

MEETING RECORD

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, August 17, 2011, 5:00 p.m., City Council Chambers, First Floor, County-City Building, 555 S. 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Leirion Gaylor Baird, Michael Cornelius, Dick Esseks, Wendy Francis, Jeanelle Lust, Jim Partington, Lynn Sunderman and Tommy Taylor (Roger Larson absent); Marvin Krout, Nicole Fleck-Tooze, David Cary, Jean Preister and Michele Abendroth of the Planning Department; media and other interested citizens.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Special Public Hearing on the “draft” 2040 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan (LPlan 2040) and the “draft” Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Chair Lynn Sunderman called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

There were no ex parte communications disclosed.

Staff presentation: **Nicole Fleck-Tooze of Planning staff** explained that the Comprehensive Plan and the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) represent a vision for Lincoln and Lancaster County and the community in the year 2040. This is a major update, which is done every 10 years, to look at where people will live, work, shop and travel around the community and to provide the infrastructure and services needed for the next 30 years. We anticipate 125,000 additional people by 2040.

Fleck-Tooze advised that these two plans are the result of more than a year-long public process which started with the formation of the LPlan Advisory Committee (LPAC) in June of 2010, which is a 20-person citizen committee of which the Planning Commission was a part. Throughout the summer, the Planning Department hosted a series of workshops on important topics and received over 95 “Bright Ideas” that were submitted in five different topic areas. At one of the workshops, the members and citizens were invited to examine options for direction and type of growth. That workshop, plus the input from LPAC was used to develop the three scenarios for future growth. Based on the input received from the broad public outreach, the staff and LPAC developed a preferred draft growth map and future land use plan, which was the basis for the detailed transportation planning that began in the first part of this year.

Fleck-Tooze also pointed out that during the course of the development of the draft plan, there were about 12 public meetings and workshops; and the staff met with many neighborhood groups, interest groups and organizations. The Department received input from hundreds of people through on-line surveys, e-mails, virtual town hall and social media, with 11,000 individual Web visits representing about 3,000 individuals.

Fleck-Tooze advised that there will be two more public hearings on the Comprehensive Plan and LRTP at the end of the regularly scheduled meetings of the Planning Commission on Wednesday, August 24th, and Wednesday, September 7th.

Fleck-Tooze also advised that a set of recommended changes were provided to the Planning Commission on Friday, August 12th. Those changes fell into four categories: 1) feedback from the individual LPAC members representing multiple changes throughout the document; 2) some changes to reflect recommendations from the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission and the Urban Design Committee to restate and add some emphasis on areas of importance to those groups relating to design standards, public buildings, the Downtown Master Plan and the work of the Urban Design Committee; 3) some changes to reflect feedback from the Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable and the Mayor's Aide for Stronger Safe Neighborhoods, to emphasize the importance of protecting existing neighborhoods and directing infill development; and 4) some changes based upon feedback from agencies relating to transportation, including the Federal Highway Administration, Nebraska Department of Roads and MPO. Further changes are anticipated based on local funding that is occurring at this time, and those additional changes will be prepared and submitted on August 24th.

Fleck-Tooze announced that as a result of today's workshop prior to this public hearing, there is a recommended change to the Parks & Recreation chapter relating to the renovation of neighborhood pools, i.e. a strategy to:

Renovate the five neighborhood pools (Air Park, Ballard, Belmont, Eden and Irvingdale) to bring the pool basins and bathhouses into compliance with accessibility guidelines, contingent upon adequate funding for annual operations and for repair/renovation costs.

Public Testimony

1. Mike Carlin, 2800 W. Paddock Road, President of the Hitching Post Hills Neighborhood Association and Board member of the Friends of Wilderness Park, stated that he is testifying on his own behalf. He believes this is a pretty impressive draft plan. It is obvious that a lot of work and dedication went into it. However, he was surprised to find that there is a rather radical reduction to the amount of land designated for regional and community parks in new growth areas. The current Comprehensive Plan requires a

level of service (LOS) of 2.5 acres for regional parks and 2.9 acres for community parks per 1,000 residents. The draft plan proposes to reduce the LOS to no set goal for regional parks and 1.3 acres for community parks. The combined effect cuts the guaranteed LOS from 5.4 acres to 2.4 acres, a 75% reduction that will be concentrated in new developing areas. Carlin believes that this is in direct conflict with the guiding principles cited at the beginning of the chapter:

Parks and open space enhance the quality of life of the community's residents and are central to the community's economic development strategy—the community's ability to attract and retain viable businesses, industries and employees is directly linked to quality of life issues, including indoor and outdoor recreational opportunities.

The proposed plan will reduce the city-wide LOS for community parks from 2.9 to 2.4 acres, not a huge change as an average, but pretty significant when you consider that the decreases will be concentrated in the new growth areas. With a higher percentage of new development areas paved and roofed, the amount of stormwater runoff will increase at the same time that the percentage of permeable park land decreases. With more stormwater, the costs will be higher and ultimately it could cost the city more in stormwater management costs. There is no guarantee that those extra developed acres will generate any tax revenues, as they could become the home of a mega church with a mega parking lot with mega runoff, with no tax revenue to pay for it, for example.

The proposed changes submitted last Friday add some verbiage on this subject attributing the change largely to financial reasons. Carlin pointed out that if we are looking to the short range in the next few years, the financial reasons are probably accurate, but this is a 30-year plan. If the LOS is lowered, we won't be able to raise it again in the future.

Carlin recommends that the LOS remain as it is today. Parks and trails were listed as a major factor for Lincoln being the #1 city to live in for college graduates.

Esseks stated that he shares Carlin's concern, and suggested to Carlin that the Planning Commission needs as much information as possible in the terms of studies either for Lincoln or for peer communities that can demonstrate the relationship between really good parks and trails and the attraction of people that invest and work in the community.

2. Dr. Earl Lampshire, 7208 Van Dorn, Apt. 224, testified about the widening of O Street. In 1955, he purchased 11 acres out by Hillcrest Country Club, facing O Street. It was all flat and for 25 years, he operated a Christmas tree farm on the property. At that time, he planted Christmas trees over the entire 11 acres. As the years went by, houses were built to the south of his property and they began to put the driveways in and the water began to come down through his property. Then they located Southeast

Community College and some other things to the west. The rains came and the water came and dug the creek deeper and deeper, and now it's almost a river. The city had told him there was nothing they could do. Dr. Lampshire quit the Christmas tree business and sold the property.

Dr. Lampshire pointed out that the water cannot get under O Street because of the small overpass. About 11 years ago, Dr. Lampshire contacted the State and he was told that there are plans to widen O Street and the creek. He was also told that when O Street is widened, the state will take some of this property and fill it in. Nothing has happened to O Street. He would hope the Planning Commission would realize that Lincoln has an opportunity to go east and O Street was supposed to be widened about five or more years ago. Nothing has been done. Is there anything in this plan that will tell me what is going to happen to O Street and whether something is going to be done to save the property from the water in that creek? Lampshire wants the city to be able to move further east.

3. Dale Arp, 426 Steele Avenue, testified on behalf of the Great Plains Trails Network (GPTN) to show support and appreciation for the process. The GPTN has followed the entire update process with a committee of members attending the meetings and activities, and they contributed a number of ideas. The GPTN has a membership of over 800 citizens who advocate a network of trails. The GPTN supports the acquisition, development and wide availability of trails by securing funds from private sources, working cooperatively with government agencies, by providing opportunity for persons to learn more about trails through education and organizing trail related events. The GPTN has accomplished raising over two million dollars for trails. Arp expressed appreciation to the staff and task force for this high quality work. This has been a wonderful learning experience, and the GPTN is quite satisfied.

4. Jim Cook, 3339 South 40th Street, also testified on behalf of the GPTN and agreed with Arp's testimony. They did attend a number of the meetings and were very impressed with the work done by the staff and the task force. The GPTN is in support of adoption of the plan. There are a lot of strategies supportive of the goals of the GPTN and they endorse the balance of the plan that appears to address all forms of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle transportation. The GPTN will be urging the decision makers in the future not to just write and talk about it, but to actually implement many of the things that are in the plan to make pedestrian and bicycle transportation more convenient. There is an energy problem in this country. Whatever we can do to reduce vehicular traffic will be to the benefit of the street system and to the benefit of all of us individually. We have to have facilities that will make it convenient.

Cook further advised that the GPTN would like to see all of the bicycle and pedestrian related facilities that are in the needs based plan implemented, but they also recognize choices had to be made for a financially constrained plan, and the GPTN concurs with the choices that have been made. They will be encouraging more of the needs based facilities in the future.

In addition, the GPTN recommends adoption of the Complete Streets concept referenced in the plan, the use of which was submitted by GPTN in the "Bright Ideas" exercise, and recommends that the city implement that Complete Streets policy before the next update of the plan.

5. Lisa Lee, 9145 Wishing Well Drive, moved to Lincoln from Kansas City about a year ago. She stated that she has slowly gotten more involved and has only attended a couple of the Comprehensive Plan meetings. She is here to suggest that there should be language in the strategies in the residential section in developing communities that is already in the plan in other sections. For example, relating to residential energy use, it would be good to encourage a passive solar type of design to reduce residential energy costs. It would be helpful to have that in the residential section for new residential development. It is a no cost way to produce energy. She does not see anything in the residential strategies that goes toward reducing energy costs. The community section includes a lot of very good language about energy costs and our relationship to the rest of the world and how there is pressure to reduce energy costs. She suggested that energy costs could also be addressed in commercial buildings. She suggested that this should become part of the building codes and zoning laws. She believes this is a fantastic community, but until the building codes reflect what you want to see, you may or may not see it. She knows there is a sensitivity for the market to drive development, but she is not sure the attitudes understand the options that are out there. Some builders are doing it because it is a nice niche, but most do not want to spend the extra money. This would level the playing field for the builders. If everyone has to spend the same amount of money, it makes it easier. It would be beneficial to the builders to increase those standards.

Esseks asked for an explanation of a "passive solar facility". Lee explained, e.g., lots should be north/south as opposed to east/west. Most of Lincoln's lots are laid out facing east and west. It is very common knowledge that east and west exposure increases your energy costs. The streets could be laid out such that the majority of the lots would be wider to the south and north so that the big windows would have the south exposure.

6. Rick Krueger, 8200 Cody Drive, appeared on own behalf. He supports the idea of local food production and suggested the simple statement that, "anybody who wants to garden in any zoning district and wants to sell that produce can do it".

Relating to sustainability, Krueger stated that he has an alternative view and believes we are sustainable. We generally call it "production" out in the industry, i.e. more productive in doing more with less. He challenges the thought that the earth is running out of energy. He submitted an article entitled, "Potential Gas Committee", from the Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado, indicating that we have more recoverable gas today than at any other time in our history. That's just one example. In terms of LES, we can already see the new generation of light bulbs coming on. In addition, we know that heating and air conditioning equipment efficiencies are increasing. Krueger submitted that the verbiage in the plan relative to running out of fuel and foreclosing options for our future should be removed from the plan.

Krueger also submitted an article published in the Seattle Times which states that, "Seattle green jobs program falls short of goals." After one year, just 14 jobs have emerged from the program, almost all of which are administrative. They are not getting things done. Krueger thus suggested that the market is taking care of itself in all of these areas. The reason is because we need density, but he does not believe the densification will be acceptable by the public in Lincoln.

Krueger also shared a report he had from Steve Henrichsen of the Planning Department dated in 2009 which shows that we have more park space in Lincoln than we have industrial ground.

Krueger would like to see some language in the business portions about the liberal interpretation of business zoning. The policy of planning appears to be that when you interpret a land use, you do it in the most conservative manner. He thinks it needs to be in the most liberal manner, so the developer can allow capital to form to get the job done.

Krueger is opposed to design standards on any of the business zoning areas. They are a hindrance to people creating the capital and getting things done.

Krueger encouraged the need to simplify zoning. For example, early on in this process the staff was promoting the old Richman Gordon site as an area for mixed use development. The zoning was changed because a new buyer wanted some office use, some retail use and some manufacturing. The key is to go for more wide range business zoning. "Simplify" and give more rights to the people who want to do things like that, especially in redeveloping areas.

The same goes for mixed use redeveloping -- simplify, simplify, simplify. They talk about pedestrian connection, but what we really want to do is integrate those mixed use developments into the neighborhoods. It is better to have a commercial street system with the residential. He does not think we should have design standards. He is also

critical of the idea of assigning this task of mixed use to Urban Development or some advisory committee. He wants to look at the underlying zoning and get the job done without going through a process. "We do not need any more cooks in the kitchen."

Krueger is also opposed to stormwater utility. That would be very negative.

Taylor asked Krueger to explain his statement about pedestrian connections. Krueger stated that the plan has a predisposition to try to have more pedestrian movements, and that's fine; but, in the commercial realm, it doesn't matter. It is more important to have the proper street connections. 90% of the people do their trips in cars. That's the market that has to be served.

7. Travis Davis, 1621 G Street, Apt. 4, appeared on his own behalf. It may be true that 90% of the people make trips in cars, but he thinks you encourage trips in cars by the type of planning that is done. If you are encouraging easier pedestrian connection throughout the city, that encourages that type of transportation, as opposed to catering to the historical use of the vehicle.

He is encouraged to see talk about raising public awareness of the impacts of global issues on the local environment and economy in the plan. If the public feels like they are instigating the change, it gains momentum. Raising public awareness creates the political demand for well informed change. When people feel like it is their idea and not the government telling them what to do, it starts to gain a lot more momentum.

8. Adam Hintz, 1611 Van Dorn Street, appeared on behalf of the Friends of Wilderness Park, a nonprofit organization dedicated to preservation of Wilderness Park and all natural areas in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The Friends of Wilderness Park advocate natural area preservation. They would like to see the city-wide level of service remain the minimum of 2.9 acres of community park per 1,000 residents.

Hintz then stated that he is testifying on his own behalf with regard to sustainability. He is pleased to see that the proposed plan includes a large amount of sustainability. There are things in the plan that could be better, but it is such a wonderful huge step towards a place that he feels comfortable leaving to his children. He expressed appreciation for all of the work that has been put into this issue in the plan. He has a vision of what he sees for his children growing up – local foods, riding bikes, walking, less and less trash, and more nature. This plan reflects that vision in a large way.

(As amended on 8/23/11**)**

Break

Meeting was reconvened at 6:50 p.m.

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There was no other public testimony.

The Clerk submitted a letter received from the Near South Neighborhood Association.

Cornelius expressed appreciation to the members of the public who testified and gave some direction, and he is hopeful to see more in the future.

The Clerk then announced that these items will have continued public hearing on Wednesday, August 24th, and Wednesday, September 7th, at the end of the regular meeting of the Planning Commission, which begins at 1:00 p.m. Any written comments may be made by e-mail to plan@lincoln.ne.gov; on-line at LPlan2040.lincoln.ne.gov; or mailed to the Planning Department, 555 S. 10th Street, Room 213, 68508, all of which will be put in the public record and considered by the Planning Commission.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Please note: These minutes will not be formally approved until the next regular meeting of the Planning Commission on August 24, 2011.