

Urban Design Committee

Annual Report 2014

The Urban Design Committee was established by ordinance in 1981 to advise city government on enhancing the physical environment of Lincoln to enhance livability. By Section 4.36 of the Lincoln Municipal Code, the Committee has seven appointed citizen members serving three year terms. The Committee meets as necessary on the first Tuesday of the month at 3 p.m., changing from Wednesdays to assist the Planning Dept. staff by avoiding conflicts with Wednesday Planning Commission meetings.

Twelve meetings were held in 2014, including one special meeting. Following a resignation late in 2013, committee members at the beginning of 2014 included JoAnne Kissel (chair), Gill Peace, Michelle Penn (vice-chair), Scott Sullivan, Michele Tilley, and Mary Anne Wells. Scott Sullivan's term expired after many years of service, and Mary Anne Well resigned in 2014, followed by appointments of Tom Huston and Tammy Eagle Bull. At the end of the year, the Committee was awaiting one more appointment to return to full strength.

Project Implementation

The past year brought numerous projects to Lincoln and to the Urban Design Committee for review and advice, which will be described below. The year also saw completion of several very significant projects which the Committee had previously reviewed, including the Arena Drive parking garages in West Haymarket, "Project Oscar"/Olsson Associates Building at Canopy and P Streets, and the 50/50 student housing and parking structure at 18th and Q-R Streets. Substantial progress was also achieved on the Latitude student housing project on the "Gold's block" (10th -11th, M-N Streets) and Piedmont Center redevelopment. The P Street retail district streetscape improvements were substantially completed and Tower Square at 13th and P was dedicated in December.

2014 Projects

Projects that were first reviewed in 2013 such as the Piedmont Center, Olsson Building courtyard, aspects of West Haymarket redevelopment, and greenhouse development at Nebraska Innovation Campus returned to the Committee's agenda in 2014 for progress reports or review of revised plans.

In general, redevelopment projects again dominated the agenda. In April the Committee reviewed and recommended the Speedway Sporting Village redevelopment in southwest Lincoln.



Speedway Sporting Village

In May, the Committee reviewed and recommended approval of several licenses for installing art on public property, advising the City under a revised procedure for such installations.



"Pitch, Roll, Yaw" NW12th & W. Adams

In May, the Committee reviewed and recommended approval of several licenses for installing art on public property, advising the City under a revised procedure for such installations. The Committee also reviewed another large student-oriented housing project in May and June for 10th & Y Streets in North Bottoms, and recommended approval of the redevelopment project, with suggestions for improvements to the landscape plan.

The September, October, and November meetings all included design review of another large student housing projects involving four buildings centered on 18th and P Streets called “Aspen Heights.” The Committee made several suggestions in September and was complimentary of design progress achieved by the October meeting.



BLDG III SOUTH ELEVATION

Sept. 2014 image, north side of P St., 18th to Antelope Valley Parkway



Oct.. 2014 image, northwest corner of P St.at Antelope Valley Parkway

Recommendations included reorienting courtyards to face the streets, creating livelier pedestrian environments (and providing more sunlight to the “Building III” swimming pool). The Committee also recommended closer attention to landscaping and to the facades of the parking structure on the south side of P St., opposite Building III.

In November, further progress was shown on these aspects and the Committee again recommended approval of the redevelopment project.



Nov. 2014 image, parking structure on Antelope Valley Parkway & P St.

Concurrent with the Aspen Heights project, the Committee began review of another redevelopment at 23rd & O Street of a building constructed as a grocery store, then operated for many years as an office supply retailer. The redevelopment will convert the structure for healthcare uses. Design aspects of the project include returning to original features such as visible expression of the bowed roofline and of its laminated wood beams. Landscaping of the parking areas was strongly endorsed as an essential enhancement.



Oct. 2014 image, 23rd & O St. redevelopment.

Urban Development Department asked the Committee's advice and approval of a proposal to enhance the Elaine Hammer Pedestrian Bridge on N. 27th St. with lighting, for a more dynamic nighttime appearance. The proposal was recommended affirmatively.



TOP ARCH AND PIERS, PLUS BOTTOM CHORD
ALTERNATE BID LIGHTING
SCALE: NTS

Nov. 2014 image, Elaine Hammer Bridge, N. 27th St. near Y St.

A final redevelopment project reviewed in 2014 was an addition to the Swanson Russell Building at 12th and P Streets, intensifying the development of the site with an additional structure over the north parking area, linked to the existing building with an upper-story connector. The Committee strongly endorsed the project.



Dec. 2014 image, Swanson Russell addition at 12th & P Streets.

Larry Enersen Urban Design Award

The Committee has annually recognized significant urban design enhancements to the City through the Larry Enersen Urban Design Award, which was initiated in 1984. In 2013 and 2014, the Committee strengthened the award process by enlisting a “jury” of former UDC members and other design professionals to nominate award-worthy projects to the Committee for endorsement. Michele Tilley and Gordon Scholz co-chaired the jury, which also included Bob Ripley, Margaret Berry, and Tom Laging, with Planning staff support. The jury’s recommendation for 2013 of Fallbrook neighborhood and Antelope Creek Village in Malone was very well received and the process was again followed at the end of 2014, resulting in an award decision which will be announced later in 2015 among the Mayor’s Arts Awards.

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