
Housing Dialogue

Community Committee Meeting

May 28, 2020

PLAN FORWARD 2050
Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department



Housing

Introduction

Over the next several months the Planning Department will be coordinating presentations with topic experts and discussions on various topics for the Community Committee meetings. This will be one of the key ways the Community Committee will have an opportunity to provide input on these topics. The discussion topic for the Community Committee meeting on May 28th will focus on housing. This document is being provided to you as a resource in advance of the May 28th meeting.

Housing Policies in LPlan 2040

The current City-County Comprehensive Plan, LPlan 2040, contains many housing and neighborhood strategies and goals. All of these strategies and goals are found in [Chapter 7, Neighborhoods and Housing](#). These strategies and goals lay a good foundation for development of PlanForward 2050. Some of these goals have been accomplished over the last 10 years whereas others may be removed or carried forward in the new Comprehensive Plan. A sample of the housing and neighborhood strategies and goals is provided below. These will continue to be discussed and examined as PlanForward 2050 is developed.

Make available a safe residential dwelling for all citizens.
Provide a wide variety of housing types and choices for an increasingly diverse and aging population.
Provide flexibility to the marketplace in siting future residential development locations.
Strive for predictability for neighborhoods and developers for residential development and redevelopment.
Encourage acreages to develop in appropriate areas and preserve farmland.
Expand education for prospective home buyers on the implications of rural living.
Discourage residential development in areas of environmental resources such as endangered species, saline wetlands, native prairies, and in floodplain corridors.
Provide adequate spacing from pipelines and areas where hazardous chemicals could be used and stored; notify property owners and residents along the pipeline about hazards and emergency actions.
Encourage substantial connectivity and convenient access to neighborhood services (stores, schools, parks) from residential areas.
Incorporate interconnected networks of streets, transit, trails, and sidewalks with multiple connections within and between neighborhoods and commercial centers to maximize access and mobility to provide alternatives to and reduce dependence upon the automobile.
Make available opportunities for individuals and/or organizations to raise local food.
Structure incentives to encourage higher densities to make greater use of the community's infrastructure.
Develop new design standards that encourage density, optimize infrastructure costs, and help lower the overall cost of property development.
Encourage well-designed and appropriately placed density, including within existing apartment complexes and special needs housing where there is land available for additional buildings or expansions.
Preserve, protect and promote the character and unique features of urban neighborhoods, including their historical and architectural elements.

Residential Land Inventory Report



The Planning Department publishes an annual report known as the [Residential Land Inventory Report](#). This report summarizes residential building permit activity and residential development approvals in Lincoln. A new addition to the report is an analysis of the residential lot supply in the County. Highlights from the report are provided below, or you can review the complete report online. All information is current as of January 1, 2020.

Building permits were issued for 1,956 residential units in 2019
Of those permits, 658 were for single-family, 1,038 were for multi-family, and 260 were for single-family attached and duplex
Based on the 3-year average of dwelling units permitted per year in new growth areas, there is a 12 year supply of approved dwelling units.
Multi-family building permits for 2019 topped 1,000 units for just the third time in the last 15 years
The amount of infill development has steadily increased in recent years, with the 2015-2019 totals nearly doubling the 2010-2014 totals.
2,708 dwelling units have been added to Greater Downtown since 2010.
Student-oriented housing accounted for 63 percent of Greater Downtown units over the past 10 years.
Based on the 3-year average of dwelling unit permitted per year in rural areas, there is a 5 year supply of approved dwelling units. (Several villages have significant available residential land within their 1-mile jurisdictions that was not included in this analysis.)

Community Indicators Report

The Planning Department publishes an annual report known as the [Community Indicators Report](#). This report is used to evaluate and monitor changes in the community and assess if assumptions in the Comprehensive Plan continue to be valid. The report is divided into six major areas of interest, including Housing (beginning on page 25). A sample of the key housing indicators are provided below, and you can view the full report online. (The Community Indicators report on 2019 data is underway. The information below is current as of May 2019.)

Hickman and Waverly have shown strong growth over the past several years, accounting for nearly 74% of all small town permits since 2010.
Since 2010, Lincoln has had significantly more multi-family housing than between 200-2009.
The difference between median existing home price and median new home price in Lincoln was \$63,055 (2018 dollars) in 2004 compared to \$125,600 in 2018.
Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).
In Lincoln significantly more renters are cost burdened when compared to owners with a mortgage.
In 2018, the median sales price of a new detached single-family unit was \$303,500, which is nearly four times (387 percent) of the median family income in Lancaster County. For an existing detached single family unit, the median sales price was \$177,900 which is over two times (227 percent) of the median family income in Lancaster County.

Staff Discussions

Planning Department staff began engaging with various City and County Departments in 2019 to discuss the upcoming Comprehensive Plan Update. Below is a summary of staff comments that relate to housing and neighborhoods.

Discuss the nodes and corridors section of the Comprehensive Plan as it relates to infill.
Discuss the appropriate design and placement of infill; specifically discuss multi-family infill.
Continue to discuss the Livable Neighborhoods Initiative.
It's difficult to define what a livable neighborhood is, but we know what it isn't.
We don't currently have an affordable housing crisis, but we could in the future.
Discuss options for updating or repurposing older slip-in apartment buildings.
Consider using public land for affordable housing projects.
Building & Safety receive lots of complaints about inadequate parking in neighborhoods and about home occupations.
Review the regulations on private roadways to see where they may not be appropriate (i.e. residential neighborhoods).
Downzone areas where there are conflicts between residential and industrial uses.
Multi-modal options and density are good from a health perspective.
Discuss "Active Living by Design" concept to provide housing close to parks, sidewalks, trails, etc.
People who live in severely blighted areas have lower health outcomes. Low income households in stable neighborhoods have better health outcomes.
Continue the goal of having a trail no more than 1 mile from every household.
Discuss urban versus suburban neighborhoods and what makes for good design.
How do we keep currently stable neighborhoods from falling into disrepair?

Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan

The [Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan](#) is based on previous housing studies and reports, an assortment of data, a variety of input from public stakeholder groups and was influenced by the Mayor's One Lincoln Initiative. This plan seeks to support the development of a housing market in Lincoln that is reflective of the diverse community of residents that makes up the city. The plan aims to identify ways to create housing options for all income levels and ages throughout the City. The top 10 takeaways are listed below, and the full draft document is available for review online.

Lincoln's housing market is affordable for most households, but housing costs are increasing and should be addressed proactively.
Despite median incomes keeping pace, many census tracts in Lincoln are cost burdened.
The greatest shortage of units is for households making less than \$25,000.
Lincoln continues to grow at a steady rate.
Over the next decade, Lincoln will need an additional 17,000 units to support projected population growth.
By 2030, Lincoln will need nearly 5,000 rental units affordable to the lowest income households.
Lincoln's population is generally young, but the number of residents over the age of 65 will continue to grow.
Despite consistent construction activity, the private market is not producing varied housing types.
Lincoln has a number of existing affordable housing units that will need to be preserved.
Multiple factors influence the cost of housing and the ability to produce affordable housing; therefore, multiple partners will have to be called upon to address housing needs.

HBAL Survey Responses

Planning staff had intended to meet with various focus groups as part of our public engagement. Our first focus group was planned to be with the Homebuilders Association of Lincoln. Due to social distancing requirements we instead created an online survey and will follow up in the future to have an in-person discussion. Below is a sample of survey questions and responses we received from HBAL.

Increased density can help the city meet our housing demand while reducing the need for costly infrastructure expansions. How do we encourage increased density while still allowing for market choice?

Not easy. Working with developers to cut through any red tape and making it easier to build housing in pockets of land within the city would be good. Easing limits on lot sizing on newer developments where infrastructure is already in place would also increase density.

Easy, allow the missing middle to grow. Bring a common sense approach to Zoning and design standards. We don't need the 8-12 unit apartments popping up in the residential neighborhoods but we can have some row homes and villa's on the larger properties in town.

We need to look at where people work and "play" and develop small communities that put people closer to their work and free time activities.

Don't require so much "green space" in a new area that is being developed. It's ok if some areas don't have a park or green space. That requirement cuts down the density from 4-5 homes per acre to 3. (For example) what if the homes are closer together or arranged so that there is less green space? That area will be more affordable AND provide higher density while still encouraging home ownership. If someone wants more green space, a park nearby or just space between them and their neighbor, they are can pay more for the lot - market choice will determine that. But if there is no lower costs options, then there is no market choice (with a new home) for those buyers.

The city's future service limit determines where urban infrastructure will be provided over the next 30 years. Are there specific locations that we should prioritize for future service limit expansion?

south and east would still take priority in my opinion. Northwest (airpark) will also continue to grow once the new high school is built.

We the absence of an east beltway and the growth of downtown I don't understand why there isn't more growth west and up and down Hwy 77. It is a great opportunity to let people live in a neighborhood setting and allow for quick access downtown.

Southeast and East

any where that land is more affordable so we can keep lot prices down and housing more affordable. we have plenty of expensive South lots.

Retailing and schools are the biggest draw to south Lincoln, and I assume will continue to be. There has also been a lot of interest in SW Lincoln areas, but little interest in North Lincoln.

What are possible solutions to expand affordable housing in Lincoln?

Working with developers to cut through any red tape and making it easier to build housing in pockets of land within the city would help affordable housing. Regulations account for a major cost in housing construction so any regulations that could be reviewed at a local level without compromising health and safety could lower the cost of construction and help affordability. Lot pricing is another larger factor in affordable housing. Having

more lots available in the city should drive down the price of lots making housing more affordable. Along with lot pricing is lot sizing. If any limitations could be reviewed to allow for smaller lots you would reduce the lot cost, increase density, and expand affordable housing.
First define affordable housing. Enact by ordinance at the local level LB 866 density bonus and inclusionary zoning act and LB 794 missing middle housing act.
get rid of policy of contiguous growth and allow SID's.
Eliminate code provisions that are not cost effective or self-serving to the industry that proposes the change. Allow looser standards of certain efficiencies.
Allow TIF for residential development-- wherever.
Two things, allow the missing middle to grow. Bring a common sense approach to Zoning and design standards. We don't need the 8-12 unit apartments popping up in the residential neighborhoods but we can have some row homes and villa's on the larger properties in town.
Allow for denser new developments 30' lots cost half as much as 60' lots. People are wanting to build smaller footprint homes. Allow that to happen. If we can build 1,000 sqft homes for \$200k we can allow families to move up to a newer home and relieve the pressure on the affordable homes. Lincoln needs HUNDREDS of new homes priced between \$200K-300K to help create a housing stock of \$100k-150k and cheaper rents.
Reduce government regulations that create increased development cost. Review codes and eliminate codes that don't address life safety, consumer protection, provide a resulting payback that far exceeds the cost (i.e. ducted cold air returns in the 2018 energy code).
If the city could help lower land prices by increasing lots that are available (supply and demand) then housing will become more affordable. The city can help increase the number of lots available by allowing SID!
Less government, Lift stations on lower priced ground, Higher density housing
Our city talks out of both sides of its mouth, first saying we want affordable housing-then in the same sentence they adopt every expensive code change, unneeded energy code, storm water bond, school bond, electrical code, unnecessary radon requirement, nonstop, all raising the cost of new construction, "but we want affordable housing".

Housing in Other Comp Plans

Planning staff have been researching what innovative practices for housing and neighborhoods are happening in other cities. Some sample goals and priorities from other cities' comprehensive plans are listed below. You can also view the full documents by clicking on the links that are provided.

Minneapolis, MN Comprehensive Plan

The Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan includes 23 policies on housing. These policies frame numerous action items that are intended to allow more housing options, especially in areas that currently lack housing choice and in areas with access to frequent and fast transit employment, and goods and services. Other policies encourage creation or expansion of new resources and tools to produce and preserve affordable housing, to minimize the displacement of existing residents, and to ensure housing is maintained to promote health and safety. Some of the key action items are included below, and you can also view the [Minneapolis 2040 Comprehensive Plan online](#).

Encourage affordable living features in residential development that result in lower transportation costs and reduce monthly utility bills for its residents.
Ensure an equitable spacing across the city of affordable housing, supportive housing, shelters, and government placed residents.

Create strategies that reduce the cost of affordable housing, such as design competitions for low cost housing using innovative techniques like prefab and manufactured housing, 3-D printed housing and tiny houses.
Review and revise existing policies, programs, and regulations to remove barriers and support innovative, energy efficient, and creative housing options, such as multi-generational housing that supports large family structures, single room occupancy, shared housing, co-housing, and cooperative-housing.
Invest in transportation infrastructure in locations experiencing growth, particularly in locations that have existing transportation infrastructure that needs to adapt to the demands and opportunities brought by growth.
Promote inclusion of active living design components in housing.
Support district approaches to energy, stormwater, parking, waste management, and public realm systems.

Also of note in Minneapolis is the change to single-family zoning districts. “The plan would allow triplexes to be built anywhere single-family homes are currently allowed. It would also eliminate mandatory parking minimums, which drive up the cost of housing construction, and further incentivize high-density apartment buildings around public transit stations. In addition, it calls for inclusionary zoning to require some market-rate developers to provide affordable housing.” More on this topic can be found by reading this [Article](#).

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma Comprehensive Plan

The Oklahoma City Comprehensive plan, planokc, is organized in a hierarchy with the broadest category being “Big Ideas” that define the overall direction of the plan. Two of the seven Big Ideas are “Housing Choice” and “Thriving Neighborhoods”. Each of these big ideas is explained below, and the entire [planokc](#) can be viewed online.



Housing Choice

INCREASE HOUSING CHOICE AND DIVERSITY FOR ALL LIFESTYLES.

Residents want neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing types such as small-lot single-family homes, townhomes, condominiums, and urban apartments. This corresponds with rising demand for townhomes and single-family homes on smaller lots.

We must provide a range of housing choices in attractive neighborhoods. A full range of housing choices allows households of all ages and types to live close to work, shopping, schools, recreation, and other places that are important to them.

Thriving Neighborhoods

ENSURE STABLE, SAFE, ATTRACTIVE, AND VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS.

Stable and resilient neighborhoods are the building blocks of a great city. Better functioning, safer, and more attractive neighborhoods can contribute to achieving important community goals, including improved education for our children.

We should ensure thriving neighborhoods by building and maintaining high quality streets and other infrastructure and amenities; reducing the number of vacant and abandoned buildings; improving schools and neighborhood safety; and protecting historic buildings.

Madison, WI Comprehensive Plan

Complete Neighborhoods

Complete neighborhoods are neighborhoods where residents have safe and convenient access to the goods and services needed in daily life. Complete neighborhoods include a range of housing types and costs, a network of well-connected streets and blocks, usable public spaces, and a system of connected parks, paths, and greenways. Complete neighborhoods have amenities such as stores, schools, and places of worship within walking distance of residences. Employment and more regional shopping, service, and civic opportunities are accessible via nearby transit or a bicycle ride.

The Madison, WI Comprehensive Plan is organized by topic areas, strategies and action items. The topic of Neighborhoods and Housing includes 8 strategies that are listed below. One of the strategies is to develop “complete neighborhoods” which is further explained to the left. The complete [Madison Comprehensive Plan](#) is also available for viewing online.

Create complete neighborhoods across the city where residents have access to transportation options and resources needed for daily living.
Support development of a wider mix of housing types, sizes, and costs throughout the city.
Increase the amount of available housing.
Integrate lower priced housing, including subsidized housing, into complete neighborhoods.
Provide housing options with health and social services for residents who need it most, including residents experiencing homelessness.
Support the rehabilitation of existing housing stock, particularly for first-time homebuyers and people living with lower incomes.
Support neighborhood-scaled schools that offer amenities and services to the surrounding area.
Ensure access to food that is affordable, nutritious, and culturally specific.

New Trends

Seattle Residential Small Lot

The [City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan](#) laid the foundation to adopt a specific zoning district for “Residential Small Lot”. The specific strategy from their Comprehensive Plan is included below. The entire Seattle Comprehensive Plan can be viewed online, and the section below is found on page 52, LU7.9.

“Allow exceptions to minimum lot size requirements to recognize building site created under earlier regulations and historical platting patterns, to allow the consolidation of very small lots into larger lots, to adjust lot lines to permit more orderly development patterns, and to provide more housing opportunities by creating additional buildable sites that integrate well with surrounding lots and do not result in the demolition of existing housing.”

Portland Residential Infill Toolkit

The City of Portland has created the [Residential Infill Toolkit](#) to serve as a resource to designers and builders of housing. The document provides design guidance for infill projects to make sure they are compatible and appropriate for their setting while also achieving medium-density development. The text below further describes the document, and the entire toolkit can be viewed online.

“The various components of this guide serve as problem-solving tools, highlighting strategies for achieving context-sensitive design in infill development and ways of overcoming some of the unique design challenges of infill development on small sites. The initial components of the Infill Design Toolkit are focused on medium-density residential development (such as rowhouses, plexes, courtyard housing, and low-rise multifamily development).”

Los Angeles County Housing Element

The [County of Los Angeles Housing Element](#) includes a Small Lot Subdivision Ordinance. An excerpt from the ordinance is included below, and the entire housing element is viewable online (see page 27).

“By allowing greater flexibility in lot sizes and widths, small lot subdivisions promote affordable homeownership opportunities. Due to the high cost of housing in Los Angeles County, reducing the amount of land required for new residences could potentially result in a significant reduction in the price of a new house. Lower home prices allow more residents to own their homes, while increased homeownership opportunities in turn contribute to neighborhood stability. Furthermore, small lot subdivisions ease overcrowding by allowing a greater variety in lot sizes, promote urban infill on vacant and underutilized parcels, and add flexibility in design to promote a diversity of housing types.”