

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION and URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Thursday, December 15, 2011, 1:00 p.m., Conference Room 214, County/City Building, 555 S. 10 St., Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: *Historic Preservation Commission:* Cathy Beecham, Jim Johnson, Berwyn Jones, Liz Kuhlman and Jim McKee; (Tim Francis and Greg Munn absent).
Urban Design Committee: JoAnne Kissel, Gil Peace, Michelle Penn, Scott Sullivan, Gordon Scholz, Michele Tilley and MaryAnne Wells.

ALSO ATTENDING: Ed Zimmer, Nicole Fleck-Tooze and Teresa McKinstry from the Planning Dept.; Rick Peo from the City Attorney's office; Hallie Salem and Dallas McGee from Urban Development; Brett West, Todd Hesson, Roger Bullington, Michael Penn, James Arter, Dennis Scheer, Randy Swanson and Jordan Pascale of the Lincoln Journal Star.

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Joint Meeting of Historic Preservation Commission & Urban Design Committee

JoAnne Kissel called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

Brett West of WRK appeared. He stated that he went to school here and just moved back. Today is the intro to their vision and design concepts. The vision they have been focusing on is developing a strong Canopy Street presence. They want to connect the energy from the West Haymarket, the Haymarket area and the arena. West said they have some bold concepts, but appropriately scaled. This area should be warm and inviting, 365 days a year. They need to create the perfect marriage with events and everything going on in the area. They are trying to figure out what types of activities are wanted and what types of signage. He noted we know what we don't want to do, such as oversize signage that doesn't make sense. We are also focusing on the housing and living environment. What does Canopy Street want to function like? We are encompassing the area of the yard and Iron Horse Park. In the lofts, we want to create something that is unique and modern. Iron Horse Park could host family friendly events. We are trying very hard to bring an anchor tenant to the other end of Canopy St. that might be more day to day usage. We are looking at what attracts the young professional. We want The Yard to be a multipurpose space.

How can we host a unique event in the yard? Maybe enhance Iron Horse Park with more child friendly places to go. We want to make sure that we are thinking hard about what this will be like in the Fall and Winter, not just what is being hosted in the Summer. West said they are interested in reactions to their concepts.

Beecham inquired if there is any green space planned as part of the yard. West replied that green space is mostly focused on semi-private areas. These would be courtyards at the interior of the housing units. The yard is meant to be event driven with lots of flexibility. Beecham more concerned with green space for public space.

Jones questioned why the 60 plus age group is not being addressed. West replied that as this area moves forward, housing will address all demographic groups.

Jordan Pascale wondered about the timeline. West replied that the first phase will start construction in 2012 with an opening date of 2013. They would like for the area to be open for the arena.

Beecham asked if there are any plans to attract locally owned businesses. West replied that they are heavily into leasing right now. It will have influences on the design as well. They are just focused on Phase One right now. They are really tracking about fifty percent local and fifty percent nationally right now. He said "We have been very cognizant of the concept of local businesses. "

Penn questioned if there are already agreements with tenants. West replied that we have letters of intent with some people.

West continued that they have been working hard with the City on how to maximize parking and pre-events. They are focused on the Plaza space. They are looking at a mechanism that makes this a pedestrian mall. Phase One is focused on housing next to the arena. There is the large parking deck immediately to the south. There are a lot of great tenant spaces. Residential would be on the second floor and up. One of the key concepts is the cube. It is a marketing element that is artistic. It sets the tone for the district. We wanted something that creates a unique experience.

Penn understands there will be five floors overall for the retail on the first floor and residential on the floors above. This will be roughly the same height as the garage.

West stated they are trying to get people on the streets and the store fronts.

Johnson would like more on what The Cube is and if it is lit. West replied that they are looking at options on how to do it, but they are thinking an external projecting LED.

Wells wanted to know the width of the sidewalk. Dennis Scheer stated that they are looking at an ADA accessible zone. There is a four to five foot amenities zone with pedestrian lights, trees, etc. Then there is another zone that varies, but is a minimum of eleven to twelve feet to the building face.

West stated that on event days, they anticipate closing Canopy Street and it would be pedestrian traffic only.

West continued with a Power Point presentation of buildings and concepts for the area.

Beecham questioned if there will be advertising on The Cube. West replied that the goal is to write a signage and tenant guidelines which will outline what can and can't be done. It is not their intent to blatantly advertise. This would be advertising events for the area. Zimmer believes one of the guiding principles is that it can't show off-premise advertising. The concept of the cube is not in the current code. The intent is to bring it into the Redevelopment Agreement, not create a special sign district. The discussion has been what can and can't be done.

Jones wondered if the housing space is rental. West believes it will be rental and coop. They are looking at one, two, three and some four bedroom spaces. He believes it would be mostly student housing. They feel that for students, this would be the easiest access point to campus and events and will be a very active student area. They don't feel a long term renter or a condo buyer would find this corner attractive. As development progresses south, there is the possibility of maybe a hotel or rent to own properties.

West presented street views of the area.

Kissel inquired if you are leaving the arena and going into the Haymarket, where would you go. West is trying to create an alley type feel to the south. Pedestrian traffic would also flow down Canopy Street and around Lincoln Station.

McKee asked what is on the east elevation of the cube. West replied it will be signage. McKee stated that it appears the south side of the cube, which is lit, would be visible to the Haymarket. He will have to wait and see the proposal for the cube.

Scholz questioned if there will be plantings on these streets. Scheer would like to see plantings.

Beecham would love to see a way to have a changing presentation of local art, different displays that could be changed. She believes it would draw people down to the area who might not normally visit.

Michael Penn stated that historical markers might be part of the streetscape.

Paula Yancy stated that they will bring back a plan for the streetscape.

Scott Sullivan would like to see this area evolve as similar to the Power and Light District. West stated there will be more of a mix of retail and housing. They are trying to find a nice balance. He does not see this area as all retail.

Kissel is curious why they chose to develop the 7th-Canopy, Q-R block the way they did. The IDP didn't show this many structures and it somewhat blocks the view of the arena. West replied that from their perspective, they wanted to create "placeness" to the courtyard area. Having retailers being dual sided they felt could bring more retail activity to the area. They are trying to bring people down Canopy Street. They want to have a balance of activity so the area stays busy at all times, not just during events in the arena. Beecham wonders if there is a way to open the block a little more. West stated that they intentionally made it a little less obvious. They are looking at creating green private spots. They will look at some ideas. They are still working on outdoor seating and all the amenities.

West stated that the yard during holiday season might involve some ice skating, a Christmas tree lighting, movie night for young kids, game day activities and tailgating. They are looking at an idea for a roof deck, maybe a third floor outdoor space.

Jones was thinking that corner would be a little more open for a site path to the arena. He is really disappointed that didn't turn out to be the open area.

Sullivan countered that if he was in the Hillis property, he thinks this gives a nice transition area to confronting the scale of the arena. He is fairly comfortable with something of this scale. It feels like this block has turned it's back to the Haymarket. He thinks it makes the southeast corner of this development softer. Sullivan is not sure the alley works.

Michelle Penn thinks the conceptual idea of the visual towards the arena is lost with this plan. This is so different from what we have seen before.

Beecham likes this building in front of the arena to help the scale. She would like to see the vista opened up just a little. She likes having it here. If Iron Horse Park is being used as more of a vista, is it set up to fulfill the role. She would like to see a little more public green space. She loves the ice skating idea. A public water feature would be great.

Zimmer noted that the Parks Dept. often discusses that if you have a water feature that you invite kids to play in, there is a degree of liability and strict requirements for water quality.

Michelle Penn questioned how this area would be controlled. West replied it would be a public/private partnership. They are still working out all the details.

Zimmer stated this was called the community block, but it is shown to be privately developed, which may be a contradiction.

Dallas McGee concurred that it was shown as more open, but he believes it was always intended as private space.

Beecham likes the market space idea.

Zimmer stated that the intention is to come back before this group on the second Thursday in January, 2012.

Sullivan would like to talk more about the office component. Have they been given more of a direction to maintain a percentage of office? This is a pretty big bang block. Office is kind of a downer. West stated they have a few office tenants that have expressed an interest in being here. This gives people a chance to be in the area all times of the year. The roof deck idea was sparked by a retailer. They continue to react to the market. People work here and they could shop in the area and have lunch here.

Gil Peace would encourage an angle corner on the building across from the arena to capitalize on the view to the arena. With a square corner, you don't notice the arena that much until you get right in front of it. West replied they will look into the idea, but they were very cognizant of the idea when they designed this.

Zimmer believes that some street views from a pedestrian perspective would be helpful to the group.

West stated they are working with the rest of the team to create a walk-thru presentation.

Scholz is curious if the canopy was considered as an influence to the design. West believes it creates a nice covered walkway. You have the ability to sit next to it and enjoy it. It finishes the place. They looked at a number of options for the plaza. This sets a line, but you can still pass through it. From a design intent, the steel structure will be used as an influence.

Scheer stated that from the pedestrian bridge all the way to O Street, this encompasses the canopy as a continuous spine. How that works with all the new architecture must be taken into consideration. There is a lot of coordination going on. They are meeting with the Mayor next week for his input. They will bring the information to this group at their next meeting. The schedule for the pedestrian bridge allows them to continue working on the design.

Kissel has been struggling with where drop offs will happen. At some point, the community space was talked about as a drop off point. That doesn't seem to be an option anymore. Scheer is of the opinion that the best place for drop off is on the north side of the arena. There is access to the arena. This would have covered ADA access and go through the loop drive and park. In his opinion, that is the best way to drop folks at the arena.

Beecham questioned if there is a plan for non arena events. Scheer replied that there is a drop off on Q Street, west of Canopy Drive. There is also a drop off on the north side of R Street right at the Arena and on 7th Street.

STREETSCAPE CONCEPTS

Scheer stated that they don't have anything to present today. He talked with Ed Zimmer yesterday. There are some meetings next week between the city staff and developers. A lot of right of way issues will be discussed. on Tuesday. They are in the process of preparing a presentation for the Mayor on the canopy. There will be a lot to discuss in January.

Zimmer stated that Dan Marvin assures us he has plans to get enough funds to complete the streetscape in the early portions. The master plan shows a sufficient level of finish for initial opening of the arena.

Zimmer stated that January 12, 2012 is the next meeting of the joint group.

Beecham would like to hear from the city if there are plans for Iron Horse Park. Zimmer believes the Humane Society fountain will stay where it is. There are changes, but not a high level to the 7th street right of way. He will have Parks involved in the discussion next month.

The joint meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.