

LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING STAFF REPORT

P.A.S.: CZ#3364, Misc.#02002, & Misc.#02003

DATE: April 23, 2002

Note: This is a combined staff report for related items. This report contains a single background and analysis section for all items.

PROPOSAL:

Adopt regulations for arterial streets 120' or more in width.

Adopt amendments to the installation of sidewalks.

Adopt amendments to parking lots.

Adopt new standards for streetscapes.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed revisions to the design standards and ordinances will implement the concept for arterial streets as included in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan as amended and the proposed Comprehensive Plan as recommended by the Planning Commission on April 3, 2002.

The revisions follow through with providing flexibility in lot depth, setback reductions, and the use of easements in lieu of fee dedication along the outer edge of the corridor.

The proposed revisions also address associated streetscape standards including sidewalks, parking lots, and landscaping.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approval

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Land Subdivision Ordinance – amend the following sections:

- 26.07.190 to revise definition of major street
- 26.11.039 to revise requisites for final plat approval
- 26.11.040 to revise provisions regarding installation of improvements
- 26.23.040 to revise street and other public way widths
- 26.23.120 to revise provisions regarding easements
- 26.23.140 to revise provisions regarding lot
- 26.27.090 to revise provisions regarding trees

Zoning Code – amend the following sections:

- 27.03.082 add definition for Arterial Streets
- 27.31.090 to revise Table 27.31.090(a) to revise front yard requirements
- 27.37.060 to revise the height and area regulations regarding front yard requirements
- 27.45.070 to revise Table 27.45.070(a) regarding front yard requirements
- 27.51.090 to revise the height and area regulations regarding front yard requirements
- 27.67.030 to revise provisions regarding parking in the front yard in the B-1, H-1, H-2, and H-3 districts
- 27.71.080 to revise provisions regarding fences to require a gate on double frontage lots
- 27.77.010 to revise provisions regarding certificate of occupancy.

Design Standards - amend the following chapters:

- 2.15 URBAN PUBLIC STREET DESIGN STANDARDS
- 2.35 DESIGN STANDARDS FOR STREET TREES
- 3.50 DESIGN STANDARDS FOR SCREENING AND LANDSCAPING

Design Standards - new chapter:

- 5.00 DESIGN STANDARDS FOR LANDSCAPING STREETSCAPES, MEDIANS, BOULEVARDS, ROUNDABOUTS AND ARTERIAL STREETS

APPLICANT:

The Directors of Parks & Recreation, Planning, and Public Works & Utilities of the City of Lincoln

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SUMMARY:

Corridor Width

- N Revises **street classification** to indicate that the width of Major Streets is 100 to 140' as shown in the Comprehensive Plan, and adds definition of arterial street.
- N Adopts standard, dimensioned **cross-section** for arterial streets (see pages 13-17 of Chapter 2.15, "*Urban Public Street Design Standards*").
- N Accommodates the **addition of future traffic lanes**.

Flexibility For Private Development Adjacent to Corridors

- N Adds provisions for ROW in excess of 50' from centerline to be shown as **easement in lieu of fee dedication**.
- N Allows **sidewalks and street trees** to be located **within easements** along the arterial corridor.
- N Allows minimum residential **lot depths to be reduced** from 120' to 110' where 120' of ROW or more has been dedicated for an arterial street .
- N Adds **provision for reducing front yards** by distance corresponding to ROW width in excess of 50' from centerline in the B-2, B-5, H-4, and I-3 zoning districts.

Sidewalks

- N **Sidewalks and trails** along arterial streets to be **installed within 2 years** of final plat approval, or at the same time the street is paved, whichever is earlier (current requirement is 4 years).

Street Trees & Landscape Screening

- N Street trees to be planted **between the curb and sidewalk**.
- N Street trees and landscape screens to be planted within 4 years or at the **same time the street is paved**, whichever is earlier.
- N Modifies existing requirement for landscape screening along residential properties abutting major streets: **fences may not be used as the only material** to meet the requirement (see pages 6-11 of Chapter 3.50, "*Design Standards for Screening and Landscaping*").
- N Landscaping and street trees to be installed by a **licensed nursery and/or landscape contractor** approved by Parks & Recreation.
- N Allows for **release of 50% or 90% of street tree bond** if corresponding percentage has been planted.
- N **Does not permit parking in the front 12' of the front yard** where parking is allowed in the front yard (B-1, H-1, H-2, and H-3 districts).
- N Increases **screening requirements for parking lots**:
 - P Eliminates reduction for additional setback
 - P Increases density of screen from 60% to 90%
 - P Adds additional deciduous trees in parking lot
- N **Revises** "*Design Standards for Street Trees*" and "*Design Standards for Screening and Landscaping*."
- N **Adopts new standards for landscaping** called "*Design Standards for Landscaping Streetscapes, Medians, Boulevards, Roundabouts, and Arterial Streets*."

Maintenance

- N **Revises fencing standards** to require double frontage lots to have a 36" **opening to allow access to maintain** the area from the property line to the curb, which is an existing requirement.

Sidewalks along local/collector streets

- N **Sidewalks** along single-family or two-family lots abutting ***local or collector streets*** to be **constructed prior to certificate of occupancy** rather than 4 years from approval of final plat.
- N Subdivider posts **bond/escrow equal to 25%** of the estimated cost.

GENERAL INFORMATION:

These are revisions to ordinances and design standards to follow up on a concept that the City Council adopted in November 2000 by amending the 1994 Comprehensive Plan.

In the 1994 Comprehensive Plan this concept was called “Public Way Corridors.” It was adopted to create a standard for future arterial streets that addresses the transportation infrastructure needs in planned growth areas, while creating a sense of place and a positive physical image for the community. The concept was adopted as a 120-foot multiple-use corridor expanding to 130 feet at major intersections, and applied generally to arterial corridors along the mile section line roadway framework within the Future Urban Area.

A proposed Year 2025 City-County Comprehensive Plan projects future right-of-way widths (including potential linear public easements) of 120 feet along selected arterial streets (with 130 feet right-of-way noted for major intersections.) Thus proposed ordinance and design standards amendments are intended to indicated the physical design features of these corridor spaces. Thus, the use of the term “Arterial Street 120 feet or More in Width.”

The arterial street corridor incorporates multiple uses including vehicular circulation, pedestrian circulation, utilities, lighting, and landscaping, in a way that facilitates neighborhood cohesiveness, with consideration given to maintenance and evolution of the corridor over time so as to have minimum impact on neighborhoods. The elements accommodated within this corridor include:

- P up to four through lanes for vehicular traffic;
- P up to three turn lanes at major intersections (duel lefts and one right turn lane);
- P a sidewalk and a trail (where planned) for pedestrian and bicycle circulation;
- P appropriate arrangement and spacing of underground utilities;
- P street trees and landscape screen with low maintenance plant materials.

The concept as it was adopted in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan is being applied today as development occurs along new arterial corridors. However, at the time the concept was adopted, the City acknowledged the need to follow through on the broader implications of the concept within the Lincoln Municipal Code and the Design Standards. A commitment was

also made to provide flexibility in meeting the objectives of the corridor, such as flexibility in lot depth, setback reductions, and the use of easements in lieu of fee dedication along the outer edge of the corridor. The proposed revisions are intended to meet these objectives.

HISTORY:

December 1999 - July 2000. The Public Works & Utilities, Planning, and Parks & Recreation Departments formed a study team to develop a standard for future arterial streets and retained the Clark Enersen Partners to assist them in the generation of design alternatives for this project. The Study Team gathered input from approximately 15 meetings and open houses which were held over the course of the study with groups that included developers, homebuilders, trails groups, neighborhood associations, utility companies, and environmental organizations. Five additional meetings were held throughout the public hearing process before the Planning Commission with representatives of the Home Builders Association, Lincoln Board of Realtors, and the development community.

November/December 2000. City Council and County Board adopted Comprehensive Plan Amendment 94-58, a standard for future arterial streets that addresses the transportation infrastructure needs in planned growth areas, while creating a sense of place and a positive physical image for the community. The concept, formerly termed “Public Way Corridors,” was adopted as a 120-foot multiple-use corridor expanding to 130 feet at major intersections, and applied generally to arterial corridors along the mile section line roadway framework within the Future Urban Area. The City acknowledged the need to follow through on the broader implications of the concept with revisions to the Lincoln Municipal Code and the Design Standards.

December 2000 - November 2001. City staff worked to generate ordinance and design standard revisions to follow through on the concept adopted by Comprehensive Plan Amendment 94-58, to provide flexibility in the implementation of the corridor, to modify and update related street tree and landscape screening requirements, and to address other proposed changes to standards relative to the installation of sidewalks and street trees.

November 2001. Proposed revisions were presented to the Mayor’s Neighborhood Roundtable.

December 2001. City staff met with representatives of the Homebuilders Association of Lincoln, the Lincoln Independent Business Association, and the Board of Realtors.

February 2002. City staff met again with representatives of the Homebuilders Association of Lincoln, the Lincoln Independent Business Association, and the Board of Realtors, as well as members of the nursery and landscape industry

February & March 2002. Additional meetings with small groups representing developers and landscape industry were held as they were requested.

ASSOCIATED APPLICATIONS:

Amendments to Sec. 12.20.030 Trees, Shrubs, and Hedges Along Public Ways and Sec. 20.12.180 section 109 Amended; Certificate of Occupancy. These amendments do not require Planning Commission review.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN SPECIFICATIONS:

Based on the new Comprehensive Plan as recommended for approval by the Planning Commission on April 3, 2002:

Pursue the active coordination of all future trail network extensions and enhancements. The urban network of trails should connect employment centers, shipping area, schools, and residential neighborhoods. Trails should be an integral part of the community's green spaces and corridors. (Page F69)

Two of the overall objectives of the transportation plan includes:

Continuing Lincoln's street and trails network into newly developing areas.

Designing a street and road improvement program that is both physically attractive and sensitive to the environments of urban neighborhoods. (Page F95)

Activity Corridors and Centers tend to be located along arterials and particularly where two major arterials might intersect. Directness and safety for pedestrians going to, from and within these corridors and centers should be stressed. (Page F99)

Within Lincoln's future growth Tiers I and II, a public right-of-way of 120' for any potential future arterial street is considered the desired standard for this Plan. (Page F121)

There are instances- mostly but not always in newer areas- where trails are to be placed along an arterial street. This may occur in order to provide trail connections,

and to allow safe trail crossings at arterial streets. When a future trail or bike lane is designated along an arterial roadway then the corridor should be expanded by 6' on the side where the trail will be located. (Page F121)

The acquisition of the wider rights-of-way will also preserve the future corridors for the larger and more expansive street improvements that will come with the growth of Lincoln. (Page F123)

ANALYSIS:

The proposed arterial streets 120' or more in width regulations meet several objectives:

The 120'/130 width will accommodate up to 4 through lanes, 2 left turn lanes, and 1 right turn lane in a manner which would minimize the negative impacts on the adjacent uses and neighborhood.

Create a broad, permanent, and landscaped open space area that mitigates the affects of vehicular traffic on residences, businesses and other potential urban uses.

Construct a street-level profile that offers an attractive and pleasing "front-door" appearance to Lincoln neighborhoods.

Establish a public corridor that accommodates the needs of motorized vehicles, pedestrian and other transportation and recreational users.

The other related revisions to the Land Subdivision and Zoning Ordinances, and the Design Standards meet several objectives:

Enacts the practice of constructing sidewalks during the construction of the single-family and two-family buildings.

Reduces the surety amount posted by the subdivider from 100% to 25% of the estimated cost of constructing the sidewalks.

Allows adjustments to the front yard requirements according to the increased width of the arterial street.

Provides additional landscaping between the street and parking lots and provides space to plant a landscape screen between the street and parking lots.

Provides additional options for screening double frontage residential lots and eliminates the monotonous appearance of solid board fences without plant material.

Provides openings and gates along double frontage lots to allow access to the unpaved area between the property line and the curb so the area can be maintained by the adjoining lot owners more conveniently as required by City Code.

Provides the construction of sidewalks and bikeways/trails along major streets and outlots (reserved open space) sooner for the safety of the pedestrians and other users.

Provides that street trees and landscape screens be constructed at the same time as the major street is constructed or within 4 years whichever is earlier.

Provides partial release of surety for street trees.

Establishes the width of new major streets as set forth in a draft Year 2025 City-County Comprehensive Plan approved by the City-County Planning Commission on April 3, 2002.

Provides that an easement may be used in lieu of dedication of additional right-of-way for sidewalks and landscaping.

Provides a reduction of the minimum depth for a lot along arterial streets 120' or more in width.

Provides that streets trees shall be planted on the right-of-way except major streets with less than 120' in width.

Provides a street cross-section and a plan view for arterial streets 120' or more in width.

Provides a revised design standard for street trees.

Provides design standards for landscaping of boulevards, medians roundabouts and cul de sacs in public right of way.

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