

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, May 27, 2015, 1:50 p.m., Bill Luxford Studio, Room 113, County-City Building, 555 South 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Cathy Beecham, Tracy Corr, Michael Cornelius, Maja Harris, Chris Hove, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer and Lynn Sunderman; (Ken Weber absent. Steve Henrichsen, Tom Cajka, and Amy Huffman, Planning Department.
STATED PURPOSE	Briefing on the "Lighting Study"

Tom Cajka, Planning Department, said Planning wanted to touch base with the Planning Commission on Outdoor Lighting Design Standards. A more comprehensive study was done and adopted in September of 2008. This was simply to revisit those standards to see if there were any issues that need to be addressed. There were three. The first was adding a new classification rating system called the "BUG" system, which stands for Backlight, Uplight and Glare. Ken Fairchild of Olsson Associates will discuss that in more detail. Planning also looked at where the reading is taken for light trespass. Right now the standard says the measurement is taken at the lot line, which does not consider cases where there is a zero setback. The third item was marquees or canopies that overhang public right-of-way and how to address lighting in those situations. These would fall mainly in the downtown area over sidewalks, such as the Terminal Building.

Ken Fairchild, Olsson Associates, gave an overview of the process and conclusions. He mentioned the tremendous dedication and sensitivity of former director, Marvin Krout, towards developers, the design community, and the public. His number one goal was to prevent outdoor lighting from negatively impacting surrounding neighbors.

The working group included David Cary, Tom Cajka, and Steve Henrichsen from Planning, as well as Terry Kathe from Building and Safety. In the 1970s, the City mandated street lighting would use high-pressure sodium lamps and be designed at levels no more than 70% of levels recommended by the Illuminating Engineering Society of America (IESNA). Much of this was driven by the oil embargo of 1972. Brightness limits for signage were adopted in 1979, and updated parking lot standards were adopted in 1994. By 2005, advances in lighting, development, and environmental pressures made it clear that the design standards needed to be updated. The comprehensive outdoor lighting RFP was issued in 2005. A task force was formed and included City staff from Planning, Parks, Police, Building and Safety, LES, as well as other stakeholders in the community. After 26 meetings, design standard recommendations were brought before Planning Commission and City Council and were adopted in 2008.

Three issues have come up repeatedly since then. The city was doing a series of waivers each time these came up. The IESNA, who sets the standards for lighting, implemented a new luminaire light fixture classification system just as the recommendations were adopted last time. This created problems for City staff when trying to enforce City standards since there was not a direct correlation from the City standards to the IESNA standards. The zero setback and marquee/canopy issues came about in the last few years with all the redevelopment downtown and in the Haymarket.

The BUG classification system has become industry standard for LED luminaires. To solve this problem, the software used for the old fixtures was run in the new system in order to build a bridge between one system and the other. The intent was to find a way to use the new classification system to meet the standards.

Hove asked what is meant by “cutoff”. Fairchild answered that cutoffs are determined at various angles for how far and how much light extends, so some levels of cutoff allow some uplight and others allow none. With the new system, there are far more zones that are looked at in terms of defining how much light is falling in certain areas. As a lighting designer, you can now be very selective about the types of light chosen and how much will fall in zones in terms of light trespass and glare. Lincoln has been very sensitive in particular about uplighting.

Lust asked if the BUG standards will only be applied to LED lighting. Fairchild said that no, it will be applied to all fixtures. The software with both systems now only uses the single system. There are several fixtures in developments that are being replaced because they were still classified under the old system. So the recommendation is to keep both classification systems in the guidelines to eliminate as much controversy as possible. We feel we got them to be very equal in terms of what they ask.

Fairchild went on to say that the current guidelines define allowable spill light at the property line. Such guidelines were not anticipated for properties with zero setback from those lines, such as the ones seen downtown. We wanted to provide some criteria for standards while still sticking with the intent of the old guidelines. What we did was model systems and decided that one of the more restrictive setbacks was when a building was only ten feet back from the setback, so that was chosen as an example. Wall mounted lighting allows these standards to be met; it can be done. We decided that for zero setback conditions, there will be a line ten feet out from the building. This is a solution that is not extremely restrictive, but is still very protective of surrounding areas.

Fairchild said the current guidelines define spill, glare and foot candle levels for canopies as used by convenience stores, banks and similar commercial enterprises. There are not such guidelines for marquees and canopies attached to buildings that overhang public right-of-way, which we now see more and more of with downtown and Haymarket development.

Lust asked for clarification about what qualifies as a marquee or canopy. Fairchild said it is like a protective roof over a sidewalk, such as the Terminal Building. This is a new area to define. But many new areas have needed waivers since we previously had no way to define what was required for spill light. We looked at what we have allowed thus far over the past few years.

Lust asked if it is how much light is allowed under the canopy. Cornelius asked if it included the amount of light that would spill out. Fairchild said part of discussion included questioning whether or not there needed to be a defined line away from the property. When there is a convenience store or bank canopy in a residential neighborhood, for example, there are definitions for what can and cannot be done. This is a canopy attached to building, overhanging a public area, so it is different. We also looked at existing examples to make sure the guidelines did not contradict themselves.

Lust asked if the spill created a problem in these areas. Fairchild said that is a question that was asked since it is in public right of way. We found that we still were close to compliance with the ten foot line. But instead of worrying about the imaginary ten foot line, we decided to set the standard for the foot candles, which is more consistent with what had been done.

Beecham asked if there is any concern about glare for drivers. Fairchild explained that canopies are required to use recessed lighting. There would be a concern if we let them be as high as convenience store canopies.

These are the things that have come up as gray areas so we have addressed the issues.

Beecham asked if there was a ten foot setback, is the light allowed to spill ten foot over. Fairchild said no, if the setback is ten feet you need to comply with the guidelines at the property lines. So if the building is at the property line, the restrictions are the same as if it were ten feet back.

Cajka pointed out that in most of these cases with zero setback, it is either a street adjacent, like downtown, or they are in commercial centers with pad sites typically surrounded by parking lots.

Beecham said at times there is a house right up against the parking lot. Fairchild said that is a unique situation and new areas would not allow that. This does not impact that, this is primarily downtown where buildings are located at the property line.

Lust asked if there are any energy efficiency standards. Fairchild replied that simply by eliminating the glare and spill light, I would say yes. There is a great deal of energy difference between the types of lighting used.

Harris asked if there are any situations similar to sign districts, where there could be area wide exceptions to the standards to reflect the nature of the district. Fairchild said that there are none that he knows of. But again, we did not anticipate the changes that prompted the recommendations being made to day. There is no guarantee that it couldn't happen, but there would have to be a waiver request put in and it would go through a lengthy process.

Beecham asked how something like the Cube fits it. It is not lighting, but it is lit. Cajka replied that it is covered under signage. Fairchild agreed that signage deals with surface brightness. There are technical differences. It can be difficult to get an accurate reading on LED signs when there is ambient light. The brightness can be adjusted on them, and they are capable of getting extremely bright.

Steve Henrichsen, Planning Department, stated that signs from 17th Street to the western edge of the B-4 district are allowed to have more animation, blinking and lighting changes in the sign ordinance, as an example of an area. Electronic changeable signs do have a standard maximum brightness, as well as that they are to have a portion of the sign that adjusts based on day or night conditions.

Cajka said the next step will be the formal application and staff report. It will include changes to three sections of the current text in the design standards.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:10 p.m.