Local Historic District Staff Report
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
City of Birmingham
Wednesday, November 18, 2026

***Applicant*:** David L. Silverstein, Jr. / The FiveStone Group, LLC

Address: 1054 24th Street South, 2130 & 2312 Highland Avenue

***District*:** Highland Park

***Status*:** All contributing resources (#27 2310 Highland Ave; 28 2312 Highland Ave; #48 1054 24th Street South)

Project Description: Demolition of three historic apartments. Conceptual approval for construction of two new apartment buildings.

***LHAC Recommendation*:** Demolition: Not addressed; Conceptual New Construction: Approved with Conditions.

Comments: The Highland Park LHAC has considered the city's request for input on the proposed demolition of three historic buildings in our neighborhood and offers the following response.

We have worked on this project for more than a year. Within the past four months, under new guidance, the owners/developers have made meaningful progress in engaging our committee and providing the information needed for a more productive review. We appreciate that progress and want to continue building on it.

The recently provided engineering report provides valuable information that would have been helpful earlier in the process. That being said, it does highlight the serious deterioration and raises substantial safety concerns. Because we have been advised that all three buildings are unsafe to enter, and despite multiple requests, we have been unable to arrange an independent inspection, and therefore, are forced to accept the reports conclusion.

As volunteers and residents of Highland Park, we take seriously the neighborhood association's strong desire to preserve these buildings. Accordingly, our committee cannot support demolition. We believe the determination of whether demolition is necessary and legally justified should rest with the appropriate city authorities, based on the applicable standards and supporting evidence.

We believe it is in the best interest of the neighborhood that our LHAC committee continue working with the owners/developers toward a design that meets the architectural quality and historic compatibility Highland Park deserves. Our participation in reviewing and acceptance of the conceptual plan should not be interpreted as an endorsement of demolition.

The Highland Park LHAC appreciates the developer's revisions, which bring the proposed building into closer alignment with the neighborhood's historic character. These improvements include a more traditional architectural style, brick and stone on the façade, greater articulation of the building's forms to reduce its apparent mass, and more traditional window designs.

Our approval is primarily intended as guidance for the submission of plans for the permitting phase of the project, which will be subject to the conditions below.

Building A

Condition 1: Setback	As drivers round the Highland Avenue curve after crossing the highway cut, the proposed building will present a broad expanse of brick and windows, substantially closer to the road and more massive than the existing structure. The LHAC will continue to work with the developers in limiting the impact of the decreased setback of the buildings in order to preserve some of the existing setback, openness, and sightlines that characterize this entrance to the neighborhood. Because this side of the building will be the first view many people have when entering Highland Park, its appearance deserves careful consideration. An elevation drawing or rendering from this approach is needed to evaluate its visual impact.
Condition 2: Top Floor	The treatment of the uppermost story does not appear to have a clear precedent among Highland Park's historic buildings. Although we appreciate

	the effort to reduce the building's apparent mass through a recessed top floor, we feel that the proposed metal balcony railing and stucco finish do not provide a cohesive termination to the brick façade below. The brick should be carried through the upper story and the balcony edge receive a more substantial architectural treatment, such as a brick parapet or masonry balustrade with cast-stone coping. This would establish a traditional base, middle, and top composition.
Condition 3: **Roof**	We appreciate your effort to reference roof forms found in historic neighborhoods. However, a hipped roof clad in asphalt shingles is not consistent with other buildings above three stories in the District. A flat roof concealed behind a properly proportioned parapet, with appropriate coping and cornice detailing will be required.
Condition 4: **Windows**	The larger historic buildings facing Highland Avenue use windows and architectural detailing to create depth and break up broad, flat façades. We appreciate the developer's use of traditional windows in the proposed design. However, windows should be articulated in a manner consistent with the historic structures in the neighborhood, with the following characteristics • Operable double hung windows are more appropriate than fixed units. • Pairs of windows should have a mullion 4"-6" wide between the units. (historically there would have been sash weights between the units). • Windows in masonry must have brick mould and historic (1 1/2") sill.

	• Top sash and transoms should have muntins (3 piece fully adhered with spacer bar between the glass). • Bottom sashes frequently had muntins although there is precedent for omitting in some building styles. • At the side elevations, the windows are currently shown to all be the same size. It would be appropriate to have some smaller windows at kitchen and bath spaces if needed. (see example of existing attached.) • Windows on the front facade are too narrow set. Continue to work on improving the proportions of the facades, consider using an odd number of windows to center the openings.
Condition 5: Entrances	The entrances are defining architectural features that establish the character of these buildings and their relationship to the neighborhood. For this reason, we request a more traditional, classically inspired treatment, using columns or pilasters with clearly defined bases and capitals supporting an appropriately proportioned entablature or cornice. These entrance surrounds should have the appearance of finished limestone and incorporate doors whose materials, proportions, and detailing complement the overall architectural design.
Condition 6: Brick, Stone, and Mortar	As mentioned previously, brick shall be the primary exterior material throughout the building, including the recessed uppermost story, where it shall replace the proposed stucco. This will create a

	more cohesive façade consistent with the traditional architectural character of this design. • The stone or cast-stone accents at the ground floor shall have the appearance of smooth, finished limestone. • Mortar joints shall have a traditional, contrasting appearance rather than mortar tinted to match the brick. • Retaining walls and foundations at parking garage should have the same quality level of materials as the base of the building above.
Condition 7: Signage	Signage criteria (location, size, aesthetic) should be designed as part of the composition of the facade.
Condition 8: Landscaping	Street trees (existing if they can remain, new proposed if not) species, location, and spacing should be incorporated into the landscape plan and coordinated with the neighborhood street tree plan.

Building B

Condition 1: Building Details	We appreciate the effort invested in this second revision. However, the proposed design still does not demonstrate the architectural character and compatibility that we believe are necessary for Highland Park. Generally the size and mass of the building is acceptable, but the design should reflect the type of building common to the neighborhood. The existing structure could be a guide for the new building in material, orientation and detailing of the entrance as it relates to the street. In addition: • There should be no exposed concrete foundation. • Brick is an appropriate exterior material, but we do not consider the proposed

	board-and-batten siding compatible for Highland Park. • The overall composition remains stark and would benefit from greater architectural detail. We encourage the developer to use the existing building as the primary reference for further revisions, particularly its massing, materials, window detailing, and porches or sunrooms. The conditions for Windows for Building A are also appropriate for Building B. These features offer a strong foundation for a design that contributes positively to Highland Park's historic character.
Condition 2: **Plaza**	The plaza is an integral part of the overall design, but we have not received enough information to evaluate it. It's dimensions, proposed paving, retaining wall materials, and locations, widths, and configurations of the new stairs leading up to the plaza from Building B. In addition, the scale of the plaza should relate to its intended use. If it is to be primarily a pass through to the stairs to Highland Avenue it could have smaller dimensions.

***Zoning Comments*:** Currently in the process of rezoning the site

General Provisions for Review:	
1.	The primary goal of the Design Review Process is to maintain historic properties as close to their original appearance as possible. However, there is no requirement that alterations already made to a property should be removed or that the property should be returned to its original appearance.
2.	Original or early materials are to be retained to the greatest extent practicable. Wood siding, windows, porch framing and supporting elements, and decorative roof and eave materials such as brackets, braces, and roof tiles should be retained. Any replaced pieces should be chosen to match the originals in appearance.

General Standards for Review:	
1.	All buildings, structures and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historic basis and which seek to create an earlier or later appearance will be discouraged.
2.	Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize a building, structure or site shall be treated with sensitivity and reviewed with particular emphasis on their preservation.
3.	Deteriorated architectural materials and features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary due to extreme deterioration of the original, reasonable effort should be made to assure that the new material matches the old in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.
5.	Whenever possible, new additions or alterations to a building or structure should be done in such a manner that, if the additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the original building or structure would be unimpaired.
***The following standards apply to all contributing and noncontributing properties in the Highland* Park Local Historic District unless an exception is made prior to approval by the Design Review Committee:**	
K.	**Additions, New Construction** The primary criterion for additions and new construction is that they should be in keeping with the original structure in terms of quality, scale and appearance. New construction will be reviewed to assure its compatibility with the historic character of both the property and the neighborhood. Site plans for new construction and additions must be sensitive to, and compatible with, adjacent properties and structures and must minimize changes to natural site topography.
O.	**Demolition** Demolition of a building or structure listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing structure is prohibited, unless the property is in a condition deteriorated beyond the point of reasonable repair, or has suffered structural damage that affects the majority of the building or structure. Also, no demolition permits will be issued for any building or structure until plans have been reviewed and approved by the Design Review Committee for both the appearance and use of the site after the requested demolition.