

PLANNING COMMISSION RECORD

Briefing Session

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, June 8, 2005, 12:00 Noon, Room 113, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jon Carlson, Gene Carroll, Gerry Krieser, Roger Larson, Melinda Pearson, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor (Dick Esseks and Mary Bills-Strand absent)

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Marvin Krout, Kent Morgan, Mike DeKalb and Michele Abendroth (Planning Department); Randy Hoskins (Public Works and Utilities); Dallas McGee (Urban Development Department); Polly McMullen (Downtown Lincoln Association); Jeff Searcy (Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission); Gordon Scholz (Urban Design Committee)

STATED PURPOSE Staff briefing on the **Downtown Master Plan**

Jon Carlson called the meeting to order at 12:07 p.m. He introduced George Crandall and Don Arambula of Crandall Arambula, the consultants for the Downtown Master Plan. The Commission members then introduced themselves.

Crandall stated that they have produced three draft documents in regard to the downtown study. They include the Master Plan, Implementation Program, and the Design Guidelines.

He stated that there have been three community workshops with the fourth and final workshop tonight. At the previous workshops, input was sought from the community on ideas for downtown as well as their reaction to the proposed alternatives.

Crandall noted that they have prepared a fundamental concept diagram, a capacity diagram, and frameworks for land use, transportation, public realm, retail and entertainment, housing, employment, convention center and arena, education, arts/cultural and parking. He then presented a diagram for depressing 9th and 10th Streets under P Street. They are also proposing more roads in the Haymarket as well as a streetcar system. A civic square is proposed at 13th and P Streets. The primary retail is shown on P Street. They also have some modest proposals for parks and green space.

Crandall then presented their strategies for implementation of the plan. It is important to create momentum and see immediate results. He identified several catalyst projects which are the civic square at 13th and P, parking/mixed use development, the civic square office, the YMCA infill, infill at the ground floor of Wells Fargo, West Haymarket and the K Street power station project. The

first three projects should be implemented immediately, as they are at the center of the community and will make a difference in the perception of the downtown as well as reinforce the retail strategy.

Carlson asked about the vision for the YMCA infill. Crandall stated that the YMCA is looking for some opportunities for joint space. Arambula added that they are a positive use for the downtown.

Sunderman asked about the shape of downtown as it exists today. Crandall stated that we are in good shape compared to some communities, but not in as good of shape as others. Arambula stated that Lincoln has done some projects which have helped to gain momentum, and the key is to keep that momentum.

Larson asked about the relationship of the downtown to the overall health of the community. Crandall stated that you should take care of the heart first. The stronger the downtown, the better the community will be. If the heart is weak, the extremities will be weak as well. Downtown needs to be the number one priority.

Pearson asked what activities are important to encourage people to come to the downtown. Crandall stated that quite often communities look for the silver bullet, but it is a combination of many things. There must be lots of activities for people to come to, as well as housing, a healthy retail environment, which is always the hardest thing to get right in the downtown. The theater is an important part of the downtown because of the number of trips it generates. Grocery stores, museums and cultural facilities are also important. There is not a big traffic problem compared to many communities, but there must be convenient parking. On-street parking needs to be maximized. We also need the amenities such as parks and open space. There also must be a focal point such as a public square.

Taylor asked about the key parking strategies being proposed. Crandall stated that Lincoln has recently completed a parking study which identifies some strategies. The fundamental concepts are that it must be convenient and easily accessed. They have located three sites in the downtown for parking. Arambula stated that parking structures are a substantial investment of public funds, so it is important to get them right.

Carroll asked about the public and private funding with respect to the public square. Crandall stated they are looking at the square being publicly funded, but they are connecting it to private investment. McGee stated that most of the public dollars will come from the tax increment financing that is generated from private development.

Pearson asked about the coordination with the Antelope Valley project. Arambula stated that they have linked the green space areas, which will help to define the structure of the downtown.

Carlson asked the consultants to expand upon the retail vision. Arambula stated that one of the fundamental components is getting housing in downtown, and to do that, there must be retail. There must be a broad selection of different types of retail. There are many existing healthy local businesses, and we must promote them. Strategically locating national chains to enhance the existing local retail is critical. Crandall added that there must be continuous retail frontage.

Pearson asked about O Street and its long-term vision. Crandall stated that for retail to work on O Street, we need on-street parking, so they are suggesting a frontage road system. There is

excessive sidewalk space which could be cut back to create parking and a frontage road. Arambula added that this is not a critical short-term project, but it is important to develop strategies for long-term projects.

Carlson asked about the Commission's role. Morgan stated that the Downtown Action Team will recommend a proposed plan, and then it will eventually be brought to the Planning Commission as a Comprehensive Plan amendment.

McMullen stated that there has been a lot of effort over the last few months to take the plan to the community and various organizations, and she feels that dialogue is very important.

The meeting concluded at 12:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michele Abendroth
Planning Department