



Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission **2015 Annual Report**

On the Cover:
Front row from left, Ken Weber, Cathy Beecham, Jeanelle Lust, Tracy Corr, Maya V. Harris. Back row from left, Michael Cornelius, Vice-Chair Dennis Scheer, Lynn Sunderman, Chair Chris Hove.

APPLICATIONS

The summary below provides an indication of the volume and trends in recent applications submitted to the Planning Department over the past six fiscal years. The Planning Commission directly reviewed about half of the applications. The volumes of the past three fiscal years reflect the continued rebound of development activity toward pre-recession levels.

PLANNING DEPT APPLICATIONS	09-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15
Annexations	3	3	7	6	6	11
Preliminary plats*	3	1	1	2	4	1
Final plats	88	100	102	139	112	129
Community Unit Plan amendments (CUP)	4	12	11	12	15	14
Use permits	2	6	5	4	13	12
Special permits and amendments	38	31	40	46	40	60
Change of zone-Map	13	25	24	16	23	22
Change of zone-Historic Preservation (HP)***				5	2	2
Change of zone-Sign district***				2	1	1
Change of zone-Planned Unit Developments (PUDs)	1	5	11	8	8	13
Board of Zoning Appeals	0	0	4	3	4	3
Street name changes	5	3	2	2	1	0
Street and alley vacations	15	13	9	9	10	11
Administrative amendments	69	62	65	106	83	103
Comp Plan conformity	11	11	15	18	35	19
Comp Plan amendments	2	0	9	2	7	7
Waiver of design standards	21	34	23	7	11	9
Text amendments	14	21	13	13	15	20
Miscellaneous/other	6	5	9	2	2	3
Urban design review**			42	57	42	42
TOTAL PER FISCAL YEAR	295	332	392	459	434	482

*Preliminary plats rolled into CUPs and use permits on 4/25/2005

**Urban design review added in 2012

***Change of Zone HP and Sign District not tracked separately in previous years

This report summarizes the major activities of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission during the past calendar year. The nine Commissioners are appointed for staggered six-year terms by Lincoln's Mayor, 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 boards on a variety of planning and development matters. It operates under an interlocal agreement dating back to 1958.

APPLICATIONS OF NOTE

Some of the more notable development applications reviewed by the Planning Commission included the following:

- » The Knolls: conversion of golf course to healthcare facility and residential uses
- » SouthPointe Pavilions: major revision for Scheel's expansion at 27th and Pine Lake Road
- » New Cornhusker Bank headquarters at 84th and O Street
- » Height waiver to allow new Hudl corporate headquarters in West Haymarket
- » Telegraph District first phase at 21st and L Street
- » Avalon Event Paradise application for expanded home occupation on Highway 33 (pending)
- » 42nd and Vine Street apartment complex and broadcast tower relocation
- » Pipeline Planning Area review of various applications along natural gas lines in several locations
- » Multi-story completely enclosed mini-warehouse near N. 84th and Holdrege Street



Telegraph District - Phase One



Swanson Russell Addition



Schwarz Building



Hudl Headquarters

- » New cell tower applications at churches to address increasing wireless loads in neighborhoods
- » Trinity Oaks: build-through designed plan for residential development on South 56th Street

The Planning Commission also reviewed applications for local historic landmark designations, National Register of Historic Places listings and redevelopment plans. There were also complex design reviews by the design review boards that informed the Planning Commission. Such applications involve efforts by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC), Urban Design Committee (UDC), and the Nebraska Capitol Environs Commission (NCEC). Applications under these headings receiving reviews by the Planning Commission included the following:

Local Historic Landmark Designations

- » Rees House, 47th and Bancroft
- » Benz/VanAndel Houses, 13th and D

National Register of Historic Places Listing

- » Former Wesleyan Hospital, 48th and Madison

Redevelopment Plans

- » Schwarz Building, 8th and O
- » Hittle Project, mixed use on 64th and Ballard in Havelock
- » Hudl Headquarters, Canopy St. at P St.
- » Robbers Cave, S. 10th St.
- » Swanson Russell Addition, N. 12th at Q
- » Former Office Max site, 23rd and O
- » VA Campus/VASH Housing, S. 70th Street
- » Telegraph District, 21st and N Street

Complex Reviews by Design Boards

- » Sophy Teeters demolition request (HPC)
- » Centennial Mall "Spirit of Nebraska Pathway" plaques (NCEC)
- » Nebraska History Museum 1% for Art installation (NCEC)
- » Courtyard revisions, President and Ambassador Apartments at S. 14th and Lincoln Mall (NCEC)
- » 11th and N Bus stop (UDC)
- » S. 8th Street "Shipping Container" House by NeighborWorks (UDC)
- » 5331 Roose St. duplex (UDC, Neighborhood Design Standards appeal)
- » 224 N. 28th (UDC, not built after adverse review)
- » "Douglas Building" at 13th and P into Fly Fitness and Brown Law Office (UDC, Downtown Design Standards appeal)

MY TOWN, LANCASTER COUNTY

Every other year, the budget is a major work item. The “off-years” of the budget cycle allow for additional work efforts to be undertaken, and in 2015 the Planning Department planned and executed the My Town, Lancaster County project. In 2014, the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department, Lancaster County Board of Commissioners and Lancaster County Extension Office of the University of Nebraska completed an application for a Citizens’ Institute on Rural Design award on behalf of the small towns of Lancaster County. The award was to provide funding for a rural design technical workshop that would bring information and resources to the towns to start a conversation on the particular challenges and opportunities afforded to small towns which share their county with a major city.

A three-day workshop in March 2015 addressed these issues. Participants discussed topics of community identity, unique attributes and opportunities, the challenges of keeping a small town vibrant in the shadow of a major city, and resources and tools for bringing vision to reality. The communities of Bennet, Denton, Firth, Hallam, Hickman, Panama and Waverly participated in the three-day workshop.

With leftover funds from the workshop, staff was able to design and organize two “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” (LQC) demonstration projects in Bennet and Hallam in August. “Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper” (LQC) is a phrase to describe the simple, short-term and low-cost solutions that are having remarkable impacts on shaping neighborhoods and cities around the world. LQC projects demonstrate how public spaces can be created and transformed by making a series of affordable, human-scale and near-term changes.

SOUTH HAYMARKET NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN

The South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan was reviewed and adopted in 2015. The purpose of the plan is to encourage and guide redevelopment over the next 25 years. The recommendations derived from this plan support significant residential development in this area of Greater Downtown Lincoln.

South Haymarket is a 38-block area south of the Historic Haymarket. South Haymarket is an intriguing area of Lincoln, given its history of development, including industrial properties, commercial buildings and residences along 9th and 10th Streets. Coupled with its desirable location, this pattern of development provides the foundation for substantial development and redevelopment opportunities.

The South Haymarket area has already been experiencing successful redevelopment projects such as the Color Court Project, Dairy House Project, N Street Cycle Track, Schwarz Paper Building, Lumberworks parking garage, 8|N Lofts and Structural Design Group redevelopment.



My Town Workshop



Hallam Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper



Bennet Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper



South Haymarket Vision



Future N Street Redevelopment



Future J Street Redevelopment

The South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan process began with an inventory of the area in early 2013. Staff held meetings with multiple public agencies and more than two dozen property owners, business owners and stakeholders. Additionally, staff toured several business facilities and photographed and inventoried nearly every block in the study boundary. Staff provided a series of presentations to public boards and commissions in the summer of 2014, as well as an open house for South Haymarket stakeholders and the general public. Four key findings resonated from these discussions:

- » South Haymarket should be a mixed-use district with an emphasis on urban infill housing in support of Greater Downtown.
- » South Haymarket's proximity to Haymarket and other Downtown attractions make it a desirable place to live.
- » Public rights-of-way should be upgraded to identify pedestrian, bicyclist and vehicular routes and to enhance connections within and across the neighborhood.
- » The government and industrial footprints in South Haymarket have an impact on redevelopment opportunities.

A second round of discussions and a public open house occurred in late 2015 to review the findings of the Plan.

City Council approved the plan (6-0) on December 21, 2015.

CODE AMENDMENTS

While there were a number of minor code amendments processed in the last year, one major amendment stood out – the wind energy code amendment made to the County Zoning Ordinance.

The Lincoln/ Lancaster County Planning Department and Lincoln/ Lancaster County Health Department hosted a series of meetings with a working group to help staff revise the current regulations regarding commercial wind energy projects. The working group of 12 people included people with various viewpoints and interests, including industry representatives and environmental interests along with landowners and residents of various viewpoints about wind turbines. The working group was joined by eight members from Gage County who are working on the same topic. The goal of the Working Group process was to develop a text amendment that permits commercial wind energy projects provided there is adequate protection of adjacent property owners and residents.

On August 19th, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on Commercial Wind Energy Text Amendment No. 15009. The Commission voted 5-4 to recommend approval as corrected by staff with amendments to the shadow flicker and noise levels sections. The Planning Commission is an advisory group to the Lancaster County Board, which in turn held a public hearing on the proposed Wind Energy Text Amendment on Tuesday, October 20th. The County Board approved the text amendments to the County Zoning

Code based on the noise recommendations of the Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department of 40 decibels (daytime) and 37 decibels (nighttime).

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPROVEMENTS

The Planning Department took steps to go more digital with its application information and process this past year. With the PATS (Planning Application Tracking Service) system already providing all correspondence and related material for applications digitally, it was determined this was the time to streamline the number of paper copies used in the Planning Department files and provided in the City Council fact sheets.

Looking forward to 2016, the Planning Commission will be going fully digital with its agenda material by providing all needed information through online sources and links to the PATS system. This will save on photocopy expenses, postage, paper usage and staff time needed to prepare copies and mailings.

WORKSHOPS

The past year included many additional briefings and work sessions for the Planning Commission with the beginning of the update process for the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Comprehensive Plan. This added work effort will continue through 2016. Below is a complete listing of briefings and workshops the Planning Commission held in 2015:

- » Fiscal Year 2016-2019 Transportation Improvement Program
- » The Community Indicators Report
- » Lighting Study Update
- » Wind Energy Text Amendment Briefing
- » South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan
- » Complete Streets, Bike Share and N Street Cycle Track Update
- » LRTP/Comprehensive Plan Review/Update Process
- » Emerald Ash Borer-Parks/Pipeline Planning Area - Health Department
- » LRTP/Comp Plan Update Kickoff

NEW DIRECTOR

David Cary was named the new Director of the Planning Department this past year. David had been serving as the Acting Director since the passing of Marvin Krout in November of 2014.





LOOKING AHEAD TO 2016

The Planning Department will continue extensive engagement of the Planning Commission, stakeholder groups and the public in 2016 with the concluding updates to the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Comprehensive Plan. Many projects and topics that will likely be brought before the Planning Commission for review and discussion include the following:

- » Implementation of the planned bike share program in Downtown Lincoln. Funding is secured for purchase and installation of the racks, bikes and technology infrastructure as well as the first year of operational and maintenance costs.
- » Completion of the update to the Long Range Transportation Plan with work conducted by the consultant team and staff.
- » Completion of the related Comprehensive Plan update.
- » Project prioritization and Comprehensive Plan conformity reviews for capital projects in the 2016/2017-2021/2022 Capital Improvement Program.
- » Consideration and action on the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Program.
- » Completion of work on the outdoor lighting design standards.
- » Review of the 2016 Community Indicators Report.
- » Implementation of a more digital application and agenda process.
- » An expected steady flow of development applications for review and action.
- » Regular updates related to Complete Streets projects and their implementation.
- » Implementation of priority items identified during the update of the Comprehensive Plan.
- » Implementation of priority items identified in the South Haymarket Neighborhood Plan.

CONCLUSION

The Planning Commission continued to play an important role in the development of Lincoln and Lancaster County over the past year. Commissioners deliberated numerous and sometimes contentious development applications and worked 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.

Chris Hove, Chair