

MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

February 13, 2017

Tracy Corr opened the meeting on Monday, February 13, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room, City/County/Building, in Lincoln, NE.

Attendance

Fifteen residents and three City staff attended:

Tracy Corr – 40 th & A NA	Carl Tesch – Autumn Wood NA
Russ Irwin – Clinton NA	Jennifer Powell – Country Club NA
Paul Johnson – East Campus CO	Karen Dienstbier – Eastridge NA
Ray Crisp – Eden Park NA	Pat Anderson-Sifuentez – Everett NA & NWL
Amy Karabel – Irvingdale NA	Scott Hofeling – Ridge South HOA
Mike DeKalb – University Place CO	Bill Vocasek – West A NA
Fred Freytag – Witherbee NA	Russell Miller – Witherbee NA
Randy Smith – Woods Park NA	Jon Carlson – Mayor's Office
Wynn Hjermstad – Urban Development Dept	Lynn Johnson – Parks & Recreation Dept

Welcome & Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves. Paul Johnson agreed to take meeting notes. Mayor did not attend due to a conflicting meeting.

Emerald Ash Borer Update – *Scott Hofeling, Hofeling Enterprises, 402-432-0806; scott@hofelingenterprises.com and Lynn Johnson, Director, City of Lincoln Parks & Recreation Department, 402-441-8265; ljohnson@lincoln.ne.gov.*

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) will be found in Lincoln in the coming year. It's likely that the insect is already here, but has not been detected yet.

Scott Hofeling's company can treat trees for EAB and can also remove trees. The Arborjet treatment method that they recommend entails drilling & inserting a special tube into the tree approximately every 4 inches & injecting the insecticide product. The product is absorbed by & spread through the tree. The treatment is repeated every two years for the life of the tree. Scott estimated that each treatment would cost approximately \$100, or approximately \$10 per hole. The best time for treatment is while the sap in the tree is moving; from leaf out through June. Trees can be treated into early fall as long as they have leaves.

The Nebraska State Forester says that treatments like this that involve drilling the tree will eventually kill the tree. Scott said that they have treated trees in other areas with drilling treatment methods & have not lost any trees from drilling. He said that the systemic insecticide & injection method has the least harmful effect on the environment.

The City of Lincoln plan for public street trees is removal & replacement of approximately 1000 trees per year. While it is too expensive to treat all trees, the City plans to treatment some of more valuable trees to stretch out the time for removal & replacement. The Parks & Recreation Department is in the process of hiring a new person whose job will include public education about EAB & development of policies for the trees. Policies to be considered include criteria for which trees will be treated; an Adopt-A-Tree program for residents and neighborhood associations wishing to pay/help pay for tree treatment; development of a database & tracking system for public trees being privately treated so those trees are not accidentally removed.

Suggested replacement trees will include a variety of tree species so that the impact of future events like the EAB can be minimized. The City is out of money for replacement trees for 2017. Additional staff will be hired to remove 1000 ash trees per year. These workers will eventually transition to treatment & replacement work.

Other points:

- The NRD has a community forestry program for which neighborhood associations can apply for replacement trees.
- New trees can be planted approximately 3-5 feet from the stump of a removed tree. If the old tree is ground out enough, new tree could be planted in same place. To prevent the new tree from leaning or falling, it is very important that the ground around it remain stable after the old stump & roots decompose.
- New trees will need to be pruned about every 5 years. With so many new trees, the Parks & Recreation Department would like to train interested homeowners to properly prune and reduce the workload on Parks & Rec employees.

Announcements

- City Councilwoman Jane Raybould extended an invitation to the Roundtable to attend the next Performance Audit Committee meeting. The Committee is looking into improving communication and tracking housing and other complaints reported to the City, including problem properties. The meeting is Tuesday, February 28 at 3:30 PM in the Bill Luxford Studio, Room 113 in the City County Building. Please feel welcome to attend and provide your input. [See Attachment 1.](#)
- The 2017 Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) Conference will be in Omaha on May 24-27. [See Attachment 2.](#)

Next Meeting/Agenda

The next meeting of the Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable will be March 13, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. The topics will be determined.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 6:30. p.m.

Notes submitted by Paul Johnson.

Somebody Needs to DO Something!

Your next door neighbor's garage and yard are full of junk and he never mows. The house across the street from your mom's house has people coming and going 24/7 and the residents scream at their children and each other. The dilapidated house down the street has been vacant for years and years and now animals are climbing into holes in the eaves and into the junk car in the backyard. Somebody needs to DO something!

These situations can and do happen in all kinds of neighborhoods: new and old, wealthy and poor, urban and rural. In Lincoln, when situations require the action or participation of more than one public agency, doing "something" can mean a referral to the Problem Resolution Team (or PRT).

Since it was formed in 1996 at the recommendation of Lincoln Police Department staff, the PRT has used an inter-agency approach to address problem properties. Co-chaired by a Police Department captain and a City Council person, the PRT is comprised of representatives from the Mayor's Office, Health, Animal Control, Weed Control, Adult & Child Protective Services, Mental Health, Fire Prevention, Housing Inspections, Aging Partners, City Attorney, Public Works, Lincoln Housing Authority, the Victim-Witness Unit and Urban Development.

The Problem Resolution Team meets monthly. Team members nominate chronic, repeat, and troublesome complaints or problems at specific locations that affect the quality of life in neighborhoods. The team discusses each problem property's history and all available background information, including past complaints, status of property taxes, and the existence of any property liens. Each department goes out and inspects the property. If two or more departments find the property to be in violation of City Code, the property becomes an active PRT case.

While a property is an active case, team members work to see the whole picture. Is there a pattern of behavior? Are there other problems? What's causing the problems? What can be done to resolve the situation? Often one of the key questions is, "Have we found the family?" Family members can play a major role in understanding the

344 N. 27th Street was a PRT case even before fire caused extensive damage. The house, on a commercially-zoned lot, was demolished and the lot is being sold for commercial use.



big picture. For example, there may be mental issues, drug issues (even legally-prescribed drugs can cause behavior changes), or even criminal issues.

Every situation is unique. Very occasionally resolution is as simple as informing the property owner or resident about code violations. As long as there is a good faith effort to comply with the regulations involved, City/County staff will work with the owner/resident. However, it normally takes considerably more effort and time -- sometimes months or even years. Neighbors selling a house next door to such a property may wish for more speed, but everyone's civil and property rights need to be respected. That can make the process very complicated and involve even more agencies -- even at the state or federal level. For example, the Veterans Administration may be asked to provide assistance if the problem property is owned by or lived in by a veteran.

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Registration of Neglected Buildings

In 2014, Neglected Building Registration became a City ordinance. In essence, its purpose is to financially pressure owners of neglected buildings to DO SOMETHING about properties that have become burdens on the community -- eyesores leading to increased crime and declining property values.

Property owners are required to register vacant, neglected buildings with the City. Registration includes a plan that addresses the neglect. If the plan is followed and completed, the building no

longer needs to be registered. If the plan is not implemented, fines and further fees will be assessed on the property. If not paid by the owner, these then become liens that can -- in extreme circumstances -- lead to the City foreclosing on the property.

This is certainly not the desired end result. In fact, the ideal response to the Neglected Buildings Registration ordinance would be the end of property neglect. In reality, registration of neglected buildings will become an additional tool

for the Problem Resolution Team as they work to address problem properties.

The eight-page Neglected Building Registration ordinance details the "who, what, when, how and why" of neglected building registration. For example, it defines neglected buildings, lists registration requirements and fees, designates enforcement, details penalties, and outlines appeals. To review the whole ordinance, visit the lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: **code**. See Chapter 21.09 of Title 21: Housing.

KURT & THE NEIGHBORHOOD SCAN

Sometimes, you can't—and shouldn't—give up on a good idea. This story is from Kurt Elder, Urban Development GIS Analyst

In 2008, I started working at the Lincoln Action Partnership (LAP) – now Community Action Program – as a community builder for their **Free to Grow (FTG)** program. **FTG**, a nationally recognized program developed in 1994 and still used widely, focuses on small geographic areas where intense effort and resources can be applied to accelerate stability and growth.

As part of **FTG**, community builders evaluate area properties by recording observations about each property and assigning scores to selected facets. Those scores are recorded in spreadsheets. Bar charts created from the spreadsheet identify factors of distress for each property, block face and focus area.

From my experiences in urban planning, geography and policy (and being a data geek), I saw the potential of adding a mapping interface to the analysis. I was beginning to lead the program in that direction when LAP's **FTG** program was phased out and NeighborWorks@Lincoln acquired local **FTG** program rights instead.

Still believing in the mapping tool, I began a

conversation with Rick Noyes, also a community builder, about how to assess or scan Lincoln's neighborhoods more efficiently. Our collaboration yielded a technological framework (i.e. the use of PDA's) and a collection process. We looked into monetizing the assessment process, but the return on investment was not enough and the project stalled.

As an Urban Development Department staff member in 2009, I proposed the idea to both NeighborWorks@Lincoln and the University of Nebraska's Community & Regional Planning program. Both organizations were interested and a partnership was formed with the Urban Development Department. The partnership further refined the idea/process and sought community support.

In early 2010, the Woods Charitable Fund awarded a grant for a pilot project to help Lincoln neighborhoods concerned about vacant and neglected properties, graffiti, weeds, litter and other problems. That first **Lincoln Community Scan** project assessed the condition of every home in two Lincoln neighborhoods and compiled the information into databases. This allowed the neighborhood residents to pinpoint their biggest concerns,

set the most appropriate improvement goals and find resources to correct problems.

From 2010 through 2014, the Woods Charitable Fund has awarded three grants totaling \$137,500 for **Lincoln Community Scan**. More than 350 neighborhood residents and UN-L students have assessed about 12,700 properties in eight Lincoln neighborhoods: Clinton, University Place, Everett, Irvingdale, Woods Park, Havelock, Indian Village and Hartley.

Information from **Lincoln Community Scan** has helped neighborhoods rehabilitate problem homes and remove junk cars. Many residents said their work with the **Scan** improved their perception of their neighborhoods and showed them the impact of even one neglected property. **Community Scan** data provided additional documentation in support of the Neglected Building Registration ordinance, which was enacted in 2014.

Community Scan information was also shared with the City of Lincoln's Public Works & Utilities Department, which contributed to additional funds for sidewalk repair and/or replacement in at least three neighborhoods. Being able to pinpoint the areas with the most problematic sidewalks was pivotal.

As they continue to assess more of Lincoln's neighborhoods, the **Community Scan** partners continue to develop new collaborations and purposes that benefit all of Lincoln.

Good ideas matter!

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Hoarding is often a problem that triggers PRT involvement. It is a phenomenon that cuts across all economic and geographic boundaries. Usually neighbors only end up reporting hoarding if it has spread outside of the house and garage. If, after referral to the PRT and inspection, the property is found to be unsafe or hazardous, it will be red-tagged. Typically, hoarding becomes hazardous when access to the furnace, water heater, or water shut off valve is blocked. Once the house is red-tagged, the resident/owner may not live there until the hazards are addressed. The PRT works with community organizations that provide temporary housing and other support services to the resident/owner.

Sometimes the resident, their family, or other volunteers can clear out/clean up enough to comply with public safety regulations. Again, as long as there is a good faith effort, City/County staff will work with the owner/resident. Eventually, if the problem persists and the property repeatedly becomes unsafe or hazardous, the City Health Department may need to step in and "abate" the problem – basically, clear out hazardous accumulations. Nui-

sance abatement costs are assessed to the property and, if not paid by the property owner, become a lien on the property. In 2014, nuisance abatement costs were assessed on 20 properties. So far in 2015, over 15 properties have been assessed.

In rare instances, repeated abatement liens have resulted in the City acquiring a property as a result of unpaid liens. When that happens, the City needs to decide what to do with the property. The overall goal is to get the property back into private ownership and on the tax rolls, but each situation is unique, so the best way to accomplish that varies. It is also another whole story for a future newsletter issue!

What can you do, as a concerned neighbor? You can bring problem properties to the attention of City staff by filing a "City Service Request" on the City's Citizen Action Center (lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: **action**) or leaving a message on the Neighborhood Hotline (**402-441-6300**). This is one instance where being brief is not the best route -- your detailed observations can make the evaluation process more efficient and timely.

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2017 Neighborhoods, USA (NUSA) Conference Omaha – May 24-27, 2017

Over 800 attendees from cities across the country will gather for the 42nd annual NUSA Conference. We estimate over half of those attendees will be from the Omaha/Council Bluffs area. NUSA is passionate about improving neighborhoods and building stronger communities through educational workshops, neighborhood tours and peer to peer sharing with experts from other cities.

Collaborating Organizations: NUSA, the City of Omaha, One Omaha, Omaha By Design, Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau, Omaha/Council Bluffs Neighborhood Alliances and Associations

Conference Venues:

Downtown Omaha Hilton and CenturyLink Center

Keynote Presenters:

Fred Kent, Founder and President, Project for Public Spaces –

Fred is the leading authority on revitalizing city spaces and is one of the foremost thinkers in livability, smart growth and the future of the city.

Joseph Porcelli, Nextdoor –

Joseph serves as **Nextdoor's** Northeast Senior City Strategist and "Professional Neighbor". Joseph focuses on bringing city partners onto the **Nextdoor** platform to improve relationships and communications among neighbors and city agencies.

Jose Garcia and Terri Sanders, Omaha's 24th Street Corridor –

Jose and Terri will speak on the revitalization of the North and South Omaha, focusing specifically on the 24th Street Corridor.

Neighborhood Pride Tours Include:

Benson-Fontenelle-Central Park
Blackstone Neighborhood
Boys Town
Long School
North Omaha Village Revitalization
Gifford Park
Historical Council Bluffs
Lincoln-Fairview Historic District
Historic Midtown Neighborhood
Urban Agriculture Tour
Downtown Bike Tour

Minne Lusa and Florence
Historic North Omaha
Northwest Neighborhood Alliance
Spring Lake Park Team
South Omaha Mural Tour
South Omaha's Commercial District
Park Avenue
Dahlman Neighborhood
Loess Hills, IA
Blue Barn Theater/KETV Burlington Station
Kaneko-CEC-Do Space



Registration Information:

National Conference Fees:

Register at www.nusa.org

February 15th through April 15th - \$200

April 16th through May 12th - \$300

For attendees who would prefer to fill out a paper registration form, please visit www.nusa.org to download a pdf of the conference registration form.

NUSA 2017 Conference Registration Includes:

- Access to 50+ workshops on community betterment. This knowledge will generate enthusiasm, ideas and improvement projects throughout the metro neighborhoods.
- Highlights of all the metro area has to offer via its 21 neighborhood tours which will be planned and executed by area neighborhood groups.
- 30+ local, regional and national exhibitors who will be on site to share their mission and information.
- Conference meals and entrance to the Mayor's Reception at the Downtown Hilton Ballroom.
- NUSA's Annual Neighborhood Awards Presentations which will celebrate neighborhood initiatives, leaders and newsletters.

Conference Website:

<http://www.intheneighborhood.org/2017-nusa-conference/>

Information on volunteering:

Contact Kylie at 402-345-5401 ext. 117

For more information, please contact:

Conference Coordinator: Roxanne Nielsen, Vic Gutman and Associates, 402-345-5401, ext. 112
rnielsen@vgagroup.com or email nusa2017omaha@gmail.com

Fiscal Agent: Omaha By Design, a 501 (C) (3) Nonprofit Organization

