

Conference focuses on preservation

■ The daylong event examined the effects of urban sprawl around Lincoln.

By **MATTHEW BEERMANN**
Staff writer

Preservation-minded citizens from around Lincoln gathered at the Nebraska Union on Saturday to share ideas on preserving Lincoln's environmental resources and discuss the effects of urban sprawl.

The conference, "Sustaining Growth and Preserving our Environmental Heritage," was sponsored in part by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's College of Architecture and featured several community conservation experts.

Cecil Steward, dean of the College of Architecture and one of the conference's organizers, said the conference was held because of concern about developments in the Lincoln area, such as with Wilderness Park and the Stevens Creek area.

Stevens Creek is an undeveloped

rural area several miles east of Lincoln near 141st Street. The area would also be the site of the Southern Corridor — the city's proposed beltway that would connect Highway 77 with Interstate 80 along 141st Street.

Elizabeth Merritt, head of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Legal Defense Fund, spoke on the dangers of uncontrolled urban growth, otherwise known as urban sprawl.

She said the amount of developed land in cities nationwide has increased dramatically while population has remained relatively stable.

"The problem with sprawl is that you can no longer walk to the grocery store, the dry cleaners, your place of work, anywhere you need to go," Merritt said. "It erodes the sense of community and contributes to a feeling of alienation on a very personal level."

Friends of Wilderness Park, another conference's sponsor, also was worried about the encroachment of commercial development on the Wilderness Park area southwest of Lincoln.

The group has been working for several years to slow development and raise public awareness on the issue.

Those groups are right on the

money, according to Karin Marchetti, legal counsel for the Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

"There is a deep motivation in each of us to preserve our environmental and historic legacy," she said.

Marchetti warned of the hidden drawbacks that can be associated with development.

"Local governments may believe the myth that development pays for itself and that conservation costs," she said.

"Every dollar of taxes that residential development raises costs a city an average of \$1.12, since they have to provide it with services such as water, gas, sewage, police, ambulance and so forth. They're actually losing money."

Another issue of concern was the Southern Corridor — the proposed beltway near Stevens Creek. Some conversation groups were concerned about the environmental impact urban development could have on the creek area.

"Beltways create sprawl," Marchetti said. "People build homes out to them, and companies build industrial parks around them."

She added that while the desire to live away from the city is understandable, development can have the unin-

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ELIZABETH MERRITT

head of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Legal Defense Fund

tended effect of bringing the city along with it.

Merritt agreed: "People often forget that building more and wider roads promotes more development and thus congestion. These roads are packed the very day they open."

The more than 60 conference attendees represented a variety of interest groups, but all shared a concern over the issue of preservation.

"(My wife and I) have been involved in transportation planning for years, most recently the Antelope Valley project," said Lincoln resident Don Jensen. "We just want to make sure that we know what's going on."

Another resident, Tim Knott, said he was concerned about preservation of the Stevens Creek area.

"I'm just looking for the tools to help preserve the Stevens Creek area," Knott said.

Those tools were discussed by Marchetti earlier in the day and included things such as conservation easements, deed restrictions, mutual covenants, leasing, options to buy or outright purchase of the land in question.

Ultimately, Steward said, conference attendees wanted to learn about humans and their environment.

"It is the interdependence between people and natural resources that we are here to discuss," he said.

Saturday's conference was the first of three. The next two are "Planning with Vision for Productive Land Use" on Oct. 16 and "Disaster by Design" on Nov. 20.

Columnist gives thoughts on politics

By **BRIAN CARLSON**
Staff writer

OMAHA — Although partisan bickering and gridlock have left Americans fed up with Washington, strong civic involvement at the local level bodes well for the country, Washington Post columnist David Broder said Thursday.

A Pulitzer Prize-winning columnist who has covered every presidential election since 1960, Broder delivered the 4th annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities at the Joslyn Art Museum.

"Washington is not an edifying spectacle in terms of government and politics," he said. "When the impeachment trial ended, there was genuine hope at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue that they might actually be able to get some things done."

The nation's continued peace and prosperity provided an opportunity to address several important issues — education, Social Security and Medicare — in the final years of Bill Clinton's presidency, Broder said.

But most of 1998 was lost to the Lewinsky scandal, and partisan differences have blocked the passage of significant legislation since then. Now the eyes of politicians and the public are turning to the 2000 presidential race, Broder said.

"This opportunity is mostly gone," he said.

Some of the current stalemate in Washington can be explained by changes in the structure of American politics, Broder said.

In the 1950s and '60s, conservative Southern Democrats often voted with Republicans, while liberal Northern Republicans routinely aligned with Democrats. But after the Civil Rights movement, many Southern Democrats switched to the Republican Party, and this realignment reduced cross-party voting.

The result, Broder said, is an almost unprecedented parity between the political parties that has hindered the government's ability to act.

This wheel-spinning and lack of action are common complaints among voters, he said. A healthy skepticism about politicians is good, he said, "but we've gone well beyond

"The further I go down in the system, the healthier things are."

DAVID BRODER
Washington Post columnist

skepticism and have developed a cynicism that is remarkable and fairly alarming."

"What we have is a kind of vote of no confidence, not just in the people in Washington, but in the whole sort of idea of representative government."

Part of the blame lies with the press' coverage of politics, Broder said.

"We concentrate on personalities — the more vivid, the better," he said. "Reporters are fight promoters at heart. Compromise and consensus do not make news."

Newspapers also are struggling to attract interest among young people, many of whom are tuned out of the political process, he said.

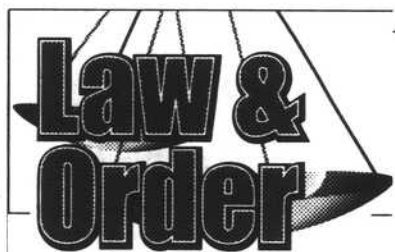
But Broder said he sees some positive trends in American politics. He said today's elected officials, many of whom think independently and genuinely try to make good public policy, are generally better than those who were in office when he began covering politics.

He also said he is encouraged by well-functioning local governments and civic participation down to the level of neighborhood associations.

"The further I go down in the system, the healthier things are," he said. "That's why I'm confident we can make it despite all these difficulties."

During last year's governor's race in Nebraska, Broder wrote that Republican nominee Mike Johanns, if elected, would essentially be no different from his predecessor, Democrat Ben Nelson. Johanns won that election, and on Thursday he introduced Broder.

"If journalists write the first draft of history, David Broder's columns need the fewest rewrites of any columnist," Johanns said.



Beer cases sold to Mum's

The 40-odd cases of beer left over after Lancaster County Sheriff's deputies confiscated about 70 cases from a Delta Tau Delta Fraternity party outside Lincoln finally found a home.

D&D Distributors took the beer off the sheriff department's hands and sold it to Mum's Liquor for \$500. The money will be donated to the Food Bank of Lincoln.

Union fire alarm pulled

A pulled fire alarm temporarily emptied the Nebraska Union of all but

firefighters and police Sunday evening.

An alarm on a pillar in the Union's food court was pulled, University Police Officer A.J. Clifton said.

No one was arrested.

Hospital employee arrested

Police arrested an employee at St. Elizabeth's Hospital on Thursday on suspicion of stealing 5 milliliters of Fentanyl, a painkiller.

Police cited Bret A. Bare, 29, for a felony narcotics violation.

The Fentanyl, which is also known as "China White," was taken from vials in a storage cabinet and replaced with water or a saline solution, Officer Katherine Finnell said. The vial's lids were then replaced.

Compiled by senior staff writer **Jake Bleed.**

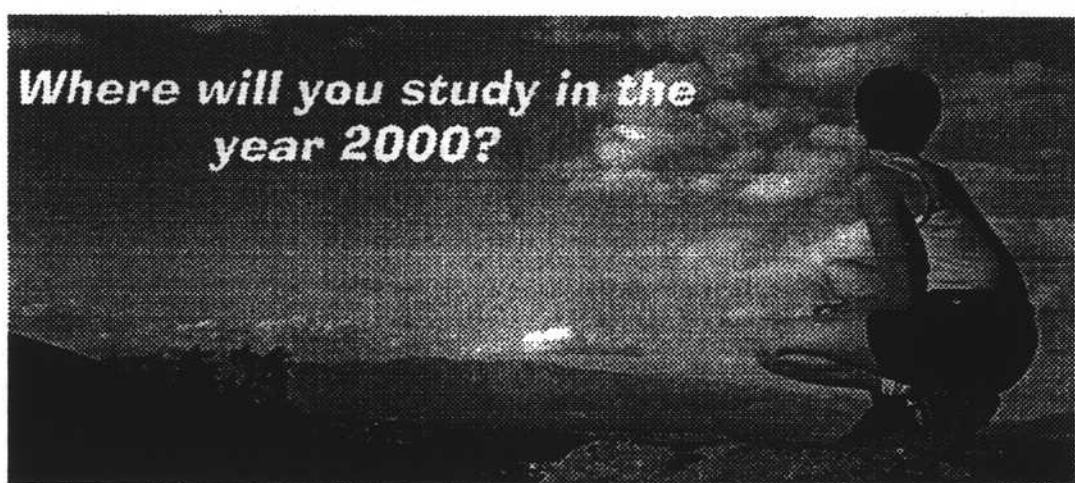
If you have any brains at all, you'll be aware of the danger of depression.

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