

Meeting Notes



Downtown Action Team

August 9, 2005

8:00 a.m.

Downtown Lincoln Association

1200 N Street

<i>Members</i>	Jon Camp Lynnie Green Matt Harris Deb Johnson Jessica Kennedy Dan Massoth (absent) Lori McClurg Annette McRoy (absent)	Sachit Nadkarni (absent) Will Scott Kent Seacrest Nader Sepahpur Mike Sisk Clay Smith (absent) Jason Smith	Cecil Steward Jane Stricker Ed Swotek Becky Van de Bogart Michelle Waite Jon Weinberg Terry Werner (absent)
<i>Others Present</i>	Brenda Bergman Terry Bundy David Cary Jeff Cole Carol Connor	Ann Harrell Mary Johns Polly McMullen Kent Morgan Benjamin Morgan	Brian Praeuner Myrna Tewes Larry Worth Michele Abendroth

1. Call to Order

Co-chair Cecil Steward called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked those present to introduce themselves.

2. Public Comment Period

Steward asked if there was anyone who wanted to make a public comment. Seeing no one, he proceeded with the next agenda item.

3. Final Report Preparation

Kent Morgan stated that City staff along with the consultants are in the process of integrating the Master Plan and Implementation Program documents into one document. The Master Plan will move ahead in the next few weeks. The Design Guidelines will go through a review process following the adoption of the Master Plan.

Morgan reviewed some of the changes that have been made in the report. The festival site has been moved to Centennial Mall. The back-in angle parking concept was removed from the report. Public Works has some concerns with how it might work operationally. It does not mean the concept has been abandoned, but they felt it was important not to stress it at this point. The bike lanes continue to be part of the plan. The O Street parallel access roads were also removed

as Public Works felt it was very costly and there were some operational issues. Master Plan staff spent time working with the Antelope Valley staff to put more detail to the area east of 17th Street over to the Creek. They want to integrate with the Antelope Valley program.

Morgan then presented the draft Overview statement. They wanted to emphasize that this is a long-range plan. There are some near-term and mid-range projects, but we need to take a long-term perspective. They also wanted to emphasize that they are working with other groups to integrate goals and visions and acknowledge that the Master Plan has a part in how the downtown develops.

4. Stakeholder Contacts

Next, Morgan stated that letters to nine different organizations, including public and private entities, were sent out following the last meeting. They were sent a copy of the draft report and then staff followed up with phone calls to answer any questions. On the whole, the groups were very pleased with the Plan and liked the long-term vision of the Plan. They also understood the long-term nature of the Plan and the fact that the public and private sectors need to work together to make this Plan successful. They recognize the importance of downtown and the need to support it.

5. Event Facility Task Force

McMullen updated the group on the multi-purpose event facility process that is underway and relates to the Master Plan. Mayor Seng appointed an Event Facility Task Force in June to discuss facilities planning. Membership includes representatives from the University, the Ag Event Center, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Lincoln Independent Business Association, Downtown Lincoln Association, the County Board, the State of Nebraska, and Pershing Center. The group has met weekly since late June and is moving forward to bring recommendations to the Mayor in late summer or early fall. The meetings have included on-site tours and briefings of all the major event facilities in Lincoln as well as in other cities. A consultant, Convention and Sports Leisure, has conducted a very thorough study on Lincoln facility needs. She feels it has been a very effective and productive process.

6. National Arbor Day Foundation

Matt Harris stated that they are in the process of renovating and redeveloping the first floor of the Arbor Day Foundation Building at 12th and P Street to add retail and restaurant use. The process has been complicated by the fact that they want to do some things that speak to the vision of the National Arbor Day Foundation, as they would like add a rooftop garden area. They have a team of professionals including a contractor, architect and City departments to work through the issues. They hope they can break ground in the fall of this year.

7. *Other Downtown Endeavors*

Morgan stated that the library board has submitted a letter stating their interest in the Pershing site for a future library location. Carroll stated the library board formed an ad hoc committee in February 2001 to look at options for the main library. In 2002, a consultant was hired to conduct a feasibility study. The library board explored options, met with community groups and conducted several public meetings. On March 1, 2005 they had their last public meeting. The library board's goal is to serve the community, be a destination point for residents and visitors as well as assist with economic development. Carroll concluded by stating that although the library is not the main engine in economic development, it is a factor.

Morgan stated that Centennial Mall is primarily overseen by the Capitol Environs Commission. Tem and Ptah have been moved to a site between Q & R Streets. Parks and Recreation been doing some work with accessibility and tree placement on the north end of the Mall. There is some discussion about a statewide public art project which would be placed on the Mall. Updowntowners have expressed an interest in a festival site on the Mall. Parks and Recreation is also developing a cost estimate for the Laging Plan.

Morgan informed the group that there are four proposals to convert the K Street Power Plant into a residential development. The Mayor is looking at those now. An appraisal is being done by the City to establish a value. Don Herz is heading a group which is looking at options for storage.

The Harris Overpass advisory group has met six times over the last year. They expect to make a decision soon as to whether to take down and rebuild the entire structure or in one or two sections. Then they will begin the design of the facility. Construction could begin in late 2007 or possibly January 2008 and will take 1-2 years to complete.

McMullen thanked Mike Sisk for his role in organizing the Kansas City regional office staff to come to Lincoln to be briefed on the Downtown Master Plan. Sisk added that they have been working on a Master Plan for several buildings.

8. *Plan Review and Approval Process*

Morgan noted that the Downtown Master Plan will be on the August 31st Planning Commission agenda. The Planning Commission has been briefed twice, once by Crandall Arambula and once by staff. The Plan will then go to City Council, which is typically three to four weeks after Planning Commission.

Steward stated that the goal of this group is to support the staff and the City in refining and completing the report and to get the report into the hands of the Planning Commission as a proposed revision to the Comprehensive Plan. The first priority is the upcoming Aug 31st Planning Commission meeting. They would like to have a brief meeting of this group a few days prior to the Aug 31st meeting. Some representatives of this group will be called upon to speak to the Planning Commission and present the view of the DAT.

Steward continued by noting that there are four broad categories of work including the nurturing of approvals, being an advocate for inclusion of the Plan in the Capital Improvement Program, advising on implementation priorities, and stimulating private investment. He feels that it would be beneficial for this group to continue to meet to help with these types of work. Until we have a clear path and strategy for some of the key elements, it seems that the greater advocacy and the greater voice that the community can present, the greater the downtown will become.

Sepahpur stated that he is somewhat disappointed that the parallel access roads on O Street have been removed from the Plan. He feels that project is a vision to make O Street a more pleasant downtown roadway and that it is too early in the process to make that change.

Scott noted that he feels it is important to put together a plan that is as clear and concise as possible with respect to private investment.

Steward stated that downtowns have to be on a level playing field with development at the edge. To do that, there has to be some specific targeting of the barriers that already exist. It is not just a matter of identifying the dollars, but also identifying the process that makes it easier.

Seacrest stated that he feels there are two areas of concentration for downtown. The first is the issue of parking and re-organization to create more of an economic development strategy. He does not believe we have the tools in place to launch development. Secondly, there are a series of catalyst projects, and it is imperative to implement some of those in the next six months to gain momentum.

McMullen stated that she feels that focusing on the catalyst projects is very important. It is a concern that there is not a major public/private redevelopment project in the pipeline.

Steward stated that he appreciates the comments on whether we are taking strong enough action and if there is enough on the table. That is the reason for the Plan, which is to allow us to have an instrument by which to work. He feels that first we have to take these procedural steps with the Comprehensive Plan. Once the body of politics endorses this Plan, then we have a larger mandate for action.

Kennedy stated that she feels the back-in angle parking and the parallel access roads were visionary goals and that it was too early to take them out. She doesn't want to lose that energy. She would like to see advocates for those visionary projects.

Morgan stated that Public Works had some concerns with back-in angle parking. They assured us that they will continue to look at it. The parallel access roads were taken out of the Plan, but if the group would like to endorse these concepts, they can take action on them.

Waite asked what role this committee will take and suggested that possibly the group should be consulted when things are taken out.

VandeBogart noted that she feels O Street needs to be a priority.

Weinberg commented that it is his sense that this group would like to recommend to staff to put the parallel access roads and back-in angle parking back in the report, not necessarily as a high priority, but as a visionary goal.

Waite moved to put parallel access roads and back-in angle parking back in the report, seconded by Green. There was unanimous approval by those members in attendance.

McMullen stated that there has been a parking study underway which was commissioned last summer. A final report was prepared last summer. She feels that it would be beneficial for this group to be briefed on it. Steward stated that we should schedule that following the August 31st Planning Commission meeting.

Steward adjourned the meeting at 9:04 a.m.

F:\FILES\PLANNING\Downtown\Minutes\DAT 08 09 05.wpd