

It's a good time to talk about Lincoln's future

We're up to something at the Lincoln Journal Star that I'd like to tell you about. We're helping to put on a Feb. 24 community conversation about the future of Lincoln. Nice, narrow topic, wouldn't you say?

It's not a bad time for people to have a chat about how things are going here in the Capital City. There's a lot to chew over— beltways, neighborhood schools, Antelope Valley, impact fees, Stevens Creek.

Lincoln has many important decisions to make about its future, yet there's discord and divisiveness. The core of the city versus the edge. Developers versus neighborhoods. Progress versus tradition. Who pays and how much? Consensus is in short supply.

Here's the question we're inviting participants to answer as they see fit:

How can Lincoln keep the qualities we treasure and develop a vital economy that provides good jobs for us and our children?

Working with the Journal Star to convene this conversation are Leadership Lincoln, a local nonprofit leadership development organization, and the University of Nebraska Public Policy Center. The Cooper Foundation and the Woods Charitable Fund are supporting the effort with grants.

This event will be different from a typical town hall meeting in several ways:

- It's not something you can nominate yourself for. It won't be just whoever shows up for an evening of discussion. Rather, 50 to 75 people will be selected at random by the Public Policy Center.



A question for Lincoln residents:

How can Lincoln keep the qualities we treasure and develop a vital economy that provides good jobs for us and our children?



KATHLEEN RUTLEDGE

Journal Star Editor

Participants will receive stipends of \$35 to help compensate them for their time, pay for child care, etc.

- Participants will take a telephone survey about their views on Lincoln issues. Leadership Lincoln fellows and Public Policy Center staff will conduct the surveys this month.

- Before the Feb. 24 meeting, participants will get short, readable briefing papers on economic development, schools, impact fees and downtown/Antelope Valley. A Public Policy Center graduate student wrote the backgrounders based on newspaper reports and other sources.

- On the evening of Feb. 24, the participants will meet first in small discussion groups. With the help of a facilitator, each group will discuss the main question and agree on a further question the group wishes a panel of experts to address.

The full group then will assemble to hear discuss the experts' answers to the questions. The moderator will be Rod Bates, general manager of Nebraska Educational Telecommunications and a former state director of economic development.

- Mayor Coleen Seng and other city leaders will be invited to listen in on the large-group discussion.

- At the end of the evening, the participants will take a written survey to see whether their views have changed or remained the same.

If you're not one of the chosen ones, you can still get in on some of this.

In the newspaper: Beginning Jan. 30, the Journal Star will publish weekly reports in the Sunday paper on economic development, schools, impact fees and downtown/Antelope Valley. We'll let you read the backgrounders that the discussion participants will receive, too.

Online: We'll make a place on our Web site, journalstar.com, where you can access the backgrounders and sound off on the future of Lincoln.

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