

THE QUARTERLY
NEWSLETTER OF THE
URBAN DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT

1st Quarter 2019

IN THIS ISSUE:

SOUTH DOWNTOWN - PROCESS	1-2
NEIGHBORHOOD REVIT & UDD	2
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN	3
SSH ARCHITECTURE WINS CD AWARD	3
REDEVELOPMENT UPDATES	4
Containers on Vine	4
Willys Knight Lofts	4
TIMELY TIDBITS	5
1/4 CENT SALES TAX PROPOSAL	6

South of Downtown: Process & Partnerships

Partnering with the South of Downtown Community Development Organization (CDO), the City — through Urban Development Department — is working to enhance South of Downtown attributes and qualities, while addressing important neighborhood concerns and issues. The South of Downtown area is generally bordered by L Street on the north, 17th Street on the east, A Street on the south, and 10th Street on the west.

Central to this effort, a Steering Committee was formed in August 2018. The 20 committee representatives are from area neighborhoods, local churches, business and property owners, non-profits, and state and local government. The Committee will optimize collaboration by private, non-profit and public partners as they identify and define key action strategies and redevelopment projects that can be implemented in the South of Downtown area.

Led by tri-chairs Michelle Suarez, Kile Johnson and Marilyn Johnson Farr, the Steering Committee identified seven key area issues developed through public input and previous studies:

- Maintenance and upkeep of residential housing stock and the need for more affordable housing
- Neighborhood blight and deterioration
- Zoning and land use regulations and incentives
- Economic opportunity
- Actual and perceived sense of safety
- CDO sustainability
- Recreational opportunities

Five subcommittees were formed to help the Steering Committee address all the issues effectively: Affordable Housing, Property Owners, Financial Investment, Workforce/Entrepreneur, and Cultural/Human Resources.

Quality, affordable housing was identified as the highest priority issue. To address this need, the 17-member **Affordable Housing Subcommittee** began its work last December. Chaired by Dan Marvin, the subcommittee membership is diverse, with representation from area neighborhoods, housing non-profits, landlords, realtors, City departments, local elected officials, and State financing agencies. Staffed by Urban Development and the CDO, the subcommittee's efforts are focused on:

- Developing action strategies to address problem properties, and
- Reviewing potential strategies and policies that maintain and improve current affordable housing and encourage new housing projects, both in the South of Downtown area and city-wide.



UNL Planning graduate students presented affordable housing study results to the Affordable Housing Subcommittee

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Annual Gathering participants review and discuss key priority issues identified by the Steering Committee

THE URBAN PAGE

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IN THIS ISSUE:

SOUTH DOWNTOWN - PROCESS	1-2
NEIGHBORHOOD REVIT & UDD	2
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN	3
SSH ARCHITECTURE WINS CD AWARD	3
REDEVELOPMENT UPDATES	4
Containers on Vine	4
Willys Knight Lofts	4
TIMELY TIDBITS	5
1/4 CENT SALES TAX PROPOSAL	6

While the Affordable Housing Subcommittee's primary emphasis is on affordable rental housing, policies to encourage a variety of housing choices are also being explored, including affordable and market rate homeownership and market rate rentals. The subcommittee's work will culminate in final recommendations to the Steering Committee, likely by late May/early June.

To check in with area residents, an **Annual Gathering** was held at Everett Elementary School on February 21st. Approximately 70 neighborhood residents attended the open house. Seven stations were positioned around the room representing the key priority issues. Attendees were updated on progress and asked for input on the issues and asked if efforts were on the right track. Participants confirmed the identification of the significant issues and that efforts are on-track. Partners in the **Annual Gathering** included the Near South Neighborhood Association, Everett Neighborhood Association, Renters Together and the City of Lincoln. El Chaparro generously provided a taco bar free for attendees.

The Steering Committee will merge and coordinate subcommittee recommendations into a combined Redevelopment/Strategic Plan, which they anticipate completing this summer.



Annual Gathering participants review and discuss key priority issues identified by the Steering Committee

Neighborhood Revitalization & UDD

Urban Development's **Liveable Neighborhood Division** was created in December 2017 as a result of a departmental reorganization. The division's mission is to improve and maintain strong, vibrant neighborhoods. Because affordable, quality housing is critical to strong, livable neighborhoods, the new division staff continues to provide **housing rehab assistance** to low- and moderate-income homeowners and **assist homeless service providers**.

In addition, the division is working to **coordinate and build on existing housing programs** and processes through public, private, and non-profit partnerships city-wide. One example of this is UD's work with the South of Downtown Community Development Organization – see page 1. Another is the Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan—see page 3.

Another key aspect of the Liveable Neighborhood mission is a **new multi-departmental emphasis** on identifying and implementing neighborhood improvement projects in a coordinated manner. Initially focusing on the South of Downtown area, multiple City departments are identifying projects for implementation beginning this year. Potential projects under consideration include alley clean-ups, sidewalk repair, ash tree removal and replacement, street light improvements, and limited street resurfacing.

THE URBAN PAGE

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1st Quarter 2019

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SOUTH DOWNTOWN - PROCESS	1-2
NEIGHBORHOOD REVIT & UDD	2
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN	3
SSH ARCHITECTURE WINS CD AWARD	3
REDEVELOPMENT UPDATES	4
Containers on Vine	4
Willys Knight Lofts	4
TIMELY TIDBITS	5
1/4 CENT SALES TAX PROPOSAL	6

Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan

The City is preparing a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking professional services to support City staff with the development of the *Lincoln Affordable Housing Coordinated Action Plan*. Many efforts and partnerships are currently underway in Lincoln. A coordinated vision for maintaining and expanding affordable, quality housing will be developed. Strategies will be identified that build on these existing programs and partnerships and the public input we have heard. While the entire spectrum of housing costs will be included, particular emphasis will be on quality affordable housing for renters with incomes at 30% to 80% of area median income. Costs and funding opportunities will also be identified for specific strategies.

Urban Development is the lead agency for the project, which will be co-chaired by David Cary, Director, Lincoln Lancaster County Planning Department and Wynn Hjernstad, Community Development Manager, Urban Development Department. A multi-departmental City Resource Team will serve as a staff resource committee who will reach out to stakeholders for input and guidance throughout the process and establish mechanisms for implementation of the Action Plan.

SSH Architecture Wins 2019 CD Week Award

The SSH Architecture Building, at 6240 Ballard Avenue, is an example of new investment in a long-established, older neighborhood. The location, on the edge of the Havelock Business District and next to Havelock Park, is ideal for a mix of commercial and residential uses. The façade of the new building echoes the character of Havelock Business District buildings. The commercial first floor is home to SSH Architecture and another leased office space. All eight of the two-bedroom apartments on the upper floors are leased and occupied.

Kevin Hittle, principal of SSH Architecture, initially looked for a building in Havelock to restore, but he couldn't find a building that would adequately serve his architectural firm's needs. He did find four vacant lots near Havelock Avenue. He and his wife originally visualized a small building, solely for his company's use, but including residential units made more and more sense. The amenities of Havelock Business District would be in walking distance for residents and the city park was just across the street. Havelock Business Association approved and local businesses were happy to see the property, vacant and unused for 20 years, become new office and residential space.

The idea was sound and the community approved, but construction of a new, mixed-use building would cost more than originally anticipated. Because Havelock is a recognized redevelopment area, the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) was a possibility. After working through the redevelopment process, the City Council and the Mayor approved use of TIF, specifically for site preparation, an alley approach, sidewalk improvements, an enhanced façade, and on-street parking improvements.

Havelock has received a variety of publicly funded improvements over the past decades: business façades, streetscapes, public parking options, park and playground improvements, and housing rehabilitation and homeownership assistance. Much of that previous funding was through Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). This kind of significant private investment — almost \$2 million — is a testament to the continuing vitality of the Havelock business community and neighborhood.



SSH Architecture Building, at 6240 Baldwin Avenue, is the 2019 CD Week Award winner

THE URBAN PAGE

THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

1st Quarter 2019

IN THIS ISSUE:

SOUTH DOWNTOWN - PROCESS	1-2
NEIGHBORHOOD REVIT & UDD	2
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN	3
SSH ARCHITECTURE WINS CD AWARD	3
REDEVELOPMENT UPDATES	4
Containers on Vine	4
Willys Knight Lofts	4
TIMELY TIDBITS	5
1/4 CENT SALES TAX PROPOSAL	6

Redevelopment Updates



Architect's rendering of Containers on Vine project, looking SW from 28th & Vine

Containers on Vine: The Containers on Vine Redevelopment project proposes the redevelopment of five properties on N. 28th Street, just south of Vine Street. The developer, TJK Investments Inc., plans to build four new duplexes on five lots which they own. All four buildings will front on N. 28th Street. The ground-level two-bedroom units will be approximately 900 square feet and the upper level one-bedroom units will be approximately 700 square feet. Each of the eight units will incorporate a shipping container as part of the living quarters. This unique design is a first for Lincoln. There will be sixteen parking stalls -- eight surface stalls, four driveway stalls, and four garage stalls. Three of the lots are vacant, but demolition of two older single-family homes, built in the early 1900s, will be necessary to clear the rest of the site for the new construction. The project will be considered by Planning Commission in early April.

Willys Knight Lofts: Pending approvals, the Willys Knight Lofts project will redevelop the Strode Building at 1600 O Street as apartments, secured parking, and commercial space. The building is currently vacant, but most recently served as an auto body repair shop. The City Council and the Mayor have approved the required amendment to the Lincoln Center Redevelopment Plan. After a positive public hearing on April 1st, the Council is expected to approve the Redevelopment Agreement between the City and the developer on April 8th.

Upon approval, the developers, KC Partners, LLC, plan to renovate and rehabilitate the two-story historic structure into approximately 13 residential units on the second floor, including a mix of one-bedroom, two-bedroom, and studio units. The ground floor would include 5,200 square feet of commercial space and 16 secured, indoor parking stalls for the use of the building's residential tenants.

The estimated \$2.5 million in private investment would increase the value of the property and therefore the taxes it would generate. That tax increase, collected over 15 years and totaling about \$252,000, would fund acquisition and allow improvements, including: interior demolition, environmental remediation, and façade enhancements. Once project design is complete, it will also contribute to the O Street Streetscape Project outlined in the 2018 Downtown Lincoln Master Plan.



The Willys Knight Lofts project will redevelop the historic building at 1600 O Street, shown here before the project

THE URBAN PAGE

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1st Quarter 2019

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SOUTH DOWNTOWN - PROCESS	1-2
NEIGHBORHOOD REVIT & UDD	2
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN	3
SSH ARCHITECTURE WINS CD AWARD	3
REDEVELOPMENT UPDATES	4
Containers on Vine	4
Willys Knight Lofts	4
TIMELY TIDBITS	5
1/4 CENT SALES TAX PROPOSAL	6

Timely Tidbits

2019 Civil Rights Conference: The 2019 Civil Rights Conference will feature Jose Antonio Vargas, Pulitzer prize-winning author and filmmaker, on Wednesday, April 17. Vargas is a leading voice for the human rights of immigrants. He is the founder of *Define American*, the nation's leading non-profit culture organization that fights injustice and anti-immigrant hate. His memoir, *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen*, was published in fall 2018.

The conference, held at Nebraska Innovation Campus at 2021 Transformation Drive, will also feature sessions on Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Fair Housing and Equal Employment Legal Updates, and Current Events/Ethics. Conference attendees can receive Nebraska CLE credits.

The \$55 conference fee includes breakfast, a plated lunch, snacks and conference materials. To register, visit lincoln.ne.gov, keyword: *CRC2019*. The registration deadline is April 12th. For more information or to be added to the conference mailing list, please contact Francisca at 402-441-7625 or fbeltran@lincoln.ne.gov.

The Lincoln Commission on Human Rights, as conference organizer, deeply appreciates the conference sponsors: Nebraska Department of Economic Development, REALTORS® Association of Lincoln, Omaha Human Rights and Relations, Nebraska Housing Developers Association, and Southeast Community College.

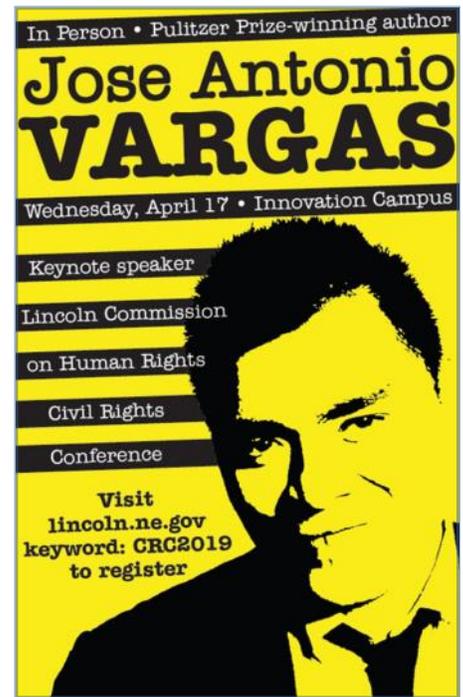
Peter Pan Party 2019: The 2019 Peter Pan Park Party is scheduled for Friday, May 10, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. in (you guessed it!) Peter Pan Park at 32nd & W Street. Coordinated by Hartley Community Learning Center staff, the party offers fun games and activities for families while providing information about community resources and summer events/programs. Stop by and say "Hi!" to Loren, who will be staffing a booth promoting UDD's housing rehab programs.

Juneteenth 2019: Mark your calendars! The Lincoln Juneteenth celebration will be Saturday, June 15, in Trago Park at 20th and U Street. To learn more, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/MaloneCommunityCenter/> or contact the Clyde Malone Community Center 402-474-1110.

Lincoln Paint-a-thon: The Lincoln Paint-a-Thon brings together volunteers to paint the exterior of homes owned by low-income individuals. The program is designed for homeowners who cannot afford to hire to have the work done and do not have the physical ability to do it themselves.

- There is no charge to the homeowner.
- A committee selects the recipients from the pool of applications based on the greatest need, the condition of the house and the availability of donation funds and volunteers.
- Recipients can choose from pre-selected paint colors.
- The application is available online at www.paintathon.org. It can either be completed online or printed out, completed and mailed in.
- All applications must be received by June 1.
- Selected homeowners will be notified by July 8, 2019.
- The painting will be done on August 17, 2019.

If you have questions or need help completing the form, email marshall@buildupnebraska.org.



THE URBAN PAGE

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NEIGHBORHOOD REVIT & UDD	2
AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION PLAN	3
SSH ARCHITECTURE WINS CD AWARD	3
REDEVELOPMENT UPDATES	4
Containers on Vine	4
Willys Knight Lofts	4
TIMELY TIDBITS	5
1/4 CENT SALES TAX PROPOSAL	6

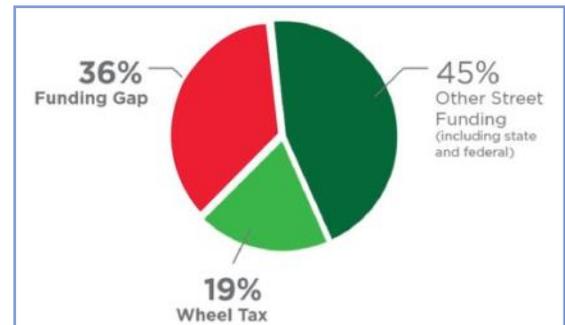
Your Streets, Your Choice on April 9th

Based on the Lincoln Citizen Transportation Coalition's recommendations, City leaders are proposing a six-year, ¼ cent sales tax to help fund the gap in Lincoln's street repair, rehabilitation and reconstruction needs. This local option sales tax would raise an estimated \$13 million annually, about a third of which would be from visitors and/or out-of-town workers. It would equal an additional 25¢ of sales tax for every \$100 purchase. The detailed proposal has been placed on the ballot for voter consideration in conjunction with primary elections on Tuesday, April 9th. If voters approve, the tax change would occur on October 1st and street construction using those additional funds could begin as early as mid-2020.

How did the Coalition's recommendation come about?

Beginning in 2017, the City of Lincoln and the Lincoln Citizen Transportation Coalition worked to develop ideas and consensus on how to address current and future infrastructure needs. Months of study by 27 community leaders began with the evaluation of existing street conditions. That evaluation showed 58% of Lincoln's streets in need of repair, 29% needing rehabilitation, and 13% in need of reconstruction. In addition, there is a \$93 million backlog of new street construction.

Addressing these needs with the current budget is not feasible – the cost is estimated at \$33 million more per year than is currently available. However, the Coalition concluded that the benefits of addressing the street infrastructure needs now would be worth the investment, delivering long-term savings and a street system that would be an asset to the city's businesses and residents.



What are the details of the proposal?

City leaders responded to the coalition's recommendations by proposing a 1/4 cent sales tax for six years. The proposal includes:

- Distribution of 75% of improvement expenditures for existing streets and 25% for new streets. The additional funding would allow the City to meet street system needs at four times the current rate. The result would be 138 miles or 1,800 blocks of rehabilitated residential streets per year.
- Street rehabilitation and reconstruction of existing neighborhood and arterial streets, in all quadrants of the City, to maximize their useful life.
- Improvement to existing streets, in all quadrants of the City, to enhance safety, streamline traffic flow, or promote private sector investment.
- Use of 1.5% of the funds raised annually for the N. 33rd & Cornhusker project.
- Use of the funds raised for streets only – not for sidewalks, trails, traffic signals, bike lanes or other non-street projects.
- Oversight of the use of funds by a committee comprised of citizens appointed by the Mayor, including neighborhood representatives. Improved data collection methods now allow better project and progress tracking than possible in the past.
- Inclusion of all projects in the annual Capital Improvement Plan, which is approved by City Council.
- A required annual report from the Lincoln Transportation & Utilities Department (LTU) to the City Council on the use of these funds. This report would be separate from the regular budget for LTU's Operations and Management Division.

Lincoln voters are encouraged to learn all they can about the proposal so they can make an informed choice at the April 9th election. To review existing street conditions, the Citizen Transportation Coalition's full report and recommendations, and the materials that were presented at public open houses held earlier, visit lincolnonthemove.com. The website includes a frequently asked questions and information on transportation revenues and expenditures.