Urban Design Review Board
MINUTES
Thursday, July 16, 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

Members Present:  
Jeff Elliott - Chair  
Robert Peters – Vice-Chair  
Kurt Cisar  
Philip Webb  
Adam Marek  
Katie Underwood

Members Not Present:  
Matthew Schafer  
Michael Riedmann  
Larry Jobeun  
Kristine Karnes

Staff Present:  
Jed Moulton – Urban Design Planning Manager  
Timothy Fries – Urban Design Review Board Administrator  
Clinette Ingram – Recording Secretary

Pre-Meeting minutes
At the pre-meeting of the Urban Design Review Board, held on July 16, 2020, the Board and City staff briefly discussed the details of the request on the agenda.

PUBLIC MEETING:

Administrative Items:

Approval of the June 18, 2020 Urban Design Review Board Meeting minutes.

As the minutes were not available at the time of the meeting, Mr. Marek moved to layover this item to the August 20, 2020 meeting. Mr. Peters seconded the motion which carried 6-0.
AYES: Elliott, Peters, Cisar, Marek, Underwood, Webb

Public Projects:
None

Private Projects:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UD-20-004</th>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Riverfront Row</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kevin Kavan</td>
<td>Location:</td>
<td>505 Riverfront Plaza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverfront Row, LLC</td>
<td>Request:</td>
<td>Review of submitted site plan and elevations</td>
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At the Urban Design review Board meeting held July 16, 2020, Mr. Mark Sanford addressed the Board to discuss the orientation and elevations of the building and answer questions regarding the design. Mr. Sanford stated that they had worked with Mr. Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager, to go through several design and orientation options and had decided on the one presented at the meeting. He advised that the building is 100’ x 50’ and will consist of five units on three levels which will sit atop a garage level and there will be a deck on the top of the building. He pointed out a parking lot on the west side of the site which will be shared with the existing building to the west, Riverfront Place. Mr. Sanford also pointed out that the Riverfront Place development extends into the easement on Riverfront Plaza; this played a role in the determination of the orientation of the Riverfront Row development. The garages will orient towards the west of the development and the front of the building will be facing the river. Mr. Sanford stated that the applicant, Mr. Kevin Kavan would prefer to orient the building towards the pedestrian bridge which would provide better access to the parking lot, as well as being a more favorable view. He stated that the applicant would like to work to get the site orientation approved by the Board first prior to determining the materials and things of that nature. Mr. Kevin Kavan of Riverfront Row, LLC, appeared before the Board in support of the project and advised that he was available to answer questions from the Board if necessary. Mr. Sanford stated that the developer is in support of the design presented at the meeting.

Mr. Peters inquired about the plans for location of service enclosures such as for utilities and garbage as well as the plan for staging of construction or utility vehicles once the units are constructed. He stated that his concern was that people are going to be doing something. Mr. Sanford stated that the area marked as Lot 1 on the north side will be paved and will be where the garbage enclosure will be with screening as well as the most likely location for contractor and architect parking. At the request of Mr. Webb, Mr. Sanford provided the rear elevations for the Board to view.

In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Moulton explained that when looking at building facades, the department tries to determine where the “front” is oriented. According to the Urban Design code, the front is defined by entrances primarily, by pedestrian entrances. He stated that architecture and buildings express certain language about hierarchy regarding what is important; generally, the front face is the most important, and the back face less so. Mr. Moulton stated that, in this case, the presence of the garage doors pretty clearly expresses the back of the building which is facing the cul-de-sac of the other building. He acknowledged that the site is very tight, but stated that staff is concerned that this orientation creates an anomaly in the area. He also confirmed that there is no pedestrian entrance at the garage level of the building. Mr. Sanford explained that they believe the front orientation is towards the very public side of the site, facing the pedestrian bridge which is a fantastic feature in Omaha and that coming from the
bridge, people would be looking towards the front elevation of the building which would be a lot nicer that looking from the bridge to the garage level on the back of the building.

Mr. Peters stated that it seemed the design reflected the density the developer wanted to achieve. Mr. Sanford confirmed that this was true. Mr. Sanford stated that people would primarily be approaching the building in their cars to enter the garage; additionally, he stated that a pedestrian access door in the rear would also allow access to the building to people who maybe should not be entering the building. He stated that there are dividing walls in the garage to provide a separate garage for each unit and that the upper floors can be accessed either via stairs or an elevator through a hallway once the resident is inside the garage (the elevator is also accessible from the front of the building).

Mr. Sanford stated that the plans he had presented reflected the preferred orientation and design of the building. However, he stated that they were seeking both approval and direction from the Board.

In response to a question from Mr. Peters, Mr. Sanford stated that the foundation will be brick, which will also be interspersed through the upper levels in addition to a solid polymer type siding and other types of materials at the “cap” which will produce a simple, yet elegant appearance.

Mr. Tim Kelso, President of the homeowners association, 444 Riverfront Plaza, appeared before the Board in opposition to the design as currently submitted. Mr. Kelso stated that the HOA had an interest of approximately $75,000,000 and was concerned about development in the area. He stated that they are not opposed to development at the riverfront; they are opposed to this development. Mr. Kelso stated that they would prefer the City purchase the land and create a park or greenspace. If the land is to be developed they believe it should be consistent with existing development in the area and Mr. Kelso stated his belief that the Omaha Municipal Code required this consistency. He stated that he feels the code requirements have been completely ignored by the applicant and that they have a lot of work to do to create a design which would be consistent with the other development on the Riverfront and which would be compliant with the municipal code. Mr. Kelso stated that the Urban Design Review Board is the first stop on the way to getting this development approved. He advised that he understands the Code would not allow this development to be approved administratively and that it would require a major amendment to the Mixed Use Agreement, which would have to be approved by the Planning Department. Mr. Kelso stated his belief that the Urban Design Review Board had no authority, per Municipal Code, to make a decision regarding this development, and that they had no choice but to deny the request and send it to the Planning Department.

Mr. Kelso stated that other property owners and HOA Board members were also present with him to discuss this proposal. He introduced them as HOA Board members: Dan Hennings and John Brandstetter; Lou Lamberty, Former HOA President; and Randy Greer, Property owner. In response to questions from the Board, Mr. Kelso stated that they had had no communication with or from the applicant or development team.

Mr. Dan Hennings appeared before the Board in opposition. He confirmed that he had also not received any communication about the project. He stated he was opposed to the project because the architectural design was not consistent with existing buildings particularly with regards to the dimensions and orientation of the building. Additionally, Mr. Hennings stated that he was opposed to the building materials being proposed which are different than those of existing buildings on the riverfront. Mr. Hennings stated that the City of Omaha and private investors have invested heavily in the Riverfront areas and advertising is going out to bring people to the Riverfront and the Bob Kerrey Bridge and that this
building would take away from the appeal of the Riverfront area which is a major attraction bringing people into Omaha.

Mr. John Brandstetter appeared before the Board in opposition. He stated that this section of Omaha used to be a huge environmental problem for the City and that alleviating that problem requires a high quality design and high quality, consistent, landscaping. He stated that the color scheme and materials are consistent among the buildings along the riverfront and that they are all high quality buildings as opposed to this project which is not going to be consistent in terms of quality, design, or landscaping.

Mr. Randy Greer stated that he opposes the project as it has been presented. He stated that he would not be opposed to a project being built which was oriented and designed in a way to complement the existing buildings in the area. Mr. Greer stated that this project would be fine somewhere else in Omaha, but it is not appropriate for this location.

Mr. Lou Lamberty appeared before the Board in opposition. He advised that he agreed with all that the previous opponents had stated and would not repeat those concerns. Mr. Lamberty suggested that if the applicant or development team came to speak with the HOA and other neighbors, perhaps they could come to an agreement that would be acceptable to everyone; however, he stated that up to that time, no one had reached out to them at all.

Mr. Tim Kelso returned to state that he believed townhomes would be fine on that property, but it needs to be consistent with the existing structures and the developer needs to communicate with the neighbors.

Mr. Mark Sanford, stated that it had been his understanding that the team had reached out to the HOA board as that is always something that he insists on and apologized if that had not happened in this case. Mr. Kevin Kavan stated that the development team had been in contact with Ross of the HOA, but they had not had anything “formal” to give to him at that time. Members of the HOA who were in attendance stated that Ross is not part of the HOA and does not live at that location.

Mr. Elliott stated that it seemed like Mr. Sanford and Mr. Kavan needed to go back to the drawing board to address some of the concerns stated by the people at the meeting as well as the recommendations of the Planning Department. Mr. Sanford agreed.

Mr. Webb stated his understanding that the applicant would be amenable to a layover and that it sounded like that was what everyone would recommend. He stated that he understood the issues to be the orientation of the building, building materials, and general design.

Mr. Webb motioned for a layover to allow the applicant the opportunity to come back with changed design plans to address the issues discussed at the meeting as well as the concerns of the Planning Department.

Mr. Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager, asked for feedback from the Board regarding what they were looking for regarding changes so he could appropriately address those concerns, such as the orientation, in discussions with the applicant prior to bringing the case back onto the agenda; otherwise, he stated they would continue working according to the recommendations in the report.

Mr. Peters stated that he understood the issues to be: 1) density, 2) Pedestrian access, 3) building design, materials, 4) easements and the ingress/egress points on the site.
Mr. Webb stated that he would like the applicant to address the rear egress and garage entrances. He suggested considering staggering the garage entrances to change the appearance on that face; he also felt this may help to address Mr. Peters’ concerns regarding ingress and egress on that side. Mr. Webb stated that he believed the back entrance will play a big role in how people view the overall design and hoped the development team took that into consideration. He stated that he was less concerned with the orientation of the building than he was about the overall look of the building and how it compared with existing structures in that area.

Mr. Elliott stated that he understood the easement on the north side played a role in the orientation. However, he also believed that the exterior building materials needed to be more consistent with the existing buildings in the area.

Mr. Cisar stated that he felt the architect needed to do more work to address the pedestrian view, materials, and design to make it more appropriate within the confines of the site and more consistent with the area and the other buildings which surround it.

Mr. Moulton stated that he appreciated the clarification from the Board members and that he would move forward with those concerns in mind as well as keeping the sensitive nature of the site at the forefront of the discussion regarding design and materials. In addition, he stated that any path forward would include a major amendment and would require the approval of the Urban Design Review Board.

Mr. Webb moved for layover. Mr. Peters seconded the motion which carried 6-0.

AYES: Elliott, Peters, Cisar, Marek, Underwood, Webb

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 p.m.