

84th & Havelock Avenue
Lancaster County Event Center

| Applicant | Location | Proposal |
|---|---|---|
| Ron Snover, President of the Lancaster County Agricultural Society | N. 84 th & Havelock (southeast corner) | Change approximately 14 acres of Public/Semi-Public and Green Space to Commercial use |
| <p>Recommendation: Denial</p> <p>The application for commercial development raises many issues in regards to the impact on the road network, floodplain, how this proposal relates to the overall Event Center development plans and to the plans of the community as a whole.</p> | | |

Status/Description

The Lancaster Event Center is on the southeast corner of 84th and Adams Street and currently hosts special events such as the Lancaster County Fair, horse expositions, sports, trade and home shows. The Lancaster County Agricultural Society (Ag Society) owns over 160 acres south of Havelock Ave. between 84th Street and east to Stevens Creek. A 14 acre portion of the overall site is proposed for commercial development. The Event Center envisions future restaurants, retail or motels on the proposed site. The 14 acre site includes about 6.5 acres that is internal driveways for the Event Center, which would be used for access to the commercial area as well. The application envisions 44,000 square feet of retail space, 8,000 sq. feet of drive-thru restaurants and a 75 room motel.

About half of the 14 acres proposed for commercial development is in the FEMA 100 year floodplain. The City is in the process of submitting information to FEMA to update the 100 year floodplain based on information developed as part of the newly adopted Stevens Creek Watershed Master Plan. Approximately five acres of the 14 acres proposed are in the new flood prone area.

In March 2002, the Ag Society submitted a request that this 14 acres be designated as commercial as part of the development of the 2025 Lincoln/ Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission reviewed this request and others and recommended they be held until after the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. The City Council and County Board adopted the 2025 Comprehensive Plan in May 2002. On October 16th, 2002 the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this proposal as Comprehensive Plan Amendment 02002.9 and recommended denial by a 6-3 vote. The Ag Society then withdrew the request.

This amendment is the same request submitted in March 2002 and recommended for denial by the Planning Commission in October 2002. This newest application did not include any specific information on floodplain other than an exhibit showing a previous floodplain fill permit. The application this year did include for the first time a traffic study and site plan for the overall Ag Society land for review.

The traffic study and site plan include a future new “main arena” with 6,000 permanent seats in a 113,000 square feet building. It also includes a future large third pavilion of 160,000 square feet, in addition

to the two existing pavilions and the existing 65,950 square feet exhibition hall. The traffic study is based on the peak generator of an event in the 6,000 seat arena.

Comprehensive Plan Implications

The review of the proposal examines the implications of the amendment in three areas: floodplain, traffic and community facilities.

Floodplain Implications

The proposal did not include enough information to show that there will be any floodplain compensation for the proposed commercial development in the floodplain. There may be opportunities on this site to provide compensatory storage for floodplain areas that are filled. It is recommended that a no-rise plan for the entire Lancaster County Event Center site be submitted which identifies areas for compensatory storage and to offset the impacts to the floodplain prior to considering the designation of commercial land uses within the floodplain.

Page F 78 of the Comprehensive Plan notes that:

“...there is an opportunity to reduce the risk of flood damages to life and property and to preserve the important functions of floodplains by designating areas for future urban development outside of floodplain and floodway areas.”

Public Works and Utilities Watershed Management notes:

“This proposal indicates a land use change “from Agricultural to Commercial” for the Lancaster County Event Center. However, the current land use designation is ‘Public/Semi-Public’ in the area outside the floodplain and ‘Green Space’ within the floodplain.... An important management strategy embodied in the Comp Plan is to designate areas for future development outside of the floodplain to avoid introducing new development to flood risks and to preserve the important functions of the floodplain. The Green Space designation is intended to identify areas to be used predominantly for active recreation.

The first floodplain permit issued for the Lancaster County Event Center in 1999 showed little or no grading in the northwest corner of the property adjacent to 84th and Havelock Streets and was thus generally consistent with the Land Use Plan in this area. In 2003, a floodplain permit to fill the area west of the north-south driveway was applied for and approved prior to an overall development plan for the site. As we have recommended with previous land use proposals for the event center, the staff continues to recommend the need to evaluate these proposals in the context of a master plan for the Event Center that demonstrates No Net Rise/Compensatory Storage strategies and how other floodplain areas will be preserved if a small portion is developed, in order to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. This information has not been submitted and the staff continues to recommend (no rise), contrary to the application which suggests that a ‘no rise’ evaluation is no longer necessary.“

On March, 28th & 29th, 2005 the City Council and County Board adopted Comprehensive Plan Amendment #05001 which refined the boundary of the Green Space designation to match the updated floodplain information developed through the Stevens Creek Watershed Master Plan.

Previously, the Lower Platte South NRD also noted concerns about filling in the floodplain. The NRD is acquiring floodplain easements upstream of the Murdock Trail (immediately south of the Event Center). The NRD stated that “we are concerned that filling of the flood fringe in this area reduces the total flood storage unless fill is utilized from within the flood plain.”

Traffic Implications

There is already a significant amount of commercial space approved or designated in the Comprehensive Plan along the N. 84th Street corridor. From south of O Street (State Farm offices) to Leighton Avenue there is 1.6 million square feet of office and retail space approved – at least half of which is not yet built. In addition, there is the potential for another 500,000 to 800,000 square feet of commercial space on the east side of 84th Street and Adams Street under consideration.

Additional commercial development along North 84th Street could potentially add to traffic delays on this roadway, particularly at the intersection of 84th and Havelock. Particularly during large events, over 95% of the traffic is assumed to leave either west on Havelock or south on 84th Street.

North 84th Street, from O Street to Cornhusker Highway, is currently 4 lanes, but is shown in the Plan for 6 lane development due to projected traffic volumes in the future. Since there is probably not enough customers at periodic events to support the proposed 52,000 sq. ft. of commercial space plus a motel, most of the proposed commercial development would be on the arterial streets, not internal to the site.

Public Works and Utilities Department notes:

“The addition of commercial traffic in this area could also cause the Event Center driveway to meet traffic signal warrants where it meets 84th St. This is a situation that needs to be avoided, since the Event Center's driveway is not a desired location for a signal along 84th St.

The traffic study also identified locations that do not operate at desirable levels of service today that will be exacerbated by the addition of commercial development at the Event Center. Since the report indicates that it would be the City's responsibility to improve these locations, and the City does not have sufficient funding to make these improvements, any traffic increases in this area will further degrade intersection operations and safety at these locations.” (Randy Hoskins, City Traffic Engineer, Public Works and Utilities Department, comments of April 22, 2005)

Community Facilities Implications

The Event Center proposal includes a traffic study and site plan for a described future 6,000 seat arena. The traffic study doesn't list what type of events could be in the arena. The arena could be used for ceremonies, uses accessory to the Event Center's horse shows and other agricultural oriented events.

However, the arena could also be used for hosting concerts, sporting events, trade shows and other entertainment events not related to agriculture. Many of these could be events that are currently hosted in the Downtown or could be in the future.

One of the key guiding principles for the “Comprehensive Plan Vision” is that the Downtown is the heart of the community. This means that the Downtown should serve as the central focus for the community and special activities, such as entertainment, festivals, parades, celebrations, or conventions. The role of the Downtown is stated in the Plan on page F 16:

“Downtown Lincoln - the Heart of our Community

Downtown Lincoln continues to serve its role as the central location for commerce, government, entertainment and the arts. Views to the State Capitol have been preserved, as they have in the past, as part of our community form.”

The Comprehensive Plan specifically encourages entertainment facilities, such as museums, live performance theaters, movie theaters, stadiums and arenas to be located in the Downtown. In the Business and Commerce section of the Plan on page F 48 it states the principles for the Downtown:

“Principles for Downtown

The City should preserve and enhance Downtown’s role as:

- *the major office and service employment center of the City*
- *the focus of all levels of government*
- *the City’s principal cultural and entertainment center*
- *the hotel and convention center for the City*
- *the City’s financial center*
- *a hub of higher education*
- *specialty retail geared toward employees, area residents, convention visitors and University population*

Lincoln’s successful Theater Policy must be maintained and reinforced. New entertainment attractions should be encouraged to located in the Downtown.”

The Chamber of Commerce recently funded a study of local event facility needs and concluded with a recommendation for a new larger arena in the Downtown area to replace Pershing Auditorium. The Downtown Master Plan has been underway over the past year. As part of that discussion, potential arena sites in the Downtown are under consideration. A draft planning document is anticipated to be submitted for formal public review some time during the summer of 2005.

The current facilities at the Event Center have cut into the market of events that traditionally had gone to Pershing Auditorium, resulting in a worsening fiscal impact on the City’s operating budget while taxpayers are also paying for the Event Center’s facilities. Don Herz, City Finance Director noted the City operating subsidy to Pershing grew from approximately \$275,000 in 2000 to \$347,000 in 2002 to over \$593,000 by 2004. Herz states:

“The operating deficit was initially negatively impacted by September 11, 2001. This event resulted in a downturn in the arena business on a national level. Now that this industry has recovered on a national level, Pershing has been again negatively impacted locally by the opening of the Qwest Center in Omaha, the Mid-America Center in Council Bluffs and the Lancaster Events Center in Lincoln. It is my concern that the new proposed arena at the Events Center will further negatively impact the bottom line at Pershing because it will create another facility that will be pursuing some of the same events that Pershing currently books.”

The Event Center is also subsidized by the public. For the current fiscal year, over \$900,000 will go to the Ag Society and Event Center.

There is no question that the construction of the proposed arena at the Event Center will take more events away from Pershing and cast serious doubt on the feasibility of building a new arena in the Downtown. Event Center officials have indicated that the lease or sale of land for commercial development is a significant source of funding for their proposed building expansion. Unless and until a coordinated community wide plan for event facilities with the appropriate focus on Downtown is implemented, this source of funding should be denied.

Conclusion

It is possible that the Lancaster County Agricultural Society could agree to develop and floodplain plan to compensate for the fill proposed on the whole site and agree to address the fiscal costs of their proposal. However, at this time, neither of these actions have been taken by the Ag Society. In addition, the Ag Society could also postpone plans for their planned 6,000 seat arena and work with other governmental agencies and organizations on a community facilities plan that works best for all parties. However, at this time, that is also not the case.

Private commercial development within the Event Center plan has raised several specific issues:

- The application also proposes development in the floodplain, which is contrary to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. Even if the Event Center has already completed some of the floodplain fill, they could compensate for this fill by providing additional storage elsewhere on their 163 acre site. The proposal did not include enough information to show that there will be any floodplain compensation for the proposed commercial development in the floodplain.
- The addition of commercial traffic in this area could cause the Event Center driveway to meet traffic signal warrants where it meets 84th St. which should be avoided, since the driveway is not at a desirable location. In addition, the traffic study identified locations that do not operate at desirable levels of service today that will be exacerbated by the addition of commercial development at the Event Center. The City does not have sufficient funding to make these improvements, any traffic increases in this area will further degrade intersection operations and safety at these locations.
- The long term master plan for the Event Center includes additional buildings including a building with 6,000 permanent stadium seats. A large portion of the parking to serve arena events will be 1/4 to 1/2 mile and farther away. The land proposed for commercial use might

be better reserved for parking for the larger events, particularly given how close it is to the Event Center facilities.

- The proposed future uses, both public and private, need to be in conformance with the commercial and environmental policies of the Comprehensive Plan. In particular, they need to be compatible with policies in regards to the future of Downtown Lincoln. The community is still in the process of addressing the future needs for event facilities. Plans for this site should await the outcome of that decision by the community.

The Event Center has stated their interest in commercial development oriented to event visitors. However, the amount of retail floor area proposed is probably far more than could be supported by the periodic gatherings at the Event Center. It is unlikely that 44,000 square feet of retail space oriented to occasional horse shows or the annual County Fair could be supported. This site is on the edge of the city and is still distant from a large residential population. The proposed two story motel would need to have visitors beyond those attending the Event Center, even though it is several miles from the Interstate 80 traffic. Thus, the retail, motel and restaurant will probably primarily generate customers and traffic from the larger market and not function primarily to serve the Event Center. Further south on 84th Street there is over 2 million square feet of potential commercial space to provide for the commercial needs of this area of town.

Any commercial development should be part of an overall plan for the entire Event Center. There are still too many questions at this point about how the Event Center proposal for a 6,000 seat arena fits into the community's plans. The additional commercial development can not be considered without the arena plans being finalized.

There are numerous potential options that could more efficiently use public resources while better serving the public than multiple facilities. Options that have been considered include the Event Center operations rejoining the State Fair Park location. Then perhaps the public subsidy to the Ag Society and Events Center could be more effectively used to improve the State Fair Park for both the State Fair, Lancaster County Fair and Ag Society activities, under a partnership agreement similar to the one that existed previously. Then the Events Center property at 84th and Havelock could be sold to the private sector and placed on the tax roll. The site provides several opportunities for economic development and potential light industrial development, outside of the floodplain.

The Lancaster County Agricultural Society as a governmental agency should work cooperatively with the City and other government agencies on the arena plans for the entire community. Cooperation among government agencies will be the most efficient and ultimately cost effective for the citizens of the community as a whole. Various agencies independently making plans for potentially overlapping facilities is wasteful and may ultimately lead to all of the facilities failing. One of the guiding principles of the Comprehensive Plan and the "One Community Vision" as stated on page F 15 is that:

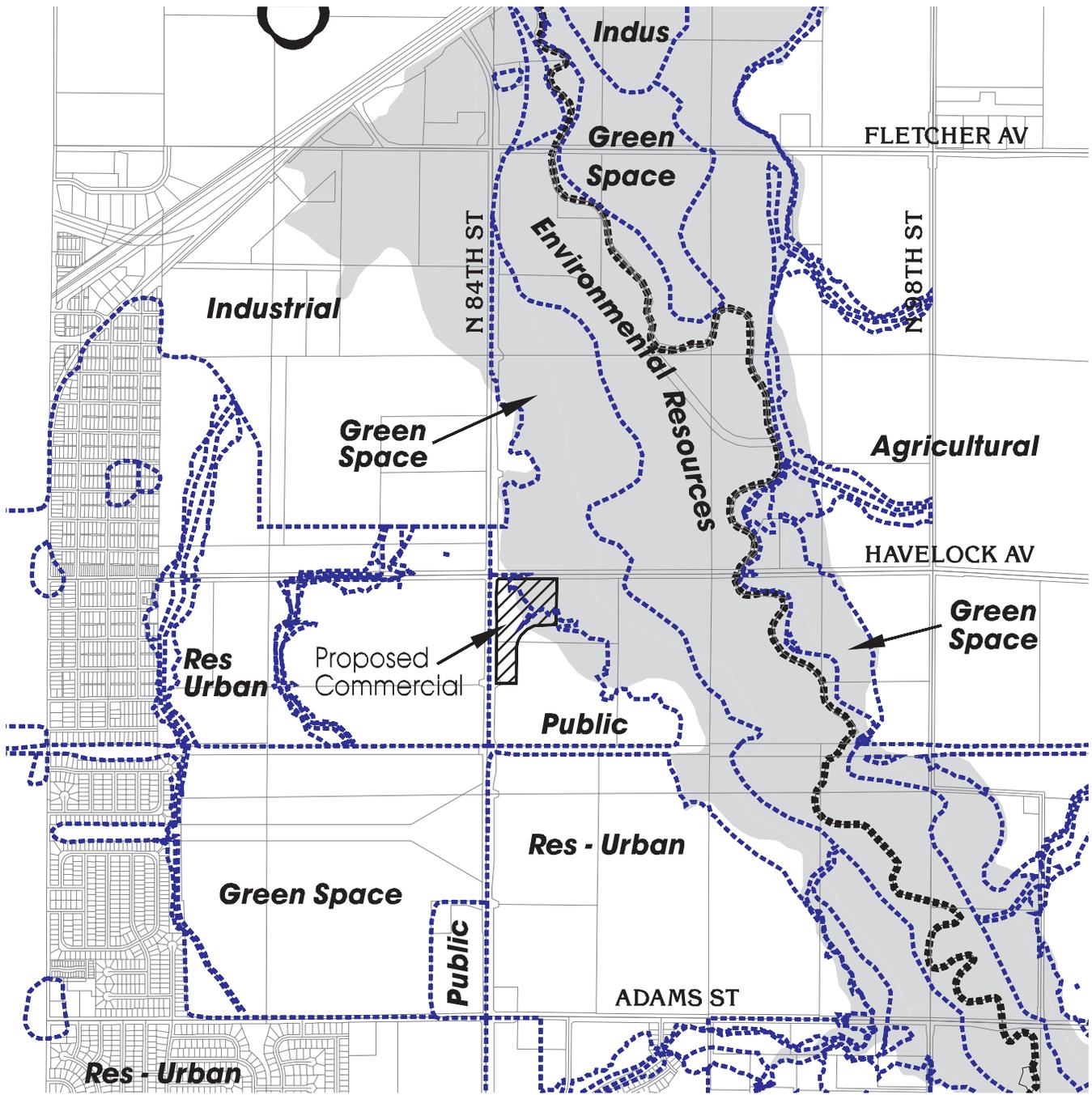
“All of the communities and people of Lancaster County work together to implement a common plan providing for mutual benefit.”

Prepared by

Marvin Krout, Director of Planning
Planning Department, (402) 441-7491: mkrou@lincoln.ne.gov

Prepared April 22, 2005

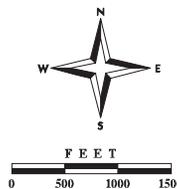
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N. 84th & Havelock Av.

Proposed Amendment # 05011

- Future Service Limit
- Land Use Boundary
- Res** Land Use Category
-  From Public/Semi-Public and Green Space to Commercial
-  100 Year Flood Plain





LANCASTER COUNTY FAIR

P.O. Box 29167, Lincoln, NE 68529 ~~~ (402) 441-6545 ~~~ Fax: (402) 441-6046 ~~~ lecenter@alltel.net

January 26, 2005

Mr. Marvin Krout
Planning Director
Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department
555 South 10th Street
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

RE: Comprehensive Plan Amendment- Change from Agricultural to Commercial on 14.4 acres proximate to the Lancaster Event Center- 84th and Havelock Avenue

Dear Mr. Krout:

On behalf of the Lancaster County Agricultural Society, I am submitting an application to change the designation of approximately 14.4 acres of ground located at the southeast corner of the intersection of North 84th Street and Havelock Avenue from Agricultural to Commercial on the Lincoln Lancaster County Land Use Plan and any associated maps and text. Transmitted herewith are copies of the completed Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application and Questionnaire. Also included in support of the application and for your information are the following documents:

- Master Plan for the Lancaster Event Center (LEC) campus;
- Development Plan for the 14.4-acre parcel where commercial land uses are proposed;
- Traffic Impact Analysis; and
- Flood Plain Permit #030035

The LEC Master Plan, Attachment "A", includes existing and proposed site improvements that are located outside of the requested Comp Plan amendment. The improvements are as follows: future main arena, exhibition hall/indoor arena, pavilion 1, pavilion 2, future pavilion 3, small animal exhibit building, outdoor riding arena, midway, recreation vehicle parking, storm water detention and patron parking.

The Commercial Plan, Attachment "B", shows the limits of the requested amendment and proposed land uses within the commercial site. The area of the requested amendment includes the area surrounding the proposed commercial development (7.9 acres) and internal driveways (6.5 acres) necessary to provide access to the commercial area from the public right-of-way. The proposed uses include:

Retail uses of 44,000 square feet;
Restaurant/drive-through- 8,000 square feet; and
Motel containing 75 rooms

The attached Traffic Impact Analysis, Attachment "C", includes information regarding trip and parking generation for 'buildout' of the Lancaster Event Center, not located within the proposed commercial designation of the site; and details of base assumptions, trip generation data, vehicle trip assignments and buildout volumes for intersections within the area of influence of the proposed commercial development. Off-site improvements are identified that mitigate expected increases in traffic resultant from the proposed commercial development.

A portion of the proposed amendment is located within the limits of the recently revised flood plain for Stevens Creek. The limits of the approved flood plain permit #FP030035 and proposed commercial site plan are shown in Exhibit "D". Review of this exhibit shows the approved area of fill is limited to the easterly portion of the amendment. We previously agreed to limit the amount of fill approved in FP#030035 to the area located west of the north/south driveway that accesses Havelock Avenue since commercial development of the area east of the driveway is not proposed. Previously, city staff has requested a 'no-rise' evaluation of the LEC site. In light of the recently approved revisions to the Stevens Creek flood plain and the limited fill for the commercial development, it appears that a 'no-rise' evaluation is no longer necessary.

The following is offered in response to the Part II of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application:

1. The proposed amendment is described in detail in the above text. This amendment is limited to amending the land use plan. Review of the Traffic Impact Analysis reveals that off-site improvements are warranted to mitigate impacts to the adjacent arterial streets. Those improvements are limited to construction of separate turning lanes at three intersections. Typically, minor intersection improvements do not require amendments to the transportation portion of the Comprehensive Plan.
2. The property is currently shown as agricultural in the Comprehensive Plan. The requested amendment would allow use of the northwesterly portion of the LEC campus by commercial land uses. The proposed land uses are identified in the text above. The change in land use was initiated for several reasons: including response to LEC patron requests; to allow development of a source of supplemental revenue that will offset operational costs of the LEC; and to allow continued use of the existing variable message sign located north of the 84th Street driveway.
3. This amendment is not expected to adversely affect the surrounding area with respect to environmental or social issues. The site within this application has been designed to minimize impact to the flood plain with elimination of a portion of the previously approved flood plain permit. Secondly, the surrounding area is currently undeveloped, thus eliminating other issues that normally affect existing neighborhoods. As previously noted, a Traffic Impact Analysis accompanies this application. The Analysis has identified intersection improvements that will require installation as part of the site development. It is anticipated that development of the LEC commercial site will provide an influx of revenue to the community through additional sales tax dollars and additional revenue from real estate taxes with removal of this property from its present exempt status.
4. This application will provide convenient and accessible retail and service for the traveling public that now use or will use 84th Street. (Future Commercial Needs and Plan, "Provide geographically convenient and accessible retail areas throughout the City and County so as to provide the widest possible variety of goods and services." (Page 54). The site is proposed not only to serve area residents, but will also provide products and services for LEC patrons. Usage of the commercial development by LEC patrons is expected to reduce trips by LEC patrons during special events, much like neighborhood shopping centers experience with their adjacent neighborhoods.
5. Community meetings have not occurred for this application. However, similar applications to amend the land use designation for this property have been made in prior years. Those applications resulted in comments from staff regarding the availability of parking for the LEC, traffic concerns and flood plain related issues. An attempt has been made to address those concerns with the information included with this submittal.

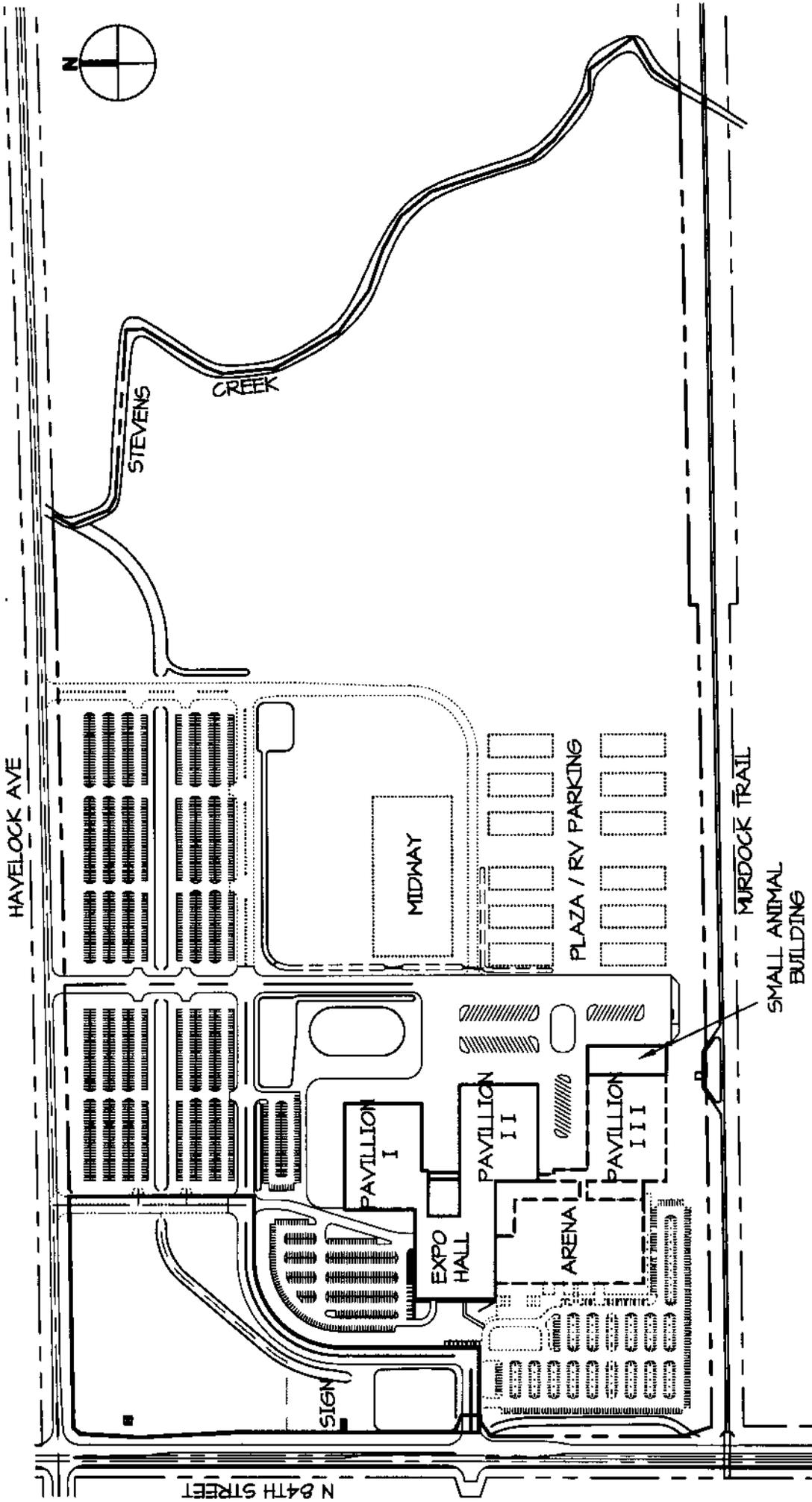
Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact me if additional information is needed for your staff's review.

Sincerely,



Ron Snover, President Lancaster County Ag Society

Copy Exhibit C' to P.W. 1/28/05

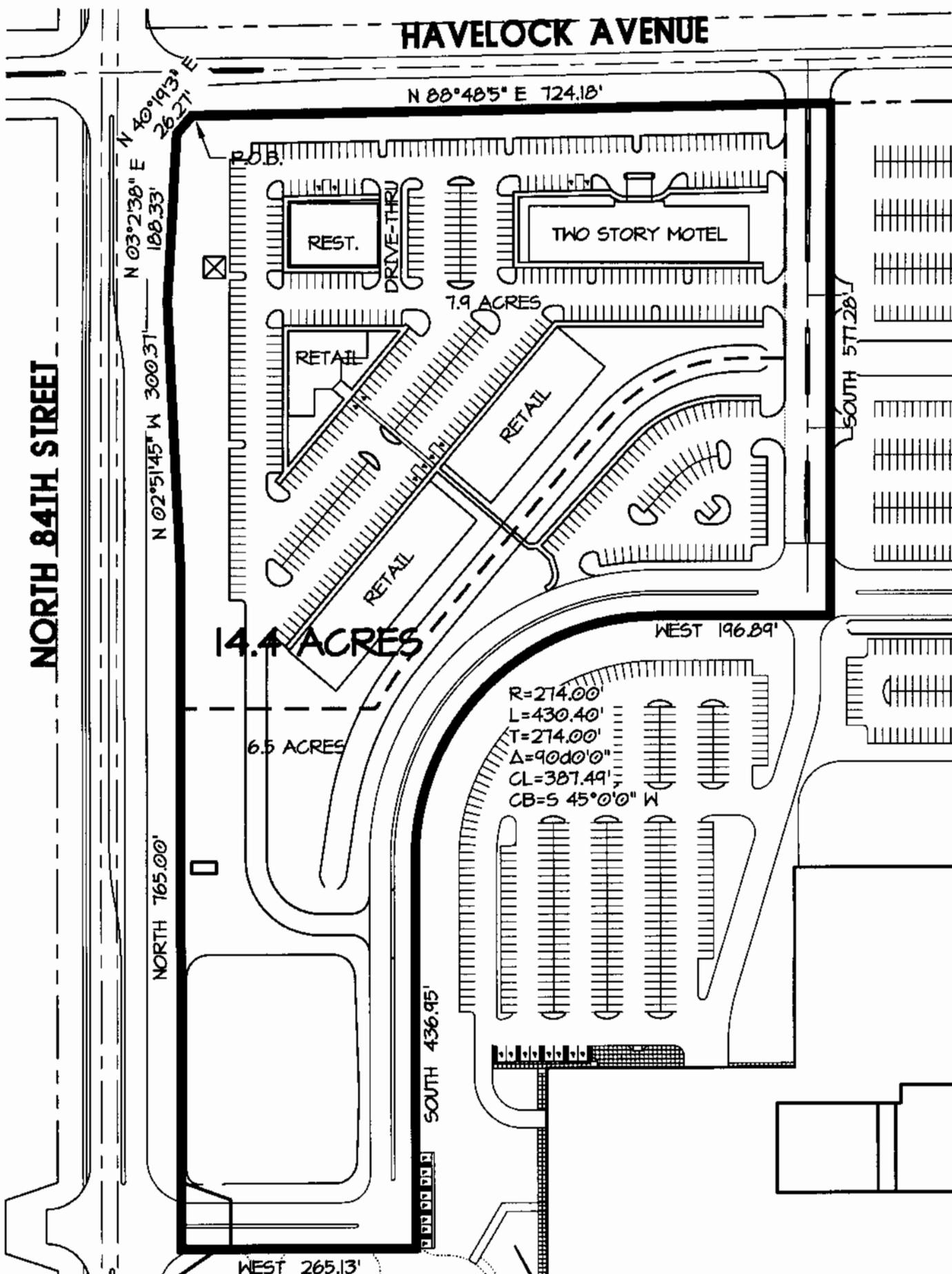


MASTER PLAN
ATTACHMENT A
25 JAN 2005

PERSHING SQUARE
1609 N. STREET
LINCOLN NEBRASKA 68508
voice: 402/474-3000
fax: 402/474-4045
desassoc@nebraska.com



DESIGN ASSOCIATES
OF LINCOLN, INC

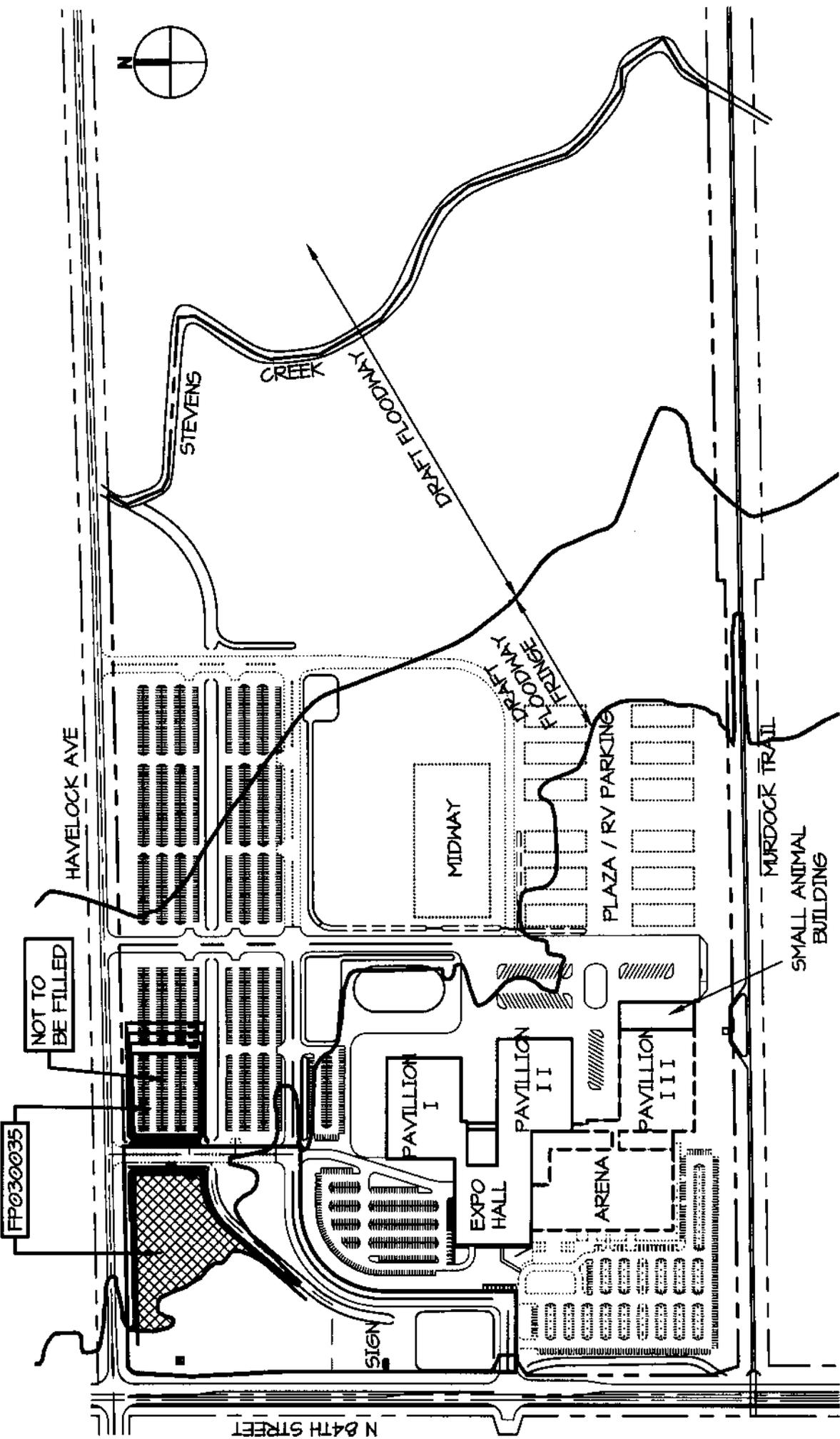


PERSHING SQUARE
 1809 "N" STREET
 LINCOLN NEBRASKA 68508
 voice: 402/474-3000
 fax: 402/474-4045
 deasasoc@inebraska.com

DESIGN ASSOCIATES OF LINCOLN, INC

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN
 ATTACHMENT B

25 JAN 2005



PERSHING SQUARE
 1609 N. STREET
 LINCOLN NEBRASKA 68506
 voice: 402/474-3000
 fax: 402/474-4045
 disassoc@inebraska.com



APPROVED
 FLOODPLAIN PERMIT
 ATTACHMENT D
 25 JAN 2005