CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

# LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

**LTC No: 25-272**

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission

**FROM:** Rickelle Williams, City Manager

**DATE:** December 24, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Himmarshee Street Initiatives Update: Himmarshee Village Historic District Architectural Resource Survey, Himmarshee Activation Strategy, and the Reimagining of the Himmarshee Special Entertainment District

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The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to provide the City Commission with an update on Himmarshee Street Initiatives including the status of the Himmarshee Village Historic District Architectural Resource Survey, the Himmarshee Activation Strategy, and City of Fort Lauderdale Code of Ordinance amendments. Together, these efforts support reimagining the Himmarshee Special Entertainment District (SED), as outlined in the Himmarshee Historic District Revitalization Plan Report, completed in September 2024.

City staff anticipate that the following related initiatives will move forward through a public outreach and public hearing process over the next one (1) to two (2) years and will collectively help to address improvements in the area. The anticipated timing of next steps is included below, and staff will provide updates to the City Commission as progress is made.

## Himmarshee Village Architectural Resource Survey

The updated Architectural Resource Survey of the Himmarshee Village Historic District was recommended for approval by the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) in January 2025. An Architectural Resource Survey is helpful to understand the current state of the Himmarshee Village Historic District and provides for the identification, research, and documentation of buildings, sites, and structures. The survey includes an evaluation of each building's architectural style, structural integrity, and overall character within the district. As part of the survey, a total of nineteen (19) structures on seventeen (17) parcels were surveyed. A total of fourteen (14) structures are identified as Contributing, five (5) are identified as Non-contributing, of which one (1) is a parking lot. The City of Fort Lauderdale owns nine (9) of the structures, eight (8) of which are classified as Contributing and one (1) as Non-contributing.

On February 18, 2025, the City Commission considered a resolution to adopt the Himmarshee Village Historic District Architectural Resource Survey, including the assignment of "Contributing" or "Non-Contributing" status to properties within the district.

At the meeting, discussion focused on the impacts of an assignment of a “Contributing” or “Non-Contributing” status, including the permitting process required for each property type, when a request for the modification of a property is reviewed.

Both definitions of “Contributing” or “Non-Contributing” properties are standard within historic preservation ordinances throughout the country. A “Contributing property” is one that adds to the historic qualities of a designated district, as defined by the district’s period of significance. This designation typically identifies relevant time periods, architectural styles, and associated historical themes or events. A “Non-Contributing property” does not add to the architectural qualities, associations, or cultural significance for which the area is designated.

While there is not a difference in process, there is a difference in the underlying staff analysis of each property with more emphasis placed on the preservation of architectural features for Contributing properties. Staff provided examples such as a request to replace windows, which could be approved at the staff level as part of the building permit process, if the request is to replace windows to match the existing appearance. For any project such as demolition, new construction, or major alterations and additions to all properties within the historic district, the application requires review by the HPB.

Three (3) members of the public appeared before the City Commission to object to assignment of a “Contributing” status to the property located at 327 SW 2 Street. The objection was related to concerns over the long-term impacts that a Contributing status would have on the property, including requests for improvements. The City Commission deferred this item to allow additional time for outreach to property owners and to ensure they have a clearer understanding of the details and requirements associated with Contributing and Non-Contributing properties.

Staff held an outreach meeting for property owners and property owner representatives on Monday, November 17, 2025, to provide an overview of the Architectural Resource Survey. Within the Himmarshee Village Historic District, there are a total of eleven (11) unique property owners of the total of nineteen (19) structures, with nine (9) the properties in the district owned by the City of Fort Lauderdale. All property owners, along with their representatives, were invited to attend this meeting. A total of thirteen (13) property owners and representatives attended the meeting which provided representation for seven (7) of the privately owned properties and one (1) representative from the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society that occupies several of the city-owned properties.

At the meeting staff provided a presentation that covered the background of the Himmarshee Village Historic District, the methodology used and the criteria for preparation of the updated Architectural Resource Survey report, and a brief overview of the District’s historical significance. Staff also provided details related to the Contributing and Non-Contributing properties, incentives that will be available to owners of properties that are identified as Contributing, and the process that would be required for the City Commission to adopt the report.

Feedback received from property owners primarily focused on incentives available to historic properties with questions specifically about the commercial tax exemption for historic properties and how it would be applied. Concerning the updated report, the representative of the property owner of 327 SW 2 Street maintained the previous objection of the assignment of a Contributing status for the property. Staff clarified that the assignment of a Contributing or Non-Contributing status is based on factual information including property type, field observations, archival research, and permit records for each structure.

Using this information, each property is evaluated by a qualified professional for its architectural integrity, meaning the building has been modified to a degree where it is no longer representative of the architectural style or the original design intent. National Register Bulletin #15, published by the National Park Service, which describes the "Seven Aspects of Integrity" was used to judge the level of integrity for buildings. The "Seven Aspects of Integrity" are: Location, Design, Setting, Material, Workmanship, Feeling, and Association. If a property owner or member of the community has factual information to be taken into consideration such as photographs, architectural plans, or permits – those materials may be submitted for review and incorporation into a final draft survey report prior to a public hearing.

At this time, rather than moving forward with adoption, staff recommend utilizing the Architectural Resource Survey as a resource and tool to evaluate Certificate of Appropriateness applications for properties located within the historic district. The process for review would remain as-is where any property within the boundary of the Himmarshee Village Historic District that is seeking to update or modify their property is subject to review by staff and may also require approval from the HPB depending on the request. All properties within the boundary of the historic district that are not individually designated as historic landmarks would remain ineligible for historic preservation incentives. In the future, adoption of the report may be revisited after moving forward with other related initiatives including proposed updates to the Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) Section that regulates the Himmarshee Village Historic District.

At the stakeholder meeting held on November 17, 2025, staff also provided updates on the following initiatives:

**Tactical Urbanism and Streetscape Beautification Project**

The City Commission provided funds in the City's 2025 fiscal year budget to hire a consultant for a Tactical Urbanism and Streetscape Beautification Project that will inform future permanent improvements within the Himmarshee area. This project will develop a "tactical urbanism" design and streetscape beautification plan, including public outreach, and a final report for two (2) blocks along Himmarshee Street (SW 2 Street) and one (1) block along SW 3 Avenue, in the Himmarshee Historic District located in downtown Fort Lauderdale. The intent of this project is to develop a temporary installation, such as street

furniture, parklets, pavement treatments, and landscape improvements as part of a potential longer-term solution to the challenges that were identified during a previous public outreach effort with community stakeholders. The tactical urbanism approach is intended to help evaluate improvements to influence a final hardscape project that will promote a more pedestrian-friendly, safe, and attractive environment.

This project was developed in response to comments provided at the open house event held when preparing the Himmarshee Revitalization Plan. This included observations about the wear and tear of sidewalks and crosswalks, suggesting a need for upgrades to the multimodal network. Placemaking and wayfinding initiatives were also discussed up as elements to infuse more character and vitality into the area.

Staff are currently in the process of identifying a consultant to work on this initiative and anticipate starting this project in early 2026.

**Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) Section 47-16 for the Himmarshee Village Historic District Updates**

Staff are drafting updates to the H-1 Himmarshee Village ordinance to balance future redevelopment with the preservation of the architectural character within the district. These updates are in response to comments provided at the open house event held when preparing the Himmarshee Revitalization Plan. These comments were related to the need to address the height restrictions in the area as it may be holding back the economic development of the area and hindering its success. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of remaining flexible and finding the right mechanisms to ensure new development, if allowed in the district, is compatible in scale, height and density, and aesthetics with the historic character of the district, with the objective of maintaining a cohesive urban fabric.

The effort to update the ULDR includes conducting a study to develop updates to the existing building standards for the area, including consideration of differences between properties fronting SW 2 Street and those fronting both SW 3 Avenue and SW 2 Avenue. This includes providing a dimensional standards table that allows for increased height, stepbacks above certain heights, setbacks from the centerline of the adjacent right-of-way to maintain consistent street frontage, and open space requirements. A draft text amendment has been prepared, and staff are currently reviewing the draft with the City Attorney's Office.

Goals of these updates include the following:

- Update List of Historic Districts to specifically identify the Himmarshee Village Historic District and the Stranahan House;
- Provide a fifteen (15)-day administrative approval call-up process for review by the HPB for certain development applications;
- Provide Dimensional Table to include minimum building standards:

    - Update existing building standards including required setbacks, open space requirements, minimum lot size, minimum lot width, and maximum structure length;
    - Increase height limitation for new construction;
    - Stepback requirements;
- Update Use Table to streamline uses; and
- Update Sign Requirements to align with existing sign code and provide administrative review for signs that agree with the City's Historic Preservation Design Guidelines.

Staff are preparing to hold a public engagement meeting in January 2026 to obtain feedback from stakeholders.

**Code of Ordinances, Chapter 5 Article III, SED Updates**

A presentation seeking City Commission guidance on the SED code language was made to the City Commission at the June 30, 2025, Conference meeting. Staff have prepared a draft amendment to the code to address goals outlined below and are currently reviewing the draft with the City Attorney's Office. This effort is in response to comments that were provided at the open house event held when preparing the Himmarshee Revitalization Plan where businesses on Himmarshee Street / SW 2nd Street recognized that there is a need for a governing body or management structure that takes ownership and manages of events, regular cleaning, and safety within the district.

Stakeholders also commented that late-night activity and open containers on Himmarshee/SW 2nd Street are causing waste management and safety issues. The suggestions are as follows:

- Allow a group of property owners to form a SED without the need for common ownership, but require the formation of a committee to govern the SED;
- Encourage a mix of business uses (including a required percentage operational during daytime hours);
- Update the process for establishing a district;
- Update the process for the City to decertify a district when out of compliance.
- Update security plan requirements for each business;
- Continue to allow no minimum distance requirements between businesses licensed by the state to sell alcoholic beverages; and
- Remove the ability to have off-premise alcohol consumption, i.e. open containers or for sale at outside carts.

In discussing proposed updates with stakeholders at the property owners meeting which included property owners and their representatives, a point was made concerning a requirement to have establishments provide a minimum of fifty-one percent (51%) gross revenue from food service and non-alcoholic beverages, which could provide a better balance within the SED and to move away from nightlife as the only environment.

Staff will explore this further as part of the preparation of amendments to the code. It was also emphasized by the stakeholders present at the property owners' meeting that in the immediate near term the ability to have open containers within the SED should be eliminated. Staff will work with the City Attorney's Office to determine if an interim solution for this request can be implemented prior to moving forward with the larger text amendment.

Once the draft ordinance is prepared, staff will move forward with scheduling a public outreach meeting. It is anticipated that this will be scheduled in late spring 2026.

If you have any questions, please contact Trisha Logan, AICP, Principal Urban Planner, at 954-828-7101 or via email at TLogan@fortlauderdale.gov.

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