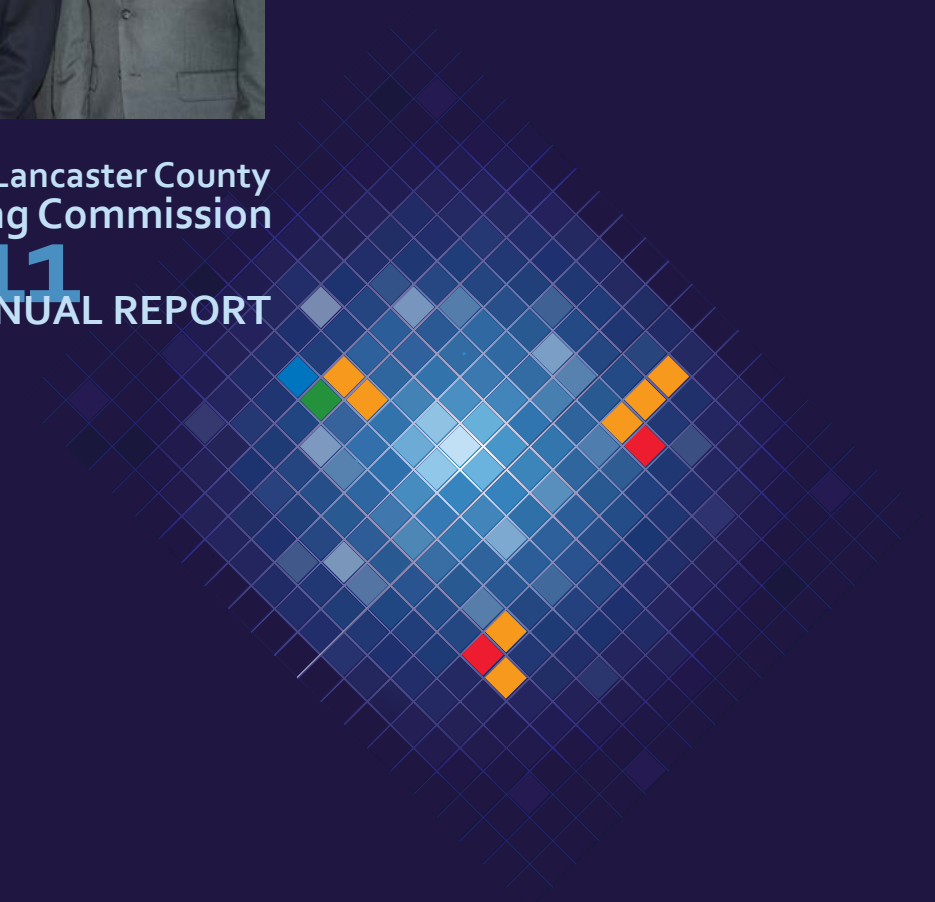




Lincoln-Lancaster County
Planning Commission
2011
ANNUAL REPORT



on the cover



*Pictured left to right are Chris Hove, Lynn Sunderman, Jeanelle Lust,
Dick Esseks, Chair Michael Cornelius, Leirion Gaylor Baird and Greg Butcher.
(Not pictured are Vice Chair Wendy Francis and Ken Weber.)*

ANNUAL REPORT

This report summarizes the major activities undertaken over the past calendar year by the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission.

This is a body of nine citizens appointed for staggered six-year terms by the Mayor of Lincoln with the concurrence of the City Council and the Lancaster County Board of Commissioners.

The Planning Commission is charged by state and local law with advising the two elected bodies on a variety of planning and development matters. It operates under an interlocal agreement dating back to 1958.



The bulk of the Commission's time in 2011 was spent in workshops and hearings related to the update of the City-County Comprehensive Plan (LPlan 2040) and the related Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Lincoln metro area, which is needed to fulfill federal grant requirements.

The Commission held 26 LPAC workshops over the past two years, including 13 in 2011. The Commission held an additional four workshops and three public hearings in August and September on the Plan and the LRTP, which were approved by the elected officials in November and December.

Late in 2011, the Commission considered a number of amendments to the new Plan, including three specifically suggested by the Lancaster County Commissioners near the end of the planning process.

The new Comprehensive Plan continues the basic planning principles adopted in previous plans, which have served the community well over six decades:

- Plan the City and County as one unified community.
- Manage urban growth through coordinated service extensions with annexation.
- Plan expansion by incremental opening of gravity-based sewer basins.
- Continue to emphasize downtown as the heart of the community.
- Recognize the importance of neighborhoods as building blocks.
- Respect natural and agricultural resources in the County's rural areas.

In addition, the new Plan includes:

- more emphasis on the potential for up to one-sixth of new development to occur through infill and redevelopment, with the potential for millions of dollars in annual savings on public infrastructure and services;
- greater attention to maintaining existing transportation infrastructure as part of the budgeting process; and
- more emphasis on the importance of well-designed commercial and mixed-use developments, especially along the City's major travelways.

APPLICATIONS HANDLED

The Planning Department tracks development applications by fiscal and not calendar year, so the latest summary information is for the fiscal year from September 1, 2010 through August 31, 2011. The summary provides an indication of the volume and trends in recent applications.

The chart to the right provides a history of applications over the past six fiscal years, and about half were reviewed by the Planning Commission. The total volume of applications is still well below the volumes reported in the mid-2000s, reflecting the continuing effects of the recession on the real estate industry. But the volume in the last year did climb over 12 percent from the previous year, indicating the beginning of a rebound.

PLANNING DEPT APPLICATIONS	05-06	06-07	07-08	08-09	09-10	10-11
Annexations	18	8	10	25	3	3
Preliminary Plats*	14	4	6	0	3	1
Final Plats	149	107	84	69	88	100
CUPs and CUP amendments	18	14	9	3	4	12
Use Permits	13	6	8	9	2	6
Special Permits and amendments	51	50	56	39	38	31
Change of Zone - Map	53	48	38	22	13	25
PUD	7	4	8	8	1	5
Board of Zoning Appeals	12	4	7	4	0	0
Street Name Changes	11	5	1	2	5	3
Street and Alley Vacations	12	11	11	10	15	13
Administrative Amendments	134	120	84	68	69	62
Comp Plan Conformity	18	34	34	15	11	11
Comp Plan Amendments	3	0	1	6	2	0
Waiver of Design Standards	8	11	7	7	21	34
CZ to text of zoning, sub and des std	23	26	28	21	14	21
Miscellaneous/Other	4	4	3	8	6	5
TOTAL PER FISCAL YEAR	548	456	395	316	295	332

CUP - Community Unit Plan PUD - Planned Unit Development CZ - Change of Zone
(*Preliminary plats were rolled into CUPs and Use permits on 4/25/05.)

Applications of note.

Developers responded to the expected demand for rental housing with a number of requests for new or expanded apartment projects. New projects were approved for the following locations:

- 24th and Dodge streets
- 33rd St. and Folkways Blvd.
- N. 14th St. and Fletcher Ave,
- N. 40th St. and Colfax Ave.

Expansions were approved for the following locations:

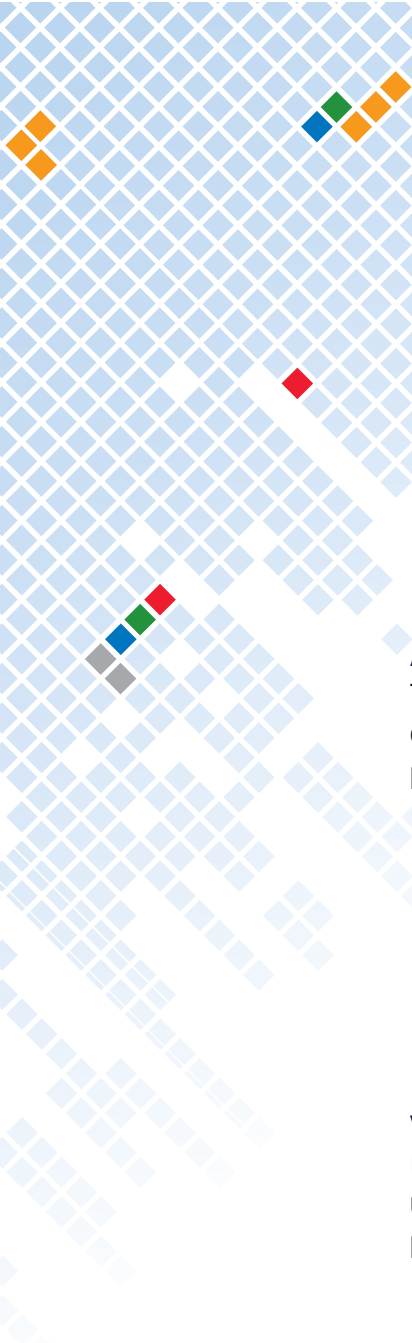
- S. 27th St. and Tierra Drive
- Folsom and "C" streets
- N. 63rd and Dudley streets
- 70th and Van Dorn streets

A major residential expansion was approved for Village Gardens, and major commercial expansion was approved for Fallbrook.

Applications for smaller infill-type developments included the following:

- a new convenience store at 25th and "O" streets
- a new credit union at 33rd and "A" streets
- a new daycare center on the site of Belmont School and Park at N. 14th and Judson streets
- the reuse of the Meadowgold Dairy block in the South Haymarket
- redevelopment of the AGR fraternity house at Holdrege St. and Idylwild Drive

Last year also saw action on the long-awaited Ringneck development, on the west side of N.W. 48th Street from the I-80 interchange to north of Holdrege Street. The development, which had been approved by the Commission in 2008, was approved by the City Council late in 2011, but the decision was appealed to District Court by an abutting property owner.



CODE AMENDMENTS

The Commission reviewed several code amendments including the following:

- Changes to the H-2 (*Highway Commercial*) zoning district to enable the reuse of the former Gordman's store at Vine and North 45th streets for office and assembly uses.
- Changes to the AG (*Agricultural*) district to provide appropriate standards for commercial wind farms in rural areas.
- Prohibition of any new sexually oriented live entertainment establishments in the B-4 (*Lincoln Center Business*) district.

The Commission considered a proposal to limit the location of new bars downtown, and that application continued into 2012. The Commission also was briefed on proposed access management policies, which are expected to be considered formally in early 2012.

ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

The Planning Commission was involved in reviewing several changes to codes and administrative procedures intended to improve service and reduce processing timeframes. They include:

- Restoring the previous practice of providing "zoning confirmation letters" to property owners, lenders and others requiring this kind of information in land transactions.
- Reducing the timeframe in the subdivision code for review of subdivision applications.
- Amending submission requirements to encourage quicker turnaround on required signatures to file plats.

WORKSHOPS

In addition to the many workshops held as part of the Comprehensive Plan update, the Commission participated in a number of workshops on other planning topics:

- zoning enforcement (*with the Building and Safety Department*)
- commercial wind farms
- Lincoln's six-year Capital Improvement Program (*CIP*) and four-year federal Transportation Improvement Program (*TIP*)
- financial guarantees in the subdivision process
- the proposed access management policy
- proposed changes in zoning code organization/formatting into "Use Groups" (*three sessions*)

CHANGES IN MEMBERSHIP

Shortly after the Planning Commission's work on LPlan 2040 was completed, the terms of three Commission members expired and one Commissioner resigned. One member was reappointed for an additional term, and three new members were appointed to the Commission in November. When the term of the Planning Commission chair ended in August, the vice-chair was elected to be the new chair, and a new vice-chair was elected. The members who served in all or part of 2011 were:

- Lynn Sunderman (*appointed in 2003 and reappointed in 2009; served as chair until August*)
- Michael Cornelius (*appointed in 2006 and reappointed in 2009; vice-chair until August, and elected new chair*)
- Wendy Francis (*appointed in 2007; elected vice-chair in August*)
- Dick Esseks (*appointed in 2005 and reappointed in 2011*)
- Leirion Gaylor Baird (*appointed in 2007*)
- Jeanelle Lust (*appointed in 2009*)
- Tommy Taylor (*appointed in 1999, reappointed in 2005, term expired in 2011*)
- Roger Larson (*appointed in 2002, reappointed in 2005, term expired in 2011*)
- Jim Partington (*appointed in 2007 and resigned in 2011*)
- Greg Butcher (*appointed in November 2011*)
- Chris Hove (*appointed in November 2011*)
- Ken Weber (*appointed in November 2011*)

As in past years, the Commissioners' attendance was exemplary, with attendance at formal meetings averaging 94 percent. Michael Cornelius had perfect attendance in 2011.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Planning Department intends to engage the Commissioners and other stakeholders in developing strategies to help implement the goals and principles in the new Comprehensive Plan. Plans for 2012 include the following:

- Implement the reorganization of the zoning code, and update Community Unit Plan and other design standards.
- Remove zoning barriers, such as excessive parking and setback requirements. Provide waiver options to older commercial districts, and review opportunities for more administrative approvals.
- Create new building and site design standards for commercial and mixed-use projects.
- Review potential financial incentives to encourage quality mixed-use infill and redevelopment, including expanded exemption of impact fees and expanded use of tax increment financing (TIF).
- Make progress on a land use/design plan for the South Haymarket area.
- Engage in cooperative planning with the Public Works and Utilities Department on Highway 2 corridor improvements, pending federal grant approval.
- Develop Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies.
- Develop a strategic plan for City-wide pedestrian-bicycle improvements.

CONCLUSION

The Planning Commission continued to play an important role in the development of Lincoln and Lancaster County over the past year – crafting a new community vision through the update of the Comprehensive Plan, deliberating over numerous and sometimes contentious development applications, and working on various improvements to local codes and administrative procedures. We appreciate the opportunity to serve our community in this role, and hope that our local elected officials have found our efforts to be helpful.


Michael Cornelius, Chair