Meeting Minutes: This document states the minutes of cases before the Urban Design Review Board at their Public hearing and Administrative meeting held on Thursday, September 19, 2019.

Certification of Publication: Urban Design Review Board Administrator certifies publication of this agenda in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha on Monday, September 9, 2019

Members Present: Jeffrey Elliott – Chair
                Robert Peters – Vice-Chair
                Kurt Cisar
                Philip Webb
                Matthew Schafer
                Michael Riedmann
                Larry Jobeun
                Adam Marek

Members Not Present: Kristine Karnes
                     Dawaune Hayes – Alternate
                     Katie Underwood - Alternate

Staff Present: Jed Moulton – Urban Design Planning Manager
              Tim Fries – Urban Design Review Board Administrator
              Paul Kratz - City Law Department
              Lisa Agans - Recording Secretary

Pre-Meeting minutes:

At the pre-meeting of the Urban Design Review Board, held on September 19, 2019 at 2:30 p.m., the Board and City staff briefly discussed the agenda item.

The pre-meeting adjourned shortly prior to the start of the regular meeting.
Administrative Items

There were no administrative items.

Public Project:

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<th>UD-18-010</th>
<th>Name: Omaha Riverfront Revitalization</th>
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<td>OJB Landscape Architecture</td>
<td>Location: Gene Leahy Mall</td>
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<td>Nathan Elliott</td>
<td>Request: Approval of 30% building and streetscape design plans for Gene Leahy Mall</td>
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At the Urban Design Review Board (UDRB) meeting held on September 19, 2019, Mr. Nathan Elliott of OJD Landscape Architecture, appeared on behalf of the applicant.

Mr. Elliott advised that work had been moving along steadily since their initial presentation at the November 15, 2018 meeting of the Urban Design Review Board and that he would go over the basic design elements which had been implemented and adjustments which had been made since that meeting. After a brief refresher of the 10% plans, Mr. Elliott confirmed that the members of the Board had received the packet of diagrams, photos, and plans specific to the 30% plans for this meeting. Mr. Elliott stated that the project would be referred to as Gene Leahy West (13th Street to 11th Street) and Gene Leahy East (11th Street to 8th Street) for clarity and simplicity, additionally he advised that the plans no longer included development between 13th and 14th Streets.

Mr. Elliott updated plans for the central event lawn at the heart of Gene Leahy West, with a restaurant, and children’s playground where the current slides would be enhanced with additional play improvements. He advised that the central event lawn is capped with an event pavilion, small plaza and a fixed water feature. Mr. Elliott stated that there is an 11th Street access which is intended to provide connectivity between the Old Market and the Capital District.

Mr. Elliott described the site as sloping slightly from west to east and from north to south. Mr. Elliott described the step “cascade” which would be on Farnam Street between 11th and 10th Street which would slope from the current grade, he stated that the remainder would be maintained at, or very near the current grade. He advised that the Burlington and Green buildings would remain in place and that the pond would be reduced to a smaller footprint anchored by a boat cove in the same area the pond currently exists.

Mr. Elliott provided an overview of the current plans for the entire area to provide prospective for the Board members. He pointed out the loading/unloading area for people arriving by car or bus, as well as various features which he stated would be discussed in more detail throughout the meeting. He advised that since the Board had access to the same material he was presenting, he would not go into detail on some of the smaller items, such as specifics of much of the landscaping, however he welcomed questions from the Board. Mr. Elliott stated that the four buildings he would be discussing at length at this meeting were the restaurant building, the performance pavilion, the children’s restroom building, and the food and beverage kiosk.

Mr. Elliott advised that most of the food and beverage operations were now being consolidated within
one restaurant building. Mr. Elliott showed photos of all four elevations, pointing out the features in each section and describing the building materials which had been discussed with the architect including concrete, metal panels, channel glass, and ceramic tile, as well as the anticipated color palette. The building will include a green roof and some painted metal as well. He stated that the concept had changed from November to now include a fast/casual restaurant on the west side of the building with both interior and exterior dining; the east end would house a full bar on the first level and a restaurant on the second level as well as an area which could be rented out for private events. This building would include publicly accessible restrooms which would be shared with the bar and café, including the family restroom as required by code. The panel board and other amenities to serve the western portion of the park would be housed within an electrical room, telecom room, etc. in this building as well. Mr. Elliott pointed out the location of the stairs and elevators in the building as well as the location of a dumbwaiter to move materials from the first to the second level. He described the movable wall on the north side of the casual café and on the north face of the bar and stated that the remainder of the building would feature store-front design.

Mr. Webb inquired about whether the stairs were opened to the east or blocked with a wall, specifically, he was concerned about where the garbage receptacle would be placed and whether there would be a wall blocking it off from pedestrian view. Mr. Elliott stated that on the current plans the stairs are open, however, the architects are working on an enclosed stairwell due to comments received from code reviewers. He advised that the developers are trying to figure out how to make the garbage enclosure work the best. He stated that they had received a lot of input about the location and it is definitely on the radar for some additional research and homework.

Mr. Elliott stated that the children’s garden restroom would measure approximately 2500 square feet with a notch cut out on one corner for shelter with a sink and counter space, entries on the north and south sides for the men’s and women’s restrooms as well as a corridor inside with family restrooms. He stated that this building would also house some of the utility and service amenities for that section of the park. Mr. Elliott described the building materials as being the same as those for the restaurant, including a green roof with skylights.

The performance pavilion was described as a steel frame structure clad in metal panels with a grid hung to support rigging for lights and sounds for special events. Mr. Elliott pointed out the diagrams in the packet showing the pavilion from underneath, and from the side. He stated that the exterior would be clad in metal panels and the interior would be stainless steel or silver painted metal. In response to a question from the Board, Mr. Elliott stated that the exterior top would be painted metal panels.

Mr. Elliott described the Food & Beverage Kiosk as being a counter service type of kiosk which would provide no cooking, no hoods, and no ovens. Although the exact type of availability would depend on the operator, it is envisioned to house cold cases, coffee, and other things of that sort. The building is anticipated to be approximately 20’ in length with a 15’ window. This building would also house mechanical, water, and electrical services for its section of the park which can be accessed via a door on the east end. He stated that the building materials will be metal panels and will feature a bi-fold door which will expose the service window. He explained that the color in the photos is a place holder as the final color has not yet been determined. In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Elliott, stated that the metal used will be one which is less resistant to oxidation than what had been previously considered. He stated that the developer is reviewing the relevant code requirements for internal employee restrooms at this location and will work to make certain they are in compliance with those requirements. Mr. Elliott stated that initially this kiosk was anticipated to have a much smaller footprint,
however, the need to include mechanical and other system services within the building has changed that original design to the one shown at the meeting. He also advised that they are still discussing ways to bring the design and materials of the kiosk more in line with those of the other buildings such as the restroom building. Mr. Webb stated that he would like to see a design which is a little more “structural” or is a bit more imaginative, however, Mr. Elliott stated that this building was designed to fit into the background since it is likely to be used seasonally rather than year-round like the other buildings.

Mr. Schafer was concerned about the angle of the Performance Pavilion and whether it would be sufficiently to prevent people from climbing on it. Mr. Elliott stated after working on similar structures which someone did climb on and cause damages, the developer has tried to be more mindful of that with this design. He stated that there is no explicit research in how to avoid that type of problem but they have increased the angle somewhat from the original design and were researching other ways to make it less prone to climbers and damages. In addition, Mr. Schafer stated that he was concerned with the lighting structure being exposed to wildlife such as pigeons. Mr. Elliott stated that they are considering placing rigging points on a grid at the front, center, and rear to allow for lighting to be mounted like it would be in a theatre which would leave less exposed to wildlife including birds. Mr. Webb wanted to know if the rigging would be permanent at the Performance Pavilion. Mr. Elliott stated that there will be points for performers to attach their own equipment to and there will be some basic lighting provided for small groups who do not have a specific lighting requirement. He explained that there are various lighting schemes which can be utilized throughout the daily operations of the park. Mr. Elliott stated that in-grade lighting will have sealed fixtures to protect it from water damage.

Mr. Cisar was concerned about security and lighting at the Performance Pavilion and the Kiosk. Mr. Elliott stated that they have worked previously with the lighting designer for this project and have addressed this issue with them in the past. He stated that there will be everyday lighting such as down lighting on the Pavilion, safety lighting throughout the plaza and lighting all along the perimeter, including the Kiosk.

In response to questions about signage, Mr. Elliott stated that they are working with a signage consultant and graphic designer focusing on the signage system concept designs which included park-oriented signage, sight-way signage, monumental signage, directional signage and maps and larger directional signage for the major streets and smaller signage for pedestrian traffic along those streets. He advised that part of the work of the designer is also developing guidelines for tenant signage as well as the lighting designer working on lighting for the restaurant and kiosk signage, while emphasizing that there will be very limited illuminated signage. Mr. Elliott stated that the guidelines will ensure everything works well together and that MECA will review and give final approval.

Mr. Peters inquired about the plan for public restrooms at the park, especially for special events or programs as there was nothing shown on the packet other than those at the restaurant and the children’s play area. Mr. Elliott stated that for large events, portable toilets placed somewhere in the parking area.

Mr. Elliott presented diagrams showing the proposed streetscapes for the project from each of the streets and several angles. He advised that the original 10% plans showed a more formal arrangement of trees and other landscaping as well as structures and benches and that the arrangement has been changed to a more winding path to make it a more pleasant, park like path. He presented photos showing the potential materials to be used for the benches, metal enclosures, light poles, and tree grates. Mr. Elliott stated that the plan was to use acid-wash concrete paving and concrete sloped
planters at the curb. Mr. Elliott stated that one of the things which will be definitely different from the 10% plans will be the bollards along the streetscape for security. He advised that they had spent a significant amount of time brainstorming ideas to create a more secure perimeter to stop someone with malicious intent from driving into the park, while still creating an inviting and pedestrian friendly environment. Mr. Elliott stated that they are still planning the use of bollards, however they intend to combine them with some natural stone elements, seating, and other aesthetically pleasing components in the same area along the walkway. He also pointed out the location of the lay-by areas and the bike lane, and pedestrian crossings. Mr. Elliott stated that some of the roadway work had already begun.

Mr. Elliott provided details regarding the sculptures and other aspects of streetscaping which were also all laid out in the photo packet provided to the Board members. This included a sculpture garden along Douglas Street, seating including benches and chairs, possible locations for small tables and large planters all designed to encourage visitors to sit and take some time at the park. Lighting in this area will be predominantly pedestrian pole lighting as there are already street lights to illuminate the roadway and some sort of lighting to emphasize the sculptures at the entrance. The landscaping will be laid out in a manner to create a park or garden like setting for casual walking or sitting. Parallel parking will be provided at several areas throughout the boundaries of the park as well as a number of pedestrian crossing locations. Areas will be open around the park to allow for some seating overlooking the park from various locations as well as overlook areas for pedestrians who are not necessarily within the park itself.

Mr. Elliott emphasized that the slopes around the park are all ADA compliant, with the exception of an area on Douglas Street between about the fifth tree and the I-480 entrance ramp which has approximately 6.5%, slopes. The developer is creating access points which can be used to access that area other than directly from the street as the slopes are too great to make compliant. In addition, the developer has been working with the designers of the ORBT routes to find a way to work around the slopes in order to accommodate both the ORBT stop and the regular bus stops around the park.

Mr. Elliott next provided some detail regarding the recycling and trash enclosures and pointed out the pages in the packet which showed street side views as well as aerial views of the potential placement and design of the enclosures. He explained that there will be an 8 yard recycling dumpster and a 27 cubic yard trash compactor; in addition there would be an OPPD transformer enclosure in this location. Mr. Elliott showed how the enclosure would be oriented to the street allowing the truck pull into the enclosure to pick up the dumpster and lift it overhead for dumping. He then explained that the compactor is a rear sled, pull-behind which would allow the truck to back in and pull it out. Several views were presented to show the orientation of the garbage enclosures to various points in the park as well as showing that the turning radius of City snow plows were also taken into consideration when designing the enclosure as well as its placement.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Elliott explained the process which went into determining the placement of the garbage and recycling enclosures. He stated that they were placed so that they would not interfere with pedestrian traffic or vehicle lay-by areas. They felt it was important to have the bins near the fast/casual restaurant due to the amount of waste that area would produce and by placing it in this location they avoided additional curb cuts and having it separate from the building reduced the footprint of the restaurant building. He confirmed that there was no code requirement which determined the location of the transformer but that it had been placed in this location to cut down on the number of enclosures scattered around the park and due to the significant power draw by the restaurant and due to all the power panels being housed in the children’s park restroom building.
The Board members had several questions regarding the materials being used in the enclosure, the security around them, and the plan for screening the enclosures from pedestrians in the area. Mr. Elliott explained the various types of perforated metal enclosures which were available, specifically describing two layer enclosures one of which would have off-set perforations in the two panels and another which could have a solid metal panel as the interior layer and perforations only on the outer layer. Mr. Webb stated that he was concerned about the isolation of the enclosure inviting “taggers” and inquired about what would have to be done to replace a panel if it was tagged, specifically, would both layers of panel need to be removed and replaced or only the outer panel? Mr. Elliott stated that the interior and exterior panels are installed separately with their own hardware, which means that if something needed repaired or replaced, just the individual panel can be removed. In addition, he stated that there would be a lot of landscape buffer to screen the enclosures which should make it harder for people to get to it, however, it has been his experience that if a person really wants to get in there, they will find a way. He explained that there are security cameras around the restaurant and other high risk areas, though there are none specifically at the garbage enclosures.

Mr. Schafer expressed concern regarding the potential damage to any landscape buffer and had questions regarding the placement of the landscaping at the garbage/recycling enclosure. Mr. Elliott stated that there were certain requirements in the code regarding how close to the street various structures and landscaping can be placed. He advised that they had determined that 6 foot planters, with some ground coverage and possibly trees placed about 6 ½ feet from the curb would be satisfactory and within the code requirements. He also mentioned the possibility of some sort of vine plants on the perforated metal enclosures.

Ms. Gayle Sturdivant of the Public Works department explained that the department is not particularly excited about the placement of the garbage enclosures, however, they have determined that it is one of the best places for it within the park area. Mr. Cisar asked whether the developer had explored alternative locations, such as near the building so it could be somewhat screened by the wall. Mr. Elliott stated that they had considered it, however, the restaurant building is not currently part of the project due to budget constraints so the developer decided that this location would be best due to its proximity to the proposed restaurant building but also that it could be a standalone enclosure without the restaurant if that came in on a separate timeline. Other areas of the park had been considered for the placement of the garbage enclosures but had been eliminated due to the proximity to pedestrians, the landscaping, the cost, or some other reason, which left them with this location as the best possible one. Placing the enclosure at the location of the restaurant without the plans for that restaurant being definite created its own set of problems. Mr. Jobeu inquired as to whether Mr. Elliott had photographs for the Board to see where this type of enclosure had been used in other projects as well as viewing a Dallas, Texas location on Google maps for the Board to see the finished project.

In response to questions from Mr. Schafer, Mr. Elliott described the various stormwater mitigation elements throughout the park. He advised that there were check dams, sub drain systems, basins, planting islands, landscape drains and other elements throughout the park.

Mr. Webb stated that he was impressed with the amount of information Mr. Elliott had presented and the detail included. He stated that his concern was with regards to the garbage/recycling and the transformer enclosures and how those could be brought in tighter with the building footprint, he would like to see an overall look of the kiosk. Mr. Webb questioned whether there was a way to approve part of the plan today and layover other parts which would allow them to be looked at again before the 90%
milestone. Mr. Elliott stated that they would prefer to have the questions answered and be sure the elements are all approved before getting to the 90% milestone with everything planned out and possibly constructed only to have elements be denied at that point. He advised that they would be back at the end of November or December for the 60% milestones as well as potentially having the Heartland of America Park information. It was discussed that one of the biggest concerns of the Board was getting the garbage/recycling and transformer enclosures away from the street and pedestrian views, or finding some way to make the enclosure less intrusive if it can’t be moved. Mr. Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager, advised that the City does allow transformer enclosures to be in the tree screening areas. Also of concern was working on the bandstand pavilion to make it less accessible to climbers and wildlife.

Mr. Moulton asked for clarification as to whether the Board was considering laying over the entire 30% plans, or whether they were considering approving some aspects and laying over others to request specific information at the 60% milestone. Mr. Moulton provided some guidance to the Board as to how to make the motion specific enough to ensure that both the Board and the applicant understand the requirements going forward.

Mr. Schafer made a motion to approve the 30% designs for the Park Restaurant, with the caveat that if it changes due to any change to the trash enclosure it would need further review at the next meeting and approval of the Children’s Garden restroom, and the 13th, 8th, and Douglas Street streetscapes. Mr. Schafer moved to layover the 30% design of the Performance Pavilion, Food and Beverage Kiosk, and the Farnam Street trash enclosure. Mr. Peters seconded the motion, which carried 5-0.

Adjournment:

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn the meeting at 4:19 p.m.