

PLANNING COMMISSION RECORD

Briefing Session

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION

DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, August 17, 2005, 12:00, Room 113, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Jon Carlson, Gene Carroll, Gerry Krieser, Roger Larson, Dan Marvin, Melinda Pearson, Mary Bills-Strand and Lynn Sunderman; (Tommy Taylor absent). Marvin Krout and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Dept.; Darl Naumann, Economic Development Coordinator; media and other interested citizens.

STATED PURPOSE Staff briefing on the proposed determination of the **West “O” Street Redevelopment Area be declared as blighted and substandard**

Darl Naumann explained that over 2 years ago the West “O” Business Association came to the city to see what they could do to improve business on West “O” Street. The fundamental answer was targeted redevelopment. Employers and business people come in and reinvest in the area. This is only a partial solution to problems on West “O” St., but it is a tool. The West “O” Business area starts at the Harris Overpass and goes out to W. 66th St. There are over 1,300 acres in the blight study area. The area shares a lot of features. About 60% of the parcels are vacant or underdeveloped. They share the railroad tracks. The area is characterized by a lack of sidewalks and dead end streets. The Interstate has 2 entry points onto West “O” St. We are trying to use TIF financing and other tools. A declaration of blighted and substandard can offer businesses access to facade improvement loans. Tax Increment Financing is used to pay for public improvements associated with private development or redevelopment in a blighted and substandard area. TIF has been used for about 20 years in Nebraska. Nationally, it has been used for around 50 years. TIF has been used on N. 27th St., 48th St. and downtown projects. According to the consultants, the blight study has to be certified according to State statutes.

Larson understands that this is altogether different than the 48th & “O” St. plan. Proposals aren’t being looked at for the entire area. Naumann replied that Redevelopment Agreements will be brought in front of the City Council after the area is declared blighted and substandard. Larson wondered if there is any control over what kind of business is retained. Naumann replied that State statutes dictate certain items. There is no indication of eminent domain for any projects in the area.

Esseks wondered about the pros and cons for the landowners. Naumann replied this is an

entryway to the city. This was the primary entryway before the Interstate. It went out of favor for a lot of travelers. It has deteriorated. The advantages are access to facade improvements dollars and individual projects. Lincoln Steel is an example. There are tools that can be used to improve the life of the businesses in the area. The long term vision is a facade that looks pretty special.

Taylor wondered how Naumann visualizes the facade. Naumann stated that if you want the entryway to look special, you need to make it look inviting. Residents and others coming to shop in the area will be attracted. It has to be a destination spot.

Larson wondered if any objections have been heard. Naumann replied not many.

Bills-Strand questioned if the city foresees businesses expanding. Naumann replied that he certainly hopes so. Lincoln Steel is currently expanding. He hopes other businesses would do the same.

Marvin Krout stated that there are existing driveways and accesses on West "O" St. that are unsafe. This can help property owners get together and build connections.

Larson wondered if any land is condemned in the process of establishing new driveways. Krout hopes that no land would have to be condemned.

Sunderman sees a fair amount of agricultural land in the area. Naumann replied that some of the agricultural land is coming in to be redeveloped. One of the reasons this plan is coming forward is to make this plan happen fairly rapidly. Lincoln Poultry is developing land in the area. This study will help that happen.

Esseks noted that it is in the best interest of Lincoln Poultry to see this plan approved. Naumann replied that Lincoln Poultry is making the move from the Antelope Valley area to the West "O" area. This project would not be possible without the blighted designation.

Larson inquired if there is a lot of floodplain in the area. Naumann replied that most of the floodplain is by the Harris Overpass.

Esseks understands that when Lincoln Poultry moves to West "O", they pay taxes but the taxes can go to a special fund. Naumann stated that those funds go to that specific property for one year, for improvements.

Bills-Strand has briefly talked to the Health Dept. about gas lines. Krout replied that there is no code that someone cannot build within a certain distance from a gas line. A committee will begin to take up the issues of hazardous lines and healthy living. One of the things staff has been working on is a set of pedestrian standards. Some of these will be normal requirements such as pedestrian walkways and requirements. Staff will be talking to the development community within the next few weeks. There are also questions of whether a warehouse should be located too close to a residential area or should a church

or daycare be located in an industrial area.

Taylor does not see any sidewalks or trails in West "O". What are the plans? Naumann replied they are already in the redevelopment plan. Krout noted that transit is not identified in the plan.

Naumann stated that billboards are identified in the plan. 8% of the TIF dollars will be identified for "O" Street improvement.

Esseks wondered if there are any studies that demonstrate the type of entryway plans that staff has in mind. Naumann replied that economic development studies show that improving the corridor will help all businesses in the area. It helps to make it a destination spot. Bills-Strand thinks it would encourage other businesses to develop in the area.

Naumann noted there is the start of a nice corridor. Nebraska Machinery will be a nice building and Harley Davidson will be constructing a nice building. He is highly in support of this.

Pearson wondered how much of the city can be declared blighted. Naumann replied that 35% of the city can only be blighted at one time.

Larson wondered how long the blight designation lasts. Naumann replied 15 years.

Bills-Strand commented that she has heard local businesses state that they feel the city reaches out more to new businesses. This will help the existing businesses in the area.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa McKinstry
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Planning Department