



TAKING CHARGE 2013

a community conversation on city priorities & the budget

STRATEGIC PLANNING PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Taking Charge Community Conversation Strategic Planning Primary Recommendations

Background

Results from the Taking Charge 2013 online survey showed that citizens wanted more attention given to two of the City's eight outcome areas: *Safety and Security* and *Efficient Transportation*.

In response to this input, City officials have devised strategic planning options in response to public concerns. This document lists those possibilities and options. Potential pros and cons related to these options will be discussed during the 2013 Taking Charge Community Conversation. Conversation participants may also have other suggestions.

The Community Conversation will have two parts. The first part, held Tuesday October 8, 2013, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., will be an informational session designed to

- present an overview of the Taking Charge survey results;
- provide additional background related to the two focus areas;
- present the potential options (see below); and
- invite community members to provide perspectives on these options and to offer any additional suggestions that are relevant and should be discussed at the second Community Conversation (see below).

This information session will be aired on 5 CITY-TV, the government access cable channel. It also will be available on the City website, lincoln.ne.gov, for later viewing.

The second part of the Community Conversation will be held Saturday, October 19, 2013, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This session will provide opportunities for Lincoln residents to work together in groups to revise, refine or create new strategic plan options. Residents will be able to discuss these options with City officials at the meeting and to present their proposals to other residents.

At the end of the meeting, participants will be asked to evaluate and comment on the pros and cons of the recommendations. This session will also be broadcast on 5 CITY-TV and streamed on the City website. A final integrative report on all three parts of Taking Charge 2013 (the survey, information session and strategic planning discussion session) will also be made available.

Safety and Security

The Safety and Security area includes the five related goals listed below. Taking Charge 2013 survey respondents indicated that they would like to see the City increase support in each area, especially areas 1 and 2.

1. Maintain a low crime rate
2. Timely and effective incident management
3. Traffic safety
4. Youth activity
5. Flood hazards

Primary staff recommendations:

A. Radio system replacement (*Timely and effective incident management*)

Background: The City's 25-year old radio system is nearing the end of its useful life. Support for the system has been discontinued by the manufacturer, and many critical components are no longer manufactured. It must be replaced in the next five years. The City is increasingly vulnerable to a failure in emergency medical services. The system also supports the Lancaster County Sheriff, University of Nebraska Police, Airport Police, hospitals, Lincoln Public Schools and many other City agencies. Replacing the system will require \$10 million to \$15 million in one-time costs or 20 years of debt service payments of about \$800,000 to \$1.2 million.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

B. Fire station relocation (*Timely and effective incident management*)

Background: As the City has grown, the ability of Lincoln Fire & Rescue to reach an emergency call within the five-minute goal has decreased. The City is meeting the five-minute standard only 77% of the time, well below the 90% standard. By

relocating four fire stations, it is estimated that the number of addresses outside a safe travel time from a fire station would be cut in half, with another 4,000 addresses covered. The plan would not require any additional firefighters, but would require the building of four new fire stations and the closing of currently existing stations that will no longer be needed. The estimated cost of building the four stations is \$10 million in one-time funds or an annual debt service payment of about \$800,000 annually for 20 years

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

C. Add police officers (*Maintain a low crime rate*)

Background: Lincoln's violent crime and burglary rates are about 40% below the average for cities similar in size across the country. On the other hand, some crimes have increased. For example, the City has experienced an increase in gang related assaults from 39 in 2011 to 51 in 2012. To have one additional officer on the street 24 hours per day, 365 days per year requires the City to hire an additional 5.2 officers at about \$88,000 per officer annually for a total of about \$460,000 annually.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

D. Provide financial support to sustaining Community Learning Center programs (*Youth activity*)

More than 5,200 students participate in the 25 Community Learning Centers (CLC) associated with public schools in lower socio-economic areas of Lincoln. Those include 18 elementary schools, six middle schools and one high school. The Lincoln CLC Initiative is a coalition of ten community agencies, including the Parks and Recreation Department, coordinated through a program coordinator and advised by a community council. More than two-thirds of the students who participate qualify for free or reduced price lunch. Students participating in CLC programs score higher on reading and math testing, attend school more regularly, and experience greater physical wellness than their peers who do not participate in programming.

About one-third of the financial support for the CLC Initiative comes from program participants through registration fees. The remaining funding is from federal and local grants. The level of federal funding has been sustained, but is potentially at risk with changes to the federal budget. It is projected that \$500,000 to \$1.5 million will be needed annually to sustain the Lincoln CLC initiative for staffing, programming and scholarships.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

Other Safety and Security possibilities:
(For more information, visit the [Taking Charge resource website](#) .)

The options above represent City officials' thoughts about effective ways to improve Safety and Security in Lincoln. Below are additional options that may be responsive to comments and concerns raised on the Taking Charge survey. However, this is by no means an exhaustive list of Safety and Security options. At the information session on Oct. 8, 2013, City officials would like the public's ideas on the pros and cons of the options above. Officials also would like to hear about other options that should be considered, including those on the following list:

- E. Increase community mental health services (Maintain a low crime rate)
- F. Provide 911 Center supervisors (Timely and effective incident management)
- G. Add another ambulance unit (Timely and effective incident management)
- H. Add traffic unit police officers (Traffic safety)
- I. Make changes in striping and signage and take other measures at high-crash locations (Traffic safety)
- J. Provide gang resistance programming (Youth activities)
- K. Increase the focus on floodplain permitting and community flood insurance rating (Flood hazards)
- L. Complete more storm drain projects (Flood hazards)

Other options to consider:

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

Efficient Transportation

The Efficient Transportation area includes the three related goals, listed below. Taking Charge 2013 survey respondents indicated that they would like to see the City increase support in each area, especially area 1.

1. Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure
2. Encourage alternate forms of transportation, such as bicycling or walking
3. Provide accessible, reliable, convenient and safe public transit

Primary staff recommendations:

A. Close street maintenance and construction funding gap (*Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure.*)

Background: Annually the City spends \$43 million on the repair, rehabilitation, and new construction projects for its streets. This is about \$7 million below the \$50 million identified in the Long-Range Transportation plan.

The \$50 million is divided into:

- \$14 million on prioritized repairs to the streets, cleaning the roads and storm pipes, and congestion management. These activities are completed with city staff and equipment
- \$15 million in private contracted repairs, rehabilitation and preventative maintenance to maintain existing roads and bridges
- \$21 million for new construction increasing road capacity and building new roads

The City is doing well on indicators that measure the amount of time drivers must wait at a traffic signal and on work commute times. But it is falling well short of meeting the 46 miles of street rehabilitation needed each year to keep those streets in "very good" condition as well as the 2.4 miles of new road required for the continued growth of the community. Identifying street pavement conditions and reacting before they become "fair" or "poor" saves future taxpayer dollars.

With each additional \$1 million allocated the City can complete:

- 2.3 to 4.7 additional miles of residential rehab
- 1.1 to 1.7 additional miles of arterial rehab
- 1/6th to 1/4th additional miles of new street growth

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

B. Funding the local match of the South Beltway (*Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure.*)

Background: The State of Nebraska is moving ahead on construction of the South Beltway and the City is obligated to provide \$40 million in local funding. If a dedicated funding source is not identified, then other street construction projects and programs will need to be put on hold for about three to five years while funds are diverted to the South Beltway project. This decision could delay new construction projects and affect replacement of aging traffic signal poles and rehabilitation of existing City streets. This would increase the costs of those projects later and could stunt economic development in emerging areas of the community

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

C. Sidewalk rehabilitation (*Encourage alternate forms of transportation such as bicycling or walking*)

Background: Lincoln requires sidewalks on both sides of all City streets and connectivity between subdivisions. Because of this policy, the vast majority of homes and businesses are served by Lincoln's 1,500 miles of sidewalks. The responsibility for rehabilitation of sidewalks was passed from the adjoining property owner to the City in two separate votes during the early 1990s. City rehabilitation of sidewalks, particularly in older residential and commercial areas, has proven to be a challenge. Currently, there are over 1,400 locations on a priority complaint list with separations of two inches or more and over 10,000 deficient locations overall. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires State and local governments to provide accessible curb ramps for access to streets and sidewalks. To address these issues, the City would need to spend \$4 million annually for a 15-year completion of existing sidewalk defects.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

D. Performance audit of engineering services (*Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure.*)

Background: Some community groups question whether engineering services provided by City staff could be more cost effectively accomplished by private sector engineers. They also are concerned that too many day-to-day staff costs are being funded by street construction dollars. These groups believe that a performance audit may find savings that allow more street construction dollars to be spent on construction and rehabilitation. The cost of an audit depends on what is being asked of the consultants. A very rough estimate is that an audit would cost \$250,000 in one-time funds.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

E. Bus service administrative improvements (*Provide accessible, reliable, convenient and safe public transit*)

Background: This includes a package of administrative improvements designed to attract more riders and increase passenger revenues. Buses will be rebranded to attract new riders. A contract specialist would be hired to develop and administer engineering, construction, equipment procurement contracts, services, leases and maintenance agreements, ensuring compliance with all applicable federal, State and local acquisition regulations. Fare structures would be changed to make them more consistent and more economical for first-time riders. New bus stop signage will help riders learn where to board buses and will help advertise the system. The package is estimated to cost \$225,000 for the first year and \$165,000 each year after. The bus stop signage improvements are a one-time cost of \$270,000.

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions:

Other Efficient Transportation possibilities:

(For more information, visit the [Taking Charge resource website.](#))

- F. Hire additional staff and update software for traffic signal timing (Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure.)
- G. Add Intelligent Transportation System adaptive signals (Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure.)
- H. Increase street signing and marking program (Provide, maintain and support safe, convenient, durable and efficient transportation infrastructure.)
- I. Add position to help promote biking, walking, transit and ride sharing (Encourage alternate forms of transportation such as bicycling or walking)
- J. Expanded transfer center for bus transportation (Provide accessible, reliable, convenient and safe public transit)
- K. Add downtown CNG (compressed natural gas) refueling station for buses (Provide accessible, reliable, convenient and safe public transit)

This is by no means an exhaustive list of Efficient Transportation options. If participants have other recommendations or want additional information, City staff will be available to consult and listen.

Other options to consider:

Pros: _____

Cons: _____

Comments/funding solutions: _____

Appendix A – Possible Funding Solutions

Discussion of programs is, of course, incomplete without also discussing how those programs would be funded. Below are potential means of funding programs discussed above.

<p>General Fund cuts to free up funds for new priorities - \$1 million</p>	<p>Review Program Prioritization on the resource website for more detail Approximate impacts of \$1 million cut: Neighborhood watch support; senior citizen volunteer program; parking enforcement; neighborhood pools; library evening and weekend hours; snow removal</p>
<p>General Fund cuts to free up funds for new priorities - \$2 million</p>	<p>Review Program Prioritization on the resource website for more detail Approximate impacts of \$2 million cut: Programs in \$1 million cut plus police services to victims and witnesses; protective custody of intoxicated persons; police alarm response; public information and engagement; Library’s One Book- One Lincoln program, median and boulevard maintenance; Ombudsman</p>
<p>Raise property tax levy by either vote of the City Council or a vote of the people</p>	<p>Each 1 cent of additional levy raises \$1.7 million and would cost the owner of a \$150,000 home about \$15 more year; 5 cents raises about \$8.5 million and adds \$75; 8 cents raises about \$13.6 million and adds \$120</p>
<p>Raise local sales by half-percent by a vote of the people</p>	<p>A half-cent of sales tax raises about \$22 million per year, and by State law, 15% may be spent on programs other than infrastructure or economic development projects. It can only be in place for 10 years unless bonded.</p>
<p>Paying for street sanitation and street maintenance out of the General Fund rather than the Street Construction fund, freeing up \$14.7 million for road construction and rehabilitation but requiring either \$14.7 million in cuts or new revenue to the General Fund</p>	<p>\$14.7 million annually solves the \$7 million roads construction gap and provides additional funding. Please review Program Prioritization at lincoln.ne.gov for more detail on impacts of \$14.7 million in cuts to the General Fund.</p>
<p>The Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD) has an annual levy for railroad crossings. If the district is authorized to spend their full 2.6 cent levy, it is capable of providing \$13 million to the South Beltway project</p>	<p>The Lancaster County Board controls the RTSD property tax levy. In the past, it has been 2.6 cents, but this year, the levy is 1.3 cents and the Board used the other 1.3 cents in its budget to keep the overall property tax levy the same as previous years. To provide \$13 million, the RTSD would have to return to 2.6 cents; The County Board has pledged to return the RTSD levy to 2.6 cents in future years to help fund the South Beltway</p>