

## J. SCOTT CHRISTIANSON

### Forum offers opportunity to rethink growth, development



A recent airplane ride over Columbia and Boone County really brought home to me how fast the area is growing. We flew over housing developments that I didn't even realize existed and saw many new subdivisions under construction. It seems increasingly hard for the average Columbian to even keep up with changes in the community, let alone speak out about growth and development issues.

No doubt many people find the pace of growth in the county alarming. The dialogue in the Tribune's pages, at various meetings and within local government seems centered on how we can achieve "controlled growth." Instead, we should rethink growth and development at a more basic level.

One of the main problems I see in the dialogue about our community's rapid growth is that we often fail to recognize the difference between growth and development. Growth is an increase in size or mass. Development is an increase in quality.

A good illustration of the difference can be seen in the changes human bodies undergo. In our early years, we grow and develop at a rapid rate. At the end of the teenage years, most people stop growing in size, but continue to develop intellectually, sociologically and spiritually. If our bodies continued growing at the same pace they did during our teens, it would be unhealthy — our internal support systems would be unable to sustain such large bodies.

A simple axiom is that growth makes things bigger, development makes things better.

Beyond a certain point, the growth of Columbia only benefits a small segment of our community, while reducing quality of life for the rest. Development, however, benefits us all. If we and future generations of Columbians are to have high-quality lives, we should restrict community growth and focus on development.

As author Donella Meadows concluded, "Although there are limits to growth, there need be no limits to development."

#### PUBLIC FORUM

The League of Women Voters, the Tribune and the Sierra Club will sponsor a forum on growth and development in Boone County at 7:30 p.m. Oct. 4 at Calvary Episcopal Church, 123 S. Ninth St. This is a great opportunity to ask questions of a panel of four knowledgeable citizens with different viewpoints on the issues.

The panelists are John John, a local Realtor and a member of the city Planning and Zoning Commission; Jeff Barrow, candidate for Southern District county commissioner and chair of the Program Development Committee of the Mid-Missouri Greenbelt Coalition; Bob Pugh, president of Citizens for a Better Community and a former Columbia mayor; and Ken Midkiff, chapter program director for the Sierra Club in Missouri.

The forum will be moderated by the League of Women Voters. Questions and answers will follow brief remarks from each panelist.

For more information, call the league at 443-3445.