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Mayor Accepts Deed To Prairie Near Pioneers Park

Mayor Coleen J. Seng today accepted the deed to 230 acres of rare, native prairie land west of Pioneers Park from the Lincoln Parks Foundation. The presentation was made by Foundation President Clancy Woolman at today's meeting of the Mayor's Environmental Advisory Committee.

"The City is committed to preserving native prairie for the future families of our community," said Mayor Seng. "This is the last remaining native prairie adjacent to Pioneers Park, so it is a wonderful addition to one of Lincoln's favorite spots. This would not have been possible without the work of the Lincoln Parks Foundation, which enabled us to add this land to our parks system at a great savings for taxpayers."

In June 2005, the Lincoln Parks Foundation purchased the land for \$1.26 million. By working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture to secure a grassland reserve program easement, the Foundation was able to transfer the deed to the City for about \$182,500, saving taxpayers about \$1.08 million. Much of the City's cost will be funded through donations and grants.

The land was owned by the Martin family, and the Mayor thanked family members for their cooperation on park enhancement. In 1997, the City acquired 157 acres west of Pioneers Park from David and Bonnie Martin. In 1999, the City acquire another 80 acres from the Martin estate. The new 230 acres were acquired from the Martin's children – David C. Martin, Sony Lowery and Carole James.

"These 230 acres of land were a very important addition to the park," Woolman said. "We are thrilled that the Lincoln Parks Foundation was able to partner with the City of Lincoln, the Friends of the Pioneers Park Nature Center, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, donors to the Lincoln Cares Program, Lancaster County and the Lower Platte South Natural Resources District to see this native land preserved for future generations to enjoy."

The Lincoln Parks Foundation was founded in 1993 to enhance the City Parks and Recreation Department by securing, managing and allocating private funding. The mission of the Foundation is to provide funding "over and above" that provided by City tax dollars. The Foundation recently spearheaded the effort to raise \$1.7 million to renovate, restore and preserve the Sunken Gardens. The Foundation currently is working with community partners to raise funds to renovate the Antelope Park Rose Garden and the historic Sherman Field baseball park.