12-1987

An Historical Description and Analysis of Lincoln, Nebraska's Development Pattern: 1860-1985 Concentric Growth – A Fading Dream

Leonard Pavelka
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/opentheses

Part of the Urban, Community and Regional Planning Commons

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/opentheses/17

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Open-Access* Master's Theses from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.
AN HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF LINCOLN, NEBRASKA'S DEVELOPMENT PATTERN: 1860-1985
CONCENTRIC GROWTH - A FAADING DREAM

by

Leonard Pavelka

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of
Master of Community and Regional Planning

Major: Community and Regional Planning

Under the Supervision of Professor James McGraw

Lincoln, Nebraska

December 1987
AN HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF
LINCOLN NEBRASKA'S DEVELOPMENT PATTERN: 1860-1985
CONCENTRIC GROWTH - A FADEING DREAM

Leonard Pavelka M.C.R.P.
University of Nebraska, 1987

Advisor: James McGraw

Three successive comprehensive plans for the city of Lincoln, Nebraska have advocated concentric growth as a goal. This thesis analyses Lincoln's physical and economic development and finds that many elements that played a major role in the city's growth strongly influenced residential expansion in two directions - east and south. Further investigation revealed that eastward growth and the lack of implementation of Lincoln's comprehensive plans have weakened the central business district and strengthened the Gateway-East Park retail complex in east Lincoln. This thesis demonstrates that both historical tendency and the process of incremental policy making employed by the City Council make realization of the goal of concentric growth improbable.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many individuals to whom the author is indebted, and who, in a multitude of ways are responsible for this document.

First and foremost is my mother, Mrs. Margaret Pavelka who has displayed such spirit and tenacity in her life that I assumed I possessed a measure of them both.

I want to thank the faculty of the Planning Department at the University of Nebraska for relating to me their various fields of expertise and honing my skills as a planner, especially Professor James McGraw.

I want to thank the staff of the Planning Department of the City of Lincoln for using their valuable time for interviews, data and map searches and general information dredging.

I want to thank my friend, C. L. Huddle, without whose adept fingers and keen editorial sense this document would not shine so brightly, if at all.

Finally, I want to thank Professor Brito Mutunayagam for his assistance in word processing and data retrieval and Marco Andrade for his map-making.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER

Introduction .................................................. 1

1 Theories of Urban Growth ......................... 3
   Concentric Ring Development ..................... 4
   Sectoral Development ............................. 10
   Multiple Nuclei Development .................... 15
   Criticism ........................................... 19

2 Lincoln, Nebraska: 1856-1900 ................. 26
   Pioneer Village to State Capital 1856-1867 ...... 27
   Boom Town to Bottoming Out 1867-1900 ....... 36

3 Lincoln, Nebraska: 1900-1960 ................. 55
   Steady Recovery, Solid Growth 1900-1930 ... 56
   The Depression and Post-War Recovery 1930-1960 . 66

4 The Changing Pattern of Retail Location ....... 78
   Retail Growth: Comprehensive Plans vs Reality . 80
   Changes of Zone in the Triangle ............... 96

5 Summary and Conclusions ......................... 108

Appendix .................................................... 122

Map #1 Electric Street Car Lines .................. 123

Map #2 Patterns of Annexation 1860-1950 ....... 124
Map #3 Patterns of Annexation 1950-1985

Bibliography
## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Concentric Ring Development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Concentric Ring Development in Lincoln</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sectoral Development</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Sectoral Development in Lincoln</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Multiple Nuclei Development</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Multiple Nuclei Development in Lincoln</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Changes of Zone in the Triangle</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Traditionally, there are three models or theories of urban growth - concentric ring, sectoral and multiple-nuclei development. Because Lincoln, Nebraska's last three comprehensive plans have specified concentric growth as a goal to be achieved, this thesis examines Lincoln and the applicability of the concentric model to Lincoln in some detail. It discusses the historical validity of concentric growth as a model for the city. It considers the model's viability in the present and repercussions of its apparent misapplication in the relatively recent past.

Chapter One presents an analysis of each of the three theories of urban development. Following each presentation is a brief example of each model appearing in the urban fabric of Lincoln. Closing the chapter is a section containing criticism of the theories by various authors.

Chapter Two is the beginning of a two-chapter analysis of the history of Lincoln, tracing its growth and development from 1856 until 1900. While not claiming to be an exhaustive study, the chapter introduces and weaves together many of the early influences on Lincoln's physical and economic existence. Particular attention is paid
to those factors that may influence concentric development.

Chapter Three picks up where Chapter Two left off, following the physical and economic growth of Lincoln from 1900 until 1960. Many elements are carried forward from Chapter Two, and a few new influences are added to the mix. Like Chapter Two, attention is given factors that may influence concentric development.

Chapter Four focuses on a single facet of Lincoln's contemporary reality, retail growth and its effects on concentric growth, but looks at the issue from many angles. It discusses relevant sections from Lincoln's 1961, 1977 and 1985 comprehensive plans. Between presentations of the plans, data from a number of floor area surveys performed by the Planning Department are presented. The chapter closes with an examination of a series of change-of-zone requests for a particular section of Lincoln detailing recommendations and at times reasoning from the planning director and the Planning Commission, and the final vote for approval or denial by the City Council.

Chapter Five is comprised of a short summary covering the information presented in earlier chapters, and conclusions of the author.
Chapter One

Theories of Urban Growth

This chapter opens with mention of Richard M. Hurd, whose ideas were a precursor to the theories that are the chapter’s focus.

The chapter then contains an overview of each of the three primary theories of urban growth. All three models apply to some degree in the evolution of any large American city. Since cities in varying stages of development were the laboratories for the generation of these ideas, a chronological presentation of the theories should parallel the increasing complexity of the American urban landscape.

In turn, each discussion of a theory will be followed by application of that model to Lincoln, Nebraska.

Criticism of the three theories by various authors concludes the first chapter.

Richard M. Hurd

Ernest Burgess and Homer Hoyt, although given credit for the theories of concentric ring and sectoral development, respectively, were not the first individuals to note those patterns occurring with regularity on the American urban landscape.
Credit here is given to the contribution of Richard M. Hurd for discerning, in his 1903 publication, *Principles of City Land Values*, what he termed central and axial growth. The concepts were not essential to his text, and were more intuitive than scientific conclusions, but they were forerunners to the ideas of Burgess and Hoyt.

Of central growth, Hurd writes, "Residences are early driven to the circumference ... and the banking and office section remains at the main business centre."¹ He viewed central growth as growth in all directions from the core. Concerning axial growth, Hurd said: "The framework of a city is laid down by its water courses, turnpikes, and railroads. Turnpikes are the natural outlets for residences forced away from the business center."² In fact, Hurd perceived city growth as the two forces dynamically intertwined with growth forced outward along axes, then centrally motivated growth gradually filling the gaps, compelling more axial movement.

Concentric Ring Development

In 1925, Ernest W. Burgess developed the concentric ring theory of urban growth (see Figure 1). In Burgess' words, "The typical process of the expansion of the city can best be illustrated
CONCENTRIC ZONE THEORY

THREE GENERALIZATIONS OF THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF CITIES From Harris and Ullman, 1945

DISTRICT
1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
2 WHOLESALE LIGHT MANUFACTURING
3 LOW-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
4 MEDIUM-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
5 HIGH-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
6 HEAVY MANUFACTURING
7 OUTLYING BUSINESS DISTRICT
8 RESIDENTIAL SUBURB
9 INDUSTRIAL SUBURB
10 COMMUTERS ZONE

FIGURE 1
... by a series of concentric circles ... numbered to designate both the successive zones of urban extension and the types of areas differentiated in the process of expansion."

The Burgess model, based on an invasion-succession process observable in plant ecology was composed of five "zones."

Zone I, the core, was the central business district (CBD). The zone contained the main financial and office buildings of a city, and the primary retail shopping area. It was also the point of convergence for any city-wide transportation network.

Zone II was labeled a zone in transition, being invaded by business and light manufacturing from Zone I. This zone also contained heavy manufacturing, located near the main traffic arteries. Also included in this area were older residences from the earlier city, the residential function now being forced toward the perimeter by manufacturing. These were slums, the initial places of residence for succeeding waves of immigrants moving to America.

Zone III was a zone of working people's homes, factory workers who were employed in Zone II, but were skilled, generally second-generation Americans.
Zone IV was a residential area typified by Burgess as an area of high-class apartment houses or exclusive restricted areas of single-family homes.

Zone V was the commuter zone. Here, beyond the city limits, people lived in suburbs or satellite cities, but within an hour commute of the central city. Under the Burgess model, expansion took place in the form of an outward rippling of concentric zones of a succession of land uses. Zone I would invade Zone II, expanding its circumference, forcing an expansion of and invasion by Zone II, and so on.

To Burgess' credit, he acknowledged his model to be an idealization unlikely to find a perfect manifestation in reality.

An important fact to remember about Burgess' theory is that the keystone of concentric ring development was a city with its economic, cultural and political life centered on downtown.

Lincoln developed what might be termed a "concentric arc" pattern of development, abruptly halted in mid curve by the University of Nebraska campus on the north, and Salt Creek and a series of railroad tracks to the west (see Figure 2).
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

WHOLESALE LIGHT MANUFACTURING

FIGURE 2
Lincoln does have a discernible central business district. Lincoln's equivalent of Zone I lies between "R" and "L" streets and from 10th Street to 15th Street. It contains the city's primary financial and office structures, and a percentage of its retail trade. The area is also the hub of Lincoln's bus system.

The arc adjacent to Lincoln's CBD - roughly from 7th and "R" streets, south to "H" Street, then east to 22nd Street and north back to "R" Street - is a zone in transition but does not contain all of the land uses enumerated by Burgess in his description of Zone II. Some land uses within the zone are warehousing, light manufacturing, office and government buildings, multiple-family and older, single-family residences, and some service-related and retail functions.

At this point, Burgess predicts a succession of residential zones in which the inhabitants' socio-economic status increases with distance from the central core. Here, Burgess' model ceases to apply to Lincoln.
Sectoral Development

Homer Hoyt developed his theory of urban expansion by sector in 1939 (see Figure 3). Hoyt, in writing a study titled *The Structure and Growth of Residential Neighborhoods in American Cities*, said that "... it may be concluded that rent areas in American cities tend to conform to a pattern of sectors rather than concentric circles."

Hoyt's theory of urban growth is based on a perceived pattern of rent distributions rather than an ecological principle. It was developed to be used as a tool in determination of risk for retail sales location and residential mortgage lending.

Hoyt observed a number of conditions which, he stated, would in combination govern the direction and pattern of a city's growth.

1. High grade residential areas tend to grow along established lines of travel or toward an existing nucleus of buildings.

2. High rent zones tend toward high ground to avoid floods, and along non-industrialized water fronts.

3. High rent residential districts tend to grow toward open country.

4. Higher priced neighborhoods tend to grow toward the homes of community leaders.
SECTOR THEORY

THREE GENERALIZATIONS OF THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF CITIES

From Harris and Ullman, 1945

DISTRICT

1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
2 WHOLESALE LIGHT MANUFACTURING
3 LOW-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
4 MEDIUM-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
5 HIGH-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
6 HEAVY MANUFACTURING
7 OUTLYING BUSINESS DISTRICT
8 RESIDENTIAL SUBURB
9 INDUSTRIAL SUBURB
10 COMMUTERS ZONE

FIGURE 3
5. Movement trends of office buildings, banks and stores tend to pull higher priced residential neighborhoods in the same direction.

6. High grade residential areas tend to develop along the fastest existing transportation lines.

7. High grade residential growth continues in the same direction for a long time.

8. Deluxe apartments tend to develop near the central business district in old residential areas.

9. Real estate promoters may bend the direction of high-rent residential growth.

Hoyt saw the initial high-priced areas developing along avenues. Subsequent to that axial thrust, middle class areas would tend to occupy the sectors adjacent to the high rent areas. Low rent areas would occur on the periphery of the intermediate rent zones. The sectors were not solid, geometric figures, but contained transition zones with an intermingling of rent levels.

Hoyt, echoing Hurd, conceived urban expansion as a combination of axial and central forces, but led by outward growth of high rent districts along transportation lines.

Although the theory of sectoral development was created specifically for dealing with patterns of residential expansion, it has become generalized to indicate that growth along a
particular axis of transportation usually consists of similar types of land use.

Sectoral growth of residential areas is reflected in Lincoln's development southeast of the CBD (see Figure 4). A band at roughly 45 degrees, extending from the CBD to South Street, through the middle of the Near South Neighborhood, contains much of Lincoln's early high-rent residential housing. The governor, the lieutenant governor and other civic leaders moved out along this sector. Also included is the historic Mount Emerald District. Residential zones on either side of the initial sector, encompassing the remaining wedges of the Near South and Woods Park neighborhoods to the north, and the Near South and Everett neighborhoods to the south include upper middle and middle class residences. Flanking those areas, in South Salt Creek to the south, and in Malone and Hartley to the north, are lower-middle and lower class housing.

This illustrates Hoyt's concept that as higher rent housing develops, middle income housing would occur on its periphery, and lower income housing would locate adjacent to the middle class housing.
Multiple Nuclei Development

The multiple nuclei theory was developed in 1945 by Chauncy Harris and Edward Ullman (see Figure 5). According to Harris and Ullman, "In many cities, the land use pattern is not built around a single center but around several discrete nuclei." Harris and Ullman acknowledged that a city may have its genesis in a single nucleus, such as a retail district, a port, or a mine, but believed that as a city matured differentiated districts and separate nuclei were the end point of that creation. They note that some nuclei originate in the outer metropolitan area, and remain centers until the city grows around them, and others emerge as growth stimulates migration and specialization. Harris and Ullman listed four factors which, in combination, caused the distinctions to arise:

1. Certain activities require specialized facilities — a retail district needs accessibility, a manufacturing district needs large blocks of land, and a water or rail connection.

2. Certain similar activities profit from cohesion, so they group together — the clustering of stores in a retail district, or manufacturing facilities in an industrial park.
MULTIPLE NUCLEI

THREE GENERALIZATIONS OF THE INTERNAL STRUCTURE OF CITIES

DISTRICT
1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT
2 WHOLESALE LIGHT MANUFACTURING
3 LOW-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
4 MEDIUM-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
5 HIGH-CLASS RESIDENTIAL
6 HEAVY MANUFACTURING
7 OUTLYING BUSINESS DISTRICT
8 RESIDENTIAL SUBURB
9 INDUSTRIAL SUBURB
10 COMMUTERS' ZONE

FIGURE 8
3. Certain dissimilarities cause each other detriment—antagonism between factories and high class residential, or between the heavy pedestrian and street traffic of a retail district and the railroad and street loading needed in a warehouse district.

4. Some activities cannot afford the high rent costs associated with the most desirable sites. Storage facilities or low class cannot afford the best views.

They saw the number of nuclei varying from city to city, but believed that the larger the city, the more numerous and specialized would be the nuclei. They did identify a number of nuclei as being common to most large American cities: the central business district, the point of most convenient transportation access from all parts of the city, and adjacent to office, financial and government buildings; the wholesale and light manufacturing district, located within the city, concentrated along railroads and usually adjacent to the central business district; the heavy industrial district, situated near the present or former edge of the city; residential districts; minor nuclei such as parks and small industrial centers; and suburbs and satellites.

Multiple nuclei growth in Lincoln is manifest in at least three areas—its "suburbs" that were annexed in the 1920s, its industrial parks and its two major retail areas (see Figure 6).
University Place, Bethany, College View and Havelock are examples of nuclei that were already in place when the city grew to fill the space between them and annexed them.

Lincoln has eight industrial parks sited on its periphery, examples of facilities that emerge as city growth stimulates specialization.

Gateway, in east Lincoln, the city's second major retail area, is an example of a facility that resulted from growth-stimulated migration in east Lincoln.

Criticism

The three models of growth just discussed are ideal constructs, rarely occurring in reality to the degree of perfection shown in diagrams.

Given the absence of a perfect fit between model and reality, a number of criticisms have arisen concerning these concepts.

Hoyt, in the context of developing his sector model, generated arguments that dispute parts of the concentric ring theory. Hoyt treats two instances at length—the pattern of industrial land use, and allocation of housing.

Hoyt agreed that in early stages of a city's growth there was a tendency for heavy industry to locate near the retail business center because of
the advantages deriving from ease of transportation. The same transportation routes that served the commercial center served the factories. But in time, commercial uses were able to outbid industrial uses for possession of the land and factories were forced to move.

Hoyt cites three factors that facilitated this change. First, he saw the advent of beltline railroads and freight line operations as enabling the development of industrial districts on a city's periphery. Second, since land costs were cheaper and taxes lower on city edges, factories could be designed as single-level buildings, giving greater continuity of operation to industrial processes, and allowing more land to be allotted to yard and storage space. Finally with increasing use of the automobile, the distance from workers' homes to the factory was no longer of major importance.

He found the influence of topography, because railroad lines generally followed topography, and heavy industry followed railroads, constantly distorting a concentric pattern of industry.

Hoyt also disagreed with the idea of concentric zones of housing. By definition, a concept of sectors that radiate from the center to the edge of a city is going to conflict with a
concept of concentric rings rippling out from the core of a city to its periphery.

Specifically, Hoyt argued that since the ring of heavy industry was no longer in existence, the zone of workers' homes likewise was dispersed and unnecessary. He also found invalid the concept that housing values increased progressively as one approached the periphery of a city. His research in some cases had found elite housing close to a city core, and housing inhabited by lower classes on a city edge. 

Harris and Ullman implicitly found concentric and sectoral growth partially invalid because both build on the concept of a single urban core from which all subsequent land use is generated.

Walter Firey, in 1947, applied the concentric ring and sectoral hypotheses to historical and then current data about Boston in an attempt to determine their validity. According to Firey, "the status of the idealized descriptive themes must be determined on the basis of their empirical adequacy to generalizing the structure of urban settlement patterns." In both historical and current cases he found a sufficiently random distribution of working class and upper class throughout the city to seriously call into
question either theory.

Firey found the Burgess and Hoyt models predicated upon a deterministic premise, and a denial of the role that social values, ideals or purposes play in land use allocation decisions. He concluded that simplified geographic patterns obscure the significance of data, that variations in land use were more important than uniformity and that land use was too valuable to be embodied in two-dimensional cartographic generalizations.¹²

Lloyd Rodwin, in his 1950 paper "The Theory of Residential Growth and Structure," presents a number of defects in Hoyt's hypothesis.

He first points to the ambiguous formulation and use of the sector concept. Then he cites Hoyt's oversimplification of class structure into higher, lower and intermediate classes which translates into misinterpretations on his reference maps. Rodwin then mentions overdependence on the upper class as a fundamental attractive force in residential location.

Rodwin also focuses on the fact that Hoyt's model supposes a laissez-faire, free-market economy based on certain assumptions such as perfect knowledge and mobility, many buyers and sellers, and a homogeneous product. If the assumed conditions changed significantly, the conclusions
of the model could be misleading.

Lastly, he refers to the narrow scope of the problem that guided Hoyt's inquiry, which, as Rodwin saw it, was preservation of investments made by financial institutions. This constricted range omitted such factors as preserving and protecting property values and investments of the community as a whole, and inadequacies of the market process, that are of importance in generating informed public policy. 13

Finally, F. Stuart Chapin and Edward Kaiser, in their book *Urban Land Use Planning*, state that while the multiple nuclei concept identifies many of the realities of contemporary urban land use patterns, the theory is still untested by the type of extensive empirical investigation undertaken by Hoyt. They find the model deficient in its differentiation between factors explaining the structure and dynamics of change. Some nuclei mentioned in the model are the outcome of "natural" market forces, others the result of such technological advances as electricity and the automobile prevailing over the friction of space, and still others are the product of community values and legalistic controls, such as zoning. 14

It should be remembered that many of the
above critics, while noting inadequacies in the classical theories of urban growth, also saw elements of truth in the concepts. Basic to Hoyt’s theory was the idea of a central core of financial and retail trade with adjacent warehouses and light industry. Rodwin recognized that an adequate substitute for Hoyt’s generalizations had not been formulated, and was interested in broadening the scope of the analysis. Harris and Ullman believed most cities reflected aspects of all three land-use patterns, but to different degrees.

The next two chapters will examine the growth of Lincoln, Nebraska, and generate information later to be used to determine if the concentric ring model was ever an operative alternative for the city.
End Notes


2. Ibid., pp. 59-60.


4. Ibid., pp. 50-56.


6. Ibid., pp. 117-119.


10. Ibid., pp. 20-23.


12. Ibid., pp. 84-85.


Chapter Two

Lincoln, Nebraska: 1856-1900

The next two chapters will examine some of the factors that influenced the growth of Lincoln, Nebraska, from its origins as a frontier village to the present. They will include a general chronological presentation of relevant historical events, but also will discuss how Lincoln's physical and economic development was directed by both elements of nature and consequences of human decisions.

Many disparate elements contribute to the success or failure of a settlement. Natural factors such as water, soil composition, topography and the presence of mineral wealth or energy resources are instrumental in initial settlement location decisions.

Often a single feature is, by turn, an asset or a liability. For example, the existence of mineral wealth causes a site to grow, but mining methods could foul the water supply, or the by-products of a refining process generate air pollution. Also operative in this calculus of growth are consequences of human decisions differing in magnitude from a vote cast on a re-
zoning appeal to a final decision for the location of a manufacturing facility. It should be remembered that decisions have unintended as well as predicted consequences.

All three components—the march of history, various natural factors and conscious human decisions—have had a notable effect on Lincoln's development. The results of their interplay, at times in unison, at times in discord, are to a large degree responsible for Lincoln as it is today.

Pioneer Village to State Capital 1856-1867

The initial period in Lincoln's history to assume definition spans the years from 1856 to 1867. These years cover the territory's initial survey by the federal government to settlement of the village to statehood for Nebraska and the subsequent selection of Lancaster, soon to be Lincoln, as the state capital.

An area containing a vast salt basin, the last vestiges of which are the name of Salt Creek and the highly saline water of Capitol Beach Lake, first was surveyed by the United States government in 1856. Upon revelation of the salt field's existence, a number of salt companies moved to the area to mine the resource, among them the Crescent
Salt Company and their agent for the operation, a steamer captain named William T. Donovan. Also arriving in 1856 were the area's first permanent settlers, John D. Prey and his son John W. Prey, down from Wisconsin to establish farming claims for John W. and his four brothers.2

Between 1856 and 1859 population increase was slight, as a few salt boilers moved in to harvest the salt, and a few farmers moved in to harvest the land.

In the fall of 1859, a group of men met on the banks of Salt Creek to decide on a location and name for the county seat of Lancaster County. Influenced by the presence of salt, they picked a site east of the salt flats. Influenced by Captain W.T. Donovan, they named the site after his home town of Lancaster, Pennsylvania.3 It has been suggested that had it not been for the salt, the site of the county seat would be elsewhere. It also has been suggested that had Lancaster not been a county seat, it would not have been selected as capital of Nebraska.4

The selection of Lancaster as the county seat, though reflecting the wishes of the people, went unratified by the territorial legislature. Official recognition of the village of Lancaster
as the seat of government of Lancaster County would be extended in 1864. Thus, in 1864 what would become a major generator of Lincoln's economic growth and a force in her physical development — government — was in place.

July of 1863 witnessed the arrival of an individual whose interest, denominational education, was to be another driving force in Lincoln's economic and physical development.

A Methodist minister, the Rev. J.M. Young, and a party of five men came to the salt basin looking for a site on which to found a colony, and eventually build a girl's seminary. Elder Young selected the present site of Lincoln, renamed it Lancaster and predicted that it would become the state capital. In August 1864, Jacob Dawson, one of Young's fellow travelers, laid out the original plat of Lancaster on 80 acres owned by Rev. Young. The town was comprised of 64 blocks of eight lots each, with 20-foot-wide east-west alleys and 66-foot-wide streets.

Young's seminary was in operation by 1866.

During the years from 1856 to 1867 Lancaster grew from an isolated salt-mining site to a small village. The slow growth of the village paralleled population increase in the county as a whole. An examination of voting records for Lancaster County
gives an indication of the rate of growth. Twenty-three votes were cast in the county's 1860 general election; 125 votes in an 1865 general election; and, in 1867, the year of statehood and Lancaster's nomination and acceptance as state capital, 235 votes were cast in county elections.

Although small, with an 1867 population of about 30, the village of Lancaster at this early date had within its boundaries the seeds of a second major agent of its future economic stability and physical growth - religious education.

On March 1, 1867, Nebraska was granted statehood and by mid-June a bill was passed authorizing removal of the capital from Omaha and selection of a new site as a state capital.

The territorial capital and Legislature had been in Omaha since 1854. At that time, Nebraska had a two-house Legislature consisting of a Council and a House of Representatives. Based on a false 1854 census, and abetted by the territorial governor, those counties north of the Platte River were given more councilmen and representatives, though the population was greater in the counties south of the Platte. This misrepresentation caused a north-south schism and was a constant source of
rancor between legislators from the north and legislators from the south.

A permanent location for a capital city and reapportionment were frequent topics of discussion in the early territorial legislature, but the question was put on hold during the Civil War. Status quo was maintained until statehood.

After statehood, heated debate, sometimes at gunpoint, was waged over both the question of reapportionment and capital selection. In early June 1867, the subject again was under discussion. In a final finesse aimed at retention of the capital in Omaha, or securing an alternate site north of the Platte, northern senators, perceiving an intense pro-rebel sectional bias in some representatives from the south, amended the bill to state that the name of the capital city would be Lincoln, hoping to gain enough southern votes to veto the relocation bill. The South Platters sensed the motivation behind the play, and voted to pass the bill anyway."

The bill enacted on June 14, 1867, stated that the new capital would be named Lincoln, it would contain no less than 640 acres lying in one body, and it would be selected from state lands lying within the county of Seward, the southern half of Butler and Saunders counties, and that
portion of Lancaster County north of the southern line of township nine. The legislation also called for the state university and agricultural college, and the state penitentiary, to be located in the capital city.

The bill called for a Capitol Commission of three men to be designated to select a site. The commission surveyed Ashland, Wahoo, Lancaster, Yankee Hill and Milford before deciding on July 29 on Lancaster as the capital city.

Factors that influenced the Capitol Commission toward selection of Lancaster over the other locations are significant because of the degree to which they successfully predict the reality that would evolve. The primary reason for choosing Lancaster was projected ease of access. At the time the search for a site was being implemented, Nebraska contained no railroads south of the Platte River. The commissioners looked at Lancaster and noted that it was a converging point for seven stream courses. They believed the water ways' gentle slopes would provide optimal grades for laying railroad tracks, that the railroad would encourage population and business growth and facilitate access to the area by citizens of the state.
The second major reason for choosing Lancaster was centrality of location. In 1867 it was thought that the southeastern one-third of Nebraska would always contain the highest population concentration in the state, and Lancaster was in the center of a circle 110 miles in diameter that included Columbus, Nebraska City, Omaha and Fremont. Since the building of the capitol was to be financed through lot sales at the site, the new capital had to be located in close enough proximity to the settled portions of the state that potential investors would feel secure in making investments there.12

The selection committee's projections of Lincoln's eventual status as a railroad hub, and southeast Nebraska as the most densely populated section of the state each would turn out equally well-grounded.

When chosen as the capital city, Lancaster contained only six or seven buildings, including shacks, located in the vicinity of Seventh and Ninth streets and "O" and "Q" streets.13 Much remained to be done before Lincoln would be a capital in anything but name only.

On August 14, 1867, title to more than 700 acres in the area east of the salt flats was conveyed formally to the state of Nebraska and the
city of Lincoln was founded. Included in the 700 acres was the village of Lancaster, absorbed in its entirety by the new town of Lincoln.

It was necessary first to survey the new town, to establish streets and reserve land for certain functions. The streets running north and south were numbered from 1st to 17th, streets running east and west were lettered, starting with "A" on the south end and proceeding to "U" on the north, omitting the letter "I." The streets were 100 feet wide, with the exception of "D", "J", "O", "S", 7th, 11th, and 15th, which were 120 feet wide and were called avenues. The blocks were 300 feet square and laid out to contain 24 business or 12 residential lots. Four blocks, "H" to "K" and 14th to 16th streets were reserved for the capitol. A second four-block area, from "R" to "T" and 10th to 12th streets, was reserved for the university, and a third area from "D" to "F" and 6th to 8th streets was set aside for a park. One block each was reserved for a courthouse, a state historical society and a market square. Lastly, ten churches applied for and received three lots each. With these actions, decisions were made establishing land use relationships that persist in Lincoln today. The University of
Nebraska, to the northeast of the nascent center of Lincoln, would in the future come to be a barrier, halting downtown expansion toward the north, but would also supply a ready and eager market, in the form of students, for the shops and services of downtown. The site of the capitol building would be one of a set of factors to deflect Lincoln's residential growth to the southeast.

After surveying the townsite and determining legal descriptions for the land, a lot sale was necessary to finance the erection of a capitol building. The lot sale occurred in mid-September 1867. Sales on the first day were very slow. Interest and momentum picked up sufficiently between the second and fifth days to generate about $34,000 in receipts. Subsequent sales in Omaha and Nebraska City added $19,000 to the building fund. The total, $53,000, was enough to justify further efforts on Lincoln's behalf by her supporters. In September, notice was issued to architects of a request for specifications for a statehouse; in October, the plan of John Morris of Chicago was accepted; ground was broken in November; and by January 1868, a contractor was on site building the Statehouse.¹⁰

Nebraska's first capitol was completed and
occupied by legislators in session in January 1869. One of their first actions was ratification of the selection, by the Capitol Commissioners, of Lincoln as the state capital.

With the advent of statehood, and Lincoln's becoming a state capital, a second major period in the story of her growth and development emerges.

Boom Town to Bottoming Out 1867-1900

This period, from 1867 to 1900, marks many changes in Lincoln's physical and economic composition as the metamorphosis from a frontier village to a bustling governmental and education center takes place. Some of the changes were short-lived. Others endured and remain intact today.

For a governmental center to evolve, there needs to occur an accretion of governmental functions. This is exactly the task the initial session of the Legislature to meet in Lincoln set themselves to perform.

According to the "Capitol Act," the new capital would serve as the location of the state university and agricultural college. An appropriate site was reserved during the planning of Lincoln, and in February 1869, the sale of
additional state-owned lots in Lincoln to finance construction of the university was authorized. Plans for the first building, University Hall, were accepted in June 1869. The university formally opened for classes, with a faculty of five and a student body of about 80, in September 1871.\(^{16}\)

The agricultural college alluded to in the "Capitol Act" would become a reality in June 1872. In September 1874, land for the modern campus was purchased, but the college itself would not move there and become a separate entity until 1909.\(^{17}\)

The Legislature subsequently authorized the erecting of a state hospital for the insane and a state penitentiary, both on sites southwest of Lincoln. The contract for building the mental hospital was issued in September 1869 and the institution opened in December 1870.\(^{18}\) Construction of the penitentiary was authorized in March 1870. The completed facility was accepted by the state and opened in the fall of 1876.\(^{19}\)

Possession of another state institution, the state fair, would shift between Lincoln and Omaha from 1872 to 1899, when the Legislature gave it a permanent home in Lincoln.\(^{20}\)

With the aid of the Legislature, Lincoln was developing a high concentration of government
functions. All would be factors in Lincoln’s growth. The locations of the penitentiary and mental hospital were negative influences on residential growth toward the southwest. Two of the most underestimated would be the agricultural college and the state fair. These two institutions, essentially agricultural in nature in a predominantly agricultural state, would cement the name of Lincoln in the minds of rural Nebraskans. When the brightest and most ambitious rural youths sought a non-rural environment for growth, their thoughts were often of Lincoln rather than Omaha, because of their previous exposure to the city.

Another series of events occurring in this era that had a telling effect on Lincoln’s growth rate was the arrival of railroads in the Capital City. As previously noted, no railroad existed in Nebraska south of the Platte River when Lincoln was selected capital. Additionally, the city’s potential to become a rail center was one of the main reasons for Lincoln’s selection. The 20 years from 1870 to 1890 would make prophets of the Capitol Commission.

Free land, financial assistance and cash bonuses were among the incentives offered by
federal, state and local governments in an effort to influence the direction of railroad growth in Nebraska. A number of railroads appeared anxious to build toward Lincoln, but it was the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad, out of Plattsmouth, that arrived first.

The Burlington and Missouri reached Lincoln on July 26, 1870. Close on the heels of the Burlington and Missouri, the Midland Pacific arrived in June 1871 from Nebraska City, and the Atchison and Nebraska, out of Atchison, Kansas, arrived in September 1872. By 1872, the B&M line had extended west to Kearney, where it hooked into the Union Pacific system, and the Midland Pacific had pushed west to Seward. Eventually, the B&M would extend to Hastings, and the Midland Pacific would reach Grand Island. By 1893, these three, and other, smaller lines would be consolidated under the umbrella of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad.

The B&M placed its first depot at 5th and "R" streets and moved to its present location at 7th and "P" in 1880. The latecomers followed suit, Midland Pacific setting up on 8th between "M" and "N" and the Atchison and Nebraska at 7th and "Q".

Thus, by the mid-1870s, Lincoln was at the
center of a rail network expanding throughout southeast and south central Nebraska. In addition, railroad depot and track right-of-way locations were selected, and those choices helped establish a barrier to westward growth that would remain in effect for decades.

With time, Lincoln became part of the nationwide rail network linking together the east and west coasts. The Union Pacific Railroad arrived in Lincoln in 1877, both the Chicago and Northwestern and the Missouri Pacific in 1886, and the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific line in 1892. All, save the Rock Island line, situated their tracks and depots on the west edge of Lincoln.

These multiple connections would directly influence Lincoln as it evolved not only into a rail center, but a warehouse and distribution center for southern Nebraska. The Chicago and Northwestern line provided a direct connection with lumber manufacturing districts in Wisconsin, mining districts in the Black Hills and coalfields in central Wyoming. The Missouri Pacific gave Lincoln access to the states of Kansas, Missouri, Arkansas, Texas and Louisiana and brought into Lincoln coal and wood from Missouri and Arkansas.
The Union Pacific provided a direct route to much of the western United States: Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Nevada, California and Oregon. The B&M railroad, later to become the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy, and later still Burlington Northern, developed a special relationship with Lincoln. Lincoln was a hub of the railroad’s western operations. The route’s eastern main line ran directly from Chicago and Peoria to Lincoln. Its 1893 payroll in Lincoln listed nearly 1,000 employees. Freight and passenger trains were made up in a trainyard on the west side of Lincoln that held between 40 to 50 miles of track within its confines, and sent out on lines radiating in six different directions to the west. Burlington’s decision, in the late 1880’s, to locate the repair and manufacturing facilities for its western division in a small village northeast of Lincoln would give rise to Havelock, and later become a chief source of Lincoln’s industrial economy.

Lincoln’s status as the focal point for railroad freight and passenger traffic in southern Nebraska was locked in by 1890. Corollary to that status was primacy as a warehouse and distribution center for the same region. This situation provided an impetus for much of Lincoln’s early
growth. The primacy would dissipate somewhat with the advent of the automobile, truck freight lines and efficient rail car refrigeration. What would remain is the web of railroad tracks on the west edge of Lincoln, and whatever physical and psychological barriers it managed to create.

The reason the village of Lancaster was founded by Elder Young was to serve as a site for a seminary for young girls. When the original plat for the city of Lincoln was drawn in 1867, ten different denominations asked for and received reservations of three lots each for churches. This strong religious element in Lincoln's composition was not lost on religious leaders both inside and outside the state, and would have a prominent influence on Lincoln's growth.

Between 1887 and 1891, leaders of three religious faiths selected Lincoln as a site for their denomination's college level educational facility. In 1886, sensing the need for statewide consolidation of their existing institutions of higher learning within Nebraska, the Methodist Episcopal Church formed a commission to select a site. Lincoln was chosen. Nebraska Wesleyan University was founded in 1887 and formally opened in 1888. The Christian Church of Nebraska in
1888 saw the need for a Christian university to serve as a focal point for their faith. Cotner University, opened in a private home in Lincoln in 1889, had a campus and building by 1890. Seventh Day Adventists decided to open a denominational college to serve the region from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains in 1889. A site selection committee was formed, received numerous invitations to visit from cities in Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa and Missouri, and finally chose Lincoln in July 1890. Ground was broken in that year, and in 1891 Union College opened.

The similarity in these three cases is not so much the religious affiliation of the schools, but the fact that a suburb of Lincoln grew up around each one. University Place, platted when Wesleyan was founded, was incorporated in 1889. Cotner University, though the school itself later fell victim to the Depression, developed a supporting community called Bethany, which was incorporated in 1890. College View, the town that developed near Union College, was incorporated in 1892.

Not all of Lincoln's suburbs were based on religious education. Havelock, the community that resulted from B&M's 1888 decision to locate an engine repair and manufacturing facility in the Lincoln area, was incorporated in 1893.
The previous four towns all became successful communities with small business districts supported by the surrounding populace. Not all of the communities that were attempted in the immediate vicinity of Lincoln were as fortunate.

Normal University, founded in 1891, was the initial source of growth for the suburb of Normal. The college burned down in 1898, and the community failed to realize the growth of the other educationally based towns.33

Belmont, founded in 1868 in an area just north of the business district, was the only other attempt at an industrial suburb of Lincoln. A woolen mill in the 1870s and a carriage top factory in the 1880s both failed to make it.34

West Lincoln, founded in 1885, completes the list of small communities founded in the near environs of Lincoln during this period.

Belmont would be annexed in 1887, and West Lincoln not until the 1960s, but the annexation in the 1920s of Havelock, Bethany and University Place to the northeast, Normal to the east and College View to the southeast would set the approximate limits for Lincoln's physical growth from the 1900s to the post-World War II era.

In addition to the previous categories of
events - an increase in the number of locally situated state government functions, the establishment of Lincoln as a hub of a regional rail network and the growth around Lincoln’s perimeter of small communities later to become suburbs - numerous other occurrences during this period influenced or reflected Lincoln’s development.

The most concrete reflection is population growth. In 1868, a year after its selection as Capital City, Lincoln’s population increased from 30 to 500. By 1870, Lincoln claimed 2,400 residents. Its 1875 population reached 7,300 and was 13,000 by 1880. The city experienced the shocking reality of a boom and bust economy in the decades between 1880 and 1900, as revealed by these population figures: 13,000 in 1880; 55,154 in 1890; and 40,169 in 1900. The city would not again attain its 1890 population peak until 1920.

Other changes occurred, primarily as a function of population increase. Lincoln was incorporated in 1869, and became a second-class city in 1871. Lincoln’s first mayoral election, held in 1871, installed a mayor elected at-large and six councilmen, two each from three wards. Lincoln became a first-class city in 1887.
In 1868, the settled portion of Lincoln was bounded by 8th and 12th streets, and "R" and "N" streets. By the 1880s, as Lincoln grew and began assuming the diversity of function manifest in an urban population center, this area would fail to encompass Lincoln’s warehouse and retail districts.

The wholesale and supply industry in Lincoln established itself on the floodplains of the Salt Creek watershed adjacent to the railyards on the west edge of the city. Initiated in 1870 by a wholesale grocery business, development had been such that in 1887 Lincoln contained no less than 68 warehouses.

As wholesaling expanded, Lincoln’s retail and commercial district was forced to move. By the mid-1880s, these businesses, then located between "N" and "P" streets and 9th and 11th streets, began an eastward shift to 12th and 13th streets.

The university continued its growth. In 1879, 10 years after its founding, enrollment was listed at 259. In 1889, 384 students were registered at the school. During the decade of the 1890s, the university was transformed from a small frontier college into a major learning institution. This
period also shows a notable increase in the number of rural youths entering the university. Enrollment in previous decades had been mostly urban. The University of Nebraska Law College was founded in 1891. In 1896, the university established the first graduate school between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. The 1899-1900 school year found 1,922 students entered on the rolls of the university.

As Lincoln's role in state government expanded, so too did government space demands. A west wing was added to the Capitol in 1879, and an east wing was added in 1881. Then, due to structural instability, the original central core was razed and a new one erected in 1887.

1876 witnessed the arrival of 30 Germans from Russia, who settled in southwest Lincoln. Twelve years later, their presence was augmented by the arrival of a second group, who settled in northwest Lincoln. Together, they formed the most distinct ethnic settlement in the city.

Advancements in transportation technology arrived in Lincoln in 1883 with the Lincoln Street Railway Company's successful trial run of an electric street car. By 1893, the company operated 12 routes over 45 miles of track, providing service to such wide-ranging points as
Lincoln’s satellite communities to the northeast and southeast, and the Nebraska State Penitentiary to the southwest. (See Map #1, Appendix)

The first of Lincoln’s insurance companies, destined to become a multi-billion-dollar industry by the 1950s, were founded during this era. Bankers Life of Nebraska began in 1887; Woodmen Accident and Life organized in York in 1890 and moved to Lincoln in 1902; and Farmers Mutual Insurance of Nebraska was founded in 1891. Also, Security Mutual Life Insurance Company, started in Fremont in 1895, moved to Lincoln in 1899.

Three events of 1889 are notable. Lincoln’s downtown experienced the addition of its first "skyscraper," a six-story structure on the northeast corner of 12th and "O" streets, contemporary Lincoln’s CenterStone building. The two other occurrences are, to a degree, related. First, Lincoln’s initial major medical facility, Saint Elizabeth’s Hospital, was constructed at 11th and South streets. Second, the state purchased a residence at 15th and "H" streets to be used as the governor’s mansion. The affinity between the two is that, being south of "O" Street, both tended to influence residential
growth in that direction.

Lincoln, through all the fits and starts common to an urban area in its adolescence, was also subject to the vagaries of nature and the national economy.

The city, and all of southeast Nebraska were plagued by hordes of migrating grasshoppers from 1872 to 1876. The grasshoppers, coupled with drought, were the cause of the first decreased real estate assessments of Lincoln's young life.

An additional, more localized natural phenomenon that occurred with alarming periodicity was the flooding of the Salt Creek watershed west of Lincoln. Salt Creek flooded in 1873, and again in 1874, taking two lives. Additional flooding would occur in 1892, 1902, 1906 and 1908. The many stream courses that converged west of town, viewed as an asset when trying to attract railroads, were a liability in times of heavy rain or snowmelt. Doubtless, the persistence of flooding in waterways west of Lincoln was another factor acting to deter urban development in that direction.

Lincoln's growth continued during the 1870s and 1880s undaunted by drought, grasshoppers and floods. However, the combination of unpredictable
weather and a national economic crisis was more than enough to stagger this booming midwestern city during the 1890s.

In 1889, many Nebraska farmers brought in their best crop in a decade and received some of their lowest prices. Costs were up and prices were down. Often, transportation costs on a bushel of grain would equal the return a farmer might receive at the railhead. The price of corn dropped to the lowest point since the Civil War and discriminative freight rates kept the produce off the Eastern markets.

In a quick reversal, 1893 and 1984 were drought years. While average yearly rainfall in Nebraska was 25.73 inches, 1893 produced only 16.26 inches, and 1894 produced 13.54 inches.

The effects on Lincoln, though delayed, were inevitable. Eight Lincoln banks had failed or closed their doors by 1896. Of 13 banks chartered in Lincoln during the period from the 1870s to the 1890s, only one, the First National Bank, was in business at the turn of the century.

Fortunately, Lincoln's economic base, comprised mostly of wholesale and retail functions, government, railroads, education and insurance, was diverse enough that the city was
able to stand the strain. The lesson learned was that agriculture was the primary variable in Lincoln’s economic equation.

This period was a time of increased political activity and agitation for farmers. Organized under the banner of the Populist Party, they fought for railroad rate and tax reforms. Subsequent to the 1890 elections, Populists controlled both houses of the Nebraska Legislature and the governorship. The elections were also the first step in the political career of William Jennings Bryan. Then a Lincoln resident, and later a three-time presidential candidate, Bryan was elected to Congress in 1890 as a Democrat with Populist backing.

As noted earlier, Lincoln’s population would decrease from 55,154 to 40,169. With this period of prolonged stress and repeated shocks, adolescence was over. Lincoln now was more mature, a young adult ready to shoulder responsibility and answer for its own actions.
End Notes

1. A.B. Hayes and Samuel D. Cox, History of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska, with Brief Historical Sketches of the State and of Lancaster County (Lincoln, Neb.: State Journal Company, 1889), p. 138.

2. Ibid., p. 68.

3. Ibid., p. 139.


7. Sawyer, pp. 28-29.


12. Ibid., pp. 42-43


15. Sawyer, pp. 84-87.


17. Copple, p. 57.

18. Reilly, p. 38.

19. Ibid., p. 52.
23. Copple, p. 47.
24. Ibid., p. 48.
26. Ibid., pp. 60-61.
27. Sawyer, p. 226.
30. Ibid., pp. 223-224.
32. Ibid., p. 72.
33. Ibid., p. 71.
34. Ibid., p. 72.
35. Sawyer, pp. 111-112.
36. Copple, pp. 82-83.
39. Sawyer, p. 112.
41. Copple, p. 65.
42. Ibid., p. 69.

44. Ibid., pp. 111-113.

45. Ibid., p. 99.

46. Ibid., p. 136.

47. Ibid., p. 147.

48. Copple, p. 73.

49. The Federal Writers Project, p. 44.

50. Sawyer, p. 145.


52. Copple, p. 67.


54. Copple, p. 68.

55. The Federal Writers Project, p. 45.

56. Copple, p. 73.

57. Ibid., p. 61.

58. Ibid., p. 61.


60. Ibid., pp. 83-84.


62. Copple, p. 86.

63. Ibid., p. 87.

64. Ibid., p. 85.
Chapter Three

Lincoln, Nebraska: 1900-1960

The University of Nebraska and other institutions of higher learning, Lincoln’s suburbs, the railroads, governmental services, warehousing and distributing and the insurance industry all were making contributions to Lincoln by the advent of the twentieth century. These components of Lincoln’s physical and economic reality, that played a major role in her development during the years from 1867 to 1900, would continue to grow.

The next time frame to be considered, 1900 to 1930, is, for the city, a period of slow recovery from from the downturn of the 1890s. Lincoln’s population increases steadily, so that by 1920, 54,928 people would claim Lincoln as home, nearly equaling the city’s previous 1890 high. By 1930, there would be an increase in Lincoln’s industrial output, the downtown would mature and add "skyscrapers," a new capitol building was being built, five towns on the near environs of Lincoln were annexed and Lincoln and the nation stood poised on the brink of another Great Depression.
This, then, is a presentation of some of the events pertinent to Lincoln’s development that occurred in the decades between 1900 and 1930.

A Steady Recovery, Solid Growth 1900-1930

Lincoln’s central business district was solidifying its eastern movement at the same time as it was acquiring a distinctly more vertical profile. Department stores led the way. Miller and Paine, having moved to its present site in 1898, erected a new building in 1916.¹ Ben Simon’s moved to a 13th and “O” location in 1922, and, in 1924, Gold’s moved to where it is today. By the 1920s, Lincoln was attracting national chain stores, although their precursor, Woolworth’s, arrived in 1902. Kreske’s came in 1923 and Grant’s in 1927, followed by Montgomery Ward in 1928 and Sears and Roebuck in 1929.²

Downtown began growing vertically in 1916 with the addition of the 10-story Terminal Building.³ The growth continued with the 12-story Federal Securities Building at 13th and “N” streets and the 16-story Sharp Building both being added in 1927. The 12-story Stuart Building was erected in 1928. In an attempt to gather a larger share of the lucrative convention market, the 10-story Cornhusker Hotel, precursor to today’s, was
built in 1926. The 10-story Capital Hotel, presently Georgian Place, also was raised in 1926.\(^a\)

A second post office was erected in 1906 immediately to the north of the first one, on the block between 9th and 10th and "O" and "P" streets. That year, the city of Lincoln took possession of the old post office, an 1873 structure, allowing for the first time consolidation of all city government offices in one place. A west wing was added to the new post office in 1915.\(^b\)

In 1912, the city changed its method of governance from a mayor-council to a commission form wherein only concilpersons would be elected. From their number, one was selected to be mayor. The others were designated commissioners and directed all administrative departments of city government.\(^c\) The commission form of government would be voted out by the citizens of Lincoln in the mid-1930s.

This period saw the city's first attempts at planning. In 1911, an attempt was made to form a municipal planning commission. It failed.\(^d\) The city brought in a consultant to make a preliminary zoning survey in 1921, and in 1926 Lincoln adopted
its first zoning ordinance. In 1925, in an effort to cope with increasing automobile traffic, certain streets were designated arterials.

Lincoln expanded horizontally as well as vertically. The city covered an area of eight square miles in 1915. By 1923, there were 12.4 square miles of land contained within Lincoln. At the end of 1930 that figure increased to 24.75 square miles. Examination of map #2 (See Appendix) reveals that after a spurt during the boom of the 1880s Lincoln's physical growth was practically non-existent for a quarter century. Another period of expansion occurred from 1914 to 1919.

A second period of significant growth occurred from 1920 to 1930, when Lincoln annexed its nearest suburbs. The process actually began in 1919 with the annexation of Normal. Starting in 1926, however, rapid major acquisitions took place. University Place and Bethany joined Lincoln in 1926, College View entered in 1929 and Havelock in 1930.

Annexation of the suburbs added 13,092 residents to Lincoln's population. This caused Lincoln's 1930 population total to be either 75,919 or 79,572, since technically, Havelock, with a population of 3,653, became part of the
city after the 1930 census was taken.\(^1\)

The development of a commercial landscape outside of the existing downtown core became evident during this period. Before 1900, almost all business activity in the city was concentrated in the area from 9th to 15th streets and "M" to "Q" streets. By 1900, increases in Lincoln's population spurred development of small outlying commercial districts in neighborhoods.

These small districts, containing food-related stores such as groceries or meat markets, and personal services such as druggists, provided for their immediate neighborhoods. The first of these nuclei appear in the vicinity of 27th and Vine streets and 11th and "G" streets.\(^1^2\) Slightly later, another developed just west of Cooper Park around 7th and "F" streets.

This interval also saw the beginnings of strip development along "O" Street. In 1900, retailers could be found on almost every block of "O" Street from the railroad tracks to 27th Street.\(^1^3\) By 1920, business had yet to expand east past 27th Street, but became more highly concentrated along "O" Street.\(^1^4\)

By 1920, the increasing presence of the automobile granted greater mobility and a wider
selection of residential location choices to the American public. As a result the population spread out. On the tail of this phenomenon, we find, again, small commercial districts fulfilling the needs of the new neighborhoods. One of these was at 14th and South streets. A second was at 27th and Randolph streets.

The University, too, was experiencing growth and growing pains. Enrollment increased steadily, totaling 2,209 during the 1899-1900 school year. By 1909-1910, the total was 3,998. The total student body for the year 1919-1920 was 6,958. In the 1929-1930 school year, 11,313 students were enrolled.

By 1909, the four-block university campus was becoming overcrowded. A prominent Lincoln citizen, desiring to turn the campus to alternate land uses, suggested relocating the university, in its entirety, on the agricultural campus. The situation was the subject of much debate, until, in 1914, it was decided to submit the proposal to the citizens of Nebraska in a special referendum. The people voted by a margin of 2-to-1 to retain two separate campuses. The referendum also authorized enlarging the campus by four blocks to the east and six blocks to the north.
Lincoln and the wholesale and distribution business seemed a tailor-made fit during this period. Many factors necessary for a favorable market were present. The city was in a good location. Nearly 450,000 people were living within a radius of 50 miles of Lincoln. Freight rates were adjusted so that, while Missouri River port cities had an advantage, it was slight. Lincoln was also a regional railroad center for southern Nebraska, giving it access to frequent inbound and outbound freight service. In fact, at this time, of 914 railroad stations in Nebraska, 744 were closer to Lincoln than any other wholesale or general distribution center.

Lincoln as a wholesaling site was primarily involved in the distribution of two types of goods: foodstuffs such as fruits, vegetables, sugar and coffee, and farm implements and supplies. In 1922, 49 percent of Lincoln’s total receipts in wholesaling and distribution were food-and farm-related. Comparably, the figures for 1929 reveal 46 percent of the receipts were from these same areas.

Net sales in this arena were increasing. Sales in 1915 showed a 63 percent increase over sales from 1910, while 1922 receipts reveal a 28 percent increase over 1915. Figures from 1929
show a 9 percent increase in receipts over those from 1922.²⁹

Manufacturing, never a powerful driver of Lincoln’s economy, was increasing. In 1906 receipts from Lincoln’s wholesaling business were nearly three times that of manufacturing. By 1922, the value of Lincoln’s wholesale products exceeded manufactured goods by about 27 percent.³⁰

Manufacturing establishments in Lincoln increased from 1899 to 1919, but experienced a reduction in the decade from 1919 to 1929. The proportion of Lincoln’s population employed in industry during these three decades peaked at 5 percent in 1919, then reached its low, 2.5 percent, in 1929.

Still, a few industries founded in Lincoln during this period managed to contribute to the local economy and gain national prominence.

Beatrice Foods came to Lincoln in 1897 and erected a six-story cold storage plant one year later.³¹ It was one of the largest creameries west of the Mississippi.³² The making of butter accounted for 25 percent of the total value of all manufacturing done in Lincoln in 1919.³³

The Van Sickle Paint Company was founded in 1900 to manufacture paints.³⁴ Its plant was, for a
time, the largest paint factory west of the Mississippi.\footnote{35}

The Cushman brothers, in 1902, designed a lightweight multi-purpose water-cooled engine that sold so well they had to move to a new shop in 1913.\footnote{36} This developed into one of the largest stationary gasoline engine factories in the country.\footnote{37}

Gooch’s Mill was founded in Lincoln in 1908, and later became a nationally known brand name.\footnote{38}

At least two other companies that got their start during this period survived the intervening 80 years and are part of Lincoln’s industrial economy today: Smith-Dorsey Pharmaceuticals (1908) and Yankee Hill Brick (1902).\footnote{39}

Among other industries, the planing and milling of lumber, and printing and publishing were also significant contributors in terms of employment and output.

The insurance industry in Lincoln continued to grow. In 1922, Lincoln was home office for 29 insurance companies with about 800 employees.\footnote{40} By 1929, the city contained 31 home offices and 27 district agencies. The scope and standing of the institutions involved caused Lincoln to be known as the "Hartford of the West".\footnote{41}
Not technically an industry, Lincoln's hospital and health services collectivity was in place by the end of this time span.

Lincoln General Hospital, built in 1925, was located at 17th and South streets. Bryan Memorial Hospital, also erected in 1925, was located on the grounds of the estate belonging to William Jennings Bryan at 48th and Sumner streets. Both, like Saint Elizabeth's 30 years earlier, are firmly embedded far south of "O" Street.

Lincoln's Veteran's Administration Hospital, a regional federal facility, was secured as a result of a well-conceived and ambitious marketing campaign that began in 1928. The facility, while not a public hospital, went into operation in 1932. It, too, is south of "O" Street.

The two dominant social, or country, clubs were formed in this era. Most important was the Lincoln Country Club which moved to its present site south of Woodsdale Boulevard in 1923. The present Hillcrest Country Club, which was founded in 1927, and went through two name changes before the current one, is located south of "O" Street on 89th Street. The former is in south Lincoln, the latter in east Lincoln.

A final piece of the Lincoln puzzle that fell
into place at this point in time was the Capitol. Construction of a new Capitol building was authorized by the Legislature in 1919. A commission was appointed to select an architect, and, after a blind competition, picked Bertram Goodhue of New York. Groundbreaking ceremonies took place on April 15, 1922. Ten years and $10,000,000 later, a decade not without questions and controversy over both the choice of design and architect, Lincoln, and the state of Nebraska, had a capitol acknowledged as one of the most significant buildings in America. It was 1930, and a depression was imminent. The last one had staggered Lincoln, draining it of more than 25 percent of its population. The efficacy with which the citizens, and by extension, the city, handled the coming period of trauma, would show how mature Lincoln as an urban entity had become.

The next period under consideration spans the years from 1930 to 1960. During these years Lincoln and the nation weather the Great Depression and World War II, and come out on the other side flowing straight into the era of good feelings. The period ends with an event of more local significance - Gateway appearing on the horizon of East Lincoln.
The Depression and Post-War Recovery 1930-1960

The stock market crash of 1929 might have been news to some people, but it had been being telegraphed to the financial community of Nebraska for about five years. Banks that became overcommitted in mortgaged-land buying of farmland had been closing at an alarming rate, nearly 100 in 1924, and 400 in 1928. Then, in 1929, the stock market crashed and the Depression followed.

As if the Depression was not enough, a drought occurred hard on its heels in 1932, finally breaking in 1938.

Lincoln learned in the 1890s that its fate and that of the state's agricultural community were inextricably linked. It proved true again. But by the 1930s, Lincoln's maturity and economic diversity put a new spin on the relationship. That Lincoln suffered is without doubt, but Lincoln sustained and held its ground throughout the period.

The city's economy reached its nadir in 1932. Then, bank deposits increased 46 percent from $24,157,165 in 1932 to $35,235,149 in 1934. By 1935, bank deposits were higher still, and 1,371 building permits were issued, up 250 percent from the 387 issued in 1932. Lincoln had turned the
corner and was working its way out of the Depression. The city continued with a slow, measured growth through the last half of the 1930s.

In the only previous comparable period – the 1890s – Lincoln had experienced a sharp drop in population. During the tribulations of the 1930s, Lincoln experienced a slight increase in population from 79,572 to 81,984, a testament to the city's added resilience and broadened economic base.

The Depression in Lincoln left casualties – failed banks and businesses, and closed schools – but a three-pronged relief effort composed of Lincoln’s churches, the Chamber of Commerce and federal agencies managed to smooth over many of the rough edges.

On the governmental front, two changes made during the 1930s are worth mention. In one, Nebraska's one-house Unicameral system of government was accepted by the voters of the state in 1934 and held its first session in 1937. Involving the second, citizens of Lincoln chose in 1935 to abandon the commissioner–council form of city government in favor of a modified manager form of government. The new system, which took
effect in 1937, elected six councilmen to staggered four-year terms and a mayor to a two-year term. Managers of the city’s administrative branches — finance, public works and public welfare — were appointed by the council.  

Almost before the city had a chance to catch its breath after its recovery from the Depression, the nation was girding for war.

One of the most notable effects the war had on Lincoln was the expansion of the city’s industrial base. Established industries such as the Burlington shops, and Cushman Motor Works contributed to the wartime effort, but Lincoln succeeded in attracting some national firms.

Two prominent industrial companies came to Lincoln in 1943 to set up factories — Goodyear and Western Electric. Goodyear is still a substantial Lincoln employer while Western Electric moved to the Omaha area in 1958.

A third business, the Elastic Stop-Nut Company, came to Lincoln in 1942. The company manufactured a self-locking nut used on bombers. Elastic Stop-Nut closed its Lincoln shop on V-J Day plus one. However, the Stop-Nut firm’s success with the Lincoln workforce encouraged another employer, the Elgin National Watch Company, to put a watchworks in the Stop-Nut plant.
within three months of Stop-Nut's departure. Elgin would fall prey to competition from the Swiss watch industry and shut down its Lincoln operation in 1958.

These words, translated into numbers, reflect a substantial growth. In 1939, Lincoln contained 1,522 industrial employees collecting an annual payroll of $1,607,000. In 1947, Lincoln counted 7,287 industrial employees with a payroll of $17,509,000 annually. Lincoln sustained this growth.

A second outcome of the war is Lincoln's present airport northwest of the city. Before formally entering the war, the government scanned the country in search of training facilities. It was decided that Lincoln's airport fit the criteria. The official announcement was made in February 1942, and after construction of 1,070 buildings and four 5,000- to 7,000-foot runways at the cost of $15,000,000, the Lincoln Army Airfield opened in April 1942. Lincoln's 160-acre airfield had been expanded into a training complex encompassing 2,750 acres.

During the war, the airbase trained aviation mechanics seven days a week, 24 hours a day and graduated 30,000 of them. The base also processed
and distributed bomber crews and planes, fighter pilots and combat crewmen. The base was deactivated on Dec. 15, 1945.

In 1952, a decision was made to reactivate the base as part of the Strategic Air Command. $29 million was spent on construction of hangars, barracks and other buildings and extension of runways. The facility housed 6,500 men and their dependents.

The base was closed permanently in 1966 as a cost-saving measure by the Defense Department. All land, buildings and improvements reverted to control of the city. The former base now is used for commercial and general aviation and an industrial park.

A third major effect of the war was felt on the campus of the University of Nebraska as the school responded, first to the demands of the war effort and the number of personnel necessary to fuel the war machine and, second, to the returning GIs and the demands of the GI Bill. Total university enrollment was 12,268 in 1939 and reached a wartime low of 11,224 in 1943. The war's end and the GI Bill are reflected in the student totals for 1946, 1947 and 1948, which were, respectively, 21,663, 22,615 and 22,595.

The influx of students necessitated a growth
in the physical plant on the two campuses as well. The initial overflow was accommodated in classrooms that were converted barracks from the Hastings Naval Ammunition Depot. Then, in 1947, the Legislature passed a 10-year, 1.1 mill building levy, and the University, which had added one new structure during 20 years of war and depression, started building. On the downtown campus, 16 buildings were added; on Ag campus, eight. University teaching staff increased from a post-war 400 to 650 in 1959.

The city of Lincoln was to undergo a period not so much of growth, but of filling out. In 1930, the city's area was 22.3 square miles. By 1960, that number had increased a mere three square miles to 25.4. Yet in 1935, the city contained an estimated 20,000 residences. A figure that would nearly double to 39,973 in 1960. This, also, while Lincoln was experiencing a population increase from 79,572 in 1930 to 128,521 in 1960. The reason for any apparent disparity in these numbers is the pattern of residential distribution during that time span.

In the late 1920s, Lincoln annexed four of its nearest neighbors. Historically, this was the time of transition from electric street cars to
automobiles. The Depression and World War II caused a relative cessation of residential construction while America, and Lincoln, were otherwise occupied. What existed were finger-like projections along street car tracks lined with residences, and large parcels of vacant land in between. Consequently, the post-war period found Lincoln with 7.5 miles of undeveloped subdivisions within its city limits. These area, platted in earlier years, were waiting to be surveyed and built upon. They were, and more subdivisions were added.

The post-war atmosphere was favorable for traditional sectors of the Lincoln economy.

During the 10-year period from 1948 to 1958, wholesaling in Lincoln increased its net sales more than 25 percent to $114,783,000. Retail trade also experienced an expansion during the decade, with net sales increasing 46 percent to $172,160,000 by 1958.

The insurance industry had matured to the degree that in 1958 Lincoln's 28 home and regional offices controlled $300,000,000 in assets and had $2,000,000,000 worth of insurance in force.

Lincoln by 1960 possessed the qualities of a thriving urban center. It had a substantial, varied, and growing economy. It had outlasted the
storms of the Depression era and World War II and came out robust, its best years ahead of it. This chapter ends with an intriguing juxtaposition of events.

In 1956, Banker's Life Insurance of Nebraska announced the development of Gateway, the city's first landscaped, plaza-type shopping center. Located at 61st and "O" streets, it was to open in 1960, containing 250,000 square feet of shopping space, and parking for 3,000 cars. In 1959, as the result of a charter election, the Advisory City Planning Commission, established in 1948, became the fourth department of city government.

The next chapter will focus on chronicling some of the data and events pertinent to commercial development in both downtown Lincoln and East Lincoln between the years 1960 and 1985.
End Notes


2. Ibid., p. 135.


5. Ibid., p. 100.


7. Copple, p. 103.

8. Ibid., pp. 125-126.


13. Ibid., p. 127.


15. Ibid., p. 65.

16. Ibid., pp. 64-65.

17. Ibid., p. 66.

18. Ibid., p. 92.

20. Ibid., p. 164.


22. Ibid., p. 52.


25. Ibid., p. 79.

26. Ibid., p. 113.


28. Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, p. 79.


32. Andrew J. Sawyer, p. 142.


34. Copple, p. 99.

35. Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, p. 137.


37. Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, p. 137.


40. Lincoln Chamber of Commerce, p. 106.


43. Ibid., p. 55.

44. Copple, p. 127.

45. Ibid., p. 133.


47. Copple, p. 139.

48. Ibid., p. 143.

49. Ibid., p. 147.

50. Ibid., p. 151.

51. Ibid., p. 152.

52. Ibid., pp. 169-170.

53. Ibid., pp. 168-169.

54. Ibid., p. 171.


58. Ibid., p. 162.


60. R. McLaren Sawyer, p. 104.


63. Folks Lincoln Nebraska City Directory, 1960, p. IX.

64. Folks Lincoln Nebraska City Directory, 1935, p. 11.

65. Folks Lincoln Nebraska City Directory, 1960, p. X.


68. Ibid., 2:27-10.

69. Copple, p. 188.


71. Ibid., p. 213.
Chapter Four

Changing Patterns of Retail Location

By 1960, Lincoln's pattern of growth was essentially established. In the next 25 years there would be expansion to the northwest by annexation, governmental fiat, as it were, and a few tentative subdivisions on the west and north edges of town. But almost every movement initiated by market forces, except the Highlands to the northwest, will be toward the south and/or east (see Map 3, appendix). One component of Lincoln's developmental framework that is altered significantly during this period is the location of retail trade.

This chapter presents different facets of a single phenomenon - changes occurring between 1960 and 1985 in a portion of Lincoln's retail landscape. It begins with a short reiteration of Burgess' concentric ring theory. Following that is a section that details the language of the last three comprehensive plans for the city of Lincoln (1961, 1977 and 1985) and their goals vis-a-vis the city's retail development in counterpoint to a series of floor area surveys done over a comparable quarter century. Finally, by way of
example, it will examine a number of change of zone requests made concerning parcels of land in east Lincoln.

In his 1925 essay, "The Growth of a City - An Introduction to a Research Project," Ernest W. Burgess described a model for urban expansion. His concept was one based upon concentric rings or zones of development.

Zone I, the central business district, or CBD, was the focus of all economic, political and cultural activity of a city. It contained the department stores, theaters, office buildings, museums, grand hotels and railroad stations. Additionally, Burgess noted a tendency for all transportation to converge in the central business district.

In turn, expanding radially from the CBD, were the remaining zones. Zone II, a zone in transition, was composed of businesses, light manufacturing and an area of deterioration, or slums. Zone III, inhabited by working people - factory and shopworkers who were generally sons and daughters of immigrants - followed. Zone IV was classified as a residential zone, an area of high-income apartment buildings and exclusive districts of single-family residences. The final area, Zone V, was outside the city limits.
Comprised of suburban areas and satellite cities, it was dubbed the commuter zone, its population living within a 30- to 60-minute commute to the CBD.  

To quote Burgess, "the typical processes of the expansion of a city can best be illustrated, perhaps, by a series of concentric circles, which may be numbered to designate both the successive zones of urban extension and the types of areas differentiated in the process of expansion."  

Retail Growth: Comprehensive Plans vs Reality

The last three comprehensive plans involving Lincoln have actually been city-county plans attempting to link developmental goals for the metropolitan environs of Lincoln with developmental goals for the city into a coherent whole. Each measured the reality of Lincoln's growth pattern against a template of concentric ring development and found it lacking. Equally, each holding concentric growth as a model, proposed policies by which this goal could be achieved.

This section reviews this process, as each succeeding plan presents its diagnosis of Lincoln's development and suggests guidelines to
set the city in motion toward the perceived concentric goal.

Over time, it became apparent that a major obstacle to concentric development, aside from unyielding residential growth patterns, was the changing profile of retail trade location in Lincoln. This section also will document policies suggested in the comprehensive plan as guidelines for retail growth.

Finally, between the plan reviews are results of floor area surveys conducted by the city Planning Department that summarize portions of this retail change.

The 1961 Comprehensive Plan was written by the firm of Harland Bartholomew and Associates of St. Louis, Mo. The 1961 plan stated "the growth of an urban community, as far as the topographical conditions will permit, should take the form of a balanced development around a center which preferably should be the central business district." The plan saw the advantage of balanced growth around a core as being better distribution of traffic and a more economical provision of public and private services.

It is interesting to note that the discussion of concentric growth in the 1961 plan occurs under the heading of "Residential Uses." This is
because, with Gateway in its infancy, no serious threat to the retail supremacy of the central business district had yet been mounted.

The solution presented by the plan was to encourage residential growth in areas where such growth was absent. It proposed additional neighborhoods toward the north, in the Belmont area, and limited growth in the West "O" Street area. Additionally, it proposed two new neighborhoods in the areas west of Salt Creek and south of "O" Street, and further development south of Highway 2.

In dealing with retail growth, the plan sets up a taxonomy of five classes of commercial use, a regional center, the major commercial center, the neighborhood shopping center, highway business and highway service districts. We are concerned with the first two.

Lincoln's CBD is the regional commercial center. The plan acknowledged that, due to expansion, outlying commercial areas would continue to develop, but affirmed that the CBD should remain the dominant retail district; the city's major administrative and office center; and the center for cultural, civic and public buildings.
The 1961 plan viewed the decentralization of office space as a more alarming and potentially damaging trend than the loss of retail space in the CBD. It thought the primary future problem for the central area would be provision of adequate parking, and that an effort should be made to preserve existing diagonal parking downtown. It also presented, in broad outlines, a plan for strengthening the regional commercial center, showing suggested traffic flow and land-use patterns.

A major center, according to the 1961 plan, was one containing a total of 100,000 to 250,000 square feet of floor space devoted to business purposes. The plan called for seven such centers — six already in existence in Havelock, College View, University Place, Gateway, South Street Center (between about 11th and 14th streets on South) and Waverly, and one eventually to be placed at 27th Street and Highway 2.

The plan noted that, like the CBD, several of these areas had undue congestion and inadequate parking. This was contrasted with Gateway, which it described as a well-designed, modern center with ample parking. It was thought the older areas would, of necessity, have to be redesigned around the model of a Gateway-type center or forced out
of the market by modern centers. 11

In summary, the 1961 plan advocated a concentric model to be achieved by manipulation of residential land-use patterns, envisioned a classical-core area CBD containing many of the functions enumerated by Burgess, and projected Gateway as a shopping area on a parallel with College View and Havelock.

The following discussion involves data from floor area surveys performed by the Planning Department in the years 1959, 1965 and 1973. The focus will be on retail space, specifically data covering the city as a whole, the CBD, Gateway, College View, Havelock and University Place. Note that the last four areas were all classified as "major commercial centers" in the 1961 Comprehensive Plan, and therefore were thought somewhat equivalent. Due to the importance given decentralization of office space in the 1961 plan, figures indicating the CBD's share of city-wide total office floor area also will be cited.

In looking at this information, it is important to realize that figures may not be comparable over time. For example, while the survey for 1965 shows an 8.4 percent increase in total retail floor space over 1959, the data sets
used in generating the numbers may not have been exactly the same. An area included in the 1965 survey may have been excluded from the 1959 survey, or vice versa. Additionally, borders of the neighborhood business districts surveyed could be shifted from survey to survey, creating the same problem.

The first survey was done in 1959, two years before the 1961 plan, but should be useful in approximating the conditions that existed when the plan was written. The second two, 1965 and 1973, do a good job of bracketing the years between 1961 and 1977, the date for Lincoln's next plan.

According to the 1959 survey, Lincoln then contained 4,808,819 square feet of retail floor area. Of that total, the CBD contained 2,640,008 square feet, or 54.9 percent. Gateway, at this early date, held 212,295 square feet, or 4.4 percent of the total. College View contained 1.4 percent; Havelock contained 2.7 percent; and University Place contained 1.9 percent of the total. In relation to total office space, the city contained 1,727,180 square feet, and the CBD held 75.3 percent of that, or 1,300,565 square feet.

The survey from 1965 shows a total of 5,214,714 square feet of retail floor space in the city. The CBD contained 2,444,691 square feet, or
46.8 percent of the total; Gateway held 7.5 percent, or 390,884 square feet. In the three neighborhoods, College View had 2.1 percent; Havelock had 2.6 percent; and University Place had 3.5 percent of the total. Lincoln's office space floor area total in 1965 was 1,825,028 square feet, and 68.5 percent, or 1,249,810 square feet of that were downtown. 13

By the time of the 1973 survey, the city contained a total of 5,958,172 square feet of retail floor area. The CBD held 2,006,337 square feet, or 33.7 percent of the total. Gateway contained 754,567 square feet, or 12.7 percent of the total. In the neighborhoods, College View had 1.9 percent; Havelock had 2.4 percent; and University Place had 2.8 percent of the total.14

A few patterns seem to be emerging from the preceding data - total retail floor area in Lincoln increased from 1959 to 1973, and the downtown core had a decreasing share of this increasing total; Gateway's retail floor area increased; and the neighborhood shopping area's share was relatively stable. The figures for office floor area show the CBD capturing a decreasing share of an increasing market.

By 1977, the year of Lincoln's next
comprehensive plan, the linkage between successful concentric growth, a healthy central business district, and controlled eastward expansion had been acknowledged. The 1977 Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan was compiled by the firm of Barton-Aschman Associates of Evanston, Ill.

The 1977 plan established three types of commercial facilities: multi-use, local retail and general commercial, a reduction from the 1961 plan, which described five. Relevant to our discussion is the "local retail" classification, which collapsed the 1961 plan categories of "major commercial center" and "neighborhood shopping area" into a single category. The two classifications from the 1961 plan were to contain 250,000 to 100,000 square feet, and less than 100,000 square feet of retail space, respectively. While not able to limit any existing retail concentrations, the 1977 plan could, and did, limit any new "local retail," or neighborhood center, to not more than 50,000 square feet of commercial space.

The plan described a multi-use center as one which was "planned to accommodate a variety of compatible and mutually supportive activities, including retail commerce, office and commercial services, entertainment, cultural and public
facilities, and housing." Lincoln Center and Gateway were two of the six multi-use or regional centers projected to be needed in the metropolitan area by the year 2000.

The other four multi-use centers were to be distributed on either side of Lincoln, two in the northwest area, near the Highlands and at 27th and Superior streets, and two on the south, at 27th Street and Pine Lake Road, and the intersection of 56th Street and Highway 2, and Old Cheney Road. These centers had a projected capacity of between 100,000 and 400,000 square feet of leasable retail floor area, and 100,000 square feet of office floor area, except for the Highlands location, which was projected to contain 300,000 square feet of office space. They were to be oriented to serving a specific area of the city, not compete for regional dominance. The comprehensive plan stated that "No other center or combination of centers should be planned, approved or developed which distract significantly from the strength and vitality of the Lincoln Center."

Retail space in Gateway, the only existing multi-use center other than Lincoln Center, was to be limited to its then-present size, 950,000 square feet. A policy stated in the plan was
to, through redesign of trafficways, and improved pedestrian amenities, create a single, unified regional center and discourage expansion of its geographical area. Gateway was to be improved, but not enlarged.

The majority of any retail growth in Lincoln was to occur in the new multi-use centers in order to minimize both the impact of the growth on Lincoln Center and any size disparity between Gateway and the proposed centers.

One intent of the 1977 plan was to support the continued and enhanced vitality of Lincoln Center. A goal of the plan was retention of downtown's status as the dominant multi-use center and key focal point of business, social and cultural activity in the region. The plan promoted provision of parking, access and environmental improvements and implementation of the Lincoln Center plan. The plan sought to encourage continued expansion of downtown Lincoln as the dominant office employment center, and through restrictive zoning policies, discourage the expansion of office centers elsewhere.

Finally, it stated that the future strength of Lincoln Center was at least partly dependent on the ability of the city to implement the plan for development of the remaining multi-use centers.
A general concept and developmental goal of the plan was a relatively concentric urban growth pattern focused upon Lincoln Center. As with the 1961 plan, a fundamental tool for generating concentric development was directing the movement of residential growth. The 1977 plan proposed some residential expansion to the south, but primarily envisioned growth to the west and north. It proposed restricting eastward expansion at 84th Street to try to compel growth into the preferred sectors. The authors of the plan correctly reasoned that further easterly residential development would weaken Lincoln Center, and increase the possibility of Gateway becoming central to the area of urbanization.

A second component of the plan that enhances this concept involves supporting the continued health of the downtown, much of which has been previously documented in this report. It is sufficient to add the plan endorsed the idea of regulatory controls to direct the size, location and timing of competing regional shopping centers.

Lincoln changed during the years between 1961 and 1977 Comprehensive Plans. The 1977 plan reflects an attempt to manage that change.
Gateway's growth had far outstripped its nominal 1961 counterparts in the "major commercial" category and it had been elevated in status to equivalency with Lincoln Center. As a result, much of the 1977 plan's commercial component dealt with moderating retail expansion in Lincoln.

Echoing the 1961 plan, the 1977 plan noted the importance of offices in the CBD and offered measures to both stem the departure of established offices and entice new office centers into the area. The plan also recommended measures be taken to make placement of office centers outside of Lincoln Center difficult.

These sets of potentials - a vital CBD, retention of office centers downtown and residential growth to the north and - were submitted in the 1961 plan as desired end states to work toward. Sixteen years later, by the time of the 1977 plan, the first two were losing ground and the third was not much improved. Then, in 1977, they had to be addressed again.

Data from three more floor area surveys done by the Planning Department in the eight years between the 1977 and 1985 Comprehensive Plans will now be examined.

A survey done in 1978 found 6,554,017 square feet of retail floor area in the city of Lincoln.
The CBD contained 1,912,961 square feet, or 29.2 percent, and Gateway contained 905,852 square feet, or 13.8 percent. College View contained 1.6 percent; Havelock contained 2.2 percent; and University Place held 2.6 percent of the total. The city contained 2,775,430 square feet of office floor area and 57 percent of it, or 1,583,096 square feet, was downtown. 31

A 1982 survey showed citywide total retail floor area had increased to 8,217,043 square feet. Of that total, 1,634,314, or 19.9 percent, was in the CBD. Gateway held 961,021 square feet, or 11.7 percent. Among the local neighborhood centers, College View had 1.2 percent; Havelock had 2.3 percent; and University Place had 2.2 percent of the total. In an example of the caveat presented earlier, the city found 5,047,597 square feet of office floor space in the city, an 80 percent increase over the 1978 figure. It wasn’t all new construction, it was a new, more inclusive category than before. The total office floor area found downtown was 1,652,905 square feet, or 32.7 percent. 32

A third survey was performed in 1985, the same year as the Comprehensive Plan update. The city held 8,719,093 square feet of retail floor
area. Downtown held 1,558,281 square feet, or 17.9 percent, while Gateway contained 1,022,749 square feet, or 11.7 percent of the total. In the three neighborhoods, College View held 1.5 percent; Havelock held 1.8 percent; and University Place held 1.7 percent of the total. The survey found 5,683,034 square feet of office floor area citywide, and 1,695,023 square feet, or 29.8 percent, of the total was in the CBD.

Again, does any pattern emerge? Is any trend noticed in the earlier three sets of surveys carried through to this set? The neighborhood areas have remained stable. The downtown continues to lose ground, getting an ever-shrinking piece of an ever-growing pie. Gateway continued growing, but at a slower pace than before. Downtown’s trend of loss of office space may have reversed itself, or stabilized.

It is now time to examine the city’s latest Comprehensive Plan, that from 1985. Where the previous two had been written by outside consultants, the 1985 plan was done in house, the Planning Department essentially updating the Barton-Aschman 1977 Comprehensive Plan.

Being an update, much of the language of the 1985 plan mirrors the 1977 plan. Many goals and policies are the same — downtown should remain the
dominant multi-use center, effectively unify Gateway and discourage its expansion and ensure that any new regional centers are compatible with community objectives for growth.

The Plan indicates the city's growth should be relatively concentric and focused upon downtown Lincoln. Lincoln Center’s dominance as a focal point of social and cultural activity should be maintained. Appropriate public policies should be used to maintain downtown's status as the dominant general purpose office center.

These goals and policies reflect the spirit and often the exact letter of the 1977 plan.

The 1985 plan does shift terminology when discussing future retail needs. As in the 1977 plan, the six multi-use centers are projected, but Lincoln Center and Gateway are classified as regional multi-use centers, and the four other locations are given the status of community multi-use centers. The 1985 plan, like the 1977 plan, notes that all five outlying centers are to be considered subservient to downtown.

The 1985 plan uses strong language in describing the plight of the CBD. It discusses the eroding retail capacity of the area and states that there is a public commitment to increase
retail activity in the downtown. The plan calls for one-half of all new private office growth projected for the planning period (to 2005) to be placed in the CBD. It pins the future strength of the area on the ability of the city to funnel projected development into the multi-use centers, and eliminate retail and office sprawl outside of designated areas.

The Gateway multi-use area was redesignated the Gateway and East Park Complex, reflecting the continued expansion of retail trade in the area immediately east of Gateway. The 1985 plan advocates keeping commercial development in the area at then present levels, except for minor growth. It is suggested that a sub-area plan be developed for the area and its environs.

To its credit, the 1985 plan does recognize and speak toward the reality of commercial expansion in Lincoln, and it advocates responsible commercial growth. So did the 1961 and 1977 plans, and they were not implemented fully.

The next section will examine change of zone requests filed on various parcels of land contained within the Gateway-East Park area, following the path from proposal, to consideration and recommendations by planning staff and the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Commission to a
Changes of Zone in the Triangle

These changes of zone all occur within a triangular-shaped area formed by Cotner Boulevard, "O" Street and the Missouri Pacific Railroad right-of-way. This area saw Gateway, the genesis of commercial growth in east Lincoln, rise. It would witness, 20 years later, East Park Plaza. I believe this sequence, while in no way claiming to be a complete history of requested zone changes for the area, typifies the successive incremental decisions that produced current conditions in east Lincoln.

The first one to be examined is a major one, change of zone request #145, filed in May 1956. It was a request by Banker's Life to rezone approximately 48 acres between "O" Street and "R" Street and Cotner Boulevard and 63rd Street from "A-2" single-family to "G" local business. The planning director, Doug Brogden, recommended denial of the request, citing the fact that there was already ample commercially zoned space along 48th Street, that abutting residential property
would experience lowered property values and that it would have a harmful effect on existing suburban shopping areas. The Planning Commission recommended for approval, saying that the site was suitable for such development, and that the presence of two office centers in the area created demand for a shopping center in that location. The City Council approved the change of zone request on May 25, 1956, and Gateway was born.

Changes of zone #507 and #508, submitted in October 1963, asked for a change from "A-2" to "G" and "G-1" planned commercial on 26 acres of land immediately north of Gateway.

Change of zone #510 was a request to rezone a 25-acre parcel of land on the northwest corner of 66th and "O" streets. The request, also submitted in October 1963, asked for a change from "A-2" to "G".

Due to their similarities, the planning staff and the Planning Commission dealt with all three requests as a group. Brogden recommended for denial stating that the area in question contained a total of 245 vacant acres with 80 acres zoned for business and each change of zone granted at the edge or within the area made later land use within the area more difficult to control. He added that streets in the area weren't built to
handle the traffic that would be generated, there was ample business zoning in other areas and that the request was not in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.

The Planning Commission recommended denial, stating that authorizing substantial commercial zoning outside of downtown would serve a dubious need, detract from downtown and be detrimental to neighborhood shopping areas such as Havelock and University Place. The commission added that additional commercial zoning in the area ultimately would lead to the entire area being zoned for business. They also noted the existence of adequate commercial zoning elsewhere, warned of adulteration of property values in that and other commercially zones areas, impossible traffic problems and that approval would require a complete reorientation of the Comprehensive Plan. The commission warned the City Council that their decision would be critical to the entire future development of Lincoln. Between recommendations for denial by planning staff and Planning Commission, and a ruling by the City Council, Bankers Life amended their petition. They altered the request from "G-1" planned commercial to "F" restricted, and greatly reduced the amount
of land covered. Neither staff nor commission reversed their findings, and in mid-December 1963, the council approved #507 and #508 and denied #510.

Change of zone request #1006 forever altered the zoning framework in the triangle. The request was filed in August 1969 by Planning Director Brogden. It covered six parcels of land, four in the triangle (Parcels A-D) and two on the south side of "O" Street (Parcels E-F).

In his report to the Planning Commission, Brogden stated that approval would transfer approximately 56 acres from residential to business or commercial zoning, or potentially 480,000 square feet of commercial floor space. He added that he was recommending approval of these changes because of other recent changes in the area's zoning pattern. He felt the resulting traffic patterns, coupled with existing railroad facilities, negated single-family residence as a viable use, and "G" local business was more suitable.

The Planning Commission was not happy with the proposal, but saw no choice other than to zone the area commercial based on previous zoning action by the city in the area. The commission recommended partial approval, giving the nod to
requested changes for parcels B, C and D. 

The City Council affirmed its recommendation on Nov. 10, 1969. 

The next requested zone change to be examined covers the same land as Parcel "A" from zone change #1006, also known as the Sankey Tract. Zone change #1006 attempted to rezone the land from "A-2" Single Family to "B" Two Family, and was denied.

During that same time, in October 1969, another change of zone was requested on the Sankey tract. Change of zone #1009 asked to switch the parcel from "A-2" single family to "G" local business. Brogden recommended denial, saying the addition of any more commercial land in the area, other than that asked in change of zone #1006 would engender additional such requests and cause a substantial increase in traffic. Also, he said that continued approval of business zoning in the area would reduce the economic viability of renewal of older shopping areas and reduce the development of shopping areas in other locations more convenient to shoppers.

The Planning Commission recommended for denial and the council seconded that denial on Nov. 10, 1969.
In March 1970, the city finally gave in. Change of zone #1037 requested changing the Sankey Tract to "G" local business. Both Brogden and the Planning Commission recommended denial. The City Council, which rejected a similar request the previous November because it lacked a specific proposal for development felt the proposed uses—a car dealership, a Sears service store and expansion of Gateway—were the best possible and approved the change.

The last change of zone request to be detailed is #1047. Coincidentally, this is the parcel that was under consideration for zone changes #507 and #508 before those filings were amended.

Zone change request #1047 asked for zoning to be changed from "A-2" single family, "B" two-family and "F" restricted commercial to "F" and "G" local commercial. Brogden recommended approval, given the existing zoning to the south and east, and the existing and proposed uses.

The Planning Commission also recommended approval, although several members indicated they were opposed to that type of change from residential to business zoning. An unidentified commission member was quoted as saying, "The City Council will approve it anyway, so we might as
The City Council, as expected, approved the change on June 29, 1970. With that approval, the last non-business or non-commercially zoned piece of property in the triangle was gone.

This chapter examined retail and office growth in Lincoln measured against standards suggested by successive comprehensive plans for the city of Lincoln. These standards were developed with the goal of a reasonably concentric growth pattern for the city. It has determined that implementation of retail and office growth guidelines established in the plans were ignored.

The last section presented a sample of change of zone requests in a selected area of east Lincoln. While not maintaining that this was either the least or most successful of the city's attempts at adherence to the comprehensive plan, it is a reflection of the incremental planning process that tends to overshadow many requests for additional commercial or retail floor space in Lincoln.

The next chapter will in summary examine the feasibility of concentric development as a model for Lincoln in light of the historic information about Lincoln's growth presented earlier.
addition to the historic context, it will detail the success or failure of implementation of Lincoln’s comprehensive plans in generating concentric growth.
End Notes


2. Ibid., p. 50.

3. Ibid., p. 54.


5. Ibid., p. 15.

6. Ibid., p. 18.

7. Ibid., p. 20.

8. Ibid., p. 20.

9. Ibid., p. 18.

10. Ibid., p. 22.

11. Ibid., p. 22.

12. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department "1959 Floor Area Survey."

13. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department "1965 Floor Area Survey."

14. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department "1973 Floor Area Survey."


18. Ibid., p. 68.

19. Ibid., p. 68.

20. Ibid., p. 88.
21. Ibid., p. 68.
22. Ibid., p. 89.
23. Ibid., p. 27.
24. Ibid., p. 89.
25. Ibid., p. 67.
26. Ibid., p. 27.
27. Ibid., p. 26.
28. Ibid., p. 77.
29. Ibid., p. 89.
30. Ibid., p. 88.

31. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department "1978 Floor Area Survey."

32. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department "1982 Floor Area Survey."

33. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department, "1985 Floor Area Survey."

34. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department, Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan (Lincoln, Neb.: Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department, 1985), p. 17.

35. Ibid., p. 35.
36. Ibid., p. 71.
37. Ibid., p. 72.


39. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department, "Change of Zone Application Monitoring File."

41. Planning Department, "Change of Zone Application Monitoring File."

42. Planning Commission, Minutes of Regular Meetings, 1969, meeting of 8 October 1969.

43. Ibid.

44. Planning Department, "Change of Zone Application Monitoring File."


46. Planning Department, "Change of Zone Application Monitoring File."

47. The Lincoln Star, 5 May 1970.


49. Planning Department, "Change of Zone Application Monitoring File."
Chapter Five

Summary and Conclusions

Is the concept of concentric growth a fading dream for Lincoln? Probably. Was it ever an achievable goal? Possibly not.

The author agrees with the contention of Harris and Ullman in their essay "The Nature of Cities" that all three growth models—concentric ring, sectoral and multiple nuclei—are present to a degree in every city. The models might be construed as generic snapshots of urban areas, each representative of urban form during the time frame within which the model was generated.

Cities, including Lincoln, might most closely have reflected the concentric model in the mid- to late 1920s, the sectoral model during the late 1930s and early 1940s and assumed a multiple nuclei structure in the late 1940s and 1950s. The theories might represent the evolution of the urban landscape rather than embody a particular goal to be attained. An unconscious response to growth stimuli, rather than a willful structuring of the urban form.
Burgess himself commented that his was an idealized formulation subject to distortion by nature and by man.  

Of course, when Lincoln's comprehensive plans advocate a goal of concentric growth, it is not in the classic sense, with a CBD at the core, then a ring of light industry, business and deteriorating housing, followed by succeeding rings of more costly housing until the suburbs are reached. What the plans hope to attain is balanced residential growth around an active, healthy downtown core. But is this possible? 

Historically, it appears not. 

Examine Lincoln's development. The city's growth has been to the east, north and south, with a noticeable trend toward the southeast. Why is this the case? 

When Lincoln was founded, it was situated on the east end of a salt flat. When it was platted, the numbered streets were laid out with First Street on the west edge of town, the streets increasing in number to 17th as one moved east, away from the salt flats. This was quite possibly the first barrier, albeit psychological rather than physical, to westward growth.
Both the University of Nebraska and the Capitol building were allotted land in the east half of the original plat, further focusing attention to the east. The university also became a barrier to expansion of the downtown toward the north. Early in Lincoln's history, the Nebraska State Penitentiary and state mental hospital were built southwest of town, adding more psychological inhibitions to westward growth.

Between 1870 and 1890, with the coming of the railroads, further barriers appeared. The railroads selected the many stream courses in the area as pathways for their tracks. Since the streams converge on the west edge of Lincoln, the west side of the city contains an intricate web of railroad tracks. Lincoln's warehouse district developed adjacent to the downtown among the interlaced tracks. The tracks created both physical and psychological impediments to westward growth. Psychological because it would be, literally, living on the wrong side of the tracks. Physical because the tracks and attendant train traffic had to be negotiated passing into and out of the area. The warehouse district became a substantial bar to westward expansion of the CBD.
The stream courses utilized as railroad rights-of-way were a block to development toward the west due to frequent flooding that at times resulted in loss of life.

In addition to negative factors in development to the west of Lincoln, as were some of the above, there also existed positive factors that drew Lincoln's development toward the east and/or south.

Possibly the most prominent of these was the location of Lincoln's suburbs. The successful ones were all east of town. As they grew, and their traffic into Lincoln increased, electric street car lines were set up connecting them to Lincoln. Residential settlement occurred along the street car lines, Lincoln grew, eventually annexed them and, voila, eastward growth.

Hoyt describes two conditions of residential growth that may well have been operative in early Lincoln. First, recall that a premise of his theory is that higher priced housing is a pathfinder, clearing new ground. Then, recall that two of his conditions that govern the direction of growth are that high-priced neighborhoods grow toward homes of community leaders and also grow toward open country.
In Lincoln, the governor's mansion was located at 15th and "H" streets, already a pricey neighborhood, and many prominent citizens followed suit, building homes in that area. From there, if growth was motivated toward open ground, it was a movement east and south, into the Mount Emerald District.

Finally, the presence of certain services and amenities in Lincoln was weighted heavily toward the south and east.

During the 1920s Lincoln's two most prominent country clubs found permanent homes. The site for the Lincoln Country Club was almost on the city's then southern edge, and the Hillcrest Country Club's location was far east of Lincoln's then eastern border.

All of Lincoln's hospitals are situated toward the south and/or east sections of town. St. Elizabeth's located at 11th and South streets in 1889. Bryan Memorial Hospital at 48th and Sumner streets and Lincoln General at 15th and South streets would follow in the mid-1920s.

An additional factor that exercises a negative influence on concentric development has been introduced by Lincoln's airport. The take-off and landing patterns used by aircraft have them
flying low and directly over the southwest part of town. The excessive noise, especially that associated with take-offs has lead to some land in this area being unsuitable for residences.

Scrutiny of historical influences on growth in Lincoln reveals a number of factors that would tend to influence development away from the west and toward the other points of the compass.

What then of the vital central business district so necessary to concentric growth? If tradition, preference and market forces pull development to the east and south can a central downtown core remain viable?

Maybe, but at least two things have to happen. First, The city has to adopt a good comprehensive plan containing sound advice on the community's capacity for and location of retail and office development. Second, the city has to follow the plan.

The 1961 Comprehensive Plan assumed and advocated continued retail and office supremacy for the downtown. It was more apprehensive about the decentralization of office space than it was about retail leakage. The plan classified downtown as a regional center, and Gateway as one of seven major centers, co-equal with, among others, College View, Havelock and University Place. A
major center was to contain 100,000 to 250,000 square feet of floor space devoted to business purposes.

A 1965 floor area survey by the City Planning Department showed Gateway with 390,884 square feet of retail floor area, 50 percent more than the limit in the 1961 plan. By 1973, according to another Planning Department survey, retail floor area in Gateway had expanded to 754,567 square feet, more than double the 1965 total, and three times greater than the limit projected in the 1961 Comprehensive Plan.

It seems it was during this span of time that the city lost control of retail development in east Lincoln. In 1965, Gateway contained approximately one-sixth of the amount of retail floor space as was found in the CBD. By 1973, although total retail floor area for the city had increased, downtown's share had decreased and Gateway's had increased to more than one-third of Lincoln Center's total.

These were the crucial years. The city should have acknowledged that residential growth was overwhelmingly toward the east, and that a large suburban center was needed to fulfill retail needs. What was needed by the urban fabric was a policy
that established a limit to growth, a ceiling on retail expansion in east Lincoln. Further retail development could have been funneled into alternate areas, such as the existing neighborhood retail centers. These decisions were not made.

The years between the 1959 and 1973 surveys saw a 15 percent decrease in downtown’s share of total office floor area, from 75 percent to 60 percent, while the total itself increased from 1,725,180 square feet to 2,314,072 square feet, a 34 percent jump.

Lincoln’s next comprehensive plan was written in 1977. By this time, Gateway and downtown were viewed as co-equal, classified as major multi-use centers, and four other multi-use centers were projected. The plan considered all five outlying centers subservient to Lincoln Center.

A Planning Department floor area survey performed in 1978 found that Gateway contained 905,852 square feet of retail floor space. A 1985 survey reported 1,022,749 square feet of retail floor space in Gateway. This gain, of roughly 100,000 square feet, occurred over a time span that saw the city’s total retail floor area increase by more than 2,000,000 square feet, from 6,554,017 to 8,719,093 square feet. Perhaps the plan was being implemented. Perhaps not.
Coincidentally, 1985 was the year of Lincoln's next comprehensive plan. A look at that plan reveals that the east Lincoln retail nucleus was now known as Gateway-East Park, and that this complex and Lincoln Center were classified as regional multi-use centers and the other planned centers were community multi-use centers. What happened?

What happened was that in 1977 another retail area called East Park, east of and adjacent to Gateway, appeared. The Planning Department designation of this area for floor area surveys is East Park and 70th and "0".

The 1977 plan projected that the largest of the planned multi-use centers would contain a total of 400,000 square feet of gross leaseable retail floor area, and total city- or area-wide square footage for new multi-use centers would be 1,100,000 square feet. According to the same floor area surveys cited in this and the last chapter, in 1978, the East Park-70th and "0" area contained 131,329 square feet of total retail floor area, and that figure grew to 454,634 square feet, an increase of 300,000 square feet, by 1985.

In other words, this area contained, by 1985, more than 300,000 square feet of multi-use floor
area out of a city-wide need of 1,100,000 square feet projected for the year 2000. More than one-fourth of the 1977 plan’s projected multi-use need for the year 2000 was in place across the street from and in the environs of Gateway by 1985.

Additionally, the 1978 and 1985 floor area surveys trace Lincoln Center’s continually decreasing share of total city-wide office floor space.

It appears the city’s 1961 and 1977 comprehensive plans were implemented on a future land use policy not based in reality.

In 1961 Lincoln’s downtown was strong, but pressure for a major shopping nucleus in east Lincoln was evident. The 1961 comprehensive plan failed to predict that growth, and subsequently assigned an invalid growth paradigm to the city. Had the plan projected multiple-nuclei rather than concentric growth as a developmental model, it would have been possible to deal with Gateway and Lincoln Center as co-equals and more successfully integrate retail expansion throughout the city.

This was not done, Lincoln was given a growth model more wishful than real, and twenty-five years later, the city has little or no more concentric growth than in 1961, and a
commercial/retail sprawl that is probably irreversible.

The 1985 Comprehensive Plan essentially updates and echoes the 1977 plan, a main variation being the upgrading of Lincoln Center and the Gateway-East Park complex mentioned earlier. What of the future and chances of success for the 1985 plan?

It is too early to tell, really, but before discussing the possibilities, the author wants to state that the preceding exposition is in no way an indictment of the Planning Department for the city of Lincoln. The department is staffed by a team of competent professional planners who would like nothing more than to see implementation of Lincoln’s comprehensive plan.

The planning staff is crippled by a policy-enforcing body, the City Council, that in the past seemed more interested in growth at any cost, regardless of the comprehensive planning process.

The council, though, is a reflection of its constituents and perhaps Lincoln is getting the type of government and laissez-faire planning policies it deserves.

Now, to the future. It is a future ripe with possibilities, both good and bad.

In the asset column are downtown
redevelopment, the West Bypass and a newly elected City Council. Downtown once again could become a vital, exciting urban center with the right synergistic mix of retail, office and entertainment functions necessary to generate an identity rather than be a mere collection of buildings. The West Bypass could encourage subdivisions in the southwest quadrant balancing to a degree Lincoln's residential land-use pattern. Finally, the current City Council could prove more amenable to planned comprehensive development than some of its predecessors.

In the liability column we have the forces of inertia and momentum, absentee ownership and, again, downtown redevelopment. The momentum of incremental decision-making in relation to city-wide office and retail expansion has been building for at least 20 years. The City Council, as a policy-enforcing body has been inert equally as long. Both Gateway and East Park are now under absentee ownership - Gateway by Jacobs, Visconi and Jacobs Co. of Cleveland, and East Park by HCW Realty Investors of Boston and Management Inc. of Omaha. It is reasonable to expect less Lincoln-oriented retail and growth policies from these shopping areas, now than when they were locally
Actually, downtown might also be owned by outsiders, Taubman Co. Inc. of Michigan. That is one problem, but an additional liability is one of design. It is possible that the firm will transplant the sterile, antiseptic atmosphere of a suburban mall into downtown, a form without human scale and without reference to the existing street fabric, creating a place without identity, only with mass.

Is concentric growth a fading dream? The potentials exist to go either way, fading dream or reality. Will it be, as the 1985 Comprehensive Plan says: "Commercial growth must pursue a course that emphasizes longterm shared benefits, not the immediacy of speculative development," stressing cooperation among public and private interests? Or, will it be as the Planning Commission member said concerning change-of-zone request #1047, "the City Council will approve it anyway, so we might as well."

An active and informed citizenry, or an apathetic one, may well tip the scales.
End Notes


4. Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department, Lincoln-Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan (Lincoln, Neb.: Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department, 1985), p. iii.
APPENDIX
ELECTRIC STREET CAR LINES

--- STREET CAR LINES

MAP No 1
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Lincoln City-Lancaster County Planning Department. "Change of Zone Application Monitoring File."


