

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, October 25, 2006, 12:00 p.m., Conference Room 113, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Jon Carlson, Gene Carroll, Michael Cornelius, Dick Esseks, Gerry Krieser, Roger Larson, Mary Strand, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor. Marvin Krout, Steve Henrichsen, Ed Zimmer, Brian Will, Sara Hartzell, Christy Eichorn, Brandon Garrett and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; and other interested citizens.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Workshop on Downzoning and Density

Steve Henrichsen stated that there is an enormous amount of information available on this topic. He pointed out numerous maps available for review.

Marvin Krout stated the first downzoning case presented during his tenure was a portion of the Witherbee neighborhood. The neighbors were concerned about what could be developed. Staff at that time recommended to defer the application. Law Dept. has since said an application can't be deferred indefinitely. He needs to think about the best use of staff time. It seemed to him that not a lot of time needed to be spent on the issue since the applications went forward fairly smoothly. Then, there were a few cases more recently that were approved but raised some questions about housing mixtures. There were also some questions about procedure and notification. The Near South Neighborhood case involved questions with non-standard buildings. The Planning Commission formed a Downzoning Committee and made a recommendation a few months ago. Planning Commission reviewed the recommendation in July, 2006. He has talked with Planning Commission Chair and Vice-Chair about what has happened since. Commissioners might want to review the recommendations. Recent neighborhood downzoning applications have followed the new procedures although they haven't been formally finalized. The last few applications seemed to involve more of a density issue. He sees more potential downzonings ahead. He thinks this is a time to look at what the goals are and what does density do for the City. Some questions to consider are how well are the goals working and what is the larger picture. The fringe area needs to be looked at as well as the core area of the City.

Henrichsen stated they tried to focus on the goals of increased density, what are we achieving and is it appropriate. This isn't just a debate in Lincoln. It is all over. There are many publications available. It has been done nationwide. Our plan in terms of what we are recommending for density is not always what people think of. There have been many definitions of what density is over the years. Today, there are many options for multi-family. The Comprehensive Plan states some density goals; maximize the use of land and what type of land use consumption we have. In terms of land consumption, we need to ask

what the projected future needs are. When staff made projections on the land, we assumed the vast majority of dwelling units would be in the new areas. About 70 percent of all dwelling units added today are single family. The last five years, the number of dwelling units permitted in an older area came out to about 4 percent of all dwelling units added. Of 11,300 dwelling units added last year, 400 were in the core area of the City.

Larson stated that staff assumed 51,000 dwelling units and 52 square miles would be needed. Henrichsen noted that area includes flood plain and Pioneers Park, amongst other things.

Strand questioned the number of units going in and being taken out of Antelope Valley. Henrichsen replied it is a net increase that was considered. As we were traffic modeling, most of the older neighborhoods were kept constant.

Henrichsen stated that some of the goals are the ability to cluster some of the units and preserve some of the open space in-between. There is a goal in the Comprehensive Plan which talks about maximizing the community's present infrastructure. This can be accomplished in many ways by encouraging new development on unused land in older neighborhoods, infrastructure investment in new schools or new water lines, also in rehabilitation and renovation. In regards to commercial density, we have seen a trend. The old mall is being divided up and infill development comes in. With regard to density goals, there are different goals in terms of affordable housing. It should be distributed throughout the region. Transit corridors should be encouraged. There should be greater concentrations of commercial and residential along corridors. The Comprehensive Plan states that neighborhoods remain one of Lincoln's greatest strengths. There is a conservation element. Single family homes in older neighborhoods should be preserved. This provides an opportunity for first time home buyers.

Strand noted that downzoning can't prevent everything. Henrichsen agreed if someone has an unusually large lot, a denser zoning could be used.

Henrichsen stated another downzoning goal from the Comprehensive Plan is maintaining balance. It encourages diversity. Newer areas have a few more dwelling units than older areas. Overall there seems to be a pretty good mix of types of housing in the older areas. The new areas don't have quite the percentages that the older areas have. Staff tried to look at all multi-family in Lincoln. The older areas have a scattering of units. Henrichsen presented some maps. Rental units are hard to map. There are many reasons; if an address is listed with the assessor as a post office box; the tax statement is going to anywhere other than the owners' address; if the property is in a trust, it was shown as non owner occupied. It is hard to tell if a property is a rental or not.

Strand would like to see where the university campuses are. She believes this dictates a lot of seasonal housing. Henrichsen replied that a lot of the university housing is shown as multi-family.

Henrichsen stated that another goal is maintaining balance. Since 2002, 10 downzonings have been approved. He presented maps of the location of R-1, R-2 and R-3 zoning across Lincoln, where downzonings have occurred,

Other goals of the Comprehensive Plan are compatibility, design standards and orientation to the sidewalk. In 2004, the design standards were applied to R-1 through R-8 zoning. Some goals of downzoning are infrastructure concerns, social concerns, lack of parking and predictability. Village Gardens has a mix of uses within the development. There is a great degree of diversity and predictability. Their land use plan clearly identifies which lots are which.

There are differences in density. Higher density is also achieved with smaller lots. We have a residential land inventory. He presented maps showing the different density of areas of Lincoln. Vavrina Meadows has overall 6 dwelling units per residential acre. It is a little higher in terms of density. He provided information with subdivisions platted since 1997 and their density.

Esseks wondered if the information reflects actual built density or projected density based on what is approved. Henrichsen replied that it is based on what has been approved. Esseks noted that developers may change their minds on what they decide to build on an area. Henrichsen replied that can certainly be the case. Market reasons can dictate what is built. There is a variety of reasons. We have lost over 2,400 apartment units through conversion to other uses. Stone Bridge Creek allows a lot of duplexes to be built in the area. This would increase the overall density.

Henrichsen stated that density is appropriate in older neighborhoods that are already at a higher density. It should be looked at on a case by case basis. The Antelope Valley Redevelopment Plan includes the channel and low density conservation.

Strand would like to see the issue addressed of Lincoln Public Schools and schools with community learning centers problem with mobility rate. What do they see as a balance that is needed to stabilize this? She still wants to see what can and can't be built in R-2, R-3 and R-4 zoning. She questioned if R-4 zoning should be eliminated and would like to see where it is needed.

The meeting concluded at 1:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa McKinstry
Planning Department