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oregon daily
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Thursday, November 18, 1982

Eugene, Oregon

Volume 84, Number 55

A neighborhood with a plan

West University project may refine area, deter traffic

By David Brown
Of the Emerald

The West University Neighborhood recently completed five years of work on a long-range document outlining its growth. This article is the first of a two-part look at that group and its future.

The West University Neighbors organization has a plan. And if all goes well, the group soon will begin work on the many projects aimed at refining the quality of the neighborhood.

The neighbors organization may begin construction of a "woonerf" project — a state-of-the-art street design for managing traffic — next year if the City's Community Development Committee approves the allocation of Federal block grant money at 11:30 a.m. today.

That money is currently intended for development of family housing as part of a three-year neighborhood improvement program funded by the federal Housing and Urban Development Block Grant Program.

Family housing would help stabilize the neighborhood, says Marshall Landman, WUN administrator of the improvement program. Landman says short-term residents have taken over the neighborhood, which is bordered by Willamette Street on the west, Franklin Boulevard on the north, the University on the east and 19th Avenue on the south.

But the poor economic situation makes the marketing of new housing impractical, says Harold Lannom, chair of the WUN advisory group. WUN is asking that the money go towards woonerf construction, an aspect of WUN's improvement program.

The woonerf design — a Dutch concept — attempts to divert cross-town traffic from residential streets and to strengthen community aesthetics, Landman says.

The WUN refinement plan maps a core area of the neighborhood covering 15 blocks and is bounded by East 13th Avenue, East 18th Avenue, High Street and Patterson Street for Woonerf construction.

The plan enables the neighborhood to become eligible for special block grant funding, set guidelines for current improvements and set policies for future development.

The woonerf plan calls for construction of circular islands in the center of intersections of residential streets to block automobiles from racing straight through the area.

Unlike cement barriers, the islands would have vegetation, giving the intersection the appeal of a neighborhood square, Landman says.

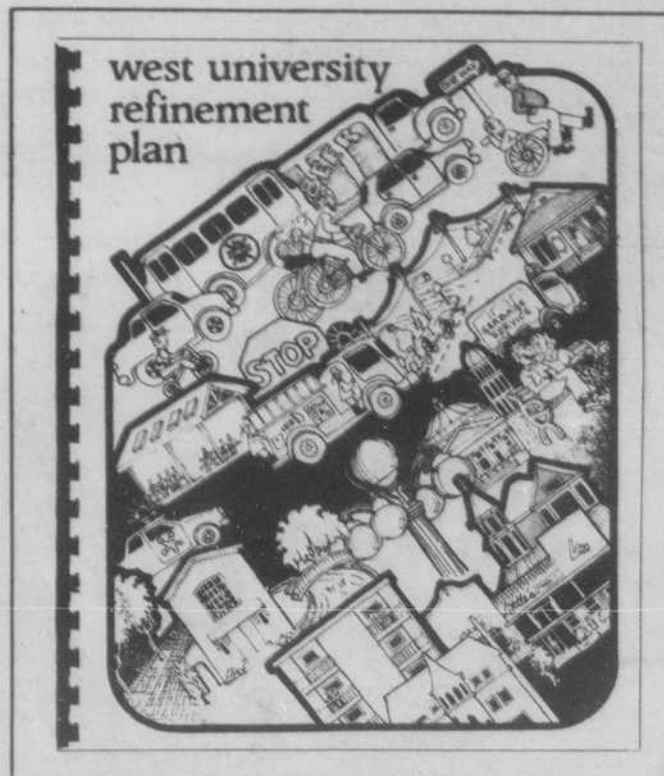
Woonerf also extends the sidewalks into residential streets as the streets approach major thoroughfares. Drivers would have to slow down around the protruding curb, according to the plan.

Such extensions might also provide opportunities for placement of grass, shrubs and benches, Landman says. The park-like greenery would make a visual statement to the driver that the area is somebody's neighborhood, he says.

And the woonerf design may decrease the number of traffic accidents. After circular islands were installed at 16 Seattle intersections, a study reported a 91-percent average decrease in traffic collisions at those intersections.

Woonerf also complements WUN's theory of "nodal" construction.

The best example of nodal development in the neighborhood are the tables and benches at 13th Avenue and Kincaid Street, Landman says. Everyone uses them, not just patrons of the tavern where the



benches are located, he says.

WUN members chose nodal development over construction of a second community-owned park.

Although neighbors were proud of the 14th Avenue park they completed in 1979 with the help of the University architecture department, they "realized that it was small," Landman says. It cost nearly \$170,000.

The neighbors decided to make the entire neighborhood more accessible through nodal development, he says. The development includes placing benches, waste baskets, bike racks and such items throughout the neighborhood, he says.

WUN's refinement plan also includes provisions for bus and bicycle transportation, land use and zoning, community services and guidelines for implementation.

Physical developments, however, comprise just one facet of neighborhood refinement. Community involvement, crime prevention and continuation of program funding are the subjects of the second part of this series.



Soviet head faces problems, profs say

By Dave Rodewald
Of the Emerald

Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev board a train.

When the train does not move, Stalin says, "I'll fix this." He leaves the train, returns in five minutes and says, "I've fixed the problem. I have had the engineer, the conductor and the stationmaster shot."

But the train still does not move. Khrushchev leaves the train and returns 10 minutes later, saying, "I've fixed the problem. I have re-educated the engineer, the conductor and the stationmaster."

The train still does not move. Brezhnev says "I have a brilliant idea. Why don't we pull down the shades and pretend that the train is moving?"

This joke, brought out in Wednesday's panel discussion of Soviet Union after Leonid Brezhnev, helped drive home the point that the new leader's actions will be hard to predict.

Four University professors

gave their ideas on life after Brezhnev to a capacity crowd in 167 EMU. The Russian program sponsored the panel discussion.

"Is Andropov another Brezhnev who will bring more of the same stagnation or is he a reformist who will bring new innovative ideas — we don't know," said Russian prof. Frum Yurevich.

One reason the new leader's actions will be hard to predict is because there have been only four "changing of the guards," and no set pattern has emerged, said Joseph Fiszman, also a professor of Russian.

Fiszman said the Soviets have made a smooth transition of power after Brezhnev's death compared to previous violent and bloody transitions because they planned ahead.

The professors credit Brezhnev with establishing a more stable society than his predecessors, but they say the government is much more corrupt and lazy than before.

Who the new leader is irrelevant, but what he will



Photo by Mark Pynes

Frum Yurevich was one of four University professors who spoke to a packed audience Wednesday night on the problems facing Yuri Andropov, the man who has replaced Leonid Brezhnev.

have to face is, said Ronald Wixman, associate geography professor.

One problem the professors say the new leader will face is a weak economy caused by poor agriculture industry. The enormous food shortage the Soviets are experiencing can also be attributed to a poor agriculture, they said.

The new leader will also

have to deal with the problems of the Soviet Union's relationship with other countries like the United States, China, Afghanistan and Poland, they added.

Yuri Andropov, Brezhnev's replacement, will act in one of two ways, Fiszman said. Andropov will either continue on with Brezhnev's policies or he will make the "clean sweep"

that is necessary to get the country back on its feet again, he said.

But Americans should not rejoice in the Soviet's problems because the country's leaders may panic, said Alan Kimball, history professor.

"It (the Soviet Union) is a very big nation with its pudgy fingers on a lot of red buttons," Kimball said.