

Historic status draws neighbors' concern

By CHARLENE BELL
Of The Emerald

A proposed historic landmark district in the South University Neighborhood may cause problems, say some South University Neighborhood Association members.

Neighbors are concerned that a historic designation would include strict guidelines on the maintenance of existing structures in the area — as well as the construction of new buildings — to maintain the neighborhood's historic quality.

SUNA members submitted a petition to the Eugene Historic Review Board last October that called for the granting of historic status to the landmark district.

The petition, signed by 70 percent of the area's property owners, proposed that the area along University and Potter Streets between 8th and 23rd avenues be granted historic status to prevent further conversion of property to high-den-

sity student and multi-family housing. The neighbors claimed the nostalgic charm of the area warranted status as a historic landmark.

The guidelines would regulate decisions such as exterior finishes, house color, height, design and landscaping.

The degree of restriction would vary according to whether the building is considered historically significant, compatible, or incompatible with the area, as determined by the review board, according to city staff member Judith Rees.

A historic preservation specialist for Eugene, Rees has worked closely with SUNA members on the project since October.

The guidelines were not established until after the original supporters had signed the petition. Now some supporters fear the regulations would be too restrictive.

As a result, a group of residents circulated a second pe-

tition opposing the proposed status. The group is headed by attorney Akin Blitz, an area resident.

The petition was presented to the review board and has since been the subject of much attention — not all of it good, according to some residents.

"The dissenting groups didn't base their protests on a lot of accurate research," says resident Dan Childress.

Childress, an architect, was a member of the original committee that drafted the proposed design regulations. He says he foresees no problems with the guidelines that some residents are protesting.

The protest grew out of disagreement escalated by "more vocal residents," Childress says.

"People don't seem to be concerned about preserving the neighborhood anymore, or else they are worried about too much government involvement."

"The original proponents don't want to force the proposal down everyone's throats. We're at the point now where we just want to remain friends."

To complicate matters even more, the city staff says some of the signers of the opposing petition felt coerced to sign. A neighborhood poll will be taken to determine each property owners' position on the proposed designation, Rees says.

"The regulations for the University area are less restrictive than those of the East Skinner Butte area," she says.

The East Skinner Butte area currently is the only Eugene neighborhood with historic status.

"The city staff felt all along that a consensus had been reached with the residents. However, the board will act according to the neighborhood consensus reached after the poll," Rees says.

The review board then will

make a recommendation to the city council, which has the power to designate historic status, she says.

A meeting will be held on May 20 at Edison School for SUNA residents to discuss the results of the poll and to ask questions.

Committee can waive rules for graduation

When graduation nears, students sometimes find they haven't met all the requirements. But that doesn't necessarily mean another term of school.

The Academic Requirements Committee meets each term to determine exceptions to the University's graduation criteria.

The committee, which consists of eight faculty members and three students, devotes 90 percent of its time to reviewing student petitions for exception to graduation rules, says chairer Lewis Ward, a mathematics professor.

When students realize their transcripts may be deficient, they should confer initially with their counselors and the student administrative services at Oregon Hall, Ward advises.

"Many problems can be handled administratively, but unique situations often end up in front of the Academic Requirements Committee," he says.

The written student petitions are considered in executive session — the student never appears in person, Ward explains. For that reason, student petitions must be well documented, with comments from instructors and counselors when appropriate. Academic advisors can help students prepare their petitions.

"The committee is hard-nosed as a rule," Ward says. "We are very skeptical of the rationale behind a petition, but we try to understand all the factors involved and reach a fair decision."

The committee frequently decides on elaborate petitions concerning lower-division and upper-division course requirements or the comparability of a course at one university to a similar course in the University curriculum.

In other cases, the request is as simple as asking permission to drop a course after the term deadline.

"We want to be sensitive when a hardship really exists," Ward says of the committee's approach.

Ward says the committee's load grows as the school year progresses, becoming particularly heavy late in spring term. Students should keep track of their academic progress and have a degree analysis done occasionally to help pinpoint potential problem areas, he says.

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