Eastern Washington University class takes on Cheney parks projects

By BECKY THOMAS  
Staff Reporter

Many college professors introduce hypothetical situations and pose theoretical problems to teach their students. But Eastern Washington University lecturer Chris Cindric is using Cheney itself as a model for teaching his students in his aptly named Recreation Facility Planning and Environmental Design class.

For the past few years, Cindric has worked with Cheney Parks and Recreation director Paul Simmons to design and plan the details of bringing new amenities to existing Cheney parks. This year, they took the collaboration one step further; Simmons produced a list of projects that were being considered as possibilities for the parks, including one that has already received funding.

The projects were assigned to small groups of students in January. During the week of March 12, Simmons and city elected officials viewed and judged the presentations.

Each project included an overview, needs assessment survey results, budgets, design plans, risk management plans, maps and references. The goal was to actually be able to implement the plans in the real world, in the real parks of Cheney.

The projects ranged in size and complexity, with smaller-scale works including wetlands trail signage and benches for the trails on city-owned land behind the wastewater treatment plant. This project has been funded by a grant and will be completed this year.

Larger projects included renovation of the city pool’s mechanical facilities and construction of new playgrounds.

Many students said they were more engaged in their projects because they had real-world implications. They said they thought more carefully about the budgets because they knew money in the Cheney Parks and Recreation budget was tight. Ultimately, being able to visualize their projects come to fruition increased “the buy-in,” Cindric said.

“Hopefully someday I can come back with family, kids, whatever and see my mark on Cheney,” one student said. “I can say, ‘I designed that.’”

Simmons said the students’ work would help the city seek grants for specific parks projects and define community demand for certain amenities. But perhaps just as important to Simmons is the collaboration between the city and the university.

“It just helps strengthen the community,” he said.

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The Ideas:

Hagelin Park Inclusive Playground—An inclusive playground to replace the existing playground at Hagelin Park. Designed to meet the physical, cognitive and social needs of all children.

Cheney Wetlands Trail—A trail with signs and benches highlighting the Cheney Wetlands Trail area off of Fish Lake Trail.

Cheney Pool Pump Renovation—Renovation of the Cheney outdoor pool mechanical room and pump facilities to make them more effective and cost efficient.

Disc Golf—A nine-hole disc-golf course located throughout three different Cheney parks: Salnave, Sutton and Moos Field.

Orchards Playground—The creation of a family park in the Orchards community in an existing drainage area.

Splash Pad—A zero-depth aquatic playground possibly located in the new 50-Acre park area.

Dog Park—A fenced-in, off-leash dog park where well-behaved canine citizens can exercise in a clean, safe vibrant environment.

50-Acre Park Perimeter Trail—A half-mile long perimeter trail encircling the new 50-Acre Park for activities such as running, biking and walking.

Cheney Intercity Trail System—An alleyway trail system that links Cheney parks together through use of a trail system created through the Cheney alleys.

Outdoor Fitness Stations—An outdoor exercise area at Centennial Park that features unique outdoor exercise machines.

Community Garden—A community garden located in Salnave Park.