Green Space to allow students to soak up sun

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The green space in the cross section of Hebrard Boulevard and Boucher Street, next to the Student Union, is under construction for an outdoor amphitheater and an outside lounge area for students.

“Students will be able to lay out picnic blankets, or set up hammocks and just enjoy our slight little green on campus,” said Mary McMahon, SGA president.

According to McMahon, half of the green area will be transformed into an amphitheater with a stage for events like Ragin’ Roar and Yell Like Hell, which were previously held at Blackham Coliseum. The outdoor amphitheater will be 20,000 square feet at roughly 118 feet wide by 173 feet long, according to Bill Crist, the director of facilities management.

The other half of the space will remain a grassy area, and more trees will be planted for more shade.

Benches and “cafeteria-style picnic tables,” similar to those found on the Student Union Patio, will also be added, McMahon said.

Sofiyat Ibrahim, the senate president for the College of Liberal Arts, said she is looking forward to the type of experiences she will be able to have in the newly renovated green space. She said as a member of several organizations on campus, a problem she faces often is the difficulty of selecting the perfect venue for certain events.

“Several of the union rooms are usually either occupied or do not fit the ideal event space,” she said. “That green space helps with this problem. In providing both an amphitheater and a lounge area for students, it makes the union area and the student life just a little bit cozier and more entertaining.”

Construction began on Feb. 16, and was expected to be completed in mid-...
September, but Crist said with the summer being abnormally rainy, the project's progression has been difficult.

"This is not like construction inside of a building where you can get away from the rain and keep working," he explained. "This is in the ground."

The completion date has been pushed back to Nov. 20, assuming there will be less rain in the upcoming months.

Though McMahon and the SGA administration has a voice in the renovations, she said the student administration under previous SGA President Kristen Allen (2015) worked with university administration in a more hands-on manner because the university was brainstorming ideas at the time.

"Kristen, Annie and Chris were very adamant about having at least one green area and to have at least part of that area remain a grassy area," McMahon said.

According to Allen, she, Chris Rome and Annie Briley used their entire term to work closely with University President Joseph E. Savoie, Ed.D., and the architects to perfectly plan the space for students. They attended weekly Monday meetings with Savoie to receive updates and give input from a student perspective.

"As a Big Three, we wanted an area where students could hang out and still have green space. So we looked at the master plan and figured out where we could functionally put a green space for students to relax and have fun," Allen said.

She added the original plan for the space was to put metal tables on a cement surface with trees and very little grass.

"It made the union look like an office building courtyard instead of a fun and entertaining place," she opined.

Allen said after more than two years since the planning process, she Rome and Briley are elated to finally witness progression on the project.

"Seeing our hard work come to reality is a major accomplishment and we can't wait to see the final product. The students of UL will have a great place to..."