

Headway made in playground discussion

By Paula Green
Emerald Reporter

Area representatives and project staff members of the 19th and Agate Special Area Study met Saturday and discussed key issues in the proposal to make the area more economically viable.

Project representatives, which is investigating the conversion of Condon School playground into a parking lot for area businesses, also is exploring the possible creation of a special parking district, or ways to improve on-street parking availability and use.

Area residents have expressed concern about the proposed playground conversion as well as the proposed relocation of some playground equipment to nearby Washburn Park and the traffic congestion that could result from a proposed one-way conversion of the alley between 17th and 19th Avenues.

The playground conversion proposal also brought criticism from University Child Care and Development Centers Coordinator Dennis Reynolds, who wrote a letter presented at the meeting. The University maintains a child care program three blocks from Condon School, and that the playground "is a destination site for walks from our centers," he wrote.

"The loss or reduction in size of the Condon playground would be of detriment to the children in our program, and the proposal for paving the alley and reducing the playground size would make access a hazard," Reynolds' letter stated.

Reynolds also noted "The Condon School location is being considered as a possible future site for expansion of University child care services," and that conversion of the playground "would limit further exploration of this option."

In addition, the Fairmount Neighborhood Executive Board opposes the conversion.

The board has encouraged area business owners to offer incentives to employees and customers to utilize means of transportation other than the automobile.

The board also recommended a citizen task force be formed to discuss long-range planning and to seek solutions to parking and other problems in the area. The proposed task force will be composed of representative of

the 19th and Agate Group, East Campus Tenants Association, Fairmount Neighborhood Association, South University Neighborhood Association, the University and the City of Eugene.

Saturday's meeting allowed the groups to identify important issues surrounding the parking and playground proposals and help choose alternative issues for the 19th and Agate Special Area Study to pursue.

Solutions gaining the most support from representatives include designing a parking area oriented to the current "walker and biker" character, eliminating untimed parking on Agate Street, and prevention of through traffic in the alley east

of Condon.

One solution concerning the playground receiving support was building a better playground immediately south of the school and developing the southernmost area next to the businesses into 20 to 30 parking spaces. Another solution opted for shifting the current playground further north in the lot.

Teresa Bishow, 19th and Agate Special Area Study project staff member, said the ideas and resolutions reached at the meeting will be compiled and researched again by project staff members, who will then go back to the neighborhood groups and business groups with the proposals.

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