**OFFICE OF THE MAYOR**

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**Mayor Issues Statement on Wilderness Crossing Development**

Mayor Leirion Gaylor Baird today issued the following statement on the Wilderness Crossing development.

“As we work to grow a more successful, secure, and shared future for all who call Lincoln home, we must acknowledge that our community rests on the ancestral lands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Oto-Missouria, Umonhon (Omaha), Dakota, Lakota, Arapaho, Tsististas and Suhtai (Cheyenne), and Kaw Peoples (Kansa), as well as the relocated Ho-Chunk (Winnebago), Isanti (Santee Dakota), Ioway, and Sac and Fox Peoples past and present. We must honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations and commit to working in partnership with our Indigenous Peoples, continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we now inhabit as well.

“At the City of Lincoln, stewardship of local land focuses on maintaining our vibrant public parks and facilitating thoughtful development of private property in order to create more housing, a high quality of life, and economic opportunities for our residents. For decades, the City has worked to ensure that, as Lincoln grows around Wilderness Park, development adjacent to the park contains buffers and setbacks that protect the park and park uses. Lincoln Southwest High School, Cooper YMCA, and Horizons business park are just a few examples of development adjacent to the park that utilize setbacks and buffering in order to protect the park and neighboring properties. The Wilderness Crossing residential neighborhood proposal has followed that process and contains many similar design considerations, including open land buffers, fences, lighting restrictions, landscaping, relocation of an existing street, and tree plantings to create distance between and mitigate the impact of the development on neighboring private properties, and the park.

“These modifications to the design of Wilderness Crossing represent the responsiveness of the developer and City planners to issues raised by concerned community members, Friends of Wilderness Park, and Native American leaders who practice sacred ceremonial rituals in the sweat lodge located across the street from the development. As the City has worked to help these neighboring land uses co-exist, a key consideration has been that Wilderness Crossing is on a neighboring farm property – not on park land nor the private property on which the sweat lodge sits. The owner of the property to be developed and the owner of the property that includes the sweat lodge both have the right to use their land as they wish within guidelines. I appreciate those involved talking with me so I could more fully understand their concerns about the proposed new neighborhood and homes, and I look forward to continuing the important conversation Native leaders and I had yesterday as we work together to build a more inclusive community where all feel seen and heard.

“After seeing and hearing the many caring perspectives of our community and after thoughtful consideration, I am signing the legislation supporting Wilderness Crossing. As our city grows, new neighborhoods will continue to be built next to existing neighborhoods, community amenities, and places of worship. When that happens, the City will continue to listen to community concerns, then use thoughtful zoning policies and the Comprehensive Plan to help neighbors find meaningful ways to live and grow together.”