

New park issues discussed

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Exactly when a proposed park on UISD property would be open to the public was just one of the main issues discussed at a town hall meeting held by Webb County Commissioner Jerry Garza on Tuesday.

The meeting was one of three scheduled to gain input from residents about the project tentatively scheduled for construction early next year.

"It doesn't make sense to build something and have the community not attend," Garza said.

The park, called the North Side International Park, would be built between Trautmann Elementary and Trautmann Middle schools on land donated by UISD. The site has raised some concern about how accessible the park would be to the public during school hours.

"I don't want the public to get the perception that the county is building facilities for the school district, because they're not," Garza said.

Some residents said it would make no sense to have a park that is off-limits during the day, citing people who may want to use the proposed hike-and-bike trail and grandparents who baby-sit their toddler grandchildren as examples of those affected if the park were closed to the public until school was let out.

Garza said many details about the project had yet to be worked out, including the hours the park would be available. He said whichever architect is hired to design the project would be instructed to compartmentalize the park to make the majority of it available to the public all day.

A skateboard park, an area for special-needs children and a live music area were also suggested for the project.

Angie Sanchez, whose daughter is blind, suggested the special-needs area and said Laredo lacks areas for all special-needs children, not just the visually impaired.

"I hope (the idea) is considered because it would be a first

for Laredo," Sanchez said.

Sylvia Treviño, who took three teenage skaters to the meeting, said she wanted something closer for her son and his friends as an alternative to driving to the closest skate park on McPherson Road.

Other suggestions included an emergency phone system to alert police immediately in case of an emergency, and recycling containers for patrons who have picnics at the park.

Parking, security and maintenance were also discussed, and Garza said all would be considered as plans for the park progressed. Garza added that a citizens' advisory committee would be formed to gain additional input from the community, and said e-mails would be sent out to alert those who attended the meeting about the park's progress.

Garza said the next step is for the Commissioners Court to award a bid to an architect firm for the park's design, which he said he hoped would be approved during the next two Commissioners Court meetings.