CERTIFICATION OF PUBLICATION:
Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Thursday, November 12, 2009, notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting, November 18, 2009.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Douglas Bisson, Chairman
Albert Macchietto, Vice Chairman
Adrian Ferguson
Bryan Zimmer
John Schleicher
Sarah Burt
Eduardo Santamaria

MEMBERS ABSENT: Edward Quinn
Nicholas Hogan

OTHERS PRESENT: James Krance, Preservation Administrator

Mr. Macchietto called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. with seven members present.

Mr. Schleicher moved to APPROVE the minutes of the September 9, 2009 and October 14, 2009, meetings. Ms. Burt seconded the motion.

AYES: Ferguson, Zimmer, Schleicher, Burt, Santamaria, Macchietto, Bisson

ABSENT: Quinn, Hogan

Motion carried 7-0

CERTIFICATES OF APPROVAL:

Case #H3-09-11
Sheila Haggas, President

REQUEST: Request for Certificate of Approval for major addition to Duchesne S.E., 1931 Building

LOCATION: 3601 Burt Street

At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on November 18, 2009, Sheila Haggas, President of Duchesne Academy, Kevin Schluckebier, architect with BCDM and Chris Johnson with Weitz Company appeared before the board in favor of this request.

Mr. Bisson stated the case was held over from the previous month to give the commissioners an opportunity to walk through the building, examine and see for themselves.

Mr. Schluckebier submitted sketches for the west and east options. After investigation of the west option it was felt that it created too much circulation and would impact the additional usage options for the corridors limiting the overall feel. There is a different approach on the east façade with the entrance from the rear of the auditorium house. One difference would be dropping the main floor an additional 35” by pulling it further away from the building and installing the mechanical against the existing building due to the foundation, which would alleviate some of the underlying issues that may occur. By doing this the front façade walk can be lower on the existing building and more buried into the existing berm. Under the
east option, the new architecture would be cast stone or precast-type material to match the existing limestone. The main door would be more of a glass entryway system with entrances to the east and south into the courtyard hallway. The courtyard has not yet been developed except for checking that some of the slopes would work. The new addition would have a more historic look for the entryway as well whether you walk into the low entrance on grade or up the stairs in the stair tower. The elevator will remain as it was in previous versions. Once through the threshold into the new lobby, there will be new restrooms and a lobby space. When looking into the lobby there will be a skylight focusing at the end which will house a marble sculpture that replicates the sacred heart.

Ms. Haggas stated Duchesne Academy were the recipients of the laurel wreath with the sacred heart insignia etched in marble. The piece would be perfect at the end of the lobby and used as a backdrop for presentations, etc.

Mr. Schluckebier stated the entrance to the theater would be more formal with a light and sound vestibule. There will be a second entrance out of the lobby.

In response to Mr. Bisson, Mr. Schluckebier stated the change in grade on the north side would be addressed with a retaining wall and there would be more of an extension of the court with more opportunity for additional gathering space. The auditorium would be below grade, which will drop the lobby even farther with concern to coming away from the belt course. When accessing the theater, the head heights are slightly above the minimum.

In response to Mr. Macchietto, Mr. Schluckebier stated he did not complete a site plan.

In response to Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Schluckebier stated that lowering the vestibule will get the parking closer to meeting ADA.

Mr. Schluckebier stated the dash lines on the plans indicate the size of the foundations and the top of those run 12” below the finished floor according to the details. The change of material would be precast stone and in keeping with the same color feel but would be up for discussion. The vestibule will be glass with an EDPM membrane roof to keep the profile as minimal as possible. It will be critical to keep the structure off the building because the vestibule would have stone work. The elevator tower will be made up of masonry and new brick. The vestibule (may have 4’ wide brick) walls to allow daylight into the corridor thus creating a clean separation between the existing and the new addition.

Mr. Krance stated the revised addition seems twice as deep as the original submittal and there is concern regarding setbacks in residential zoning. Mr. Schluckebier responded that the addition is approximately 8’ larger because of the footings and to allow room for equipment and access the space. The entranceway splits the restrooms on both sides allowing enough room for the ramp.

Mr. Krance stated the elevator area in the original submittal seemed like it was in the corner of the southeast corner but has taken over the southeast side. Mr. Schluckebier stated the elevator area has not changed because the men’s restroom was located at the southeast end originally.

In response to Mr. Santamaria, Mr. Schluckebier stated a heat pump system will tie into the existing loop system and the fresh air will be pulled in above the men’s restroom. The mechanical room will have a roof and attach to the existing façade. The elevations will be at the sill of the windows and will be located above the entrance to the auditorium encompassing the lower window to get additional height and the actual headroom. The windows will remain allowing the light into the auditorium.

In response to Mr. Bisson, Mr. Schluckebier stated the revised addition would be approximately 45’ from the existing building. There was discussion regarding the elevation, grading, sloping, landscaping, berms, retaining walls, plaza area, courtyards, etc.

Mr. Schluckebier stated there was further investigation for the west option but the west option ends up being a hardship with regard to circulation and the location of the elevator in relation to the entrance therefore more money would be spent for a less functional product in regard to getting visitors to the different floors without travel.
One commissioner asked if there would be greater function with a lobby that could be used every day. Mr. Schluckebier stated the lobby would be used not only for students but staff, alumni and for events.

Cheri Rockwell, City Planner, stated there is a special use permit on the site that may need to be amended. The special use permit was granted in February 2002. Ms. Haggas stated the special use permit is for the assisted living facility located on the south side for the property and has no connection.

Ms. Rockwell stated the subject property is zoned R3 but without a site plan the setback requirements cannot be determined.

In response to Mr. Krance, Chris Johnson with Weitz Construction stated the cost due to the increased area for the east option has not yet been estimated. The cost for the west option would also increase due to the interior remodel and the relocation of the playground system.

In response to Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Schluckebier stated the problems with the west option would be the circulation, the elevators, flexibility of that space due to the additional square footage for just circulation that is not large enough or wide enough for events, luncheons, etc. It would also create a pass through that would be disruptive during school days. There would be a need for additional signage because of the functionality and the distance between the entrance and elevator would need to be pointed out.

Mr. Macchietto submitted a sketch regarding the west option with regard to feasibility. He stated he toured the property twice and drove by numerous times to get a feel for the neighborhood. There could be an opportunity to build on the southeast corner of the building in a contemporary fashion.

Ms. Haggas stated the school needs a way to get the elderly alums, grandparents and disabled people inside the building as quickly as possible. The west option would require the elderly and disabled to walk more than one block. Mr. Macchietto suggested measuring the distance between the entrances and the elevator for both options. Ms. Haggas agreed to measure the distance but with the west option a person would have to walk a city block to get to the Stuart Art Gallery on the first floor, student lounge or the library.

Mr. Ferguson stated the commission is attempting to balance the needs of Duchesne along with preserving the façade.

In response to Mr. Zimmer, Mr. Schluckebier stated the distance for the proposed elevator in the southeast corner would gain access to the library but there is difficulty in getting to the auditorium. This would probably about one-third the distance because the lobby is adjacent to the auditorium whereas the other option would require to walk out and around to get to the gathering space near the front entrance.

Ms. Haggas stated that with regard to Mr. Macchietto’s sketch, there would be a loss of back stage storage and preparation and there would not be a good location for the playground. Duchesne services 70 preschoolers with revenue of approximately $250,000 for the campus.

Mr. Macchietto stated one possibility was to build a mezzanine over the restroom area. Mr. Schluckebier stated there would be extra expense to add an additional story.

Mr. Macchietto stated the (fenestration for the) addition on the west could possibly be simpler and less elaborate than the east option. When the commitment to go to the east side of the building, the level of quality of construction, materials and detail would need to be impeccable to be compatible with the existing building. The same standard would not apply on the west side of the building therefore a less elaborate addition could be constructed.

Ms. Haggas stated a secondary dream would be to showcase the fine arts program and make the auditorium more accessible to the neighborhood. The existing entrance is not very attractive to enter. There are great hopes to make it more elaborate and the funding could be raised because it will be a showcase for the fine arts program. She stated she would have a hard time finding a donor that will help with the funding for the west option.
Mr. Macchietto stated another concern would be accessibility for people with walkers and understanding how the site plan will work. With the grades and slopes from the parking lot, it is difficult to get people from the parking lot. There is an existing handicap ramp sloped across the parking lot.

Mr. Schleicher stated it is a complex addition and the integrity of the high school building needs to be protected. The playground and student entrance on the west does protect the children from weather, predators, etc.

Ms. Haggas stated that parents appreciate the element of safety in the fact that the students enter the school through the courtyard that is not used by visitors.

Mr. Santamaria stated he approves of the glaze enclosure and would like to see it continue all the way across without being so elemental and less distracting. The addition needs to be differentiated from the existing building. Mr. Schluckebier stated he does not believe glazing would work visually all the way across but should be limestone or pre-cast concrete. The center section could be simplified with less detail and skylights over the center portion.

Mr. Santamaria suggested that the belt course be covered up because the windows will not be seen from the street. The proposed addition seems disjointed when trying to relate too much to the façade behind the addition.

Mr. Bisson suggested raising the grade to minimize the belt course look with a retaining wall toward the southern entrance. It sounds like there might be a desire by the commission to see an additional concept. The building is wonderful and the commission wants to make the right decision.

Mr. Schluckebier questioned if the east option would be feasible before spending the time and expense to do a site plan analysis.

Ms. Haggas stated she would rather come back with another concept than to have the commission vote “no” on the east option because there are more advantages for the east including a more welcoming and finished entrance to the auditorium and some obstacles that are hard to overcome on the west, which is primarily the playground.

Mr. Santamaria stated the east side is a practical solution but the more the addition is buried on the east side, the less of an intrusion it will be. The space would be much more successful with less intrusion of the façade on the east side and more of a landscape element including retaining walls to get into and out of the space. Mr. Santamaria stated that if the same effort were put to the west side, there would be a true discussion.

Mr. Schluckebier stated that the west option is not as functional to the end goals of the project. The east option would solve the goals and there would be no crossing of circulation paths and circulation within the building. The additional square footage on the revised east plan is functional square footage with additional flexibility and opportunities for usage rather than a long corridor in the west option.

Mr. Bisson stated that it shows how serious the commission is by addressing the west but there is a potential to look at both options.

Mr. Schluckebier stated that by investigating both options up front would create a hardship on design fees. He recommended getting the details worked out on the east option with a successful solution.

Mr. Bisson questioned the commissioners as to whether they want to look at both options or emphasis the east side and what the potential design could look like.

Ms. Burt stated the emphasis should be on the east side option.

Ms. Haggas stated she would appreciate direction as to whether or not to proceed on design plans for the east side or both options.
Mr. Macchietto recognized that the applicant wants to do an addition on the east side therefore the applicant has the obligation to prove to the commission that the east side is a good workable scheme and solve the concerns brought forth by the commission.

Ms. Haggas stated she is frustrated and would like Mr. Schluckebier’s time and energy to be spent on specifications of the commission for the east option.

Mr. Macchietto stated there are obstacles on both the west option and the east option.

Mr. Santamaria stated the east option is very challenging and a solution may be achieved but the east option may not be the solution. The commission needs to explore all options in order to feel comfortable because of a very, very high precedence that may be set.

Mr. Santamaria moved to LAY OVER until the next meeting on December 9, 2009 to allow the applicant time to further develop and articulate the east option design concept to include site plans, sections, elevations, photograph rendering and building materials. Ms. Burt seconded the motion.

AYES: Zimmer, Schleicher, Burt, Santamaria, Macchietto, Ferguson, Bisson

ABSENT: Quinn, Hogan

Motion carried 7-0

Discussion:

Mr. Krance stated a copy of the Old Market guidelines was forwarded to the commission. The signage portion of the Old Market guidelines covers over 40% of the guidelines.

Mr. Zimmer stated everything seems cut and dry except for “one 13 sq. ft. double-sided sign”. The way the sentence is interpreted is either 13 sq. ft. of total signage spread on two sides or it is a 13 sq. ft. sign with signage on both sides, which would be 26 sq. ft. of signage. The past planning director, who was instrumental in writing the guidelines, said that it was intended to be both sides of a 13 sq. ft. sign or 26 sq. ft. of signage.

Mr. Krance stated that the interpretation in the past has been a total of 13 sq. ft. or 6.5 sq. ft. for each side which roughly translates to approximately 2’ x 3’ which is what is presently being enforced in the Old Market with the exception of the Rock Bottom sign.

Mr. Bisson stated he would like to see the guidelines refined as to the allowable signs and 13 or 26 total sq. ft. and 6.5 or 13 sq. ft. for each side. The guidelines could also include graphic images with measurements.

In response to Mr. Macchietto, Mr. Krance stated the “Blue Sushi” signage is within the guidelines but noted that the signs on a face of a building tend to be larger than projecting signs. The sign budget is figured by the overall size of the sign.

Mr. Bisson suggested a walk through the Old Market area by the sub-committee to look at the signage before approving or revising the guidelines.

In response to Mr. Macchietto, Mr. Krance stated the allowed sign budget is 2 sq. ft. for each foot of street frontage occupied by a building. Mr. Macchietto suggested looking at the “Blue Sushi” signage to see how it was calculated and does it comply and if it complies, why does it comply.

Mr. Krance stated the “Blue Shushi” sign did not become before the commission because it was within the guidelines.
Mr. Bisson stated the “Blue Shushi” sign is backlit so there may be allowances for different types of signage.

Mr. Krance stated the guidelines were written before backlit signage but the guidelines address the approval of unique and exceptional signage.

In response to Mr. Bisson, Mr. Krance stated the guidelines have been amended as indicated in Attachment A and Attachment B and the commission can rewrite confusing portions of the guidelines or possibly add a pictorial.

Mr. Bisson stated he would like direction and guidance to protect everyone and so that Mr. Krance does not need to come to the commission for sign issues. If a sign is to be creative then a clause could be added to indicate that approval would need to come from the commission.

Mr. Krance suggested the sub-committee address channel letters and signage such as the “Blue Shushi”.

Mr. Zimmer stated he would chair the Old Market guidelines committee and would schedule a meeting. Mr. Santamaria volunteered to be on the Old Market guidelines committee.

In response to Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Krance stated there is no survey available for the signage in the Old Market. It is very difficult to enforce code signage within the city. The recourse for a non-conforming sign starts with a letter and a visit from the City of Omaha sign inspector and the business will be cited if the sign is still non-conforming. A summons will eventually be issued if the signage continues to be non-conforming. Signage is not a preservation issue and does not affect a building but is more of an aesthetic that the Old Market wants to continue with and perpetuate. Mr. Krance stated he would like to see the Old Market Business Association address signage issues but is not sure how that could be implemented.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Mr. Macchietto moved to ADJOURN the meeting. Mr. Bisson seconded the motion.

AYES: Schleicher, Burt, Santamaria, Macchietto, Ferguson, Zimmer, Bisson

ABSENT: Quinn, Hogan

Motion carried 7-0

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Debbie Hightower
Recording Secretary