

Claire Linzee also attended a community garden summit, where Bobbie Wilson, National Community Garden Association President, based in Atlanta, spoke about legislative initiatives the organization has launched to provide fresh food to underserved communities. Christine Michael, leader of Clemens, gave a presentation on garden leadership.

Things are happening at other gardens, too. The decorative flower beds of Parkview Gardens have received their spring cleanup, including cutting back of last season's growth and mulching. Daffodil and crocus bulbs planted last fall have begun to pop up. Syracuse Garden thanks the gardeners who kept the birdfeeder full during this very cold winter. Clemens Garden thanks Claudia Barahnoa and Steve Kroiss, who made the new instruction sign for the compost bin. The University City Children's Center plans a field trip to Clemens, so the kids can see vegetables growing in a farm-like setting.

Around U. City

Sustainability & jobs

The Green Practices Committee of University City has been holding public meetings around town. The Committee encourages U. City's people, businesses and institutions to "integrate sustainability into every decision made, every action taken." Among areas that particularly call for attention are River des Peres flooding, air quality and mass transit, waste disposal and recycling. For more information on meetings past and future, go to ucitymo.org and click on the "Government" tab.

The U. City Job Fair for age 17 and older will be held from 11 am to 1 pm

Saturday, April 2 at Centennial Commons. Available jobs include lifeguard, summer camp counselor and desk clerk

How Walkable/ Bikeable Are We?

Trailnet checks us out

On Saturday Feb. 26, I joined a Walk Audit of Parkview Gardens conducted by Trailnet. About 30 volunteers, most of them Washington University students, took part. We met at the Regional Arts Commission, where Chris Colizza of Trailnet set forth the rationale. The environmental and health benefits of walking and biking vs. driving are well-known. The economic benefits are impressive too: the average American family spends one-fifth of their income on transportation, almost all on their cars. The costs of walking and biking are negligible. Being amenable to alternative transport has big benefits for a neighborhood, too. It's good for local businesses, because pedestrians and cyclists patronize them rather than the big box stores or malls. More people on the sidewalk and street reduce crime. Lastly, community feeling is enhanced by the chance encounters you just don't have when you're in a car.

We divided into 10 teams. Each was assigned part of Parkview Gardens to survey and given checklists to fill out. My team had the dubious honor of walking our least walkable street, Vernon Avenue. Closing the eastern section of Vernon was one of the goals agreed upon in the Parkview Gardens parks planning process conducted last year; until that happens, pedestrians are well advised to avoid this no-sidewalk, fast-traffic street. We, and

other teams, found that the neighborhood has plenty of streets that are safe and pleasant to walk or ride on.

There were trouble spots. On Olive, some auto repair shops have encroached on the sidewalks, making them impassable. In the western part of the neighborhood, sidewalks are narrow and blocked in spots by street fixtures, and curbs lined with parked cars obstruct vision. On stretches of Enright and Vernon, sidewalks are deteriorating. In the central part of the neighborhood, some sidewalks are blocked by tree detritus. The northeastern area has drainage problems and a lot of litter. Access to the Metrolink station is difficult. The bicycle teams commented on the total absence of bike lanes, even in areas signposted as bike routes. They found, unsurprisingly, that Olive and Delmar are bad streets to ride on.

I was surprised that the teams found so many negatives; I've always considered Parkview Gardens easy to bike and walk around. A common complaint was the lack of sidewalk lighting, though I think that if the teams had gone around at night, they would have found that the streetlights provide more than adequate illumination. I would also question the complaints about lack of stop signs in the western section. We seem to get along fine without them. But in one category, I think we got off too easy. The audit teams reported that they felt safe from crime everywhere. That's true if you're going around in groups on Saturday morning. After dark, alas, you have to be wary.

Once Trailnet finishes crunching numbers, the Walk Audit results will be available on line. A future issue of the Pacer will provide the url.