

# Powell heads petition drive

## Proposed ballot measure would replace plants with parking

By LeAnne Lovings  
Staff Reporter

If downtown retailer O. M. "Jack" Powell gets his way, Lincoln residents could see a change in the downtown environment. Powell is leading a petition drive to remove many of the trees downtown and replace them with diagonal parking stalls.

Jack Powell, owner of Powell's Jewelers, 1317 O St., for 22 years, started circulating his petition July 23. He said he hopes to get the necessary 4,746 petition signatures by October to place the issue on the November ballot.

Although Powell refused to say how many signatures he has, he said that he collected more than 600 signatures at his store alone.

The trees that Powell wants to remove were planted downtown as part of a beautification project more than 10 years ago. Powell said he and many other downtown businessmen were forced to pay for the trees through special assessment taxes. He said he did not like the idea then, and he certainly doesn't like the idea now.

"I love trees just as much as anybody, but without parking, business is dead," Powell said.

According to Richard Haden, acting city traffic engineer, parking space downtown has increased by 250 spaces since 1975. He said additional parking garages have made up for the parking lost when trees were planted.

However, Powell said he feels that shoppers are intimidated by parking garages and would rather not park in them.

"There must be on-street parking," Powell said.

Powell proposes the addition of diagonal parking in an 81-square-block area, adding what he says would be some 8,000 parking spaces. However, some feel that diagonal parking is too dangerous in heavy downtown traffic.

Haden stated that the number of parking accidents was reduced when downtown parking originally was converted to parallel stalls.

Haden also stated that even if Powell's drive succeeds, certain streets, such as O, Ninth, 10th and parts of 17th would be left with parallel parking because of previous commitments and the acceptance of federal aid for those streets that makes them off-limits to changes.

Members of the Downtown Lincoln Association say they are upset by Powell's petition and have voted unanimously against supporting his efforts.

"We would like to take a positive stance towards furthering the parking downtown, but we don't feel that Powell's ideas are the answer," said Carol

Jess, executive director of the association.

Jess also said that even if Powell's petition got on the ballot, it would have a hard time passing because it is vaguely worded.

Powell said he will continue the petition drive until he has enough signatures.

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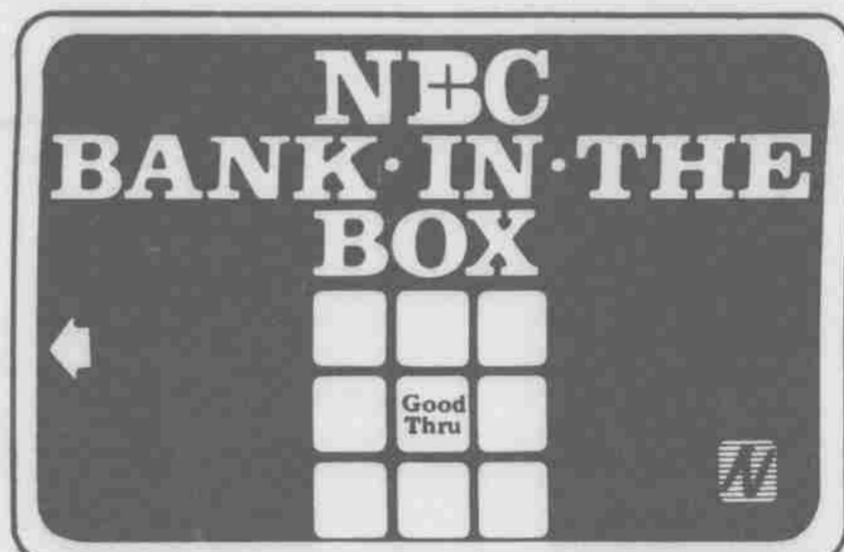
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