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City's planning director, Marvin Krout, dies

By NANCY HICKS / Lincoln Journal Star Nov 20, 2014



Planning Director Marvin Krout

Courtesy photo

Marvin Krout was a healer.

When he came to Lincoln 12 years ago to become planning director for the city, there was tension between the development community and city officials.

Krout listened, eliminating many of the bureaucratic delay and much of the red tape while staying true to planning principles, said Tom Huston, a Lincoln attorney who represents developers.

Today, he said, the relationship between developers and the city is much less adversarial because of Krout's approach, Huston said.

Krout, 68, died Thursday morning after a brief illness.

"Lincoln has lost a true and valued friend," Mayor Chris Be





Mayor candidate Rene Solc will get a meeting with Beutler



Cary to continue as interim planning department head

said in a news release. "Marvin Krout had a powerful mind and a long-range vision for what our community could be.

"His attention to detail, visionary ideas and hard work will continue to have an impact on our community far into the future."

Krout, hired by Mayor Don Wesely, had master's degrees in city planning and in architecture, both from the University of Pennsylvania.

He came from Wichita, Kansas, to lead the Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department in 2002.

"He was very calm in a high-pressure job, always reasonable and thoughtful," said Wesely. "There had been times in the past when the planning director was very controversial. But Marvin's style was a good fit for Lincoln. He worked well with everyone."

Veteran Lancaster County Commissioner Larry Hudkins, who has had some battles with planning over the years, said he respected Krout's wealth of knowledge and appreciated his concern with county as well as city issues.

"Instead of being confrontational, Krout said, 'Let's look at things we can agree on and go from there,'" said Hudkins. "He was a fine, fine gentleman, and this reminds us all how fragile life is."

Mike DeKalb, who retired from the Planning Department ten years ago, described Krout as a Renaissance man.

He had very high standards, DeKalb said. The department could accept no gifts, in order to make sure it stayed above

suspicion. Even a box of cookies was sent back, he said.

Krout was respected by both developers and neighborhood advocates, groups that often have very different attitudes about what is good for the city.

Cathy Beecham, a neighborhood advocate and member of the Planning Commission, said, "Marvin believed that neighborhoods form the heart of our community and work incredibly hard to ensure that Lincoln's neighborhoods are walkable, with a sense of place and easy access to resources."

Krout was fair-minded, helpful and knowledgeable, said Tim Francis, with the Capitol View Neighborhood Association.

"He had the interest of the city as a whole at heart. The city really sustained a loss," he said.

From beautiful landscaping to pedestrian-friendly street frontages with windows, not walls, facing the street, Krout's fingerprints are all over Lincoln, said Leirion Gaylor Baird, a member of the City Council and former planning commissioner.

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Nancy Hicks reports on Lincoln city government, but she's been following the leaders of local and state government for more than 40 years.