

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, January 3, 2024, 1:00 p.m., Hearing Room 112, on the first floor of the County-City Building, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
MEMBERS AND OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Lorenzo Ball, Maribel Cruz, Gloria Eddins, Bailey Feit, Christy Joy, Rich Rodenburg, and Cindy Ryman Yost; Dick Campbell absent; one vacant seat. David Cary, Paul Barnes, Steve Henrichsen, Clara McCully, and Andrew Thierolf of the Planning Department; and other interested citizens.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Post-Planning Commission Hearing Briefing Session on TX23016: Parking Changes

David Cary, Planning Department, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated this item is to modernize parking standards. Staff is available for questions. Cary introduced Council Member Tom Beckius.

Tom Beckius, City Council, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated the Planning Department has been looking at modernizing commercial parking standards of the city for several years. In the last few months, he has been working with the Planning Department to begin talking to community groups such as the Resilient Lincoln Task Force, the Mayor's Roundtable, real estate developers, and environmental stewards. It is not often to bring these groups together to find consensus and support.

Staff Presentation:

Andrew Thierolf, Planning Department, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated this project has been in the works for a while with the last Comprehensive Plan update. The plan was approved in 2021 and this item is first on the list. This item is scheduled for a hearing in two weeks.

Thierolf stated automobile parking minimums would be eliminated for most commercial and industrial zoning districts. A lot of businesses do not need the parking they are required to have currently.

Existing minimum parking requirements would be maintained in residential districts and commercial districts typically found near neighborhoods: all R (Residential), B-1 and B-3 (Business), and O-2 (Suburban Office) Districts. They don't want to create an unintended impact on neighborhoods from commercial or industrial overflow.

Lincoln's parking modernization goals are: to promote economic development by allowing enhanced flexibility and potential cost savings for businesses when developing a site; allow for more market-driven parking decisions so parking for automobiles in commercial and industrial districts would be primarily determined by market needs; continue to support parking requirements near residential areas; encourage redevelopment of vacant or underutilized sites, including underutilized parking lots (PlanForward 2050 goal of 12,000 infill units by 2050, and Policy 11); remove barriers to compact development, reducing the "urban sprawl" effect over the long term; and more efficient use of existing city infrastructure, such as roads, sewer and water.

By supporting infill redevelopment and denser redevelopments, more compact means fewer sewer streets to build and maintain. A potential site for redevelopment is Gateway Mall's underutilized parking lots.

There are currently parking requirements for all zoning districts outside of Downtown and special parking uses that have additional standards. Reducing requirements often requires Planning Commission and/or City Council action.

Lincoln has had parking requirements since 1951, 70+ years of excess parking has led to increased development, construction, and maintenance costs, urban sprawl, commercial districts that are unfriendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, and heat islands of expanse concrete and few trees.

Eliminating parking is a trend in the planning world. A few similar cities have done the same. Fayetteville, AR was one of the first cities to eliminate parking in 2015. They eliminated minimum requirements, added maximums, and also require parking analysis for developers to demonstrate that they are providing adequate on-site parking. The results have been anticlimactic and long-term, similar to how Lincoln may be, just a few less parking spots here and there.

Buffalo, NY eliminated all minimum parking requirements, enacted in 2017. Certain development proposals are required to address how they will meet parking demand. A peer-reviewed study in 2020, the first few years of this change, showed 47 percent of major developments included fewer parking spaces. It is expected to be the same in Lincoln even though it is expected there will be more parking put in than is required.

H and I zoning districts would not have a minimum amount of required parking spaces. Previously approved planned service commercial special permits (H-4 zoning district) and Planned Unit Developments would have their parking requirements removed, and future ones would have no parking requirements. Use Permits would not have a minimum parking requirement, but Planning Commission and City Council would have final approval of the site plans. Previously approved Use Permits would have their parking requirement removed.

Parking requirements would be removed in 95 percent of commercially zoned areas. Eliminating minimum parking requirements is expected to result in lower development costs, businesses will continue to provide on-site parking, creation of additional pad site opportunities in commercial centers, businesses may expand their footprint into underutilized parking lots instead of relocating, sites with limited parking ability may be redeveloped, the biggest impact will be long-term, shorter car trips and reduced carbon emissions, and a more vibrant urban environment that supports multiple modes of transportation.

Rodenburg asked, today's agenda included Southminster Church. One letter was concerned about no parking. Would that item be affected by this? We passed it through.

Paul Barnes, Planning Department, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated this item is in the R District and would not be in the changes we are talking about but allows parking change under the historic landmark designation.

Eddins asked, if parking is removed from a private paid lot into the street, most streets outside of downtown do not have handicapped parking. Would it cost to have to go in later and add the handicap parking? This has occurred in a few areas now. Most street parking doesn't have handicap parking. Buffalo, NY is really good at handicapped parking and transit.

Joy asked if this is something to explore in the future.

Thierolf stated Lincoln Transportation and Utilities may have it on their lists, sidewalks need to be accessible.

Eddins stated they are still working on curb cuts for a 33-year-old initiative. She is worried about the domino effects.

Ball stated the on-street parking would increase, would there be an impact on street maintenance?

Thierolf stated there are no known concerns on the street maintenance side. He still expects to have onsite parking.

Barnes stated, regarding cost, public space costs money to build, and a lot goes underutilized. On the flip side, this offers higher utilization of those sunk costs.

Ball stated there have been a couple of agenda items where residents were upset a business would come in without appropriate parking. Removing requirements may be easier for businesses but harder for residents to use their homes.

Barnes stated they are not removing the parking requirements for neighborhoods or adjacent areas to neighborhoods. They talked to the neighborhood roundtable with no opposition.

Ball asked what is used to make a parking requirement.

Thierolf stated with Use Permits, the site planner will need approval from the Planning Department. On a site plan, the Planning Department can still require parking if it is a concern.

Joy asked if the parking changes map is online.

Thierolf stated this map is not on the website he can send it out.

Joy stated that doing the math per parking stall is a lot of area.

Beckius stated the cost per parking stall has a large impact on the development.

Beckius stated the developers are well-positioned to know what fits their development. He doesn't think they will build or redevelop without appreciation for what parking will look like. Lincoln will remain car-centric. They have the opportunity to evaluate if all of the parking is needed all of the time. He doesn't anticipate drastic changes.

Ball stated this is a great plan but the worst-case scenario is detrimental cost-cutting measures by developers. He likes the option of coming to the Planning Commission and City Council to evaluate.

Beckius stated the areas we are talking about have setbacks and the areas that don't have setbacks won't be impacted.

Beckius stated core residential districts have lost parking over time and the city provides additional parking lots to eliminate street parking shortage. As a council member, he supports that accessible parking will remain.

Eddins stated for the existing street parking there is no handicap parking available. She doesn't want accessible parking to be eliminated and city doesn't have money for that.

Joy stated developers would be Tax Increment Financed and there would be additional review processes with the design committee. If we can look at developers that pay for paving alongside streets and new parking if Lincoln Transportation and Utilities would support those being accessible stalls. Something we can work on together. Do we track how many infill projects we've had? Where we are currently? Or can you add that number to the 17th hearing?

Thierolf stated there is an annual report to track infill growth, which will be sent out within the next couple of months.

Yost stated she never been somewhere where parking is full. Hy-Vee has the pickup option and is still never full even on the busiest days.

Rodenburg asked if they have also considered water runoffs that will help impact storm sewers.

Beckius stated the tradeoff of building to parking space, and runoff in impact to watershed is about equal. It is a positive trade, more compact, and overall reducing impact of developing out as big as we once were.

Feit stated areas that are close to residential and also commercials may ask in the future that the requirements are removed since they are so close to commercial. Is that a future issue?

Thierolf stated someone could ask for a Change of Zone but there are different uses, and setbacks based on use. Long-term they would want to get rid of parking requirements overall.