Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, August 14, 2019

Public Meeting:
1:30 PM, Room 1210

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission Members: Scott Dobbe – Chair, Carey Meyer – Vice Chair, Andrew Conzett, Joan Fogarty, Brian Magee, Regan Pence, Kathryn Aultz, Jaime Suarez, and Curt Witzenburg.

Certification of Publication: Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Thursday, August 1, 2019 notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting on Wednesday, August 14, 2019.

Members Present:
Scott Dobbe – Chair
Carrie Meyer – Vice Chair
Kathryn Aultz
Andrew Conzett
Joan Fogarty
Brian Magee
Jaime Suarez
Curt Witzenburg

Members Not Present:
Regan Pence

Others Present:
Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager
Ivy Freitag, LHPC Administrator
Jennifer Taylor, Attorney - City Law Department
Clinette Ingram, Recording Secretary

Mr. Dobbe called the meeting to order at 1:34 pm. He introduced the Commission members, City staff and explained the procedures for hearing the cases. There were seven members present. Mr. Suarez appeared after roll call and the approval of the minutes.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Witzenburg moved to APPROVE the minutes from the May 8, 2019 meetings. Mr. Magee seconded the motion.

AYES: Meyer, Aultz, Conzett, Magee, Witzenburg, Fogarty, Dobbe

MOTION CARRIED: 7-0.
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on August 14, 2019, Melissa Gengler (Historic Resources Group – Lincoln, Nebraska) and Tom McLeay appeared before the commission.

Ms. Gengler stated that the nomination was being presented under Criterion A in the area of Commerce, specifically in the area of transportation. It was also significant under Criterion A for Community Planning and Development and Criterion C for Architecture. The period of significance began in 1900 which is the earliest date of construction of the oldest buildings in the district (two apartment buildings in the northeast corner of the district boundary) and ended in 1962 when Interstate 480 was completed. There were 7 buildings in the district that had already been individually listed on the National Register. There were 31 contributing buildings, 2 contributing brick streets (portions of 26th and 27th Avenues), 4 non-contributing buildings and 1 non-contributing structure (a TV tower).

Ms. Gengler presented several historic and current photos of structures and she highlighted the details that determined whether the structure could be considered to be contributing or non-contributing. She stated that there was a series of apartment buildings and support structures (i.e. grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, bars etc.) that were important to the development and success of Automobile Row. She noted that many of the buildings had housed a wide variety of automobile dealers. The contributing apartment buildings are mostly concentrated on the north/south streets.

Ms. Gengler stated that “Farnam Hill District” would be added as another common name for the area as the result of a strong branding effort by many property owners to create an identity for the area. That name would be added onto the information that would be presented to the State. The historic name, however, would remain Omaha Auto Row.

Mr. McLeay discussed the plans for the Drummond and Firestone buildings and spoke about the benefits of the Tax Increment Financing program as it related to development within the City of Omaha.

Mr. Conzett spoke about the impact of transportation on a city and how the nomination provided an opportunity to tell the story of the Omaha Auto Row.

Ms. Aultz moved to APPROVE the request as presented. Ms. Meyer seconded the motion.

AYES: Meyer, Aultz, Conzett, Magee, Suarez, Witzenburg, Fogarty, Dobbe

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0.
At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on August 14, 2019, Aida Capellan, Tyler Ward and Justin Torpy (Denali Homes) appeared before the commission.

Ms. Capellan stated that she had spoken with several neighbors and the president of the Neighborhood Association and had applied their suggestions to the design of their Tudor style home as much as possible. She had also been working closely with Mr. Moulton and Ms. Freitag with the Planning Department from the time the lot had been purchased. Ms. Capellan stated that they attempted to take features from homes in the area and include them into their design. She mentioned, as an example, that none of the homes have front-facing garages so the proposed garage would be placed behind the home and would have a single driveway. She stated that they would consider closing in the front porch so that it would be similar to most of the other homes in the neighborhood. She explained they were willing to accept any suggestions as long as they fit within their budget and did not compromise the integrity and quality of the home.

Mr. Torpy stated that the applicants had chosen materials that added to the value of the home. He mentioned that Marvin Windows, asphalt shingles and James Hardie boards would be used on the home. There was some discussion about what would be done to ensure that the seams in the boards would not be visible. In response to Ms. Fogarty, Mr. Torpy stated that the architect planned to pick a color for the home that would be in character with the neighborhood. Ms. Fogarty suggested that the applicants speak with the president of the neighborhood association about the roof color. Ms. Freitag stated that the Planning Department required that the applicant choose earth tones that were characteristic of the district.

Lynn Williams (309 North 38th Street) appeared before the commission. Ms. Williams was concerned with how far back from the property line the proposed home would be built. Ms. Freitag stated that the zoning for the lot was R4(35) and that the minimum distance from the side yard setback was about 25’.

Ms. Freitag stated for the record that she had provided the commission members with the copy of an email from a neighbor who supported of the project.

Mr. Moulton stated that city staff had met with the builder and worked through some of the details of the home. He stated that the applicants had been provided with a list of guidelines and some direction about what would be appropriate at that location. The Planning Department supported the larger elements of the project and made suggestions about how some details could be improved. He discussed the porch depth, layering of the façade, building materials, building form, etc. He stated that if the commission agreed, staff would continue to work with the applicants to work out the remaining details of the project. The Planning Department recommended approval, subject to the conditions cited in the recommendation report.
Mr. Dobbe expressed support for the concept; however, he suggested that more attention be given to the south façade, perhaps by adding more fenestration and adding a brick chimney to the roof. There was some discussion as to how the gas fireplace would be vented. He explained that there were details of homes that were currently built that had become standard operating procedure that were not found in the district. He stated that, in those cases, the applicant should try to be as compatible with the neighborhood as possible. He stated that the way the home met the ground was also very important, especially with regards to the grading of the site and the foundation. He also mentioned the eaves, soffits, gutters and downspouts that would need to be added in such a way that they would fit the historical nature of the neighborhood and add value to the home. He noted that many of the homes in the area have lower pitched roofs and if there was a higher pitched roof, it featured dormers of some type.

The commission reviewed samples of James Hardie boards and discussed how they would be applied so that the seams were not visible. Ms. Fogarty supported the overall design of the home; however, she believed the porch design was too contemporary. She also agreed with Mr. Dobbe that there needed to be more fenestration on the south side of the home. Ms. Fogarty suggested that the applicants continue to meet with their neighbors to discuss the project.

In response to Ms. Aultz, Mr. Moulton stated that staff would continue to work with the applicant to ensure that the details of the recommendations by the commission and staff were followed. He suggested that site visits could be arranged. The commission also requested an update on how the James Hardie boards would be arranged on the home and joint placement. There was some discussion about other materials that could be used in place of that particular type of board. Lap siding, brick and stucco were discussed as options. Mr. Witzenburg suggested that the applicants reference the homes in Little Italy for ideas regarding the proportions of the home.

In response to Ms. Freitag, Ms. Taylor suggested that if city staff had questions for certain board member regarding particular details of the project the case should be brought back before the commission.

After some discussion, a motion was made that included various amendments with the final motion being:

Motion by Mr. Witzenburg to APPROVE in accordance with the recommendation made by the Planning Department with the condition that the applicant follow up with City staff or further recommendations with regards to the following items: the porch; the relationship with textures (specifically the predominant exterior materials and definition of the joint patter); the relationship with color; the relationship to architectural details, including chimney, plumbing stacks, etc.; corner conditions; the way the building meets the ground; consideration of soffits, eaves and gutter downspouts; form and fenestrations (windows and overall massing) particularly on the south façade. Ms. Aultz seconded the motion.

AYES: Meyer, Aultz, Conzett, Magee, Suarez, Witzenburg, Fogarty, Dobbe

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0.
DISCUSSION:

Ms. Fogarty mentioned that she had completed her book about Nebraska architect Thomas Rogers Kimball and that it had just been published. She provided copies of her book to the commission.

ADJOURNMENT:
It was the consensus of the Board to ADJOURN the meeting at 3:07 p.m.