

Northeast Radial status unsure

By John Hopgood

Question: What is the status of Lincoln's controversial Northeast Radial?

Answer: The same as it was two generations ago—up in the air.

The Northeast Radial, a proposed four-lane diagonal road designed to run from the downtown business district to 27th street, has been a topic of heated debate since the 1940s. The Lincoln City Council is still debating whether to build the road and their delay is affecting the growth plans of the UNL and the nearby Malone and Clinton neighborhoods.

If the proposal to build the radial passes, the road will cut through property owned by the university and may limit growth to the east.

One way the radial would benefit the university is that it would take commuter traffic off of 16th and 17th streets, which run through the downtown campus. Such a plan is in keeping with the university's projected goal of establishing a "walking campus" with parking on the perimeters.

UNL officials will not publicly come out supporting or opposing the radial. However, Ron Wright, vice chancellor for business and finance, said the university has "served notice" to the city that if the road is to be built "it (the university) would prefer that it be built east of 21st Street." The university's long-range master plan calls for growth east to 21st Street. Wright's suggestion for constructing this radial would be in keeping with the plan.

The UNL master plan, developed in 1967 by a Texas planning firm, was designed to accommodate a student population level of 25,000 and sets no timetable for completion. At present about 23,000 students attend UNL.

Although the plan does not specify exact locations, it calls for the construction of two more residential halls and a new student center.

Full approval deadlocked

Wright pointed out that the university "is hemmed in on three sides" by railroad tracks bordering the campus on the north, Interstate 80 on the west and downtown Lincoln on the south.

Even though slower growth is projected for the 1980s, UNL officials hope to keep the option of eastward expansion open. The construction of the radial "would in fact be the fourth boundary," Wright said.

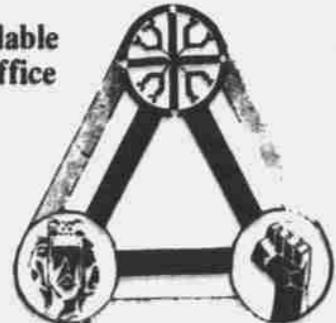
The radial first was proposed in the late 1940s as "the diagonal." As the city grew during a growth boom in the 1950s and early 1960s, so did the design plan for what

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