IN LIEU OF
DIRECTORS’ MEETING
MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2013

I. CITY CLERK

II. MAYOR
1. NEWS RELEASE. Public invited to Open House on stormwater drainage improvements in east central Lincoln.
2. NEWS ADVISORY. Mayor Beutler will hold a news conference Thursday, June 20th, 1:30 p.m. at the Dickinson Dinsmore Graf Amphitheater, to announce new community events planned for Union Plaza.

III. DIRECTORS CORRESPONDENCE

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

FINANCE/BUDGET
1. June sales tax reports reflecting April activity:
   a) Actual Compared to Projected Sales Tax Collections;
   b) Gross Sales Tax Collections (with refunds added back in) 2008-2009 through 2012-2013;
   c) Sales Tax Refunds 2008-2009 through 2012-2013; and

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
2. Administrative approvals by the Planing Director from June 11, 2013 through June 17, 2013.

IV. COUNCIL MEMBERS

CARL ESKRIDGE
1. Correspondence from Tom Clark regarding donation boxes with Councilman Eskridge’s reply.
2. Reply to Councilman Eskridge’s email from Thomas Clark.

V. CORRESPONDENCE FROM CITIZENS
PUBLIC INVITED TO OPEN HOUSE ON
STORMWATER DRAINAGE IMPROVEMENTS

The public is invited to an open house Tuesday, June 25 to discuss proposed stormwater improvements in east central Lincoln. This informal meeting is from 5 to 6:30 p.m. in the Lefler Middle School cafeteria, 1100 S. 48th St.

The project will increase the capacity of the existing drainage system in the area bordered by 53rd, 55th, “L” and “J” streets. Work will include the addition of curb inlets, new storm drain pipes and manholes at the “L” Street intersections at 53rd and 54th streets and at the “J” Street intersections at 53rd, 54th and 55th streets.

The new inlets and pipes will connect to the existing storm drain system. A grate inlet also will be built on private property on the south side of “J” Street and connected to the existing storm drain system.

The project design team will be available to answer questions at the open house.

The final design is scheduled to be completed in late July, and construction will be completed this year. The project is being funded through the 2012 Stormwater Bond Issue.

For more information about the open house or the project, contact Angie Schmidt, E & A Consulting Group, at 402-420-7217 or Ed Kouma, City of Lincoln, at 402-441-7018. More information on City Public Works and Utilities construction projects is available at lincoln.ne.gov (keyword: projects).
DATE: June 19, 2013
FOR MORE INFORMATION: Diane Gonzolas, Citizen Information Center, 402-441-7831

Mayor Chris Beutler will announce new community events planned for Union Plaza at a news conference at 1:30 p.m. Thursday, June 20 at the Dickinson Dinsmore Graf Amphitheatre, just off 21st Street between “P” and “Q” streets. If the weather is bad, the news conference will be held at the Jayne Snyder Trail Center, 21st and “Q” streets.

The project to be announced is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.
AGENDA

I. Roll Call

II. Approval of Minutes of May 30, 2013 Commission Meeting

III. Approval of Agenda for June 27, 2013 Commission Meeting

IV. Case Dispositions
   A. Reasonable Cause/No Reasonable Cause
      1. LCHR No.: 12-1115-055-E-R
      2. LCHR No.: 12-1217-063-E-R
      3. LCHR No.: 12-1218-064-E
      4. LCHR No.: 12-1221-065-E-R
      5. LCHR No.: 12-1227-066-E-R
      6. LCHR No.: 13-0408-008-E-R
      7. LCHR No.: 13-0528-002-H
   B. Administrative Closures
      Withdrawal with Settlement
      1. LCHR No.: 12-1105-054-E

V. Old Business

VI. New Business

VII. Public Comment**

VIII. Adjournment

**Public comments are limited to 5 minutes per person. Members of the public may address any item of interest to the LCHR during this open session with the exception of LCHR cases. Also, no member of the public who wishes to address the Commission will be allowed to examine any individual Commissioner or staff member on any item/question before the Commission unless invited to do so by the Chairperson.
# Actual Compared to Projected Sales Tax Collections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>2012-13 Projected</th>
<th>2012-13 Actual</th>
<th>Variance From Projected</th>
<th>$ Change Fr. 11-12</th>
<th>% Change Fr. 11-12</th>
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<td>SEPTEMBER</td>
<td>$5,220,256</td>
<td>$5,069,566</td>
<td>($150,690)</td>
<td>$527,316</td>
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</tr>
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<td>OCTOBER</td>
<td>$5,424,472</td>
<td>$5,516,359</td>
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<td>$388,893</td>
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<td>NOVEMBER</td>
<td>$5,424,472</td>
<td>$5,026,408</td>
<td>($398,064)</td>
<td>($119,959)</td>
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<td>DECEMBER</td>
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<td>($29,478)</td>
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<tr>
<td>JANUARY</td>
<td>$5,162,821</td>
<td>$5,034,261</td>
<td>($128,560)</td>
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<td>FEBRUARY</td>
<td>$6,541,275</td>
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<td>($448,721)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MARCH</td>
<td>$4,818,207</td>
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<td>($125,435)</td>
<td>($30,154)</td>
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<tr>
<td>APRIL</td>
<td>$4,633,137</td>
<td>$4,613,747</td>
<td>($19,390)</td>
<td>$85,504</td>
<td>1.89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAY</td>
<td>$5,418,090</td>
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<tr>
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<td>JULY</td>
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<td>AUGUST</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$63,817,314</td>
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<td>($833,452)</td>
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Actual collections for the fiscal year to date are 1.574% under projections for the year.
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<th>5%</th>
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<th>14%</th>
<th>19%</th>
<th>24%</th>
<th>29%</th>
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<th>40%</th>
<th>45%</th>
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<th>61%</th>
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<td>6.8%</td>
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**2008-2009 TIEROUGCH 2012-2013**

CITY OF LINCOLN

WITH RETAINED ADDEND BACK IN

CROSS SALES TAX COLLECTIONS
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<td>66.13%</td>
<td>$5,144,194</td>
<td>$4,680,931</td>
<td>$4,175,760</td>
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<td>$17,514,736</td>
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<td>$1,434,773</td>
<td>$13,449,773</td>
<td>$14,031,804</td>
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<td>$1,216,692</td>
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<td>$1,177,201</td>
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<td>$344.106</td>
<td>$310.728</td>
<td>$311.705</td>
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<td>$383.142</td>
<td>$359.857</td>
<td>$348.286</td>
<td>$341.782</td>
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<td>$81.432</td>
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<td>$68.711</td>
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<td>$519.283</td>
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<td>$481.783</td>
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<td>$973.067</td>
<td>$918.920</td>
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<td>$5,842.500</td>
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2008-2009 THROUGH Q3 2012 Q4 2013
SALES TAX RETURNS
CITY OF LINCOLN
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<th>Previous Year</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>0.06%</th>
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<th>5.22%</th>
<th>5.99%</th>
<th>5.13%</th>
<th>5.92%</th>
<th>5.52%</th>
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<td>$2,321,122,156</td>
<td>2.23%</td>
<td>1.90%</td>
<td>3.31%</td>
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<td>5.52%</td>
<td>5.42%</td>
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<tr>
<td>$4,388,214</td>
<td>7.33%</td>
<td>11.04%</td>
<td>8.67%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>3.01%</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
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<td>$5,400,947</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
<td>5.62%</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
<td>5.52%</td>
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<td>5.70%</td>
<td>6.01%</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
<td>5.52%</td>
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<td>$11,010</td>
<td>1.14%</td>
<td>6.01%</td>
<td>7.43%</td>
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**2008-2009 THROUGH 2012-2013**

**NET SALES TAX COLLECTIONS**

**CITY OF LINCOLN**
The City of Lincoln Historic Preservation Commission will hold a public meeting on Thursday, June 20, 2013. The meeting will convene at 1:30 p.m. in Room 214 in Development Services Center, 2nd floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska, to consider the following agenda. For more information, contact the Planning Department at (402) 441-7491.

AGENDA

June 20, 2013

1. Approval of meeting record May 16, 2013.

2. Opportunity for persons with limited time or with an item not appearing on the agenda to address the Commission.

HEARING AND ACTION

3. Application by Scott Sullivan for a Certificate of Appropriateness for work at 6117 Havelock Avenue in the Havelock Avenue Landmark District.


5. Review of preservation easement for Lewis-Syford House, 700 N. 16th Street.

DISCUSSION & RECOMMENDATION

6. Temporary modifications to Fairview site during Emergency Department upgrade, Bryan Hospital East

7. Staff Report & Misc.

The Historic Preservation Commission agenda may be accessed on the Internet at http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/bdscom/hpc/index.htm

For further information on Historic Preservation in Lincoln, visit http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/hist/index.htm

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Memorandum

Date:  ♦  June 18, 2013
To:  ♦  City Clerk
From:  ♦  Teresa McKinstry, Planning Dept.
Re:  ♦  Administrative Approvals
cc:  ♦  Jean Preister

This is a list of the administrative approvals by the Planning Director from June 11, 2013 through June 17, 2013:

**Administrative Amendment No. 13036** to Change of Zone No. 05026B, Apple’s Way Planned Unit Development, approved by the Planning Director on June 13, 2013, requested by Old City Homes, Inc., to adjust the side setback for Lot 4, Block 2 (6308 Artisan Way) from 10' to 9', on property generally located near S. 63rd St. and Highway 2.

**Waiver No. 12024**, approved by the Planning Director on June 17, 2013, requested by Scott Anderson, to extend the time for two years to install sidewalks on S. 86th Street, landscape screen and street trees for Anderson’s Place 1st Addition. The improvements shall be completed by June 17, 2015. Property is generally located at N. 84th St. and Leighton Ave.
Mr. Clark,
Thank you for your email. Quite honestly, since it has been ten days since we met and I was not provided any information until now, including specific information that I requested, I assumed that there was no interest. If that is not the case, I am still seeking the information requested. If the information is not provided, I am not interested in a discussion. As you pointed out, the clock is running.

Carl Eskridge

Tom Clark <TClark757@cox.net> wrote:

Dear Councilman Eskridge:
Thank you for your time last Friday to meet with Jack Shultz and me regarding donation homes in Lincoln. One of your recommendations was that we set up a meeting with Goodwill, People's City Mission, March of Dimes, yourself, one other council person, Milo Mumgaard, a representative from the City's solid waste committee, and any additional invitees that you may want to include in order to exchange information, clarify misconceptions and create dialog between the interested parties. Our work can consist of defining missions as well as goals and try to work on common threads between all the parties.

Hopefully you have a Council employee who can notify the parties and set up a time for all of us to get together. In light of the Council's decision not to extend the ordinance's effective date, time is of the essence. Jack Shultz and I are available to meet any date in the near future other than June 24 and 25. I know your time is very limited, and I certainly appreciate your past time commitment to this issue. I am looking forward to working with you in this endeavor.

Please let me know your progress in setting up this meeting.
Thanking you in advance.

Tom Clark
Dear Council Chairman Eskridge,

Thank you for your response to my email. During our meeting on June 7, 2012 you had requested that Linc-Drop Inc. provide you of a copy of its financial statements and a copy of its contract with the March of Dimes. You agreed I was under no legal obligation to provide these documents. I agreed to consider providing these documents subject to some confidentiality agreement. I am not aware of any other information which you have requested. Is my understanding correct, that unless I provide the Linc-Drop Inc. financial statements and a copy of the contract between Linc-Drop, Inc. and the March of Dimes, you have no further interest in discussing this matter.

Please let me know your thoughts.

Thomas J. Clark
DIRECTORS’ AGENDA
ADDENDUM
MONDAY, JUNE 24, 2013

I. CITY CLERK

II. MAYOR & DIRECTORS’ CORRESPONDENCE

MAYOR
1. NEWS RELEASE. “Party in the Parks” coming to Union Plaza. Arts festivals supported by grant from National Endowment for the Arts.
2. NEWS RELEASE. Kokyo Taiko drummers to perform at libraries.
3. NEWS RELEASE. Public invited to Bison Trail Bridge dedication on Sunday, June 30, 2013.
5. NEWS RELEASE. Open house set for proposed Bikeway Project, June 25, 2013.

III. DIRECTORS

HEALTH DEPARTMENT
1. NEWS RELEASE. Public asked to help clean up fireworks debris.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT
1. Planning Assessment Survey reports. Full survey report available online along with a draft report of the resulting Planning Department Self Assessment report.
2. The June 27, 2013 Nebraska Capitol Environ Commission meeting has been cancelled.

IV. COUNCIL MEMBERS

JON CAMP
1. Memorandum to Lincoln’s City Council from Councilman Camp regarding a TIF Audit.

V. CORRESPONDENCE FROM CITIZENS

1. InterLinc correspondence from Robert Narveson on Protected Bike Lanes.
   a) Article on Life in the Green Lane: Protected Bike Lanes transform the experience of riding.
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508, 402-441-7511

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 20, 2013
FOR MORE INFORMATION: Diane Gonzolas, Citizen Information Center, 402-441-7381
Lynn Johnson, Parks and Recreation, 402-441-7847
Brendan Evans, Party in the Parks Coordinator, 402-730-2016

“PARTY IN THE PARKS” COMING TO UNION PLAZA
Arts festivals supported by grant from National Endowment for the Arts

Mayor Chris Beutler today announced a new series of public arts festivals at Union Plaza called “Party in the Parks.” The first festival is from 4 to 9 p.m. Saturday, June 29 and will feature live music, visual arts, food vendors and kids activities, such as a Rubber Ducky Race. No admission fee will be charged. Future festivals are being planned for July 27, August 17 and September 28.

“Party in the Parks” is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as part of its “Art Works” initiative. The Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department collaborated with community arts organizations and civic leaders to receive an NEA “Our Town” grant to begin a summer entertainment series in the new civic event spaces, such as Union Plaza, Centennial Mall and Civic Plaza as well as public areas in the West Haymarket development.

“Festivals like this add to the community spirit of Lincoln and to our civic pride,” said Mayor Beutler. “The new public spaces that have been created and the ones now being built will provide many new opportunities for residents and visitors to gather to enjoy the growing and diverse pool of visual and performing artists in the Capital City.”

Parks and Recreation Director Lynn Johnson said Lincoln is one of only 80 cities to be awarded an “Our Town” grant to support family friendly arts activities that encourage creativity and create community identity. “Union Plaza in the center of Lincoln is the perfect place to begin this new effort to bring together arts organizations and the community,” Johnson said.

In addition to NEA grant funds, the festivals will be supported by local sponsors, said Party in the Parks Coordinator Brendan Evans. “This is a great way for local businesses and organizations to become partners in presenting family friendly events open to the whole community,” Evans said.

More information is available at PartyintheParks.com or by calling 402-730-2016. More information on the NEA is available at nea.gov.
KOKYO TAIKO DRUMMERS TO PERFORM AT LIBRARIES

The public is invited to two performances by the Lincoln-based Kokyo Taiko Drummers at Lincoln City Libraries. Wadaiko, the art of choreographed Japanese-style drumming, will be featured at these times and locations:

- 1 p.m. Saturday, June 22 at Walt Branch Library, 6701 S. 14th St.
- 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, July 23 at Bennett Martin Public Library, 136 S. 14th St.

For more information on Lincoln City Library programs, visit lincolnlibraries.org. For more information on the Kokyo Taiko Drummers, visit www.kokyotaiko.com.

- 30-
PUBLIC INVITED TO BISON TRAIL BRIDGE DEDICATION

The public is invited to join Mayor Chris Beutler for the dedication of the new Bison Trail Bridge at 2 p.m. Sunday, June 30. The ceremony will take place at the site of the new bridge, located on the Bison Trail just west of the intersection of Highway 77 and West Van Dorn Street.

The new bridge replaces the old West Van Dorn Bridge that was closed about three years ago for safety reasons. The project included removing the old concrete bridge and replacing it with a 143-foot long, 12-feet wide steel truss bridge.

The total project cost was $439,100. To help fund the project, the City received a $250,000 Recreational Trails Program Grant administered by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and a $50,000 donation from the Great Plains Trails Network. The rest was covered by Parks and Recreation capital improvement funds.

The public is encouraged to ride their bicycles to the dedication ceremony because of limited parking. Some parking is available at the First Street and Park Boulevard trailhead to the Bison and Salt Creek Levee Trails; Pioneers Park; and along West Prospector Street west of Folsom Street.

For more information on Parks and Recreation programs and activities, visit parks.lincoln.ne.gov.

- 30 -
Mayor Beutler’s Public Schedule
Week of June 22 through 28, 2013
Schedule subject to change

Saturday, June 22
• Annual Juneteenth celebration, remarks and proclamation - 11 a.m., Trago Park, 22nd and “U” streets (adjacent to Malone Center, 2032 “U” St.)

Sunday, June 23
• Trail Trek, remarks - 9 a.m., Haymarket Park, 403 Line Drive Circle

Monday, June 24
• International visitors from Croatia, Egypt, Liberia and Peru - 9:30 a.m., Mayor’s Conference Room, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th St.

Tuesday, June 25
• Corrections Joint Public Agency public meeting - 9 a.m., room 113, County-City Building
• KFOR - 12:30 p.m. (previously recorded)
OPEN HOUSE SET FOR PROPOSED BIKEWAY PROJECT

The public is invited to an open house Tuesday, June 25 on the City’s first proposed protected bikeway on “N” Street. Draft design plans will be available for review, and the project consultants will be available for questions. The open house is from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at St. Paul United Methodist Church, 1144 “M” St. The meeting will take place in the dining room, and the public should enter on “M” Street.

The City is proposing to create a two-way protected bikeway on “N” Street from 7th to 23rd streets. The bikeway would be located between the sidewalk and a median protecting bikers from street traffic. The bikeway would provide bicycle access through the downtown area by connecting on the east with the Billy Wolff Trail in Antelope Valley and on the west with the Jamaica North Trail in the West Haymarket.

The protected bikeway concept was approved as part of the Downtown Master Plan Update in 2012. Once the design is finalized this summer, the project will need City Council approval to add it to the City’s Capital Improvement Program before construction can begin. Construction could begin this fall, and the segment from 7th to 11th streets would be built first as part of the West Haymarket development.

For more information about the open house, contact Urban Development at 402-441-7606.
PUBLIC ASKED TO HELP CLEAN UP FIREWORKS DEBRIS

Keep Lincoln and Lancaster County Beautiful (KLLCB) ask residents to clean up fireworks debris following private and public Independence Day celebrations. Officials say used fireworks should be allowed to sit several minutes before cleaning them up, and water can be used to make sure they are completely extinguished before disposing them in the garbage. A metal bucket or a bucket with sand or water can be used as a temporary trash can.

“Removing litter is essential to a clean and safe community,” said KLLCB Coordinator, Adam Rhoads. “People are more likely to litter in an area that is already littered and not cared for. Cleaning up fireworks debris is also part of being a good neighbor by making sure wind, water, traffic and animals don’t transport litter onto someone else’s property.” Rhoads said fireworks debris can enter storm drains and pollute streams and lakes. Chemicals in leftover fireworks are a danger to aquatic plants and animals.

KLLCB is a program of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department. The Fireworks Debris Prevention Program is funded in part by the Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality.

More information on KLLCB is available at lincoln.ne.gov (keyword: kllcb).
Many of you took part in the Planning Assessment Survey that was conducted this March and April. A full report of the survey is available online at http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/reports/pas/report_full.pdf. As part of that survey process, focus group conversations were conducted with the public, Planning staffed boards and committees, and City and County staff. A draft report of the resulting Planning Department Self Assessment report is available here http://lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/reports/pas/evalreport.pdf.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sara Hartzell at 402-441-6371.

Sara S. Hartzell  
Planning Dept.  
City of Lincoln and Lancaster County  
555 S. 10th St  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508  
402-441-6371
From: Michele M. Abendroth  
Sent: Friday, June 21, 2013 11:59 AM  
To: Abram Lueders; Allan Eurek; Amanda Bauman; awilkason@hotmail.com; Branden Collingsworth; Camilla Rice; Charla Rasmussen; David R. Cary; Derek W. Contreras; Ed Zimmer; Gordon Scholz; Greg Allen; Gregory Gustafson; Gus P.; Holly Johnson; Ian Singh; Jason Stege; Jean Preister; Jerry J. Shorney; John Badami; John Kaslon; Jon Yoachim; Joyce Ebmeier; Ken Fougeron; Kevin Andersen; Lori Houle; Lynn Johnson; Lynnette Nelson; Marvin S. Krout; Matt Hansen; Megan Patent-Nygren; Nathan Morris; Nicholas Bergin; robert.ripley@nebraska.gov; Ryan Knollenberg; Sarah Hanzel; Scott Hatfield; Stuart Long; tlorenz@pershingcenter.com; tstickney@pershingcenter.com; Zachary White; Cecil Steward; Christie Dionisopoulos; Jeff Searcy; John Kay; Jon Weinberg; Karen Nalow; Tom Laging  
Subject: Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission Agenda

The June 27, 2013 Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission meeting has been cancelled.

If you have any question, please feel free to call the Planning Department at 402-441-7491.

Michele Abendroth  
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department  
555 South 10th Street, Suite 213  
Lincoln, NE 68508  
402-441-6164
I would like to get feedback from each of the Council members on requesting an audit of the TIF program. In recent years, there has been an expansion of TIF and a variety of proposed uses of TIF. We have witnessed both neighborhood revitalization and economic development.

A review of TIF appears to be in order and would be a good task for the Audit Committee. Several specific topics include:

1. Process to project future valuations used for TIF
2. Identification of uses for TIF dollars
3. Types of uses of TIF
   a. Including public art justification
   b. Unidentified uses for some of the TIF under a Redevelopment Agreement
   c. Pour-over TIF
   d. Surplus TIF
4. Effect on the other property taxing entities (e.g. Lancaster County, NRDs, LPS, SCC, etc.)
5. Public infrastructure use versus building component uses (e.g. facades)
6. When does condition of blight end

I am sure you will have other items that can be added to this list.

Thank you in advance for reviewing this proposed TIF Audit.

Jon

"The American Republic will endure until the day Congress discovers that it can bribe the public with the public's money"

~ Alexis de Tocqueville (French Historian and Political scientist. 1805-1859)
Check our reception and event venues at:

http://www.facebook.com/pages/Apothecary-Lofts-Ridnour-Room/173175799380032

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InterLinc: City Council Feedback for General Council

Name: Robert Narveson
Address: 1729 C St/
City: Lincoln, NE 68502

Phone:
Fax:
Email: narveson@arvig.net

Comment or Question:
About dedicated bike lanes:
http://www.alternet.org/environment/protected-bike-lanes-transform-experience-riding?akid=10604.239370.bBbEwI&rd=1&src=newsletter858343&t=21

Please consider for Lincoln.
Life in the Green Lane: Protected Bike Lanes Transform the Experience of Riding

Protected bike lanes, now called Green Lanes, are popping up from Miami to Long Beach, Austin to Chicago.

How to describe your first time in a green lane? There's nothing quite like it.

For me it happened on a business trip to Copenhagen. I saw bikes everywhere, beginning with the taxi ride from the airport where I spotted business executives toting briefcases on bikes, wanna-be fashion models wearing high heels on bikes, kids heading to school on bikes, parents pedaling toddlers to daycare on bikes, old folks chatting to one another on bikes.

How do they do it, I wondered? I was a seasoned bicyclist who rode every day for commuting and recreation yet still felt tense wheeling down busy city streets. These riders looked completely at ease, even in the midst of morning rush hour with cars, buses, trucks and motorcycles all around them. I even saw one guy smoking a cigarette on a bike and others absorbed in conversations on their mobile phones.

Then I looked down and noticed that the bike lane was separated from motor vehicles by a divider. So that's how they do it! I couldn't wait to try it myself.

The next day I ducked out of a meeting, rented a bike at nearby shop and set forth to explore Copenhagen on two wheels. After pedaling just a block, I thought...
“Wow!” and began giggling. This was an entirely new experience in biking—almost like the exhilaration of riding without training wheels for the first time.

Liberated from fears of being sideswiped by motorists, I could take in the historic architecture and enjoy the city’s teeming streetlife. There were even special traffic signals for bicyclists, giving us a slight head start through crowded intersections. No wonder half of Copenhagen’s downtown commuters travel by bike.

Cruising through the heart of the city, I realized that these protected bike lanes were good for everyone, not just bicyclists. Without them, pedestrians, motorists and bus riders would be engulfed by twice as much traffic. That, I figured, accounted for the calm courtesy I experienced from people behind the wheel.

We need something like this in the U.S., I told everyone back home. Impossible, many folks would tell me. Special bike lanes are strictly a European thing that would never fit in our newer, auto-dominated cities. You’re selling America short, I answered. We are an enterprising nation, dedicated to innovations that can improve our lives. If we can invent the Internet, we can make biking safe for everyone.

And that’s exactly what’s happening right now. Protected bike lanes (now called Green Lanes) are popping up from Miami to Long Beach, Austin to Chicago. As I ride the new protected bike lanes downtown here in Minneapolis, I say “Wow!” and then giggle. I can appreciate the handsome old warehouses and enjoy the bustling streetlife. I notice people in suits and in high-fashion outfits on bikes, even some teenagers and older riders. It feels even more exhilarating than the first time Copenhagen, because it’s right here at home.

Jay Walljasper is a writer and speaker who explores how new ideas in urban planning, tourism, community development, sustainability, politics and culture can improve our lives as well as the world.