

City farming: Will it grow?

Kaki Rusmore's classroom has a dirt floor and plastic roof.

All it needs now is to be filled—with plants, not students.

Rusmore offers a course in Urban Farming to University students, and, while the class itself is new, the idea isn't. Gardening of one sort or another has been offered in the landscape architecture department's plot of land near the Millrace.

While the other classes have dealt with the cultivation of outside produce such as vegetables and fruits, Rusmore's class has taken a new turn—inside.

"We are concentrating primarily on greenhouse plants," she says, "similar to something one might grow in a city where land is scarce."

Hence the title, Urban Farming.

Rusmore, who says the class is still open, is enthusiastic about this term.

"The students have already asked me what we can grow and when we can get started," she says. "One even wanted to know if we could try different varieties of mushrooms."

The types of produce that the class will grow will depend upon the final consensus of the group, although Rusmore says there will be plenty of room for individuality.

Other classes sponsored by the landscape architecture department are offered in the fall and spring, Rusmore explains. Hers, she says, is "sort of a continuation."

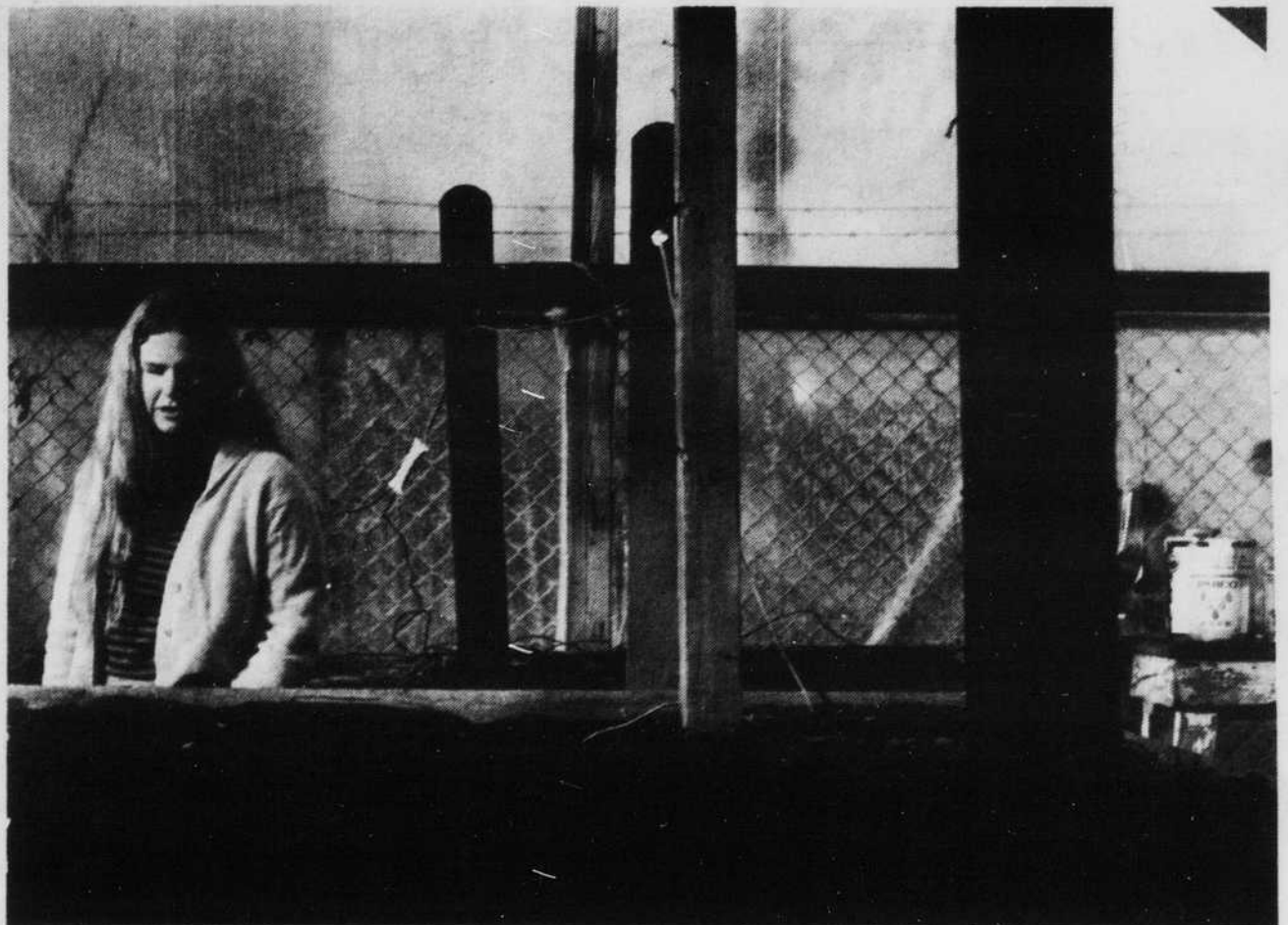


Photo by Greg Clark
What is now an empty greenhouse will be full of plants (and students) in a few weeks.

Health agency draws debate

By TOM JACKSON
Of the Emerald

A new health planning agency has been proposed to improve health care in Western Oregon, but it has become the subject of criticism from persons who feel that it would not be accountable to the people.

The proposal is a result of the efforts of the Western Oregon Health Systems Agency Development Project and the Lane Council of Governments (L-COG).

These two organizations are trying to develop a Health Systems Agency (HSA) that is agreeable and acceptable to all persons concerned, including physicians and other providers of health care as well as the general public.

Jeri O'Brien, director of public affairs of L-COG, said L-COG is "concerned about accountability," but favors the concept of a HSA. He declined to speculate on the long-range effects of the HSA,

saying that it is a very complex agency and it would be difficult to predict the future of it.

"I think that people are looking at it positively," said O'Brien.

But Lane County Commissioner Bob Wood is more aggressive in his criticism of the HSA. Wood is concerned about the lack of public interest and education about the HSA, and about accountability and the future of the agency. "It could become a viable, powerful agency, or it could become a chaotic tug-and-pull situation," said Wood.

"As it is structured, I am totally opposed to the HSA," he said.

The proposal to develop an HSA is a result of the National Health Planning and Resources Development Act of 1974. It is also a result of congressional findings that the public must have equal access to quality health care, that existing systems have not achieved such access, and that attempts to achieve access have failed. Congress also recognizes that health care costs have risen

uncontrollably, that providers of health care must play an active role, and that the public must have knowledge of how to use and obtain maximum benefit from the health system.

Under the existing proposal, there would be three HSA's in Oregon, one each for northwest, eastern and western Oregon. The three HSAs would be responsible for approving or disapproving federal funds for health facilities, for reviewing facilities for appropriateness, and for developing a long-range health plan.

These agencies would be under a statewide Health Coordinating Council, which in turn would be accountable to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW). The Western Oregon HSA Development Project will be applying to HEW for federal funding.

The HSA steering committee will meet on Thursday at 7 p.m. in the Pacific First Federal Savings and Loan, 640 North A St., Springfield.

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