

PLAN REALIZATION

Comprehensive planning is as much about the process of planning as it is about the plan itself.

The dreams and hopes embodied in this Plan reflect the collective aspirations of over a quarter million people. This Plan, however, did not just happen. It represents thousands of hours of work by hundreds of citizens who willingly and eagerly contributed their knowledge and ideas toward the Plan's creation. Planning — as practiced in Lincoln and Lancaster County — is a democratic, collaborative process.

In this section, the content of and reasons for this Comprehensive Plan are examined, as well as the community process used in its development.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a community's common vision of its future. It expresses through text, maps, and illustrations what the community wants to look like in the future, where it wants to construct buildings and infrastructure, what it values and wants to preserve, where it wants certain land uses to be located, and how it wants to maintain and enhance the quality of its residents' lives.

Comprehensive plans deal mostly with the physical characteristics of a city or county. They contain the visions and policies a community needs to guide future activities. Such plans illustrate where homes, schools, parks, shopping centers, office complexes, and public structures will be in the future, and how such existing activities can be kept vital.

Comprehensive plans are long range in their scope and typically show future programs reaching out for twenty five years or more. They also describe the administrative and financial means for fulfilling the community's common vision.

WHY DO THE CITY AND COUNTY HAVE COMPREHENSIVE PLANS?

The City of Lincoln and Lancaster County are required by State statute and other legislative directives to have comprehensive plans. The plans are intended to serve as the legal foundation for other aspects of the planning process, such as zoning, subdivision regulations, and various development standards.

Nebraska State law calls for comprehensive plans to show “the general location, character, and extent” of major land uses and public facilities. The law spells out a range of elements that are to be in the plan. These include items relating to future population levels and densities, transportation facilities, employment, housing, schools, recreation, utilities, historic and cultural resources, land conservation, and government systems and procedures.

IS THERE A SINGLE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR THE CITY & COUNTY?

The City and County have separate, individual comprehensive plans — these plans, however, are integrated into a single planning document. This single document contains identical policies and language for both jurisdictions.

Since the 1950’s, the City of Lincoln and Lancaster County have worked diligently to ensure that their respective comprehensive planning efforts are closely coordinated. This has included the creation of a single Planning Commission and Planning Department for the city and county. The elected officials from the city and county continue to support the need to maintain a unified planning perspective involving both jurisdictions.

By law, Lancaster County’s planning authority encompasses all areas of the County not included in the plans of any other incorporated entity within the County. This is the area outside the corporate limits of any incorporated jurisdiction, plus that jurisdiction’s extraterritorial areas of influence – in Lincoln’s case for three miles beyond its city limits. The County, of course, remains vitally interested in all the areas of the County as it must provide support services outside the incorporated cities and towns even if those jurisdictions have control over what is and is not built in those areas.



In addition to the close cooperation of the City and County, the planning process respects the policies and desires of the other twelve incorporated jurisdictions within the county, as well as the eight counties bordering Lancaster County. Meetings were held during the development of this plan with representatives of all of these jurisdictions. Such meetings provided the opportunity to effectively coordinate the plans of these many jurisdictions.

HOW WAS THIS PLAN PREPARED?

The City of Lincoln Charter places the responsibility for developing the Comprehensive Plan with the City-County Director of Planning. Once prepared, the draft document is submitted to the City-County Planning Commission for public comment and subsequent Planning Commission action. Ultimately, the Lincoln City Council and Lancaster County Board must approve each jurisdiction’s Plan, with the Mayor of Lincoln also needing to approve the City’s Plan.

Local tradition holds, however, that the community is much more actively involved in the Plan’s formulation than might otherwise be required by official directive. Comprehensive Plans for the city and county have historically embraced intensive community involvement. This Comprehensive Plan is no exception.

At the center of the Plan’s creation was a 14 member citizen group called the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC). The CPC was composed of a diverse assortment of individuals representing far-reaching urban, rural, and agricultural perspectives. To ensure the continuity of thought as the Plan progressed later through the formal review process, the CPC’s membership also contained two representatives from the City-County Planning Commission.

The Committee’s task was to help guide the process toward the successful blending of various planning polices. The CPC’s participation extended for a period of slightly more than a year. Meeting several times each month throughout the 2001 calendar year, the Committee concluded their work in late January, 2002. Throughout this period, numerous approaches were used by the Committee to solicit the community’s ideas on the future of the city and county.

Following the conclusion of the Committee’s work, the draft Plan was submitted to the City-County Planning Commission for their review. This was done in accordance with local charter standards.

The Planning Commission held a number of working sessions of their own before conducting two formal public hearings on March 13 and 27, 2002. The Planning Commission then adopted their recommended Plan on April 3, 2002, and forwarded it to the Lincoln City Council and Lancaster County Board. Joint hearings by these elected bodies were conducted in May, 2002, with the adoption of this Plan occurring on May 28, 2002. Lincoln Mayor Don Wesely affirmed the City’s administrative adoption of the Comprehensive Plan on May 29, 2002.

- Community Involvement Approaches Used in Preparing This Plan***
- *Two community-wide telephone surveys*
 - *Five to seven community workshops every 3 months*
 - *Email comments and ideas submittal site*
 - *Comprehensive Plan informational website*
 - *Bi-monthly newsletter*
 - *Televised community forum*
 - *Central faxing location*
 - *Phone comment lines (multi-lingual)*
 - *Meeting posters and brochures (multi-lingual)*
 - *Workshops targeted to special communities*
 - *Presentations to local organizations*

WHAT IS A “LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN” (LRTP)?

Federal transportation planning regulations require urbanized areas with populations greater than 50,000 people to have a “Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).” This Plan shows strategies and actions to enhance the community’s intermodal transportation system — that is, streets, buses, trains, planes, trails, etc. — for a period of at least twenty years. The Plan is to be developed and adopted by the area’s Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

By directive of the Nebraska Governor, the City of Lincoln is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Lincoln and Lancaster County area. The Lincoln City Mayor is considered to be the administrative head of the MPO. Decisions regarding MPO transportation policy are made through a process involving close collaboration with many County, State and Federal officials.

The Federal planning guidelines specify what needs to be in the Long Range Transportation Plan, how it needs to be prepared, who needs to participate in its preparation, and how it is approved. In most communities across the country, LRTP’s are a separate document from the Comprehensive Plan. The LRTP report reflects what the comprehensive plans of the local jurisdictions indicate for future growth – but only rarely are the MPO long range transportation plans actually part of local comprehensive plans.

Lincoln’s LRTP is different in this regard. The Long Range Transportation Plan for the greater Lincoln metropolitan area is a part of this Comprehensive Plan. It is embodied in the transportation chapters of this document, as well as in the other portions of the Comprehensive Plan that bear direct relevance to the transportation planning process. This enhances both the transportation and land use elements of the community’s overall planning effort.



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