BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, May 13, 2015, 1:50 p.m., City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Michael Cornelius, Maja Harris, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer, Lynn Sunderman and Ken Weber; Cathy Beecham, Tracy Corr, and Chris Hove absent. David Cary, Brandon Garrett, Kellee Van Bruggen, and Amy Huffman of the Planning Department.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Briefing on **"The Community Indicators Report"**

David Cary stated that the Community Indicators Report is especially valuable this year, as an update of the Comprehensive Plan is just getting underway. It is valuable touchstone and ensures assumptions of City staff are in line with the realities of what is actually occurring. The update will not be a major overhaul, but rather a refining process, where a few new emerging topics are addressed.

Brandon Garret stated that in the 2015 report, the population of the County surpassed 300,000. There has been a steady, predictable increase of approximately 3,000 per year. Overall, there is an ample supply of lots approved for future dwelling units. The economy is reviving with personal income growth, decreased unemployment, and increased building.

The population growth rate since 2000 was 1.2% and increased to 1.34% beginning in 2010. This matches Comprehensive Plan which predicts a 1.2% increase over the plan period. 94% of Lancaster County residents live in Lincoln. 62.3% of the increase is due to natural change, that is, births outnumbering deaths, and just under 40% of growth is due to migration into the county from other parts of the state, country, and world. Lincoln is also more diverse, with 84% of the population being white, non-Hispanic, compared to 88.4% in 2000. The population of the Lincoln Public School system is even more diverse due to greater diversity among the child-bearing-age population.

Building activity is on the rise. 2009 was the lowest activity year since the 1982-84 period. There is a strong apartment market. There were nearly 2,800 multi-family units, compared to 2,546 for detached single family. The Comprehensive Plan assumes 60% of new units will be attached and detached single family, and 40% will be multi-family. Based on our projections, there are still not enough apartments. There are over 13,000 capacity units approved or in the platting process within Growth Tier 1, which means a 12.4 year supply of detached single family lots; it is up to builders to fill them in.

Chris Hove noted that the available inventory of homes for sale down. He wondered if this report tracks that.

Garrett replied that those numbers are not part of the Indicators Report but there are annual and quarterly reports available elsewhere.

Hove asked for further clarification about the approved buildable lots.

Garrett said areas have earned the right to build, they just need to go through the administrative process of final platting and selling the lots, so those 13,000 units are ready in an administrative form.

Lynn Sunderman asked whether the lack of City services and infrastructure in newly developed areas slows the building process.

Garrett said that during the preliminary stages, some of those services may not be in place, but they come quickly during the final platting process. Cary added that of the 13,000 approved areas, approximately 93% of the necessary infrastructure is in place. Garrett agreed that is confirmed by County Assessor data. There is smarter platting happening where developers are only putting out twenty to forty lots at a time, rather than hundreds, so that also helps to guarantee that infrastructure has time to get to newer areas.

Maja Harris asked for clarification about shifts occurring in living situations.

Garrett stated that projections are based on households, that is, people who live together or alone. Since the recession, in Lincoln and nationally, there are more adult children staying home longer or boomeranging back to the household of the parents, there are more multi-generational households where grandparents have moved in, there are more roommates per living situation, and young people wait longer to marry and start their own families. In that sense, some of the demand for housing is getting absorbed. That may not be a long-term trend.

Garrett went on to say that in Lincoln, housing is still more affordable than the U.S. average. There is a tremendous increase in downtown living opportunities. There have been 818 new dwelling units approved, with 354 permitted thus far in 2015.

Jeanelle Lust asked if those units are filled.

Garrett said a large number of the units are under construction now. There will be a decent idea of the demand for them by October, after the University of Nebraska begins its academic year. A good portion of this downtown housing is marketed towards students. The student

population is approximately 25,000, so if 10% wanted to live downtown, that would be 2,500, so maybe there is demand.

Garrett continued with his presentation, stating that there were nearly 20,000 jobs added between 2000 and 2013. The labor force grew by 5.4% and unemployment is 3.4% which is lower than the state as a whole. Lincoln has a very educated labor force. There were increases in both sales and lodging taxes in 2012-2013.

Flood plain areas are still preserved, air quality remains very good throughout the county, and municipal solid waste has gone down due to the recession and an increase in recycling services. Water consumption correlates with rainfall; people still like green lawns so there are spikes during times of drought. The number of residential customers is steadily increasing. As of 2014, there were 85,000 street trees. More trees are being removed than replaced. Parks Department is being proactive about Emerald Ash Bore, so that may contribute to the loss of even more trees. 83% of homes are within a half mile of a park.

Kelly Van Bruggen stated that in 2014, Star Tran increased number of rides to 1.5 million, which is its highest level and is 55% higher than in 2000. The bike racks were used 2,466 times per month. 95.5% or residents are within one mile of the trail system, which provides citizens with an alternate mode of transportation and recreation.

Use of alternate modes of travel has remained steady since 2000, with 18.8% of work trips using alternate modes. Travel time is still under 20 minutes.

Harris asked for clarification about what was considered alternate modes of travel.

Van Bruggen replied that it includes things like carpooling, biking, cabs, and walking. She went on to say that daily vehicle miles have increased. Crash rates have decreased to 4.74 crashes per million vehicle miles travelled. Infrastructure has become safer.

Harris asked if smarter platting could prevent some of the controversy that occurs when unexpected changes occur in neighborhoods.

Garret agreed that if a CUP was built exactly to the plan and never made changes over time, everyone would know exactly what to expect. The reality is, CUPs are typically large and develop over time, responding to market demands. If major changes are made, they do still go through a public hearing process so neighbors can be involved.

Cary added that this is a new era where banks are more conservative regarding prospective building. It is also the case that lots get platted but not built immediately, so the neighbors get used to the empty lot and it is a major and potentially upsetting change when building finally

begins. Rezoning for a different use can also be controversial due to the fact that an area would historically not have been used a certain way.

Lust stated that the median household income is decreasing. Does the Comprehensive Plan address that? Does it affect the type of housing that is developed?

Garrett said that the Plan does not talk about income, but it is a good point; maybe some of the newer development is not affordable to those in lower income sectors who want to purchase single owner-occupied homes.

Harris asked the timeline of the Comprehensive Plan Revisions.

Cary replied that there will be six months of prep work starting June 1st. The process will involve various meetings and discussions and will likely carry into 2016.

Lust and Harris wondered if it will be a large group involved in the process, or just the Planning Commission.

Cary said the process is being defined now. Last time, it was a very large group since it was a major update. Planning looks to the Commission for advice and there will also be some public outreach.

Sunderman, Cornelius and Lust all agreed that the process this time could be simpler, since these are revisions and not a complete overhaul.

Harris asked about the extent of involvement or input from various stakeholders.

Cary replied that issues will be identified and discussed. He went on to note that transportation will be a major issue this time around.

Garrett added that population and household growth numbers are tied to land use, growth assumptions, and future service limits. As long as the population grows along the expected trends, we can feel good.

Cary said there could be policy types of issues to change or get more specific about. The energy chapter could be built in. Again, much effort will go into transportation. It is important to assess need against revenue.

Cornelius asked if it would be possible to visit an existing wind farm since that text amendment is under discussion now.

Cary replied that there will be a briefing on that topic.

Lust asked if there are items that should be readdressed, such as water availability in the County and how it affects the approval of acreage developments.

Cary said a request from the County Board regarding that topic would be logical. At one time, we were ready to bring information forward, but there was not interest to formalize it. It is worth consideration. We can work on that topic within the department and then assess whether or not it should become part of the plan.

Harris asked if the public notification system was part of the vision.

Cary replied that the Comprehensive Plan is very broad in terms of engaging the public. It is not the best place to address that issue. We do meet our Ordinance requirements. They are comparatively robust requirements. Part of that issue is how active neighborhood associations are, and how much citizens are paying attention.

Lust noted that information is always available online. Sometimes it is a problem with the timing.

Cornelius added that the discussion is worth having. Changing the process would require public input. He agreed that timing could be a factor since some neighborhoods only meet once a month.

Cary concluded that there needs to be balance between effective notification process and moving forward on applications in a timely manner.

Adjournment: 12:45 PM

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

F:\Boards\PC\Minutes\2015\pcb042915.doc