

Group forms to push parks bond

By the Lincoln Journal Star

A new group called "Vote for Lincoln's Parks" has formed to promote a yes vote on the parks bond issue during the May 9 primary election.

Voters will be asked to approve a \$2.7 million bond issue to buy about 130 acres of land north of the planned South Beltway, a four-lane freeway that will be built south of Lincoln. Construction of the beltway is expected to begin in 2008 and last five or six years.

The parks department has proposed that the city preserve land for a linear park similar to the one north of Nebraska 2 between 17th and 56th streets and Roper Park along Interstate 180.

The park land would be developed after the beltway is completed. The \$2.7 million would only cover the cost of the land. The cost to develop trails and park areas would come from tax dollars, grants and donations.

The group promoting the bond issue is chaired by Jerry Hoffman, a member of Citizens for Quality Parks and Trails, a group that formed last year out of concern that the city's parks and recreation system is not being adequately maintained. The bond issue group is co-chaired by former Mayor Helen Boosalis and Jim Mastera, recently retired vice president of Cornhusker Bank.

They said buying the land now, in conjunction with the state Department of Roads, will save more than \$5 million and preserve critical green space.

"If we wait until the Beltway is completed, it will be too late to preserve significant portions of the green space and taxpayer costs will be much higher," Hoffman said in a press release.

Boosalis said the project will "provide a legacy for our children and grandchildren."

"Generations of Lincolniters have enjoyed their parks, trails, and green spaces because of the foresight of those who came before us. Now it is time for our generation to leave a once-in-a-lifetime legacy for those who follow."

City Councilman Dan Marvin also attended the campaign kickoff, saying the city should buy the land now to save taxpayer dollars later.

"At a cost of less than \$1.60 per year to the average family, we can preserve green space and parks for the next generation," he said.

Jason Albers, a community leader and active supporter of parks and trails, said the project embraces the principles of smart planning, because the green space will be a buffer between homes and the beltway.

Meeting tonight

The "Vote for Lincoln's Parks" campaign will hold a kick-off to provide more information to the public Thursday at Yia Yia's pizzeria, 1435 O St., from 5 to 7 p.m.