



Lincoln-Lancaster County
Planning Commission
2012
ANNUAL REPORT



on the cover



Front row from the left, Vice-Chair Wendy Francis and Chair Michael Cornelius.

*Back row from the left, Ken Weber, Tracy Corr, Lynn Sunderman,
Leirion Gaylor Baird, Dennis Scheer, Jeanelle Lust and Chris Hove.*

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This report summarizes the major activities undertaken over the past calendar year by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission.

This body of nine citizens is appointed for staggered six-year terms by Lincoln's Mayor with the concurrence of the City Council and the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners.

The Planning Commission is charged by state and local law with advising the two elected boards on a variety of planning and development matters and operates under an interlocal agreement dating back to 1958.

APPLICATIONS

The Planning Department tracks development applications by fiscal and not calendar year, so the information provided here is for the fiscal year from September 2011 through August 2012. The summary provides an indication of the volume and trends in recent applications. The chart below provides a history of applications over the past six fiscal years. The Planning Commission reviewed about half of those applications. The total volume of applications is still well below the numbers reported in the early 2000s. The decrease reflects the continuing effects of the recession on the real estate industry. The volumes in the last two years do indicate a rebound.

PLANNING DEPT. APPLICATIONS	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12
Annexations	8	10	25	3	3	7
Preliminary plats*	4	6	0	3	1	1
Final plats	107	84	69	88	100	102
Community Unit Plans	14	9	3	4	12	11
Use permits	6	8	9	2	6	5
Special permits and amendments	50	56	39	38	31	40
Change of zone - Map	48	38	22	13	25	24
Planned Unit Development	4	8	8	1	5	11
Board of Zoning Appeals	4	7	4	0	0	4
Street name changes	5	1	2	5	3	2
Street and alley vacations	11	11	10	15	13	9
Administrative amendments	120	84	68	69	62	65
Comp Plan conformity	34	34	15	11	11	15
Comp Plan amendments	0	1	6	2	0	9
Waiver of design standards	11	7	7	21	34	23
Text amendments to zoning, subdivision and design standards	26	28	21	14	21	13
Miscellaneous / other	4	3	8	6	5	9
**Urban design review						42
TOTAL PER FISCAL YEAR	456	395	316	295	332	392

*Preliminary plats rolled into CUPs and use permits on 4/25/2005 **Urban design review added in 2012

Among the applications heard by the Planning Commission in 2012, a number of cases were noteworthy. These included the following:

- The City Council approved a Planned Unit Development (PUD) to redevelop the Lincoln Public Schools (LPS) land at "O" Street and Lyncrest for the new LPS administrative center and a grocery/retail development.
- The City Council approved PUD amendments to permit a horse track and associated facilities at Denton Road west of Highway 77.
- The City Council approved the expansion of downtown zoning and design standards and amendments to height regulations to facilitate development in the West Haymarket area.

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- The City Council approved PUD, right-of-way vacations and redevelopment plan for a proposed mixed-use development at Holdrege and Idylwild, across from UNL's East Campus.



- The City Council denied a proposed special permit and amendments to the preservation easement to allow for re-use of the historic Lewis-Syford property on North 16th Street.
- The City Council denied a request to waive the sidewalk for a new infill residence on Clifford Drive, and a request to waive a pedestrian way through the Hamann Meadows Addition connecting Lucile Drive to the Billy Wolff trail.
- The City Council and County Board approved amendments to a special permit for a camp facility at Southwest 29th Street and Wittstruck Road to allow for more and larger outdoor athletic events.
- The City Council approved a request to re-zone property along Highway 2 near 98th Street in Cheney from residential to highway commercial to permit a self-storage facility.

CODE AMENDMENTS

The Commission reviewed a number of proposed code amendments. The City Council denied only one request, which would have allowed for waivers to the 100-foot distance requirement between alcohol sales establishments and certain other uses. Another amendment to consider new spacing requirements between residential uses and downtown bars was withdrawn based on new notification procedures being established for Council hearings to consider issuing liquor licenses. The following code amendments were approved:

- The City zoning code was reorganized and reformatted into 14 "Use Groups" based on the consolidation and reclassification of land uses.

- The County's zoning and subdivision codes were amended to provide new simplified ways to allow for lots of three to five acres to be subdivided and sold away from larger parcels that would remain for agricultural use. The changes also increase the bonus provisions for cluster developments approved as Community Unit Plans (CUPs).
- A new “market garden” use category was created in the City and County rural zoning districts to allow for unique agricultural-related uses, such as restaurants that serve products grown on the same land.
- The City's parking requirements for fraternities and sororities were changed.
- Amendments to the City's CUP provisions allow for taller apartment buildings with compensating landscaping and screening requirements.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

Staff in the Planning and Urban Development departments developed a new interactive Web mapping application for neighborhood and homeowner associations on the City website, lincoln.ne.gov. The viewer identifies the boundaries of 41 neighborhood associations and 125 homeowner associations and provides contact information. This expands the list of associations the Planning Department will notify of upcoming planning and zoning issues. It also will be an effective new tool for other City and County departments and agencies to communicate with affected residents on their proposed projects and programs.

WORKSHOPS

The Planning Commission participated in a number of workshops on planning topics, including sessions on the following topics:

- Lincoln's six-year Capital Improvement Program and four-year federal Transportation Improvement Program
- Proposed changes in zoning code organization and formatting into “Use Groups”
- Proposed new Access Management policy
- Proposed amendments to the County zoning resolution to establish Agricultural Preservation Lots
- Explanation of the redevelopment plan process and tax increment financing by Urban Development Department

- Proposed Downtown Master Plan update



- Conflict of interest rules and procedures with the Executive Director of the Nebraska Accountability and Disclosure Commission

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

Two members of the Commission resigned in August, and their successors were approved in December. The members who served in all or part of 2012 are:

- Lynn Sunderman (appointed in 2003 and reappointed in 2009)
- Michael Cornelius, Chair (appointed in 2006 and reappointed in 2009)
- Wendy Francis, Vice-Chair (appointed in 2007)
- Dick Esseks (appointed in 2005; reappointed in 2011; resigned in August 2012)
- Leirion Gaylor Baird (appointed in 2007)
- Jeanelle Lust (appointed in 2009)
- Greg Butcher (appointed in November 2011; resigned in August 2012, but continued to serve through December)
- Chris Hove (appointed in November 2011)
- Ken Weber (appointed in November 2011)
- Tracy Corr (appointed in December 2012)
- Dennis Scheer (appointed in December 2012)

The Commissioners' attendance was exemplary as it has been in the past. The attendance at formal meetings averaged 86 percent, and Chris Hove had perfect attendance in 2012.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2013, the Planning Department intends to engage the Commissioners and other stakeholders in discussions on an extensive set of proposals to help implement goals in the new Comprehensive Plan relating to infill/redevelopment and “placemaking.” The issues include the following:

- Removal of zoning barriers. This includes reducing parking and setback requirements, adding waiver options for older commercial districts, and establishing more streamlined plan reviews.
- Creation of new building and site design standards for commercial and mixed-use projects
- New financial incentives to encourage quality mixed-use infill and redevelopment

Other projects will include working with other departments on a land use/design plan for the South Haymarket area and developing new strategies to encourage more car and van pooling, staggered work hours, car and bike sharing and other efforts that can reduce peak-hour traffic congestion.

CONCLUSION

The Planning Commission continued to play an important role in the development of Lincoln and Lancaster County over the past year. Commissioners deliberated numerous and sometimes contentious development applications and worked on improvements to local codes and administrative procedures. We appreciate the opportunity to serve our community in this role and hope that our local elected officials have found our efforts to be helpful.



Michael Cornelius, Chair