

## MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, December 12, 2012, 3:00 p.m., Room 214, County/City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Hind, JoAnne Kissel, Gill Peace, Michelle Penn and Mary Anne Wells. Scott Sullivan and Michele Tilley absent.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kurt Cisar and Curt Witzenburg (Holland Basham Architects); Dominic Vaccaro (America First Real Estate Group); Jordan Pascale (Journal Star); Jeffre Chadwick (Lincoln Arts Council); Dallas McGee and Hallie Salem (Urban Development); Marvin Krout, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Ed Zimmer, Stacey Hageman & Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting of the Urban Design Committee

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

### **Adoption of meeting record from the UDC meetings of August 1 and September 5, 2012**

Penn moved approval of the August 1 and September 5, 2012, seconded by Wells. Motion carried 5-0; Hind, Kissel, Peace, Penn and Wells voting 'yes'; Sullivan and Tilley absent.

### **Public/private, mixed-use project (including parking garage and student housing) on block bounded by Q, R, and 18<sup>th</sup> Streets and Antelope Valley Parkway (Urban Development Dept.).**

Vaccaro began by stating that the project site is bounded by Q, R and 18<sup>th</sup> and Antelope Valley. The project consists of two primary components: parking dedicated to UNL; and housing on the top level of the garage as well as wrapping the site on the northern boundary and the Antelope Valley site. This is a 7 level parking structure with 3 stories of housing on top. The housing on the ground level will be a 4 story structure. The intent of the housing on the lower level is to soften the visual appearance to a more pedestrian scale. The University has new residence halls being developed to the north of the site. The University housing will be a complementary scale to the garage. The primary mix of residents will be students. Most units will be 4 bedroom and 4 bath configuration. There will be 475 beds of student housing. In total, the University will have 1,270 stalls and 300 stalls for residences.

Cisar stated that the garage has 2 access points, one off 18<sup>th</sup> Street and one off Q Street. The garage is 7 stories with housing on top. There is also housing that wraps the north and east sides. There are 4 stairwells, 3 of them go the full length of the building. The construction is a cast in place concrete. There will be brick on the barrier walls along the perimeter. He noted that they are in schematic design and have a long way to go on site development. On the northeast corner, they are trying to determine the best use for that space, and the intention currently is to have a plaza.

Zimmer stated that the Urban Design Committee is advising the Urban Development Department today. This is a public-private project which is why Urban Development is commenting on it. It is also a redevelopment project. The UDC is also the appeal body on the Downtown Design Standards.

Cisar stated that the upper floors are the apartments. There will also be a fitness center, open study areas, a courtyard, and a green roof. The stair tower is pushed to the outside of the building.

Cisar then reviewed the exterior of the building. The lower floors are primarily masonry construction for the first three floors. The overall construction of the parking garage is pre-cast concrete with brick inlay. The stairwell is a glass element and will potentially be lit at night and serves as a security feature. There is a potential for some artwork on the wall housing the mechanical equipment in an attempt to bring it down to more of a pedestrian level. The upper floors of residential are primarily metal panel. On the south elevation, there is a 6 foot grade change, so they will have to work with that. It provides a nice opportunity for the plaza so it could be lifted up and will provide a nice separation. On the south side, there is masonry construction. They are looking at cut metal to provide more openings for ventilation for the garage. The west facade will abut the adjacent parking garage, so this side has less detail.

Wells stated that she likes the idea of the green roof. She asked if they have looked at a variety of plant materials since most of it will be in the shade. Cisar stated that they had the same concern, but there will be more sun than they originally thought, especially in the summer.

Penn asked how they were handling the roof above the lower-level housing. Witzenburg said they are currently looking at a TPO roof (thermoplastic polyolefin membrane).

Zimmer stated that because this is a redevelopment agreement, this brings it into the City's review. The UDC is the design process for the City. If the Downtown Design Standards are appealed, the UDC will be the review body.

Peace asked what design elements are not meeting the Downtown Design Standards. Zimmer stated that he has had a quick review of an early set of plans. The residential sides in terms of window and glass are fine. Q Street is identified as a street where there are active uses between the street/sidewalk and the structured parking. There is also language that there be screening between a public sidewalk and any garage, which appeared to be a problem in the plans he reviewed earlier but has been addressed with the design we are seeing today. The other issue is the mechanical equipment on the Antelope Valley side, which is not allowed on major facades. The design is proposing substantial screening of the transformers. In regard to the Q Street "active use" question, the Committee may also take note that in this location, there are parking structures east (Assurity) and west (UNL) of this proposed garage.

Hind asked if they have looked at the University Master Plan. Witzenburg stated that is a good point, and he will follow up with it.

Witzenburg asked for the Committee's input on the south side. Wells stated that she could see students gathering on that side looking for sun. Vaccaro stated that the primary users of the garage will be the new students in the new dorm. Because of this, it seemed the front door to the project was on that side. Zimmer stated that there is a good pedestrian/bicycle flow on the Q Street side, and the meandering sidewalk is pretending it is something it is not. It interrupts that flow rather than facilitating it. Enhanced landscaping might be of more benefit, to soften the edge of the garage and provide a

good pedestrian experience. A clear, simple pathway for the through traffic seems an advantage with the benches and landscape beside it.

Penn asked if the TIF money could go toward the plaza. She believes this is a priority, and she would like to see the plaza developed. Kissel agrees, and she does not believe that it is quite as harsh when you look at the overall context. It could be an urban oasis if it is done right.

Kissel stated that we want to encourage people to walk from the downtown and campus to Antelope Valley. With three garages in a row, anything you can do to soften that space would be good.

Witzenburg stated that the sidewalk needs to serve as a thoroughfare as well as create the semi-private areas.

Wells stated that they should look at where the sidewalk is in relation to the access points of the garage.

Hind added that the design would be better by questioning the guidelines and applying for the waiver for the Q Street side. The Committee agreed that this is a good approach.

Kissel asked if there are any alternatives with the mechanical equipment. Vaccaro stated that there was some feedback with the city to move the entire building 6 feet to the west. As a result of that, it has pinched the site in all directions. Witzenburg stated that LES has some requirements with the location of the transformers. He stated that at the end of the day, there were limited options. They feel like they have done a good job screening it with the public art wall, and they do not feel it is a visual barrier. Penn stated that she feels it is fine. Zimmer commented that the art wall could be a focal point at a pedestrian scale. Peace suggested raising the height of the wall to 20 feet. Witzenburg stated that is a good point worth further study.

Hind commented on the entrance on the north side as it does not seem substantial enough for an entrance that will serve a lot of people.

Zimmer provided a summary of the Committee's input as follows: The Committee looks favorably on a Q Street waiver in exchange for enhanced landscape and advised the team to look for TIF money for the northeast plaza, the east art wall, the Q Street landscape, and R Street entrance.

#### **Process discussion, Enersen Urban Design Award**

Zimmer stated that there are a couple ideas he wanted to bring forward with regard to the Enersen Urban Design Award process. The ordinance calls for an educational award which has been the Enersen Award. This award has been given at the Mayor's Arts Award ceremony, produced by the Lincoln Arts Council, which helps to make the urban design award more public. The tradition has been to commission a work of art to the recipient of Mayor's Arts Awards. One suggestion is to standardize this award so it is dignified enough to hand out but is also more cost-effective. They are also suggesting that a panel of former members and design experts offer the Committee suggestions on worthy projects.

Chadwick stated that the big question is that the Lincoln Arts Council would like to know early in February if there is an award to be given that year, and if so, how many awards there will be.

Kissel stated that she believes the process has gotten a little more lax over the years, and she believes the process needs to be more rigorous.

Zimmer asked the Committee if they would like him to meet with a panel and ask them to offer a couple recommendations for the Committee's final approval. Then the following year, the process can be more formalized. The Committee agreed with this approach.

#### **Draft 2012 Annual Report**

Zimmer distributed the draft Annual Report. The major projects reviewed in 2012 were the Courtyard Marriott at 8<sup>th</sup> and R, Haymarket Park, the Near South neighborhood sign, Chipotle, the I-180 and Cornhusker Highway entryways, the LES substation, and the Antelope Valley Parkway.

#### **Staff report/misc**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

\*\*Please note that these minutes will not be formally approved until the next meeting of the Urban Design Committee. \*\*

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