# SECTION 8: PEER CITY REVIEW ON GROWTH

8.1 Introduction

The City of Lincoln is a growing community. The local practice of "One Lincoln" necessitates that as development occurs on the fringe, it is annexed into the rest of the City. To assist the community in understanding the impacts of this practice and to place them into context of peers and aspirational communities the consultant team undertook a review of six communities. This peer review on growth strategies is distinct from the peer review discussed earlier in Section 5, which focused on system preservation and optimization. The peer communities reviewed for growth strategies include communities similar to Lincoln in terms of their size, economics, geographic character, and composition. Summary information for the peer communities reviewed during the growth and development review are shown in the following figures.
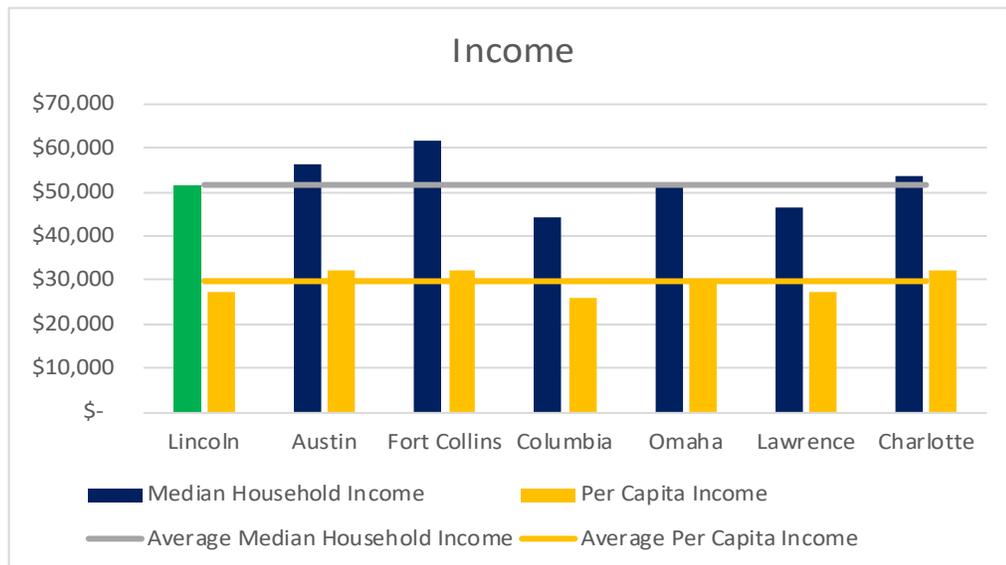
Figure 8.1: Population (2014)
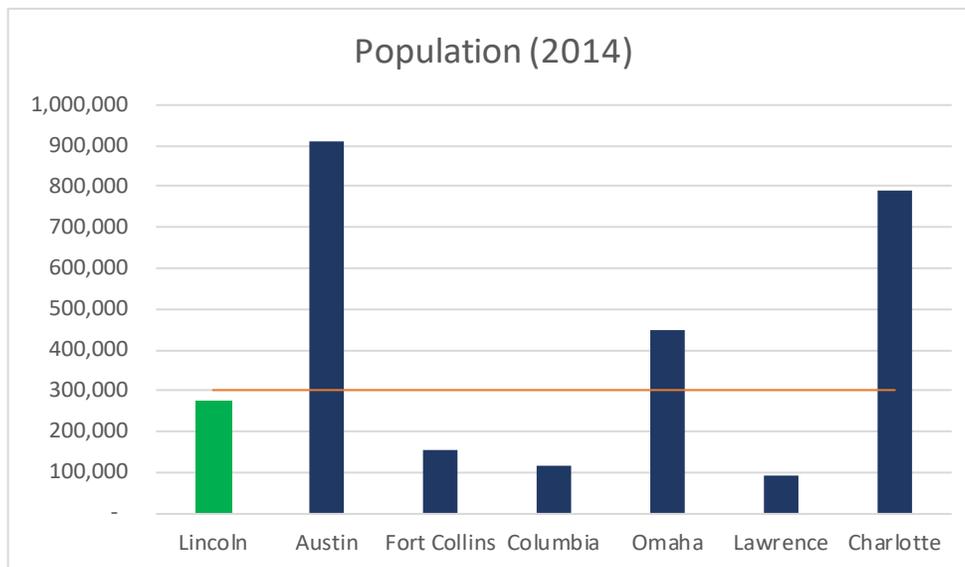
Source: OpenDataNetwork.com

Figure 8.2: Population Change (%) Since 2000

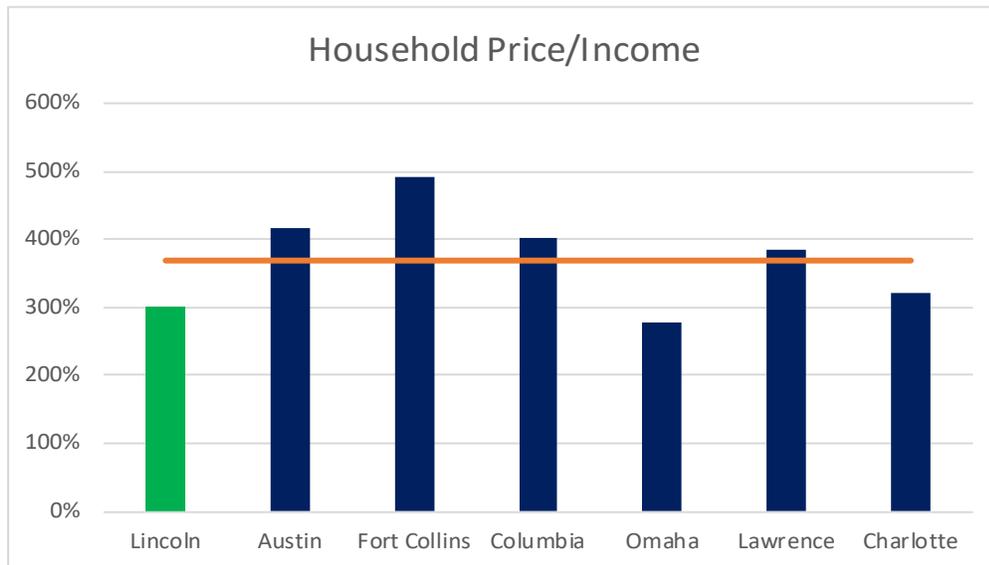**Population Change since 2000**
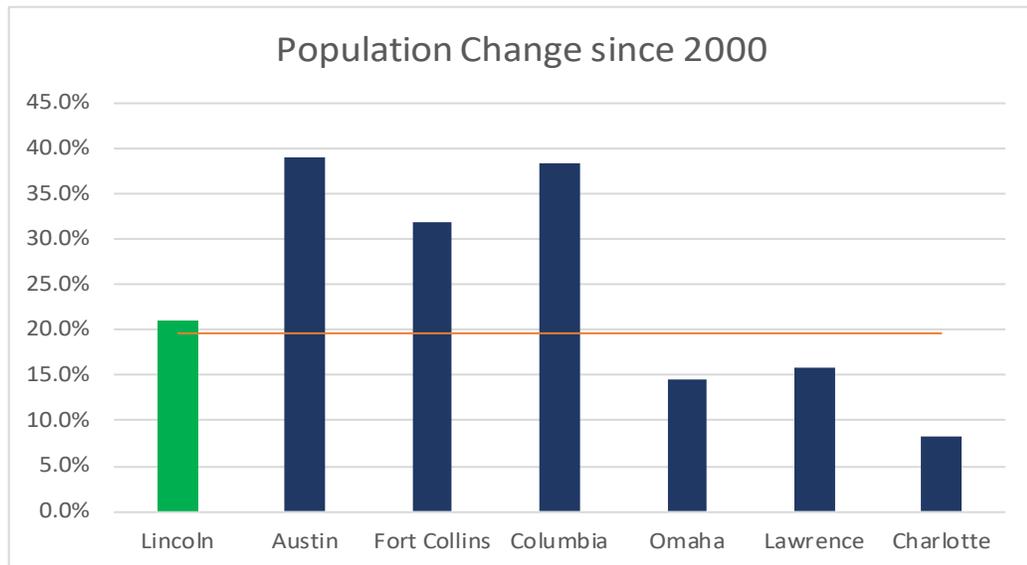
Source: OpenDataNetwork.com

Figure 8.3: Peer City Median Household Income


Income

Source: OpenDataNetwork.com

Figure 8.4: Household Price/ Household Income

Household Price/Income

Source: OpenDataNetwork.com

Lincoln is close to the peer city average for population, population growth and income. It's ratio of household price / income, however, is lower than the average for peer communities – reflecting greater home affordability. In all, six cities were contacted for interviews and responses were received from five communities (including a partial response from Austin). **Figure 8.5** illustrates the list of peer cities and those who responded to the interview request.

Figure 8.5: Peer City Growth Survey
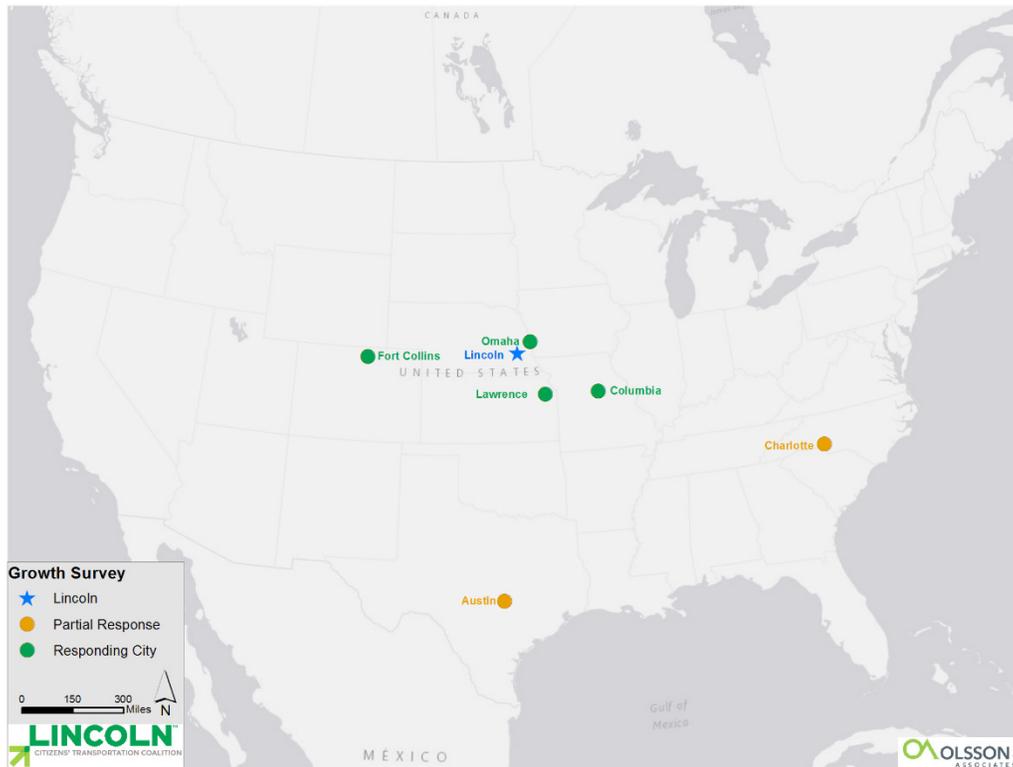
Source: Olsson Associates

Peer cities for growth evaluations were identified by comparing communities with similar populations, growth patterns, climate, and/or a mix of state government and major universities. Questions focused on a variety of characteristics, including:

- General attitudes surrounding future growth, including
  ◦ Infill vs greenfield growth
  ◦ Growth boundaries
  ◦ Incentives for development
- Funding, financing and project delivery, including
  ◦ Funding directly related to development
  ◦ Share structure for development
  ◦ Program priorities – system preservation vs new infrastructure
  ◦ Program budgeting
  ◦ Innovative project delivery
- Annexation policies
  ◦ Demand for annexation
  ◦ Evaluation of property to be annexed
  ◦ Design standards for extraterritorial areas

- Traffic Signals
    - ° Management of requests for new signals
    - ° Funding for signal Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) deployment
    - ° Communications infrastructure
- Bicycle/Pedestrian system planning and development

Some of the key takeaways are discussed below.

8.1.1 Community Growth

All of the communities have identified areas for new growth in greenfields areas. Fort Collins is unique in that they are seeing the majority of their growth as infill/redevelopment. Every community uses comprehensive planning documents to identify locations for new growth in their region. Specificity of infill growth areas varies with most communities not specifically identifying sectors for new infill growth.

8.1.2 Growth Boundary

Only Fort Collins has identified a firm growth boundary. The remaining communities have identified future service limits (much like what Lincoln has done). There are no disincentives for development outside of the future service limit other than the potential for the developer to pay for the full cost of development. In Omaha, this cost may be ultimately reimbursed when the City reaches the development if funding is available. Several communities stated that they would like to have a mechanism for disincentives but they are not politically viable in their community.

8.1.3 Infill Incentives

While Omaha and Lawrence have at least some form of incentive to attract infill/redevelopment, the remaining communities do not. Of note is that Fort Collins (which is experiencing the most infill/redevelopment) has no direct incentive program to facilitate this growth.

8.1.4 Master Development

Only Omaha and Austin have engaged master developers to assist in planning and redeveloping major civic sites.

8.1.5 Transportation Investment Leading Growth

Peer communities are all using some form of incentive package to assist in the development of public infrastructure at infill sites. Tax Increment Financing is the most frequently used tool. Special districts are also used in half of the communities. Omaha is evaluating the use of parking districts and minimum maintenance street districts.

8.1.6 Infrastructure Investment Leading Growth

None of the communities build/expand roadways prior to new development taking place. It was noted by a few communities that state department of transportation (DOT) project implementation in fringe areas has spurred/ incentivized sprawl but the communities themselves are always following development with transportation projects

8.1.7 Transportation Funding Streams

All of the communities have in place or are developing (Austin) transportation based impact fees for new developments to assist in paying for necessary transportation improvements. The structure of these fees vary with some using a flat fee per unit and others utilizing a fee per square foot of development. Columbia uses a $0.50/sq ft flat rate on all new construction regardless of land use.

8.1.8 Developer Share of Roadway Costs

All of the communities responding stated that the City pays most of the cost of new roadways adjacent to a new neighborhood/development. Impact fees are used to offset this cost. In some cases (Omaha and Austin), special negotiations have occurred on a case-by-case basis to assist in offsetting the cost to the community. Columbia and Omaha require developers to dedicate right-of-way for public roadways – Omaha requires ROW to be dedicated for a 5-lane section with 3-lanes built initially.

8.1.9 Financing Options

The majority of communities bond to assist in paying for large public infrastructure projects. Omaha uses general obligation bonds. Fort Collins has been successful in passing dedicated sales tax measures to support transportation investment.

8.1.10 Preservation vs Growth

All of the communities prioritize system preservation over system growth. Omaha does not include system preservation in the CIP as it has its own line item in the city budget.

8.1.11 Annexations

All of the communities review annexation packages annually. Both voluntary and involuntary annexations occur in all communities. All of the communities evaluate the areas to be annexed based upon fiscal scenarios.

8.1.12 Contiguous Growth

Austin and Columbia do not require annexed areas to be contiguous, though it is strongly encouraged in both communities. The remaining communities require contiguous growth.

8.1.13 Substandard Infrastructure

The application of community design standards varies by community. Austin cannot enforce transportation, water or wastewater standards outside of their city limits. As such, substandard infrastructure is a major issue during annexation. Fort Collins reviews substandard infrastructure, documents it and then attempts to find a way to finance its improvement. Columbia looks at this issue as an opportunity to assist in improving the community at large, framing the issue as "if not us, then who?" when speaking to the City Council.

8.1.14 Avoiding Residential Annexation

Only Lawrence would consider avoiding residential annexation at this point. In Lawrence, each annexation request is evaluated on its own merit. If a residential annexation does not meet minimum standards, it would not be approved. Omaha is similar but would identify deficiencies and work with the area to develop a timeframe for annexations pending necessary improvements.

8.1.15 Traffic Signal Redevelopment

Every community requires new signals to meet federal warrants before installation. Developers are largely required to pay for new signals to the level that their development is responsible for their need.

8.1.16 Communications Infrastructure

Columbia, Lawrence and Omaha have developed communications master plans for their traffic signal infrastructure. Where called for, communications infrastructure is installed as an area is developed or redeveloped. The funding of these improvements is determined on a case-by-case basis.

8.1.17 Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

Omaha and Fort Collins dedicate funding to ITS deployments. This funding is not fixed and may include federal-aid as awarded by the local metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The remaining communities have an ITS Architecture (required by federal law) but funding is not dedicated to implement an ITS program. Columbia, Fort Collins and Omaha all have submitted recent Smart Cities grant applications.

8.1.18 Bicycle/Pedestrian Infrastructure

Columbia's subdivision design standards require complete streets to be implemented in new subdivisions. Other communities have developed bicycle/pedestrian master plans that are implemented as funding becomes available. Fort Collins requires developers to connect new developments to regional trail systems with "local sized" trails. Recreational trail networks are largely required to be developed as a part of the annexation of new areas.
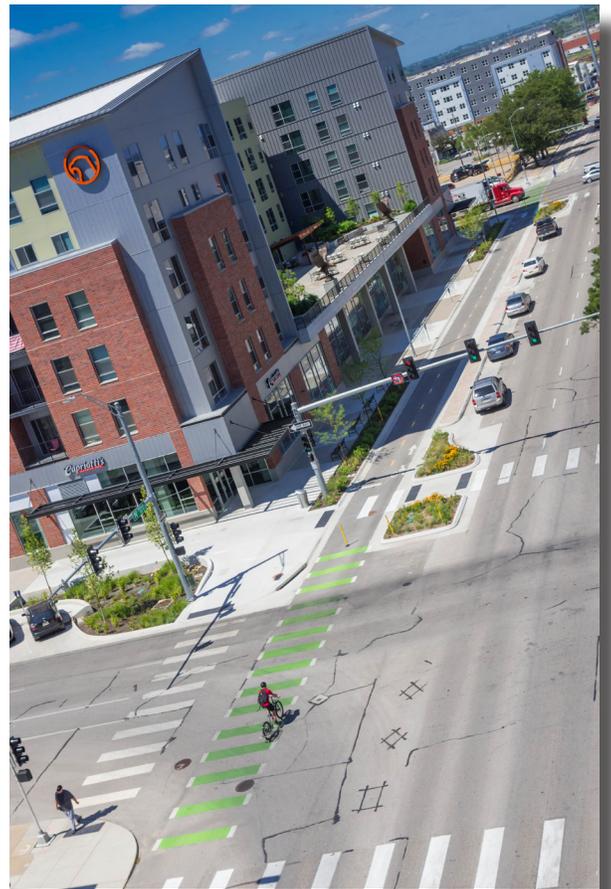
Bicycle Infrastructure in Lincoln