

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP: URBAN DESIGN COMMITTEE

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, January 8, 2014, 3:00 p.m., Room 214, County/City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: JoAnne Kissel, Gill Peace, Michelle Penn, Scott Sullivan and Michele Tilley. Mary Anne Wells absent.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Glenn & Paul Glenn (Piedmont); Christy Joy (Archi + Etc); Darl Naumann (Ayars & Ayars); Ernie Castillo (Urban Development); Marvin Krout, Ed Zimmer, Stacey Hageman & Michele Abendroth (Planning Department)

STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Regular Meeting of the Urban Design Committee

Chair JoAnne Kissel called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Adoption of meeting record of UDC meeting of December 11, 2013.

Penn moved approval of the meeting record of the UDC meeting of December 11, 2013, seconded by Peace. Motion carried 5-0. Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan and Tilley voting 'yes'; Wells absent.

Piedmont Center Redevelopment Project (Urban Development Dept.)

Castillo provided some background on the Piedmont Center project. Piedmont Shopping Center was declared blighted in the fall of 2013. Today, the Planning Commission approved conformance with Comprehensive Plan. It is a \$4.5 million investment. They just received a draft of the redevelopment agreement. TIF funding will be approximately \$750,000, which will go toward façade improvements, sidewalks, curb cut and landscaping. They will meet with the developer next week to discuss those details.

Joy stated that they improved the rendering so the Committee could see the modeling of the trees. There are also bigger views of the seating areas and the fireplace and outdoor area. The main thing they want to talk about today is the vision of the group.

Steve Glenn, project developer, stated that Piedmont is a big part of the history of Lincoln. In the spring of 2013, he approached the owner and purchased the center. They want to restore it back to its historical roots. They want to keep the structures and embellish them. About 70% of the stone face is retained in the new structure. He wants to get back to the 50's/60's feel and develop that into a retail environment. When they acquired the property, the economics were completely out of whack. So they want to maintain what is here and give it a 3-dimensional feel rather than the flat feel that is there now. They want to look at how to build a boulevard effect. They want it to have a feel of history and make it family friendly. They worked aggressively on the walkways and made them 12' wide. They want to add

greenscapes as well. They want to make it a neighborhood center that is family friendly and stay true to the history. The parking currently runs east-west which doesn't give easy access to the stores, so they want to change the parking to north-south. They met with the neighborhoods, and they like the plan. Along Cotner, they want to pull Cotner into Piedmont, and Piedmont into Cotner. They are moving the sidewalk off the curb so it is safer for pedestrians. They want to build seating that allows people to stay there longer. The area desperately needs a restaurant. They have rented 81% of the space, so they understand the retail concept. There are local businesses that are the backbone of the whole center, and they believe that is consistent with the history and neighborhood of Piedmont. All the tenants are excited about the center.

Sullivan asked about the view from the west and north. Glenn stated that from the west they are putting landscape material there so the view is visually limited. There is also a deck, so the landscape is meant to limit the view path through there. On the north, they are doing the same. There is a driveway on the north side, and you need that wall to allow for the drive.

Krout stated that they looked at what the design standards would require. Everything they are asking for is what the normal design standards would require. We added a couple street trees on Cotner and in the parking lot field. They are doing a lot dealing with both the edges and to enhance the interior. It is a limited redevelopment project in an area where there is not a lot of budget. We felt they are doing a reasonable job and above and beyond what is required.

Kissel stated that in regard to the boulevard, that makes it sound like it is a pathway, but it doesn't sound like you are doing that. Glenn stated that the boulevard is meant to soften the building and provide a visual-scape. The pathways are through the boulevard. Joy stated that it went back to the concept of the original plan, more like a Sheridan Boulevard concept. Glenn stated that they want to push the pedestrian walkways close to the buildings themselves. There is a major advantage to that as a retailer. They don't have any seating in the boulevard due to safety concerns. This is an ideal center for walking and biking to and for families.

Glenn stated that they are sensitive to the issue that this is a historical center and it needs to feel like Piedmont, not a strip center.

Sullivan asked if there is any provision for outdoor seating. Joy stated that there are two outdoor seating areas.

Sullivan asked about the northeast corner and the angled parking strip. Joy stated that because of the drive-through, there were stacking issues, so they angled it.

Glenn stated that they are excited about the project, and they hope to start in the next few weeks. They have some tenants who want to be open by Easter.

Kissel stated that where they have ended up is a typical retail approach that could be anywhere. Glenn stated that there are some familiar elements to it, but they are maintaining the whole façade but just embellishing it. He has to respond to what retail wants, or we are going back to the spiral where it was.

There is a balanced approach. He thinks this will be the nicest small center in Lincoln. You still can see, feel and touch the whole Piedmont Center. The awnings underneath and the glass facades are 100% Piedmont. They are taking some elements of old and some elements of new. He can be as historical as he wants, but he has to have a 30-year-old want to shop there.

Sullivan stated that he is curious about the entries, as he thinks they could be a number of different forms. He doesn't think the entries are unique to the neighborhood. Tilley stated that she believes the columns are what is tripping it up. The flaring of the columns has an old school feeling to it, and the center seems to fight it a little. It has clean lines, but she is wondering if a slight change to the entryways would keep the historical feel. Glenn stated that the signage is not strip mall signage, and there is uniformity to that. The elements are meant to be more upscale, and to do that, they have to have the height of the façade. Joy stated that the entries were a nice flavor for the investors and for Glenn. The retailers have responded well to this design. It is a balance of what sells and what people are comfortable with. Glenn noted that they are not replacing any of the glass.

Sullivan stated that the design addresses a lot of the proposed design standards. He does not see any concerns with the site. He appreciates addressing the park and the neighbors to the north.

Sullivan moved approval of the design, seconded by Tilley.

Kissel stated that she believes they are doing a lot of good things with the site. The reason they are pushing a little on the design to make it more unique is because of the TIF funding which is supposed to enhance a more pedestrian approach. Their role is to see if there is another level to push to. Perhaps the TIF money could be spent to make the entrances a little more design driven for the area. She sees there is some wiggle room between the retailability and the urban design statement. This is an important part of town.

Sullivan stated that instead of all the entries being the repetitive element, he asked if some of the feature tenants could have a more prominent entry.

Glenn stated that it is the balance of all this. When we think of Piedmont, we think of upper scale, but this isn't even the middle of the economic scale. Sullivan stated that his comment isn't about being more upscale, it is about maybe using a different color or treatment at some of the entries. Glenn stated that this center has been the fastest leasing area in town when they showed the prospective tenants the design.

Peace stated that he is excited to see this project, but he agrees with several comments from the committee, especially the one that this should be brought back to the shine that it once was. The entry pieces become the dominant feature and they are repeated over and over, and that is the part that feels like Anywhere USA. He feels there could be an architectural solution and asked them to study that further.

Penn stated that as she has had more time to consider the project, it does seem Anywhere USA, but it is going to look great.

Motion carried 5-0. Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan and Tilley voting 'yes'; Wells absent.

2014 Enersen Urban Design Award.

Kissel stated that at the last meeting, we talked about cleaning up our process. Tilley agreed to chair the "jury". Zimmer stated that the suggestion was that there would be a group of alums of the Urban Design Committee which would propose one or two nominations to the Urban Design Committee. They also want to see if they can get a couple students involved. They would like to start meeting in the fall and then bring nominations to the Committee. This will also alleviate that inherent problem of having the committee members being eligible for the award and voting on their own projects. He feels that four or five jury members would be best. He suggested a couple variations on the criteria, one of which is a project that was completed in the past year, which is difficult to define. There could be a five-year time frame or a pending list. There was also some discussion if some of the projects were urban or suburban. Truly Lincoln doesn't have suburbs, but if a new edge project achieves a lovely human environment and has the qualities of a high-quality urban place, you could award an urban context. He believes we don't have to put a boundary line on it, except for the city limits.

Sullivan stated that he likes the idea of five years. Also, several of us represent firms, and it is awkward to talk about your projects, so he likes the notion of members that don't have to worry about that aspect. He doesn't want this committee to become a rubber stamping for the jury committee. He would like to have three options. Kissel asked if the jury could rank the nominations.

Sullivan asked how nominations get to the jury. Zimmer stated that in September we could create a press release and send notices to firms. He doesn't want to have every firm's marketing person submit one or two nominations. The jury could nominate to the committee the projects they think are worthy of the award.

The Committee also felt there should be public input as well, so they suggested that an ad be put in the newspaper.

Zimmer stated that for this year, they will get a small group together soon and come up with a list of nominations for the Committee's consideration. He requested that there be a special meeting on January 29 to vote on the nominations.

Advisory review of 1823 O Street, "The Foxy," regarding an appeal to City Council a staff finding of non-conformance with the Downtown Design Standards.

Zimmer stated that this is an appeal to City Council of the Downtown Design Standards. For two decades, 1823 O Street has been The Foxy Lady. A new owner bought the property from the widow recently and proceeded to apply for a new liquor license and some interior remodel. According to the Downtown Design Standards, in a major remodel, if they exceed 50% of the valuation, they need to put a window. They worked with the owner on the special permit application, and staff agreed to recommend approval of the zoning if he agreed to put in two windows that he will paint over or otherwise shield from the inside. He got the special permit and then decided that he didn't like what he had agreed to, so he appealed it to City Council. Staff's recommendation is that they believe he should

have to keep the agreement. The Urban Design Committee's recommendation will be added to the staff recommendation when the City Council will hear the case next Monday.

Tilley stated that N Street, which is right next door, came up with a solution for the windows. If we allow him to not comply with the Downtown Design Standards, we are setting precedence to allow other people not to comply. She feels he is going outside the boundaries, and she doesn't want to support that.

Tilley made a motion to sustain the Downtown Design Standards as required in the special permit, seconded by Peace. Motion carried 5-0. Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan and Tilley voting 'yes'; Wells absent.

2013 UDC Annual Report.

Zimmer noted that the 2013 UDC Annual Report has been completed.

Penn moved to accept the Annual Report, seconded by Sullivan. Motion carried 5-0. Kissel, Peace, Penn, Sullivan and Tilley voting 'yes'; Wells absent.

Misc. and staff report, etc.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

**Please note that these minutes will not be formally approved until the next meeting of the Urban Design Committee. **

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