

MINUTES

PRE-COUNCIL MEETING

Monday, October 29, 2017

4:15 p.m.

Bill Luxford Studio, Room #113

Downtown Master Plan

Members present: Jon Camp, Roy Christensen, Carl Eskridge, Jayne Raybould and Bennie Shobe; (Leirion Gaylor Baird and Cyndi Lamm absent).

Others present: David Cary, Paul Barnes, Andrew Thierolf and Teresa McKinstry of the Planning Department; David Landis, Hallie Salem and Dallas McGee of Urban Development Dept; Mark Lutjeharms with Public Works & Utilities; Tom Huston; Brad Segal and J.J. Folsom from Progressive Urban Management Associates (PUMA); Terry Uland from Downtown Lincoln Association (DLA); Pat Leach from Lincoln City Libraries; and Nancy Hicks of the Lincoln Journal Star.

Chair Shobe called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. The Nebraska Open Meetings Act was acknowledged.

David Cary thanked the members for the opportunity to share the draft concepts of the Downtown Master Plan process. The consultant team and local staff are here today with a presentation. This is the full kickoff of the findings. Today is an overview of the plan. Our coordination with DLA has been fruitful.

Paul Barnes reiterated that staff is very excited about this plan. He played a video titled: 2018 Downtown Lincoln Master Plan – Center of Opportunity.

Brad Segal from PUMA appeared. His firm is based in Denver. Part of our job is to be the economist and see where downtown is going and relate that to different trends that are going on. We are working with Civitas on this project. The whole center of opportunity theme is a reflection of trends that are shaping cities and puts Lincoln on trend to be competitive with peer cities. We feel this plan will appeal to millennials, Gen Z, baby boomers and others inclined to downtown living. We keep an inventory of different demographic lifestyle trends. We update this information periodically. We are finding a trend throughout the country of second tier cities that are capitalizing on reverse migration from the larger cities. We are finding the cost of living is starting to wear on millennials and Gen Z. These populations are looking for smaller cities, many in the heartland. We want to attract many different

populations. If Lincoln can be positioned for this, we feel there is a competitive advantage. This plan looks at how we can make downtown Lincoln a neighborhood. The market has been bringing some of this vitality on its own. Many of the physical improvements such as two way streets and greenways, all of those are oriented into moving downtown into more of a neighborhood with the intention that this will appeal more to a workforce. There is an emphasis on diverse housing, policies to make it happen and different amenities. Services are outlined and making sure downtown is inviting to all groups. This is achieved through different uses and physicality.

Tom Huston explained that the effort to reach the community has been pretty broad. There were over 2,000 people that participated in the effort. We had five working groups with over 80 members that reviewed various aspects. We made presentations to Planning Commission, Downtown Lincoln Association and Urban Design Committee. We held three community houses and a design charrette. There was an online survey that gathered over 1,700 responses. PUMA went out to the adjacent neighborhoods and talked to them. We have received input from a lot of people.

Barnes would like to go through the catalyst projects. He showed the study area. It is roughly similar to the 2005 Downtown Master Plan.

The first catalyst project is the Pershing block. The majority of responses want to see more utilization of underutilized sites. An RFP (Request For Proposals) has been published. The plan outlines different orientation of buildings, as well as land uses. This is along Centennial Mall and the N Street Bikeway. Those are key significant features of this site. The plan is to guide what could happen once we start to look at proposals.

The next project is West Park. There are two different options shown. This is in South Haymarket. We heard a lot from people about open space and how it would make downtown more livable for them. A lot of people have a strong interest in a dog park.

The O Street Corridor is another project. A lot of people were excited about the transformation of P Street. O Street is considered by a lot to be the front door to Downtown. This would be a combination of improvements. There are quite a few ash trees that must be removed. There are sidewalk improvements, façade improvements, areas for redevelopment and infill.

The 11th and M Street Greenways would increase open space. This looks at two streets downtown and what can be done in the existing right-of-way. The idea is that we would shift the curb on the west side of the street to allow for installation of linear green space in the existing right-of-way. M Street today would be a different design. It would connect South Haymarket to Antelope Valley with a procession for enhanced walkway and greenspace.

The next project is celebrating the local music scene downtown. This centers around 14th and O Street. This builds on and celebrates the live music scene that we have today. This could be a combination of some improvements along 14th Street, but also a matter of programming and marketing. We have also heard that people are interested in a more kid and family friendly downtown and the art scene can be part of this.

Another big topic has to do with mobility. There are a few recommendations. One is one-way versus two-way street concept. The 2005 plan recommended 13th St. be converted. In looking at that, that could be a near term project. The rest of the streets would be looked at in phasing over time. This doesn't include the highest traveled streets such as 9th St., 10th St., K St. and L St. We have been coordinating with the Lincoln Bike Plan. The LINC is a pretty bold idea. One example would be the Cultural Trail in Indianapolis. It has been an economic development tool. We already have some facilities in place such as the Antelope Valley Trail on the east side.

Camp asked for more information about streets being looked at to be converted into two-way streets. Barnes responded that the approach at this point is look at 13th St. in the near term. The second phase would look at 11th St., 12th St., 14th St., and possibly M St. and N St. The further out strategy would be to look at P St., Q St., 16th St. and 17th St. Camp believes that was looked at in the past and was not a popular idea. Sioux Falls has a nice trail with a lot of artwork in the falls area and would be an example to learn from.

Dallas McGee would like to think back 13 years ago. 2005 was when the last master plan was completed. That plan was very instrumental in developing a plan for downtown. It included many different projects, short term and long term. There was talk about building an arena. The 2005 plan talked about building it in the BNSF railyards. We now have the Pinnacle Bank Arena. The plan also said you need to develop supporting uses around it. We have three hotels, over 160 residential units, offices, and we have new retail. There is now a much needed downtown grocery store. The plan also talked about looking at P St. and encouraging more retail. That streetscape has been enhanced. Many new projects have been built. There is a lot of development that has followed the City investment. The 2005 plan also said to connect the bikeway system. We now have a protected bikeway on N Street. Adjacent to that are a number of student housing projects. The power of that plan lies in its bold vision, and leadership and partnerships. There has been \$1.3 billion dollars of investment since 2005. The final chapter of this plan addresses implementation. It identifies short terms actions, partners and responsibilities. It suggests funding sources and supportive policies. Finally, it addresses a tracking system to evaluate how it is doing.

Terry Uland thinks we have a plan that will generate a lot of good work. This has been a very collaborative process. Working with the DLA and City has been very fruitful.

Barnes noted that everyone is invited to the event at the Railyard tomorrow night. The video will be shown on the Cube. We will move into the public market and review plan material. The draft plan will be released in mid-November. It will appear before Planning Commission in late November and before City Council in mid-December.

Christensen would like staff to talk about the Federal parking garage shown in the plan. Barnes stated that we have heard there was an interest to see more along Centennial Mall. We had conversation with the GSA (U.S. General Services Administration) about their property. The idea is we should continue these conversations and look at something to activate the space.

David Landis believes everyone would like to see better uses on this block. We approached the GSA about three years ago. They would like a better secure way to move judges and prisoners into the Federal building. There were many terms involved to buy the garage and build them a new one. Developers have begun to see that block as connected to many surrounding blocks. It would require someone to negotiate a better deal. Given current parking plans, we will not exhaust parking resources, but once a second garage is identified, resources will be exhausted. Two recent projects are feeling out developers for ideas. They have included two floors of parking.

Camp believes funding for all of this is key. Landis responded that this is all conceptual. Camp believes parking leads the way. We have to have flexibility. He thinks we need to walk carefully. The last desire to go to two-way streets really flopped. Segal personally thinks if 13th St., 14th St., 12th St. and 11th St. went two-way, it would make a lot of sense. He shares Camp's caution. Camp believes the one way pairs work. Cary added that this is how the plan is set up. We want to take a look, but be cautious and deliberate. 13th St. is the first look. We want to have a plan that states a vision.

Shobe wondered about time frames. Barnes stated that the Master Plan is looking at a time frame of ten to twelve years. A lot of those projects and concepts would happen near, mid or long term. Mid-term could be 18 months to five years. Beyond five to ten years would be long term.

Camp was glad to see affordable housing noted in the plan. He heard on television about how as a whole, America is going to a higher level of renting. He thinks that might be occurring more in larger metropolitan areas. He questioned how that fits in. Cary responded that affordability is a big topic. Rental housing is a trend here in Lincoln as well. We have experienced 40 percent of all new units are multi-family or rental Citywide. In the last three years, we are seeing a higher rate of that, almost 44 percent. It is a trend. That is part of what this plan talks about. We are trying to make downtown the neighborhood we want to attract people with different housing choices. Green space is a part of this, the art and music district, trying to create projects and the living experience that people want to have. Camp noted there was an article about Lincoln in the New York Times.

Eskridge wondered how this ties in with millennials and transportation. Millennials don't necessarily want to have their own vehicle. That might also change our parking needs. He questioned if staff has any thoughts on the topic. Segal remembers that if we had done this planning 15 years ago, parking would be THE issue. It is much farther down the list now. With younger generations, they are looking for different ways to get around. It is a trend. We need to provide more options.

The topic was concluded at 5:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Teresa McKinstry
Planning Department