City of Lincoln
Department of Public Works and Utilities

2020 VISION
A Strategic Plan for the Department of Public Works and Utilities

December 2015
Executive VISION

The City of Lincoln is on the move. We are a growing and thriving community; nationally emerging and recognized as a premier American city for businesses, entrepreneurs, young people, retirees and families. Lincoln’s population has grown by 140,287 people since 1958 and in that same amount of time, the City went from 25.54 square miles to 92.74 square miles; a 265% increase. What that means for the Department of Public Works and Utilities is growing infrastructure and service demands. In order to successfully support Lincoln’s continued growth and prosperity, the Department must establish a strategic mindset that is aimed at continual improvement of vital infrastructure and services coupled with a sustainable and responsible approach to the management of public resources.

The Department of Public Works and Utilities provides quality of life, core services that are fundamental to basic human needs, such as:

**Transportation Services**
- Public Transportation System (StarTran)
- Transportation Network Design & Construction
- Public Right-of-Way Management & Development Services
- Traffic Engineering
- Street Maintenance

**Utility Services**
- Lincoln Water System
- Lincoln Wastewater System
- Watershed Management (Stormwater & Floodplain)
- Solid Waste Management (Disposal and Recycling)

While each Division is unique, what we all share in common is that we impact every citizen’s life with our programs and services. Together, we make up the Department of Public Works and Utilities.
Our **Mission** is to responsibly deliver, enhance and maintain vital infrastructure and services for the good of our community. Every day, Department staff engage Lincoln citizens through the programs, projects, and services we provide. We are ambassadors to and for the community and we seek the highest and best of ourselves through **Values** such as COMPASSION, INTEGRITY, RESPECT, DEDICATION, RESPONSIVENESS, PRIDE, KNOWLEDGE, INNOVATION, TRANSPARENCY, and UNITY. The culmination of these esteemed principles lead us toward being a credible and trusted partner upon which Lincoln citizens can rely.

Our dedicated Department employees work hard to responsibly deliver valuable, quality products, programs and services that are safe, reliable, healthy and helpful to people. We have a deep commitment to our citizens and strive to make a meaningful contribution to their quality of life each day. We promote business opportunity and prosperity, neighborhood and community vitality, public health, safety, and security as well as environmental quality. We also aim for an increased level of understanding about our programs and services and actively engage the citizens we serve through the process of Community Informed Decision-Making. As such, we strive to add value to the community in such a way that shows the community they are valued. Our Department employees continue to be our most valuable resource in serving citizens and preserving our Lincoln way of life.

With all of that said, we are not without the following challenges:

- Customer Expectations
- Awareness of Department Responsibilities and Capabilities
- Employee Well-Being
- Preservation of Institutional Knowledge
- Cumbersome Business Processes and Practices
- Sustainability
- Regulatory Mandates
- Budgetary Constraints
Strategic thinking and planning is a critical process devoted to addressing challenges as well as pursuing improvement and success in any organization. The Department of Public Works and Utilities is proud to present our 2020 VISION Strategic Plan (2020 Vision) aimed to better inform, engage, and serve the citizens of Lincoln. It will extend over the next five year period, from January 2016 to December 2020 and is intended to be a living, breathing document that is reviewed and updated regularly by Department staff.

The 2020 Vision strategic planning team identified eight (8) strategic Goals in order to effectively tackle our challenges:

1. Provide Quality Customer Service & Satisfaction
2. Increase Understanding, Involvement and Advocacy of the Department
3. Improve Employee Well-Being in the Workplace
4. Ensure Continuity of Knowledge during Staff Changes
5. Streamline Business Processes & Practices
6. Practice Stewardship of City Resources, Infrastructure and the Environment
7. Balance Public Interest and Resources to Achieve Compliance with and Provide Input to Shape State and Federal Regulations
8. Continually Improve Asset Management to Maintain Public Infrastructure

“Strategic planning provides a framework for creating direction in a manner that moves away from guesswork and toward intelligent selection. The end result is a destination of choice, not chance.”

- Jack Lowe, Jr.
The best way to shape our future is to create it. Strategic thinking and planning is crucial to proper and prudent management of any public works and utilities organization. This 2020 Vision captures our Department’s direction, objectives, goals and actions to support the future of our great City. Each biennium, the Department will issue a 2020 Vision report to provide an update on the progress we are making toward realizing our collective vision and plan.

With our 2020 Vision in clear sight, I am confident that the City of Lincoln Department of Public Works and Utilities will achieve great success and continue to move Lincoln forward.

Sincerely,

Miki Esposito, Director

A special note of thanks goes to the members of the Strategic Planning Team* for devoting their precious time, energy and effort toward creation of the 2020 Vision document and plan.

*Strategic Planning Team (alphabetical)

- Michele Abendroth - Administration
- Ty Barger – Street Operations
- Dave Beyersdorf - Water
- Donna Garden – Utilities
- Brian Kramer - Wastewater
- Doug Luedtke – Customer Service/Billing
- Jared Nelson – Watershed Management
- Brian Praeuner – StarTran
- Tim Pratt – Technology Services
- Cynthia Roth – Business Office
- Thomas Shafer – Design and Construction
- Bob Simmering – Development Services & ROW Management
- Frank Uhlarik – Compliance Support
- Karla Welding – Solid Waste Management

"Instead of worrying about the future, let us labor to create it."

- Hubert H. Humphrey
Mission

To responsibly deliver, enhance and maintain vital infrastructure and services for the good of our community.

Vision

1. We are leading a growing and dynamic community.
2. We are empowered and responsible to meet the needs and expectations of ourselves and our community.
3. We are strengthening public trust.

We responsibly deliver exceptional service through collaboration, effective communication, efficient use of resources and innovation while dedicated to continuous improvement. As such, we strive to add value to the community in such a way that shows the community they are valued.

Values

Every day, Department staff engage Lincoln citizens through the programs, projects, and services we provide. We are ambassadors to and for the community. We seek the highest and best of ourselves with the following esteemed principles, the culmination of which leads us toward being a credible and trusted partner upon which Lincoln citizens can rely.
Compassion  We care about our community and the needs of our citizens.

Integrity  We seek the highest standard of character in ourselves. We are principled in our actions and remain true to these values.

Respect  We follow the golden rule and extend the same courtesy, respect and civility to our customers as we would expect for ourselves. We compassionately listen to our citizens and seek to understand their concerns, interests and perspectives. We are also mindful of how we treat each other in the workplace.

Dedication  We are committed to providing excellent public service.

Responsiveness  We respond to the diverse needs of the community and strive to take prompt action.

Ambassador  We proudly serve as our Department’s representatives to the community.

Pride  We take ownership in our work and the services we provide. We live, work, play and take pride in our community and are invested in its future.

Knowledge  We strive to be experts in our field of work as well as a reliable, trustworthy and credible source of information for Lincoln’s citizens.

Innovation  We are dedicated to continual improvement, working both harder and smarter and pushing ourselves to utilizing creative solutions for the betterment of our community.

Transparency  We believe in the open exchange of ideas and information in an honest, respectful and civil manner, and strongly aspire for community informed design, engineering, and implementation of programs, projects and services.

Unity  While every employee of the Department is unique, we share a common purpose to positively impact the community we serve.
## Department Challenges

The Department is challenged and influenced by many factors including, but not limited to:

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## Strategic Goals

In order to effectively address these specific challenges by 2020, the Department has set the following Strategic Goals:
Now more than ever, Lincoln citizens expect quality projects, programs and services from the Department. Every day, we have the awesome responsibility of affecting the health, safety and welfare of each citizen’s life. Therefore, it is important to deliver vital infrastructure and services in a manner that shows the community they are valued. We do so by maintaining the highest standards of ourselves and the services we provide to the community, with courtesy, respect and responsiveness to meet our customers’ needs.

**Objective:** Continue to provide excellent services, information and products that meet or exceed customer expectations.

**Actions**

- Complete a Departmental strategic plan by December 2015.
- Develop performance measures for every Division of the Department by December 2015.
- Track and report on performance measures annually (via website/asset management program) by July 2017.
- Incorporate performance measures into each employee’s performance evaluations by December 2017, so that employees can see how their jobs drive the objectives, goals and actions in the strategic plan.
- Evaluate customer satisfaction via the Taking Charge citizen surveys by September 2015 and biennially thereafter.
- Continually work toward improving citizen engagement and service request tools.
- Achieve Department-wide Accreditation from the American Public Works Association (APWA) by December 2020.
In order to realize the 2020 Vision of building public trust, we must continue to strengthen credibility with our citizens and community leaders. Community relationships help to increase awareness and understanding about Department challenges, responsibilities and capabilities. Building relationships with citizens, elected leaders, business and community groups, and educational or other governmental entities generates interest and advocacy for the Departments’ services and programs.

**Goal 2: Increase Understanding, Involvement and Advocacy of the Department**

**Objective 1:** Enhance community relations that provide meaningful opportunities for citizen engagement, the exchange of information, and to understand and help us resolve community challenges.

**Actions**

- Complete the Communications Audit and Draft Plan by December 2015.
- Implement the Communications Plan by April 2016.
- Continue the Employee Newsletter at least quarterly.
- Continue the Channel 8 Agreement for Public Service Announcements, running at least four (4) PSAs per year.
- Hire a Community Relations Specialist/Public Educator by September 2017.
- Establish an annual Citizens Academy program to provide Department information and education on what we do for our citizens in order to cultivate understanding and advocacy for the Department by December 2018.
- Continually work toward improving citizen engagement and service request tools that both inform and educate Lincoln citizens.
- Continue to maintain and update the website annually.
- Complete and engage in a robust community relations campaign for transportation infrastructure and financing support by July 2016.

“Tell me and I’ll forget; Show me and I may remember; Involve me and I’ll understand.”

- Chinese proverb
Objective 2: The Department receives many service requests that are outside our scope of authority or responsibility. It is critical to proactively inform and educate on Department responsibilities and capabilities in order to stay on mission, preserve resources, and be good stewards of public funds.

Actions

- Develop written policy and protocol for processing inquiries and service requests that both inform and educate Lincoln citizens pursuant to the Communications Plan by August 2016.
- Educate all staff, Citizen Information Center (CIC) and City Ombudsman on the Department’s Service Request Protocol by October 2016.
- Research, Select and Utilize a “E311” public facing technology tool to communicate, process and streamline all public service requests by December 2018.

Objective 3: The Department seeks to promote and reach balanced, informed and sound decisions, policy and legislation.

Actions

- Complete the Communications Audit and Draft Plan by December 2015.
- Implement the Communications Plan by April 2016.
- Proactively inform, engage and educate community leaders, interested stakeholders, and decision-makers on impactful projects and initiatives regularly.
- Demonstrate Department’s professional expertise, competency and capability by participating in at least four (4) Pre-Council briefings annually.
- Invite political, citizen, neighborhood, business or other groups to share issues, concerns and perspectives with Department leaders at least quarterly (e.g. “The Rounds”).
- Work regularly, closely and cooperatively with media representatives to cultivate trust and credibility with the public as well as ensure the accuracy of the information provided.
- Extend an open invitation for facility tours to community leaders, interested stakeholders, and decision-makers each May during Public Works week.
We recognize that our employees are the reason behind our quality organization and excellent service record. We strive to support their continual professional and personal development and growth, safety, security and well-being.

Objective: Promote and adopt practices that demonstrate loyalty and support to our employees.

Actions

- Continue to promote and encourage participation in the Health and Wellness Programs facilitated by the Human Resources Department, Lincoln/Lancaster County Health Department and the Department’s Compliance Administration Section.

- Relative to internal communications, education, training and information sharing, implement the Communications Plan by April 2016.

- Conduct a Workplace Climate Survey in April 2017 to evaluate existing employee conditions, including effectiveness of employee recognition programs and share results and any changes made as a result of the Workplace Climate Survey.

- Prepare Divisional Environmental and Risk Management System (ERMS) training plans in 2015 and monitor training performance annually.

- Complete the ERMS Manual by December 2016.


- Conduct an annual review and report of the ERMS every December, including strategies for ensuring staff needs, objectives and goals are met relative to environmental, safety and emergency management training.
Institutional knowledge and other valuable information is often lost with exiting staff. It is therefore important to develop robust and effective methods of knowledge transfer for the benefit of both new and existing employees.

**Objective:** Define and implement practices to ensure an acceptable level of knowledge management accessibility and transfer.

**Actions**

- Develop implementation plan for any gaps found in the Human Resources Chapter in 2016.
- Review and update employee position descriptions prior to recruitment and/or every 5 years.
- Establish and utilize a new employee orientation checklist and process by September 2015.
- Create an online employee resource portal for Department employees (via Intralinc) by December 2015.
- Establish a recruitment and replacement procedure for succession by February 2016.
- Conduct a Training Needs Analysis by December 2016.
- Establish and implement a Training and Career Development program by December 2018.
- Create individual position manuals by January 2020.
Cumbersome business processes and practices can limit the effectiveness of Department resources and capabilities. They have a negative impact on the Department’s ability to efficiently serve our citizens. Technology can allow existing staff to make better use of their time while also providing consistent, reliable and higher quality deliverables.

Objective 1: Ensure the Department is operating in the most efficient and effective manner possible by evaluating and refining the most cumbersome business practices and systems in the Department.

Actions

- The Business Practices Review Team will identify by June 2016 at least three (3) critical, yet cumbersome business practices to evaluate and refine.
- The Business Practices Review Team will conduct a review and propose a workflow solution, including any technological tools for each of the three (3) identified business practices, by February 2017.

Objective 2: Where appropriate and cost effective, leverage technological tools to streamline and make paperless internal workflows and business practices.

Actions

- Update the Department’s Technology Roadmap by October 2017 and biennially thereafter.
- Establish a Technology Services Advisory Group by February 2016.
- Create a Records Manager position by August 2016.
- Adopt a common project management policy for all Technology Services projects by May 2016.
In order to support a sustainable, beautiful, vibrant, safe and livable Lincoln that keeps and attracts future generations to come, it is important for the Public Works and Utilities Department to be good stewards of public resources, infrastructure and the environment.

**Objective 1: Maintain the livability, beauty and cleanliness of public spaces, property and right-of-way.**

**Actions**

- During design, construction, operations and maintenance functions, take ownership and foster a sense of pride in the “look” of Lincoln where the Department has authority and responsibility (e.g. construction sites, streetscapes, medians, and other public rights-of-way).

- Continually seek to improve housekeeping at construction sites to include compliance with Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plans.

  - Respond to street cleaning, mowing and graffiti removal requests within 48 hours.

  - Evaluate and select appropriate street tree plantings and urban landscape initiatives where feasible.

  - Promote and implement the City’s complete streets policy as specified in EO 086476 and AR 35.

  - Continue to secure, preserve and protect public property, right-of-way and utility and conservation easements.
Objective 2: Within our power, authority and responsibility, protect and preserve the safety and security of our citizens, workforce, facilities and resources as well as the resiliency of our infrastructure.

Actions

- Develop an Environmental and Risk Management System (ERMS) Manual by December 2016 that includes standard environmental, safety and emergency management policies, plans and procedures (including ERMS training).
- Annually conduct an ERMS review and report in December of each year.
- Ensure that each Division of the Department actively reviews, maintains and conducts drills of their respective Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) on at least an annual basis.

Objective 3: Promote, evaluate and implement sustainable policies and practices where feasible.

Actions

- Consider and capture sustainability elements in five-year Master Planning efforts.
- Encourage sustainable practices in facility and fleet management.
- Study the development of and develop a strategy for a long-term use of alternative fuels, vehicle conversions and new fueling stations by January 2018.
- Promote water conservation and reclamation and reuse by re-establishing the Water Conservation Task Force with renewed goals, objectives and targets by January 2017.
- Promote increased recycling and waste diversion through implementation of the 2040 Solid Waste Management Plan and Recycling Working Groups’ recommendations by January 2017.
- Continue to promote the preservation and protection of floodplain, flood corridors, open spaces and other natural habitats and systems by way of CIP programming of Stormwater Bond dollars.
- Continue to promote green infrastructure for public improvement projects, water quality public street and drainage projects by way of CIP programming of Stormwater Bond dollars.
Balance Public Interest and Resources to Achieve Compliance with and Provide Input to Shape State and Federal Regulations

Over the course of the last 60 years, state and federal regulations have increased significantly, adding both time and cost to municipal projects, programs and services. It is crucial for the Department to actively and proactively research, evaluate and ultimately comply with state and federal mandates, while also advocating for balanced and reasonable regulations.

Objective: Comply with local, state and federal regulations.

Action Items

- Develop a policy to promote membership and participation in national, state and local professional organizations by December 2016.

- On an ongoing basis, participate in local, state, or federal coalitions that identify, discuss or advocate for/against issues and concerns on behalf of municipal government.

- Continually track the efforts and initiatives of regulatory agencies.

- Engage regulatory agencies early and often to improve regulatory reasonableness. Regularly advocate against overburdening regulations.

- Evaluate whether to develop an integrated management plan for discussion with regulatory agencies by January 2017.

- On an annual basis, identify and assess potential mandates and possible outcomes (e.g. Legislative Bill Review) beginning in January of each year.

- Regularly seek to understand the underlying need for proposed or existing regulation and evaluate their implications (e.g. public interest, cost, level of service, enforcement).

- Initiate a community/stakeholder advocacy group (e.g. Mayor’s Task Force, stakeholder advisory group) as needed.
Continually Improve Asset Management to Maintain Public Infrastructure

Public infrastructure and municipal budgets that support them are continually challenged by revenue shortages, limited resources and fiscal constraints. At the same time, declining and failing infrastructure requires proper investment, management and response from the Department. Therefore, budgets must reflect needs that are supported by relevant and defensible data. Ever mindful of affordability, our operating and capital budgets should reflect a realistic and commensurate relationship between projects, programs, levels of service and current staffing.

Objective 1: Make budget decisions based on asset condition, risk of loss and growing and emergent needs.

Actions

- Select and Procure an Enterprise Asset Management Program by December 2015.
- Advocate for funding levels that meet the community’s needs for Infrastructure and Services during the budget process.
- Develop Cost of Service Data for Citizens (e.g. How much do I pay? What does my money buy?) for each operating Division of the Department by January 2019.
- Develop or update a Master Plan every five (5) years for each operating Division of the Department.
Objective 2: Responsibly manage and protect the public’s interest by having greater oversight and enforcement of the public and private use of the public right-of-way (ROW).

Actions

- Begin implementation of the approved October 2014 Engineering Services Task Force Recommendations by February 2016.
- Adopt consistent and reasonable standards that apply to all users of the ROW by January 2016.
- Develop a consistent process to oversee utility construction in the ROW in 2015, including associated ROW permit and fees by June 2016.
- Create a brochure to educate citizens about legal private use of the ROW by March 2016.
- Continue to advance advocacy and funding support for the sidewalk repair program.
- Complete the update to the ADA Transition Plan by June 2016.

Objective 3: Promote responsible investment in public infrastructure by developers while also supporting growth in Lincoln and avoid the premature decline or failure of public infrastructure.

Actions

- Implement the approved October 2014 Engineering Services Task Force Recommendations by February 2016.
- Develop a document management solution to track private construction agreements (PCA) public improvements by December 2016.
- Continually monitor and assess the quality and performance of the public improvement by developers.
- Continually review and improve Development Services Center coordination with Building and Safety and strive for greater access as a means to support economic development (e.g. Landbase, Click Zip Ship, GIS Portal).
Closing Remarks

Strategic planning and thinking is a careful and disciplined approach to establishing goals, objectives, and action items for the Department and to achieve them in a systematic way. Over the next 5 years, our **2020 Vision** will serve as a basis for program development, prioritization of projects, and justification for resource support. We clearly articulated our mission, vision and values and with our eight (8) strategic goals in place, we are confident in overcoming the major challenges we face.

In addition, each Division of the Department will devise corresponding performance measures for our most prominent programs and services. These will be identified as the most relevant to the community, and are things that we can, should and must do for our citizenry. It is critical that these programs and services have continued resource support. Therefore, each of our nine (9) operating divisions will identify specific performance measures that capture the outcomes for each selected program or service. They will be reported in this order: StarTran, Design & Construction, Development Services & ROW Management, Traffic Engineering, Street Maintenance, the Lincoln Water System, the Lincoln Wastewater System, Watershed Management, and finally, Solid Waste Management (Disposal & Recycling).

Together, the **Executive Vision** and the **Division Measures** will make up the **2020 Vision** for the City of Lincoln Public Works and Utilities Department.