

# Accessibility improvements planned

## Amazon to be renovated for physically disabled

By Christopher Blair  
Emerald Contributor

The Eugene Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services (PRCS) department is currently planning a new specialized recreation center for people with disabilities — complete with a playground for alter-abled children — to be built next year at Amazon Park.

Two federal grants totaling \$405,000 awarded in Aug 1987 have made possible the construction and planning of the playground and a 5,800 square-foot facility, which will cater to the recreational needs of the disabled living in the Eugene area.

The current specialized recreation center, located at Washington Park is inaccessible to most people with disabilities, said developmental disabilities program coordinator Molly Cole.

The Eugene parks department instead evaluated seven existing sites owned by the city for a new site, including Campbell Senior Center, Lincoln School and Westmoreland Park, using criteria such as access to public transportation and existing accessibility, said PRCS Special Programs Director Mary Winston.

"It could be made accessible, but only at great cost," Cole said.

The committee selected Amazon Park after careful consultation with disabled groups and the general public, Winston said. Some of the reasons include the park's easy accessibility to bus stops, its proximity to area merchants, the University, LCC, the Amazon

development division.

The playground will be dominated by a central play structure, which will be equipped with wheelchair ramps, tire swings with leg straps and a platform swing for severely disabled children.

"We intend to accommodate as many types of disabilities as we can," Kroeck said. "We're going to be careful to avoid

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— Tim Shearer

pool, and the site's expansive area, Winston said.

One of the groups involved with the selection process, the Disabilities Advisory Coalition, was in favor of the site for these reasons.

"We're excited in that a lot of disabled folks are going to be able to involve themselves in a lot of different activities in a lot of different ways," coalition spokesperson Tim Shearer said. "It's going to be close to the swimming pool, close to the other park facilities, and it's close to the running tracks for

creating gaps or lips in the structure that would trip anyone or impair a wheelchair."

Proposals from architects for the recreation center will be accepted in the fall, with a groundbreaking ceremony expected next spring. Construction on the playground is expected to begin within two months.

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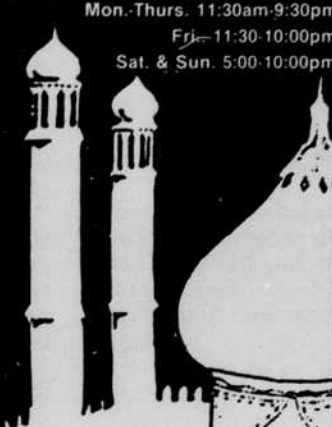
— Louis Kroeck

"It's the oldest building currently being used on a daily basis by the city," Cole said, adding that such drawbacks as street parking and a lack of total wheelchair accessibility make the location unsuitable as a recreation center for the disabled.

people who like to wheel."

The other new facility for the disabled at Amazon will be the "all child playground," a play structure designed for "integrated" use by both disabled and non-disabled children, said Louis Kroeck of the parks planning and

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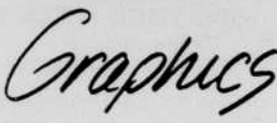
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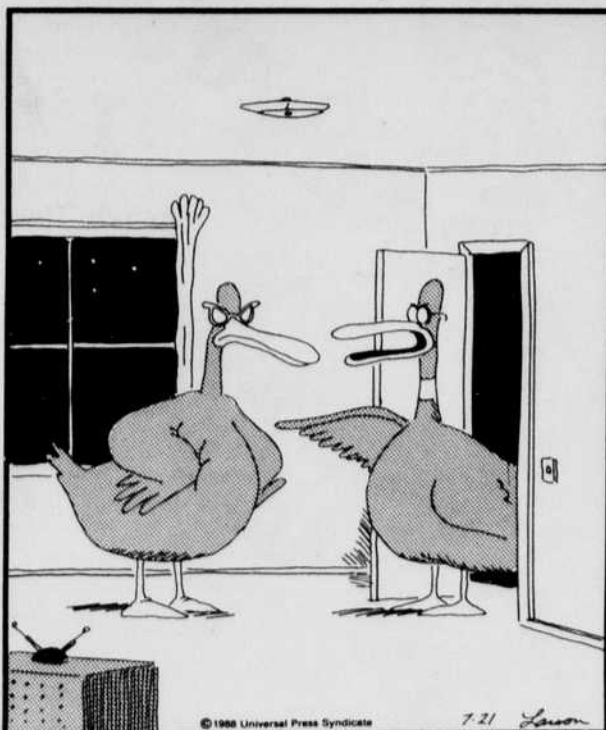
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By GARY LARSON



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