Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

MINUTES

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

Public Meeting:
1:30 PM, Room 1210 – 12th Floor

Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street

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

Certification of Publication: Omaha Preservation Administrator certifies publication in the Daily Record, the official newspaper of the City of Omaha, on Monday, February 27, 2017 notice re: Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting on Wednesday, March 8, 2017.

Members Present: Joan Fogarty, Chair
George Killian, Vice-Chair
Kathryn Aultz
Scott Dobbe
Brian Magee
Carrie Meyer
Jaime Suarez
Curt Witzenburg

Members Not Present: Regan Pence

Others Present: Jed Moulton, Manager Urban Design and Historic Preservation
Trina Westman, LHPC Administrator
Jennifer Taylor, City Law Department
Clinette Ingram, Recording Secretary

Ms. Fogarty - Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:33 pm, introduced the Commission members and staff. She explained the procedures for hearing the cases. There were seven members present. Mr. Suarez appeared after the roll was called.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mr. Witzenburg moved to APPROVE the December 14, 2016 minutes as submitted. Mr. Killian seconded the motion.

AYES: Killian, Magee, Meyer, Suarez, Fogarty

ABSTAIN: Aultz, Dobbe, Witzenburg

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0-3
RESOLUTION:

CASE NUMBER: 17-07-CLG
PRESENTED BY: Jed Moulton_City of Omaha
NAME: FY2017 CLG Grant Proposal
LOCATION: N/A
REQUEST: Resolution of the Nebraska Certified Local Government (Omaha) Funding Request and Application for the Fiscal Year 2017-2018

At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on March 8, 2017, Jed Moulton appeared before the Commission.

Mr. Moulton stated that he was seeking approval for the 2017 grant funding which contains three parts. These include funding for the survey, to attend the conference to apply to an update to the Preservation Master Plan, and requests for miscellaneous supplies and materials.

Mr. Moulton noted that the survey program has been ongoing, being added to as they become relevant and needed. He referred to a map of the area to be studied which encompasses properties around the stockyards which is the oldest, un-surveyed area of the city. In completing this survey all areas of the historic street car lines will be covered. The National Trust Conference will be held November 18-19, 2017 and the focus of the Planning Department’s attendance will be on preparing an update to the Preservation Master Plan, which was last updated in 1980.

Mr. Witzenburg moved to APPROVE the request. Ms. Magee seconded the motion.

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

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0
CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL:

CASE NUMBER: 17-02-H3
PRESENTED BY: Gary Bowen_BVH Architecture
NAME: Mercer Building – M’s Pub Addition
LOCATION: 422 S 11 Street
REQUEST: Certificate of Approval for Work in a Local Landmark Heritage District

At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on March 8, 2017, Gary Bowen of BVH Architecture appeared before the Commission on behalf of the owners Mercer Management - Mark Mercer and Ann Mellen.

Mr. Bowen introduced the renovation and addition to the Mercer Building project referencing the January 2016 fire. For the past 14 months the core and the shell was being rebuilt. A plan was shown for a 16’ addition that was being proposed for the north side of the building. The extra space would allow for an expansion of the kitchen and bathrooms which were located in the basement before the fire. This would also bring the restrooms into compliance with ADA requirements. He noted the mechanical equipment on the roof of the addition and the adjacent 420 Building’s entrance. A screen that included planted vines was proposed that would address both issues. The addition itself would be constructed of black metal and would be considered a background building to the larger, more attractive Mercer Building. It would be painted black to match the lower level of the building. Mr. Bowen explained that there was originally screening in place for the first 3 bays and that the plans would extend that original screening to the length of the building on the north side and wrap around the building on the roof. The screen would be painted dark green as it was before the fire.

In response to Ms. Fogarty’s, Mr. Bowen noted that the rooftop screen is set back 6’ to 8’ from the east side of the addition, which would be far enough to cover the first mechanical unit. In response to Mr. Dobbe’s, Mr. Bowen noted that the dimension between the new addition and the screen is about 6” inches to allow for the depth of the gutter. He also noted that the bottom is raised about 6 or 8 inches to allow for cleaning behind and under the screen. Mr. Bowen stated that the screen also serves as a safety barrier for the roof. In response to Mr. Witzenburg’s question regarding the screen landscaping, Mr. Bowen noted that there will be a cut-out every 6 feet or so at the location of the screen posts to allow for planting of vines.

In response to Mr. Magee’s, Mr. Bowen noted that the patio seating area along 11th Street was to be extended several feet in front of the new addition. Two more sections of railing, screens and posts would be added to the existing basement stair railing, screen and posts.

Mr. Mercer stated that the previous trellis screen came out nearly as far as the sidewalk, creating the separation with the adjacent building entrance. The new screen would be in the same location. Mr. Bowen stated that the slope of the addition’s roof reflects that of the previous canopy’s slope. Mr. Mercer stated that the new addition would be in the same location as the awning spanning the space that it did. Ms. Mellen stated that the building and vines would be much more attractive than the parked cars under the canopy.

In response to Mr. Suarez’s, Mr. Bowen stated that the joists of the original canopy that spanned between the Mercer Building and the 420 Building would remain and actually carry on over to the new addition.
Mr. Magee moved to APPROVE the request as submitted. Mr. Witzenburg seconded the motion.

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

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0
LOCAL LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

CASE NUMBER: 17-03-H1  NAME: Saunders Kennedy Building
PRESENTED BY: Albert Macchietto  LOCATION: 203 S 18 Street
Alley Poyner Macchietto  REQUEST: Recommendation of Approval for Local Architecture  Landmark Designation

At the Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission meeting held on March 8, 2017, Albert Macchietto (Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture), Neil Kapadia (ViaNova Development), Amy Gilbertson (Trivers Associates) and Jennifer Hoebrink appeared before the commission.

Ms. Honebrink stated that the building should be nominated for the following reasons: 1) for its association with the development of the history of Downtown Omaha; 2) for its association with several prominent developers of the time; and 3) for its significance as Work of a Master (John Latenser). She clarified that the proposed Period of Significance was extended from 1914 when the building was built until 1948 when it was purchased by World Insurance.

With regards to its significance with its association with Downtown Omaha, Ms. Honebrink described the relationship that this building had with the former Brandeis Theater and how the theater is still reflected in the façade of the Saunders Kennedy building today. She presented several pictures of the building from various times. She noted the interior connections that joined the two building. She stated that between 1960 and 1966 the cornice was removed from the building most likely due to its poor condition.

Ms. Honebrink discussed the building’s association with three important individuals in Omaha: Charles Saunders, President of the Saunders Investment Company; John Kennedy, a Republican congressman and long-time attorney for the John Brandeis Company; and Harry Wolf the owner of several property investment companies in Omaha. The 3 individuals worked together on various projects.

As the work of a master, Mr. Honebrink described the building’s association with architect John Latenser. She discussed his portfolio of work. She argued that the building was eligible for landmark designation because of the collective whole of the three parts that she outlined. In response to Mr. Killian’s question, Ms. Honebrink stated that the horizontal banding on the base of the building was comprised of metal panels.

Mr. Fogarty inquired about the plans for the windows. Mr. Macchietto noted that they would like to replace the windows with double hung if the project budget allowed, since those were original to the building design. Mr. Dobbe inquired about the plans for the base of the building. The applicant responded that they would like to have the foundation consist of storefronts which were in place during its Period of Significance. Proof of the building’s original appearance would come from photographs and pictures of similar building from that time.

Ms. Fogarty was concerned that too much had been taken away from the building with the removal of the cornice and original windows.

Ms. Gilbertson stated that it could not be determined what is underneath the metal panels at the base until some selective demolition had begun, adding that many exterior features were still the same as they were originally.
Jed Moulton, Urban Design Planning Manager, explained that Planning Department’s reason for recommending denial was based on the strict interpretation of the code and local precedence. He stated that the Planning Department felt that there was not enough of the building’s integrity left as it currently stood. From a cultural standpoint, the Planning Department believed that the structure was not significant. Finally, he stated that most other buildings in Omaha were built by wealthy, influential owners so the criteria for its association with prominent developers was not unique. Finally, he stated that there was work on the building from masters who were not as well-known at the time. Mr. Moulton noted that the commission was essentially deciding on whether to approve a local designation for the future condition of the building.

Mr. Killian asked if the applicant needed more time to determine what some of the existing conditions of the building were. He felt that the condition of the base of the structure would determine the commission’s decision. He was also concerned about granting a Local Designation for a building where the plans for renovation/restoration could possibly be discontinued. Mr. Magee was in agreement.

There was some discussion on how the commission could decide to proceed with the project. Jennifer Taylor, City Attorney, explained that approval of the request could be granted with conditions. She further explained that any conditions must be specific enough so that the Planning Board and City Council could determine whether the applicant had met those conditions. The commission could also chose to approve the request or lay the case over.

Mr. Kapadia discussed some of the future plans for the property. Ms. Gilbertson stated that significant attention would be given to the exterior of the building, specifically its base. She added that the applicant would continue to communicate with the Planning Department and State Historical Society for guidance. Ms. Taylor further added that the commission could condition its approval on subsequent review and approval of the scope of work prior to the applicant appearing before City Council. It was decided that the applicant would receive an approval of the scope of work from the Planning Department before the case was heard at City Council.

Ms. Aultz moved to APPROVE the request for designation status with the condition of approval of the scope of the work, for the entire building, prior to advancing to City Council. Mr. Suarez seconded the motion.

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

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0
ELECTION OF OFFICER:

Ms. Aultz moved to NOMINATE Ms. Fogarty as CHAIR of the commission and Mr. Killian as VICE-CHAIR. Mr. Killian seconded the motion.

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

MOTION CARRIED: 8-0

DISCUSSION:

Ms. Meyer informed those in attendance that Union Station was designated a National Historic Landmark at the end of December 2016 and that a press conference was being held on April 7, 2017 at 11:00 a.m. She stated that she would be sending invites to the commission and other interested parties.

ADJOURNMENT:

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