

YOUR VIEW

08/08/08

Make necessary decisions

NORFOLK — I have had the opportunity to work with a lot of dedicated Norfolkers serving on committees to explore the possibilities river development would open for the city and our region.

I recently attended a presentation by HDR, the architectural/engineering firm chosen to do a master plan for the river. Its representatives mentioned some of the incredible benefits realized by communities that started this type of development.

I also attended a finance committee meeting of the Norfolk City Council where several representatives of the NorthFork Development Foundation made a request for city involvement in this project. The mayor made a comment about "a lot of people have their hands out." But this committee is not asking for a handout. It is asking the city for an investment in a development that would enhance the city.

The NorthFork Development Finance Committee is doing its own fundraising to provide money for this project. All of those funds are going to be returned to the city in the form of helping our community's progress. The foundation is only asking the city to make the same effort in investing in Norfolk that the citizens are making.

As a teacher and the mother of three sons in college, I think we need to start investing in Norfolk so we can create the kind of community that perhaps my boys will want to return to after college. It's difficult to see so many past students leave town because we didn't do everything in our power to keep them here. It would be nice to use the knowledge they gained through our school system to continue efforts for city improvement.

Instead of reading where Madison County has nearly the highest percentage of elderly in the country and the biggest decrease in population for a city of our size, I would rather read we have the biggest influx of young families. J. Paul McIntosh mentioned in his presentation that if we don't start providing the lifestyle that young workers require we won't be able to fill the jobs we already have, much less the jobs that will be created by bringing in new industry.

I think it's time for our city council to recognize this worthwhile investment opportunity and make the decisions that are necessary if we want to grow.

LORRI PORN

Be proud once again

NORFOLK — When I was a little girl, I was proud to be a part of Norfolk, Neb. Norfolk was known and proud to be a dynamic entity of growth and progress. Communities like Columbus now are stealing the glory that Norfolk once had. Once the meat-packing plant in town shut down, and then shut down again, the Norfolk economy was hurt. Some people got jobs at different locations in the area, a lot moved away. Those people that left had no reason to stay.

Norfolk has gotten itself in a rut. Nothing new, nothing exciting has come to this once great city of ours. Nothing is keeping the community thriving. The community of strength is becoming weak.

But there is a force driving its way through the city. It's been there since the beginning. It was the inspiration for the original name of the city — the North Fork of the Elkhorn River. The river is flowing in our back yards and in the back of our minds: The reality is Norfolk turned its back on the river that started it all.

There is a way to give back to this community. There is a way to build up this city and bring Norfolk up to its full potential. The economic machine of Norfolk needs a jump start and a community of strength has the power to do just that. All it takes is a little bit of imagination.

Imagine talking a stroll down by the river. As you are walking along, you are looking up and across the river seeing all the people that are joining you in your stroll. After walking for a few minutes you realize it is about time for lunch and you walk a few feet to your favorite outside dining café. While you are enjoying your lunch, you sit and enjoy the hustle and bustle of passers-by and the sound of the river flowing 20 feet away from you.

You read in the Norfolk newspaper that your favorite author just came out with another best seller and you head a few doors down to the bookstore. Then you remember your forgot your mother's birthday. That is OK, though, because there is a gift shop on the way to the bookstore.

You step into your newly built apartment. You go to the balcony and open up the French doors to let in fresh air. Out on your balcony, you sit watching the people and listening to the subtle sounds of the river below you. What a perfect way to enjoy your time off and relax.

Norfolk has the potential to offer great amenities to keep people here, to bring people back to live and offer tourists a reason to visit. Jobs can be created and companies will move in. Norfolk will once again become that powerful, growing, progressive entity.

If you share my vision or have a vision of your own, contact your city council representative and tell them what you see and to vote yes to help fund the river walk project.

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