

## BRIEFING NOTES

<b>NAME OF GROUP:</b>	PLANNING COMMISSION
<b>DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:</b>	Wednesday, November 14, 2018, 3:35 p.m., Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10 <sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
<b>MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Tom Beckius, Dick Campbell, Tracy Corr, Maja Harris, Dennis Scheer and Sändra Washington; (Tracy Edgerton, Deanne Finnegan and Christy Joy absent).
<b>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	David Cary, Paul Barnes, Steve Henrichsen, Andrew Thierolf and Amy Huffman of the Planning Dept.
<b>STATED PURPOSE:</b>	Briefing on “ <b>Downtown Master Plan Update</b> ” by Planning Department staff.

Chair Dennis Scheer called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

Paul Barnes stated Planning Commissioners have received several updates on the progress of the Downtown Master Plan over the past several months. The presentation today represents a more polished iteration of the plan will be ready or publication and available online tomorrow. The plan highlights the catalyst projects and focuses on encouraging development and presenting downtown as a center for opportunity.

Andrew Thierolf noted the area is roughly bounded on the west by the railroad tracks, on the east by Antelope Valley, on the south by G Street, and on the north by Salt Creek. Several committees were formed representing a mix of stakeholders and City staff. A steering committee was made up of staff and representatives from the Downtown Lincoln Association. There were five working groups who focused on specific aspects of the plan. Three large public meetings were held, including an open house in April with over 200 people in attendance, one in May which had over 200 attendees, and finally, an event held in the Railyard, with over 130 attendees. The public could also participate via an online survey, for which 1,746 responses were received. Many responses were located within or surrounding the downtown area, but there were responses received from throughout Lincoln.

Common themes raised throughout the process are that downtown should be vibrant, livable, and kid-friendly, with a wider range of housing options, more greenspace, and a central library. Other ideas included the revitalization of O Street, a designated area for art and music, and the

activation of the Pershing site. The consultants agreed that Lincoln has a special music scene that should be emphasized. The library is a somewhat newer topic, but one with lots of interest.

The consultants conducted a market assessment and found that there is a strong residential demand, with need for 900-1900 non-student housing units indicated over the next ten years; staff believes that we could be at the high end of that suggestion. There is a moderate demand for the office segment. Much of it will be infill, but there are opportunities for new, Class A construction projects. Niche demands included additional retail spaces and boutique hotels. The topic of a convention center came up regularly, but at this time requires additional feasibility studies. The number suggested by the consultants based on hotels and access was 150,000 square feet.

Lincoln has the potential to be a center of opportunity as the rising cost of living in “superstar” cities, such as Portland, Austin, and San Francisco have begun to push out young professionals and Millennials. Many are moving to mid-tier markets such as Lincoln where there is affordable housing, a high quality of life and significant civic engagement. Along with Baby Boomers, these groups are drawn to downtown living. It will be important to develop amenities to attract and keep these populations with things like parks, services, retail options, and a variety of housing options. Downtown should be attractive to a more diverse population than just college students and wealthy people.

Thierolf went on to say there are several catalyst project identified in the plan including a community commons, enhancement of the “front door” to downtown, greenways to connect to outer areas, a designated music and arts area, and an urban park.

A community commons is one idea that has been suggested for the revitalization of the Pershing block. Other agencies including State and Federal parties will need to be included in the discussions. The block will also fall under the purview of Capitol Environs Commission. The maximum height for a building in that location will be 57 feet. Guidance will be provided as to appropriate materials and design. The project should take advantage of its placement on Centennial Mall and should be conceived as a unified design concept including open space and superior quality design and architecture; there are several viable concepts combining these elements with civic and mixed uses.

The west park, located south of Haymarket Park, is a concept that came up in the 2005 Downtown Master Plan and the 2015 South Haymarket Plan. The concept has been refined more with two options shown. The first shows a new road connection and a community pavilion, possible incorporation of the Springer Building, a potential year-round market, parking, and connections to the Jamaica North trail. A dog park located downtown is a theme that comes up regularly and it is shown in the concepts. The second option is smaller in scale, thus more cost-effective, but still with potential for future growth. It does not included the

addition of the street and is located primarily on JPA-owned land. This project could help support the further development of the Midwest Steel, K Street Building, and Star Tran and LPD maintenance areas.

The O-Street Corridor is a broad project to include streetscape and façade improvements. There are many good sites for rehabilitation and infill including the Terminal Building, the LES building and Gold's. SCC said they would like to stay downtown, but possibly in another location. If they move, that becomes a great spot for redevelopment. The plan would include a cohesive street tree program, enhanced pedestrian environments, improved lighting, and potentially some awnings, new signage, and window displays.

Greenways are proposed along 11<sup>th</sup> Street and M Street and both have received strong support. The overall strategy is to open these corridors up using right-of-way, providing park and greenspace. 11<sup>th</sup> Street has 120 feet of right-of-way so the plan is to create a 2-lane street, moving the bike lane to another street, and converting diagonal parking to parallel. This would create usable park space all along the corridor with potential for native gardens, play equipment, public art, outdoor dining, and open lawn space. There is less space on M Street with 100 feet of right-of-way, but with some reconfiguration, there will be 37 feet of greenway with trees, landscaping and possible storefront cafés.

One thing that was highlighted by the consultants was how special Lincoln's live music scene is. This idea is to create a designated music district with a combination of physical and programming improvements. One area of focus is at 14<sup>th</sup> and O Streets where there are existing festivals taking place. There is potential to create some kind of connection with the Lied Center and to enhance alleyways to be used as festival spaces. There is a billboard at this intersection that could be acquired to have place-making signage rather than advertisements.

This master plan also includes the completion of projects that were outlined by the 2005 plan including some West Haymarket blocks, the P Street corridor, the K Street Building, and conversion of 13<sup>th</sup> Street to a 2-way street in the remaining one-way sections. The autonomous shuttle is expected to be in place in the next few years.

Some key individual sites noted by the plan are the LPD maintenance, SCC, parking garages, Star Tran, some underused blocks, the Federal parking garage, Bennet Martin library site and YWCA, and the post office. There is discussion about the conversion of one-way streets to 2-way, which makes sense since traffic volumes are not high enough to require the one-ways. Bike facilities are under consideration, as is the L.I.N.K. project to connect Innovation Campus, neighborhoods, and city Campus. Harris asked if it is a transit-oriented plan. Thierolf said it could be bike, pedestrian, and greenway paths. Indianapolis invested in a massive project to connect various cultural institutions with public art. It is now a tourist destination where people

walk and visit the businesses along the way. Lincoln's may not be at that scale, but it is something to consider for the long-term.

Campbell asked if there are any conflicts or constraints along O Street, given that it is a highway. Barnes said cooperation will happen with the Department of Transportation and staff has met with their representatives throughout the process to talk about things like trees, parking changes, and lighting, among other things. They do have standards for clear zones and there is a process for working with them.

Beckius asked if it is anticipated that 11<sup>th</sup> Street and M Street will be maintained by the Parks Department, or possibly the DLA. Barnes said that detail is yet to be worked out but an agreement will be put into place at some point during development to outline those various responsibilities.

Washington asked for details about the land available for the urban park design as it relates to conservation, restoration, and other land issues. Barnes said the smaller park concept includes mostly land owned by JPA, part of which was FEMA remediated land associated with the West Haymarket. There are projects to excavate contaminated soils. Washington wondered if trees are allowed. Barnes said that from what he understands, plantings would be allowed, though that level of design detail has not been reached yet. A building might require more engineering. Cary said there could be limitations, especially for larger trees, if no further fills were done. Scheer commented that if larger trees could be planted, they would serve as an attractive sight and sound buffer from the tracks. Cary agreed and reiterated that those details are not in place yet, but much of the area will be open green space.

Scheer expressed his concern regarding the maintenance of new greenspaces. He wondered if it will take additional staff or significant resources to do it in a reasonable way. There has to be intent and thought given to that specific aspect of the projects because it is already an issue that comes up now.

Harris wondered if any specific parameters were set for the Pershing block. Dallas McGee, Urban Development, said that an invitation was issued and was left relatively general, in terms of what the City would accept. We would like to see some open space, underground parking, and a very active ground level, along with any residential or mixed uses. One limiting factor will be the Capitol Environs height limit of 57 feet. Harris wondered if the invitation indicates that the City is open to inclusion of a civic use that might have potential to be supported as a bond issue. McGee said the invitation does not specify that, though it is envisioned in the possibilities for the area.

Harris asked how this plan lines up with the State Capitol plan that was just released. Barnes said that plan was not on the same timeline and was published toward the end of this process;

however, there were representative from the State on the committees and engaged in the process. For the most part, the projects they have outlined are in line with the City's vision. It is important to work with the State and the University on projects.

Washington said one thing she has noticed in other communities is design standards that require businesses to have outdoor dining along corridors like the ones proposed for 11<sup>th</sup> and M Streets. They may be required to have iron fencing, or planter fencing, and not just a scattering of tables, in order to establish a real sense of place. She wondered if businesses have to give back, aesthetically, as part of the permissions process for using the sidewalk for dining space. Barnes said this is a topic that is raised regularly. If it is part of a TIF project, there is a higher level of review of the fencing and even the outdoor furniture. There are currently different ways of achieving that review now. Though there is not a clear recommendation for that review now, staff can look into it when the greenways are implemented. It will be important to have a higher level of review for the right-of-way that we invest in.

Scheer asked for more information about the conversion of one-way streets to 2-way streets. He noted that 20 years ago, similar changes were not well received. Barnes said it is a matter of understanding that it is part of an overall strategy and not simply making a change and seeing how it goes; it will not be a block-by-block approach. This change has the potential to create economic benefit for businesses by creating better access. It could also create a safer environment.

Commissioners thank staff for their good work.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

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