

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP:	PLANNING COMMISSION
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING:	Wednesday, January 31, 2018, 1:15 p.m., Council Chambers, County-City Building, 555 South 10 th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:	Tom Beckius, Tracy Edgerton, Deane Finnegan, Maja Harris, Chris Hove, Christy Joy, Dennis Scheer and Sändra Washington; (Tracy Corr absent).
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:	David Cary, Steve Henrichsen, Paul Barnes, Andrew Thierolf and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Dept.; Kristen Humphrey of Public Works & Utilities; Roger Figard of the Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD); and other interested parties.
STATED PURPOSE:	Briefing on “Downtown Master Plan Update” by Planning Dept. staff and “Cornhusker Railroad Transportation Safety District (RTSD) Project Overview” by Public Works & Utilities staff, RTSD staff and Planning Dept. staff.

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

David Cary thanked everyone. He believes both of these topics are very exciting. The first is the Downtown Master Plan Update. This project is just getting underway. The second topic is an overview of the Cornhusker Highway RTSD project.

DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Paul Barnes stated that the last Downtown Master Plan was adopted in 2005. There was an update in 2012. There have been a significant number of projects from those two master plans that have been accomplished. This plan update is an effort that is being worked on as a partnership between the City of Lincoln and the DLA (Downtown Lincoln Association). This plan moving forward for 2018 and beyond, will be a standalone plan. This is what’s next for Lincoln and building on the successes and acknowledging there are several other efforts going on at the same time. There is the On-Street Bicycle Facilities Plan. The State is doing a Campus Master Plan. There will be the Downtown Lincoln Parking Strategy. There is the downtown parking discussion. We hope to adopt the plan sometime later this year. The master plan team is core

staff from the Planning Dept., Urban Development and DLA. Then there is the steering committee. We have invited other department representatives. It will be more of a technical committee to review concepts and the vision. Then there is a project committee that reaches out to key downtown stakeholders such as the University of Nebraska, business owners and residents. Then there is the consultant team. It will be led by PUMA, short for Progressive Urban Management Associates. They have done work in Lincoln and with the DLA. They are known in the industry as the downtown gurus. Civitas is landscape architecture and urban design firm. These companies are both based out of Denver. Also within their firm are staff that are working on types of smart city technology. Then there is FHU (Felsburg Holt & Ullevig) as a consultant as well. They bring the transportation side of this project.

The first category is land use and redevelopment capacity. Downtown is an urban neighborhood. There is housing, retail, places to shop and places to go. PUMA will look at market studies to see what kinds of residential Lincoln can support, what it should look like, market rates and many other details. They will also look at strategies to continue to encourage mixed use redevelopment. There is also a technology and smart cities piece. We are already involved in bringing gigabyte technology to Lincoln. The question is what the next piece should be.

Another category is transportation. There will be a conversation about the downtown driverless shuttle. We want to bring that concept to this process. We will coordinate on this piece. The next is to have a conceptual idea of two way streets. We want this to be a high level conversation. As one of the outcomes of this effort, we would like to know what the community wants to look at in more depth.

Another big topic is public realm. This will be a discussion regarding public spaces, including hardscape, greenspace and water features. Streetscape designs will be looked at.

An important section is implementation. We want to have this discussion with all our stakeholders. We will also look at the timing and phasing of these projects. As we go through this process, there may be ideas for future topics that come up.

Andrew Thierolf presented the city website for this project. The keyword 'downtown' takes you to the site: <http://www.lincoln.ne.gov/city/plan/long/downtown/downtown.htm>. There is also a link on the Planning Dept. homepage. There isn't a lot of information now as this is just being started. We will continue to add information to the site as things progress. There will be a public meeting schedule, a comment board and a survey, amongst other items.

The background report is the first document related to this plan. It walks through the different projects and identifies the progress. In 2005, seven catalyst projects were identified. Many of those have been completed, some never materialized. It also looks at the 2012 update of the plan. Two projects were identified and it walks through the status of those projects. It

discusses various projects that have happened since 2005. A companion to that is the story map. Most major projects in the downtown area are included. You can click on the map and an individual project. It talks about the project and gives some details. It gives a look at what has gone on downtown since 2005. He would recommend reviewing the website and the document for a broad overview.

Barnes continued that right now, we are in the process of finalizing the EO (Executive Order) for the contract with the consultant. Their first visit will be at the end of February 2018. We will meet with the various committees and then start discussion with some of the working groups. The groups are pretty much the same as focus groups. There are key topics we will discuss. PUMA has a presentation they call a global trends package where they have done a lot of research on downtown environments across the globe. At their visit in April, PUMA will be doing a Global Trends Presentation. There will be a charrette in June. There will be community open houses, an online survey, information added to the web and more Planning Commission briefings. Information will be provided to the Planning Commission as it develops. We will also invite Planning Commissioners to the open houses.

Hove questioned if the group will review entertainment policies as part of this. Barnes replied that with the recent decision of the City and the City Council, we believe that is pretty fresh and don't need another consultant to dive into that policy. There were consultants who reviewed that topic already.

Washington wondered about the conversion of one-way streets to two-way and how much the public will be involved in that conversation. Barnes thinks there are already ideas regarding some streets that can be looked at. He believes there are already discussions that are happening with business owners. That would be one of many topics that would be discussed. Cary added that the current Downtown Plan calls for 13th Street to be two-way through downtown. We have also had recent discussions with Public Works & Utilities and there is interest in studying that. He believes there is a lot of evidence supporting that some downtown streets can benefit from going two-way. We want to tap into the mood of the community and see if there is interest. We would like Public Works & Utilities to take the lead on this.

Finnegan questioned if structured conversation was considered instead of open houses and wide discussions. Barnes doesn't believe that specific concept has been part of the conversation

Harris stated that at the last Planning Commission briefing, commissioners heard about Urban Development and the plan to get more bang for the buck. Is this being used or considered? Barnes thinks it would be great if it could be. Downtown is more dense and active than any other part of the City.

CORNHUSKER RTSD PROJECT OVERVIEW

Roger Figard is the Executive Director of the RTSD. On behalf of the district and board members, it is our pleasure and we thank the Planning Commission for giving us the opportunity to share and update you on where this project is. The RTSD is excited to partner with the City on the next steps. As you know, Lincoln-Lancaster County has a long history of planning, over 60 years. The community wants to know about the vision for the future. We wanted to make sure that a RTSD project collaborates and coordinates with the vision of the City. We have signed an interlocal agreement.

Cary stated this is a collaborative effort. RTSD has been the leader. The first step was a study, the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study. This is a federal study to identify a lot of items and issues that will come up ahead of those steps being taken. So when you get to the process, it is more understood. The findings were very solid and will be used moving forward. It doesn't get into all of the effects this project will have on the area moving forward. Kudos to Public Works & Utilities as well for being the major funder of this. The Planning Dept. is providing funding as well. Today we want to talk about the planning phase. Cornhusker Highway cuts through this area. It is identified as a major entryway in the Comprehensive Plan. Similar to what has been done to the airport entryway, we want to take a look at what this can look like as well. We want to have conversations with the public. We have a design and consultant team on board now. Kris Humphrey is the RTSD Project Manager. Rick Herrick from Olsson Associates is the lead consultant. Ken Boone is from OA Design Studio. We also have Benesch on board for some technical work.

Kris Humphrey stated that back in mid-2015 to mid-2016, we worked on the PEL study. This allows us to have an informed decision making process. This is under the FHWA (Federal Highway Administration) and the DOT (Department of Transportation). We looked at the railroad corridor between 27th and 48th Streets, Holdrege to Superior Street and focused on the rail corridor. There are crossings at 33rd Street, 44th Street and Adams Street. The first thing we did is look at what the project goals would be: safety, traffic and congestion, mobility and multi-modal and LRTP (Long Range Transportation Plan) compatible. We knew that this wouldn't be an easy task. One of the metrics we use is an exposure rating. For 33rd St. and Adams, that is about 1.3 million. This is one of the highest in the State of Nebraska. The number needs to be greater than 50,000 for the State to consider. Then we looked at all of the constraints. There are a lot of businesses in the area. There is a grain elevator that has its own unique needs. Deadman's Run is on the south side. The Corp. of Engineers along with Public Works Watershed and the NRD (Lower Platte South Natural Resources District) are doing a study of Deadman's Run. There is floodplain north of the railroad tracks. There are a lot of parks in the area. We knew this wouldn't be easy. There are a lot of pieces to this. The good news is there are no environmental red flags. Once we get into the environmental phase, this will be looked at in much greater detail. We started with many different alignment alternatives. We whittled

it down to two alternatives. The only difference between the two scenarios is how Adams St. connects to Cornhusker Hwy. The course of the next year will be exciting. We started discussions with the City and add the subarea plan. All this information is on the website: www.33rdcornhusker.com. There is the subarea plan boundary, the corridor enhancement boundary and the NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) study area.

Cary continued that we had the PEL study. There are years of studies yet. For a project of this size, we are looking at this probably not being completed until 2025. We are going to look at the land uses with a consultant and layout land uses and the strategy. We will also look at the corridor so we can have a vision for the long term. In that perspective, they like to get a lot of input and end up with a strategy that can be implemented. The corridor plan will talk about the aesthetics of Cornhusker Highway in particular. They will look at the right-of-way and areas for improvements. This will set expectations for private development. There is an advisory committee that has been put in place. This will be all encompassing. By the time we get to the charrette stage, there could be more people involved. The administrative team is members of the RTSD board, Roger Figard, Deb Schorr, Cyndi Lamm and himself. The idea with the subarea study is to talk about economic development. That is not the only driver, but we go into this with the idea that this area is underutilized from what it could be. There is an ongoing effort to get a lot of land in the Deadman's Run area out of the floodplain with the improvement. What we have here is a combination of major efforts and a lot of opportunity. We want to take all this into consideration and come up with a vision we can all agree on.

Humphrey stated that the schedule for the PEL study has been completed. The planning, environmental analysis and preliminary engineering will take about three to four years. The final design will take about one year. The right-of-way acquisition will take around two to three years. The utility relocations will take about one year, with construction taking around two to three years. The anticipated completion date is around 2025 - 2026. The first open house will be on February 22, 2018 at the Center for People in Need from 5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. We are planning on having a few charrettes in 2018 and an informational open house in late 2018.

Figard added that he thinks it is important to know that this is a project that has real viability. The RTSD and their partners are at a place that show this has the potential to become a real project. Cary added that we will be back early in the planning process to let you know what is going on. We will ask for direction on adopting this as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Hove wondered about the railroad and any details regarding an overpass. Figard would expect the railroad to tell us the entire corridor needs to be taken care of. Closing at grade crossings provides the best safety improvements. That brings the need for more improvements. The tracks are BNSF Railway. They have operating agreements with Union Pacific and Amtrak

Scheer inquired if rail numbers are the same or down. Figard thinks they are down a little from the past, but still very active. 65 trains a day were noted in the PEL study.

Beckius thinks the neighborhoods are looking forward to a solution. He has first-hand experience in how difficult it can be to have to wait for a train during your commute. Figard believes it is important to have the solutions fit the neighborhood.

Scheer finds this exciting. These are the projects that change Lincoln.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

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