

STATEMENT BY LIBA BOARD ON LPLAN 2040

Adopted November 16, 2010

The Lincoln Independent Business Association (LIBA) Board of Directors would like to thank the LPlan Advisory Committee (LPAC) for all of the time and effort put on studying and analyzing the three growth options for the City of Lincoln. This has been no small task, and we are grateful for your interest in public policy and the future of our city.

As the LIBA Board conducted our own study and analysis of the three options, several important points became very clear to us. Some of these are somewhat specific and some are more general in nature:

- The LIBA Board does not feel that the higher-density Plan C is a realistic option for Lincoln's future growth. Plan C is a radical departure from past comp plans.
- We do not believe the cost estimates provided to LPAC for Plan C have been portrayed accurately. The assumption in materials provided to LPAC was that high-density urban growth within the current city limits would save money by not having to build infrastructure for new growth areas on the edge of the city. We feel the costs the city would absorb to add 17,000 new residences within the current city boundaries are woefully underestimated.
- City staff has indicated to LIBA that the cost of replacing a water main is three to four times higher than the cost of merely building a new water main. We do not feel this additional cost incurred under Plan C has been accurately represented.
- The increased cost of building and development has not been taken into account under Plan C. Limiting a large amount of growth in Lincoln to inner-city areas would drive up the development costs of land acquisition. Additionally, it would increase costs for moving and upgrading utilities. It would increase the amount of legal fees, regulatory fees and zoning fees. It would also increase the costs of street improvements or modifications to accommodate the higher population density.
- We do not see where the costs for Plan C take into consideration the added costs to the City for infill development such as TIF financing incentives, utility subsidies and the possible waiver of Impact Fees (as was suggested to LIBA by City staff). Using TIF for financing infill growth does not add immediately to the tax base to help offset new services that will be needed such as new schools, police, fire protection, health department services and city and county government services.
- A significant concern to citizens under Plan C would be the possible widespread use of eminent domain to acquire the private property necessary to develop inner-city projects. LIBA recognizes that eminent domain would be required to put together the land necessary to develop the types of projects outlined in Plan C.

Additionally, the cost to the city of paying higher real estate prices to avoid using eminent domain drives up inner-city development costs. Two examples are the Assurity Life project and Block 38, which cost Lincoln taxpayers millions of dollars. How many “infill” projects can we afford?

- The impact on our public schools by Plan C has not been explained or considered in the discussion of these proposals. Adding significant population density to our currently overcrowded schools would present multiple challenges to Lincoln Public Schools’ current classroom capabilities. Many of our center core schools currently have limited or no room for expansion.
- Lincoln needs the South Beltway right now under our current traffic conditions. Plan C appears to not plan for or envision adding either a South or East Beltway for Lincoln’s traffic needs. We feel this is a glaring omission that must be addressed.
- Plan C has the potential to drive out the availability of affordable housing due to the several increased costs incurred by the development of infill housing described above.
- Plan C has the potential to limit growth, but more importantly, could eliminate jobs. Plan C may also stifle new job growth with fewer infrastructure improvement projects in new growth areas on the edge of the city, which virtually eliminates “shovel ready” sites in Lincoln.

For these reasons, the LIBA Board feels Plan C is an unrealistic alternative. We are also concerned that much of the materials provided to the LPAC were somewhat skewed to provide a false impression of the positive benefits Plan C may have for Lincoln’s future. We are disappointed that a more objective presentation of the true costs of Plan C to Lincoln taxpayers was not presented to the LPAC.

The LIBA Board is recommending to the LPAC that it support what we are calling a Plan B+ scenario. Plan B+ would include everything in the current Plan B but would add allowing for southwestern growth and providing for an East Bypass to accommodate future traffic needs.

- We encourage infill in the city where it is financially feasible; however, we should not force redevelopment.
- The city and NRD have spent millions of dollars setting up Stevens Creek for new growth with new sewer and environmentally friendly water detention systems, and it seems irresponsible to not get some return in that investment by allowing new growth in that area.

- We also understand the environmental concerns that Plan C would address. However, we feel that with improvements in technology and more consumer education, Plan B+ could meet future environmental goals for city growth.

We have heard that the Plan C scenario was a “dream” scenario that was put forth to invoke discussion and stretch the boundaries of our long-term approach to Lincoln’s growth. We can appreciate that type of discussion; however, we also feel that Plan C had little grounding in addressing Lincoln’s real growth needs and in many ways was misrepresented to the public and to the LPAC. We are concerned that if any real credence is given to significant elements of Plan C, Lincoln’s leadership may fail to recognize and invest in the infrastructure necessary to solve the city’s very real challenges that we know will exist.

For the reasons stated above, we strongly encourage the LPAC to consider and support the plan we have identified as Plan B+ in moving forward. Again, the LIBA Board thanks the members of the LPAC for their hard work and dedication to Lincoln’s future by serving on this committee.