-2025-00056 for a Special Use Permit in the Nature of a Concurrent Preliminary & Final Planned Development, Final Plat of Re-subdivision, & Design Review, with Modifications from City Code, for a four-townhome residential unit Development (932 Deerfield Road & 942 Deerfield Road)

Senior Planner Burhop reviewed the plan:

- Project Summary (continued from September 16, 2025, PDC meeting)
 - 4-unit townhome
- Updates
- Renderings
 - street-facing
 - rear-facing

Director Fontane noted the windows could be expanded or changed.

Mr. Alex Malecki, Owner with Stalwart Development, explained they don't wish to expand the windows, as they aesthetically look better from the inside and are 4% above code regarding energy.

Some PDC comments are.....

- Chairperson Moore asked, and Mr. Malecki said panels for the exterior of the side elevation could be considered.

- Commissioner Nanus asked if the trees are accurate in the renderings. Mr. Malecki said he is unsure. Senior Planner Burhop illustrated that 3 trees are missing from the back and 2 from the front.
- Commissioner Mantis asked if they are existing trees. Mr. Malecki said they are new.
- Commissioner Moore asked, and Senior Planner Burhop replied they will be 6' high.

Councilperson Ross asked what the height would be at maturity. Mr. Malecki is unsure.

Continued PDC comments are.....

- Commissioner Fettner asked if specified trees could be noted if this is approved. Corporation Counsel Martinez said a specific height by a specific date could be added. Director Fontane said there could be an installed size and a maturity size noted. The rate of tree growth can be nebulous. He shared the City Forester can assist in making that happen.
- Commissioner Mantis asked if:
 - trees from the road and sidewalk are different.
 - Evergreen trees are more appealing than short Boxwoods as shown.

Senior Planner Burhop said the height from the ground to the building material change is 10.33'.

- Commissioner Ihnchak said, regarding rear screening, there are 3 Ginkgo trees proposed that could grow up to 80' (per Google). She noted trees can rise in expense. Leaving it up to the City Forester may be the way to go.
- Commissioner Kerch noted the landscape plan shows a lot more. Senior Planner Burhop concurred.

Chairperson Moore asked if there are audience members wishing to speak on this matter. The following was previously sworn:

- Susan Bell thanked the PDC for paying attention to the landscape plan, height of trees, etc. She noted a 20' Crabapple is being removed. Currently, this looks warehousey. Senior Planner Burhop stated, regarding the plant schedule, they are either 3 caliper inches or 6' and need to be compliant.

Commissioner Kerch moved to recommend approval adopting the Findings of Fact with the conditions that the landscape plan comply with City code and the developer confer with City Forester. Commissioner Fettner seconded the motion.

Comments from the PDC ensued...

- Chairperson Moore stated this is a 4-story building.
- Commissioner Ihnchak said window modifications haven't been completely finalized.
- Commissioner Henry doesn't disagree; has an industrial look.
- Chairperson Moore said landscaping will help and doesn't fix a solid blue wall.
- Commissioner Kerch shared this isn't the worst example in Highland Park.
- Commissioner Mantis said there are other developments like this that have appropriate windows and are more architecturally-interesting; wish this was more attractive.
- Commissioner Nanus said higher shrubs could be added.

Corporation Counsel Martinez said City Council would rely on the City Forester's expertise.

On a roll call vote

Voting Yea Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Fettner, Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, & Mantis

1 Voting Nay: Nanus

2
3 Director Fontane declared that the motion passed 6-1.

4
5 5. Pre-Application Meeting (793 Laurel Avenue & 1696-1704 McGovern Street)

6
7 Director Fontane shared this is not a complete Application. It is a Public Meeting.

8
9 Senior Planner Burhop reviewed the plan:

- 10 • Project Summary
 - 11 ○ separate zoning lots
 - 12 ○ current RM1A zoning with rezoning to RO
 - 13 ○ 5-story, 14 units at 793 Laurel Avenue
 - 14 ○ 5 and 6-story, 21-unit building with 50 onsite parking spaces at 1696-1764 McGovern Street
- 15 • Neighborhood Context
- 16 • Zoning Context
- 17 • Preliminary Relief Review
 - 18 ○ height relief
 - 19 ○ lot-coverage request
 - 20 ○ setbacks
- 21 • Landscaping
- 22 • Applicant's Proposal was highlighted
 - 23 ○ setbacks
- 24 • Public Works & Inclusionary Information is included

25
26 Some PDC comments are.....

- 27 • Commissioner Henry said a lot is requested. The PDC is kind of walking blind. There is an expectation
- 28 of a balance with developer's intentions vs. code restraints. He finds this troubling.
- 29 • Chairperson Moore explained we shouldn't zone in a piecemeal manner. She wonders if the zoning
- 30 is being selected based on the least amount of variations.
- 31 • Commissioner Mantis said it's great to see proposals. Context is important. A thought process/vision
- 32 is needed.
- 33 • Commissioner Kerch asked:
 - 34 ○ what the RO district is. Director Fontane said it can allow office uses.
 - 35 ○ if density and height is attractive for the RO district. Senior Planner Burhop concurred.
 - 36 Director Fontane said what's proposed is a significant departure. He stated perhaps the rest
 - 37 of the block should be changed to RO and explained that extending B4, B5 would not be
 - 38 appropriate.
- 39 • Chairperson Moore asked about the differences of RM1A and RO. Director Fontane said Staff would
- 40 provide this information.
- 41 • Commissioner Ihnchak asked if this proposal would meet the code in the B4, B5 districts. Director
- 42 Fontane replied yes.
- 43 • Commissioner Kerch said this Applicant seems to take the most logical approach. He noted, as one
- 44 goes toward Green Bay Road, there should be more density and more height. Chairperson Moore
- 45 added.....or.....as one leaves downtown, buildings should get shorter, etc.

1 Director Fontane shared, from a land development point of view, the need for that alley has been
2 reviewed many times. The consensus is nothing should happen to the alley. He noted the right-of-
3 way is not owned by the Applicant.

4
5 Other alternatives would be a townhome development.

- 6
7 • Commissioner Mantis asked if there is a requirement for actual number of units for residential uses
8 and density. Chairperson Moore emphasized smaller number of units in a building could offer larger
9 unit sizes. Director Fontane said unit sizes are not dictated, with the exception of inclusionary units.
10 Financial metrics are also involved. Parking drives a lot in a development. Market segments are
11 reviewed for whom to attract.

12
13 Mr. Michael Ezgur, Attorney with Acosta Ezgur, LLC, said he appreciates Staff and all of the thoughtful
14 discussion. He explained this is a challenging site, vacant for years. The biggest issue is the 20' steep slope
15 zone/SSZ. They believe this fits in. The front address would be on McGovern Street. The appropriate
16 transition from a nearby 6-story building was explained. This would be consistent with other RO approvals
17 (height, lot coverage). The 4th and 5th floors would be stepped back. Due to the large alley, it provides for
18 vehicular access. In this development, the building is setback, has open space, etc. They don't think the
19 single-family home between them is a problem. This project would set the context.

20
21 Mr. David Goldman, Founder with Structa LLC, advised he grew up in Highland Park and went to Highland
22 Park High School. Many from this team are Highland Park residents. He shared this site should provide
23 context to its neighboring properties. Staff's recommendation is it would be a PUD, require relief. Zoning
24 was a starting point. His background has been working in Chicago (built 3,000 units there). This feels like one
25 site; cohesive development. Offices or retail are not intended. This offers home-replacement options (lower
26 maintenance, family flexibility, a home for those who are away in summertime, etc.). Larger units are the
27 trend. More visual representation will be provided. Grade change is over 17'. This is why the east building
28 has 2 step backs. The slope plays a big role in lot coverage. Several of the utility poles at the corner make it
29 difficult for trucks, etc. to navigate. These utilities will be placed underground and upgraded. The PDC's
30 feedback is critical, as they want to be successful at this site. Perhaps a different zoning makes better sense;
31 would like to maximize what is on these lots. This is downtown, close to amenities, etc. They would like to
32 unlock this opportunity.

33
34 Some PDC comments are.....

- 35 • Chairperson Moore is concerned about the overall ask (stories, lot coverage, inclusionary units).
- 36 • Commissioner Kerch said most of the relief is justified. Setbacks and open space are important. A
37 substantial public benefit must be commensurate with relief.

38
39 Mr. Goldman noted this is a large complex site. They are trying to create a viable project.

- 40
41 • Commissioner Mantis said there could be smaller units and more of them. There's a walkable
42 element; would like to see this feed the community.

43
44 Mr. Goldman replied they are well below the maximum-allowable density. He indicated supply
45 brings the prices down.

46
47 Chairperson Moore asked if there are audience members wishing to speak on this matter. There was no one.

1
2 **OTHER BUSINESS**

3 1. 2026 Work Plan

4 Director Fontane noted this is part of the budget process which has not substantially changed. He shared the
5 City Manager suggested dinner be provided to the PDC before a future meeting due to all the hard work,
6 Special Meetings the PDC has been involved in.

7
8 Councilperson Ross disclosed she knew the architect who spoke earlier years ago and decided to say hello.
9 Her allegiance is to City Council. She suggested contextual photos be requested from the developer.

10
11 Councilperson Ross asked why the Lucid sign wouldn't go to City Council. Director Fontane said the PDC has
12 the authority for sign packages. She respects the choice the PDC made.

13
14 Councilperson Ross endorses dinner for the PDC.

15
16 2. Information Item: Administrative Design Review Update

17 There were no updates.

18
19 3. Next Meeting – November 4, 2025

20 The next regular meeting will be on November 4, 2025, in City Hall at 7 p.m.

21
22 4. Case Briefing

23 There was no Case Briefing.

24
25 **BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

26 There was no Business from the Public.

27
28 **ADJOURNMENT**

29 Commissioner Henry moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m. Commissioner Nanus seconded the
30 motion.

31
32 On a voice vote

33 Voting Yea Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Fettner, Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, Mantis & Nanus

34 Voting Nay: None

35
36 Chairperson Moore declared that the motion passed unanimously.

37
38 Respectfully Submitted,

39
40
41 Gale Cerabona

42 Recorder

43
44 **MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING ON OCTOBER 21, 2025, WERE APPROVED WITHOUT CORRECTIONS.**