

Proposal:

Davis Design, on behalf of Farmers Mutual Insurance Company, requests a Certificate of Appropriateness for work on the block bounded by South 12th and 13th Streets, Lincoln Mall and K Streets.

Discussion:

Farmers Mutual Insurance Company has worked with the Commission for several years towards the redevelopment of its block on the north side of Lincoln Mall between 12th and 13th Streets. The Company and their architects, Davis Design, have submitted designs for a new headquarters building on the 13th Street frontage. The intention is to retain and redevelop the existing home office at 1220 Lincoln Mall as leased office space.

The Commission should review the proposal in light of the Environs Design Standards. I will also address the Downtown Design Standards, since the Commission acts as the design board for those standards as well, for properties within the boundaries of the District.

The proposal depicts a three story, 45,000 square foot office building centered on South 13th Street with small plazas at the north and south ends, enclosed by brick piers and wrought-iron-type fences. The building is depicted as brick with stone or cast-stone trim. The northwest portion of the block provides parking for the project, proposed as a two-level deck.

The overall design standard for structures on Lincoln Mall states:

Design Standard 9: Facades

New buildings in the District should be designed to enhance the setting of the Capitol and their immediate surroundings. When those surroundings have a high degree of cohesiveness, new designs should be compatible with their setting, strengthening the visual relationships found among existing buildings and landscape features. In areas that lack cohesion, designs should be proposed that offer themes and patterns that can be further expanded in future development. Brick, stone, or other richly textured, highly durable masonry is desirable for building exteriors on Capitol Square, Centennial Mall, and Lincoln Mall. Permanence should be an overriding characteristic in the choice of exterior materials. Colors should be drawn from a muted palette of warm, earth tones or shades of white, with the context of surrounding buildings as a guide.

The proposal appears to meet this standard in exemplary fashion.

Environs Design Standard 12 includes

"To reinforce the edges of the District spaces, it is essential that new buildings be oriented to their respective Mall, or to Capitol Square, and that new buildings have a consistent setback."

The more "advisory" Guidelines listed under that Standard include

"12.2: The principal elevation of new buildings constructed on property that fronts on a Mall but does not front on Capitol Square must be oriented towards that Mall, including primary entrance and fenestration." and "12.3: The principal façade of new buildings constructed on property facing Centennial or Lincoln Mall must be located on the property line towards the Mall. This guideline does not preclude use of courtyards or recessed entries as features when the full height or the main portion of the building clearly reinforces the desired edge. When the edge is strongly reinforced with a wall or landscape feature, a front yard may be considered."

The existing building dominates the Lincoln Mall frontage. The proposal locates the new home office on South 13th Street and centers the building on that prominent frontage, addressing the north and south corners (K Street and Lincoln Mall) with small plazas "strongly reinforced" by brick piers and wrought metal fences. In discussion with the Company and their designers, they indicated a strong desire for symmetry on So. 13th Street and also a need to not crowd their existing Lincoln Mall building with the new building,. We also discussed the potential to open Capitol view windows in the blank east wall of the existing building as they transition it to leased space.

The proposed design neither turns its back on Lincoln Mall nor ignores the purpose of reinforcing that Mall edge. I believe the language of the Standards provide the Commission some discretion in reviewing the overall "fit" of this proposal on its site and enhancement it offers the District, rather than simply viewing its Lincoln Mall frontage.

In regard to the Downtown Design Standards, the building meets or exceeds most of them. However, consideration should be given to the "Site Development" standards that include "*Downtown Lincoln buildings west of 19th Street...shall be 'built-to' their front property lines (and on corner lots, shall be built-to both front property lines).*" However, the standards also indicate that "*Pedestrian plazas and forecourts at street level shall be permitted except on P Street from 9th to 19th Street and on North 21st Street from O to Q Streets.*" Given that the proposed building hugs 13th Street and has well-defined "pedestrian plazas" north and south to the corners, I believe the Commission would be well-founded in declaring that the intent of the Downtown Design Standards is met by the proposal.

Recommended finding:

The proposed new construction meets the intent of the Environs District Design Standards and the intent of the Downtown Design Standards.

Recommended action:

Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for improvement of the site as proposed.

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FARMERS MUTUAL OF NEBRASKA

A MUTUAL COMPANY INCORPORATED IN 1891

PO BOX 81529 - 1220 LINCOLN MALL
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68501

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PRESS RELEASE

December 10, 2009

**Contact: Byron L. Boslau
Chairman, President & CEO**

Farmers Mutual of Nebraska plans for new home office facility in downtown Lincoln

Farmers Mutual Insurance Company of Nebraska is announcing plans for a new corporate home office facility to be built at its current location on the block bounded by 12th and 13th Streets between Lincoln Mall and K Street. Farmers Mutual Chairman, President and CEO Byron Boslau stated that the three level, 45,000 square foot building will incorporate “green” design principles. The end result will be the creation of an aesthetically pleasing, flexible and comfortable facility with low maintenance and life cycle costs.

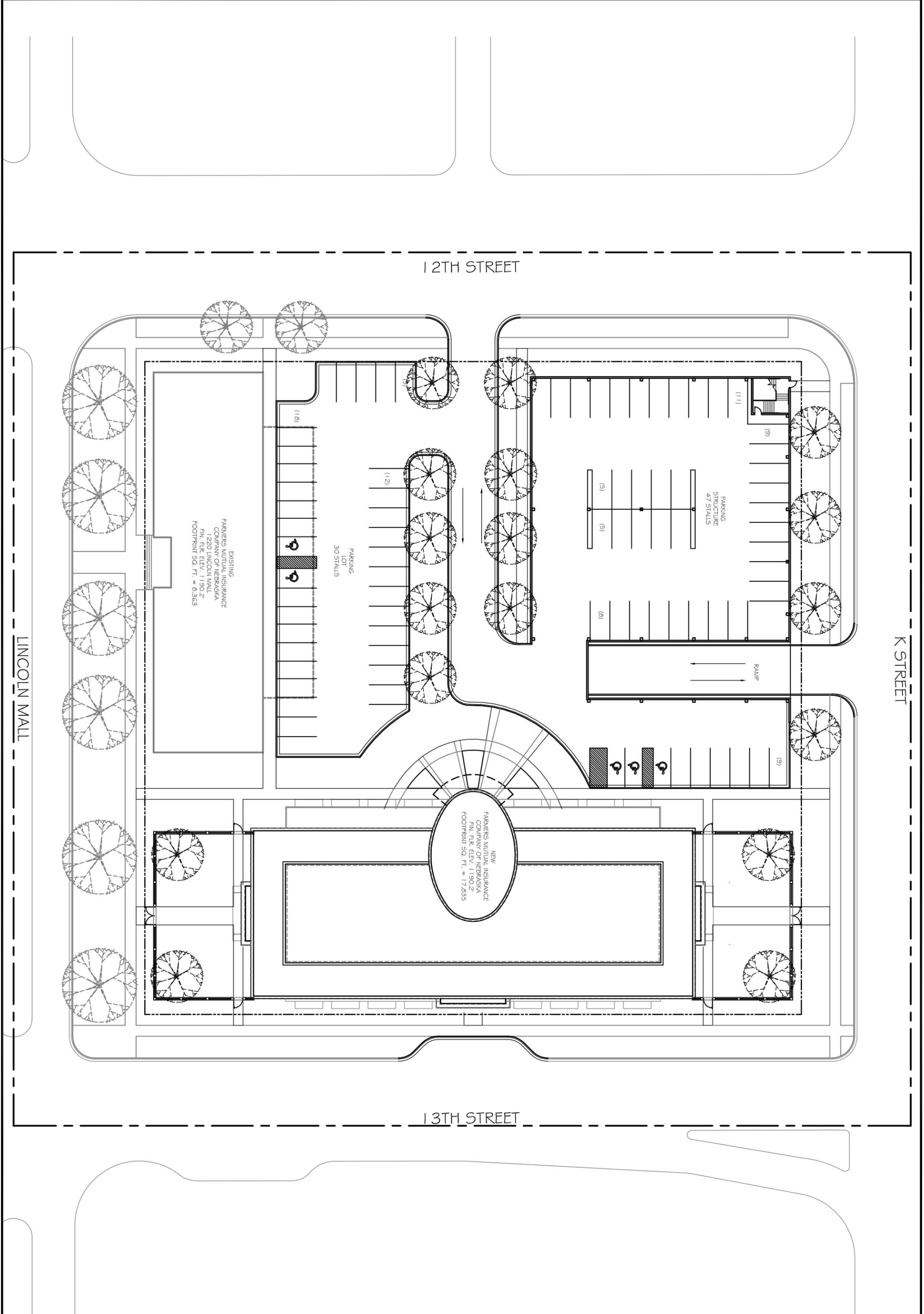
Since its inception in 1891, Farmers Mutual has maintained its presence in the downtown corridor at various locations. It has been at its current location since 1962 and over the years has purchased the remainder of the block to meet its future growth needs. Farmers Mutual enjoys the distinction of being the largest mutual property and casualty insurance company domiciled in the state of Nebraska. The Company employs approximately 250 people. Out of 3,200 property and casualty insurance companies in the United States, Farmers Mutual ranks among the top 150 in terms of premium income while only writing business in two states, Nebraska and South Dakota.

Mr. Boslau noted that the project reflects the Company’s commitment to the Lincoln community in general, and the downtown corridor in particular. “We believe that a healthy and vibrant downtown corridor is essential to the economic vitality of the city and we are pleased to make this long-term investment in the Lincoln community. Mr. Boslau said the total cost for the project is about \$15 million. No tax increment financing will be used in this project.

The Company’s current headquarters, located on the same block, will be redeveloped into commercial office space upon completion of the new facility.

Located in the shadow of the Nebraska State Capitol, the design of the new building is subject to the approval of the Capitol Eviros Commission. Mr. Boslau said that Farmers Mutual will submit architectural drawings to the Capitol Eviros Commission at their December 17 meeting.

No timetable has been set for the start of this project.



LINCOLN MALL

12TH STREET

K STREET

13TH STREET

EXISTING
FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE
COMPANY OF NEBRASKA
FIN. FTR. ELEV. 1190.2'
FOOTPRINT SQ. FT. = 8,363

NEW
FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE
COMPANY OF NEBRASKA
FIN. FTR. ELEV. 1190.2'
FOOTPRINT SQ. FT. = 17,835

PARKING
LOT
30 STALLS

PARKING
STRUCTURE
47 STALLS

RAMP



FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE
SITE PLAN

SCALE: 1"=40'-0"



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SW PERSPECTIVE



NW PERSPECTIVE

FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE
3D PERSPECTIVE



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SE PERSPECTIVE

FARMERS MUTUAL INSURANCE
3d PERSPECTIVE



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SW PERSPECTIVE FROM LINCOLN MALL