

## 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.

**NAME OF GROUP:** URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Tuesday, June 3, 2025, 3:00 p.m., County-City Building, City Council Chambers, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, NE.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Emily Deeker, Jill Grasso, Michael Harpster, Tom Huston, Gill Peace and Michelle Penn.  
Mark Canney absent.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Paul Barnes and Kristi Merfeld of the Planning Department; Mark Bacon BVH Architecture; Kerin Peterson Public Building Commission; Ben Kunz Project Manager Hoppe Development; and other Interested parties.

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

Penn said the Urban Design Committee action is final on the agenda today for items 1 and 4. The other items are an advisory review and a recommendation to the appropriate review body.

Penn then called for the approval of the minutes for the regular meetings held on March 4 and May 6, 2025.

Motion for approval of the minutes made by Huston, seconded by Deeker, and approved 6-0: Deeker, Grasso, Harpster, Huston, Peace and Penn voting "yes". Canney absent.

**ADVISE:**

**UDR25011 Updated Sidewalk Café Enclosure for Bison Witches Café**

**Public Hearing**

**June 3, 2025**

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

**Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Planning Department, 555 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street Ste 213 Lincoln, NE,** came forward and stated that the Bison Witches sidewalk café has come back with an updated design since the meeting held in March. This design shows a wrap-around low-height wall with a masonry panel system. At the last meeting, it was decided that a brightly colored wall was not the desired look that was trying to be achieved. So, the new proposal shows a neutral color. Gopalakrishnan asked the members for some input on the color and appearance of the wall.

Gill is present today and will speak about the materials and especially the installation of the low-height wall, the new columns, and the joining between them and the existing pavers. If there is any formal removal of the pavers, the artist would need to be contacted and possibly coordinated with the Parks Department about this removal. Gopalakrishnan did not think there would be much of a disturbance to the pavers, but that would need to be clarified. There are some questions proposed from Urban Development Department and that is, if the intent was to rest the panel assembly on the pavers with no footing of the foundation, how would frost action be mitigated and would it affect anything. Also, would the new columns that are shown be in a frost free footing.

**Gill Peace, Peace Studio Architects Inc, 1835 Kings Hwy Suite B Lincoln, NE** came forward and mentioned focusing on the differences from the last proposal to this one today and highlighting those items. The South end and the North end in previous designs were all store front and had segmented sections that face the courtyard. This was intended to be clear roll down motorized screens.

Peace stated that when working with Bison Witches, they requested that a section of the ends have roll-down screens. In a previous version, this was all storefronts across and the same with the opposite end. Now, there is a section of fixed storefront across and a fixed section of storefront with a door, and the opposite end is similar. Both doors are required for an egress, not only for safety, but also for the licensing of that outdoor space. The section that is showing open on the drawing is the fascia of the roll-down screen system.

The segmented side is hidden by the fascia up inside the structure of the existing steel structure, which holds the roof up. The roof and most of the columns are existing, underneath the segmented sections, as well as the ends of the existing handrails. To

get a good enclosure, the handrail guardrail will need to be closed. Otherwise, the air that we are trying to keep in the space will be going right through the handrails.

Peace, said Arvind, had mentioned that there are a couple of new columns being presented, and pointed them out on the drawing on the corners of the café. The new columns are there to hold the storefront in place. This assembly would require a few of the columns to disrupt the pavers and they would need a frost-free footing. This can be done under the depth of the pavers, and the pavers can be put back. This would be the least disruptive to the paving in the existing plaza.

Grasso asked if the existing roofline is curved.

Peace responded that yes, the roofline is segmented.

Grasso responded does this match.

Peace stated that the pattern starts at the tower with concentric circles that get bigger and bigger as you go out, and the existing section is segmented to follow the curve and the alternating stripes of the paver colors.

The other component that had been asked about is should the lower wall be an interesting primary color. A response was never received, so it was determined to keep it muted, and it is shown in gray, though the color has not been decided yet. All the existing steel is dark grey and would be a muted tone for the exterior portion of the wall and the dark bronze storefront, which matches the existing openings in the building.

The existing handrails and steel structure above are segmented, but it does follow the curve of the radiating pavers.

Peace discussed the materials being used, which are made from illumination series masonry panels that are 5/8 thick and are hard and very durable. They have been used on several projects in the downtown area. Marriott Courtyard on 8<sup>th</sup> and S Street has large sections of these panels. They are 6 ft by 18 inches. One of the items that has been asked is to show an example of how this will be attached to the existing handrail. This is structurally sound and will be left in place for the new lower wall.

There will be a 3/8 to half-inch float to this wall with beveled flashing to allow for some movement, and we feel this is better than tearing everything down and doing a frost-free footing. This way the materials are not disturbed any more than necessary. Peace pointed out on the drawing where the clear panels are in different openings. There is no paneling with about 85 percent opacity. It has been difficult to get a sample from the company, as no one answers the phone, and it is all automated.

Michael asked if the company was running by AI capabilities.

Peace, answered yes, he thought so.

Grasso questioned if these were manual or motorized and the previous discussion called for them to be motorized, but there was a concern with the cost.

Peace said yes, they are motorized, but the company may also suggest a manual approach to save money. It would be nice to have an option. Motorized will make the turnover quicker and everyone is interested in that.

Huston asked if the panels would only be used in certain parts of the year.

Peace responded that the current screens require a significant effort to open and close. Now they could close on demand due to weather. They will not have to wait for a change of seasons to close them.

Grasso commented that the initial issue was aesthetics and the storm door egress. Now there is a permanent structure, with transparency and the option to open and close. This would allow them to be up all year round.

Grasso asked what the material on the roller shades are made from, a polyvinyl.

Peace replied that they have not been able to get an answer from the company about the materials, but we want it to be as transparent as possible. So, that is why the 85% transparency has been chosen, to keep it as clear as possible. The current screen is a red rectangle with only a couple of small clear panels. The new transparent panel would allow a good view of the plaza area and dining area.

Huston mentioned the current staff report identifies three issues that were being asked and that is:

1. Color of the low height wall
2. Type of shade being proposed
3. Method of installation and impact on the pavers

The installation will make these lower walls float and will not interfere with the integrity of the pavers.

Peace, said yes, that is correct.

Huston asked what about the other 2 questions.

Peace said a Sherman Williams color has not been selected yet, but the existing steel color is an option. Peace knows Grasso is aware of the Grizzle Grey color and this should be a shade lighter than that color. So, it matches, but not the same color as the steel.

Penn commented that the yellow color is not a choice anymore.

Peace agreed, and with no feedback on color choices, the more neutral approach is being taken.

Penn said the yellow color would be too loud. So, the opaqueness looks like it has a frame around it. The renderings are showing it clear from the track and will it be clear from track to track, the way it is being represented.

Peace said unless the shade company states that there is a technical reason why that is not an option and until we get samples, our goal is to make it from jam to jam one clear plastic panel or mostly clear panel.

Grasso asked what the distance is from column to column, on the west side, like 12 feet.

Penn, commented that she thought it was 10 feet.

Gopalakrishnan said 10 feet

Peace said the company will fit the best one and hope that they won't be too long. There is also a company out of Canada that makes these and thought it should be a good product for Nebraska. A company in Omaha makes a competing product at a cost-effective rate. This is the company that is being proposed to supply the panels for this project.

Grasso commented that she worked on a project and used canvas before and was difficult to transport because they were heavy. Her opinion was to look at the colors more closely, since this is more of an addition, but everything else has improved and looks like a covered patio now.

Peace asked if she knew the supplier of that product.

Penn asked if there was a motion for this item.

Huston asked if a motion could be approved and not require discussion on this item again. There could be an approval with the conditions that a sample would be provided if the materials are different from what was proposed today in reference to transparency and colors.

Peace said that makes sense.

Penn agreed as well.

Huston moved for approval, Deeker seconded and carried 5-0: Deeker, Grasso, Harpster, Huston, and Penn voting “yes”. Peace abstained. Canney absent.

**UDR25041 Expansion of the Public Building Commission Parking Garage at 425 S 10<sup>th</sup> Street**

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**June 3, 2025**

**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 she had brought updates to include some additional design elements and transparency to the southwest stair tower, which was a concern. We think some ideas are more befitting, as a primary entryway focal point into our city. Kerin stated that she was going to ask for approval today, so that the process can continue and meet critical deadlines for the project.

**Mark Bacon BVH Architecture ,440 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street #140, Lincoln, NE**

came forward and stated that the presentation today reflects all the current materials, and focuses on the Southwest 3<sup>rd</sup> tower. Bacon continued saying that when this was in review a month ago, it was agreed that the design aesthetics should relate to each other and the design should relate to the other stair towers and contributes to the city gateway of Rosa Parks and the residence façade. The landscaping elements need to soften this edge. We have opened through the use of glass on the West side both at the street level and the upper levels of the stair tower, and changed the color of the

precast concrete that is the stair enclosure. This will more closely match the East stair tower, which allows the contrast of the stair tower to the fins that wrap around the Southwest and North facades of the parking garage. The precast concrete fins have a different texture than the stair towers would have.

As it turns into nighttime, the building starts to look different, as shown with examples. There are wayfinding elements within the stair tower to remind people what level you are coming from or going to. Rather than have those applications on the wall, they would appear on the underside of the stairs. This provides more visual interest from the main intersection, and looking at all 3 side by side, shows how the building at this corner changes. Standing on the South and looking North keeps the transparency for safety and security at the street level but also the fins continue to wrap from the East side all the way back around the North side and returning to the East side again.

Precast concrete on the stair tower matches the stair tower on the East side. The integrated lighting will make this feel safe and secure for people moving along the sidewalks. It is not just putting wall packs on the side of the building, but they can see into the stair tower and out of stair tower as well. Based on the feedback from last time, precast colors have been changed on the Southeast stair and windows have been added facing the West side and the color to the interior of the stair tower for way finding and visual interest, as well as the landscaping elements that will be coordinated with the street corridor project. This is just a reminder of where this project was and where it is now, coming down Rosa Parkway down onto K Street.

Penn asked to confirm that from the staff report, if there is support of the fin design and the overall architectural treatment.

Gopalakrishnan stated overall yes, but they were wondering on the stair tower, if there were no fins and they go back to the first option which showed some windows and what the fins actually do, if the windows would be better. The plain façade would provide an opportunity for some art, but it is not part of this project, The color has been maintained and some emphasis on both stair towers, the only thing is the fins that face the city county building.

Penn replied the color of the precast is white, rather than grey concrete.

Bacon responded that the match of the existing color to the building, is not exact, so it will match to the existing garage because it is more of a cream white color. It is a tough color match to begin with, and when looking at the lighter colored concrete for the fins and the rest of the parking deck it would be true concrete color and the precast stair panels would be a darker color. Once there is a project manager on

board, samples can be created to show the colors more accurately. These samples would need to be custom made.

Harpster asked if the fins were to stop on the South side and stay on the West to help with solar shading would that give more of a free façade on the South.

Bacon replied that if there is a stair tower on the Southwest corner and the South and the West is opened up, that is exposing it to a lot of solar heat gain. This is where we are trying to make it cooler, because it is a transitory space. If windows are added to the South side, they would be taken and put more on the West to create an entry feature. The goal is to decrease solar heat gain, and not add to the South side, plus we are trying to be cost conscious with the budget, by not putting a lot of windows on the stair tower. The fins are intended to be kept for the element of the three-sided wrapping. Having a break there would not make the most sense.

Peace commented that he missed the last meeting but wanted to confirm that this was being constructed on existing foundations, and there is not the option to push and pull the face of the stair tower.

Bacon said they can take the existing stair towers on the Southeast and Southwest corners down to the foundation and there are areas that reside into the current stair towers but are being enlarged due to the egress width, but the stair tower is generally the same footprint.

Peace asked what the slot at the top of the tower represents.

Beacon said was trying to lighten it up closer to the sky and there may be a drain overflow.

Penn commented that a lot of progress has been made since the last meeting. Penn appreciates all the changes that have been made to the tower design, and Rosa Parkway the gateway to the city. Having gone through the stairway, safety is a concern. If we can do anymore transparency for safety issues, would be good idea. The fins are not necessary since there is already a bold statement on this side of the building. Penn thanks group for looking at the design.

Bacon asked what the landscape architects thought of the landscape changes.

Huston said the landscape design looks a lot better.

Deeker said she can't comment too much, since her group is working on this and there are some challenges when the traffic study comes back. Creating a better pedestrian environment is important. The corner will feel more welcoming and better for employees. Deeker said she appreciates the time it to look at changes and this pulls the garage together better.

Harpster asked if the vertical fins are structural.

Bacon replied, no they are not, but serve a function as a vehicle restraint and add fall protection to the tower.

Huston moves for approval and thinks there has been dramatic improvement.

Grasso seconded the motion.

Peace commented that every urban building should have a small umbrella zone or covered canopy.

Bacon said there is one on the Southeast side, but also agreed, that is a great idea and it can be picked up. We are dealing with stair width, and not having doors swing over property lines. There are pipes and several things going on in the stair towers. We can address the canopy.

Penn agreed that this condition should be included.

Huston had motioned for approval and Grasso seconded earlier, so motion was carried 6-0 Deeker, Grasso, Harpster, Huston, Peace and Penn voting "yes.  
Canney absent.

came forward and stated this project was approved and recommended for approval by the committee in 2022. This application is an update to the approval of the completion of Phase One, 1C and 1D. Gopalakrishnan mentioned that the project manager from Hoppe Development would speak more on this, as this project predates his time with the Planning Department.

**Ben Kunz Project Manager Hoppe Development 1620 S 84<sup>th</sup> Street Lincoln, NE,** came forward and spoke that this was previously approved and showed images of the three story row homes from phase one and the colors of them. Specific colors have been updated due to in field markups. 166 units were completed in January and we are now moving onto the next 26 units of row homes now. In Phase 1C there is one single family portion that was for sale and was adjusted from a previous single family detached to a 2 story row home, due to not be financially feasible. Here are the plans from the first row of 2 story row homes, which are like the previous plans and similar façade. The brick is applied more broadly, but not full height so it is mostly around the garage openings. It is done on every unit, instead of every third unit. There are a couple of walk out basements. We were able to adapt and add 13 homes with some going to Habitat of Lincoln and to a trust fund program. There are a series of five-plexes along the West as it wraps to the East there are triplexes and duplexes of the same façade. Here is Phase 1D in the same plan as already approved, except one difference in one unit there is a single-story edition to meet section 504 accessibility requirements. Kunz went on to show images and cluster sizes for Phase 1D.

Peace asked are these units are still for sale.

Kunz replied, they are stacked flats and are not for sale, but for rent with 2 bedrooms on the ground floor and 2 bedrooms on the second floor with their independent entrance.

The status update on future phases is that Phase 2 and 3 are in the works with no design available yet. So, a status update will be presented soon for those phases. Phase 2 will be a core neighborhood approach with 3 and 4 story apartments and garages. Phase 3 will have a commercial component with a convenience store and a potential main street concept that includes micro retail, amenity space and potential live work units to activate the street frontage, along with further development of 2 to 4 story apartments. These will include the same partnership of design groups for architectural and engineering, so the design approaches will be similar.

Huston, commented that Phase 1C and 1D are in front of us today with the adjustment of the facades.

Kunz responded that 1D is similar except for the 1 story addition and 1C the affordable for sale units, is the bigger adjustment. Instead of single family detached units, it will be arranged from duplexes up to 5 or 6 plexes.

Peace, said is it correct that they are solar-ready and some have solar panels built to help with energy.

Kunz commented not the homes for sale, but the 166 units currently in Phase 1 have solar behind the meter for each tenant to help reduce their electric bills.

Grasso asked where is Phase 1D on your chart.

Kunz showed this on the site plan, that this phase is on the lots that continue from the 2 and 3 story rowhomes down the street and the current is the continuation of the 2 story stacked flats.

Penn, commented that she did not realize the density, of this project when it was approved before.

Huston said Hoppe Development has done this type of neighborhood in Grand Island, Fremont and Lincoln.

Kunz replied yes Lincoln is the third one of this type of development. Now they are putting one in Papillion.

Huston expressed that Phase 1A and Phase 1B is funded by the Lincoln housing tax credit, and that is the norm now in low income housing, to get more housing and density for your dollar.

Peace, do we know what the number on this piece per acre.

Kunz said 650 units and the low 40's in acres for the total build out.

Peace asked if a pickle ball court was being built or a basketball court.

Kunz said this was not included in a previous photo. But a playground was being built and a fire pit area and a central meadow.

Penn said the solar panels are pretty impressive.

Grasso, said you don't notice the panels from the street.

Kunz said there are discrepancies in the field mockups, the color of the old orange and the new orange, thanks to Jill.

Grasso, replied it is still orange.

Harpster said he has no concerns with the changes from the single detached homes to attached homes.

Penn asked do we need to vote on this item.

Huston, said he would move to approve.

Grasso seconded the motion.

Penn asked for any additional comments.

Grasso asked if this would come back again for Phase 2

Huston commented that this is in front of us because of Tax Increment Funding.

Motion carried 6-0, Deeker, Grasso, Harpster, Huston, Peace and Penn voting "yes. Canney absent.

**UPDATES:**

There was a discussion, about whether the next meeting on July 1 would cause low attendance from the board members due to the 4<sup>th</sup> of July holiday. It was decided that the members would like the meeting on July 8th instead.

**ACTION:**

There was no further discussion on this item and no further business to discuss, so the meeting was adjourned at 4:01 pm.