The Highland Park Neighborhood Association's (HPNA) History & Preservation and Physical Improvements Teams determined through a nine-month research effort in 2016 and 2017 that residents care about community character and want to see Highland Park's history preserved. A neighborhood survey revealed that historic character is the top reason survey respondents initially moved to the Highland Park Neighborhood and it is also the primary reason why they like the community. Property maintenance and the potential loss of historic character are identified concerns. Results of the survey were presented at the monthly HPNA meeting in March 2018 and are posted on the HPNA website.

Current zoning regulation that exists in the Highland Park Neighborhood does not adequately address residents' identified concerns for preserving the historic nature and character of Highland Park. As such, the History & Preservation and Physical Improvements Teams proposed developing a form-based overlay code to ensure that new investment complements the Highland Park aesthetic and recognizes the neighborhood's history.

A form-based overlay is a geographically defined area over an existing zone or zones which contain land development regulations designed to foster predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form as the organizing principle.

Efforts to move forward with further exploration of the form-based overlay concept were tabled at the May 2018 HPNA meeting, but discussion at the annual meeting in November revived the idea. A survey was distributed to all Highland Park residents to determine support for further investigation of the concept and a majority of responding households (~70%) were in favor. In light of the results, the officers voted at a December general meeting to proceed with forming a committee and committing HPNA to investigate how a form-based overlay could help preserve the look, feel and character of Highland Park.