

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING

URBANA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

APPROVED

DATE: May 31, 2006

TIME: 7:00 p.m.

PLACE: Council Chambers, 400 South Vine Street, Urbana, Illinois

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rich Cahill, Alice Novak, Bill Rose, Mary Stuart, Art Zangerl

MEMBERS EXCUSED: Scott Dossett, Trent Shepard

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Robert Myers, Planning Division Manager; Rebecca Bicksler, Planning Division Intern; Tony Weck, Recording Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT: Tom Carrino, Karen Kummer, Jaci Nickelson, Jim Webster

1. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL AND DECLARATION OF QUORUM

Urbana Historic Preservation Commission Chair, Alice Novak, called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m. The roll call was taken, and a quorum was declared present.

2. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were none.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

With regards to the minutes of the March 1, 2006 meeting, Ms. Stuart made a motion to approve as presented. Mr. Cahill seconded the motion and the Commission unanimously approved the minutes as presented.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

There were none.

5. AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

There was none at this point in the meeting.

6. CONTINUED PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Mrs. Bicksler gave a brief recapitulation of the Stucco Workshop which took place on May 21, 2006, saying that it went very well, with good weather and strong attendance. Ms. Novak made note of the Kids' Building Fair, which took place on May 20, 2006, saying that it also went very well and thanking all who contributed to its success.

8. NEW PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

9. NEW BUSINESS

National Register nomination for Urbana-Historic Lincoln Hotel/Lincoln Square Mall, 300 South Broadway, Urbana.

Mrs. Bicksler made a brief overview of the steps necessary for nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. Mr. Myers then explained that the City's role in the nomination process was to review the nomination, and as a Certified Local Government, the Historic Preservation Commission has an opportunity to provide comments and/or any corrections to the Illinois Advisory Council and Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Ms. Novak then turned the floor over to Karen Kummer who prepared the nomination. Ms. Kummer gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history, construction and architecture of the Historic Lincoln Hotel and Lincoln Square Mall.

The Urbana-Lincoln Hotel was built in 1923 from a design by locally significant architect Joseph Royer. The adjacent mall was built in 1964 from plans by nationally significant architect and planner, Victor Gruen. Historically, Lincoln Square Mall occupied nine square blocks of commercial and residential property, all of which were removed for the development except for nine properties. Lincoln Square Mall was built as a downtown revitalization project and spearheaded by downtown Urbana business interests. The project was first designed to have grouped multiple commercial buildings but not to be an enclosed shopping mall. However, plans were modified to meet the project's needs. This project, including land acquisition and demolition, was totally privately financed. In the end, Lincoln Square Mall was the first fully enclosed shopping mall built in the downtown of a smaller American city.

Following Ms. Kummer's presentation, Ms. Novak opened the floor to anyone in the audience who wished to comment. Jim Webster, whose law office is located in Lincoln Square Mall, thanked the Historic Preservation Commission for holding this meeting to consider National Register nomination for the mall and hotel. Mr. Webster stated that it is his belief that historic preservation in Urbana is an important factor in the community.

With no further public comments or questions, it was asked whether City staff had any comments. Mr. Myers noted that in the Description section of the nomination, the Mall is described as being organized into Buildings A through D, however the nomination document does not include an

illustration showing these buildings. Mr. Myers posed the question of why the period of significance was listed as 1923-1964, but a full five pages of the nomination covered the property's history and significance for the period 1965 to the present. He noted that it would be good to weave the historic context into a cohesive narrative. For instance, it's not until the very end of the nomination (pages 59-65 of Section 8 of) that "Lincoln Square Mall's Development" and "Lincoln Square Mall's Economic Impact" are provided. This is very important information in showing significance and should be moved to the front of the document so as to provide better context for the conclusions. The Mall is argued to be nationally significant because of Victor Gruen's design, however the nomination document only seems to mention him in passing in the course of its narrative leading up to the Mall's construction. This, along with his significance not being discussed until the very end, makes Gruen's role appear to be minimized. Additionally, not communicated until page 51 of the narrative is the sense that Gruen developed a plan for Urbana's entire downtown. Also, Gruen's plans for Lincoln Square Mall apparently were not for an enclosed mall but his plans were changed by the developers. The question was posed whether or not this has an impact on the nomination. In addition, Mr. Myers posed the question of how Lincoln Square compares today with other early enclosed shopping malls, especially that in Rochester, New York.

Further, Mr. Myers noted that there were some statements in the nomination which needed to be documented and footnoted: that Lincoln Square is the first downtown mall in a smaller city constructed in the manner of a suburban shopping center, that Lincoln Square is the first enclosed downtown mall in Illinois and that it is the first mall in a city of Urbana's size and the second enclosed mall (downtown or otherwise) in Illinois. Mr. Myers also asked if there were any contemporary retail or mall trade journals that commented on the opening of Lincoln Square. Additionally, Mr. Myers asked whether the large amount of detailed description regarding the original layout and architectural finishes of the Mall which appear in the "Significance" section should be instead in the "Description" section. Mr. Myers stated that the claim that Lincoln Square influenced the design of other malls in the United States in the 1960s should be documented and integrated into the narrative. Lastly, Mr. Myers noted that illustrations do not include 1960's photographs of the mall which would be helpful.

Discussion of the nomination then turned to members of the Historic Preservation Commission. Mr. Cahill noted the 1983 addition to Lincoln Square Mall, stating that it is a distinct section and should be kept so. Also noted by Mr. Cahill was that the history of hotels in Urbana-Champaign seems to have been short-changed in this nomination; the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel should have been compared to others in the community of that era and some mention should have been made of hotel accommodations in the community in general at that time. Mr. Rose noted that he would like to see at least 50 years of history behind a property to decide whether National Historic Register designation is a success or a mistake. He has doubts about recommending approval to nominate a failed urban renewal effort to the National Register. Ms. Novak made note of the insular design of the mall, stating that there are virtually no exterior windows or storefronts to serve as enticements for shoppers to enter the mall. Ms. Novak also noted that she has difficulty in thinking of the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel as part of the mall. Further, Ms. Novak questioned the *national* significance of the mall, asking what difference it made on the national scene in terms of this type of development, and stating that she cannot give her approval to the prospect of national significance for Lincoln Square as the case was here presented.

It was the general consensus of the Commission that national significance of Lincoln Square Mall and the Urbana-Lincoln Hotel had not been adequately presented in the nomination for the National

Historic Register, however, local and perhaps statewide significance was apparent. Mr. Zangerl made a motion that the Commission forward the following comments to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency for review in regards to this National Register nomination: (1) Lincoln Square is significant at the local and state levels, but the case for national significance is not adequately documented. Lincoln Square may have been designed by a master architect, but if the project did not lead to similar projects, can it be considered a prototype? (2) The nomination would benefit from a comparison with other downtown enclosed shopping malls, (3) the local hotel context needs to be strengthened, including the fact that the hotel's designer, Joseph Royer, was prolific in early 20th century revival styles, (4) the nomination should provide a sense of what Lincoln Square Mall replaced as part of its nine square block area, and (5) the nomination should mention why Lincoln Square Mall's design was so inwardly oriented. Mr. Cahill seconded the motion. Upon a vote, the motion was approved as follows:

Mr. Cahill: yes	Mr. Rose: yes
Ms. Novak: yes	Ms. Stuart: yes
Mr. Rose: yes	Mr. Zangerl: yes

Robert Myers will prepare a letter for Alice Novak to sign.

10. MONITORING OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES

No report was made.

11. STAFF REPORT

No additional staff report was made other than reporting on the success of stucco workshop.

12. STUDY SESSION

There was none.

13. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Myers announced the 25th Annual Illinois Statewide Preservation Conference, taking place on Thursday, June 8, 2006 through Saturday, June 10 in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Zangerl moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Rose seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned by Ms. Novak at 9:10 p.m.

Submitted,

Robert Myers, Planning Division Manager