

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, January 9, 2024, 3:00 p.m., County-City Building, City Council Chambers, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Emily Deeker, Jill Grasso, Tom Huston, Frank Ordia and Michelle Penn; Mary Canney and Gil Peace absent.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Paul Barnes, Collin Christopher and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Peter Hind and Ernie Castillo of Urban Development Department; Jordan Reed with Aragon Tavern; Brayden McLaughlin with Bridgewater Consulting; Glenn Kitto and Jeff Strong with Reserve Development; Mark Palmer with Olsson; Kent Seacrest with Seacrest & Kalkowski; Matt Olberding with Lincoln Journal Star; and other interested parties.

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

Penn then called for a motion approving the minutes of the regular meetings held December 5, 2023. Motion for approval made by Huston, seconded by Grasso and carried 5-0: Deeker, Grasso, Huston, Ordia and Penn voting 'yes'; Canney and Peace absent.

ARAGON TAVERN SIDEWALK CAFE:

January 9, 2024

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

Arvind Gopalakrishnan stated this is on the first floor of 1125 'Q' Street. They are asking for a sidewalk café. The applicant is proposing a sidewalk café measuring 47' 2" x 9' 10" that would be attached to the building. This would be the only sidewalk café that fronts 'Q' Street. It would be located just north of the line from the barriers for the drop-off for the building. With the café, 6 feet would be available for the pedestrian passageway. This would meet the standards. The applicant is proposing 24 inch tempered glass on top of movable planters surrounding the space. They plan to serve alcohol, so there would be only one entrance. The overall plans are in conformance with the design standards.

Huston knows that this property was always envisioned as having a sidewalk café.

Grasso likes the idea of planters instead of a permanent fence. She thinks it looks great.

Penn asked if any thought was given to heating the space. She understands that this location will always be in the shade. Gopalakrishnan replied he was not aware of any heating plans.

Jordan Reed is the manager of Aragon Tavern. He didn't know if they were allowed to add heaters. If they did, they would be mobile. Nothing is attached to the building with this proposal. He believes the sidewalks are already ground heated.

Grasso inquired if the applicant is planning on leaving the planters outside year around. Reed replied yes.

Ordia wondered how they stay fixed. Reed stated they have a heavy weighted bottom.

ACTION:

Deeker moved approval, as recommended by staff, seconded by Ordia and carried 5-0: Deeker, Grasso, Huston, Ordia and Penn voting 'yes'; Canney and Peace absent.

Penn thanked the applicant for doing a nice design. She voiced her appreciation.

GRUENEMEYER HOUSE ON 4207 PIONEERS BOULEVARD:

January 9, 2024

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

Gopalakrishnan stated this proposal is for single family underground residence. This was informally reviewed at the December meeting. For this proposal, the design has gone through considerable change. They are asking for advice before they come back for a vote in February. The design standards are now met, with the design they are proposing. The applicant is proposing windows and shutters on the garage door. Staff wondered about maintenance. Landscaping is shown, along with a tree along the sidewalk for a contiguous look with the neighborhood. One issue was the setback. The structure is setback 25 feet. Staff would like advice from the committee on the appearance of the structure, specifically the garage door, the pedestrian door and landscaping.

Penn questioned if notices were sent to neighbors within 200 feet of the property. She would like staff to elaborate on how that process works. Gopalakrishnan stated that any project that doesn't meet design standards, gives staff a chance to review it. Staff would deny the application. It is then taken to the Planning Director. He can waive standards or deny the application. In between the Planning Director action, notifications will be sent to the neighbors within 200 feet. This would happen even if the Planning Director approves the waiver. Penn understood that for the next meeting in February, the neighbors will have seen the application and can give feedback if desired. Gopalakrishnan agreed with her assessment.

Grasso asked if any emails and letters sent by neighbors would be seen by the Urban Design Committee. Gopalakrishnan replied yes.

Huston inquired what specific design standards the design doesn't comply with. Gopalakrishnan stated that one big factor if there is not a pattern of garages on the block followed by 50 percent of the houses, the garage must be setback 5 feet from the house. In this case, the house is underground. Huston understood that the design standards didn't envision an underground house. Gopalakrishnan noted that another issue is not having any front steps or a porch.

Grasso believes if she read correctly, the precedent on this street is not necessarily front porches. She believes the applicant doesn't need to comply with that. Gopalakrishnan agreed. Most houses on this street don't have a porch. The main concern here is the garage being the primary structure. At the last meeting of this committee, the direction was to bring this as close as possible to houses on the street.

Penn believes this has come far. Perhaps we take these concerns one at a time. The garage door is one. One concern was this group didn't feel this was going to be a very welcoming building. She appreciates it was put in context. That is very helpful. Her thought is that the garage door should just be a garage door. She was curious to hear other committee member opinions. She would make it aesthetically more pleasing. She doesn't think we have that precedent here. She isn't sure two fake windows make a lot of sense to her.

Deeker agreed with Penn. She thinks that the faux windows take away from what is trying to be achieved. Just a garage door would fit better, in her opinion. The door should look like a regular door. It should be something that lets sunlight in.

Brayden McLaughlin pointed out the two plexiglass panels on top of the garage door. He noted that the actual shutters on the windows are real.

Grasso stated at the last meeting of this committee, members gave recommendations and discussed perhaps the garage could look like a house. She believes there is more to talk about than that. She feels like she has so many questions on the design intent of the entire site. She wondered about putting up a Menards garage and making it look like a house. She isn't opposed to an underground or berm house, if it is done well and looks like it is part of the neighborhood. She still has a lot of questions. How tall are the retaining walls? Are they brick forms? It feels like there wasn't any thought given to the nature of the underground house. She understands they are trying to create a place of sense and a typical entry. She isn't saying the applicant can't do this. She is just asking for something a little more thoughtful.

McLaughlin stated that most retaining walls are concrete with block. They are trying to be practical. He asked the committee what their ideal underground house would look like.

Grasso stated this doesn't look very inviting to her. It looks like a garage door down a ramp. She inquired if the above ground structure is a built garage. McLaughlin replied it would be a stick frame, with a single gable east/west. Grasso asked if they are planning on slab on-grade. McLaughlin responded there will be four footings around the garage per frost depth.

Grasso asked if anyone has looked at a landscape plan. McLaughlin stated that landscaping was discussed at the last meeting. It was noted that the biggest thing defining the homes on this street was a large

defining tree. They can't do that here. They shrank the driveway down to ten feet wide. We can place a medium size there. It would be a little closer to the street than the rest of the properties, but there was no choice. As far as landscaping, they don't have any set idea of plants yet. He noted if the committee has something specific in mind, they can address that.

Deeker noted that the committee doesn't give specifics on plantings, just suggestions.

McLaughlin stated that this committee asked for landscaping. He questioned if this isn't satisfactory, what is? Deeker would like to see species called out. The applicant is showing a tree. Huston added that he doesn't believe Neighborhood Design Standards ask for trees.

Grasso stated that the Urban Design Committee is an advisory committee. Members are giving their opinion on how they believe this fits into the neighborhood.

Huston would like to see the Director Letter from the Planning Dept. first. He wants to see from city staff perspective what the issues are. He believes there are two methods of appeal, one to Urban Design Committee and one to City Council.

Grasso believes it will be interesting to see what the neighbors say.

Penn asked if the setback issue has been taken care of. It is now at 28 feet. Gopalakrishnan stated yes, the setback has been taken care of. McLaughlin noted the trick is to see what is going on with Pioneers Blvd. There are varying setbacks.

Penn wondered about the glass insert of the pedestrian door and asked if other committee members had any thoughts. McLaughlin has no problem with adding some glass to the front door. Penn has no strong opinion about a window in the door.

Deeker would rather see a real window as opposed to a faux window. Penn agreed. It starts to look like a little house that looks similar to the other little houses on the street.

Deeker would look at ways to soften the edge. There is a lot of space in the back. Perhaps part of the site plan could show opportunities for landscaping in the rear. That might help the conversation with the neighborhood. It looks like you will want some shade. McLaughlin can add some landscaping. Deeker can see where the neighborhood might want some more trees.

Grasso would look for ways to make it visually more appealing. Limestone planters or benches could be used.

McLaughlin stated there will be a fence along the edge of the ground above the garage so no one falls in.

Penn noted the applicant proposed a shared driveway between the two lots. She inquired if there was any change or what the owner intent is. McLaughlin stated from the owner's perspective, they are assuming

there will be a single family home on the other lot. The easement is to come in and turn around for both lots to use the circle drive.

SHOPS AT LINCOLN:

January 9, 2024

Members present: Grasso, Huston, Ordia and Penn; Deeker declared a conflict of interest; Canney and Peace absent.

Gopalakrishnan stated this is a redevelopment of the 130,000 square foot former Sears building that is part of the Gateway Shopping Center. The applicant proposes to convert the Sears building into an upscale, quality smaller tenant space with three new to Lincoln retailers, which include a multi-national, high end green electric vehicle service facility and a Lincoln hospital based urgent care and outpatient medical office facility. The development team is working with City staff through the substandard and blighted process. The former Sears building renovation will be using many design choices that will provide additional energy efficiencies and savings during the construction, use and operation phases. Sustainability advantages include a lower carbon footprint, no additional materials will be sent to the landfill, improved glazing, and updated HVAC.

Huston is concerned with the location. We get one chance to do this. This has to qualify for blighted and substandard. He recognized there is a study.

Ernie Castillo understood that Huston was talking about the entirety of Gateway. They looked at a 2019 blight study. They went as far as getting a blight study that never went to Planning Commission or City Council. He just heard yesterday from the Gateway folks. A change may come to the plan area. Huston would make sure a conscious decision is made regarding the boundaries.

Grasso would like someone to speak to the new materials on the façade.

Glenn Kitto stated they are proposing EIFS for the store fronts. The lower band would be a front natural stone that will be mortared for the first three feet with capstone. They are proposing a metal panel and new paint scheme. They will be putting in a new store front entry where one doesn't currently exist. They will do new mullions and energy efficient upgrades. He pointed out the potential pedestrian access. The City has asked to close one access point and they will continue a sidewalk. There is a current sidewalk next to Krispy Kreme. They will be installing an American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) pathway all the way to the building. The front of the building will have the sidewalk extended out about five feet. They will put in a walkway from this building to Dick's Sporting Goods.

Grasso stated it is her understanding this would be a sort of wainscoating stone. Kitto pointed out the stone on the plan. He showed the location of the glazed brick and stack stone, and location of the EIFS. He showed a tenant space with a Nichiha metal panel. Grasso inquired if they would be adding some canopies. Kitto pointed out the two that will be a façade canopy built specifically for their space. They will use real stacked stone for aesthetic purposes. He noted that the Health facility backed out of this location when the announcement was made in the paper.

Jeff Strong stated the first floor will have an EV green vehicle location. It was the first lease signed. Other tenants are in process or haven't been signed yet. Retailers like to announce their own openings.

Huston wondered if this site will be overparked. Strong replied yes, to a certain degree. This site easily meets the code for parking. The tenant has their own parking standard. They won't sign a lease unless their parking can be provided.

Kitto stated they are 700 parking spots over the requirement for the entire mall. From a design perspective, because we aren't taking this building down, we are saving a lot of building materials. We will adhere to the new energy code. All lighting will be converted to high efficiency LED.

Huston believes this is a great adaptive reuse of a building.

Grasso asked if they will be adding some additional lighting. Kitto replied yes, on the exterior. Grasso wondered if they are maintaining the lighting 'as is' on the north side of the building. Strong replied yes, until they get a tenant.

ACTION:

Huston moved approval with the condition that this is subject to further review when there is a new tenant proposed on the north side, seconded by Ordia.

Huston noted the redevelopment will come back. This is just the first step.

Grasso likes that they are keeping the building and planning to modify it.

Strong likes that it is glazed brick. That has come full circle to the 2020's. It is very popular now.

Gopalakrishnan noted that this project doesn't have to come back before the committee.

Huston pointed out this is blight, not redevelopment.

Paul Barnes stated this committee is not reviewing the blight study. The review is of the building and site design. If there is another tenant and changes to the façade, since this is Tax Increment Financing (TIF), it will come back before this committee.

Grasso thinks it is exciting to see this redevelopment.

Strong stated there will be two tenants who will be new to Lincoln.

Motion for conditional approval carried 4-0: Grasso, Huston, Ordia and Penn voting 'yes'; Deeker abstaining; Canney and Peace absent.

2023 UDC ANNUAL REPORT:

January 9, 2024

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

Gopalakrishnan stated that some highlights of 2023 were the committee reviewed 17 projects. 8 were TIF. One was City led. Five were sidewalk cafes. There was one waiver and two appeals. Membership of the committee changed in July 2023 when Peter Hind resigned and Frank Ordia filled the vacancy. He voiced his thanks to all members who raise the bar for the design standards for the City of Lincoln.

Huston stated it was a nice report, very well done.

Grasso appreciates all the summaries. They are very thorough and thoughtful. She questioned the canopy at Bison Witches. Gopalakrishnan responded that the business was informed that the City expects them to change the existing red enclosure and come up with a new design that the City and Urban Design Committee would have to approve before erection.

ACTION:

Huston moved approval, seconded by Grasso and carried 5-0: Deeker, Grasso, Huston, Ordia and Penn voting 'yes'; Canney and Peace absent.

MISCELLANEOUS:

- Huston asked if the amendment to the Community Unit Plan (CUP) of Hawley commons will be back before Urban Design Committee. He believes there was a lot of discussion about the CUP that there was ultimately going to be a redevelopment.

Barnes stated there were a couple of amendments that impacted the neighborhood development. Another one would front Vine Street. He believes the zoning piece was appealed to City Council. Staff is talking with Urban Development staff about the process and coordination.

Huston believes it would be better for the decision makers to have the entire package.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 p.m.