

## BRIEFING NOTES

*Advanced public notice of the Planning Commission briefing was posted on the County-City bulletin board and the Planning Department's website.*

**NAME OF GROUP:** PLANNING COMMISSION

**DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:** Wednesday, September 17, 2025, 12:00pm, City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Dick Campbell, Maribel Cruz, Brett Ebert, Gloria Eddins, Baily Feit, Rich Rodenburg, and Christy Joy,  
  
(Ryman Yost and Ball absent)

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** David Cary, Andrew Thierolf, Rachel Christopher, Ayden Johnson and Kristi Merfeld of the Planning Department, and other interested parties.

**STATED PURPOSE:** Briefing on **Longe Range Transportation Plan, Mobility Plan and Comprehensive Plan**

**David Cary, Director Lincoln Planning Department** came forward and began the meeting by stating that every five years the Planning Department is required to update the Long Range Transportation Plan and also uses this opportunity to update the Comprehensive Plan at the same time. This is the best practice in the planning profession and has been taking place for 25 years. These briefings will happen every month moving forward for around a year. This is a long process, with several things to accomplish and a great deal of public outreach and engagement. We want the Planning Commission to be aware of these updates, as you are the representative of the community and will be asked to take action on these plans sometime next year.

**Andrew Thierolf, Lincoln Planning Department** stated that today, the Comprehensive Plan, the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Mobility Plan would be discussed. The first topic would be about the current Comprehensive Plan which was last adopted in November 2021. It is a combined city and county plan and the division looks at how and where the community will grow. This is also where the capital programming, zoning and decisions are made on a regular basis. There are two types of updates made on the Comprehensive Plan. A major update and a minor

update. Major updates are made every ten years, and that was last completed in 2021, with the Horizon 2050. In 2031, the Horizon 2060 will be updated. Then, every five years, a minor update is made to the growth horizon and it is kept the same for the most part. There are not any big changes to be made, unless something needs to be updated from the past five years. There are some new items to be added this time.

Thierolf said that the 2050 plan is being refreshed, and not replaced. The bulk of the document is still going to be the same. Our ~~compliance updates~~update process embodies our long tradition of comprehensive planning and most of our longstanding policies, goals, projects, and assumptions will continue, and this is a process we are doing with the LRTP and Mobility Plan. There are three separate planning documents, but one process. The population projections were done at UNL for the Center of Public Affairs Research in 2020. It shows on the chart that the material color is the census estimates for Lancaster County right now, and the purple is our projected number. We think the census estimates are a little low, but the census is an estimate, and we feel the population projections are basically right on track for what we expected. This is very important when looking at how the city is going to grow and how much land and housing will be needed. This represents about 90% of the county population.

The land area growth is matching the expectations also. Since 1960, Lincoln has been growing at a land area growth of about 1 square mile per year. In the last few years, there has been growth as well. Our land use growth tiers are pretty relevant and accurate to what we projected in 2021. Thierolf commented that there were several achievements in the last five years, that the Planning Commission has been a part of. These include the parking reform text amendment, where the parking requirements were removed in most of the commercial areas. This is something specifically that was in the plan and it was accomplished. Also, the local food text amendment gave the increased access to local food in residential districts. There was another amendment to make access to light industrial uses more flexible for businesses. Another item is residential as an approved H-2 use district and some design standards regarding the sidewalks.

Also, there was text amendment to make it easier to build on non-conforming residential lots. A complete neighborhood review tool was done, and the comprehensive plan today talks a lot about ~~the neighborhood review and~~ supporting neighborhoods that have a variety of amenities. So, it was decided to create a tool to help highlight where these neighborhoods are located. This was done using a GIS exercise, to help map out the amenities that neighborhoods have and those that do not have amenities. This will be helpful when discussing the comprehensive plan. Another text amendment helped to increase and gain access to more residential opportunities. Also, an inventory of the non ag uses and mechanism in the county zoning ordinance was completed and the Historic Preservation Design Standards were streamlined to make the process easier for both applicants and staff.

The city has added 3.7 square miles in accordance with the future land use and priority growth maps. In Lincoln it is something we still want to highlight to show that our growth plan is being followed ~~and it is continued to be followed~~. There has been two Capital Improvement Programs since 2021 that have gone through compliance and financial review with the most recent comprehensive plan. There have also been several new additions to the plan. These include the

University Place sub-area plan and the Belmont sub-area plan. Also, the local food system plan at the beginning of 2022 and they have all been adopted into being part of the comprehensive plan.

Thierolf said they have been working internally on things over the past few months and have identified some items that we want to look at in the next update. One item is housing and neighborhoods. This was called Complete Neighborhoods in the last plan. The term Great Neighborhoods will be used for terminology now. Those great neighborhood discussions and the policies of building from the tool that was created, will highlight which neighborhoods scored the highest and try to expand the amenities across Lincoln. Another item of discussion is the aging population. Aging Partners is conducting a study to be incorporated into the comprehensive plan. There are some changes that have happened downtown since the last downtown master plan in 2018. Several things have been accomplished, but there are a few things still on the list. More recent changes to downtown are coming soon, such as the Convention Center and the library space has been identified. The Pershing space is not going to be for the library anymore, but these recent items will be part of the comprehensive plan. The final piece is incorporating the LRTP and mobility plan recommendations that Rachel and Ayden will be discussing next.

**Rachel Christopher, Lincoln Planning Department and Lincoln MPO** came forward and stated that she would discuss the Long Range Transportation Plan update, which is happening at the same time as the Comprehensive Plan update. This is a more significant update than the Comprehensive Plan because it is federally required every five years. The last update was in 2021. It is a county wide vision for transportation plan through 2050. The growth horizon is not changing and will remain at 2050. Since this is a significant update, we will be revisiting all elements of the plan. That will include our goals, funding and project list. Any new considerations, whether it is with policy, technology or anything else that we might want to add will also be a part of the plan. It will also include an update to the Travel Demand Model. The Long Range Transportation Plan is our guidebook for transportation in Lancaster County and is used for the projects that will move forward, so any major project needs to be found consistent with this plan.

The consultant team we are working with on the model is Cambridge Systematics. The model looks at vehicle congestion on roads and the projects we are considering during this time frame to see where congestion could build up. This helps guide our decision process. In this model there is always a mid-year and future year. The future year will stay at 2050, the base year will be adjusted to 2024, and the midyear will move to 2036. The model takes into account existing and future land use. We will work with Andrew on land uses within the Comprehensive Plan. The future land use will look at where people are coming and going within the model area and the demand for schools, housing, work and other destinations. This combined with the road network and the projects we want to pursue get integrated into the model.

The Long Range Plan and all the other current plans will speak to one another and be developed so they will each be reflective in all of the plans. The Comprehensive Plan is part of this integration and another is the Lincoln Vision Zero Action Plan. That is a safety plan for the City of Lincoln led by Lincoln Transportation and Utilities. It looks at reducing traffic fatalities and traffic related

injuries. Some of the main focus areas for the Long Range Transportation Plan, therefore, are safety and mobility. Any additional new focus areas will be informed through the public process as we go along. Ayden will now talk about the Lincoln Mobility Plan.

**Ayden Johnson, Lincoln Planning Department MPO.** Stated this is the first time he is working with the MPO and this is the first time Lincoln is implementing a mobility plan. It will be a combination of previous bike and pedestrian plans. They are being combined and updated. There is a lot of data from all the different departments, as we have worked closely with the Lincoln Vision Zero Action Plan. This is to make sure that the updates are being coordinated at the same time and using the data to emphasize their goals about reducing fatalities and using bike safety. Work is being done with the consultants to work on nine goals we want to address. They are still being fine-tuned, but we can mention some of the things we are working on. One is the first and last mile for bus connections which focuses on making it easier for people to catch the bus for the first part and last part of their journey. Also, the micromobility with bikes, skateboards, scooters and the upcoming multi modal transportation center, to make sure people have a connective route. If they do not have a car or just choose to take public transportation. There has been several comments from the public regarding network gaps and recommendations that we have received from StarTran board meetings. We will make sure they are addressed and given to the correct people to make those changes happen.

Another goal is to identify cross bike waves and traffic improvement with the bikers. Street typologies and infrastructure. This includes bus shelters, scooter parking stations and several ideas the Vision Zero Action Plan has included. There is also the goal of having new cross walks and a comprehensive plan trail activity. Where a bus stop might be close to a trail. For example, the Bishop Heights area, has a bus stop and two trails that intersect. It would be good to have those spread throughout the city and in the comprehensive plan. We are working with consultants from FHU( Felsburg, Holt and Ullevig) who have also partnered with SFR to help guide this idea. They have experience doing this for this type of plan for other cities. A representative from FHU in Lincoln has worked with our Long Range Transportation Plans in the past and is helping with the next steps involved with this idea. For the mobility plan the kickoff events started last month with the LRTP and the focus groups are starting soon to solidify those goals and implement them in the plan sometime at the end of October.

Christopher said the process would be discussed now. The LRTP is to be adopted by 2026 and the comprehensive plan on the same schedule or a little sooner so it can be incorporated in the LRTP. The Planning Commission members will be a part of this and act as our steering committee for the Mobility Plan and Long Range Transportation Plan. We will be coming to you at key points in the process for your input, and that should be able to be done through these briefings. There is a staff committee for the Mobility Plan and LRTP. There is also one for the comprehensive plan and one overall staff committee that discusses various topics. One topic is mobility, so that includes transit and bicycle focus staff. For public outreach we were trying to avoid having the same things at each engagement and asking people repetitive questions. So, the events are

combined for the comprehensive plan and for the transportation plans. The different types are open houses, public events, online events and focus groups. There is a plan to have 3 different open house events at each key point in the process. Community events are a pop up event at various locations around the community. There is a popup event for each phase and there has been one so far. There is a website that has been put together with the help of our consultants. Then the transportation focus groups have members of the public. These are topic based and there are 10 focus groups, which will be rotated into different groups.

The Planning commission will act as our steering committee and be briefed once a month. There will probably times when there is a lot of material to discuss and other times when there may not be as much to discuss. The next briefing is October 15 and the topics will be from Andrew's plan for the future land use map, changes and any input you may have with that. We will also talk about what our consultant has on the existing transportation update and updates on the transportation model. November 12, the discussion will be based on what has been heard from the public at the engagement events.

The kick-off open house event is October 23 at Culler Middle School. The pop up events have been successful. Last weekend there was an event at the Latino Festival, and this Saturday the pop up event is at the local food truck festival. One of the activities at the open houses is a marble activity, where they choose between 9 priority areas and where they think the money should be spent. We have seen a need for materials to be translated into other languages. Spanish being an important language to have the materials translated into. This includes the instructions to the games as well as business cards etc. Christopher demonstrated the website where people can leave a comment and it will drop it into different areas based on the comment. They are asked a few questions that are combined with the comprehensive plan.

Thierolf did not have anything else to add except for the schedule.

Christopher reviewed the schedule with the Planning Commission members.

Phase 1 big picture concepts

Phase 2 alternatives and priorities

Phase 3 draft for review

Thierolf mentioned the virtual activities available for people to participate in. It first started as something we had to do in 2020 and then it became something very successful. It is like open house, with all activities done virtually. More comments are received through this process.

Christopher gave two links for the planning commission members for the virtual activities.

Thierolf stated that there will be a power point of this presentation, with all the information included. The next meeting will have more interaction and input. He asked the members to think about things they want addressed or feel is lacking in the current plans

Campbell asked if the previous site of the library at Pershing would still be under the same zoning which is zone P.

Thierolf replied he is unaware of any zoning change on the Pershing site at this time.

Campbell confirmed that it would have to come from the developer to convert it to another use.

Thierolf stated that Urban Development is working on the redevelopment of that site and any surplus that goes with it.

Campbell asked will there be any information shared, or suggestions taken from the pedestrian and bike committee through Parks and Recreation.

Christopher replied yes, they will be an active member of our mobility focus group

Ebert asked if it is being coordinated through LCF for the Prosper Lincoln initiative.

Christopher said yes, that they are under one of the focus groups.

Feit asked what about people who are unable to get to the focus groups because of time or lack of transportation. Not everyone has access to computers or phones. Will there be other options, like information on the buses for instance or the library computers.

Christopher replied that this is a good suggestion. There will be something on the kiosks at the libraries. There will also be advertising on the city buses.

Eddins suggested having something at Matt Talbot because several people use the buses. Also, the sidewalks are inaccessible due to scooters for people with disabilities. There is also a state homestead plan and transportation committee that focuses on rural Nebraska which has a bigger problem for people with disabilities to get around. It was suggested to contact the state homestead transportation committee. They could have some ideas about how to improve accessible travel for people with disabilities.

Campbell asked how large Waverly needs to grow before they are annexed into Lincoln.

Thierolf responded that it is not in the comprehensive plan to annex Waverly.

Cary responded they are not in the 2050 plan.

Thierolf agreed with what Cary said. No plans right now.

Campbell said the same question would it apply to Cheney.

Thierolf replied that they are a little different than Waverly but are not part of the 2050 growth plan. The elevation is different so it would be hard to service them with city water and sewer. The water lines would need to be replaced, to meet the standards for water pressure and fire pressure. They are not in the 2050 plan either.

Campbell responded that a lot could change.

Christy – if everyone attends an event is there a process.

Cary responded that if everyone is attending, it would have to be advertised as a public meeting. It would be recommended not to discuss things at the event, as it will be an agenda item at a later date. Also, if enough people are there to make a quorum we would ask some to leave or stagger their times. The information will be given so that you will not need to attend a public event to get the information needed.

Campbell asked if they would get the marble activity.

Christopher replied that they will have to do this activity with the commission members.

Joy thanked everyone for the presentation today.

There being no further questions, the briefing was adjourned at 12.47 p.m.