

—*Mary O'Brien, Citizens for Public Accountability*

While the 1998 vote may not be a good measure of how citizens prioritize natural versus sports parks, a 1992 vote dealt more directly with the issue. In a countywide initiative, citizens voted by a wide margin to dedicate East Alton Baker Park as a natural area rather than building a golf course or soccer field complex.

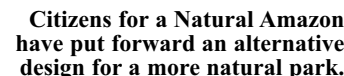
But sports boosters appear to have the city's ear on parks. Organized sports are by definition organized and as such are better able to lobby the city than large numbers of individual walkers, bikers, hikers and bird watchers, say natural parks advocates. Sports groups have shown up in force to city meetings to advocate for more ball fields instead of natural areas. Kidsports

The city should keep the interests of the general public ahead of organized special interests, Cauthorn says. "Not everybody recreates with balls," she says. "What's the greatest good for the community?"

The process for how the city decides to spend park money is dominated by city staff and isn't open or democratic, natural parks advocates complain.

"Not all projects are put on for public discussion," Riner says. For example, she

O'Brien says it's been too difficult for citizens to get information on how the city is spending taxpayer money on park creation and maintenance and for whom. "They don't have an accounting of what



People living near Amazon don't want more intensive sports development, Taylor says. "When they talk about putting in a big ball field for the people in north Eugene, if they want to use it, maybe it should be out there." —*Alan Pittman*