

third dimension

Businessman protests redevelopment

What he thought was a good, long-term investment may be lost to the city according to Lincoln businessman Pat Ash. And he's not a bit happy about it.

Ash, who owns property on the proposed Centrum block bounded by 11th, 12th, N and O streets, has filed three law suits against the city in his attempt to keep his property.

According to Ash, the city wants to purchase his 25 feet of property facing O Street and a smaller lot facing 11th St. to make way for the private development.

Questions legality

Ash is questioning the legality of this purchase, the constitutionality of the Urban Redevelopment Act and the validity of its blight interpretation and the denial of due process.

"I maintain that it's wrong for the city to have eminent domain to condemn privately owned property for the resale to a private developer," Ash said.

Ash, who owns Pat Ash, Inc., and the building housing Duling Optical at 11th and O streets, said his property is

one of the prime corners in downtown Lincoln. He said he understands why many businessmen would like to have it.

Morally wrong

It's morally wrong for government to take a large piece of property away from several private owners and put it into the hands of a single owner, which the Centrum project proposes to do, he said.

Made way

Urban renewal has been voted down twice by Lincoln voters, Ash added. This time the city went to the Legislature to get a state law passed to make way for the Centrum.

"By going to the legislature," he said, "they didn't have to go to the people.

Although not opposed to progress in Lincoln, Ash said he firmly believes businesses should stay in the hands of the smaller businessmen. Ash is financing the law suits himself.

The lawsuits still are pending in court, he said, and added: "I don't think they (the city) will push the court case, because a feeling of resentment may arise."

Ash said he is not holding out for more money for the property because he already has received higher offers.

The city made the offer for his property only 60 days ago, long after the suits had been pending, he said, adding the "price was no where in the ball park."

Calling the Burton-Aschman (redevelopment consultants) proposed plan for downtown "the most loosely compiled of gobbledy-gook I've ever seen," Ash said, "It is easy for them to sit on the outside and propose this thing, but if they were in my position they would be thinking quite a bit differently."

Fifteen other lawsuits have been filed by property owners in the Centrum block against the project. Ash said there were originally 24 lawsuits, but several have been dropped and others consolidated.

"I don't expect people to agree with everything I've done or said," Ash concluded, "but I plan to express my opinions when I think I'm right and if I'm wrong I'll admit it."

Atrium plan proposes complex



The Atrium, seen from the corner of 12th and N Streets.

While building projects are booming in Lincoln, many investors are considering remodeling older structures into retail and office centers.

The Gunny's complex at 13th and Q streets, which was completed last spring, was the first large-scale remodeling in Lincoln. It soon will be followed by the transformation of the temporary National Bank of Commerce (NBC) Building, at 12th and N Streets into the \$4.5 million Atrium.

Cary Neiman, vice president of the Chicago-based Hawthorn Realty Group which bought and is remodeling the Atrium, said the realty group picked Lincoln's strong downtown for its project.

"It's one of the strongest downtowns in the country," he said. "It is an extremely strong economic base, the capital of Nebraska and the University."

He added that new construction in the area influenced the developer's decision, along with the low Lincoln unemployment rate.

The main alteration of the NBC Building, he said, will be the addition of a 40-foot square open area, or atrium, in the center of the building, running through all seven floors and topped by a skylight.

At the base of the atrium area will be a dining and re-

laxing area, Neiman said, surrounded by shops, eating establishments and lounges.

Plants and greenery will hang in and be placed around the atrium area, he added.

The first two floors and lower level, some 80,000 square feet of leasable space, will house retail shops. The upper floors will hold glassed-in office space facing the atrium.

"We are installing all new mechanical equipment," Neiman said. "New escalators and elevators will be installed in addition to the remodeling."

His firm invested in the NBC Building, formerly the Rudge and Gunzel Dept. Store, then the Sears Building, because of its location (between two major banks and close to the State Capitol) and because the 1917 structure is still sound.

Neiman said Ben Simon's has signed a long-term lease for parts of the first two levels of the Atrium and "there are 10 retailers interested in some of the space."

"We are planning to house dynamic, high-quality tenants," he noted, "and not the faddish type of businesses."

Completion date for the Atrium is scheduled for late 1976, he said. Work will begin on the building in February, as soon as NBC moves out.



Photo courtesy of the Lincoln Center Development Program. An aerial view of Lincoln shows the proximity of the university campus which developers say will keep the downtown alive.

FREE COFFEE

courtesy of the Nebraska Union

while you study for finals in the

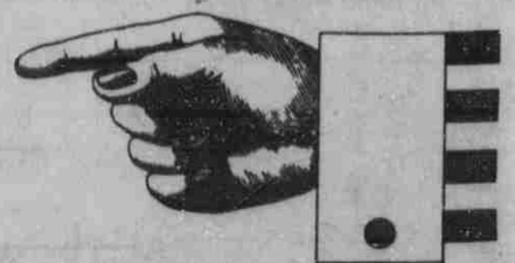
HARVEST ROOM

Sun. Dec. 14 3pm-11pm
Mon.-Wed. Dec. 15-17 7pm-11pm

DO IT!

Put yourself into the fashion scene with "Designer Frame" glasses. Names like Givenchy, Oscar de la Renta and Nina Ricci mean "today" and express it through bold and beautiful eyewear for men and women.

The Optical Shop brings you these fashion eyeglasses and for a limited time will allow you a 20% discount off the purchase price of any of their many styles to choose from.



DO IT!

This coupon allows the bearer at time of order, a 20% discount on any pair of "Designer Frame" glasses available at The Optical Shop, 333 North 12th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska. — Expiration date January 26, 1976 —