

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, January 21, 2026 12:00 pm, City Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Lorenzo Ball, Dick Campbell, Gloria Eddins, Bailey Feit, Christy Joy, Rich Rodenburg and Cindy Ryman Yost

Brett Ebert and Maribel Cruz absent.

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Paul Barnes, Andrew Thierolf, Rachel Christopher, Mia Haschenburger, David Cary and Kristi Merfeld of the Planning and Development Services Department and other interested parties.

STATED PURPOSE: Briefing on **“Long Range Transportation Plan Update, Lincoln Mobility Plan, and Comprehensive Plan Update”**

Andrew Thierolf, Planning and Development Services Department, 555 S 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated that he was going to talk about land use and how that feeds into the transportation model and talk about the mobility plan. For the land use portion, we are going to discuss the

residential construction numbers for 2025, talk about comp plan assumptions and trends and are the 2050 boundaries sufficient for the update. We now have 5 years of data, since it was originally developed. Also we will look at the future land use updates. So, in 2025 we had 2029 total residential units permitted. That is right on track with our trend of the last 2 years which was almost 60% multi-family units. Almost 1200 multi-family units which again are on trend with recent years. When it is looked back at historical data that is a lot of multi-family owners. There are about a quarter of our residential units are for single family and then the rest were townhomes and duplexes. 75% were in our new growth areas, so that is basically our edge growth areas of 24% or 25% which are within the existing city. Those were our infill projects. There is 1% of a little bit of area within the 3 mile ETJ that is not within our growth boundaries. There were just a few miscellaneous acreages that got built within the ETJ outside of our growth boundary.

Ryman Yost asked that from the new residential units what percentage of those are owner occupied?

Thierolf replied that they do not have that data from permits, but that is something when we do our housing studies, we get that information. So looking at a few comp plan assumptions this is from the previous plan. Lincoln will have about 400,000 residents and 167,000 households by 2050. Right now we are a little over 300,000 residents. 48,000 new dwelling units need to be constructed between 2020 and 2050 which comes down to 1600 units per year. That is the comp plan assumption or goal. Thierolf showed this information on a graph and stated that this has been the last 15 years and the purple line is overall residential units with a big peak right after COVID in 2021. That was an all time high, well above what we ever experienced before. From then on we have had almost 2,000 units a year over the last 3 years. This is a really good place to be.

Looking at the last 5 years, there have been 11,499 units, which is the most in a 5 year period in the history of Lincoln. Just under 25% were single family and about 15% were townhomes, duplex and then 60% for multi-family.

For multi-family we have added almost 7000 units since 2021 and that comes out to be 2300 units a year. So that means we have been adding about 2300

units each year over the last 5 years. Does this mean we are growing faster than projected? It does mean we are building all of these new housing units. The census bureau has an annual estimates program that they do between the decennial census years. It is based on different population models and then different government servant survey programs. There is a proprietary model that they put together for an estimate so those come out every year. Right now our most recent estimate is July 2024. This is a little bit behind, but when you look at the numbers from 2024, the purple is the comp plan projection. This chart has been shown at a previous briefing. The teal is the actual census estimated population. It's actually lower so the census estimate for our county population growth is a little below projections. Since 2021 the census bureaus also estimates housing units. These estimates have come out to about 1630 new units per year and that is what we have been estimating, so it is exactly right on line with the comp plan projections. Population and housing growth generally match with what we were expecting.

We know that housing construction is exceeding the needs for new housing based on our population growth for the census. Our projection is 1600 units per year. The census says we are adding 1630 units per year, but in terms of building permits, actually 2300 are being issued a year. That is a pretty big discrepancy. There are a few contributing factors, one is the pent up demand of more people who had roommates or living with parents before and now that there is more housing available and moving to an apartment or house. That could be some of it. Another factor is that the census estimates are probably a little low, but not like 800 units low. The census model for the Midwest seems to underestimate Lincoln's population. So each year until the decennial census the population ticks up and then with the descending it shoots up a little bit. We do think the census estimates are a little low and the other piece is the vacancy rates. Lincoln's vacancy rate for all housing is 4.3 %, which has been pretty steady the last 3 years. When looking at issued building permits and some of these are huge apartment complexes. There are some expectations that those are not actually filling up immediately, so there is some time where we are adding all those units, but actually not being occupied for 2-3 years.

Eddins asked what is the year's vacancy rate compared to an average city similar in size?

Thierolf responded the generic target for a city or size was always like 5% or 5.5%. We are right within the margin of error. These are things to keep monitoring, because our building permits don't seem to be matching what the census is saying or what our projections say.

Feit questioned if a townhouse or apartment that is used as an Airbnb is it considered vacant or not really?

Thierolf replied no, that wouldn't be. Basically 4% for a vacancy rate for housing is almost considered full occupancy, because there are people selling and moving out and all of that. We are almost full occupancy for housing. Infill is also something to look at with our housing units. We want to support infill. Comp plans of assumption at 25% of new dwelling units will be infill over the next 30 years. That is about 12, 000 housing units. So, if we look at where we are growing here on the map. Purple is our edge growth, the teal is the infill and the grey is just that stuff outside our growth areas in the county. The comp plan had the 25% target and we are basically at 24%. In 2024 we were at 30%, 2023 40% and 2022 was at 36.7 %, We have been exceeding those assumptions.

Looking at the last 5 years we have added 3715 units within the existing city and within our infill areas. We are exceeding our comp plan expectations, mostly in the downtown area but also other areas. The purple dots show all of the parcels where we have had infill development in the last 5 years. You can see it is spread out all over the community. The big multi-family projects are mostly downtown, but have had a lot of smaller housing projects and individual parcel infill things going on throughout the city. The big question is why am I going through this as part of our comp plan briefing? We want to know is our 2050 growth boundary still sufficient? The answer is "yes " it is and that is great. We have approved the preliminary plats and have 27, 896 that are approved and not built yet. In the amount of what we have approved already and our growth areas that is about a 21 year supply. We could almost not approve anything else and go through 2050. We have quite a bit of supply in our growth area now. Beyond that there is obviously a lot of land in our 2050 growth finder that does

not have approvals yet. It is showing on the future land map as well as residential. So that is another 20 plus years of supply of unapproved land that we're planning for in our 2050 growth boundary. This will be available at some point, once the infrastructure gets out there. We have a lot of space which is really good news and that is one reason why it is minor plan update. The growth boundaries are not being changed, because it is not really needed.

Ball asked if there is an over supply, would the request be lowered in the next years due to this?

Thierolf commented that if we have an oversupply and based on building permits, we don't exactly know if we have one. It would rely on the market for which we would probably just be getting less applications. When we look at our growth, we have to look at the map. It is really about where we put urban infrastructure being sewer, streets and water. This is planned out in the CIP, which will be here in April. We prioritize these areas within our growth plan, for where we have approvals for infrastructure and it is needed. That is the big change we would see. There would be less interest in certain areas of our growth areas, because we have all the approvals already. We would just not be providing urban infrastructure to those areas. 5 years from now, when we do the bigger comp plan update, there is a bigger discussion to have. When we push out the horizon out to 2060 are we actually going to add any area or is it sufficient now. We are seeing more dense growth along the edges and more infill. Potentially, we won't have the same demand to add 10 more years of growth area land beyond what we already have. This is something we keep an eye on with this annual report. Land areas needs and growth areas will continue to evolve. We have this residential inventory report that tracks residential trends and available land area. Commercial industrial is an area that is not being looked at too much, because residential is driving that. We do have some areas zoned for industrial land that is available and then commercial centers come in as part of the neighborhood approvals. This map shows a link to the residential inventory report. It is also interactive where it specifically shows the approved units that are not built yet. It is pretty evenly distributed East, South, West and North.

Thierolf stated he was going to discuss the 2050 future land updates now. The 2050 growth boundary is being maintained as part of the process for doing the updates. This has been discussed before, so there will not be a lot of time spent on it today. At the public open house, people could leave comments and the virtual open house allowed people to leave a pin. On the map there was a land use proposal process. This has been done 5 and 10 years ago and was called a developer proposal because they were the people we heard from. Now we can hear from anyone, so it is called a land use proposal. This time a couple of our proposals did come from developers, but also a lot of community proposals for a total of 9. We support some of the elements from 7 of the proposals. 2 don't really align with the comp plan at all, so we are not supportive of those at all.

Two of the proposals were related to 9 Mile Prairie Environs area. This is asking for continued protection of the environment area that has some city owned land by Arnold Elementary. This is shown as residential and is requested to change it to environmental resources. The plan right now is not to make those future land use maps changes. This is city and airport authority owned land, so we have control over what happens there and looking at ways to develop it to use the conservation design principles that isn't going to harm the prairie. There is also a couple of street changes in the 9 Mile Prairie Environs area that the MPO will need to talk about and discuss. We had a conceptual proposal about conservation design desire to see strength in language. This is something that is being worked on now. We are definitely supportive of that, as we move forward in this process. Also there we will be presenting concepts on proposals for policy. Along with updates and stronger conservation design policy.

There were also 2 proposals at the 112th and Adams area, which is city owned and part of the prison swap situation. One proposal was focused on making it affordable housing since again this is land the city controls. The other proposal was making sure we are taking the steps to protect Prairie Pines from development. As part of this comp plan process we are putting together some development concepts for 112th and Adams. A few different options will be presented for what it could become. There were 2 proposals about acreage subdivisions, but decided not to go with those. The comp plan states we do not want to add more acreages into our growth area right now. We have about

a 25 year supply of those, so we track those as part of the residential report also. 25 years takes us to 2050 and we have a pretty healthy supply already.

Another proposal was to focus on 9th and 10th as an infill corridor to have more density and a mix of uses. We are obviously very supportive of infill and redevelopment. Right now the focus is on the O Street corridor. The 9th and 10th Street corridor is that it has a lot of very high density zoning R6 or R7. It is almost as dense as it could get. The street is a big opportunity zone. It is a patchwork of different zoning. Last year the H 2 zoning change took place and it allowed residential and pushed sidewalks back off the street. We would like to look at it bigger at a holistic level in the corridor to see how we can create high density mixed use closer to O Street. The very long term goal of having enhanced transit maybe a BRT or something like that on O Street. This was in the comp plan 5 years ago. It is being flushed a lot more with some actual zoning implementation ideas this time around. The final proposal was Bethany Neighborhood would like to be a part of a subarea plan. They saw what was done in the Uni Place in Belmont. In the comp plan in the next 5 years, there is a list of things to be done and a subarea plan is included. It is unsure if Bethany will be in the next 5 years but is on the list for now. Also, South of the Bethany library the city owns a vacant lot. The neighborhood is interested in doing something with this and we are talking to Urban Development about this.

Looking at the land use updates there is not much to say about them. On the map there is more or less clean up items. We did not make any major changes or anything. The black lines are all the changes and it looks like a lot. What has been done is the rural areas. There is green space for future land use. This has not been updated in about 15-20 years. Many of the floodplains were out of date. Most of what is seen here is updates to the environmental resources green space because of the floodplains. The watershed department has established flood corridors and they have been included on this map, as well as the underdeveloped green space. The actual changes that were made are changes of zone over the last 5 years or so. An area was shown as commercial in the future land use ma, but if the whole thing was built as an apartment complex we would change that to residential to reflect what is actually there. There will be a link, when the presentation is sent out for everyone to see it.

More or less these are just clean up items and will not be discussed piece by piece. They are things that will be in the zoning now or will be later. The land use portion of this and residential construction in terms of issuing permits is exceeding comp plan expectations. Even with looking at the trends from the last 5 years, there is still adequate land in the 2050 boundary to accommodate future growth. The proposed land use changes are generally minor and incorporate staff and then public feedback. Does anyone have any questions?

Campbell commented that the present generation are renting and not owning homes. Is that accounted for in the growth potential?

Thierolf responded that it is being illustrated in all the apartments that are being built now. The comp plan 5 years ago and our assumptions, have caused us to bump up how many apartments was thought would be built. We were assuming 3 units per acre for all our edge growth 5 years ago. Now it is 40 an acre. Part of that is due to smaller homes, but still a lot of bigger homes are part of it. Most new subdivisions now have an apartment multi-family component or a town home component. In terms of the growth expectations the higher density is being factored in, which for the most part is probably going to mean rental housing.

Rodenburg asked if any of those homes were not in the floodplain?

Thierolf stated that the future land use map was just being updated to reflect the current floodplains only outside the city limits. It creates a lot of issues inside the city limits because there is a broader remapping project that we don't have the results for yet, but watershed is working with FEMA.

Campbell questioned if it has been looked at when the need will be to build the Southwest treatment plant?

Cary came forward and said there are not plans for a Southwest treatment plant, but there are plans for a holding facility. It is just not in the next few years. The plans for this are unclear at this time. This is one of the few times this has been asked, so now they will be ready with the information when we have that CIP conversation. It will not be a treatment facility, but will be a holding facility

that will provide a lot more capacity of the existing treatment plant. It will hold it to off peak hours and things like that. But it is not known when that will be constructed.

Thierolf then said that Rachel would be the next speaker.

Rachel Christopher, Planning and Development Services Department, 555 S 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and thanked everyone for coming today. She stated that they were going to transition to talking a little bit about the travel demand model. This is basically a computer model for vehicle traffic. It is updated every 5 years according with the LRTP update. Sometimes it will be updated more often if needed or if we need to look at something specific. This is the first big update since 5 years ago and we are working with Cambridge Systematics as our subconsultant. They are a nationally recognized traffic modeling company. The model is called a 4 step model and is the most traditional type of model. We used it to mostly look at congestion. It can also be used to consider project alternatives and it gets plugged into our air quality analysis. The building blocks of the model are called traffic analysis zones or TAZs. Lincoln has 508 TAZs. These are used to estimate the origins and destinations of people traveling through the area from one TAZ to another. Lincoln's TAZs match our Data Application and Tracking System (DATS) that we use track dwelling units and commercial floor area. The model estimates how traffic is put out onto the road network, at key locations around the perimeter and within it.

The first step of the model is called trip generation. It is the number of trips produced or attracted by each zone. Within each TAZ, what are the land uses and what are the estimated trips traveling there? The trip distribution allocates the trips to pairs of TAZs. The next step is mode choice. This is considering whether people travel by car, transit or some other mode. We do pull data from Star Tran to estimate how many people or what portion of people are taking transit. The last step is network assignment and this is what routes are taken within this network.

Christopher showed a map with outputs of the model, with the red, green and yellow areas of congestion identified. The red area would be higher congestion

and the green would be little to no congestion. Our base year is 2024. 2036 is the interim year and our horizon year is staying at 2050. We took the previous model and bumped up the analysis years 5 years. Different scenarios get produced so the impacts on transportation can be considered either negative or positive. It is one of the ways to evaluate how projects are prioritized and what kind of value they have towards different goals. We also consider future needs and what could be obstacles towards meeting them, such as congestion. Not all aspects of the road are modelable. The model doesn't account for roundabouts versus intersections, but turn lanes and vehicle speed can be accounted for.

Christopher commented that Andrew's discussion of land use are some inputs for the model. The roadway network is also an input, along with University, community college, and local school enrollment numbers and student housing. Validation is confirming that the model matches with known information. Lincoln Transportation and Utilities collects vehicle counts and those are compared to the model estimates for the base year to see how accurate they are. Our consultant considers like transit fare and ridership to develop mode splits and estimate how affordable transit is, and therefore how likely it is that people will use transit. Any projects that we have completed in the last 5 years are reflected. The model also includes hypothetical external stations for trips through, into, and out of the model boundary. We don't model the whole county, but an area that includes Lincoln and a logical area outside of Lincoln. The workload and actual value provides us with what is needed. On the outside there are external stations that are kind of hypothetical. We look at the area and how many dwelling units there are, and how many are projected to be in that area by the different future years. We also look at park areas, commercial and industrial acres and floor area, building permits, and estimated future dwelling units.

We have finished modeling the base year. The next steps will be modeling future years and deciding what kind of alternatives and scenarios we want to look at this time around.

Campbell responded that the bypasses are still in the future for heading to Omaha, but asked if there is anything projected for 98th Street?

Christopher replied that it will depend on reevaluation of future projects and where they fall in the timeline. A project in the model would be either in the 2036 or 2050 scenario. The future 98th Street projects will appear in the updated LRTP and considered in the funding scenario.

Campbell asked if it can wait until 2036 to do something like that?

Christopher replied that the next phase of work is project prioritization, consultation with County Engineering, and public input on project rankings.

Campbell asked what percentage of the East Bypass right-of-way is under contract?

Christopher commented that we can follow up but we know it's not a lot.

Mia Haschenburger, Planning and Development Services Department, 555 S 10th Street, Lincoln NE came forward and stated that as part of the comprehensive plan update and LRTP update there is also development of the Lincoln Mobility Plan. Linking the plan aims to combine previous bicycle and pedestrian plans and update the content. It focuses on what is called first and last mile connections to facilitate people having access to the transportation network. In the transportation network, how do they get from their house to the network and from work to the network, how to facilitate travel and also focus on the multimodal transportation center? One of the goals is to identify gaps in the network and come up with recommendations. The vision for the mobility plan is to create a citywide network that is connected and easy to use regardless of mode of transportation, regardless of how people travel and how people use the network. It is to, basically, make it as easy for as many people as possible to use it efficiently and to get to where they need to go. This also supports a healthy and prosperous city and sustainable mode of transportation, to make the future more resilient.

The top three goals that were selected in collaboration with the consultants were safety, having a network that is well connected and giving people choices, and lastly, making the network accessible. Those were the top three and also additional goals of supporting active and healthy lifestyles. Giving people

access to jobs and education, to support the economy and also focusing on collaboration and partnerships, to make work more efficient and cost effective.

There is a concept of nodes and corridors that is central to the mobility plan. Nodes are physical locations that facilitate transitioning from one mode of transportation to another and allow people to access the transportation network efficiently. Also giving them a choice in how to do so and then the corridors are the connection, allowing people to safely get where they need to go. Having things like trails, bikeways and sidewalks that are connected and in good condition. The nodes are divided into different categories based on whether they are in existing areas and new areas or areas with a lot of mixed land uses. In existing areas, it would be more of a focus on redevelopment opportunities. Nodes would be near transit lines that are already in place or may be put in place near trails and bike boulevards, or on a street bike route. In the new growth areas, it would be in places where there are future projects or opportunities prioritized and then these would be supporting transit, or off-street new trails and off street bicycle facilities, as well as on bike routes. The other category that was mentioned is where there is a mix of different land uses and again it would be in support of transit, trail and other bicycle facilities.

There have been over 2000 instances of public engagement with a wide variety of audiences. There have been 9 events in the community and 10 focus groups. In order to get the word out, different methods were used such as postcards, email blasts, social media press releases and a kiosk in the libraries. An open house was held on October 23, 2025. More than 100 people attended and it was set up as a one-stop shop. Layouts for the 4 different plans going on were displayed. The comprehensive plan update, LRTP update, mobility plan and the vision zero safety action plan were featured. There were also different types of activities and opportunities to provide input on what the goals should be. One of the games was to place marbles in jars to prioritize projects. The public had several opportunities to ask questions and get information. People could pin a map where they had concerns, wanted to see things happen or things change. The categories included bicycle, traffic safety, pedestrian, transit, land use, and more general and other categories.

The area with the most input was Southeast Lincoln. Most of the themes that emerged involved traffic, bicycle safety, pedestrian and some transit. In Southeast Lincoln there was focus on Normal Boulevard, A Street and 70th Street. There were comments about multimodal safe transportation using

different modes as well as neighborhood access. In Northeast Lincoln, the focus is on Vine Street and 48th St, and Highway 6, with an emphasis on trail connectivity and road congestion. Southwest Lincoln had a focus on crossings and neighborhood traffic calming and neighborhoods. Northwest Lincoln had more comments about transit and having a connected bike network. In Lancaster County outside of Lincoln, in the smaller communities, people expressed interest in having transit connections and also the ability to ride a bike safely into Lincoln. Some of the high concentration areas were 27th and NE Parkway, 48th to 70th, and then A to O to Normal. The 84th Street corridor had lots of comments about sidewalks and traveling safely on trails. There were a lot of comments regarding downtown and the Haymarket with scooters and pedestrian facilities, and bicycling on N 27th and Cornhusker. In Havelock, in the East part of the city, people expressed interest in transit oriented development as well as a better bike network. In the smaller cities and smaller towns in Lancaster County there was interest in trail extensions and having opportunities for transit. This process includes a plan to have a draft by spring of this year. There will be an open house in April at the Kindler Hotel downtown. More public input and the recommendations will be incorporated into the Long Range Transportation Plan as well as the transportation section of the comprehensive plan and then the final approval is planned for the end of the year.

Rodenburg asked if they were working directly with the mayor's pedestrian bicycle committee?

Haschenburger replied, yes the same one.

Paul Barnes, Planning and Development Services Department, 555 S 10th Street, Lincoln, NE came forward and stated updates have been done and will continue with that group. There is continued interest in the safety aspects of the system and have heard that from the group as well. We also work with the Star Tran advisory board in a similar capacity. We are pulling in transit routes with this mobility plan as well as the Parks and Rec Advisory board. Barnes commented that if there are any community groups or committees that are interested we are happy to come speak with them as well.

Ryman-Yost asked if the April event at Kindler hotel was a daytime or evening event? Next question was if there were disability groups that were involved in terms of mobility for people who are not driving?

Christopher responded that she had a list of focus group invitees and attendees.

Christy Joy commented where does the University Place sub area plan fit into this and now working on being a walkable neighborhood, with all the challenges?

Barnes replied it was thought that it could fit in a number of ways. There is a vision zero action plan that is being developed and a draft is underway. There are a lot of intersections across the city that have pedestrian crossings that we want to make sure that they are safe. Specifically in University Place we are looking at doing street art with the artist community. We had applied for a Bloomberg grant, but did not get awarded. Some local funds will be used to do some artwork on Saint Paul and the crosswalks likely at 48th Street with the idea that improvements like that do slow traffic. There are a bunch of things to help prioritize pedestrians to avoid distracted driving and how to educate people on that and the bigger conversation about that topic.

Feit stated that on the maps that allowed people to pin areas, were there any surprises that were not expected? Some were probably part of future plans.

Barnes remarked that the final version of everything is going to be downloaded and it can be viewed, so not for sure if there were any surprises or not. Any comments the public could review and give a thumbs up or down. That was interesting. Next month will be a fun activity.

There being no further questions, the briefing was adjourned at 12:57 p.m.