

Group discusses fate of park

Some would like to see West University Neighborhood Park open once again

By Laura Cadiz
Oregon Daily Emerald

On 14th Avenue and Hilyard Street sits a plot of land that the city of Eugene and the West University neighborhood may have forgotten.

The West University Park has been closed indefinitely since November 1995 because of heavy criminal activity in the area that made it unsafe for neighborhood residents. For the last four years, there has been no agreement on the fate of the park.

But now, the West University Partners Group is discussing options for the park's future as part of an overall examination and plan for the West University neighborhood.

"I think it's extremely unfortunate that it's not being used," said Eugene City Councilman Bobby Lee, who is also the group's chairman.

The alternatives the group is discussing include reopening the park, creating another park at a new location or moving or building a facility to replace the park. The group wants to make a decision soon about the park, but no deadline has been set, Lee said.

Before any action can be taken, the group wants input from the residents, who are primarily composed of University students, Lee said.

"I think students appreciate the park," he said. "But I'm not sure the West University neighborhood as a whole has made good use of it."

Lee said he thinks there may not be a strong neighborhood consensus about the park because of the neighborhood's transitory nature, with students continually moving in and out between school years. He said students might develop more interest if they felt more ownership of the area.



Amanda Cowan/Emerald

West University Neighborhood Park, at 14th Avenue and Hilyard Street, has been closed since 1996.

"Most students don't see the West University neighborhood as their permanent home," he said.

Reopening and maintaining the park would cost several thousand dollars, said Andrea Riner, the city's parks planning manager. The city did not budget money for the park in its successful \$25.3 million parks and open spaces ballot measure in November because no one from the neighborhood voiced support for it, she said.

"We don't have the funding to bring it up to park standards," she said.

Riner said the park's closure created unusable open space in that area. But she said the residents have other nearby options, such as the University and Alton Baker Park.

The park was created in 1979, built with a small basketball court and gazebo. It created an environment for people to "hang out" that resulted in disruptive behavior, Eugene Police Spokeswoman Jan Power said. It became a place for aggressive pan handling and

drug deals, which Power said disrupts the residents' quality of life.

Eventually, the park ran out of options because of increased criminal activity; between 1990 and 1995, the number of crime cases in the neighborhood increased about 65 percent, from 1,513 to 2,490 incidents. Sixty percent of that increase was in behavioral crimes, which include drug abuse, disorderly conduct and liquor violations.

The last option was to close the park, Riner said.

"We don't like to do that," she said. "What was happening was contrary to what parks are supposed to be about."

Power said the criminal problems have reduced since the park closed. In 1998, there were 1,930 cases of reported crime in the neighborhood.

Lee said he agrees the park was closed for good reasons, but he said he still feels awful that it's a "dead" park.

"In a way, it's quite symbolic," Lee said. "It just demonstrates how poorly West University is being taken care of."

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University Senate OKs increased faculty reviews

The group recommends post-tenure evaluations every three years

By G. Jaros
Oregon Daily Emerald

The University Senate voted Wednesday to increase the frequency of post-tenure faculty reviews.

In a 19-9 vote, the senate approved a motion to increase the number of reviews from once every five years to once every three years, as well as a more substantive review every six years. The vote serves as a recommendation that is passed on to University President Dave Frohnmayer.

The reason for the policy change is that when the University received its accreditation report, the team that did the review wanted a more explicit third- and sixth-year post-tenure review, said Nathan Tublitz, a biology professor and senate member who helped draft the new review policy.

"What we did today is take the existing [post-tenure review] and make it more specific, basically adding a three-year review," Tublitz said. "The current document was every five years. We changed to a substantive review

every three years and a major review every six years."

"By implementing these third- and six-year reviews, the effect on students will be that it will continue to increase the quality of our faculty after tenure," Tublitz said. "For the vast majority of faculty, the effect will be minimal."

Student Senate President and University Senate member Michael Olson voted against the new policy. His concern centered around the third-year review.

"The plan focuses more on the 6th year, meaning the third-year review will happen, but not happen," Olson said. "My concern is that by only having a focus on the six-year review that input from students is more likely to get drowned out by the other criteria."

Another issue brought up during the Senate meeting was the Process for Change program. The program began last year as a way for the University to focus on students and their needs as well as upcoming changes in education practices and curriculum.

Nothing concrete was presented at Wednesday's meeting, but different ideas were discussed, including mandatory freshman focus groups and an advising week for sophomores.



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