

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, June 12, 2013, 3:00 p.m., Room 214, County/City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Kevin Clark and Chris Beardslee (Clark Architects); Jude Werner (Phi Kappa Theta Fraternity); Brett West (WRK); Jordan Pascale (Journal Star); Hallie Salem (Urban Development); Marvin Krout, Ed Zimmer, David Cary, Sara Hartzell, Stacey Hageman & Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

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

JoAnne Kissel called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Adoption of meeting record from the UDC meeting of May 8, 2013

Peace moved approval of the meeting record of May 8, 2013, seconded by Hind. Motion carried 5-0. Hind, Peace, Penn, Sullivan and Wells voting 'yes'; Kissel and Tilley absent during vote.

Note: Later in the meeting, Kissell asked for reconsideration, to amend the May 8th meeting record to include (second to last paragraph):

"It is important that the advice the Committee gives is timely to assure that the process is helpful and positive. Perhaps it would be beneficial for the Chair to meet with the applicant before a project is brought to the Committee to identify issues of concern."

Also, a sentence was proposed on the pedestrian wayfinding signs:

"The Committee would like to ensure that there is enough value difference in colors so the signs can be read."

These emendations were accepted by consensus and are incorporated into the meeting record.

Landscape design for Phi Kappa Theta fraternity house (redevelopment project), 17th & Q Street (Urban Development and Kevin Clark)

Clark stated that they are nearing completion of the building and are currently working on a landscape plan in and around the building. They see themselves as part of the University; all of the people coming to and around the building are University faculty and staff. To the east is the UNL parking garage which has a UNL feel in its character. To the north are University fraternities and sororities. They have taken

the approach to work the edges of the site with the TIF dollars. They want to bring forward the lighting; they want to use the same pole and the same head. They want similar planting and similar curb detail. They would use TIF dollars to take care of the plantings and seating outside the property line. There is a phased construction plan with completion in July. The old St. Thomas Church is demolished, and the fence will go back up and it will become an active construction zone for the Neuman Center and St. Thomas. It is their intention that they will continue the landscape down Q Street maintaining the ginkgo trees and rework the front face of 16th Street. It is their hope that 16th Street will evolve over the next few years and see two-way traffic. There is a LaMars and a strip mall on opposite side of this block of Q St. and there is a lot of student traffic in the parking lot, and they see a fair amount of people using that as a shortcut. They want to have a brick bollard fence on both sides of the courtyard with gates that can be secured. They continue to meet with LES in hopes of orchestrating the lowering and burying of power lines. They are maintaining all of the sidewalk alignments. The overhead lights will remain. There will be two acorn fixtures flanking either side of the entry to the building.

Werner stated that they are excited about making the entry feel like an entrance to campus. There is a simple planting concept that is low maintenance and will have a zero lot line. Plantings will include spireas, daylilies, serviceberries, evergreens, and boxwoods. The private portion will be paid for by the fraternity house. TIF dollars will be used to sod along the streetway and an irrigation system. They have had a unique opportunity work with the neighboring fraternities. There is a real unity within this two-block strip to invest in the block and clean it up.

Kissel asked how this relates to the rest of the block. Werner stated that it ties in more with 16th Street, which is primarily Greek row.

Clark commented that on the south property line, you would not want to sit on a bench for about three months of the year because when the ginkgos drop their fruit, it smells from 150 feet away. Peace suggested removing the ginkgo trees now while they are investing the money. Clark stated that they tried very hard to suggest that and even suggested planting a different variety of ginkgos, but it was met with opposition by the City arborist because it is the largest stand of this type of tree in the world. Sullivan suggested setting back the fencing on the south side of the courtyard and create benches that sit up against the fence facing the street. Clark responded that he believes that would work. Peace added that seems more appropriate in the green space. He noted that two blocks away, there are two or three spots along the parkway with benches and plantings, and the sidewalk zigzags to create little pockets. Clark stated that the idea of the pockets could work into the pattern. A series of access points along that area would be nice to dress up the overall parkway.

Clark stated that he does not believe there is a design standard for this street, so he is thinking through the bench type. Two blocks east, there is a simple stone seat wall. Salem added that you could look to the standard downtown bench. Penn stated that it should be more elegant. Werner stated that they would propose a traditional-looking bench with a classic feel.

Clark asked if the nodes need to align with an entry. Hind stated that he does not think they need to. The conversation with the building to the east is that it's not just a blank façade with no occupation of that public space. Zimmer added that this street face does not have the problem that the garage street face does as it is articulated already. Hind commented that he would hate to see this with no way to occupy it.

Clark stated that they would like to start bidding the work soon so that it is done when the students come back in August .

Peace moved approval of the application with the recommendation to remove the ginkgo trees and replace them with a different variety and consideration of the discussion regarding the benches, seconded by Hind. Motion carried 7-0. Hind, Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan, Tilley and Wells voting 'yes'.

Sidewalk Café for Mellow Mushroom, 601 R Street (SW corner of Canopy and R Streets)

Zimmer stated that City Council action is awaiting the UDC recommendation on the Entertainment District. There will be two actions today; one on the sidewalk café, and one on the Entertainment District.

Mellow Mushroom would like to put a sidewalk café in their restaurant which is on the southwest corner of 6th and Canopy Street. They wish to build a feature with a concrete bench.

Sullivan asked about the fence line. West stated that it will be on the north and east sides as well as wrap in front of the hotel. This will provide a consistent visual tool. It will also have a medallion with the Canopy Street logo which will provide some texture.

Wells stated that she likes the long table that will seat a large group. Typically we see small tables of two or four.

Hind commented that galvanized painted fences tend to rust, expand, and blow apart concrete pretty easily. This does not provide a long term solution, although he realizes that we probably cannot require a different material.

Salem noted that they are requiring a permanent or temporary fencing along the alley in the courtyard. West stated that it is not their intent to make that a public space.

West stated that the intention is to close R and Canopy to allow for free-flowing pedestrian movement. The SDL would be needed for downtown festivals with alcohol. This would require a 6 foot fence. On a day to day basis, there is a 3 foot permanent fence that helps define the sidewalk.

Penn asked about the sunbrella shades. West stated that the fabric awnings will be on the windows, and the corners will have a metal awning.

Sullivan moved approval of the application, seconded by Peace, with the suggestions to ensure drainage through the concrete bench, and that the undersized pot indicated for a tree be reconsidered. Motion carried 7-0. Hind, Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan, Tilley and Wells voting 'yes'.

Entertainment District

West explained the layout of the Entertainment District. There is leasable outdoor area along the perimeter and large interior common courtyard space on the middle interiors.

Wells asked why there is a fence between Hiro 88 and the building to the south. West stated that there is a grade change of about 1.5 feet. It is a permanent fence.

Sullivan expressed a concern with the south and east sides, 7th Street and Q Streets. He is not in favor of the party zone continuing to grow. He believes the boundary of the zone should be moved in to the building on those two sides. West stated that any SDL needs to go through the City Council and those

boundaries will be set on an event by event basis. It is the intention on the developer side not to use 7th Street. However, on Q Street, there is an additional block that they hope to develop south of there. There is also the train station. There has been some discussion that it may connect to the midline of that street and extend an additional one. Their intention is to use Canopy Street. They would like some room on the north and south.

Salem stated that it makes sense to pull the zone on 7th Street to the building. They do not want to disrupt the Haymarket or traffic through the Haymarket. Sullivan questions Q Street for the same reasons. Tilley stated that she agrees with Sullivan for 7th Street, but it would be more difficult on Q Street. West stated that if the concern is closing Q Street, they are not able to do that. Hind recommended that there be a zone for staging. Sullivan stated there is a lot of area for an entertainment district. He believes that west of Canopy, it sets it up for the entire Q Street closing by their future development, and so there is another block of outdoor entertainment. East of Canopy, there is an allegiance to the Haymarket that the party doesn't need to continue. He is concerned about the atmosphere we are setting up in the district and letting it bleed further. One of the principles of the district is to be family oriented. Wells stated that Q Street might provide some of the quieter spaces where you are not right in the middle of the action, so she is not opposed to including Q Street. Tilley stated that she understands Sullivan's point, but by not activating that area, it really closes off those two blocks.

Salem stated that we do not know how this is going to shape out and we need to give some flexibility in how the area is controlled. The owners do not want to impede traffic flow every day. The hotel entrance and dropoff is on Q Street, so the vast majority of the time, the owner will want it open. We need to make sure the common outdoor areas are appropriate in this district. From time to time, an SDL will be taken out to expand these two districts. The day to day functions are the two common area blocks that will not require a street closure. Sullivan stated that he believes that Q Street should be alcohol free. West offered a compromise to move the Q Street line to the back of curb and off the street. This would limit their ability to close Q Street. There are a number of restaurants, which are food service first and bar second; the notion that these are college bars is completely untrue. He wants to attract people who respect the space and not have it be a crazy bar crawl atmosphere. He would like the opportunity to have the flexibility to see how it goes. If they need to be tighter with security, he would like the room at the sides to put up a 6 foot fence. He is hoping he does not have to do that and that it feels more pedestrian.

Sullivan made a recommendation that the east (7th Street) Entertainment District boundary is the building line and Q Street is the back of curb; seconded by Tilley. Motion carried 7-0. Hind, Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan, Tilley and Wells voting 'yes'.

Zimmer noted this is a recommendation to the City Council and he will deliver it in writing and in person.

Salem stated that she will talk to the Law Department about changing the boundaries in the legal description. Krout confirmed that this will be reviewed by City Council at Monday's meeting.

**Presentation on and discussion of “reFORM: Zoning reFORMs for a New Chapter of City Building”
(Planning Staff)**

Cary stated that reFORM is a large package of proposals, both zoning changes and design standards. These proposals are mainly for commercial areas, to encourage infill and redevelopment and placemaking. They want to have a discussion of these proposals and meet with as many groups as possible in July and then probably have a committee structure to look into more detail. They intend to have a refined package by the end of the year. They want to elevate the site and architectural design in commercial areas. A lot of the package is based on the energy, investment, level of design and pedestrian-friendliness in and around downtown in the last five years. They want this to ripple through the rest of the community. The basis for the package is from the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This is also driven by being competitive with other cities in economic development. We want Lincoln to be a place that people want to grow up and stay in and invest in. Part of that is creating attractive places. We looked at over two dozen cities that have established design standards that we learned from.

Hageman stated that the reFORM proposal is broken into four areas, which are 1) reMOVE zoning barriers; 2) reESTABLISH a sense of place in our commercial areas; 3) reINFORCE landscape/screening requirements; and 4) reALIGN zoning map with development goals.

- Strategies in the reMOVE section include the following: revise parking standards, streamline the project review processes, apply PUD tool to smaller development sites and provide flexibility for waivers, allow more opportunities for residential uses in commercial zoning districts, and expand options for residential infill.
- Strategies in the reESTABLISH section include establish design standards to encourage commercial and mixed use developments that are attractive, pedestrian-oriented, and enhance nearby neighborhoods; establish site development standards that make commercial and mixed use development more walkable; and create building design standards that make development more aesthetically pleasing.
- Strategies in the reINFORCE section include to provide better enforcement of existing landscape/screening standards, require street trees at the time of building permit if not planted as part of a new subdivision, require more parking lot trees, require solid fencing plus dense landscaping to separate more intensive uses from residential uses.
- Strategies in the reALIGN chapter include rezoning properties to align with desired design context.

Sullivan had to depart early, but commented that there is a lot of information presented and will take some time to go through this.

Hind stated that in Omaha the landscaping must be completed before a Certificate of Occupancy is given. That was easy from the designer’s perspective and was very effective, but it was difficult to get them to agree to the letter of credit. Krout stated that the City takes escrows for some kinds of public improvements, but we are trying to move away from that. We do take guarantees in some cases but not at the building permit level. It is an administrative step, but it is not self-enforceable as someone has to monitor it. Several departments spend a lot of time tracking down those delinquent letters. He believes a better way is enforcement after the planting has been put in. Why have laws if you are not going to enforce them? He has better confidence that is going to happen than some of the other ways.

Peace suggested that a certification letter could be sent by a certified designer and kept as part of the record stating that the landscaping has been put in according to the plan. Wells stated that one of the biggest issues is getting a good landscaping plan. There needs to be better review or a registered landscape architect in the design. She also noted that the landscape planting list needs to be updated as well.

Hind also asked about rain runoff. He stated that in Omaha you are required to retain the first half inch of rain on site. Krout commented that there is a cost benefit issue of stormwater management on site. Omaha has more reason to do that than Lincoln does, because of their blended storm/sanitary sewers. Hind wondered if there are some areas in Lincoln that may be beneficial to do that. Krout stated that there needs to be a larger community-wide consensus on this as it is more to do with public infrastructure. We do want to be very conscious of cost as well.

Hind commented that he starts to worry when we use language like unity and continuity. He questioned if there is a way to write this to allow for differences. Krout stated that there is an art in creating the standards to allow for flexibility but make them predictable as well.

Peace stated that he agrees with everything that was presented in the introduction, but the devil will be in the details. It is tough to be a designer in Lincoln, and there are already a lot of layers. If we introduce more layers and more rules, he would encourage that it be simple and that it's right there in the zoning ordinance. Hind commented that it also has to work on the economic side of things. You may need to adjust and do things differently.

Staff report/miscellaneous

Zimmer noted that the Mayor's Arts Awards are tonight, and Jeff Chadwick created an award for Enersen Award winners.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:23 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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