

Lincoln-Lancaster County
Planning Commission
2013
ANNUAL REPORT



on the cover

Front row from left, Ken Weber, Cathy Beecham, Chair Jeanelle Lust, Tracy Corr, Maja V. Harris. Back row from left, Michael Cornelius, Dennis Scheer, Lynn Sunderman, Vice-Chair 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. It operates under an interlocal agreement dating back to 1958.

APPLICATIONS

The summary below provides an indication of the volume and trends in recent applications submitted to the Planning Department over the past six fiscal years (September through August).

The Planning Commission directly reviewed about half of these applications. The volumes reflect the continued rebound of development activity toward pre-recession levels.

PLANNING DEPT. APPLICATIONS	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13
Annexations	10	25	3	3	7	6
*Preliminary plats	6	0	3	1	1	2
Final plats	84	69	88	100	102	139
Community Unit Plan amendments (CUP)	9	3	4	12	11	12
Use permits	8	9	2	6	5	4
Special permits and amendments	56	39	38	31	40	46
Change of zone - Map	38	22	13	25	24	16
Change of zone - Historic Preservation (HP)						5
Change of zone - Sign district						2
Change of zone - Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)	8	8	1	5	11	8
Board of Zoning Appeals	7	4	0	0	4	3
Street name changes	1	2	5	3	2	2
Street and alley vacations	11	10	15	13	9	9
Administrative amendments	84	68	69	62	65	106
Comp Plan conformity	34	15	11	11	15	18
Comp Plan amendments	1	6	2	0	9	2
Waiver of design standards	7	7	21	34	23	7
Text amendments	28	21	14	21	13	13
Miscellaneous / other	3	8	6	5	9	2
**Urban design review					42	57
TOTAL PER FISCAL YEAR	395	316	295	332	392	459

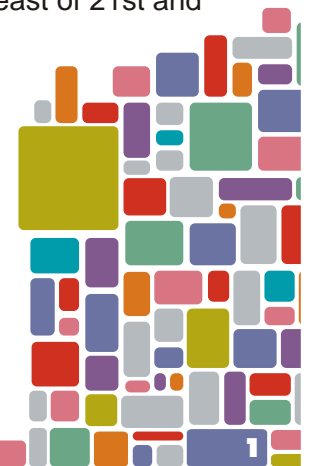
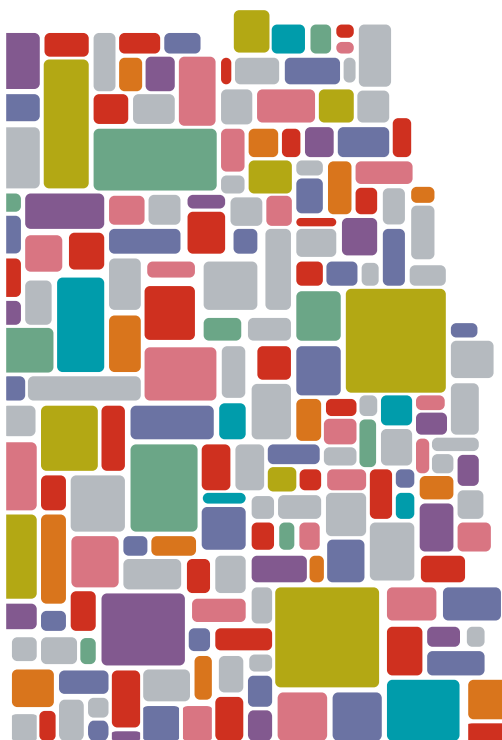
*Preliminary plats rolled into CUPs and use permits on 4/25/2005 **Urban design review added in 2012

Some of the more notable development applications reviewed by the Planning Commission included:

- Rezoning and annexation of over 400 acres of land owned by Lincoln Airport Authority for rail-oriented industrial uses
- New PUD for mixed-use development south and east of 21st and "N" streets, along Antelope Creek



3137 & N STREET DEVELOPMENT | BIRDSEYE VIEW OF ROW HOUSE DEVELOPMENT | 12 SEPTEMBER 2013





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- New PUD for the redevelopment of the Piedmont Shopping Center on Cotner Boulevard
- Rezoning of land with a CUP for apartments at Highway 2 and Ashbrook Drive (denied by Planning Commission; appeal pending with City Council)
- Use permit for the redevelopment of the Russwood site at the northwest corner of 84th and “O” streets
- Amendment to the PUD at the southwest corner of 84th and Holdrege to allow for additional apartments
- PUD to redevelop the plant nursery south and east of Capital Parkway and 40th Street with mixed uses
- Special permit to expand a nonconforming sexually oriented live entertainment establishment on “O” Street west of Antelope Valley Parkway
- Amendment to the PUD at southeast corner of 40th Street and Yankee Hill Road to allow for a new auto dealership
- Rezoning of land with CUP east of 56th Street at Shadow Pines Drive for townhouse development
- Amendment to special permit to allow for expansion of emergency room facilities at Bryan East hospital
- Amendment to PUD to allow for drive-through restaurant south of Highway 2 at Apple’s Way Drive



*Railyard in
West Haymarket
Photo courtesy
of Kiewit*

- Large-scale rezoning of land in the West Haymarket/Haymarket Park area
- Amendment to the special sign district for the Haymarket Park area
- Amendment to CUP in Roca area to allow additional acreage lots
- Special permit to allow a composting operation on Pella Road near Panama; also approved by County Board

The past year brought an unusual number of applications to the Planning Commission dealing with historic landmarks, including:

- Designation of former municipal pool house (now Parks and Recreation offices) near 21st and “N” streets



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- Designation and special permit for recycling use on former Air Force base remote facility
- Designation and special permits to allow for office/residential use of buildings on “D” Street at 12th and 17th streets
- Designation and special permit to allow a neighborhood support facility on 18th Street near “G”
- Special permit to reduce parking for proposed sorority use of Atwood House at 17th and “G”
- Designation of fraternity house on North 16th Street
- Amendment to preservation easement and special permit to allow more than three unrelated residents for the Lewis-Syford house on North 16th Street

The Planning Commission also reviewed proposed blight and/or redevelopment plans for student housing and a garage at 18th and “Q” streets; revitalization of the Piedmont shopping center; mixed use development on parcels stretching from Antelope Valley Parkway to 21st Street; and a new manufacturing building on Yolande Street near Cornhusker Highway. The Commission also reviewed an amendment to the Capital Improvement Program to add a beautification project for the Cornhusker Highway and I-180 entryway corridors.



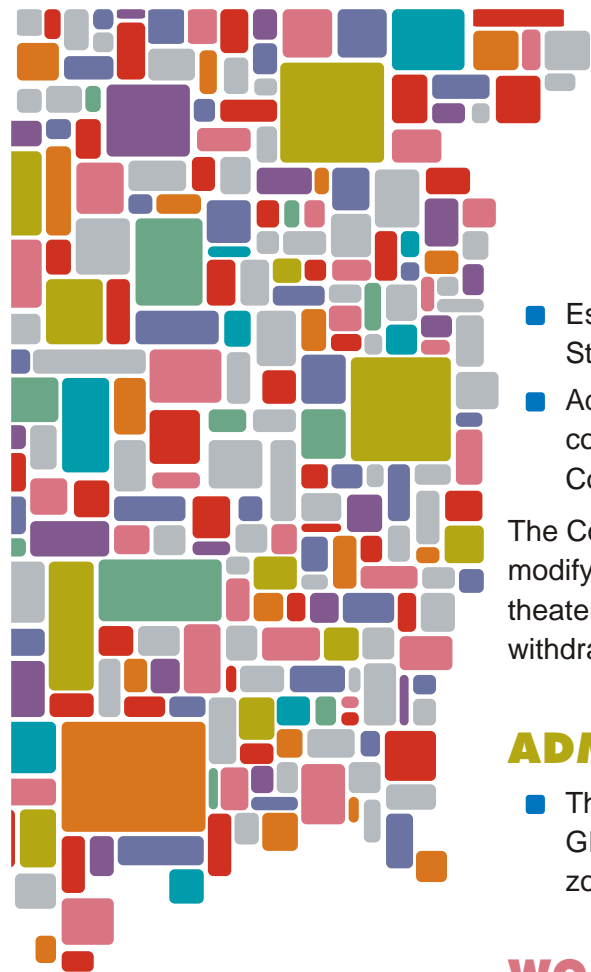
Proposed entryway corridor

CODE AMENDMENTS

The Planning Department initiated several amendments to the City and County zoning codes, including the following:

- Added flexibility on setback requirements for decks and building additions in rear yards in the City zoning code
- Simplified process to file a variance with the City and County Boards of Zoning Appeals, and clarified the role of the Boards in acting on appeals versus variances
- Defined “outlots” in the City and County zoning codes





- Established a special sign district for The Railyard block on Canopy Street in the West Haymarket area
- Added provision to allow review and approval by special permit of commercial composting operations in the County; approved by County Board

The Commission was scheduled to review a developer's application to modify the City's unique theater policy, which limits the number of movie theater screens allowed outside the downtown area. This application was withdrawn at the Commission hearing.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS

- The Planning Department added a simplified smart phone link to the GIS development viewer, which provides parcel-level information on zoning and development plans.

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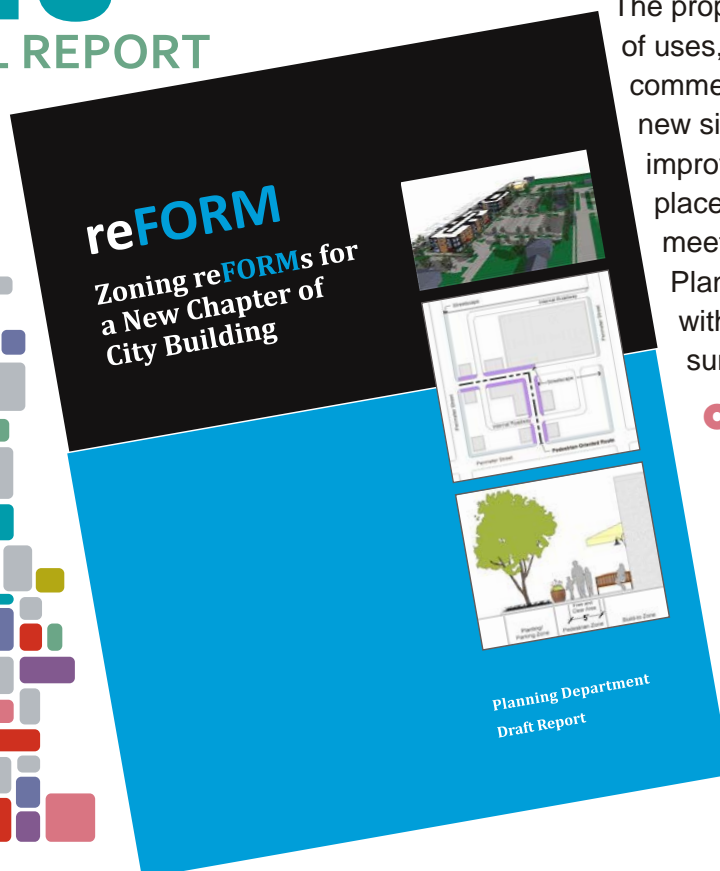
WORKSHOPS

Planning Commissioners were part of a broad-based special advisory committee that met 11 times in the fall to discuss a package of staff-proposed changes to the City zoning code referred to as "reFORM."

The proposals include more flexible treatment of uses, parking, height and setbacks in the commercial zoning districts. They also include new site and building design standards to improve the attractiveness and sense of place in those areas. The committee meetings followed a presentation to the Planning Commission in May and meetings with 20 stakeholder groups over the summer months.

Other workshops included:

- Multiple workshops on modifying zoning regulations regarding building additions and decks in rear yards
- Presentation by Omaha's urban design manager on their experience in applying urban design site standards to proposed developments in certain designated districts of that city





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- Annual review of the Comprehensive Plan, including latest Community Indicators report
- Review of City sidewalk and pedestrian way policies
- Review of pipelines and other hazardous activities in relation to land use policy
- Session on navigating the department's webpage
- Review of Planning Department's "Self-Assessment", which asked the general public and stakeholder groups through surveys and focus group sessions to assess the department's performance and their general satisfaction with efforts to achieve key goals set out in the city-county comprehensive plan

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

- In September, Cathy Beecham replaced Leirion Gaylor Baird, who was elected to the City Council in May.
- In November, Maja Harris replaced Wendy Francis, who resigned in April. Ken Weber was reappointed.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2014

The Planning Department intends to continue engaging the Planning Commission and stakeholder groups on the "reFORM" proposals, looking ahead to public hearings by mid-year. The department also expects to work with stakeholders and possibly bring forward for Planning Commission review the following:

- New standards for block length and pedestrian ways in new subdivisions
- Bicycle parking
- Parking requirements for apartment developments
- Ways to reduce the number of special permits in the code and simplify others

A study of the South Haymarket area is being developed for review as well.

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 various 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.

Jeanelle Lust, Chair

