

Future of Razor Park concerns locals

■ **ARENA:** Area residents are concerned the city's proposed soccer facility will ruin the ecosystem

By **Melissa Lebahn**
Community Reporter

Many in the River Road community oppose a city plan to build an indoor soccer facility at Razor Park because it is one of the only remaining large open spaces left in the area.

Several years ago, the city of Eugene began looking at Razor Park, a grassy meadow along the Willamette River about a half a mile from the Chambers Street connector, as a potential site for an indoor arena because of the distance to the next-nearest facility in Salem.

But some citizens who live around Razor Park have said the facility would overpopulate the area and depreciate its natural beauty.

In November 1994, the city identified the park as a potential site for a proposed indoor soccer facility. After a capability study, the city found the site to be economically feasible.

The city then proceeded to get a greenway permit, which protects the green land near the river, and later asked for an analysis of alternative sites for the soccer facility. In those findings an alternative site was found to be a better choice than Razor Park. However, last February, the hearings official granted a greenway permit to build at the park.

On March 4, the River Road Community signed an appeal against the use of the site. The community is waiting for the

Eugene Planning Commission to make a ruling on the appeal and the Eugene City Council, which has the power to act on the Commission's ruling.

Members of the community said they felt the placement of a soccer facility in Razor Park is inappropriate. They said the area should be cherished, preserved, enhanced and restored, not cluttered and polluted with a large, unattractive metal warehouse, a large paved parking lot and increased automobile traffic.

Becky Riley, the head of Friends of Razor Park Community, said the park is an open space and should remain open.

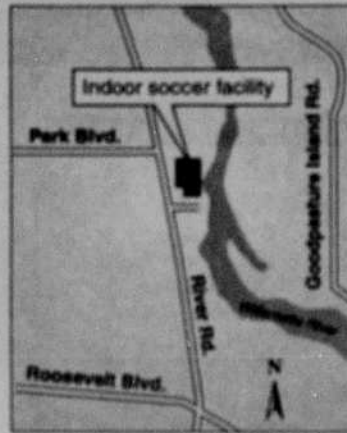
"It is a unique ecosystem on the river and should stay that way," Riley said.

The community claims the soccer facility would increase traffic and create safety problems. It would also increase noise, night-time lighting and litter around the facility, they said, and home property values and the value of the park would decrease.

The community suggested that rather than tearing up the park, the city should look for a place that already has a paved parking lot. They suggested the fairgrounds, constructing a dome over Autzen Stadium or use of the proposed private facility in Springfield.

Jim Johnson, director of Library Recreation and Cultural Services, said the fairgrounds would be an appropriate site, but the city would have to get approval from the fairgrounds' board of directors.

Doming Autzen Stadium, on the other hand, would be another



MATT GARTON/Emerald

er possibility, but it would cost more money than the city has planned for the project, Johnson said.

He said the problem with the proposed site in Springfield was that there isn't a guarantee that the facility would be there forever, whereas the facility at Razor Park would.

Barbara Keller, city councilwoman, said this facility would be a great opportunity for people to play soccer all year around.

"Not only is it a recreational facility, but it is an excellent recreational opportunity for kids and adults," Keller said.

She said the new facility would save the current soccer fields because during the winter, people can't play on the fields because it tears them up.

"This lot will be changing, but we will use less than 20 percent of the site — including the parking lot," Keller said. "It will still remain as park land, and it will link to a bike path. This facility can serve the whole city."

Sex offenders are raising area residents' concerns

■ **FORUM:** Police are not required to inform neighbors when criminals move in

By **Abe Estimada**
Community Reporter

Springfield resident Shawna Tallerday remembers the October day when her 15-year-old daughter was harassed by a convicted sex offender as she walked to her friend's house by herself.

"The one time she decided to walk without her pepper spray was the day she decided to walk by herself," Tallerday said. "He kept on coming and coming and trying to talk her into getting into his car. If she had pepper sprayed him, she would've been the one in trouble — not him."

Tallerday and her family immediately took action against the man, who lived just two blocks from their home.

Tallerday wrote an anonymous letter to the offender. She passed out fliers informing her neighbors that a sex offender lived near them. Because of the pressure from his neighbors, the offender moved out of the area just two weeks ago.

However, Tallerday and a group of Springfield residents vented their frustration during a public forum on Tuesday night with a justice system they said was too lax on sex offenders and gave them too few legal tools to protect themselves and their children.

"We're providing them with more services than I get, and they can turn around and hurt us," Tallerday said. "These people can pick up

on my daughter and get their sensations from that. It's frustrating to realize that we have the laws [on one side] and the morals [on the other]."

The number of sex offenders in the state and county, recited by Jeff Collins, a parole and probation officer with the Oregon Department of Corrections, alarmed the residents.

In Lane County alone, about 300 sex offenders live in the Eugene-Springfield area "under strict supervision," he said. Statewide, 3,000 sex offenders are on parole. Oregon's prisons hold 2,000 sex offenders, and within an average of six years, 98 percent of them are released.

"The reality is that when they come out, they have to live in our cities," Collins said. "I can't put them out in the countryside near the coyotes in Dexter. The bottom line is, they are free."

Coupled with a strict battery of parole regulations that severely limit the movement of convicted sex offenders within a community, the best way for residents to protect themselves is to become informed.

"Then you tell your kids, in the same way you tell them not to stick their finger in a light socket, you also tell them not to talk to strangers," Collins said.

Under current Oregon law, authorities are not required to inform the residents of a neighborhood if a sex offender is living in their midst. But this does not prevent residents from taking steps such as distributing fliers warning their neighbors of potential problems, Collins said.

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