



This week's Design Review Committee meeting attendees witnessed yet another revisiting of the Two North Twentieth sign wrap project. ([You may click here if you'd like to jump to that section.](#)) There were also three residential projects, signage, and exterior updates.

Before the meeting began, committee chair Sam Frazier welcomed new member, civil engineer Sheila Montgomery-Mills.

[Highland Park](#)

First up was developer [Joseph McClure](#), but this time instead of a historic building downtown, he presented plans for an addition and renovations to a residence. The owners have outgrown the brick 1970s ranch-style home. Plans include adding a second story and porch, exterior paint, and a large two-story garage. The neighborhood association approved the plans with certain conditions, including their main contention regarding the removal of the large upper windows. The project architect, also in attendance, explained that the majority of the neighborhood's concerns have been addressed, but they are exploring how to fix the windows. The committee approved construction of the garage and asked McClure to return to the committee to present updated plans for the house.

Norwood

Two residential projects in [Norwood](#) were brought before the committee. First, the owner was seeking approval for renovations of a long-neglected multi-family building. The four-unit house was damaged on one side by a fire of a neighboring property. The owner plans to replace wood siding and porch materials with salvage to match as closely as possible. The committee approved.

The next one was a residence where the owner wants to paint concrete porch caps and ledges. The Norwood neighborhood guidelines state that unpainted caps, ledges, and sills cannot be painted, but owners can repaint anything previously painted. The neighborhood voted to have the owner return the caps and ledges to their original condition (pointing out they are actually limestone and not concrete) by removing the remainder of the paint. The committee agreed and approved the removal of paint.

Both the Highland Park and Norwood neighborhood associations will be completing orientations to develop subcommittees to address architectural issues prior to projects coming to the Design Review Committee.

Five Points West / North Birmingham

[MetroPCS](#) plans to open stores in each of these neighborhoods. Images, but no structural details, were presented to the committee for consideration. The committee tabled the project so the

franchise owner could work with staff and the sign company to prepare an appropriate package to be presented at the next meeting.

Five Points South

Howard Rasco of Lathan Associates Architects presented plans for awnings at the entrances for the building housing First Partners Bank on Highland Avenue. Located in the old Southern Health and Life Insurance Building, exterior renovations were previously approved by the committee. The architect proposed dark grey awnings with the name of the bank in white letters. The committee approved.

Midtown

The proposed plans for the Milo's restaurant on 5th Ave. S. to relocate to 7th Ave. S. (next door to Arby's) are no longer proceeding. In order to improve the general aesthetics of the building - and, hopefully, lure tenants - the new firm working on the project, [Cohen Carnaggio Reynolds](#), presented a conceptual design including navy blue aluminum panels on the front façade, painted brick, and updated railings in the rear. Although the committee felt that the contemporary improvements are good and they were glad the building will be used again, they felt the presentation was a mish-mash of ideas. The project was tabled for more information.

Downtown West

John Bradley of [S.A.S. Architects](#) brought initial plans for exterior improvements to the Tillman Levenson Annex Building on 12th Street North. The façade, including the faded sign, will be maintained, but the current industrial garage doors will be replaced with a storefront, stoop, and awning. The air conditioner window units will be removed and new windows will be installed in their place. The committee requested bronze storefronts rather than clean anodized aluminum and approved the project with that modification. **NOTE:** [Mike Tomberlin filed this story with AL.com late yesterday](#) revealing more information about plans for the building.

East Lake

Arijays, a new business moving into the area, contracted Steve Looney and [Commander Board Signs](#) to install signage on their building. The non-lighted signs will be digitally printed. The committee expressed concern about the signage as well as the purple paint used on the building. The committee moved to table the signs until the next meeting.

After the agenda was completed, a committee member motioned to reconsider this project for approval to allow Looney to work with staff rather than wait three weeks before being able to complete the installation.

Ensley

Jerry Holcombe of Reliable Storage had been approached by a salvage firm to demolish the two historic brick buildings on the property. He came before the committee seeking a demolition request for the one closest to the portion of the property he currently uses. Both buildings are damaged beyond repair and had not been previously demolished for financial reasons. The salvage firm does not charge for demolition and will re-sell the materials. The lot will be fenced in and grass planted. The committee approved with the condition that Holcombe file a site plan with staff.

Birmingham Green

Now, onto the elephant in the room: [Harbert Realty](#). A subcommittee had been appointed to work with Harbert Realty and Buffalo Rock to best determine how to proceed with the sign atop [Two North Twentieth](#). David Miller from [Buffalo Rock](#) and Tab Bisignani of Harbert introduced Sara Nichols from [o2ideas](#) to present designs they believed addressed the committee's concerns. The presenters began with an elaborate presentation, which was cut short by the chair due to the lengthiness of the agenda. A design resembling a billboard was presented to the committee. And, once again, the committee explained that billboards are not allowed by the code. Bisignani again explained the hardship of the expense as a factor in the decision to wrap the sign. When the committee balked at this design, Bisignani reminded the committee that the sign was grandfathered (and no one on the committee argued with that, going so far as to explain the significance of the uniqueness of the sign). As the committee did not change their minds from either argument, Bisignani told the committee that he was not sure this sign should be under the purview of this assembly and that maybe it should be considered by a higher authority.

Bisignani also expressed that he believed "We have done everything you have asked." However, based on three previous full committee discussions summarized via [excerpts from previous columns for Magic City Posts shared over on Dear Birmingham](#), there continues to appear to be a disconnect between the committee's ideas and what Harbert wants to do.