

BRIEFING NOTES

NAME OF GROUP: PLANNING COMMISSION  
DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF MEETING: Wednesday, January 22, 2014, 1:00 p.m., Room 113, County-City Building, 555 S. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, Lincoln, Nebraska  
MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Cathy Beecham, Michael Cornelius, Tracy Corr, Maja V. Harris, Jeanelle Lust, Dennis Scheer, Lynn Sunderman and Ken Weber. Chris Hove absent.  
OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE: Marvin Krout, David Cary, Steve Henrichsen, Ed Zimmer, Christy Eichorn, Brandon Garrett, Sara Hartzell, Stacey Hageman, Brian Will and Michele Abendroth of the Planning Department.  
STATED PURPOSE OF MEETING: Review of reFORM Proposals

The meeting continued after the Planning Commission regular meeting and began at 1:23 p.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

Cary explained that the purpose of today's briefing is to make sure the Commission understands the package of the reFORM proposals and for staff to get a good understanding of where the Commission stands on the proposal. He noted that staff will review the different but related aspects of the reFORM package.

Garrett reviewed the site development standards. He explained the center standards and corridor standards, and concepts such as pedestrian-oriented route, build-to zone, net frontage length and streetscape.

Corr commented on the drive-through lane in relation to the sidewalk and asked what a good design would look like. Garrett stated that you would bring the building up to the streetscape within the build-to zone and the drive-through would orient behind or to the side of the building. Lust stated that she is concerned about reorienting the buildings where you need a crosswalk to cross the drive-through lane to get into the building. Commissioners asked to see examples of drive-through lanes that would meet the new standards in relation to pedestrian access. Campbell is concerned about pedestrian safety when crossing a drive-through lane.

Harris commented on the historical street wall for corridors and asked if a new development with brownstones could be done with the build-to zone. Scheer asked if it is possible to design a new historical street wall as a solution to the streetscape. Garrett stated that it would be possible. Corr asked how the historical street wall affects street widening. Garrett stated that establishing a streetscape helps create separation between the curb to the sidewalk and to the building. The intention is that as streets are widened, the streetscape should move with it as redevelopment occurs.

Next, Hageman reviewed the building design standards. She reviewed the definition for street façade, entrance façade and arterial façade. She briefly reviewed the proposed design

standards for articulation, entrance design, transparency, materials, parking structures, equipment screening,

Lust asked if there were any concerns expressed that glass is not necessarily the greenest way to build a building. Garrett stated that there were many architects on the committee, and they didn't express any concerns with the standards making any buildings less green. Eichorn added that they looked at whether any of these standards would conflict with any energy efficiency standards or LEED certification, and they found that they were not in conflict. Scheer stated that glass is very efficient now and daylight is important for solar heat.

Garrett then reviewed the areas where the zoning standards will apply. The zoning changes include establishing B-3 and H-2 zoning in corridors; establishing B-2, B-5, and H-4 zoning in centers; and making other related zoning changes. The proposal includes a new B-1 "Neighborhood Retail District" and rezoning all existing B-1 to other districts, mainly to B-3.

Harris stated that it seems there was some difference of opinion with the design standards and asked if the rezoning was generally non-controversial. Garrett stated that the rezoning does create issues for property owners, so they have looked at specific efforts for certain areas in meeting with property owners. Cary stated that there would be a significant outreach to property owners to explain the proposed changes. Eichorn stated that we are talking about two different things with zoning. There is rezoning of properties, and then there is the zoning code and the specific changes such as setbacks.

Next, Eichorn explained the changes that would be needed to the zoning ordinance. She reviewed the changes related to parking, height and setbacks, process improvements, residential development in and near commercial development, and screening and landscaping.

Harris asked about the administrative approval process. Eichorn stated that if we adopt new standards and we have a common understanding that we have a set of standards that we can all agree on, so there aren't any surprises, then an administrative process is possible. Today, when you go through the public hearing process, the developers don't know what the neighborhoods are going to ask for, and it is very uncertain. The design standards say that these are the rules we are going to play by, and if you don't ask for any waivers, then you shouldn't have the expectation that you will have to provide above and beyond what the standards are.

Cary stated that the next meeting will be on February 5. There will be time to ask questions, discuss these proposals and give your opinion on the reFORM proposal.

Campbell stated that she served on both reFORM Subcommittees and wishes that everyone had the opportunity to do that. This needs to be a balanced package, and it's hard to have balance if you only look at one piece of the puzzle. She feels like it would be helpful to look at all the changes being proposed for each district. Cary stated that we are at a point where you

need to understand the proposal and feel comfortable with it. Lust stated that she agrees with Campbell that it would be helpful to look at the package by district.

Scheer stated that with any of these proposals, the danger is that a developer will look at those standards and pick them apart. You need to look at it holistically. When you look at solving a design issue, you need to look at it and take the whole project in.

Cary asked if it would be helpful to have examples. Commissioners stated that examples would be helpful. Lust added that a printed document like what was given to them at the beginning of the process would be very helpful.

Cornelius asked about the timeline. Cary stated that there is no date, other than we hope to have it done by the end of the year. Cornelius asked if we are largely done and just need minor tweaks with the design standards. Cary stated that there have been tweaks along the way, but we need to hear from the Commission if they are comfortable with the proposal or if there are things that are holding them back.

Lust asked what staff is envisioning happening at the February 5 meeting. Cary stated that they would like to get comments and questions from the Commissioners prior to the February 5 meeting.

Campbell stated that there are areas where we do have design standards, and she would like to hear about examples where those have been successful and where they haven't.

Sunderman stated that he would like to hear more about the 84<sup>th</sup> & O Street development. It seemed that the developer was disagreeing with the standards, and he would like to hear more about why they felt that way.

Lust stated that she would like to have more information on the perceived increase in cost and how we back that up, as she believes that is a big obstacle. Cary stated that they have looked into the costs, and it depends on the market, the design standards, a point in time, and the level of acceptance for the design standards. There is going to be a gray area. Lust stated that there must have been a basis for the standards, and she would like to hear about that. Campbell stated that they are going to hear from developers and neighborhoods who say that these aren't strong enough, and if staff can help them have that understanding, that would be helpful. Cary stated that information about the current design standards on where they have worked would be helpful for the committee. Sunderman stated that he understands the argument from some developers saying that it is their vision for a project and they don't want design standards, but he thinks we need some sort of base design standards.

Campbell stated that we need to encourage good design in the older neighborhoods as well. Sunderman stated that is where we need the balance.

Cary stated that staff will send out an email to the Commissioners asking for their comments and questions to be returned by Friday.

Cornelius asked if there will be another meeting after February 5. Krout stated that they hope to get a sense of where to go next from the Commissioners at the February 5 meeting, and then they will go out and meet with the stakeholders after that.

Cornelius stated he is generally in favor of the package of proposals. It is when they get into the tiny details that he could have more questions. He is not uncomfortable with any of the proposed changes.

Harris asked if there is any way to get a rough estimate or percentage difference on the increase in cost. Cary stated that most of the development has good design, so the cost differential will not be that great. The biggest push back on design standards was on how to design the site. Campbell stated that this is where it would be helpful to see the whole picture. She asked if we are giving any flexibility to the developers on zoning where it might help them. Krout stated that every site is different. If you go into the newer areas of town, you get a different level of construction. We have heard that average building standards might cost 3-4% more depending on the design standards. Our design standards are not very tough. It has to do more with centers and corridors and reorienting entrances and the relationship from building to building and parking standards. Developers see the idea of internal orientation as reducing the visibility of their buildings and signage.

Cary stated that the design standards would raise the bar for some developments. Part of the discussion during the committee work was that some members didn't want the standards to tell them what to do with their site. We can have good discussion and realize that we may not get 100% agreement with everything in the package.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

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