

## MEETING RECORD

Advanced public notice of the Urban Design Committee meeting was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website.

<b>NAME OF GROUP:</b>	URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE
<b>DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:</b>	Tuesday, May 6, 2025, 3:00 p.m., County-City Building, City Council Chambers, 555 S. 10 <sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE.
<b>MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Jill Grasso, Emily Deeker and Michelle Penn. Gill Peace. Tom Huston, Mark Canney and Michael Harpster absent.
<b>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Paul Barnes and Kristi Merfeld of the Planning Department; Nate Burnett Rega Engineering; Mark Bacon and Adam Sitzman BVH Architecture; Kerin Peterson Public Building Commission; and other Interested parties.

Acting Chair Penn called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room.

Minutes from the meeting held on March 4, 2025 were not approved due to a lack of quorum.

Penn said the item on the agenda today is an advisory review and there is no final action today.

### ADVISE:

**UDR25041 Lincoln Lancaster County Public Building  
Commission Parking Garage Expansion**

**May 6, 2025**

Members present: Grasso, Deeker and Penn. Harpster, Peace, Canney and Huston absent.

**Arvind Gopalakrishnan Planning Department, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street Ste 213 Lincoln, NE,**

Came forward and stated the project site is at 425 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street and is currently a 2-level parking deck North of the City County Building. The site is in the B4 zoning district. This is subject to downtown design standards and is compliant with the standards. The existing parking deck is owned by the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County. The Urban Design Committee is to provide an advisory review of the project for building design that is compatible with its surroundings and streetscape design. The goal of the project is to provide a minimum of 915 stalls, including public and private parking. This also includes accommodation for handicap stalls, EV stalls, and fleet vehicles. This will be accomplished by adding three levels of precast concrete parking decks, installed on top of the second level of the existing parking structure. Currently, there are 478 stalls and with this proposal, it will increase to 960.

Gopalakrishnan said he would go over some of the design moves, but representatives from BVH Architecture and Rega Engineering are here to go over additional details of the entrance. First, the K Street entrance will be closed, and a new entrance and exit are proposed on 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The existing entrance and exit locations serving level 1 will remain on L Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. New access control gates are planned for all new and existing entrance locations. Also, new building signage and wayfinding are proposed for the entire facility. Architectural precast concrete will be used on all four sides of the structure. The Southwest and North facades will use precast fins that emulate the architecture of the existing campus. The East façade will use precast panels with vertical openings to contrast with the other faces of the building. The use of form liners and colored concrete will be implemented to refine the precast, creating a lasting design element.

Differentiating the East façade from the others will help provide a visual cue and help pedestrians and vehicles identify the main stair tower and parking entry. At the bottom of the level there will be a five bay parking area. Levels 2-5 will be three bay structured parking. There will be two basic user groups, public and employees. There will be designated parking for each group. Employees will occupy the entire lower level. That is considered level 1. A portion of level 3 and all levels of 4 and 5 will be employee parking. The public will occupy level 2 and a portion of level 3. Levels 2-5 will have a central internal vehicular ramp. Level 1 will not have an internal ramp connecting it to the upper levels 2-5.

The existing access point into the garage off K Street will be removed. There will be an expanded entry in the form of two lanes into the garage off 10<sup>th</sup> Street. Two exit lanes will also be onto S 10<sup>th</sup> Street to allow for more efficient flow of traffic out of the

garage. The existing access points on L and S 9<sup>th</sup> Street will remain in their current locations, but with a new access control.

Gopalakrishnan commented that based on the design staff, it is proposed to be conditionally approved, with some improvements being suggested. There is support for the fins lighting and the overall architectural treatment of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street façade, which is recognized as the primary face. The elevation shows a strong civic presence, while it incorporates precast concrete fins on the Southwest and North façade. It is suggested that to strengthen the identity and visual appeal of these facades, that some additional design elements such as perforated or colored metal panels could be added. This location is less visible in the broader urban context. The recommendation is to relocate or replicate the mural concept on the more prominent side of K and 9<sup>th</sup> Street. Gopalakrishnan, encouraged the design team to explore variations in that concept. The plan in the packet does not have the updated master plan, but new trees would also be planted around the building.

Penn asked if the site plan has been updated now with the downtown corridor and that it seems to show more trees on the corridor master plan.

Gopalakrishnan said Yes, the plan shows the downtown corridors.

Grasso, verified that the construction documents at the end of the packet are the updated plan.

Deeker said there is a double lane on 10<sup>th</sup> street, which the downtown corridors did not anticipate and does that account for not having four trees planted at this spot.

Grasso commented, yes, there are two trees here, but it can't happen in this plan.

Deeker asked if traffic engineering has reviewed the double lanes.

**Mark Bacon BVH Architecture ,440 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street #140, Lincoln, NE** came forward and stated that the traffic study and field work has been performed, but the final report has not been issued yet for the determination of the multiple lanes.

**Nate Burnett Rega Engineering, 601 Old Cheney Street Ste A, Lincoln, NE** came forward and said that LTU conceptually approved this plan last week. They do want to incorporate keeping those entrances and exits as close together as possible but will wait for the results from the traffic study. Looking at typical everyday traffic, only one

exit would be open and then for special events, the dual lanes could be opened up to help with the traffic control.

Burnett mentioned the topic of trees. There are a lot of utilities on this block to try and avoid. Electrical lines, fiber, storm sewer and water. These things that are located on the Southeast part of the block make it crowded, and then there is a turn lane into the garage on the North half. The trees have about 40-foot spacing, so it could potentially be shifted down to get another tree planted. We will work with Collin Christopher to see if the requirements are being met for the 10<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape.

Penn asked if there is a sidewalk all along L Street.

Burnett stated Yes, there is a sidewalk and some grass. At the entrance of the employee parking on level one, then it is either concrete, sidewalk or a turn lane.

Bacon asked Burnett if that existing condition is to remain as it is.

Burnett replied yes.

Penn questioned the 9<sup>th</sup> Street intersection and asked if this was 9<sup>th</sup> Street or 10<sup>th</sup> Street that they were looking at. Penn said this is an important intersection in our city and wondered why they chose that option.

Bacon said the intent while looking at the facades of the building is really about wayfinding at vehicular speeds. When a person is trying to navigate the entrance and exit into a parking garage, the most appropriate way is to use the building to signify where those access points are located. It was mentioned to have Adam Sitzman discuss this approach. People will be driving or walking from this parking garage on the East specifically the Southeast corner. This architecture is being used to reinforce that, instead of leaving the parking garage exposed with beams and floor structure showing. So, it was decided to wrap all three sides with similar expression of what is seen in the renderings. The facades were elevated, rather than leaving it exposed.

Deeker asked if this view is what is being talked about right now and not relocating the mural.

Bacon said the mural is not part of the project and is not required to be part of the project. However, with this big blank wall, it could lead to an opportunity for a mural or something.

Penn asked if there was anything else in the renderings that were not really a part of the project.

Bacon said no.

Grasso wanted to confirm that the Southwest corner shows the elevation and fins turning the corner.

Bacon replied yes, that is the Southwest corner on 9<sup>th</sup> Street.

Grasso asked if the fins are going to be wrapped around since it is not an entrance or exit.

Bacon said yes, that is correct.

Grasso asked where the doors are located and are they just pedestrian doors.

Bacon stated that there is a stair tower for people to use within the parking garage itself. Most people that come to this complex of buildings use the Southeast corner about 98% of the time.

Grasso asked if this would really be an exit, if it exists onto the street.

Bacon said there are really no doors on the 9<sup>th</sup> Street side of the City County building, which is how it exists now.

Penn confirmed that this exists now.

Bacon stated, that's true.

Penn asked what material the fins are made from.

Bacon commented that it was precast concrete.

Penn said, it's the same gray color and that is why it looks all gray.

Grasso asked if there is any colored precast available. On the renderings it is hard to see the color differentiation.

Bacon commented that the East side has the suggested mural, and it would be a different color than the rest of the parking garage. Since we are working with an existing parking garage, that has precast, it is hard to try and negotiate what is new and what is existing. It will be extremely difficult to match the existing precast concrete color, just because of wear and tear and the age of the materials.

**Adam Sitzman BVH Architecture 440 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street # 140, Lincoln, NE** came forward and clarified that the colored concrete is still being determined and the goal is to differentiate it from the rest of the massing to express the wayfinding ability to get people to that location. Part of this is being on four one-way roads and drawing people around the block to get back around again.

Sitzman said having any sort of differentiation allows for wayfinding to happen. That would include the height extending up above the rest of the mass and then a break away from the color and form of the reveals compared to the fins. This makes it very clear where you are supposed to enter as a vehicle or as a pedestrian.

Penn said the core that faces East is higher and the variance in color doesn't wrap around.

Sitzman said that is correct. Here is a view of the Southeast corner showing how far that extent goes. It currently matches the existing footprint of the structure below. There are two elevators and a stair tower at this location. The same footprint is being utilized to build vertically at this location.

Sitzman commented that the only portion of the South façade that has treatment is just at the stairs, which is the primary means of wayfinding and for vertical circulation for pedestrians.

Deeker said the stair tower is popping up higher, just at the corner, but the rest of the façade was treated to wrap around.

Bacon said that is correct. It also occupies the existing footprint of the stair tower. It is just being extended to add three floors of parking.

Sitzman stated that the height extends up to the minimum amount also. For the upper level to be covered, the other end will extend slightly higher, as it has the

elevators for space. There is a height difference between the Southeast end and the Southwest end.

Grasso said the staff comments led to treating this corner as a little more of a focal point.

Barnes agreed with that comment.

Penn asked for an explanation about the solar panels and on the taller side where is it colored.

Bacon said there is precast concrete on the East side. There is a proposal for a structure that would support a PV array of 25kw solar panels for power on site and lighting the entire garage. There has been ongoing discussion with LES and the Public Building Commission to work this out.

Penn asked who owns the building. Is it city owned.

Bacon stated that the Public Building Commission and Lancaster County owns the building.

Penn said the budget was being looked at for this garage.

**Kerin Peterson, Administrator Public Building Commission; Director of Facilities and Properties for Lincoln and Lancaster County 555 So 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE**

came forward and said that block 101 is anything that the Public Building Commission, via interlocal agreement, has the authority and capacity to provide infrastructure for local government to do business in, and part of this is parking but not only staff parking. It is important to make it easy for our constituents to come and do business here and make it free for a period of time. It is our responsibility to this. The Public Building Commission built the original public parking structure, but the land underneath is what is owned by the city and county. So, we don't own the land or the buildings. It is a split ownership between the city and county.

Peterson also stated that the Public Building Commission was charged with building the structure to keep people in business and have a central location to make things more accessible. The revenue on this project would be funded by revenue bonds and the Public Building Commission would issue those bonds. It is our responsibility to use our levy to pay those bonds back.

Penn asked if the budget of 20 million that would be raised by bonds.

Peterson, responded that the budget is for 20 million by using bonds.

Penn said the Rosa Parkway is a struggle for the 9<sup>th</sup> street intersection. She doesn't feel like it has a presence like it might have, as it is a gateway into the city. This should be looked at more closely.

Penn stated that she was not sure if there was an issue with the budget for the building or if it could take on more of a visual statement. There are some nice parking garages in the city, to attract people coming into downtown. Just curious if the budget is why the corner is being ignored as an important area.

Bacon commented that the budget is a concern, but not the only concern. They have looked at maintenance and durability and they are trying to think of all aspects of the diminished appearance of the corner. It is being elevated with architectural fins that provide safety for people, diminish the stair tower and does not signify the area as an entry point for cars to get confused. This is not used heavily by pedestrians.

Sitzman mentioned that there was a study to create a clear design language, not only verticality but also a solid and void balance of buildings. This is to try and create an entire sense of campus, so it is not just a flat lot and looks appealing with the rest of the buildings.

Grasso said, when driving down Rosa Parks, it is flat, and it is clear with the wayfinding on 10<sup>th</sup> Street where the entrance and exits are located. There needs to be something more than just wrapping the fins and something brought down at the streetscape level. The visual should not be high, but more at the street level. This would make it more of a campus and not just someplace to park. Grasso wanted an explanation on the night view.

Bacon, said architectural lighting is being used for safety and security, but also wayfinding. The interest for the building is to enhance the civic condition primarily for 10<sup>th</sup> Street, but lighting will also be used for the other three facades as well.

Sitzman said some of the existing lighting that is being proposed is just within the main body and the fins open up the lighting into that space. We are doing our best to find a balance for security and reduce the light load, so it is not so overwhelming.



There will be motion sensors to bring up the lighting when people are occupying it and bring it down to accommodate it when it is not occupied.

Penn asked if the fins light up.

Bacon said yes, on the East façade, the fins will help light the building and the sidewalk below.

Sitzman stated that there is lighting proposed on the metal fins that protrude outward on the east facade, whereas the precast concrete fins on the other three sides are just lit with the interior general parking lighting. There are no actual fixtures mounted to the precast concrete fins.

Penn suggested that lighting on the SW corner could help that look as well.

Bacon said, they just had a meeting with the electrical engineer and are continuing to develop the design process for lighting.

Deeker asked if the Southwest corner of the garage was an open stair.

Bacon said no, this is an enclosed stair.

Sitman commented that there are darker windows in between the fins of the stair tower.

Deeker stated that the design looks a little brutal with the rhythm of the fins as an entry to the city. This needs to be thought about differently. If that means introducing a mural or something. There is not much space because of the busy intersection.

Penn likes the other side of the building and wish it could be flipped. She would like the precast fins taken off the stair tower. The mural looks nice but most people won't see it. She stated she would like to know the mayor's opinion on such an entry point to the city and downtown area.

Grasso agreed that the color is dark and something is needed to look more significant.

Bacon said, it was not expressed to anyone that this was seen as the gateway to the city. This was new information that is being conveyed.

Grasso stated that the design process is at this corner, and it needs the next layer of design because everyone wants it to look good.

Bacon asked if murals and color design comments are from the Urban Design Committee.

Penn agreed that the corner needs to look significant coming down 9<sup>th</sup> Street or off Rosa Parks. The comments are reflective in what else can be done to emphasize this corner.

Bacon thinks it is about the significance of the corner and not about the mural or color.

Grasso agreed that it is more than just the mural, it is about the corner.

Grasso wanted to end on a positive note by commenting that the design of this building is tied in well with the other buildings, but now the issue is how can the corner be enhanced.

Penn said it is the city county parking garage, and a transportation center is coming at the other end of the block, so putting our best foot forward is important.

Gopalakrishnan said the designs are reflected well to the other buildings. This will need to be back on the agenda in June for final action and to discuss in further detail.

Barnes said he would convey to the design team that there needs to be a couple of meetings to discuss this. Staff would recommend that the suggestions are reviewed and discussed at the June meeting for further review.

Deeker mentioned planting trees at the corner to bring it to the pedestrian level.

Burnett said this is the only corner that does not have a bump out.

Penn recommended that this item needs to be discussed again at next month's meeting with more ideas on the project.

## **UPDATES:**

Gopalakrishnan said there is a mural with a smiley face in the intersection of 35<sup>th</sup> and Washington Street. The applicant wants to update it with a new design, and that is to be a football player and helmet. This doesn't require a vote, it just gets approved administratively. It was stated that they want to paint it before June 1.

Penn asked if it is run through an image scanner and if there is any underlying meaning of this image.

Gopalakrishnan stated he tried to reach out to the applicant to verify that there is not any hidden meaning with this mural.

**ACTION:**

There was no further discussion on this item and no further business to discuss, so the meeting was adjourned at 3:59pm.