

# MAYOR'S NEIGHBORHOOD ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

June 12, 2017

Tracy Corr opened the meeting on Monday, June 12, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. in the Mayor's Conference Room, City/County/Building, in Lincoln, NE.

## Attendance

Fifteen residents and five City staff attended:

Tracy Corr – 40 <sup>th</sup> & A NA	Russ Irwin – Clinton NA
Jennifer Powell – Country Club NA	Paul Johnson – East Campus CO
Karen Dienstbier – Eastridge NA	Pat Anderson-Sifuentez – Everett NA & NWL
Curt Donaldson – Hartley NA	Myrna Coleman – Highlands NA
Scott Richert – Indian Village NA	Dennis Hecht -- Meadowlane Area RA
Rich Furasek – Meadowlane Area RA	Mike DeKalb – University Place CO
Keith Roland – University Place CO	Russell Miller – Witherbee NA
Bennie Shobe – City Council	Ben McShane – Community Crops
Willa DiCostanzo – Health, KLLCB	Lin Quenzer – Mayor's Office
Jon Carlson – Mayor's Office	Mayor Beutler

## Welcome & Introductions

Everyone introduced themselves. Willa DiCostanzo agreed to take meeting notes.

## Mayor's Comments

In light of the United States dropping out of the Paris Climate Accord, the Mayor wanted to discuss the role of businesses and municipalities in helping mitigate and correct what we can for future generations. He doesn't normally focus on national issues, but he also doesn't want Lincoln to be blind to the big picture.

When should the City of Lincoln take a public stance aligning the City with sustainability values? The City is already working to implement a sustainability plan. Perhaps a public position statement could be combined with an announcement/update on the implementation of sustainability measures locally. These include:

- GL2 (or Green Light Lincoln): an initiative being undertaken by the City of Lincoln Traffic Engineering Division to improve traffic flow and traffic safety city wide. The focus of the effort is improvement of the overall traffic management system.
- LES Sustainable Energy Program, which helps residents and businesses make improvements, such as weatherization, that save money, help reduce the need for energy during expensive peak periods and help delay the necessity to build high-cost power plants.
- LED Street Lighting: City Council recently approved a new design that will require LED streetlights in new subdivisions. LEDs are more energy-efficient, last longer, have lower maintenance costs, and over the long run should be a benefit to the city. City staff and Lincoln Electric System are working on a plan to eventually replace all streetlights with LED fixtures.
- LES Methane Power Plant: The City sells landfill gas from the Bluff Road Landfill, including methane, to LES to produce electricity for Lincoln households and businesses.

Comments from Roundtable attendees included:

- The climate is changing and the smaller groups are the ones that have to be doing the work and making the change.
- Water is going to be a big concern – we need to plan ahead for where water is going to come from.

- The city should look into electrification of buses as the next step beyond Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), ethanol, and biodiesel alternative fuels.

## **Food Deserts**

*Presentation by Ben McShane-Jewell, Executive Director, Community CROPS: 402-474-9802; [ben@communitycrops.org](mailto:ben@communitycrops.org).*

Ben presented a PowerPoint defining food deserts and what they mean for Lincoln. **See Attachment 1.**

A food desert is defined by the US Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) is an area with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly an area with predominantly lower income neighborhoods and communities. Many poor people live in food deserts — where they have plenty of food but not much of it healthy. This is largely due to a lack of grocery stores and other healthy food providers.

Key variables limit access to healthy foods:

- Limited Access: based on walking and driving distances to supermarkets,
- Affordability, and
- Nutritious food availability.

The presence of low income /poverty level households is now the main indicator of the presence of a food desert. However, it is incorrect to assume that all households in a low income area are low income households and that all households in a higher income area are higher income households. Households in any income level area can experience food desert conditions.

Some limitations to the food desert research and concepts were pointed out:

- Assumes supermarkets provide healthy food,
- Ignores smaller food outlets, farmers markets, and ethnic markets.
- Measures “potential access,” not “realized access.”

According to the USDA, supermarkets are the most prevalent food source. However, from 2010 to 2015, the number of super centers (Sam’s & Costco, for example) has doubled nationally. The number of low-income and low-access census tracts slowly & steadily increased in that time period as well.

What does this mean for Lincoln? Six “extreme” poverty neighborhoods were identified in Lincoln. These are core areas where more than 40% of the residents are living below poverty level. The life spans of people living in core areas are about 20 years shorter than life spans of people living in other areas. Approximately 52,000 residents live in 26 “food desert” Census Tracts identified in Lincoln by the USDA. Those 26 Census Tracts include 29,183 residents living in low-income households.

Community Crops is working to understand how to “farm the food desert” and work toward growing enough produce to eliminate Lincoln’s food deserts. Based on their calculations, it would take 3,333 acres to feed the whole city. A first step toward sustainability is to focus on just 1% of that total area – about 33 acres. While this would be a substantial increase of food producing land within Lincoln, the land itself already exists – as under-used church, school and park land and as vacant lots. Although there is no shortage of land, there is a shortage of farmers. Community Crops is working to address that shortage through community outreach, education and training.

## **Announcements**

- **FY17 Annual Action Plan:** The FY17 Annual Action Plan for HUD Entitlement Programs is available for public comment through June 19th. Contact Urban Development: [urbandev@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:urbandev@lincoln.ne.gov). This plan provides an overview of the City’s use of federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME, and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds.

- **Taste of 27<sup>th</sup> Street Tour:** Walking food tours on June 27, 2017, at 6 pm and 7 pm, including four North 27<sup>th</sup> Street restaurants: Big Sal's, Dory BBQ, Imperial Palace and Pan Dulce Bakery. Limited to 20 seats per tour, \$15 tickets per seat. [See Attachment 2.](#)
- **Uncle Sam Jam:** Free public celebration on Monday, July 3 at Oak Lake Park (1<sup>st</sup> & Charleston Street), starting at 3:00 pm with a variety of family activities and wrapping up with fireworks at 10:00 pm. Rain date is Wednesday, July 5<sup>th</sup> – same location & time. [See Attachment 3.](#)

### **Next Meeting/Agenda**

The next meeting of the Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable will be July 10, 2017 at 5:30 p.m. Ideas suggested included energy and sustainability and Green Light Lincoln.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

*Notes submitted by Willa DiCostanzo.*