

MEETING NOTES

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, August 1, 2023, 3:00 p.m., County-City Building, City Council Chambers, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE.

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

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Barnes, Arvind Gopalakrishnan, Collin Christopher and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; Jennifer Hiatt with Urban Development Department; and Omar Attaie.

Vice-Chair Peace called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the room. He noted the approval of the minutes will be postponed until the next meeting due to a lack of quorum.

Sidewalk Café Application for Pita & Naan at 1434 'O' Street

Arvind Gopalakrishnan stated this is an application for a permit for a sidewalk café covering the right-of-way. The café meets the standards for the most part. A hand drawn sketch provided of the space does not provide detail of the obstructed or unobstructed passageway after considering a 13.5 foot sidewalk café. The application also does not specify the joinery details between the metal railing and the brick pavers. The edge of the outdoor café space might interfere with the adjoining pedestrian walkway. He showed a sketch of what the applicant is proposing. Staff met with the applicant and discussed some options. The café could be 12 feet wide and that leaves 3 feet 6 inches off the lamppost and 7 feet 6 inches for the walkway. The idea is to maximize the space. The applicant would like space for 12 people. He believes 12 people could be seated in a 12 foot' wide café. Staff is recommending conditional approval for a 12 foot wide café.

Canney questioned is there has to be an exit on the south. He wondered if there is a possibility of closing what appears to be a pathway out of the door on the right and taking out that piece of fence. Omar Attaie stated that he has been told that is where a post needs to be. Gopalakrishnan also noted that is where the door opens. Canney is supportive of outdoor dining in downtown and was just looking for any possible solution. Gopalakrishnan showed the staff proposed arrangements that are possible for 12 person seating.

Peace inquired what the standard is for a pedestrian walkway. Gopalakrishnan stated that between the lamppost and parking meter is around 7 feet of space. That is enough, but right after the sidewalk café there is a planting bed, streetlights and on-street parking. Peace asked about the minimum distance. Gopalakrishnan answered that the minimum is 6 feet.

Peace asked if bikes are allowed in downtown. Barnes responded there is a prohibitive boundary in downtown. It is enforced by business owners. It is a safety issue. There is a boundary. Bike racks are available for parking.

Peace is in favor of outdoor dining. He would go out as deep on the light pole and not have a sliver on one side.

Grasso asked about the 11 foot seating area. She is wondering about downtown, with people walking and bikes. 3.5 feet can start to get a little narrow. She thinks that 3 feet is what is usually spaced between people. It is not ADA (American's with Disabilities Act), but meets downtown requirements. Gopalakrishnan stated that with 11 feet, it might get a little cluttered. Grasso stated that if it was bumped out to the lamppost, you might get 4 tables with 4 seats each in the outdoor space.

Grasso inquired if the fence will be installed there permanently. Attaie replied yes. He believes the 11 feet makes things very tight. There needs to be spacing and there is the wheelchair code. He just wanted to do exactly what was there previously.

Peace wondered about the dimensions of Lazari's outdoor space goes. Gopalakrishnan stated it was 13.5 feet. Attaie believes the lamppost is overstated. He thinks it can be avoided very easily.

Canney understands that the master plan for 'O' Street is still being worked on. He wondered if it is too early to give any consideration to the master plan. Collin Christopher believes it is too early. The goal is to get away from always attaching the café to the building. There is the option to push these out to the curbside. They are also considering both options of one attached to the building and one on the curbside, with a pathway in the middle. Christopher met with Attaie, along with Jennifer Hiatt. There is a struggle as City staff looks at the light pole that may or may not go away. If you are just looking at this café on its' own, people can move around it. If there were a couple of cafés stacked up, it could be an issue to navigate in and out, and around many items. He doesn't believe it is an ideal situation. If someone else did this, you are creating a pinch point. That is his struggle. You can push it to 13.5 feet and go around the light pole, but that isn't ideal for him.

Peace asked about the timeline regarding the master plan. Christopher believes there is a solid expectation of spring 2025. He thinks what that means is, if the Urban Design Committee encouraged staff to allow the applicant to maximize his space with the understanding that with the streetscape project, there might be a decision in the future that avoids this scenario. Peace asked if the master planning had started. Christopher stated they developed a master plan that doesn't get into high detail yet. They are still working on the schematic design. The goal is by the end of the year to be done with design development.

Canney appreciates all comments. Knowing the risk, he wants to maximize seating and success for the applicant.

Attaie appreciates the comments. There are many businesses that have 4 to 5 feet of passageway.

Canney wants the opportunity to maximize the space with the understanding that in a few years, the configuration might change.

Grasso wondered if the applicant could install a fence where Lazari's previously had their fence.

Canney doesn't mean to be disrespectful of City staff, but he believes outdoor dining space is very nice to have.

Attaie would be happy with 13.5 feet with mirroring what was there before.

Barnes thinks that when we look at these, they are looked at individually. The master plan will eventually change that. We heard in the past that people weren't happy with the gap when Lazari's was there. Knowing that if this extends out, it is temporary until the master plan. There will be a zig zag around it and people will get used to it. We just don't want it to be unsafe. He noted that staff considered some options. He would like specifics on what is being considered.

Canney is comfortable going out to the light pole with understanding that this could be reevaluated when the master plan is done, if there are concerns about it being too big.

Attaie inquired if there could be more tables if the outdoor space went out to the light pole. Gopalakrishnan believes there could be 4 sets of 4 seaters. Attaie would be comfortable with that.

Peace would like to see it go to the light pole. He would like to create as much a possibility for success as possible. Grasso agreed. She would like to see it extend to the light pole as well. She believes you could fit 12 people in there comfortably. She recommended eliminating the gap. You can always fill in any gap with a planter or something.

Gopalakrishnan will work with the applicant to maximize the space for 16 people.

Barnes stated that City staff will work with the City Clerk to get the applicant his sidewalk café permit.

STAFF REPORT AND MISCELLANEOUS:

Christopher stated that he had nothing else to present.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.