

Urban Design Committee

2016 Annual Report

The Urban Design Committee was established by ordinance in 1981 to advise city government on enhancing the physical environment of our city to increase enjoyment of living in and visiting Lincoln. 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.

Ten meetings were held in 2016, including four joint meetings with the Historic Preservation Commission. Urban Design Committee members included Michelle Penn (chair), Gill Peace (vice-chair), Emily Casper, Tammy Eagle Bull, Tom Huston, JoAnne Kissel, and Michele Tilley.

The Planning Department made some staffing adjustments and assigned Stacey Groshong Hageman as the lead staff to the Committee, supported by Ed Zimmer and Teresa McKinstry.

The past year was a very productive one. Numerous projects were brought to the Urban Design Committee for review and advice (as described below), several of which were strengthened greatly by their input.

Lincoln Children's Zoo Expansion

The Committee's advice on the Zoo expansion project was particularly meaningful as their concerns were received in the positive light in which they were offered and incorporated to the betterment of this important project.

Representatives of the Lincoln Children's Zoo and the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department brought a Master Plan for the Zoo expansion to UDC in July and August. The Committee's advice was sought for this major project which involved complex interactions with many public facilities located on or near the Antelope Park Triangle including trails, the Rose Garden, the Strolling Garden, the Chet Ager Building, and the Parks and Recreation Administration Building.



The initial plans brought to the Committee proposed expansion of the Zoo on the Triangle, maintaining the Parks and Recreation building, and relocating the Zoo's primary parking lot south of A Street. Because A Street is an arterial street, concerns were raised about 1,000s of people, particularly young children, crossing the street at grade and, therefore, the proposal included a pedestrian bridge over A Street.

◀ Zoo's Initial Site Plan

UDC was enthusiastic about the expansion but felt strongly that the intimate setting of the Zoo be maintained by recommending that the Zoo's guest experience, including parking, be located within the Triangle. Further, the Committee recommended the reconsideration and re-evaluation of each use on the Triangle, including the Parks & Rec building, the southwest corner of the Triangle, the Gardens, and the Retired Teachers Fountain, to avoid the complex parking and entrance solution required by locating the primary Zoo patron parking south of A Street.

In August, an updated plan for the Zoo was brought to UDC that addressed their concerns. The new plan moved the Parks & Rec office off the Triangle and utilized the southwest corner for visitor parking. The Committee expressed appreciation that their advice for the long-term vision of the Antelope Park Triangle was reflected in the Zoo's Master Plan.

Revised Master Plan



Antelope Square (22nd & Q Streets)

Antelope Square, a joint venture of Assurity and NeighborWorks Lincoln, is located on portions of two blocks in the vicinity of 22nd and Q Streets. The Committee reviewed the proposal for 24 “single-family-attached” residences in January and February, advising on the urban design merits of the public-private endeavor. UDC recommended approval of the project and expressed their enthusiasm for the rowhouse-style development and hope that more phases of similar housing would be implemented in the area.

Site Plan



View of Rowhouses

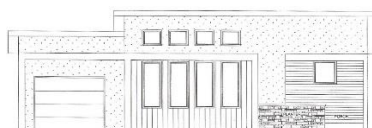


Hartley Infill House (224 N 28th Street)

The Committee spent much time and effort on this Urban Development Dept. project in 2015, approving a design in June that proved to be too costly to build and recommending denial of a modernistic design in October that was not compatible with its setting. Urban Development’s intention was to produce a model, affordable home for a very small lot. With the assistance of Stacey Hageman, the design was revised to maximize the home’s street presence and provide alley access to the garage. UDC recommended approval of the 2016 design in April.



◀ June 2015



◀ October 2015

April 2016 ▶



48th & Holdrege Redevelopment

2016 brought two large-scale redevelopment projects to the Committee that were located outside of greater downtown. In April, UDC reviewed plans for a five story mixed-use building located at the northeast corner of 48th and Holdrege with retail on the first floor and 98 residential units above. The Committee recommended its approval.

Proposed Redevelopment from Southwest

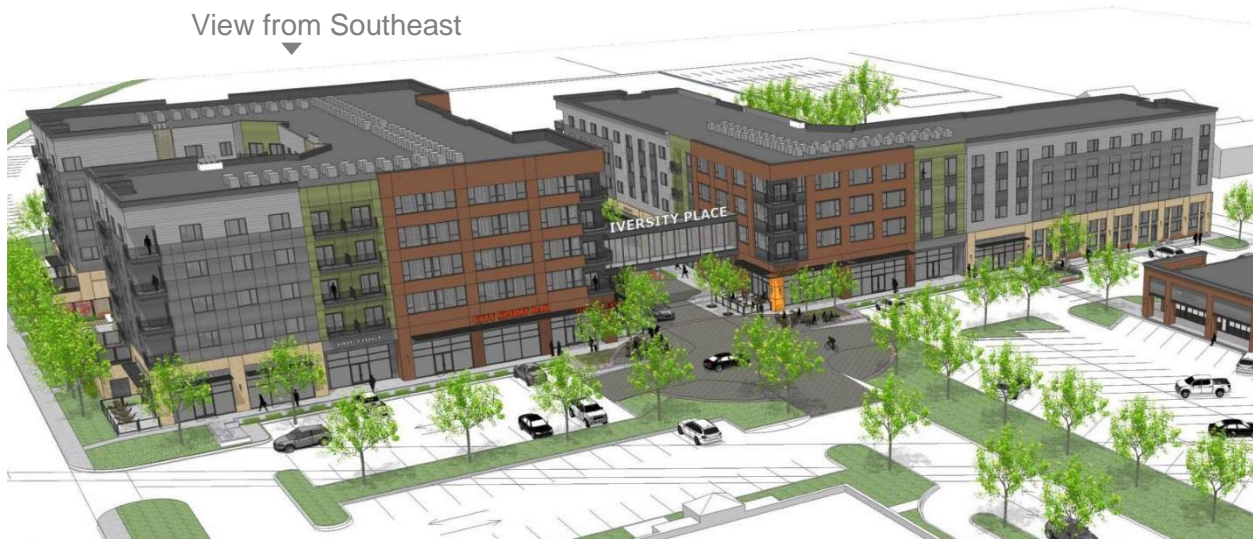


48th & Leighton Redevelopment

For 48th and Leighton, a second outside-of-downtown project was presented to the Committee in September. The project would redevelop the shopping center at this location into a mixed-use development. The first phase would establish a street network within the site and construct two buildings with commercial/office space on the first floor and residential above.



A later second phase would likely continue the same pattern of development on the western portion of the site. UDC supported the project and recommended approval.



Mixed-Use Redevelopment (1222 P Street)

A redevelopment proposal was seen in November for the former Swanson Russell building at 1222 P Street (vacated when the agency built a new addition which was approved by UDC in 2015). The design juxtaposed new and old by adding 3 floors of residential atop the 1921 storefront. The Committee advocated for greater differentiation of old and new with an asymmetrical design of the addition, greater setback from the existing façade, and bolder material choice. The revised design shown below was approved by the Committee in December.



Telegraph District, Phase I

Three joint meetings were held in 2016 with the Historic Preservation Commission. Projects are reviewed jointly when they involve historic properties and public property or public assistance.

A joint meeting with HPC was held in October 2015 to review the “Telegraph District” redevelopment project by Speedway Properties and Nelnet in the vicinity of 21st and N streets. In January 2016, this project returned to the Committee for specific advice on Phase I. The office building and parking garage which flank L Street on the west side of 21st Street were part of this phase.

HPC reviewed the project because the National Register-eligible LT&T Warehouse is located across 21st Street from these two buildings. UDC’s advice was sought not only because this is a TIF project with public investment, but also because of the large-scale, urban design impact the overall project will have.

The Committee also reviewed the design of the south building (401 S 21st St) for an appeal of Downtown Design Standards relating to the amount of transparency provided at street level and recommended approval of the design as a vast



improvement to the building.

▲
View of 401 S 21st
from Northeast

►
View of 333 S 21st
from Southeast



Lumberworks Garage Liner Building (Canopy & O Streets)

In October and November, the Lumberworks Liner Building was reviewed jointly. Because the project had city involvement through TIF and land acquisition, the Committee made suggestions in its role as urban design advisor on public-private projects. HPC reviewed the project based on its proximity to the Historic Haymarket District.

UDC recommended that the north façade not mimic the west façade and instead relate more to Historic Haymarket. The design pictured below was recommended for approval by the Committee.



9th & O Redevelopment

The Committee reviewed a proposal for a redevelopment at this prominent 9th and O Street corner at a joint meeting with HPC in November. The 12 to 16 story building would house two hotels and a mix of commercial and residential uses as well as a parking garage. Following discussion on materials, window openings, and programming, the Committee recommended approval.



◀ View from Northwest

Downtown and Neighborhood Design Standards

Infill projects that meet the Downtown and the Neighborhood Design Standards can be approved administratively by Planning staff, which occurred for almost three dozen projects in 2016. Applicants proposing alternative solutions can appeal to UDC. The Committee handled two such requests in 2016. The first appeal was for a new residence along an alley near 40th and Sheridan (4030 Calvert). The Neighborhood Design Standards were difficult to apply as they address a building as it relates to the street and the adjacent houses along the street. UDC recommended approval. The second appeal was for a garage conversion at 4919 Glade to which the applicant and Committee agreed on a solution that would meet the design standards, essentially withdrawing the requested waiver.

Other Reviews

In July, the Committee recommended approval of entryway features at Union College which are to be located on public right-of-way. Plans included decorative pavers, signs, lighting, and seating/gathering spaces delineated by curved brick walls and planters.

Proposed Union College Entryway



The initial design of the Hudl Headquarter Building in West Haymarket was reviewed by UDC and HPC in 2015. A revised design including streetscape improvements and plans for the public courtyard to be located on the block were presented at joint meetings in February and October. The Committee recommended approval and expressed their interest in making the courtyard inviting to the public and an overall pleasant space to be. Once plans are finalized for the building directly north of Hudl, more refined designs for the courtyard will be brought back to a joint meeting for review.

The Committee regularly reviews applications for sidewalk cafes and vendor carts throughout the City as they are typically located on public property. In 2016, UDC saw six such requests for HopCat, Falafel King, Cottonwood Cafe, Highnooners Deli, Badang (sidewalk vendor), and The Mill at Prescott.

The South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan, presented to the Committee last year, was adopted by City Council in December 2015. The South Haymarket plan recommended the adoption of South Haymarket Design Standards and various zoning changes to the B-4 and O-1 zoning districts. The Committee reviewed the design standards and zoning changes in December and recommended their approval.

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. Beginning in 2013, 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 2015 winner—announced in 2016—was the Lincoln Mall Revitalization.

The citation celebrated the thorough transformation of this key urban corridor linking local and state government through numerous projects over four decades. These included the envisioning of Lincoln Mall in the 1970s, its creation in the 1980s and upgrading in the 1990s. Farmers Mutual headquarters, Landmark I, and Landmark III each transformed full blocks of Lincoln Mall, while numerous small projects—rehab and new construction—raised up smaller portions resulting in a high quality urban environment.

The jury’s recommendation and Committee’s choice for 2017 will be announced among the Mayor’s Arts Awards.

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