

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, February 3, 2026 3:00 p.m., County-City Building, City Council Chambers, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE.

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

ATTENDANCE: Gill Peace absent

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Paul Barnes, Collin Christopher and Kristi Merfeld of the Planning and Development Services Department; Hallie Salem of Urban Development; Sophia Swanson, Elizabeth Kramer and Cole Wycoff with HDR and other interested parties.

ATTENDANCE:

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 today is final action on all items on the agenda

Penn then called for the approval of the minutes for the regular meetings held on November 4, 2025.

Motion for approval of the minutes made by Huston, seconded by Grasso; Canney, Harpster and Huston voting "yes"; Deeker abstained; Grasso and Penn recused. There was not a quorum to approve the minutes, so they will carry over to the next meeting.

Peace was absent

ADVISE:

UDR26005 University Square Parking Garage Façade Improvements**Advisory Review and Final Action****February 3, 2026**

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

Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Planning and Development Services Department, 555 S 10th Street Ste 203, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated that this project is located at the Northwest corner of 14th and O Street in the Music District. It proposes a comprehensive series of façade and architectural improvements to the parking garage. The university garage includes 5 parcels on the first floor of the building fronting 14th Street. In addition to the entry and exit driveways, city staff are working closely with our property owners and the design team to ensure that all proposed façade improvement results in a cohesive and unified building appearance. Last October the UDC reviewed a conceptual façade improvement for one of the projects with Tallgrass. This proposal addresses the exterior treatment of the entire parking garage except the Tallgrass, although they're designed would follow and compliment the overall look. It will also depend on the potential tenant so Tallgrass will come back with the design eventually. The proposed scope includes material upgrades to existing ground floor retail facades, excluding the Tallgrass selling space enhancement to the canopies and signages along the street facing elevations. The façade lighting enhancements and the upper garage levels and a redesigned central pedestrian entrance on 14th Street. The proposed improvements will complement the planned streetscape enhancements along 14th Street. This project is limited to façade lighting and signage upgrades. City staff and design teams have determined that these improvements will not impact their project, O street or music street construction timeline. That is because new fittings or construction within the public right of way are required. Together these interventions are intended to strengthen the garage feet and visual appearance. They will also improve pedestrian experience and better integrate the structure into the surrounding music district context. We are requesting some advisory review and final action in this because the project involves both public and private funding. Gopalakrishnan stated that it would be turned over to HCR to talk about the design of the garage.

Cole Wycoff, Architect; HCR; 1248 O Street Suite 716, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated he will discuss the project at University Square Garage and it is a façade improvement project. A lot of work that we have executed on this project is through many conversations with City officials and the Downtown Lincoln Association. The

efforts have been going on to create opportunities for improvement along the 14th Street corridor now referred to as Beamer Street, as part of the music district development in this area. This is the next step in terms of public projects or public involvement that we have the privilege to be a part of. First, the music box down the street and the Eagle Park garage to the South. The street frontage on 14th Street is important as it relates to the music district. The improvements that are being shared today fall into 2 primary zones. There is the garage entrance improvement as well as some additional facade improvements. Above the pedestrian realm, there are some proposed facade improvements. We are planning a new intervention that highlights the entrance to this garage off 14th Street and draws people in and calls attention to this pedestrian experience. It connects the pedestrian realm to the core of the elevators and stairs, which is used to access the levels of parking. The idea for the development of this element is born from music-inspired themes and in this case, strings and notation in an abstract way to musical instruments.

This area, shown in the center, is planned to have an installation that highlights the entrance, which is composed of both lighting elements and metal rods. These promote an image of strings sort of folding and inner weaving among themselves, stretching from the top of the garage down to the pedestrian realm. Then, ultimately back into the garage underneath the structure itself, back to the public elevator core. An image of the garage was shown in daylight for reference. The left-hand side of the image is the Tall Grass property that Arvind had described earlier. This is not part of the scope that is being shared today, but the elements in the center of the screen are part of that as additional facade improvements on the right-hand side of the image.

The lights are intended to be color-changing and will have a dynamic visual effect on the garage. There is a plan to be programmable and dynamic in addition to color changing. The city will have the option to program into this. A similar view more North up the street will show not only the elements associated with that entrance, but also the proliferation of some of these vertical light elements. This facade will have a similar type of controllability. We are forecasting some potential improvements underneath for the garage as well. This is not the focus of approval today, but this is a view looking at that core for reference, walking off of 14th Street to the elevator core and pedestrian experience that might come to fruition under the garage. On the left side of the image is a wall surface that is a future wall that could come into existence with the addition of the Tallgrass property, so we are planning ahead. When this improvement happens someday, some informed assumptions about the opportunities for signage will be made. Art installation and other interactive elements might be installed underneath the garage. An additional element that is being explored is some graphics associated

with the garage, where some thermoplastic ground covering is applied to the ground plane underneath the garage. Again, recalling the same theme described for the façade element itself.

Beyond the entrance we have been working collaboratively with the city and the property owners that own the condo retail frontages underneath the garage to develop a strategy that updates and improves the materials. The general aesthetic of those façade frontages here, the view from O Street to the Northwest at the corner of 14th Street, showing more of the lighting. It proliferates itself around the upper portions of the garage and then begins to look at the material improvements beneath the existing canopy to those facades. More specifically, a rainscreen system composed of cast stone material is being evaluated. Wycoff displayed a slide that shows some of the construction associated with that, as Arvind had mentioned in his introduction. Part of the benefits of this strategy is it facilitates a material that is durable, and we believe is appropriate for this urban setting, while also being able to be installed without the need for additional footings and potential conflicts with the ongoing project O street work. Furthermore, we are evaluating or planning for some improvements to the canopy itself. Such as refinishing the surfaces of the canopies as well as some new lighting underneath the canopy shown on the image on the right. The opportunity for some suspended signage will be able to be customizable for the tenants of the retail spaces.

Another view of the same area shows this in greater detail, how the material improvements work collaboratively with the upgrades to the canopies. The color of the façade that can be seen is a darker gray. Wycoff brought samples so that it can be seen what is being planned and in real life. As it was mentioned, it is a cast stone with a deep, slightly dark gray color. The intention with this is to contrast the color palette of the existing garage with a bit of a darker neutral tone. The material being passed around is planned for the façade. The other materials are associated with the project O Street streetscape. There are 2 colors of concrete. The darker color is what will be closest to the facades and placed right around the perimeter of these retail spaces. The smaller, darker sample is the paver planned for the project on O Street, again just for reference. It was shown in the plan that the darker portions of paving here, adjacent to the building proper lighter paving around the perimeter and then some of those pavers in these zones along 14th Street.

Here is a bit more detail on the basis of the design that is being used for the façade improvements. The material for our rainscreen system is the cast stone and we are developing this system assuming that it will be an open joint rainscreen system with

fastening happening in a concealed way along the edges of the panels, like it is shown here with the effort being to minimize. Access and opportunity for debris and other elements to get behind the rainscreen proper, so this is a continuous track that these panels sit on. Then some elevational views starting with the North looking at the North elevation. This is the entrance into the garage of vehicular entrance, we are planning the material improvements all along this section of the North façade as well as some improvements to the existing ticket booth underneath the garage as it wraps around 14th Street. The extend of the lighting is planned at this entrance and then the façade improvements again planning for the idea of ground covering. Then we wrap around to the South more of the same improvements and the façade improvements beyond the lighting really being focused to the area below the existing canopies.

Penn stated that she is recused from the discussion and voting on this manner. She could facilitate the discussion to get it going.

Grasso asked with the existing canopies are they looking at recladding?

Wycoff replied, yes..

Grasso responded then adding some integrated light, on the other side.

Wycoff said correct.

Huston commented that the Tallgrass space is the former bank drive through for Commercial Federal that has been inactive and used for illegal parking for 20 years. So it will be active space now?

Wycoff stated that he couldn't speak as to what the plans are for that space, it is not part of their scope.

Salem replied that they did the redevelopment agreement with Tallgrass. There are 2 phases that are being considered. One is putting in any of the utilities and footings related to the future façade, so that they can be installed without getting into the paving of 14th Street. At which time they have a tenant, it would likely build the rest of the commercial build out. The South wall of the pedestrian walkway and then the façade on lighting 14th Street and the way it is configured still allows for some parking. This keeps some space between the building to the South, so that they have a fire egress.

Huston mentioned that it marks the pedestrian entrance to the parking garage from 14th Street. It was always been less clear.

Salem stated that right now it is our intention to take the emphasis off that entrance to that garage there and focus it towards P Street. This is because of some of the conflicts with pedestrians and now with the pedestrian walkway being extended.

Huston said the automobile traffic is kind of awkward to begin with because you have to weave through the parking garage to get to the entrance.

Salem responded that it is a two-way alley, without being sized to be two-way. It does create an issue.

Huston replied that he thought it was a great idea and liked the opportunity to address the music district and part of the downtown master plan.

Canney commented that he liked the design inspiration of the piano, for the embellishments. Is there any significance of the 9 and 9 or how was it determined?

Wycoff said in terms of the number of threads, it is an abstraction. Part of the consideration is just density and creating something that feels scale wise sort of appropriate for the width of that structural bay. Beyond that, it wasn't the intent to be overly heavy handed with the proportions reflecting that of a guitar or piano. Music is terribly specific. They just want to recall the visual language of a musical instrument more abstractly and speak more generally to the idea of music.

Canney just wondered if there was something that he was missing.

Jill asked if they have looked at the specific jointing patterns of the new façade and keep those as large as possible?

Wycoff stated yes that is the intention. Large spaces that we are attempting to clad are really the column enclosures between each bay of the retail frontage and then the panels above the storefronts of those frontages. So the intention is to maximize the size of the panels for 2 reasons. One is to create as monolithic looking element as possible and then 2 it is just more economical, so these panels can be quite large. That is approximately 6 feet in long dimension and approximately 3 or 4 feet in the short dimension. We are unsure of the exact dimensions of the limits are specifically and it depends on who might win the contract. Or in terms of proprietary nature, which

material gets chosen. To answer the question, the intention is to use as large of panel as possible and minimize the joint thing as much as possible.

Grasso replied that this is great and it was briefly looked at months ago and discussed.

Huston commented that this project is 37 years old and needs to be refreshed.

Penn asked them to talk a little bit about South façade and what the plans are there.

Wycoff responded that there are some interesting nuances on the South, and it was mentioned that the entrance to the secondary core here includes the area, that is being shown on the screen. There are existing soffits and existing sort of freestanding columns that hold up. The intention is to continue the material from the façade out and reclad all of those elements in consistent material. We are anticipating some of the graphic appliqué of the branded element of the garage happening in a much smaller way at this entrance. Just to recall 14th Street is going to be a secondary entrance in that way, so some of the graphic elements can be seen at that entrance to recall the theme.

Deeker asked if that is the existing or if the half hoop cycle will be taken off on the University?

Wycoff replied that above these columns today is a semicircular sign. There is signage at the entrance on 14th Street that will also come down as part of this project. There is also a 3rd sign on top of the elevator core of the garage that would come off as well.

Huston wondered if the garage was going to be renamed?

Wycoff commented that there have been discussions about that, but not sure if that has been established.

Hallie Salem, Urban Development Department; stated she had not introduced herself earlier. Parking is also in this department, and it has been discussed to rename the garage, as they are not set on the University Square Garage name. It seems confusing to some people. It has been talked about, but it will not be Beamer garage, but it could be something else related to the music district. We will have to see what that would be. It's important to have wayfinding around the garage, so people know how to get to the stair towers, but other than that, there will probably not be a lot of names listed on the garage.

Canney responded what is the process for those banners and is that a public art component?

Salem said it is not intended to be a public art component, but more for events. We expect as events occur or promotions for other downtown and music district related projects it might be put up by the event programmer. It depends on what they are meant to be for, but more temporary.

Deeker commented on the South elevation, it was noticed that the light element on the far right hand doesn't show how it is wrapped around.

Wycoff mentioned that it wasn't mentioned directly. This is another array similar to the 14th Street entrance up the street. The intention with this was to just add a bit of emphasis to the corner. This is a very visible corner and we wanted to carry some of that theme to that corner and promote the music district from that vantage point.

Grasso replied that it is an important part of the overall design for the signage for naming the garage and will bring some cohesiveness. This will be a part of this when the drawings go out?

Salem agreed these are the schematics and as we get down into the details of the design, we will identify some locations.

Grasso responded that part of the signage on this building is nice that it is a little simpler and more up to date. The signage is going to be a huge component and to keep this kind of uniformity as it is around the building. Will each tenant be in charge of their own canopy sign or is that something that will have strict parameters?

Salem stated that Heath McComber is the owner of these retail spaces, and would work directly with the retailers on the signage inserts for those signs and we would install as part of the canopy.

Grasso asked if the framework is part of this and will there will be parameters?

Salem agreed "yes"

Grasso replied that this is one of the things talked about last time is the cohesiveness as you turn the corner.

Canney asked when looking at the lights, is there concern about damage or people vandalizing them? Can this be talked about a little bit more and the structure of the lights? Even though it is conceptual at this point, is there some sort of assurance of their long-term standing in this design.

Wycoff commented that this is a great question. The lights that are being used come in 4-foot segments. The other areas of concern would be on the decks of the garage, where people can reach them and do something with them. The set-off distance is going to play a factor in mitigating some of our concerns. The structure of what is there will be installed on a rigid steel or aluminum backup.

Canney mentioned how it was appreciated that his questions were answered and that it was being looked into, because vandalism and maintenance were important things.

Wycoff stated that the reason the 4-foot segments were mentioned is because it could be swapped or replaced without disrupting the entire length of each of them.

Harpster asked what is the approximate size of the fixtures that the 4-foot segments were describing?

Wycoff felt that they were about one inch diameter.

Grasso commented that the lighting is lovely and there is not too much of that downtown and it will add a lot.

Canney responded that it is nice to see different lighting come into play.

ACTION:

Penn asked for a motion, Huston approved the motion, Canney seconded and the motion was approved 4-0. Canney, Deeker, Harpster, and Huston voting "yes"; Penn and Grasso recused; and Peace was absent.

Penn said the second item on the agenda is the Urban Design Committee 2025 Annual Report and it is a final action.

Gopalakrishnan stated that there were 7 projects for the year of 2025, a little less than 2024. There were some that had multiple reviews and went on for a few months. Included in this total is one TIF project, 3 city led projects, one sidewalk café and 2 private projects. The only TIF project was the Foxtail Meadows which is also just an amendment to the original plan, which was around revisions focusing on one of their phases. This was replacing Single-family attached homes with attached townhomes, to increase affordability and unit count. This was reviewed once, but before we did that we had Michael Harpster join our Urban Design Committee. As for the city led projects, we had staff present sidewalk design standards for the H 2 district to support its transition to a mixed-use district that encourages high quality redevelopment and improved workability. Also there were new established streetscape standards requiring sidewalks to be set back a minimum of 10 feet from the curb. This was a response to portions of O Street and 48th Street where narrow sidewalks create an unsafe pedestrian environment.

Next was University Place which had 3 major recommendations. One was along the 48th Street corridor and strengthening surrounding residential areas. We had some historic preservation efforts and some neighborhood revitalization strategies that also included expanding the blight study area and establishing a new TIF district to support public improvements. There was another major project the PBC garage that came to UDC multiple times and the city worked with the design team to come up with a design for the parking garage expansion at 425 S 10th Street, just North of the City County building. It involves expanding 2 level parking structured located North of the city county building by adding 3 levels of precast concrete parking increasing capacity from 470 to approximately 966. This project went through a rigorous 6-month review period and several meetings with the city staff and around 3 meetings with the Urban Design Committee. The designs and discussions mostly revolved around façade articulation and materials, architectural lighting, vehicular access and circulation entry and egress organization. Signage, landscaping, and the product relationship with the proposed project.

Over the last few years, Bison Witches has finally received approval for the revised sidewalk café design. This had multiple issues through the included opaque. Gopalakrishnan mentioned this was his first project with the Urban Design Committee. This included segmented low walls and transparent storefront doors and windows, and rolled on screens. This significantly improved transparent aesthetics and café connections to the tower square during the café location with the city-owned park, and the importance of maintaining visibility. The committee and staff reviewed

multiple shade options and ultimately recommended approval of a shade with a 5% openness, and that is something the city did not have any standards for before, and now we do.

There were also some private projects such as Black Hills proposing relocating gas meters from inside buildings to exterior locations along O Street to improve safety and emergency access. This initial focus was on sites along near Walgreen's, 13th and O Street and Bloom on O Street. The city staff and Urban Design Committee reviewed 3 placement options and recommended the one that kept the meters inside the building, while locating risers and regulators on the outside. We also discussed broader standards and strategies to minimize visual and pedestrian impacts in the high traffic areas.

Next was the Tallgrass development façade improvement, which is related to the previous agenda item. It is part of the University Square Garage. There has been preliminary feedback on façade materials, colors, and streetscape interaction, along with approval to proceed with the façade design while allowing flexibility for refinement to align with the music district construction schedule. We have not discussed much about other parts of the garage at the time, as city staff continues to work with the design team to coordinate some design for the entire garage. Tallgrass is expected to return soon once they update their design based on their potential new tenant.

Deeker commented that there is an update to Walgreen's gas meters. Black Hills was able to move that to the alleyway, so that is not happening anymore. It is by YaYa's.

Huston replied it was a light agenda for 2025, maybe due to the interest rates.

Gopalakrishnan said previous years there were 14-16 projects.

FINAL ACTION

Penn asked for a motion to approve and Deeker approved the motion, Harpster seconded and the motion was approved 4-0. Canney, Deeker, Harpster, and Huston voting "yes"; Penn and Grasso recused; and Peace was absent.

UPDATES:

There were no updates for the committee.

ACTION:

There was no further discussion on this item and no further business to discuss, so the meeting was adjourned at 3:44 pm.