

## BRIEFING NOTES

**NAME OF GROUP:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Wednesday, February 28, 2018, 2:30 p.m., Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Tom Beckius, Tracy Corr, Tracy Edgerton, Deane Finnegan, Maja Harris, Chris Hove and Christy Joy; (Dennis Scheer and Sändra Washington absent).

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** David Cary, Paul Barnes, Andrew Thierolf, George Wesselhoft and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Dept.

**STATED PURPOSE:** Briefing on “**Downtown Master Plan Update**” by Planning Dept. staff.

Vice-Chair Tracy Corr called the meeting to order and acknowledged the posting of the Open Meetings Act in the back of the room.

David Cary stated that this briefing is on the Downtown Master Plan. The consultant was in town for the last couple of days. He believes we are off to a good start. There has been great attendance at the meetings. He thinks it is a good time to do this. The consultant team has proven to be the right people for this job.

Paul Barnes explained that the last couple of days have been very busy with meetings and events. The consultants have headed back to Denver. The steering committee was the kick off. The Mayor attended the meeting. The second meeting was a larger stakeholder group with downtown interests, along with staff. They held the meeting downtown to generate more interest in the downtown area. Yesterday there was a meeting at the Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA). Then there were three working groups. They were Vibrant Economy, Public Realm & Urban Design and Housing & Livability. The DLA is a partner in this project. Brad Seagal with P.U.M.A., the consultant, met with local developers. He heard it was a very productive meeting. We will receive a summary of all the meetings and events in a week or so. Seagal and Cary also met with Mayor Beutler. We did a tour of the study area yesterday. He thinks along with the walking tour, the consultant has a good feel of the downtown area. As we started the meeting, we wanted to explain how the committee’s role fits with the overall process. This information is available on the city website, keyword “downtown”. There was a steering committee and a project committee. There was a lot of enthusiasm and energy. The last Downtown Master Plan was in 2005. He believes there are a lot of new ideas. He posed

two questions to commissioners. What are your expectations of the Downtown Master Plan and what are two desired improvements you would like to see in downtown?

Finnegan stated that regarding expectations, she has seen many plans over the years and doesn't want to see it sit on a shelf and be forgotten.

Edgerton likes the emphasis on diversity and getting input from different sectors. She wants to make sure we get input from people who aren't present. She wants to make sure everything is critically evaluated. Barnes noted that we have already received interest from people who want to be involved in the process.

Beckius would like this to be a guidebook that tells us how to involve every segment of our population into downtown and make sure it is a desirable place for all members of our community.

Corr wants to make sure we reach for the next level and don't stagnate. Barnes noted that we added in the RFP (Request For Proposals) how we make this a city for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Corr believes we are getting there with the autonomous shuttle and bike share. Barnes stated that the consultant noticed those items.

Hove sees that we need to continue to focus on the vibrancy of the downtown area. He doesn't want to see downtown get left behind. We are fortunate that we continue to focus on the downtown area.

Joy stated that one of the things she thinks about is that the downtown serves the entire state. People come in from the county and the entire state. Everyone needs to be addressed.

Harris wants to see the trend report. She expects it to incorporate ride sharing, driverless technologies and ways to alleviate parking congestion. She wants to see a big playground that will pull in people to play and run errands. She lived downtown with a small child and it is one of the most limiting challenges. If you are going to have people choose to live downtown, you have to have places for kids. She expects to think about the financial viability of shops. It is horrible to park around the Capitol Building. They either need a ride sharing option or more places to park. She anticipates the South Haymarket will be addressed. She wants to see the O Street bars addressed also. They were there before we had everything else and she wants to make sure they are included.

Finnegan stated that regarding improvements, she would like to see traffic movement addressed. If we can find a good traffic movement for downtown, it would be nice. It is nice that there is a lot of foot traffic, but it slows down traffic movement. She goes to St. Petersburg

Florida a lot. They have turned downtown into a great place that you want to go. It is fun with a lot of activities. We need to make sure that we have a good mix downtown.

Edgerton thinks about how public transit ties in, how to better use it and make it more appealing.

Beckius would like to see explored if there are more players to be brought in, such as developers who don't do anything downtown. He thinks when we talk about conversations, he would imagine those developers already develop in downtown. He would like have conversations with developers that don't currently develop in downtown and ask them why. Hove believes it is all national players that build downtown. Beckius would like to find out what is problematic about downtown for them. He would really like to see affordable housing in downtown. He would like to see options. There is city owned property that could be used for this.

Corr stated that in her opinion, it seems that over the past year, she has noticed more homeless people in the traditional downtown area. This needs to be addressed.

Hove agrees with parking concerns from other commissioners. There has to be a way to have better parking so we can attract people who don't live downtown. Perhaps a shuttle service could be implemented.

Corr stated that when you come to an event downtown and park in a garage, there is only one lane to exit. She doesn't understand why traffic can't move better.

Joy would like to see improvements on retention programs that help keep people in the downtown area. She reiterated Beckius's comments on affordable housing.

Harris would like to see a playground with lots of fun easy things around like coffee shops, places to eat, a community. That is how every European city is designed. Americans love to go to those places. European cities are centered around squares. She thinks that is what downtown is. We need to create the buzz for the natural gathering places. She would like to see ride sharing addressed. She struggles with the driving question. Parking places and garages are taking the space of something that could be a lot more fun. Anytime we encourage mixed use is a good thing.

Barnes noted there are a lot of themes from this conversation that came up in the discussions we have already had. Staff met with the DLA. The number one desired improvement was a kid friendly downtown. Also noted were a convention center, supporting additional start ups and headquarters and having a variety of housing options.

The Vibrant Economy working group had 12 attendees. Their desired improvements were a new downtown library, active ground floor space, a diversity of housing and better parking management and supply.

The Housing and Livability working group had 14 attendees. The number one desired improvement was housing for the middle. They would like to see additional catalyst and redevelopment projects, parking stock and management, green space and an enhanced transit loop.

The Public Realm working group had 14 attendees. Their number one desired improvement was having amenities and services to support downtown residents such as a grocery store and dentist. They also noted a desire for green space that is family and pet friendly.

The next consultant visit will be in April. We will continue with working groups. We will have discussions with UNL (University of Nebraska Lincoln) and Nebraska state staff. There is a community open house and global trends presentation on April 10, 2018 at the Rococo Theater. There will be another project committee meeting at the Kiechel Art Gallery. We are trying to give the consultants exposure to our downtown.

Beckius wondered if the consultants are looking at what we would consider an expanded version of downtown. Barnes would say yes. As we toured the area with them, we noted neighborhoods that influence downtown. He believes that will be part of the work.

Cary thinks the consultant team is already looking how to consider the housing stock around downtown and how it all plays into one another. How do the wider pieces fit together?

Beckius asked what the boundary is of the downtown study. Barnes replied that the boundary was part of the RFP process, which was driven by the last study. It doesn't mean you don't look further beyond the boundaries.

Beckius would like to see normal Lincolnites not associated with downtown, involved in the committees. Barnes believes that could be part of our outreach. Cary believes a wider net could include others as well. Barnes added that city staff will be available to meet with groups as requested.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:10 p.m.