Urban Design Review Board

MINUTES
Thursday, May 21, 2020

Pre-Meeting: 2:30 PM, 3rd Floor – Jesse Lowe Conference Room

Regular Meeting:
3:00 p.m. – 3rd Floor – Jesse Lowe Conference Room
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

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, May 21, 2020.

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, May 11, 2020

Members Present:
Jeffrey Elliott – Chair
Robert Peters – Vice-Chair
Matthew Schafer
Michael Riedmann
Dawaune Hayes

Members Not Present:
Matthew Schafer
Katie Underwood
Philip Webb
Adam Marek
Larry Jobeun
Kurt Cisar
Kristine Karnes (Non-voting member)

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

Pre-Meeting minutes:

At the pre-meeting of the Urban Design Review Board, held on May 21, 2020 at 2:33 p.m., the Board and City staff briefly discussed the agenda items.

Mr. Tim Fries advised the Board that some revisions had been made to the previously approved design elements and landscaping for the Gene Leahy Mall portion of the Riverfront Revitalization. These included small changes to the landscaping, a redesign of the restroom building at the Children’s area, removal of the Food & Beverage kiosk, and improvements to the design of the pavilion.
Additionally, the Heartland of America Park portion of the Riverfront Revitalization project preliminary designs were briefly discussed with Mr. Fries pointing out several design areas which the Board would be voting on at the meeting. Several questions focusing on the design of the sculpture over the railroad tracks were discussed.

Mr. Fries advised that these two sections of the Riverfront project would be discussed and voted on separately.

Mr. Fries provided a brief overview of the Discovery Center proposal. He outlined the recommendations of the department and answered questions regarding the design of the building.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

**Administrative Items**

Mr. Peters moved to adopt the minutes of January 16, 2020 Urban Design Review meeting. Mr. Hayes seconded the motion.

AYES: Elliott, Peters, Schafer, Hayes

**Public Projects:**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>UD-18-010 OJB Landscape Architecture Nathan Elliott</th>
<th>Name: OJB Landscape Architecture Nathan Elliott</th>
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<tr>
<td>Location: Gene Leahy Mall and Heartland of America Park</td>
<td>Request: Approval of final design plans for Gene Leahy Mall Approval of preliminary design plans for Heartland of America Park</td>
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At the Urban Design Review Board (UDRB) meeting held on May 21, 2020, Mr. Nathan Elliott of OJD Landscape Architecture, appeared via online video link on behalf of the applicant. Mr. Elliott advised that these were the 90% plans and that the target opening is June of 2022.

Mr. Elliott stated that the 90% plans being presented are very similar to the previously approved ones. He provided photos/renderings of the sculpture garden, Dog Park, and other areas in the park. Mr. Elliott showed landscaping, sculpture gardens, sitting areas, interactive water feature, and play areas which would be located throughout the Gene Leahy Mall portion of the park. He explained that some of the changes are:

1. The restaurant is not a part of the program at this time; it will likely be replaced with a social area and art plaza.
2. The Food & Beverage Kiosk has been removed from the project.
3. The Performance Pavilion design has been updated and was discussed at the meeting.
4. The children’s garden restroom building design has been changed and the footprint was expanded and was discussed at length at the meeting.

Mr. Elliott stated that the Performance Pavilion had undergone some minor refinements but remained
essentially the same as previously presented. He stated that it is made up of three separate architectural structures which share a set of footings on the lower level of the plaza. The structure is composed of architectural metal panels in a metal frame on the exterior; the top of the structure is solid to protect it from weather and transitions down to perforated panels down the sides to allow visibility and light. He provided renderings of the pavilion from various angles to show detail in the panels including the perforated panels and the attachments to the frame.

Mr. Elliott moved along to discuss the restroom building which would be at the children’s garden in the park and provided renderings to show the design of the building from various angles. He pointed out that the exterior canopy overhang, which was originally planned to cover a sink and counter area, had been removed and the footprint had been tightened relative to how it addresses the children’s garden to the west. Interior space was added to facilitate long term maintenance which could be accessed through the janitor’s closet. A service entry is located behind the transformer, facing the street and a telecom room is located within the building as well. Mr. Elliott pointed out the main entrance to the restrooms which was on the east side of the building and aligns with a path which leads to the 11th Street promenade. He pointed out the men’s restroom on the right with one urinal, two toilet fixtures, and two sinks; the women’s restroom was on the left with three toilet fixtures and two sinks. Mr. Elliott explained that the restroom vestibule was constructed so that when the doors open there is still privacy in the restrooms.

Mr. Elliott stated that the equipment on the roof of the building is still hidden behind a screen and that skylights are still present in the roof to provide some natural light inside the building including in the family restrooms. He stated that the exterior of the building would be constructed of limestone masonry under CME structural core. Mr. Elliott pointed out the angle of the roof which would be higher on one end and dip down towards the opposite end of the building. He pointed out the various building entrances on renderings from several different angles.

Mr. Elliott showed various areas of the park which are still undergoing demolition and grading work; work currently in progress, such as the portion of the project between 13th and 14th Street as well as the location of utility work currently in progress for this portion of the project.

There were no additional proponents and no opponents.

In response to questions from Mr. Hayes, Mr. Elliott stated that the owner had made the decision to remove the Food and Beverage Kiosk after determining that several other projects in the area, as well as the Old Market area offered many other options for park guests to obtain the types of products which would have been available at the kiosk. In order to save some money, and free up additional public space within the park, the decision was made to remove that building.

Board members expressed concern regarding what they believed to be drastic changes in the designs to the restroom building such as the removal of the canopy, removal of the green roof, and the changing of the design into a box like structure. Mr. Elliott explained that, while the restroom building was an essential part of the project, the decision was made to streamline the design of the building to optimize the square footage of the building structure budget purposes, which included the removal of the canopy area to allow for additional square footage to be utilized for more essential services without increasing the size of the building substantially. Considerations were made in light of the cost of maintenance of the green roof as well as the cost of additional structural reinforcements required due to the load of the green roof. He explained that they did not look at sustainability regarding each individual aspect of the
park, but rather looked at sustainability throughout the entire park. Mr. Elliott stated that they are still providing an efficient structure which will serve as a terminus of the playground as well as an access point for people on the east side and they are utilizing locally sourced materials in the exterior cladding. He stated that he believes they are reaching the goal of providing a comfortable and accessible space for people to find respite in the park. Mr. Hayes stated that he was not impressed with the design and felt that, if this park was to be a focal point for the community, the architect needed to be more creative than just designing a “lifeless box” for the park.

Mr. Schafer stated that the renderings of the building roofline seemed “jaunty”, and he wondered what it will look like in reality. Mr. Elliott stated that the architect had originally designed the roofline to be tipped as a point of interest and to give it a sense of presence; he stated that the elevation incline is approximately 3 ½ feet from the east end to the western corner.

In response to questions from the Board members regarding the space around the restroom building, such as shading and a seating area for people waiting for the restroom which would be within sight of the entrance, Mr. Elliott pointed out several features near the building. On the renderings, Mr. Elliott pointed out the east side of the building where there was a series of benches for people to sit on under shade trees while waiting for people in the restroom. In addition, there were a large number of movable tables which could be brought to the area. He stated that on the west side there was a larger clearing which provided room for cueing, with tables and benches which also had a clear view of the restroom entrances. He also pointed out several other seating areas in the children’s area for parents to sit to watch their children playing in that area. Mr. Schafer pointed out that the seating areas were very difficult to see on the renderings and he did not feel there was enough seating near the restroom building for as busy as it would likely be during peak times at the park.

Regarding the tree canopy, Mr. Elliott stated that the smallest trees they were considering were 3’ diameter trees which would be 14’-16’ foot high, in addition, they would be installing 5” and 7” trees which would be between 18-22’ high, to provide immediate shading at the time of installation. Mr. Hayes expressed concern that the trees would not provide enough shading and suggested an additional canopy at the seating area near the restroom.

In response to questions regarding the building materials. Mr. Elliott stated that limestone would be used throughout the park to create a uniform aesthetic. He pointed out areas where limestone was used in the sculpture garden, in the children’s area, as seating benches and walls which could be sat upon as well. Mr. Elliott stated that the designers were aware of the differences in limestone types, colors, and finishes and were working to insure a cohesive look.

Mr. Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager, summed up the concerns about the restroom building which were mostly regarding the cubic design and lack of visual interest. He asked Mr. Elliott to explain what had led to the significant changes in the design of the building. Mr. Elliott stated that the majority of the focus was on the design and budget to optimize the public space at the park. He pointed out that it is located near the playground which is very colorful and energetic as well as the performance pavilion arches which are meant to be a dramatic visual element of the park, the restroom building was meant to recede into the background as a necessary structure, but not a focal point in the park, which is why there is so much landscaping around that building. Mr. Jeff Elliott, Chairman, stated that he believed the restroom building was meant to be a functional structure and that it was not to be a focal point in the park, he stated that he believed the seating nearby was sufficient and the landscaping around the building helped to set it apart from the other elements of the park meant to be the focus.
Chairman Elliott asked about the landscape nodes which were referenced in the department’s recommendation report, and which were originally shown along the on-street parking on the north side of Farnam Street. Mr. Elliott, of OJB Landscape Architecture, stated that the original intention was to have planting islands periodically located along the edge near the proposed restaurant building and some other areas such as near fire hydrants where on-street parking was prohibited. He stated that those islands have been removed from the scope as their placement was breaking up the curb line and was affecting the storm sewer system in those areas. Mr. Elliott stated that keeping those islands would have required extensive renovations to the storm sewer system which would be in excess of $1,000,000. Instead, the landscape islands were removed, but there are still some curb adjustments such as pushing them out at the intersections, as well as the walk way paths and 6’ to 10’ in plant landscaping along the streetscape. Mr. Moulton asked for clarification as to how the islands were impacting the storm water flow; Mr. Elliott explained that due to the slopes, all of the storm water is collected in the gutter line along the curb and that every place where the flow line was interrupted by planters they were going to be required to construct a new manhole and move the storm sewer (which is approximately 10’ deep) which would be extremely costly for just a 100-200 square foot planting area. Mr. Moulton wanted to know whether there were any discussions for a method to provide a continuous gutter line with the landscape nodes outside of the gutter. He stated that his concern was that without the traffic nodes and just the 20’ to 30’ of diagonal parking, the traffic speed characteristics change considerably along that street section. Mr. Elliott stated that they had considered a number of options but he could not recall whether that had been specifically discussed. Mr. Dennis Bryers of the Parks Department was present and stated that it had been discussed with the Public Works department and ultimately it was determined that they would seek other options.

Mr. Moulton advised Mr. Elliott that since this is the third review of the same architectural features and he recommends consistency; he stated that he was looking at the deviations from the previously reviewed design of the restroom to the one which was presented at this meeting and he believes it would be a good idea to consider the recommendations and comments made today regarding the new design. He reminded the Board that the applicant was seeking final approval of this portion of the project; therefore, if there are any further comments or considerations which they wished to have included prior to granting that approval, they can be included as conditions of approval. If so, those conditions would need to be included specifically in the motion.

Chairman Elliott asked whether they could provide guidance as to what they were looking for with regards to the restroom design prior to, or within, the motion. Mr. Elliott stated that he would discuss the concerns with the architect and see what could be done to incorporate some of the elements the Board had discussed in the design. Mr. Peters stated that, from his perspective, the restroom building was kind of a “back of house” structure, but it is also in the center of the children’s garden and on a major walkway through the park. He stated that his issue was that the building needs to have some natural light other than the skylights, and some type of finishing on the exterior rather than the flat limestone walls. He stated that the design which was approved in January for the restroom building was much different and he believes they can do better. Mr. Schaefer stated that he also believed they needed more detailed architectural renderings since the ones they had been provided did not contain much detail and were difficult to read.

Mr. Moulton stated that he was hearing from the Board that they were concerned about the skin of the building including elements such as a canopy, fenestrations, and textures, rather than the structure of the building and he believes that could be an area of flexibility at this stage of the project. Mr. Elliott
stated that he understood and would discuss those elements with the architect. Mr. Moulton explained to the Board that they had the authority to have the applicant come back before the Board for another review, but they also had the authority to specify conditions which could be reviewed administratively on behalf of the Board and then brought back to the Board if the staff felt it was not meeting the intent of the Board as stated in the conditions.

DISPOSITION: ITEM #1: APPROVAL 4-0.

Mr. Nathan Elliott of OJD Landscape Architecture, provided an overhead view of the project at Heartland of America Park and discussed aspects of the preliminary design. Mr. Elliott pointed out where 8th Street extended from Gene Leahy Mall to a pedestrian plaza at Heartland of America Park as well as the skate rental building, skate ribbon, rink support building, a pedestrian bridge structure which would be built over the railroad tracks, and several public gathering areas such as gardens and play areas. Farnam Street is extended into a large pedestrian promenade ending in a pier looking out at the river; south of the pier where there is significant grade change, will be built up to create a new level of public event space for large civic gatherings and there will be a series of steps, sloped walks, and ramps which visitors can use to get down to the lake level where there will be additional park features including a gondola boat dock. He also pointed out several areas where trails or walking paths will wind throughout the project on different levels. Mr. Elliott provided a site plan which showed the overall layout of the park and advised that at this meeting he would be discussing the Skate kiosk, the rink support building, and the pedestrian structure over the railroad tracks.

Regarding the skate ribbon and kiosk, Mr. Elliott stated that it is anticipated to be a year-round facility with ice skating in the winter and roller skating/skate boarding in the warmer months. There will be space in the kiosk to rent skates and perhaps there will be food and drinks available on a small scale. At this location there will also be an enclosure for transformers as well as a small trash enclosure. Restrooms will be located on one end of the building; a small park security office will be within the building; a service door will provide access to the transformers and trash enclosure; an electrical room, an IDF network room, water service room, and maintenance closet will also be included in the structure. The roof will have a parapet, skylights, and screening for mechanical equipment. Mr. Elliott provided renderings of the building from several different angles so the Board could see the building materials and how the structure would appear from various areas in the park.

Mr. Elliott moved on to describe the rink support building for the Board and provided renderings to show the building materials and orientation of the structure within the park. Mr. Elliott stated that this small building would house the chiller for the ice rink as well as generators. He pointed out that all access to the building would be from the rink through an access gate.

Finally, Mr. Elliott presented the 30% design plans for the Farnam pier structure and advised that the 60% design is currently underway. He provided several renderings showing the structure from all angles between the Gene Leahy Mall and the Heartland of America Park. Mr. Elliott stated that the conventional truss structure was somewhat sunken to minimize its overall profile and a series of metal ribs which slant outward presented a more dynamic sense of enclosure for the pier which is at the terminus of the Farnam Street promenade. He advised the Board that they did have to comply with federal regulations regarding clearances over the railroad tracks and that the height of the structure was driven by those clearances; he stated that they have attempted to lower the grade changes but are fairly locked in by the required clearances. Mr. Elliott pointed out that at the structure was visible from a distance and provided an interesting focal point with the arched enclosure which brings the view back to
the city. He showed renderings with a view from inside the structure showing the guardrails along the edge where people could rest and look out over the park or the river and pointed out that only a small portion of the truss was visible from on the structure. He advised that the design also provides an opportunity for gathering by using floating walks, which did not require handrails, as well as benches for seating.

Mr. Schafer stated that he was concerned that the skate kiosk was another public building which had no shade or canopy and he did not think there were many interesting design elements. Mr. Peters stated that he likes all of the elements which had been discussed for this portion of the project. He advised that he was curious whether the materials or some of the design elements utilized on the rink kiosk could be carried over to the children’s garden restroom building. He stated that he felt it would be a good visual to have all of the support/utilitarian buildings share a similar design either through materials, textures, or other elements. Mr. Hayes stated that he, too, would like to see more of a canopy at the rink structures as well as more dynamic finishes which are sensual and speak to nature, he added that he would like to see a building shape which is not a box with corners such as rounding the corners or creating a more interesting shape.

In response to questions from the Board regarding the bridge structure, Mr. Elliott stated that the structure can be illuminated. He advised that they drew inspiration from several sources to make it an interesting and organic focal point. Mr. Schafer stated that he wanted to see something more than just it being a “cool structure” since it is a focal point he believed they deserved more depth in the design inspiration, he stated that as the design progresses he wants to hear a more cohesive design narrative regarding the source of inspiration.

Mr. Tim Fries, Urban Design Planner, asked Mr. Elliott to address the issue of pedestrian movement along Douglas Street. Mr. Elliott provided a slide showing the area Mr. Fries was referring to. He explained that several unique conditions existed in that area of the project including the increased elevation as the roadway approaches I-480, when the ramp peels off it slopes down dramatically, so the elevation is much lower at the intersection of 8th Street but is still higher than where it needs to be where it crosses the railroad tracks which was one of the big challenges. Mr. Elliott stated that Douglas Street stays fairly level for approximately 2/3 of the section which will be dedicated to on-street parking and increases near the crosswalk; from that point the elevation begins to fall dramatically approaching the railroad crossing while the upper portion of Heartland of America Park remains at a higher elevation. He advised that there is a retention basin which will catch water as it flows down from the higher landscape and will become an aesthetic amenity at the lower level. Mr. Elliott pointed out two different pathways to the landing and that there will be no sidewalks on the south side of Douglas Street. At the request of Mr. Moulton, Mr. Elliott pointed out where the pathway connected to the bridge structure.

Mr. Elliott indicated that he was finished with his presentation and would answer further questions from the Board. Mr. Moulton provided some guidance to the Board regarding the structuring of their motion to include any specific conditions and the recommendation for either administrative disposition or the requirement to come back before the Board for disposition. Ms. Jennifer Taylor of the City Law Department, advised that since this agenda item was separated into two different parts, the Board would need to make a separate motion for the Gene Leahy Mall portion and another motion for the Heartland of America Park portion.

Following some discussion among the Board members, Mr. Peters motioned for approval of the final design plans for Gene Leahy Mall subject to the following conditions:
1. Submittal to staff of updated design plans for the Children’s Garden restroom building reflecting changes based upon suggestions from the Urban Design Review Board members.

2. Administrative disposition by staff of revised exterior design concept of the Children’s Garden restroom building which incorporates consideration of additional building materials, fenestration of elevations, and canopies at entry locations as appropriate.

Mr. Schafer seconded the motion which carried 4-0.

Mr. Hayes motioned for approval of the preliminary design plans for Heartland of America Park subject to the following conditions:

1. Reevaluate and resubmit the design of the restroom building similar to the Children’s Garden restroom building at Gene Leahy Mall.

2. Approval of revised restroom building design at a later meeting of the Urban Design Review Board.

Mr. Schafer seconded the motion which carried 4-0.

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<th>UD-20-002</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Dineen HDR</td>
<td>Location: Omaha Riverfront</td>
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<tr>
<td>Request: Approval of preliminary design plans for Omaha Discovery Center</td>
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At the Urban Design Review Board (UDRB) meeting held on May 21, 2020, Mr. John Dineen of HDR, appeared before the Board to describe the details of the submittal. Mr. Dineen advised that these plans are in the schematic design, or 30%, phase of completion. He stated that the Discovery Center is a privately funded project at the Lewis and Clark Landing and is separate from the Riverfront Revitalization project.

Mr. Dineen stated that the project was envisioned to create a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) museum to supplement STEM education in the Omaha area. The development team believes it will be a destination area for Omaha visitors, families, as well as school field trips and events with programming for both children and adults.

He stated that the building itself is envisioned to be a backdrop or container for the interior exhibits and participatory activities. He stated that the building is a large, open building designed to allow visitors to just walk up to the exhibits and interact with them. Mr. Dineen stated that the inspiration for the design concept was drawn from the Exploratorium Museum in San Francisco which had been designed by Global Studios, who are also designing this building and several of the exhibits. He showed an overview of the entire site, pointing out the boundaries of the project. Mr. Dineen provided more close up views of the site showing the current parking area which would be remaining as the primary parking for the Discovery Center. He also pointed out the landscaping buffer, the main entrance to the building, loading/drop off areas for buses, a 15’ covered pedestrian walkway and other service entries and parking. Mr. Dineen advised that they are exceeding requirements for landscaping and providing many open areas on the site as well.

Mr. Dineen stated that the building is approximately 82,000 square feet across two levels. The first level is approximately 45,000 square feet and houses a large gallery type area which will be filled with exhibits. On the second level, there are several areas which are open to the first level and Mr. Dineen pointed out which areas will be open to the public as well as utilitarian and office areas as well as the
location of classrooms. He then showed the Board some very basic elevations, explaining that they were still looking at several ideas for materials. Mr. Dineen stated that although they plan for the building to really serve as a backdrop, they are also using materials and building techniques which will illustrate construction processes such as leaving some portions exposed for visitors to see the materials used and how they are put together. He advised that, although exact materials have not been selected, it is anticipated that the exterior of the building will be primarily metal panels and glass. Mr. Dineen stated that requirements are for 25% transparency and the first level of this building is 40% transparent. He then showed other slides showing the building from several different angles and vantage points to show how the building is oriented to the site as well as what people will see when they are approaching the building, such as through the large framed glass panels. Large windows will provide a view of either the river or the City and will allow visitors to draw connections between the STEM exhibits and the city itself as well as nature as represented by the river.

Members of the Board expressed disappointment with the impersonal, office structure-like, design of the building. Mr. Hayes stated that the building did not seem to connect with nature and he did not feel it embodied the concept of “discovery”. Mr. Dineen stated that he disagreed, but that the Board was not seeing the entire context of the park around the building and that there would be additional exterior displays and points of interest to draw people to the building. He advised that he could provide aerial views with updated plans which would show the Discovery Center as it related to the Riverfront parks, the nearby children’s play areas, and the riverfront itself. Members of the Board indicated that they would definitely like to see those aerial views.

Mr. Tim Fries, Urban Design Planner, advised that this project will be on the site which previously housed Rick’s Boatyard. He indicated that Riverfront Drive will remain as it is, running between the building site and the parking area which is also remaining.

Mr. Schafer stated that he would like to see the context of the public realm around the proposed building. He feels that the building is a two block long, bleak and brutal building. Mr. Schafer stated that perhaps the context would help with that belief if he could see how the building materials and design were offset by the surrounding streetscapes, structures, and public areas. He stated that since this is a very tall, large building, he wants to see how that scale fits within the human scale. Mr. Dineen inquired about whether Mr. Schafer was implying that he would like to see some of the exhibit programming to come outside the building to bring interest to the exterior of the structure or were there specific design elements he was interested in seeing. Mr. Schafer stated that he would like to see some of the programming brought outside as well as more dynamic design elements on the structure. He stated that he understood the interest of the visitors would be on the exhibits inside the building, but he felt that the developer could do more than create just a box to house those exhibits and should work harder to create a more inviting exterior. Mr. Dineen stated that there were some requests for collaboration regarding the design elements facing the exterior courtyard, but much of that collaboration would take place a bit farther along in the design phase.

Mr. Hayes stated that he was disappointed that the design did not include dynamic features or include elements of nature. He advised that old buildings with spires, and domes are more interesting and that he would like to see the hills and natural elements in the area reflected in the design as well. Mr. Hayes expressed his belief that nature is the ultimate engineer and that the natural world is shaped by wind, animals, and weather. He pointed to the Badlands and Black Hills as examples of organic architecture. He felt that designing a box on the river was lazy designing and should be better. Mr. Dineen asked whether some of that was included in the Urban Design criteria which he could pass along as
measurable criteria to the design team; Mr. Hayes stated it was not Urban Design issue it was a building
design issue. He stated that this building will not inspire the future of the world as the designer wants it
to. He stated that he understands that they are trying to optimize the space available, but that the
problem is not with the materials applied to the exterior of the building it is the building design. Mr.
Dineen stated that the building was designed to emulate the efficiency and flow of engineering and to
address the components of building systems, strength and performance of materials, and how they are
all made possible through engineering and math. He stated that he had not understood that the issues
raised by Mr. Hayes were the purview of the Urban Design Review Board but that he would now take
them into consideration moving forward.

Mr. Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager, clarified that the benchmarks for the Board were the
Urban Design zoning code criteria; however, the Board does have the ability to use their discretion in
asking questions, expressing concerns, and making recommendations. Mr. Dineen stated that he was
looking for measurable criteria which he could take back to the designer to show them what the Board
needed. Mr. Hayes stated that he could do that, for examples he stated that where 5% was required and
the designer had given 7%, they should do more, he wanted to see nature brought into the building and
have it shaped to fit with the environment such as the river and to make the building melt into nature so
it feels like they are a part of each other.

Mr. Moulton pointed out that it was the job of the Board to take these concerns and opinions to create
specific recommendations. The Board would need to create specific conditions within their motions and
clear and specific.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Dineen stated that the location of the building on the site
is being dictated by the flood wall as a separate piece of property which requires a certain distance
between it and the Discovery Center. He stated that the window to wall ratio is approximately 30% and
that energy code requirements require it to be below 40%. The exterior weather-proof façade is being
adjusted. Mr. Dineen directed the Board’s attention to a slide which showed the length of the building
which is intended to be windows looking out to the river, some of which will have louvers to assist with
efficiency while others will be wide open for viewing. Mr. Riedman expressed that knowing the first level
is all windows where they could only previously see the louvers, makes a big difference. Mr. Dineen
agreed that it broke up some of the flat wall and provided texture to that portion of the building facing
the river. Mr. Schafer stated that having better aerials or site plans would help to place those windows
and the view in better perspective if they could see the surrounding features as well and he agreed that
the articulation of the louvers would add some dimension to the otherwise long flat wall; Mr. Dineen
agreed that it would be easier to gain perspective with the additional information.

Mr. Jed Moulton clarified that he was hearing the Board members felt that it was important to have
context regarding the surrounding environment which was unique to Nebraska. He stated that he
understood that the louver system was a dynamic array, but he wondered whether it was a part of the
problem as it was covering up a lot of the windows which would create a more open appearance of the
building. Mr. Dineen stated that some of the performance considerations inside the building deal with the science and phenomena of light so they felt having this type of system to control the light coming into the building was an important consideration on that portion of the building. He stated that it is a system which may evolve as the design becomes more complete through further design stages. Mr. Moulton expressed his understanding that under the louvers there was an external, thermal envelope which included the glass; Mr. Dineen stated that they envisioned the metal panel thermal envelope and the louver system would be made of the same material and that on some parts of the building, those metal panels would make up the thermal envelope or where there were windows, the louver system would serve that function while also allowing transparency. Mr. Hayes stated that all he sees is a big shiny container and that the design needs to be more permeable and draw nature into the design.

Chairman Elliott stated that, to him, it appeared that the space was very tight on the site and wondered how much that was driving the building design. Mr. Dineen stated that one of the functional requirements for the building had been to have 60% of the gallery on the lower level and that the developer was committed to that idea. He advised that the site also has serious restrictions such as how the foundation engages below the building where there are some buried obstructions which have to be worked around as well as some environmental restrictions. Mr. Dineen stated that both of these restrictions have to be considered when determining how many levels to put on top of the foundation which led to the determination that having the majority of the gallery on one level would be a functional requirement. Mr. Elliott inquired whether the team had considered reducing the length of the structure and adding a level and whether the aforementioned restrictions had played into the decision to keep the height down. Mr. Dineen stated that they had considered the possibility of a taller building but found that it was not a desirable option at all.

Mr. Schafer stated that he would like to see more detail in the design and materials such as textures and other elements to break up the façade while maintaining the efficiency. Mr. Dineen stated that it is something they are working on as they try and identify materials which will be more open to light as well as adding texture to the exterior of the building. Mr. Dineen reminded the board that these are only very preliminary design plans and there are still details to be worked out in later design phases. Mr. Schafer stated that he would be looking for the integration of some detail which would draw in the public and make the building more attractive in the public realm. Mr. Fries advised that the recommendation report provided some with regards to staff concerns and recommendations.

In response to questions from Mr. Fries regarding the loading docks and the access for delivery trucks to the property, Mr. Dineen stated that there would be rollover curbs and they were considering different types of pavement or pavers to delineate the delivery areas from public areas. Mr. Dineen demonstrated where the truck traffic would approach the building and that they would avoid Riverfront Drive for truck traffic. Mr. Moulton stated that there were also questions regarding zoning and access to the building from various points on the site. He expressed that they would continue to have conversations regarding solutions to some of the concerns expressed by the Board.

Mr. Peters stated that the staff report recommended approval of the preliminary plans but he wanted clarification as to what they considered to be “preliminary”. Mr. Moulton stated that the recommendation would be appropriate if the Board had no concerns with the plans, but he recognized the concern of the Board regarding various aspects of the preliminary design plans and he did not know whether the staff recommendations were adequate to address those concerns. If the Board felt strongly about their concerns, they were welcome to include their own conditions in the motion or to layover the case to allow time for the applicant to work further with the staff. Mr. Hayes stated that he wanted to
see different designs which incorporated the surrounding natural environment and he expected the developer to challenge themselves to create something better. Mr. Moulton asked whether Mr. Hayes could clarify his requests into specific conditions within a motion.

Mr. Peters moved to layover the preliminary design plans for the Omaha Discovery Center for a minimum of 30 days to allow for coordination with Planning Department staff on all of the items mentioned in the recommendation report, pertinent code compliance issues, and addressing concerns regarding building design elements and building orientation relative to surrounding context and park activities. Mr. Hayes seconded the motion which carried 4-0.

**Private Projects:**
None

**Adjournment:**
It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn the meeting at 5:23 p.m.