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Photo by Steve Card

Chi Psi fraternity will be one of many buildings declared historically significant if the Millrace is classified as a historic district.

## Millrace may earn historic title Option causes controversy

By Sheri Metzler  
Emerald Contributor

Walk north along Alder or Hilyard Streets from campus and you will find the Millrace, a waterway that nowadays looks more like an eyesore than a historic part of the West University Neighborhood.

The Historic Review Board and Planning Commission is asking the City of Eugene to consider establishing a historic district for the Millrace and surrounding buildings. The boundaries of this district would stretch from Franklin Boulevard south to E. 12th Avenue and would encompass all of the buildings in the area.

Mike Shellenbarger, chair of the Historic Review Board for the City of Eugene, said the Millrace deserves to be declared a historic district.

"It was dug before the stagecoach arrived, before steamboats arrived and 20 years before the first train came to Eugene," Shellenbarger said. "It was built 25 years before Deady Hall, which started the whole University."

If the city makes this region into a historic district it is likely to increase the chances for other historic districts to be es-

tablished Shellenbarger said.

However, there is opposition to the establishment of a historic district, primarily because to change any of the buildings in the zone would require approval from the Historic Review Board. Shellenbarger says 50 percent of the property owners in the area must give their consent before the city can actually create a district.

Northwest Christian College is one property owner that does not want to become part of the district. James Womack, president of NCC, said the administration is not opposed to the historic preservation of the Millrace, but it does not want its buildings, 70 percent of which occupy the area in question, to be declared historic.

"It took us 60 years to accumulate the property we are now on and we want to redevelop it with facilities appropriate to a college campus," Womack said.

Womack said the preservation of the Millrace itself is not an issue with NCC.

"We have always assumed the Millrace would be there. We're perfectly willing to preserve the Millrace," he said.

Shellenbarger said the

Millrace is an important part of the history of Eugene.

"It's not just a ditch with water in it," he said, adding that it could be some time before the city makes a decision about making the area a historic district.

The Millrace has a colorful history. It was built in 1851 by Hilyard Shaw and Avery Smith as a water power source for industrial development and irrigation.

Recreational use of the Millrace began with ice skating in 1884, followed by the popularity of boating and canoeing. The area around it became a fashionable place to live, according to a City of Eugene pamphlet entitled "West University Neighborhood."

In 1927, a flood caused major damage to the Millrace. Although it was repaired, electricity and automobiles were now available and the main functions of the waterway ceased. By the 1950s the Millrace was partly covered and fell into disrepair.

In recent years, there have been some efforts to clean up the Millrace. Meanwhile, University students, Eugene residents and area visitors continue using the waterway for recreational purposes.



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