Urban Design Review Board

MINUTES

Thursday, January 15, 2015

Regular Meeting:
3:00 PM, Jesse Lowe Conference Room – 3rd Floor
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, January 15, 2015.

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, January 5, 2015.

Members Present:
Timothy Holland –Chair
David Ciaccio
Jeffrey Elliott
Brinker Harding – Non-Voting Ex-Officio Member
Katie Underwood
Philip Webb

Members Not Present:
Robert Peters – Vice-Chair
Christian Christensen
Larry Jobeun
Jay Noddle
Gerald Torczon

Staff Present:
Jed Moulton, Manager of Urban Design & Preservation
Trina Westman, UDRB Administrator
Alan Thelen, City Law
Clinette Warren, Recording Secretary
Public Projects:

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<tr>
<th>UD-15-001</th>
<th>Name: Maple Street Improvements - 59th – 63rd Streets (Benson)</th>
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<td>Sarah Arthur_Public Works Department</td>
<td>Request: Approval of 30% Design Submittal</td>
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At the Urban Design Review Board meeting held on January 15, 2015, Councilman Pete Festerson, John Larkin, Julie Ogden, and Jake Vasa appeared before the Board in support of the request.

Councilman Festersen discussed the progress that has been made in the Benson area the last few years. He provided background information about the project, mentioning that public and private funds had been contributed. He explained that improvements would include the replacement of all curbs and sidewalks, the widening of sidewalks to make them more pedestrian friendly, the addition of large bump-outs at the intersections along Maple Street making the crosswalks easier for pedestrians to maneuver, and the addition of plaza areas and bike racks. In addition, there have been talks with Metro about the addition of a bus transit area. Omaha Public Power District has also been helpful with the relocation of overhead power lines along Military Street creating a space where special events can be held. He requested the Commission’s approval which would allow the project to progress.

John Larkin, Benson Improvement District, discussed the investments that he and other business owners have in the area. He stated that the Benson business owners were in full support of the project.

Julie Ogden, Project Manager - JEO Consulting Group, presented slides of the proposed improvements. She stated that there were discussions with the Nebraska Department of Roads about the highway designation. She mentioned that the driving lanes and center turn lane would remain in place, some of the older trees would be replaced, and more pedestrian seating would be created. There was also communication with Public Works about reducing the number of existing traffic signs along Maple Street making it more open. Sidewalks along Binney Street would be widened by 1’ and the existing parking would be left as is. She noted other changes that would be made to allow more seating areas for pedestrians. She stated that the goal was to have the project bid in March 2015 so that construction could begin in the summer.

Jake Vasa, Project Engineer – JEO Consulting Group, stated that he had met with Jed Moulton about landscaping and node layouts. He elaborated on the details of the plans there was mentioned by Councilman Festersen and Ms. Ogden. Ms. Ogden mentioned the use of acorn-style street lighting that would be installed as part of the project, and that had already been installed in the neighborhood. There was additional discussion about seat walls, bike racks, and trash receptacles. Mr. Vasa submitted a document (Exhibit 2) that showed the types of landscaping that will be used as part of the project.

Dale Rabideau, 14506 Stone Avenue, appeared in opposition to the request. He believed that the highway designation for Military Avenue was unnecessary. He felt that it would negatively impact the size of the traffic lanes and reduce the amount of sidewalk space for pedestrians. He suggested that the speed limit be reduced in that area to make it more pedestrian-friendly.

In response to Mr. Webb, Todd Pfitzer – City Engineer, stated that the existing traffic signals would remain in place. He confirmed that there will be pedestrian markings wherever there are curb ramps.

Mr. Ciaccio moved to APPROVE the request with the following recommendations: 1) Landscaping areas should be provided with drought tolerant species with the exclusion of street trees which will be provided by the Green Streets Project in coordination with Parks & Recreation and the Planning Department; 2) A bike rack detail shall incorporate a black inverted “U” style; 3) A control joint plan should be prepared; the control joints should be hand tooled or saw-cut with a beveled edge; 4) Consideration of the design for the north and south legs of 61st Street to include removal of existing deteriorated brickwork and seating and replace with landscaping, which would result in
the existing trees and sidewalk being allowed to remain. New pedestrian street lighting (two per side, each leg) should be added for cost evaluation; 5) Further coordination and review with the Planning Department staff should occur as the project develops; and 6) A communication plan should be put in place for the merchants and property owners during construction. Approval also included administrative disposition for 95% design review. Mr. Elliott seconded the motion.

AYES: Ciaccio, Elliott, Webb, Underwood, Holland

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0
At the Urban Design Review Board meeting held on January 15, 2015, Eddy Santamaria appeared before the Board in support of the request.

Mr. Santamaria explained that a portable stage has been used on the site in the past. He presented slides showing the current location for the stage and discussed the layout of the area. He explained how the proposed design came about, which entailed taking into consideration the shape of the site and the location of the existing ramp. One of his goals was to make the site a multi-purpose area and to incorporate existing materials into the proposed design. He presented a model of the design to the board for their review. He explained the use of a type of steel that would create a natural patina over time.

Mr. Holland advised the applicant to research into whether two separate access points would be required for the stage in keeping with ADA requirements. There was some discussion about the proposed sound system, speaker and temporary lighting locations, and power sources.

Mr. Harding wanted to ensure that all parties involved took full advantage of the site’s potential. He noted that in ULI’s (Urban Land Institute) preliminary reports, the City was encouraged to be ambitious in the development plans, with much of the focus being directed to the base of the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge. He felt that an opportunity was being missed that would make the area a focal point, thereby, attracting private entities and philanthropic groups that are looking for opportunities to invest in projects of this nature. Mr. Santamaria responded that he was restricted by the budget that had been set for the project.

Brook Bench, City of Omaha – Parks Department, stated that there would be a $15,000 power upgrade on the site so that a small band would be able to play on the stage. He commented on some of the future events planned for the base of the bridge. He explained that attendance for many events is limited due to space constraints.

Mr. Ciaccio moved to APPROVE the request. Mr. Webb seconded the motion.

AYES: Ciaccio, Elliott, Webb, Underwood, Holland

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0
Administrative Item:

Mr. Elliott moved to APPROVE the meeting minutes for the November 20, 2014 meeting. Mr. Ciaccio seconded the motion.

AYES: Ciaccio, Elliott, Webb, Underwood, Holland

MOTION CARRIED: 5-0

Election of Officers:

It was the consensus of Board decided to postpone the Election of Officers until the next schedule meeting.

It was the consensus of the Board to adjourn the meeting at 4:10 p.m.

Clinette Warren, Planning Department
Recording Secretary