

Council passes new bike law

Changed ordinance designed to reduce bicycle accidents

By Shawn Hubbell
Staff Reporter

Increased conflicts between bicyclists and pedestrians and confusion over where bicyclists may ride on downtown sidewalks has prompted the Lincoln City Council to redefine its bike boundary ordinance.

Passed Aug. 18 by the city council, the new ordinance became effective Sept. 8. According to Capt. Jim Baird of the Lincoln Police Department, the old ordinance concerning bikes in the downtown area, which has been in effect for the past seven years, was ineffective in lowering the number of bicycle accidents.

Baird said the boundaries originally established in the old ordinance — from N Street to P Street and from 10th Street to 16th Street — were satisfactory until downtown business started moving out of those boundaries.

Baird said police received increased reports of bike accidents and complaints from business

owners and pedestrians about people riding bikes on the sidewalks, even though bicyclists legally could ride on the sidewalks in those areas.

Over time, Baird said, the congestion problem of pedestrians within the legal bike-riding areas was no different than in areas where bikes on the sidewalks were prohibited.

The new ordinance prohibits the use of bicycles, skateboards and roller skates on sidewalks in the downtown area between L and Q Streets and from Ninth to 16th Streets.

"We will be enforcing the ordinance as is. Our foot officers are very aware of this situation," Baird said. "But whether you receive a warning ticket or an actual citation will depend upon the situation and the officer involved. Our officers have a certain amount of discretion."

Repeat offenders or people riding on the sidewalks at 5 p.m. when the sidewalks are full probably will be ticketed, he said.

But the amount of the fine will be entirely up to the judge, said Sgt. Max Meyer of the Lincoln Police Department. "If it's a repeat offender the judge is probably going to sock it to 'em."

Baird said the new bicycle ordinance should answer the immediate concerns of business owners, but it may need to be reevaluated as downtown redevelopment plans continue.

Director: Fix it up or shut it down

GENOWAYS from Page 1

"Fixing this place up is one of the top priorities of the university," he said of Morrill Hall. "They are either going to have to fix this place up or shut it down entirely. Some of the windows here are about ready to fall out."

Genoways said he also hopes to update the exhibits and give them a modern appearance.

Establishing a program to rotate the showing of the university's paleontological and anthropological exhibits would give the museum more variety, Genoways said. He said the university's fossil collection is one of the best in the world.

"This place can be made to look as modern and be as good as any museum in the country if we get the commitment and fix this place up," Genoways said. "Some of the displays here, like Elephant Hall, are unmatched by any museum anywhere."

A common misconception about the museum is that it consists of just Morrill Hall, Genoways said. The state museum system includes Nebraska Hall, which holds the museum's research facilities, the Ralph Mueller planetarium and the Trailside Museum, an exhibit at Fort Robinson

in western Nebraska.

Genoways said he would like to establish more exhibits in the western and central parts of the state.

"Kearney is about as far west as people will come to see the museum," he said. "Within the next year, I would like to start moving exhibits out west in a small traveling exhibit concept."

Besides his museum work, Genoways is doing field research on bats. He started his research in 1974 while at Texas Tech and continues that research today. Before taking over as director, Genoways worked with a research team in the Antilles, a group of islands in the Caribbean, to study bats' interrelationships, evolution and migratory patterns. Genoways said he plans to make a return trip to continue his work with bats.

"I'd really get stale if I couldn't get out and do field work once in a while," he said.

But for now, Genoways said he is content with being an administrator and "pushing papers" to upgrade the museum and its exhibits.

"College students in Nebraska should have an interest in natural history," Genoways said. "I suggest students take an afternoon and stroll through the halls. They'll find it interesting."



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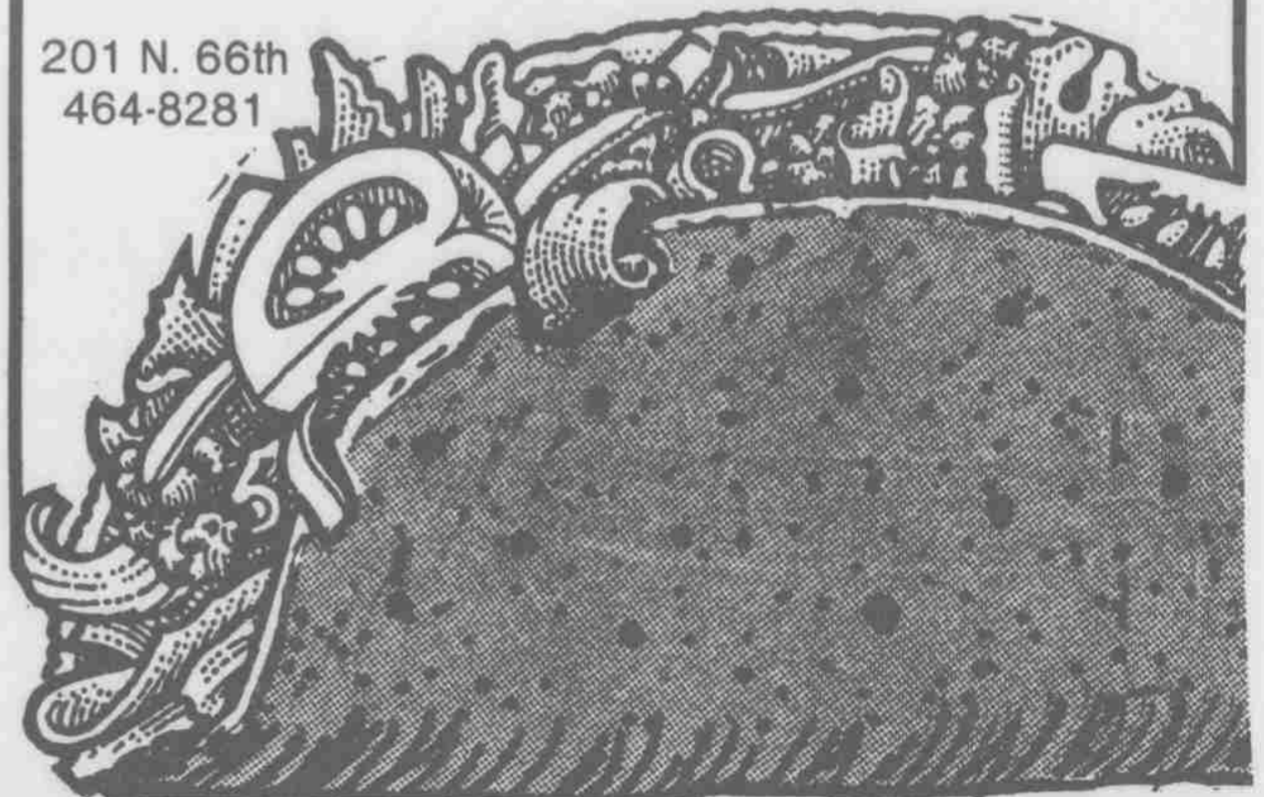
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