

TO: Urban Design Committee

FROM: Ed Zimmer

RE: Agenda of January 5, 2016

DATE: December 30, 2015

Item #2: 401 S. 21st St., Appeal of Downtown Design Standards

401 LLC, a joint entity of Nelnet and Speedway Properties, is undertaking a major remodeling of the office and operations building constructed in 1971 by Lincoln Telephone & Telegraph Company at 21st and L Streets. The red-brick building has entrances at the east and west sides and is otherwise windowless. To convert the building into office space for Nelnet, a major (exceeding 50% of assessed value) remodeling is proposed.

The Downtown Design Standards apply to all property zoned B-4 (Lincoln Center Business District) and



O-1. 401 S. 21st is zoned B-4. Major remodeling projects are required to “meet the applicable Design Standards that are feasible given existing site conditions.”

One of the applicable standards calls for street facades to “have transparent glazing in at least 50% of the area between four and nine feet above the sidewalk.”

The intent of this standard is

to offer a visual connection between interior and exterior, to enhance the experience of building occupants and especially passersby.

As proposed, the renovation would introduce windows into all four facades and on all three



stories. On the north and south facades, five bays of three windows per floor would be outlined in

decorative metal frames, an industrial-type “signature” or branding feature intended to be employed in various ways throughout the Telegraph District. The east (21st St.) façade would feature a similar metal frame including signs and logos, Vertical fins or sun shades are also proposed for the new windows on both the north and the south facades.



The transparency standards apply only to the east and the north facades, as the south and west sides should not be regarded as “street” facades. The proposed north windows are calculated to occupy just under 40% of the area specified for windows in the Standards, whereas 50% is required. The east façade falls considerably below 40%, with the large logo/metal art work proposed.

The Downtown Design Standards outline four pathways to approval:

- Administrative approval by Planning staff if all standards are met;
- Administrative approval by Planning Director if the intent of the standards are met with some minor deviation or alternative solution not strictly in compliance with the standards;
- Appeal to and approval by the Urban Design Committee upon a finding that the design is a creative solution that meets the intent of the ordinance;
- Appeal to and approval by City Council.

As this project is proposed as a publicly assisted (TIF) project, which is to be reviewed by a design board (or boards) as part of the redevelopment process, Planning Department found it appropriate to address the Downtown Design Standard deviation or waiver to the Urban Design Committee. The Assurity redevelopment project several years ago followed a similar process. As in the Assurity case, the

Planning Department recommends that the Committee make a finding that the proposed design meets the intent of the Downtown Design Standards given its setting, the constraints of the existing building design, and the very considerable enhancement of the building and its setting offered by the proposed design.

Item 3: **Antelope Square redevelopment project**

On January 6, 2016, the Planning Commission will consider an amendment to the Antelope Valley Redevelopment Plan for “Antelope Square.” Planning Commission reviews Redevelopment Plans and plan amendments for their conformance with the Comprehensive Plan. Urban Design Committee is asked to advise the city administration, the Planning Commission, and the City Council on the urban design merits of public projects and public-private endeavors.

Antelope Square is proposed as a joint venture of Assurity and NeighborWorks Lincoln. Located on portions of two blocks in the vicinity of 22nd and Q Streets, the project would produce 24 units of “single-family-attached” (rowhouse) residences, clustered in groups of two, four, or six unit groupings.

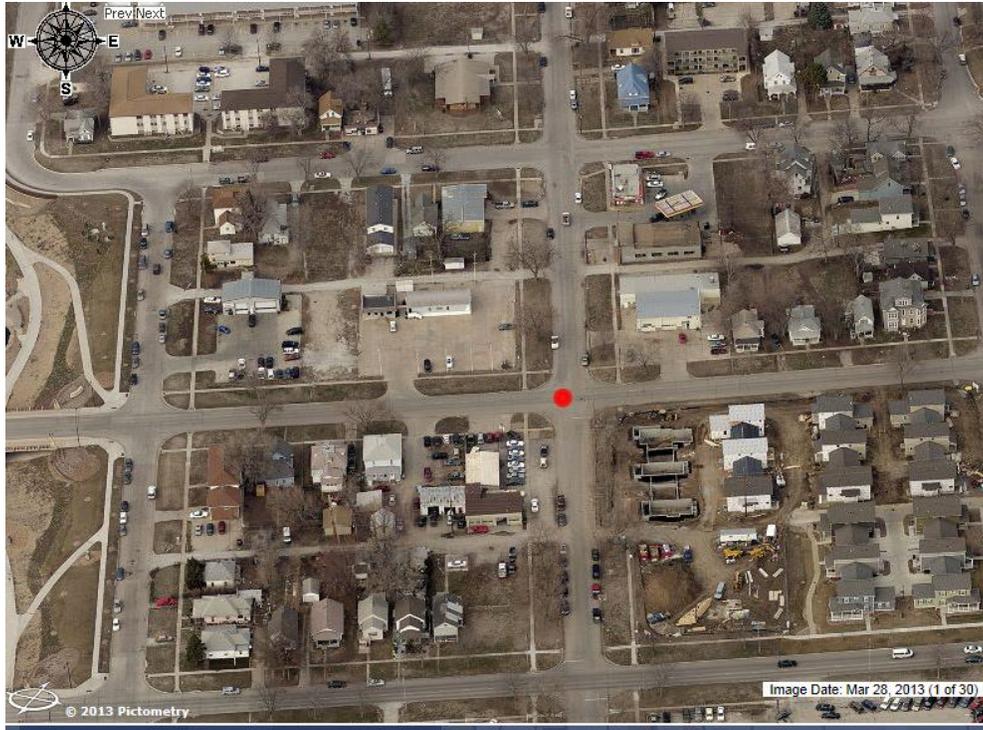
The Project Area is outlined below.



Antelope Square: Project Area



The general area is shown in the following aerial view from the south. The red dot is positioned at 23rd & Q Streets. This photo was taken in 2013 when NeighborWorks’ “Antelope Village” project was under construction on the block bounded by 23rd & 24th Sts. and P & Q Sts., shown at lower right. Antelope Square would be adjacent on the north and northwest to that completed, award-winning project.



At left is a sketch of the project area indicating the specific parcels involved. The property at the northeast and southwest corners of the 22-23-Q-R block is not involved, while on the 23-34-Q-R block only the southwest corner is available for the project.

The following rendering provides a perspective view from the southeast of the proposal. Representatives of the project will attend the meeting. They anticipate returning soon to a subsequent meeting of UDC to show more finished designs incorporating advice from the Committee.



Item 4: Update on upcoming meetings

The Committee will likely be asked to meet jointly with the Historic Preservation Commission in February to consider major redevelopment projects including Telegraph District and 9th & O hotel project. The Antelope Square redevelopment project will likely be returning to the UDC agenda in February as well.