



NEBRASKA CAPITOL ENVIRONS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER	Urban Design Record #24087
APPLICATION TYPE	Certificate of Appropriateness
ADDRESS/LOCATION	802 J Street
HEARING DATE	July 12, 2024
ADDITIONAL MEETINGS	June 28, 2024
APPLICANT	Wynn Hjermstad (Urban Development), whjermstad@lincoln.ne.gov
STAFF CONTACT	Collin Christopher, 402-441-6370, cchristopher@lincoln.ne.gov

RECOMMENDATION: N/A

Staff Update: *This item was deferred from the June 28th meeting. The applicant will be presenting a revised plan on July 12th, addressing feedback received from the Commission in June. Since Planning has yet to receive any new information from the applicant, the following staff report and imagery are from that original June 28th meeting and have not been updated to reflect the new proposal.*

Summary of Request

The city's Urban Development Department has submitted a proposal to build a permanent supportive housing facility at 802 J Street. The facility will be operated by CenterPointe and will serve to provide housing and support services for the chronically homeless. The two-story, 15,000 square-foot facility will include the following, per a city press release:

- 24 single bed apartments with a shared laundry room
- Secure entry lobby and reception area
- Common spaces for gathering, including a covered front porch, kitchen, yard and garden
- Secure offices and meeting space for the CenterPointe staff
- Off-street parking for 11 CenterPointe staff and visitors

Located just west of the County-City Building, the project fits within the eastern edge of the evolving South Haymarket neighborhood.

Compatibility with the Design Standards

Given its location, this project must consider the design standards set forth for both Capitol Environs and South Haymarket. What follows are the most relevant standards at hand:

Capitol Environs 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.

In the rehabilitation of existing buildings, retention of high quality materials and use of new, durable, and high quality materials is also desirable.

Guideline 9.1:

Proposals for new buildings should strengthen interrelationships among buildings within a specific setting while encouraging variations. Features that contribute to compatibility among buildings include similarities in:

- alignment and setback;
- spaces between buildings;
- silhouette, including height and roof pitch;
- building base--relationship of building to ground or site;
- materials and material scale;
- mass and scale;
- building shade and shadow pattern from massing;
- permanence and durability, with 100 year "life cycle" expected facing Capitol Square and 75 year "life cycle" expected on Centennial and Lincoln Malls;
- entrance position, scale, and features;
- color, finish, and texture;
- size, type, and proportion of openings;
- ornamentation and detail, particularly at street level and in the residential areas;
- landscape design and features;
- cornice heights.

Compatibility per Staff Analysis: High-quality, masonry materials serve as the primary façade material. While the brick color deviates from the buildings directly surrounding the project, it feels appropriate within the larger environs district.

The setback of the building, particularly along the J Street side, is greater than what is typically expected in the district. Given the residential nature of the project and the particular design features of the south façade with a protected patio space, the desire to set the building back is understandable. Regardless, it still deviates moderately from the intent of the standards.

Capitol Environs Design Standard 15: Buildings on J Street/West

J Street west of 9th Street ("J Street/West") should develop, over time, into a medium-density residential area. The build-to line for new buildings on J Street/West shall be 60 feet from the J Street centerline. This reduction of the standard front yard in the underlying zoning districts is intended:

- to encourage a uniform "edge" to the Mall's open space,
- to create more buildable lot area, encouraging quality redevelopment,
- *to narrow the very wide open space created by the 120 foot right-of-way and any zoned front yards, which would not reinforce a residential atmosphere for this portion of the District.*

Guideline 15.1:

The "South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan" illustrates rowhouses as desirable on J Street/West. Other medium-density housing forms can be considered by the Commission supportive of enhancing the residential character of this portion of the District.

Guideline 15.3:

All new construction along J Street/West should be oriented toward J Street and should contribute to an attractive residential character.

Guideline 15.4:

Where necessary, access features such as ramps or stairs are encouraged to be located in the right-of-way with access easements.

Compatibility per Staff Analysis: This section of the standards is much more explicit in its desire to see new buildings built to the property line along J Street. The proposal clearly deviates from this expectation.

Capitol Environs Design Standard 24: J Street/West Landscape

The "South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan" approved by City Council in 2015 shall guide development of the public landscape of J Street/West. Because the view to the Capitol is limited by the siting of the County/City government campus, this western extension of Lincoln Mall should be less formal than its counterpart. Improvements along this Mall should reinforce a residential environment.

Guideline 24.1

J Street/West rehabilitation should include construction of a center island and realignment of the curb to allow for parallel on-street parking. New curbs should "bump out" at intersections to shorten the crosswalk distance and thus enhance the walkability of the residential neighborhood.

Guideline 24.2

Establish overstory trees within a minimum 8-foot wide "curb zone" along J Street/West. Require placement of one overstory tree on every corner and at every alley intersection (or on both sides of the street at midblock) along the Mall for continuity.

Guideline 24.3

Plant all four corners of street intersections with the same species, but vary the species from one end of the Mall to the other. Variation can also occur at the midblock locations.

Guideline 24.4

Establish center islands with perennials, grasses, or shrubs in large masses for higher interest.

Compatibility per Staff Analysis: The guidelines within this standard and the South Haymarket Design Standards from which they were derived imagine a larger reconstruction of J Street that has yet to happen. As such, it is not the responsibility of the applicant to meet these guidelines as part of their project.

Recommendations

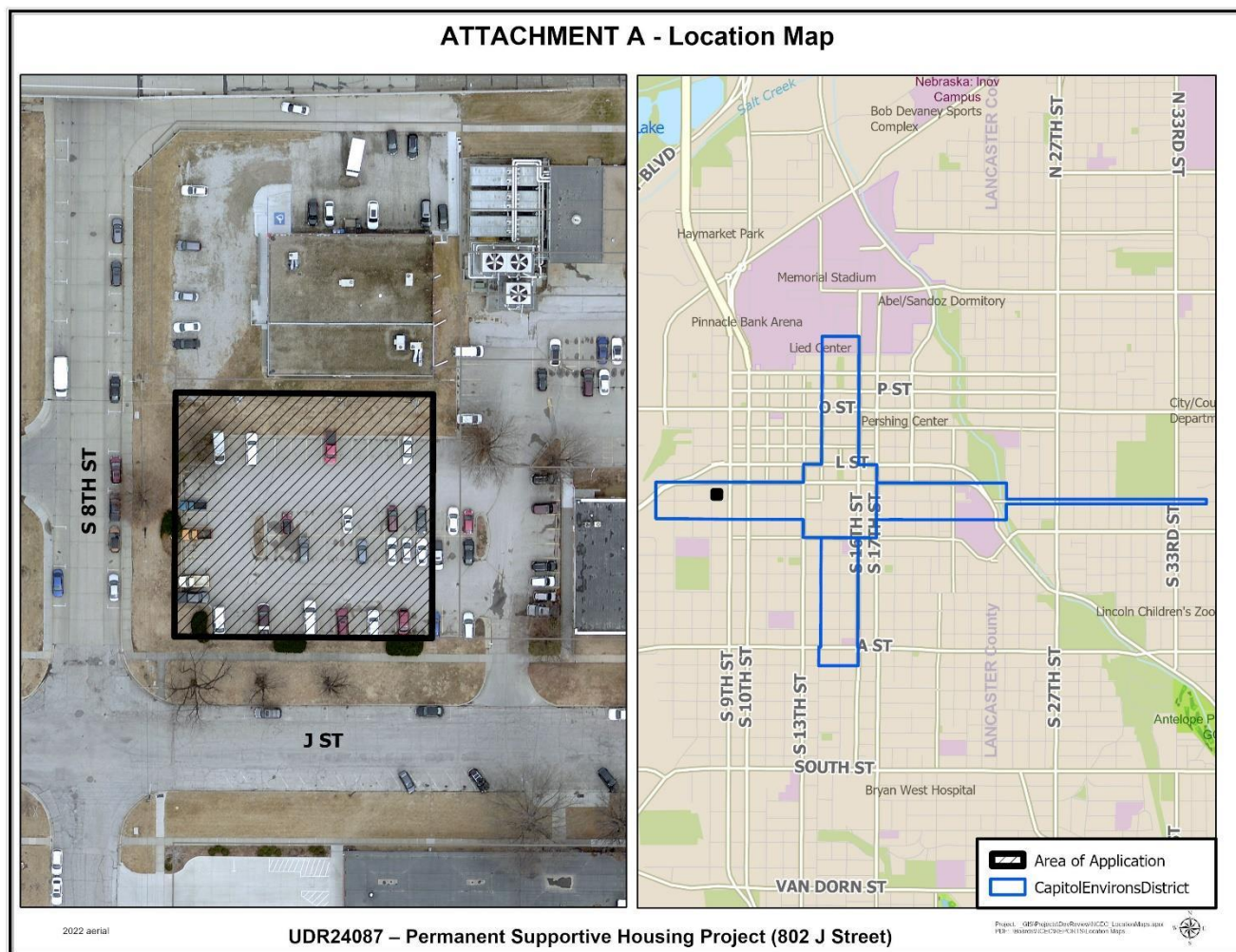
The proposed permanent supportive housing project at 802 J Street will provide needed services to the greater downtown area. Further, the design of the building appears to be thoughtful in how it interacts with both the Capitol Environs District and the South Haymarket neighborhood. That said, the setback of the building from J Street is clearly in conflict with the standards. The Commission should consider whether the justification for this setback as presented by the applicant at the meeting is reasonable or not.

Staff generally recommends approval of the building design, but the setback issue with the building will require consideration and guidance from the Commission. There are two most obvious pathways to approval:

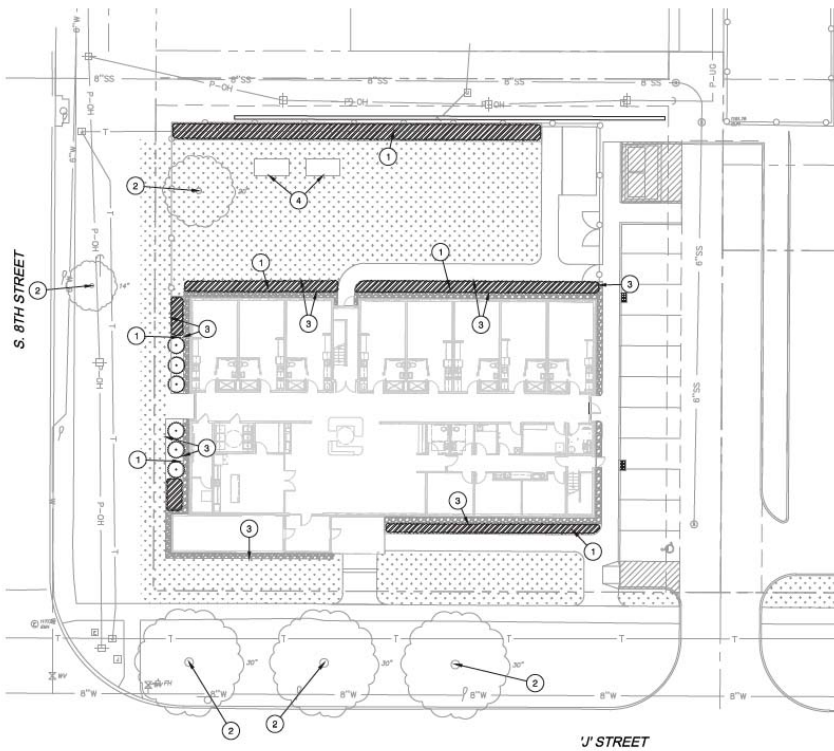
1. The Commission could approve a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed, understanding that it deviates from the standards. Approving such a deviation is within the purview of the Commission.
2. The Commission could defer a decision to the July meeting to give the applicant a chance to modify their proposal to meet the expectations of the design standards as written.

Beyond that issue, it should be noted that the landscape plan for the project is still conceptual and lacking in details that might be of interest to the Commission like proposed plant species. If the Commission is interested in approving a more developed landscape plan at a future meeting, that direction should be provided to the applicant.

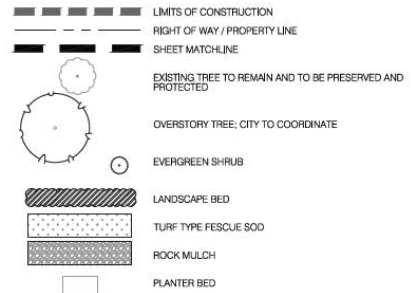
ATTACHMENT A - Location Map



ATTACHMENT B – Site Plan

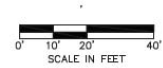


LANDSCAPE LEGEND:



LANDSCAPE PLAN NOTES:

- ① PLANTING BED WITH SHREDDED HARDWOOD MULCH; REF: LANDSCAPE GENERAL NOTES
- ② EXISTING TREE TO REMAIN AND TO BE PRESERVED AND PROTECTED
- ③ STEEL METAL EDGING
- ④ PLANTER BEDS



ATTACHMENT B – Renderings



Southeast perspective



South perspective



Southwest perspective



Northwest perspective