

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48

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

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, December 16, 2025

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

CALL TO ORDER

At 7:04 p.m., Chairperson Moore called the meeting to order. Staff was asked to call the roll.

ROLL CALL

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

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Fettner

Councilmember Absent: Ross

Student Council Absent: Fallas

Staff declared that a quorum was present.

Guests Present: Cal Bernstein, Attorney/Samuels & Bernstein
Nate Kipnis, Architect/ Kipnis Architecture & Planning

Staff Present: Fontane & Burhop

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of the Plan and Design Commission – November 4, 2025

Commissioner Mantis moved to approve the November 4, 2025, PDC regular meeting minutes.
Commissioner Henry seconded the motion.

On a voice vote

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

Voting Nay: None

Chairperson Moore declared that the motion passed unanimously.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

1. Public Hearing #PUD-2025-00079 for a Special Use Permit in the Nature of a Final Planned Development, with Modifications from City Code; and Design Review and Final Plat of Consolidation, with Variances from City Code (734 Central Avenue)

Senior Planner Burhop reviewed the proposal:

- Recommendation

- 1 • Project
- 2 ○ 11 residential units, 6 stories
- 3 ○ 1st floor parking garage
- 4 ○ 2nd-5th floors are residential
- 5 ○ 6th floor offers roof access and structures
- 6 ○ 1 inclusionary housing unit
- 7 • Background
- 8 ○ February 4, March 18, and April 15, 2025 – PDC recommended approval on April 15, 2025
- 9 ○ May 12 & 27, 2025 – City Council gave Preliminary Approval on May 27, 2025
- 10 • Changes
- 11 • Site Plans – May, 2025, & in December, 2025, shrubs were added
- 12 • Rooftop – May, 2025, & in December, 2025, 2 residential-penthouse units were expanded
- 13 • Elevations were compared from May to December, 2025
- 14 • Materials were discussed
- 15 • Other items (exterior lighting, etc.)
- 16 • Modifications (bulk on 6th floor)
- 17 • Public Benefit (cash donation of \$15,000 toward downtown streetscape improvement fund)
- 18 • Parking Reduction Request (20 proposed vs. 19 per code)
- 19 • Inclusionary Zoning (includes \$148, 320 payment-in-lieu; Housing Commission/HC approved)
- 20 • Recommendation (Findings of Fact included; Conditions Recommended)

21
22 Some PDC comments are.....

- 23 • Commissioner Mantis asked if additional bulk on the 6th story is considered additional relief. Senior
- 24 Planner Burhop concurred, and said this triggered a public hearing as larger structures are on the 6th
- 25 floor. He noted the applicant submitted updated renderings which were displayed and explained
- 26 along with materials.
- 27 • Chairperson Moore asked:
- 28 ○ if dimensions for the 6th floor were included. Senior Planner Burhop stated they were not.
- 29 ○ how the PDC/Staff would know if that would change between what's approved until what's
- 30 actually built. Senior Planner Burhop said Staff requested square-foot dimensions. More
- 31 detailed dimensions are on the various plans; percentage of increase has not been stated.

32
33 Chairperson Moore swore in Petitioners Cal Bernstein, Attorney with Samuels & Bernstein, & Nate Kipnis,
34 Architect with Kipnis Architecture & Planning.

35
36 Mr. Bernstein noted they are here to discuss the additional bulk on the 6th floor. Otherwise, the plan
37 essentially conforms. He offered context to the height relief and reminded this property is zoned in the B45
38 district which allows 5 stories. As a result of the lot being undersized, the B44 height requirements applied
39 which only allowed for 4 stories. City Council and the PDC approved the 5th story in May, 2025. After
40 reviewing engineering issues, this facilitated additional relief for the 6th story.

41
42 Mr. Kipnis explained the 11 items on the 6th story (rooftop mechanical units won't be visible, there's
43 accessibility/option for an elevator from the 5th to 6th floor rooftop, etc.). There is 1 handicapped-accessible
44 parking space; 1 space was omitted in the parking garage. Brick pavers will be installed on the sidewalk.
45 There are 13 spaces in the garage for bicycle parking.

1 He stated originally there was stair access to the rooftop. Evolution of the plans facilitated 2 small rooms up
2 there (accommodating mechanicals and a closet). Trellises are placed on those decks.

3
4 Director Fontane:

- 5 • asked if the rooms on the 6th floor have a sufficient area for an elevator and staircase. Mr. Kipnis said
6 yes and will submit drawings to Senior Planner Burhop. He said the usable area is the size of a den
7 in a house (medium-size).
- 8 • said they want the pavers along Central & McGovern Avenues to complement and mirror what's
9 across the street at McGovern House. Senior Planner Burhop noted he sent a link about pavers to
10 the Applicant today, so they haven't had a chance to review that yet. He referenced Page 21 and
11 shared the design guidelines for pavers.

12
13 Mr. Kipnis continued and identified a change on the exterior of the renderings. He highlighted the corner
14 balconies with the glass railings and stated, capping that is a metal roof structure (metal band with white
15 underneath). Before that was the cornice/limestone that visually didn't make sense. The only change on the
16 exterior is the upper canopy over the upper deck on each of the 3 sides. Lighting remains as approved;
17 nighttime rendering shows that well. Landscaping is the same with the addition of hydrangeas on the west
18 side. There will not be above-grade utilities. Everything is buried.

19
20 More PDC comments are.....

- 21 • Commissioner Ilnchak asked if the spaces on the roof are accessible to all residents. Mr. Kipnis said
22 these are only accessible to penthouse residents. If it were accessible to all, an elevator would be
23 required. In the event of a fire, the common stair that goes up could be used.
- 24 • Commissioner Nanus asked to identify where the bicycle parking is. Mr. Kipnis illustrated same.
- 25 • Chairperson Moore asked if that particular storage area also serves as extra storage for residential
26 units or only for bikes. Mr. Kipnis identified individual storage lockers and bike spaces.
- 27 • Commissioner Kerch said the added bulk created a larger variance which should be offset by a larger
28 public benefit. Chairperson Moore concurred. His suggestion is the brick pavers as an additional
29 public benefit. Chairperson Moore added that would be on the full sidewalk to match the full
30 sidewalk at McGovern House across the street. Director Fontane said the public benefit depends on
31 the impact of the relief. The technical change on the 6th story is larger but not actually visible.

32
33 Mr. Berstein stated the additional bulk cannot be seen from the street. However, they are fine with
34 placing additional pavers along Central Avenue to match what's at McGovern House. That would be
35 offered as an additional public benefit.

36
37 Mr. Kipnis identified there is brick on the sidewalk and illustrated where that stops at McGovern
38 House.

39
40 Director Fontane and Chairperson Moore recommended stopping the brick at the same point on this
41 project as well.

- 42
43 • Commissioner Mantis has discomfort with the additional bulk. He wasn't crazy about it when first
44 proposed. Originally it was proposed the elevator would go all the way up, and only the 5th floor
45 residents would have access. It was lowered to cap out below the parapet. Now that there is
46 additional bulk on the 6th floor, it's a lot of relief. He is unsure if he is comfortable with more brick
47 pavers.

1
2 Chairperson Moore said the bulk can't be seen on the roof; however, it's there and is a step beyond
3 already-approved relief which doesn't make some Commissioners feel comfortable.
4

5 Director Fontane stated brick pavers have always been required for this project; City standards.
6 Guidance can be provided to the Applicant. Pavers are desired and a Public Benefit.
7

8 Mr. Kipnis gave the percentage of the additional square footage on the 6th floor which is 687.7 square
9 feet in total for outside dimensions. The square footage of stairs for each unit was 125-150 square
10 feet. That equates to 400 extra square feet (200 per unit).
11

12 Chairperson Moore asked if this is increased roughly by 200%. Mr. Kipnis said the usable square feet
13 in those rooms is not that large as there are mechanicals and a closet.
14

15 Mr. Bernstein said the additional space in the penthouse is for ADA accessibility. Mr. Kipnis said
16 before there were just stairs going up. Mr. Bernstein reminded that is not all usable space. He said,
17 due to the additional relief, they would increase the Public Benefit from \$15,000 to \$20,000 as the
18 brick pavers were a requirement all along.
19

- 20 • Commissioner Mantis asked where the mechanicals were in the original plan. Mr. Kipnis said on the
21 5th floor and perhaps on the 6th floor. Senior Planner Burhop said the interior mechanicals are not
22 shown on the original plan.
23

24 Mr. Kipnis advised there were no mechanicals in the doghouses. Every mechanical system has
25 condensers which are all on the roof (there's a set toward the front and a set toward the back).
26 Actual furnaces are in the units. In the duplexes, they are on the 5th floor and in the additional small
27 room on the 6th floor (mini splits).
28

29 Director Fontane reminded the equipment is screened by the parapet. Per code, sound cannot be an
30 issue up there. He suggested around those units a low-level screening wall be placed for sound
31 mitigation. Mr. Kipnis believes that is slated.
32

33 Chairperson Moore verified this is on the Conditions' list. Senior Planner Burhop said the bicycle
34 Condition is already contained in the Findings of Fact. Brick pavers are included in the design
35 guidelines but should still be a Condition noted on the plans. He added the increase in Public Benefit
36 on the Conditions.
37

- 38 • Commissioner Henry discussed the Condition for the screening of rooftop mechanicals.
39 • Chairperson Moore verified the rooftop square-foot increase is 266%. She asked if there is an
40 additional closet besides the one that can be repurposed as an elevator. Mr. Kipnis illustrated the
41 closets where mechanical equipment is and the elevator box for each penthouse unit.
42

43 Commissioner Kerch moved to adopt the Findings of Fact recommending approval for a Special Use Permit
44 in the Nature of a Final Plat Development for a Multi-Family Development at 734 Central Avenue including
45 Modifications to City Code and a Final Plat of Resubdivision with 3 Conditions:

46 *that the Petitioner demonstrate the rooftop mechanical equipment be screened behind the parapet and
47 provide acoustical screening to comply with Article 6 performance standards.

48 *depict brick-paver sidewalks as required for the downtown streetscape program on an updated plan.

1 *a Public Benefit of \$20,000 to the downtown streetscape improvement fund.
2
3 Commissioner Ihnchak seconded the motion.
4
5 Commissioner Mantis doesn't think \$20,000 is adequate for the increased relief; something larger is
6 appropriate like double the amount (from \$15,000 to \$30,000) since twice the amount of square footage is
7 requested for relief.
8
9 Director Fontane noted the volume of the height relief is the increased request – not the height.
10 Chairperson Moore reminded the extra bulk is not visible from the street.
11
12 Mr. Bernstein said, upon further review and to move this forward, they are willing to increase the Public
13 Benefit to \$25,000.
14
15 Director Fontane read the standard for the triggered relief.
16
17 Commissioner Kerch amended his motion to strike the \$20,000 Public Benefit and note an increase to
18 \$25,000 for a Public Benefit.
19
20 Commissioner Ihnchak accepted the Amendment.
21
22 On a roll call vote
23 Voting Yea Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Ihnchak, Kerch, Mantis, & Nanus
24 Voting Nay: Commissioner Henry
25
26 Chairperson Moore raised concern about setting a precedent for a large amount of variations/relief.
27
28 Corporation Counsel Martinez noted each parcel is unique, so there is no precedent. What works for one
29 parcel doesn't necessarily justify granting that on another parcel.
30
31 Director Fontane declared that the motion passed 5-1.
32
33 Commissioner Henry concurred with Corporation Counsel Martinez; though, expressed
34 attorneys/petitioners will remember what is granted to leverage a possible future case.
35
36 Director Fontane said similar parcels should be treated similarly in the same zoning district. While each
37 project should be considered on its own merits and context, what must be looked at are the particular facts
38 of the parcel in question. Staff does its best to advise Commissions.
39
40 Mr. Bernstein thanked everyone for their careful consideration tonight. He doesn't often bring up other
41 projects when presenting. He doesn't believe there's a danger of that happening. There are a lot of unique
42 properties which create unique situations in Highland Park.
43
44 Commissioner Kerch said this is a good-looking project on a difficult site. It will be a good addition to
45 Highland Park.
46
47 Commissioner Kerch moved to approve the Design Review for 734 Central Avenue. Commissioner Nanus
48 seconded the motion.

1
2 On a roll call vote
3 Voting Yea Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, Mantis, & Nanus
4 Voting Nay: None
5

6 Director Fontane declared that the motion passed unanimously.
7

8 **OTHER BUSINESS**

9 1. Approving an Amended Resolution Setting The Schedule Of Regular Meetings Of The Plan And
10 Design Commission Of The City Of Highland Park for 2026

11 Senior Planner Burhop noted there was updated law from the State that there can't be a
12 municipal/government meeting when there's an election.
13

14 Commissioner Henry moved to adopt a State-Compliant Meeting Resolution. Commissioner Mantis
15 seconded the motion.
16

17 On a voice vote
18 Voting Yea Chairperson Moore; Commissioners Henry, Ihnchak, Kerch, Mantis, & Nanus
19 Voting Nay: None
20

21 Director Fontane declared that the motion passed unanimously.
22

23 2. Information Item: Administrative Design Review Update

24 There were no updates.
25

26 3. Next Regular Meeting – January 6, 2026

27 The next regular meeting will be January 6, 2026, in City Hall at 7 p.m.
28

29 4. Case Briefing

30 Director Fontane noted City Council approved/adopted:

- 31 • The Walton project. The Public Benefit was increased to \$25,000 to the Place of Remembrance.
- 32 • a minor lighting Amendment at Park Sheridan, 1950 Sheridan Road.
- 33 • a Special Use Permit for a PUD at 932-942 Deerfield Road
- 34 • the KIA dealership at 250 Skokie Valley Road
- 35 • the Mayor's appointment Schedule for Boards & Commissions. He noted Vice Chair Kerch will
36 become Chair & Commissioner Nanus will become Vice Chair of the PDC on January 1, 2026.
37

38 Chairperson Moore welcomed the two PDC Commissioners into their new roles. She looks forward to
39 working together as she will remain on the PDC.
40

41 Director Fontane said he appreciates Chairperson Moore's chairmanship and really enjoyed working with
42 her in the role of Chair and looks forward to working together in the role of Commissioner again. He
43 welcomed Commissioners Kerch & Nanus to Chair & Vice Chair, respectively.
44

45 Commissioner Kerch said he enjoys the people on the PDC, and he's learned so much even when he is
46 persuaded.
47

1 Director Fontane advised Commissioner Fettner was reappointed to a new term with the PDC.

2

3 **BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

4 There was no Business from the Public.

5

6 Senior Planner Burhop noted there may be a Special Meeting on January 13, 2026.

7

8 **ADJOURNMENT**

9 Commissioner Kerch moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. Commissioner Henry seconded the motion.

10

11 On a voice vote

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

13 Voting Nay: None

14

15 Chairperson Moore declared that the motion passed unanimously.

16

17 Respectfully Submitted,

18

19

20 Gale Cerabona

21 Recorder

22

23 **MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING ON NOVEMBER 4, 2025, WERE APPROVED WITHOUT CORRECTIONS.**