

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, January 27, 2010, 11:45 a.m. Room 113, County-City Building, 555 S. 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Dick Esseks, Wendy Francis, Leirion Gaylor Baird, Roger Larson, Jeanelle Lust, Jim Partington, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor. Michael Cornelius absent
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Marvin Krout, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, Steve Henrichsen, Ed Zimmer, Mike DeKalb, David Cary, Brandon Garrett, Rashi Jain and Michele Abendroth of the Planning Department; other interested parties.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Comprehensive Plan Update

The meeting was called to order at 11:48 a.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Nicole Fleck-Tooze stated that the Planning Department is in the very early stages of updating the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. This is a major update that is required every ten years. Staff felt it was a good time to get suggestions from the Planning Commission as we move into the next stages.

Every five years, the City and County determine how we will accommodate another 100,000 or so more residents expected in Lincoln and Lancaster County over the next 25 or 30 years. This includes where they will live, work, shop, and recreate. We need predictability to make better decisions and ultimately result in greater efficiencies. Another element of the Comp Plan is the Long Range Transportation Plan. This is a federal requirement and a condition to receive funding for transportation related projects including roads and bridges and the bus system.

As part of the update, we will look at the impacts of demographic change. For example, as the baby boomers age, we will consider the impacts on housing.

Another consideration will be the impacts of future technology. We can expect that digital information and communication will continue to advance and may increase the number of people working from home. This would have an impact on the transportation system.

Fleck-Tooze continued by stating that another issue to address will be the principle of sustainability. Many different elements of sustainability will be reviewed in relation to the update, but staff will continue to focus on how these elements may impact land use and transportation.

Around the country, metropolitan areas are being encouraged to consider the impacts of growth on climate change. Transportation systems are responsible for about one-third of greenhouse gas emissions, and so these communities are looking at how average

vehicle miles traveled can be reduced while accommodating growth. This translates into the consideration of alternative patterns of land use and transportation.

During the last major update of the Comp Plan, several different growth scenarios were evaluated. Maps were displayed showing three different scenarios. Future A shows a “compact growth” scenario, channeling near-term growth into the existing City and within the adopted Future Service Limit. Future B shows a “unidirectional growth” plan, with the dominant near-term urban growth toward the east in the Stevens Creek watershed. Future C demonstrates a “multi-directional growth” scenario, with near-term growth occurring in several directions around the City.

The update process will begin with a review of the currently adopted 2030 Comprehensive Plan. The 2030 Comprehensive Plan projected that the bulk of new housing units would be accommodated on over 50 square miles of unimproved land at the edges of the City. The remainder of new housing units was projected to occur through infill and redevelopment in the City’s downtown and Antelope Valley.

In contrast, the City of Omaha and its private partner, Omaha By Design, are considering a very different scenario for that City’s future growth as part of their plan update. This scenario projects a much larger percentage of Omaha’s growth to be accommodated through infill and redevelopment, while a smaller percentage of growth in a smaller area (15 square miles) is projected to occur at the edges. The advantages of this scenario are a reduction in vehicle miles traveled, a reduction in infrastructure costs outside the city limits, and an increase in density inside the city limits which can support more public and private services.

Fleck-Tooze stated that the 2040 Plan update will also need to take into consideration the very different trends we have seen in recent years in the local housing industry. The supply of vacant lots that are platted or committed through annexation agreements at the edge of the City for new single family and duplex units in Lincoln has doubled over the past 6 years. At the same time, the number of new housing starts has dropped by 75 percent. Assuming the slow recovery of the industry that is being predicted at both the national and local levels, the existing supply could easily serve the needs of the community for the rest of this new decade.

During the past five years, significant improvements have been made by the Lincoln Public Works Department in overall traffic flow within the City. The percentage of City intersections during the afternoon peak traffic hour that are operating with some congestion (where average vehicle delay is more than 35 seconds) has been reduced from about 14 percent to 9 percent. But as we look forward to a growing City with limited financial resources, it may become more difficult to maintain this standard. During the Plan update, this standard should be considered together with the level of service for other modes of travel such as walking and bicycling and public transit.

Five years have passed since the adoption of the Master Plan for Lincoln’s downtown, and the Master Plan calls for a review at this time. This review is planned to be incorporated as part of the larger update of the Comprehensive Plan. In doing so,

consideration will be given to the downtown in the context of its surrounding core area neighborhoods and special districts.

The bulk of the technical and citizen-oriented activities required to develop and adopt the new Plan will fall on staff in the Planning Department and other City-County departments as available. Activities need to be scheduled around the federally-imposed deadline of December 2011 for adoption of the Long Range Transportation element. Details on tasks to be accomplished and the structure for citizen involvement still are being developed.

Larson asked about the Planning Commission's responsibility regarding funding. Fleck-Tooze responded that there is a funding element in that the Long-Range Transportation Plan states that we must have a fiscally constrained plan, but there will not be a detailed funding element to the Plan. Marvin Krout stated that there have been three infrastructure finance committees in the past, so perhaps there will be another one. If not, the Planning Commission will be responsible for that. The federal guidelines state that the plans must be realistic and attainable.

Gaylor Baird asked how the three scenarios were arrived at in the 2025 Plan. Fleck-Tooze stated that it was a long process of starting with general concepts that were narrowed to five and then three by the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC).

Sunderman asked about the core area. Krout stated that Antelope Valley and Innovation Campus may begin to change the way we look at downtown and may begin to suggest looking closer at an enhanced transit system that serves heavy concentrations of people working and living there.

Sunderman stated that the CPC which will be formed for the 2040 update will help fill in the gaps that are not represented on the Planning Commission. The obvious gap is that there is not a developer on the Planning Commission. Sunderman asked if there are any other gaps the members would like represented. Gaylor Baird suggested a historical representative.

Esseks asked if this is the time for a truly long range planning effort than what was done five years ago considering the economic state. Krout stated that we expect a slow recovery, but there will be a recovery. This will be a more fundamental rethinking of the Plan.

Larson asked if Lincoln Public Schools will have a representative on the CPC. Krout stated that there is a liaison from LPS that staff works with, but an LPS Board member has not been identified for the CPC.

Gaylor Baird suggested that a person with sustainability interests be on the CPC. Krout stated that the traditional focus of the Comp Plan is on land use and transportation. Many of the sustainability issues are beyond that focus. The ones that relate most to land use and transportation are the ones that will be focused upon.

Esseks asked if we should use this period of planning to think about an agenda to pursue in the unicameral such as the transfer of development rights and annexation.

Krout responded that if there are state legislation items that are holding us back, then we should address that in the implementation section of the Comp Plan.

Larson asked if there is a policy on the growth patterns that we want to achieve. Krout stated that the current Comp Plan shows growth in all logical directions. We will look at the cost and benefits to multi-directional growth.

Gaylor Baird asked if there were any challenges and lessons learned from the last major update that are being incorporated into this update. Krout stated that we want to reach out more to the community, particularly the younger generations. We would like to reach out in different ways this time.

Lust asked why Omaha's growth is highly anticipated in the core, whereas ours is on the edges. Krout stated that there is a shift in attitude in Omaha and they are rethinking some of the ways they have grown in the past.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Abendroth
Planning Department

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