

Proposed urbanization may hurt nature park

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When Wilderness Park was first acquired, approximately 750 to 800 acres were covered with trees. The remaining 600 acres consisted of non-wooded areas and abandoned fields.

Over time, the trees of Wilderness Park have expanded into those areas and created a natural biotic community within an urban setting. Park use was to be minimal.

If the proposed plan is approved, however, use of the park may increase and put pressure on the park's ability to accommodate this use.

The plan to expand this area of Lincoln will not only bring industrial developments into the flood plains, but a high school and a golf course. Building a high school could, in turn, bring in more families wanting to build around the area.

An increased population will have its effects. Urbanization of the area around the park may force some animal and insect species to stay contained within the park, causing crowding. Eventually, the animals and birds will either be forced to eat park foliage or they will die off.

Nocturnal activity within the park may also be disturbed because of the increase of light from baseball fields, traffic in the area and lights coming from the industrial park.

The animals are not the only ones who will suffer from area growth. An increase in population will also mean an increase in the amount of water that will run into Salt Creek.

Although flood control within that area of Lincoln will be under control, the extra water may cause problems for Waverly and Ashland. Both cities have had problems with flood control in the past which has forced some residents to use water pumps to manually pump out the sewage around their homes.

Because of these types of concerns about the well-being of the park and its surrounding areas, developers have not received their permits to build.

Instead, stakeholders, or individuals representing groups of people who have a specific interest, concern or role in determining the future of Wilderness Park, and developers have been meeting once a month.

The Wilderness Park Mediation Committee is the first committee in Lincoln to use mediation as a way to determine the outcome of a situation.

"A series of meetings between stakeholders and developers began in the fall of 1998," said Becky Anderson, an employee with Lincoln Mediation Services. "They are joined by five facilitators who are neutral and these people communicate ideas and information about the park in order to come to a common understanding of what should be done within that area."

The group is supposed to come to a conclusion by August, Anderson said.

They will then relay their decision to Kip Hulvershorn, professor of com-



munity and regional planning at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Hulvershorn is in charge of putting together a cohesive plan to be presented to the City Council and Mayor in December, 1999. The final decision of what will happen to the park will come from the City Board, Anderson said.

Developers have applied for a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to begin building, but it has been put on hold until a final decision is made.

Army Corps is a federal agency that is primarily responsible for flood control. Traditionally they do not take into concern what problems may occur downstream if construction takes place.

The debate over Wilderness Park, however, has made the Army Corps take a more comprehensive approach when deciding whether to approve this specific permit.

A decision to begin building in a different area of the park could, however, be made before Hulvershorn's proposal is considered, or even complete.

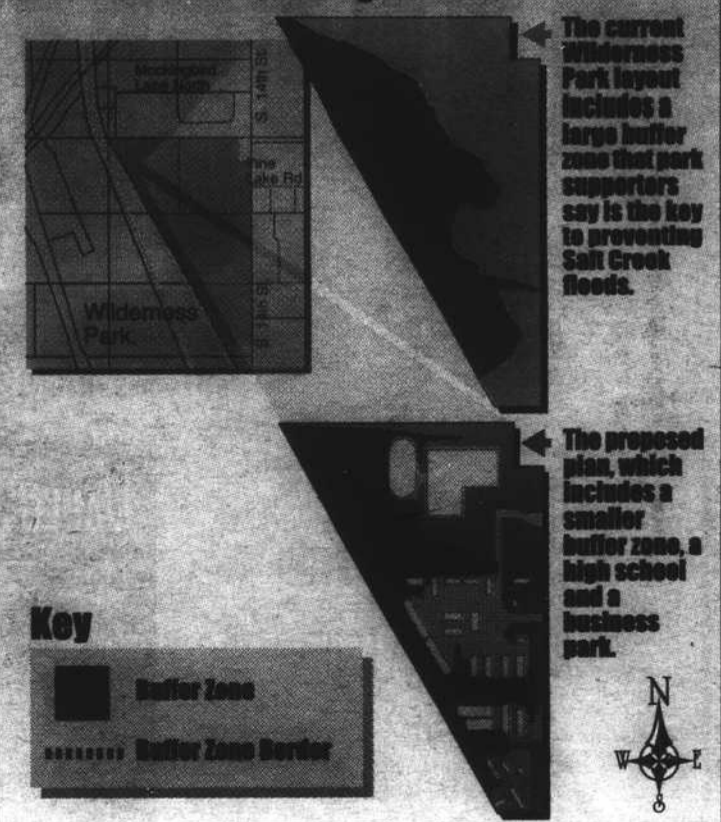
On Monday, June 28, the city council will hold a public testimony concerning the building of the Horizon Business Center on 14th and Pine Lake Road. This is the same area where the proposed high school will be built.

A memo from Mary Roseberry-Brown, a member of the Friends of Wilderness Park, sent to all concerned parties stated that 55 of the 60 acres of the proposed Horizon Center are in flood plain.

According to the memo, the site that they are planning on using consists of the flat bottom of an 815.5 acre sub-basin of Salt Creek.

"Currently, in a heavy, fast down-pour, this entire area becomes a pond

The Buffer Zone Question



MATT HANEY/DN

of about three feet of water-deep enough so that small cars are washed off 14th street," wrote Roseberry-Brown.

Building on this site will cause more water to drain into Salt Creek, instead of allowing the land to absorb it. It may also cause eventual erosion, destroying the eastern banks of the creek and the eastern edge of

Wilderness Park.

The hearing will be held at 1:30p.m. at the City Council Building, 555 S 10th St. People are encouraged to voice their concerns during this time.

"This is an a very sensitive, extraordinary area and very extraordinary measures should be taken," wrote Roseberry-Brown. "We as a city should go the extra mile."