

MEETING RECORD

Advanced public notice of the Planning Commission meeting was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website. In addition, a public notice was emailed to the Lincoln Journal Star for publication on Tuesday, August 26, 2025.

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME, AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, September 03, 2025, 1:00 p.m., Hearing Room 112, on the first floor of the County-City Building, 555 S. 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
IN ATTENDANCE:	Lorenzo Ball, Dick Campbell, Brett Ebert, Gloria Eddins, Cristy Joy, Rich Rodenburg, Cindy Ryman Yost; Andrew Thierolf, Paul Barnes, David Cary, Rachel Christopher, Steve Henrichsen, Shelli Reid, and Laura Tinnerstet, of the Planning Department, media, and other interested citizens.
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING:	Regular Planning Commission Hearing

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

Chair Joy requested a motion approving the minutes for the regular meeting held August 20, 2025.

Motion for approval of the minutes made by Eddins, seconded by Rodenburg.

Minutes approved 5-0: Ball, Ebert, Eddins, Joy, and Rodenburg voting "yes". Cruz, Feit and Ryman Yost absent. Campbell abstained.

Chair Joy asked the Clerk to call for the Consent Agenda Items.

CONSENT AGENDA
PUBLIC HEARING & ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION
BEFORE PLANNING COMMISSION: **September 03, 2025**

Members present: Ball, Campbell, Ebert, Eddins, Joy, and Rodenburg. Cruz, Feit, and Ryman Yost absent.

The Consent Agenda consisted of the following items: Comprehensive Plan Conformance 25007, Text Amendment 25010, and Miscellaneous 25011.

There were no ex parte communications disclosed.

There were no ex parte communications disclosed relating to site visit.

Eddins moved for approval of the Consent Agenda; seconded by Rodenburg

Consent Agenda approved 6 -0: Ball, Campbell, Ebert, Eddins, Joy and Rodenburg, voting "yes". Cruz, Feit, and Ryman Yost absent.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT 25004 - TO AMEND THE 2050 LINCOLN-LANCASTER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN TO ADOPT THE "BELMONT NEIGHBORHOOD SUBAREA PLAN' WHICH INCLUDES A STRATEGIC VISION FOR ENHANCEMENTS TO THE BELMONT AND LANDON'S NEIGHBORHOODS AND A FRAMEWORK FOR ACHIEVING THAT VISION. THE SUBAREA PLAN IS GENERALLY BOUNDED BY I-180 ON THE WEST, SUPERIOR STREET ON THE NORTH, NORTH 27TH STREET ON THE EAST, AND CORNHUSKER HIGHWAY ON THE SOUTH.

PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION:

SEPTEMBER 03, 2025

Members present: Ball, Campbell, Ebert, Eddins, Joy, Rodenburg and Ryman Yost. Cruz and Feit absent.

Staff Recommendation: Approval

There were no ex parte communications disclosed.

There were no ex parte communications disclosed relating to site visits.

Staff/Applicant Presentation-

Andrew Thierolf, Planning Department, 555 S. 10th Street, Suite 213, Lincoln, NE, came forward with **Jennifer Hiatt, Urban Development, 555 S. 10th Street, Suite 205, Lincoln, NE,** and began a joint presentation to introduce the new project as an exciting step forward. Thierolf noted that this marks the second subarea plan proposed this year under the Comprehensive Plan—an uncommon occurrence in a typical year. Unlike the previously presented University Place Plan, this new plan represents a collaborative effort between the Planning Department and Urban Development. In addition to internal coordination, the project involved external partners, including architectural firms BNIM and Sinclair Hille, along with contributions from other community stakeholders.

Hiatt expanded on Thierolf's comments, highlighting that the opportunity to complete two subarea plans in one year is rare due to the significant staff time and public input effort involved. Hiatt credited the Community Health Endowment of Lincoln and the Lincoln Community Foundation for providing critical funding that supported the work with consultants BNIM and Sinclair Hille. She gave special recognition to Emily Koopman from the Belmont Community Center, noting that without her dedication and leadership, the plan would not have been as successful. The funding not only covered consultant services but also played a key role in enhancing community engagement. With that support, the team was able to offer dinner at each of the public events and open houses, which Thierolf would describe later in the

presentation. Additionally, through the Belmont Community Center, childcare services were provided during these events, allowing more families to attend and making it possible to gather unique and valuable insights directly from neighborhood children.

Thierolf continued the presentation by introducing a series of slides intended to walk through the process and provide a high-level overview of the plan's recommendations. He emphasized that the effort was a community-driven process, coordinated by a core group composed of city staff, the partner organizations previously mentioned by Hiatt, and neighborhood community members. In addition to the core group, there was also a stakeholder group, which would be detailed further in a later slide. Public input was gathered through several channels, including multiple open house events and online engagement opportunities. Thierolf noted that the team made a concerted effort to ensure accessibility for all residents, making it as easy as possible for community members to provide meaningful feedback.

In total, four major open house events were held, and each was strategically scheduled to coincide with existing community events to boost attendance and reach residents who might not otherwise participate in a traditional planning meeting. Thierolf explained that this approach proved highly effective. For example, one open house was held during parent-teacher conferences, another alongside the City Build project at Belmont, where children created miniature cities out of recycled materials. Additional events included the Belmont Block Party—a kickoff-to-summer event—and a combined family swim night and outdoor movie event in mid-July. These events attracted broad participation and generated valuable input for the planning process. In addition to in-person engagement, an online survey was also circulated multiple times throughout the process, with consistent email outreach and promotional efforts to encourage participation.

Hiatt added that, in addition to in-person and survey-based outreach, there was a dedicated webpage on the Planning Department's website that served as a central hub for project information. Every presentation created throughout the process was made available on this site, along with a direct link to the online survey. This ensured that residents who were unable to attend events in person could still access the full range of materials and provide feedback at their convenience.

Thierolf then spoke about the role and composition of the stakeholder group, describing it as the guiding body for the entire planning process. He explained that it was a comprehensive and diverse group representing all facets of the neighborhood. The group included 22 members, in addition to a translator and a childcare provider, as previously mentioned by Hiatt. Stakeholders consisted of neighborhood residents, school representatives, individuals from community-serving organizations and local businesses, and even a high school student—a rare but valuable perspective in neighborhood planning processes. Thierolf emphasized how important it was to hear directly from teens, who are not often represented in these conversations. The group also included representatives from faith-based organizations and various departments within the City of Lincoln. This group met four times throughout the spring and early summer.

Thierolf highlighted several key takeaways from the stakeholder engagement process. One of the first and most consistent concerns raised was street safety—particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists. Issues were identified both within the neighborhood and at its boundaries, such as the 14th Street bridge over Cornhusker and the bridge over I-180, both of which were described as dangerous and unpleasant for non-vehicular travel. Thierolf noted that these concerns would be addressed in the final plan. Additionally, the community expressed a desire for more neighborhood-scale, community-serving businesses, as well as support programs and resources for homeowners. Participants frequently mentioned the aging housing stock and the need for assistance to help maintain and revitalize existing homes and residential areas.

Hiatt continued by highlighting an important takeaway from the community engagement process: the residents of the neighborhood have a deep affection for where they live. She acknowledged that while she had been familiar with the neighborhood itself, she hadn't realized the strong sense of community that had been built there. She noted that residents particularly appreciated and celebrated the diversity of the neighborhood—a strength they wish to maintain and further uplift. Another strong theme that emerged was the community's desire to support healthy living, which includes access to healthy food, healthcare, and safe outdoor environments. These priorities closely tie back to multimodal transportation options, which the plan aims to expand and improve.

Hiatt emphasized the importance of the neighborhood's excellent park system, specifically pointing to Roper and Belmont Parks. Residents are highly engaged with these outdoor spaces and expressed a desire for more opportunities to interact with nature and participate in outdoor recreation. As the team reviewed feedback from open houses and surveys, five key themes consistently emerged: community building, health and recreation, nature and environment, mobility and transportation, and housing and development. These themes formed the backbone of the subarea plan and informed over 30 strategies developed by staff. Hiatt noted that six strategies stood out both in terms of frequency in community feedback and potential for near-term implementation, particularly if a redevelopment plan were to be brought forward. The first strategy involves improving safe multimodal access, especially at key bridge crossings and major connection points. Hiatt recounted a conversation at the first open house where a community member asked if she had ever walked across the 14th Street Bridge over Adams. While she had driven it many times, she had not walked it—an experience she later completed and described as one she wouldn't care to repeat. She noted that the city's transportation team had already identified this bridge as needing significant improvements, and any redevelopment plan would aim to enhance pedestrian access and safety in that area. Additionally, the Adams Street Bridge is under review by the State of Nebraska for potential improvements, which is also encouraging.

Another top priority was enhancing the Belmont Park area, which includes the park itself, the Belmont Recreation Center, Belmont Elementary School, Educare, and the Belmont Community Center—collectively referred to by residents as the “Belmont Campus.” This area functions as the heart of the neighborhood. While it currently offers many amenities, residents expressed a strong desire for a modern, accessible, multi-use facility within the park. Expansion of the Belmont Community Center (BCC) also ranked high among community priorities. The building, constructed in 1955, is a cinder block structure featuring a unique vaulted gym ceiling.

Though beloved by the community, residents hope to see an expansion of the services and resources offered at the BCC.

Hiatt also noted a recurring request to install or improve outdoor lighting in the parks and at the BCC to increase safety, particularly along pedestrian corridors. However, residents requested that any new lighting be thoughtfully designed to avoid disrupting nearby homes, referencing a past issue with overly bright lighting. In terms of housing, the neighborhood takes pride in its predominantly owner-occupied homes, but many homeowners face challenges with maintenance and repair. The plan proposes exploring home repair assistance programs, possibly in partnership with nonprofits such as NeighborWorks Lincoln. Ideas included the creation of a tool lending library, where residents could borrow equipment like lawn mowers or power tools to maintain their properties.

Finally, Hiatt addressed the issue of public transportation, particularly around Belmont Elementary School and the nearby middle school. Residents frequently commented on the poor condition of bus stops—many of which are marked only by a small flag in the grass. While route changes would fall under StarTran's purview, the city could assist in improving bus stop infrastructure where right-of-way is available, including the installation of elevated bus shelters to increase comfort and usability.

Hiatt and Thierolf concluded the presentation and invited questions from the Planning Commission, noting that the staff and applicant team were available for further discussion.

Staff Questions-

Chair Joy opened the floor for questions from the commission. No questions were raised. Joy acknowledged the presentation was thorough and thanked the staff and applicant team for their work. No further discussion followed.

Proponents:

Virginia Geiger, 3924 North 17th Street, Lincoln, NE, came forward and spoke before the Planning Commission. Geiger and her husband built their home there 57 years ago, and she has lived there ever since. She expressed how honored she was to represent her neighbors in the project, sharing that although she was initially reluctant, she eventually embraced the role and recognized the importance of the committee's efforts to actively involve the Belmont community in shaping the plan.

Geiger emphasized that the extensive outreach—including open houses and community engagement—ensured that residents' voices were heard. She often encouraged her neighbors to participate. She praised the collaborative work between city planners, architects, and community members, highlighting the thoughtful and productive input that was received throughout the process.

Geiger said she was proud to have contributed to a plan aimed at restoring Belmont to the vibrant community she remembered from decades ago, when the area was known for the lively

Belmont Plaza. Despite her optimism, she acknowledged that many neighbors remain skeptical about the plan's implementation, citing Belmont's history of being overlooked compared to other parts of the city. Nevertheless, she described the community as "Belmont proud" and expressed excitement about the prospect of revitalization.

Geiger urged the Commission to recognize the plan's importance—not only to Belmont residents, but to the City of Lincoln as a whole—and to approve the plan.

Emily Koopman, Executive Director, Belmont Community Center, 3335 North 12th Street, Lincoln, NE spoke in strong support of the plan, emphasizing the deeply collaborative nature of the process. Koopman shared that the mission of the community center is to adapt to the cultural, recreational, and social needs of the community, and that this project has allowed them to fulfill that mission by serving as both an information broker and a key collaborator.

Koopman described her involvement in meetings with planners, architects, and community members, including working closely with Virginia Geiger and coordinating with various stakeholders. While presentations captured the formal aspects of the process—such as open houses and core meetings—Koopman stressed the importance of the informal, grassroots efforts that happened behind the scenes: one-on-one conversations, community coffees, email outreach, and real-time public engagement, including encouraging residents to watch or participate in the hearing.

Koopman highlighted three major themes that emerged throughout the process: connectedness, communication, and community pride. Koopman noted the strong neighborhood identity reflected in the phrase "Belmont Proud," pointing to residents' commitment to safety, nature, shared spaces, and access to tangible resources. She expressed excitement about the revitalization of key assets like the Belmont Plaza and the Belmont Community Center.

Koopman also outlined how, with support from community funders like the Lincoln Community Foundation and the Community Health Endowment, the center continued to deliver essential services—including licensed childcare, early education, weekend meals, facility use, and support group meetings—while remaining actively engaged in the planning process. Koopman concluded by affirming her optimism for the plan's next phases, emphasizing the strength of the neighborhood's assets, partners, and collective vision for a thriving and connected Belmont.

Neutral:

No one approached in a neutral capacity.

Opposition:

No one approached in opposition.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT 25004**ACTION BY PLANNING COMMISSION:****SEPTEMBER 03, 2025**

Campbell moved to close the public hearing; seconded by Eddins.

Campbell moved to approve Comprehensive Plan Amendment 25004; seconded by Eddins.

Ball stated that he frequently visits the area through his work with Educare and is familiar with the mission of both Educare and the Belmont Community Center, as well as the needs of local residents. He remarked that it was encouraging to see the plan come together and expressed strong support, noting that he was glad to see both a formal plan and resources finally being directed to support the area.

Eddins shared that she was raised in the Belmont neighborhood, specifically in Landon's Addition, where her family was the seventh house built in the area. She recalled that the closest park at the time was Belmont Park, known for its large rocket, and that the community center also functioned as the neighborhood library. Eddins expressed that the area still holds a special place in her heart, noting that many of her friends' parents still live there. She voiced strong and enthusiastic support for the plan, stating she is "100% behind this" and would love to see Belmont "shine and have its moment of glory." Eddins concluded by thanking everyone for their hard work on the project.

Chair Joy thanked the presenters and participants, stating that the presentation was well done and that it was excellent to hear the testimony provided. She expressed appreciation to everyone involved.

Motion for approval of Comprehensive Plan Amendment 25004 carried 7-0: Ball, Campbell, Eddins, Feit, Joy, Rodenburg and Ryman Yost, voting 'yes'. Cruz and Feit absent.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONFORMANCE 25008 - TO REVIEW AS TO CONFORMANCE
WITH THE 2050 LINCOLN LANCASTER COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, A PROPOSED
ONE AND SIX YEAR LANCASTER COUNTY ROAD AND BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM
FOR FISCAL YEARS 2026 AND 2027.****PUBLIC HEARING AND ACTION:****SEPTEMBER 03, 2025**

Members present: Ball, Campbell, Ebert, Eddins, Joy, Rodenburg and Ryman Yost. Cruz and Feit absent.

Staff Recommendation: In General Conformance with the Comprehensive Plan

There were no ex parte communications disclosed.

There were no ex parte communications disclosed relating to site visits.

Staff/Applicant Presentation-

Pam Dingman, Lancaster County Engineer, 555 S. 10th Street, Lincoln, NE, came forward and provided a detailed presentation on the county's roads and bridges program.

Dingman began by emphasizing the scale of Lancaster County's infrastructure responsibilities, noting that it oversees the largest county road and bridge program in Nebraska by a significant margin. The program includes 289 bridges, approximately 6,900 pipe culverts, 1,000 box culverts, and roughly 1,400 centerline miles of roadway.

Dingman identified key challenges for fiscal years 2025–26, including ongoing supply chain disruptions, equipment shortages, and increased project costs due to inflation and tariffs. She noted that the department has not received a new snowplow or dump truck in over two years, with equipment costs having tripled or quadrupled.

Dingman explained that equipment delays have resulted in frequent outages, directly affecting the department's operational resiliency. Staffing shortages further compound these challenges. Turning to the topic of construction inflation, Dingman noted that although inflation has slowed, the cumulative impact since 2020 remains significant. She projected that construction costs could be 50% higher by 2030 than they were in 2020. To illustrate this point, she referenced a slide from a colleague in Kansas.

Dingman then addressed the growing need for culvert replacement. While the department currently replaces approximately 65 culverts annually—up from just 8 per year a decade ago—this still falls short of meeting demand. As of her report, 943 culverts need replacement. Dingman explained that this backlog threatens the resiliency of the county's road system, with dashboard maps showing widespread areas of concern across the county.

Dingman reported progress in addressing scour-critical and scour-susceptible bridges—those vulnerable to erosion at bridge approaches. Following the 2019 “bomb cyclone,” 58 bridges were identified as at risk; that number has since been reduced to 27. Dingman emphasized that bridges flagged in red on department maps require emergency action plans to remain open, creating administrative and operational burdens—especially during major storm events that require emergency inspections. She proudly noted that while 42 bridges were closed in 2019, only one remains closed today. She shared an image of that bridge, which has suffered major erosion and includes support beams no longer securely embedded in the ground.

Overall, Dingman reported improvement in bridge conditions, with the number of “poor-rated” bridges trending downward. She expressed optimism that, if funding remains consistent, that number could be reduced to just two or three bridges in the coming years. Dingman also described several key bridge projects, including Bridge F201 near North 27th Street and Arbor Road—a federal-aid project funded through MOO and expected to last 100 years. Other projects include Bridge G222 on 98th Street, which has been adjusted repeatedly due to erosion along Salt Creek's bed. Dingman noted that G222 is the county's only capital improvement project for the year, with an estimated investment of \$3 million.

To illustrate long-term maintenance concerns, Dingman referenced Bridge K-144, near the Lancaster Event Center, and discussed how winter salting contributes to concrete deterioration.

Dingman then outlined the department's six-year plan for bridge maintenance and construction, while clarifying that the plan is fiscally constrained and does not reflect the full scope of identified needs.

Shifting focus to roads, Dingman reported that Lancaster County still includes 43 miles of dirt roads that have never been rocked or graded. Some of these are being vacated, particularly where there are no homes or where environmental concerns, such as wetlands, make ongoing maintenance unsustainable. Dingman stated that the county maintains over 1,000 miles of gravel roads and just under 300 miles of paved roads.

Using a map showing Average Daily Traffic (ADT), Dingman explained that gravel roads become unsustainable when traffic exceeds 300 vehicles per day. An internal study showed that roads carrying more than 400 vehicles per day cost so much to maintain that it would be more cost-effective to pave them every 3–5 years. Dingman stressed the need to prioritize paving 20 critical miles to reduce long-term maintenance costs.

Dingman then described the county's success in reducing the number of paved roads in poor condition, which has dropped from nearly 100 miles to just 35 over the past decade, despite flat funding. Dingman acknowledged that potholes remain, but said she is proud of the department's progress.

Dingman discussed the county's federal aid program, which has grown significantly—from just one project (Saltillo Road) to 12 projects totaling around \$70 million. This contrasts with a previous average of only \$1 million in federal aid every two to three years.

Major projects include improvements along Saltillo Road (27th to 68th Streets), 98th Street (Old Cheney to A Street and A to O Street), and the 148th and Holdrege intersection. Dingman described these as some of the largest infrastructure projects in county history, with each costing \$10–13 million. She noted a particular focus on school routes and public safety, with construction expected to begin on many of these projects in the next 18 to 24 months.

Additional projects include work on South 68th Street (Hickman to Firth Road), a HUD-funded economic development project on Northwest 56th Street, and a major investment in North 162nd Street (Highway 6 to the county line). Dingman noted that this corridor has not been paved since it was originally graded in 1974, and residents have long awaited its completion. She credited Congressman Flood for securing more than \$5 million in federal earmarks for the corridor, which is expected to cost over \$10 million in total.

Dingman addressed the long-planned East Beltway project, expressing a desire to begin design or NEPA work. She noted that the estimated cost is now \$600 million and emphasized the significance of completing the loop around Lincoln. Dingman referenced Arthur Edgren, the

county engineer who first proposed the idea—then known as Cotner Boulevard—in 1927, remarking that the vision has been nearly 100 years in the making.

Dingman concluded her presentation with updates on two federal grants:

- A **BRIC grant**, which will fund a study of drainage basins outside the city's three-mile jurisdiction and help prioritize 25 key bridges for future investment.
- A **Safe Streets for All grant**, which has been delayed due to changes in federal agreements. This study will focus on driver behavior, seatbelt usage, impaired driving, and excessive speeding—ongoing safety concerns in Lancaster County.

Dingman wrapped up by inviting commissioners and members of the public to reach out with any questions about the program or future plans.

Staff Questions-

Rodenburg asked whether the proposed road widening would include the addition of shoulders, noting a particular interest in accommodating bicycle traffic.

Dingman responded that the County is actively working on the issue of road widening and bicycle accommodation. Some of the roads that have received safety funding—such as North 14th Street, South 68th Street, and Saltillo Road—currently have drive lanes that are less than 11 feet wide, providing no space for bicyclists. Dingman explained that a standard modern road should be 28 feet wide and include a rumble strip along the side. While rumble strips can be unpopular due to the noise when tires hit them, she noted they serve an important safety purpose. Interestingly, she pointed out that people often prefer driving off the side of the road and getting stuck in the mud over dealing with the rumble strip. Dingman emphasized that the County is working toward incorporating paved shoulders into future road projects. Although they have not yet secured funding, they continue to actively seek it.

Rodenburg noted that the rumble strips would not extend all the way across the shoulder.

Dingman explained that bicycles do not handle rumble strips well, which typically range from 6 to 12 inches in width.

Proponents:

Katie Bohlmeier, Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, 1128 Lincoln Mall, Suite 100, Lincoln, NE, came forward and expressed support for the ongoing efforts led by Engineer Dingman and her staff, commending their expertise and collaboration. Bohlmeier emphasized the importance of continuing conversations about the East Beltway, acknowledging that while it is not prominently featured in the 2050 Comprehensive Plan or the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), it remains a priority for the Chamber. She encouraged keeping this topic visible and appreciated Dingman's assistance in committee meetings. Bohlmeier concluded by thanking the Commission for its work.

Neutral:

No one approached in a neutral capacity.

Opposition:

No one approached in opposition.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CONFORMANCE 25008

ACTION BY PLANNING COMMISSION:

SEPTEMBER 03, 2025

Campbell moved to close the public hearing; seconded by Eddins.

Campbell moved to approve Comprehensive Plan Conformance 25008; seconded by Eddins.

Campbell expressed appreciation for the County Engineering Department's efforts, acknowledging the challenges involved in securing funding. He noted it is encouraging to see improvements reflected in reduced numbers of projects needing work, even though the desired level of progress has not yet been fully achieved. Campbell commended the department's ongoing efforts, particularly in seeking grants to support these initiatives.

Chair Joy stated that the presentation was outstanding and shared her appreciation as someone who frequently drives many of the roads that were discussed. She expressed excitement about the progress on the Rock Creek Bridge and commended the County Engineering Department for the excellent work being done throughout the county.

Ball echoed Commissioner Campbell's comments, expressing appreciation for the progress being made, particularly the reduction in the number of scour-critical bridges. He noted that when he first joined the Planning Commission, he wasn't familiar with the term "scour critical," but now understands its importance as a key safety concern. Ball emphasized the significance of addressing infrastructure needs on the east side and thanked staff for their ongoing efforts.

Chair Joy thanked staff for their excellent work, then asked if there were any additional comments before proceeding. No further comments were made.

Motion for approval of Comprehensive Plan Conformance 25008 carried 7-0: Ball, Campbell, Eddins, Feit, Joy, Rodenburg and Ryman Yost, voting 'yes'. Cruz and Feit absent.

Rodenburg moved to adjourn the Planning Commission meeting of September 03, 2025; seconded Eddins.

Motion to adjourn carried -7-0: Ball, Campbell, Ebert, Eddins, Joy, Rodenburg, and Ryman Yost voted "yes." Cruz and Feit absent.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:03 p.m.

