Public Engagement Summary

Reimagining Downtown Lincoln's Design Standards

The City of Lincoln conducted outreach to a broad range of Downtown stakeholders as part of the *Reimagining Downtown Lincoln's Design Standards* project. Engagement efforts focused on gathering perspectives from developers, property owners, architects, business representatives, neighborhood stakeholders, institutional partners, and members of the public.

Outreach included individual conversations, stakeholder meetings, presentations, email communications, a public open house, and opportunities to submit comments through the project website. These efforts were intended to introduce the proposed standards, identify potential concerns, and understand how the proposed updates could affect existing and future development in Downtown Lincoln.

Stakeholder Outreach and Engagement

The project team engaged representatives from several local businesses, development organizations, property owners, and community institutions. Organizations and individuals participating in outreach included:

- **Development and Business Representatives:** NEBCO, WRK, Hoppe Development, Speedway, and Papageorge architects associated with the redevelopment project at 11th and N Streets.
- **Downtown Organizations:** Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA) Board and Downtown Lincoln Champions.
- **Neighborhood and Institutional Representatives:** Mayor's Neighborhood Roundtable, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Campus Planner, and Assurity representative.
- **Design and Development Professionals:** Two meetings coordinated by the Downtown Lincoln Association brought together additional architects, developers, and property owners to discuss the proposed standards.

Additional individual outreach included conversations with architects and designers; shared information about the project with the AIA Lincoln Chapter; several phone conversations with attorneys, developers, and brokers.

Public Meetings and Communications

Several engagement opportunities were provided throughout the project:

- **Stakeholder meetings:** Individual and group conversations with local businesses, developers, property owners, architects, and Downtown organizations.
- **Public open house:** Held October 1, 2026, to introduce the proposed standards and provide an opportunity for public participation. One architect was the only attendee recorded at the open house.
- **Urban Design Committee:** Two meetings were held in September and October. No members of the development community attended or submitted comments through these meetings.
- **Email outreach:** Two communications were distributed to the Downtown Lincoln Association email list. These announced the project website and the public open house. An additional email announcing the open house was distributed to Planning & Development Services' developer email list.
- **Online engagement:** The project website provided access to the proposed standards and an opportunity for community members to submit comments.
- **KLKN TV Interview:** Staff was interviewed about the project and explained the importance of the update as well as promoted the online content and comment form.

Feedback and Key Themes

Four comments were received through the project website. Feedback included:

- **Support for the proposed standards:** Two comments expressed support for the proposed updates.
- **Downtown residential parking:** One comment expressed a desire for additional parking for Downtown apartments.
- **Affordable housing:** One comment led to a follow-up phone conversation that focused primarily on affordable housing rather than the specific provisions of the Downtown Design Standards.

Additional conversations provided insight into how stakeholders view the potential implications of the proposed standards.

During the developers and property owners meeting, some participants expressed concerns about how the proposal could affect development projects. Following that meeting, a separate conversation offered a different perspective, indicating that the proposed standards would not affect projects in the same way others had suggested.

The project team also presented to the Commercial Brokers group and gained feedback regarding drive-throughs, empty retail spaces, and bicycle parking.

Continued Opportunities for Input

Following the initial stakeholder discussions, copies of the proposed standards were sent directly to representatives of Assurity, Speedway, and a local development attorney. Downtown Lincoln Association was also collecting input.

These additional opportunities provided stakeholders with time to review the proposed language and identify specific questions, concerns, or recommendations.

Summary and Observations

Several observations emerged from the engagement process:

1. **Broad stakeholder outreach was conducted.** The project team used direct conversations, coordinated stakeholder meetings, email communications, and online engagement to reach individuals and organizations with an interest in Downtown development.
2. **Feedback reflected a range of perspectives.** Website comments included support for the proposed standards, while other feedback raised questions about residential parking and affordable housing.
3. **Development impacts were a topic of discussion.** Some developers and property owners expressed concerns about the potential implications of the proposed standards. Other conversations reflected differing perspectives about how the standards might affect individual projects.
4. **Participation in public meetings was limited.** Attendance at the October 1 Open House was limited to one recorded participant. Additionally, no development community representatives attended the two Urban Design Committee meetings or submitted comments through those meetings.
5. **Some conversations extended beyond the design standards.** Discussions about affordable housing, existing development proposals, drive-through facilities, and other current and upcoming projects demonstrated the broader range of issues stakeholders associate with Downtown development.

The feedback received resulted in many changes to the final draft of the proposed Downtown Design Standards.