

Eastern's 'ski hill' shaping up

By JEFFREY RAYMOND
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CHARLESTON — Central Illinois is getting a man-made ski hill.

Nervous residents of Oakley, site of the proposed ADM-Staley "ash mound," need not worry. This one's going up at Eastern Illinois University.

Southeast of Eastern's Greek Court fraternity and sorority housing complex, a bulldozer is slowly shaping the hill. It should be ready for skiing by next winter.

This will be no 350-foot mountain and resort. It will use no ash from coal-fired generators.

It will be, simply, a 35-foot-high mound of dirt with a gentle, 12-degree slope.

Eastern gets the dirt from the construction site of the student recreation center. What used to be a parking lot and open-air walkway in front of Lantz Gym is now a pit about two acres big and at least 20 feet deep.

Verna Armstrong, the university's vice president for administration, said Eastern was going to have to pay to have the dirt hauled off.

Instead, officials decided to use the dirt to fulfill one of Leisure Studies Department Chairman Even Bryden's dreams: to build a ski slope.

Bryden said his department will use the slope as training for a course on cross-country skiing. It could also be used by other students, staff and Charleston residents for skiing and sledding, he added.

"This will not rival the slopes of Aspen. It won't even have snow-making equipment, though Bryden hopes to have man-made snow someday.

"A skilled skier would not be interested in it," Bryden said. Some people at Eastern, including the student newspaper, have criticized the administration for misplaced priorities and resources in pushing the project.

"President (Stan) Rives, if you want to imitate the Ivy League, you don't attract quality students by building a giant sports complex and a ski ramp," stated one column last week.

But Armstrong said Eastern expects to save between \$2,000 and \$50,000 by moving the dirt a mile to the ski slope site instead of paying to have it dumped miles away. The savings will go back into the recreation center.

"I think the whole problem is people don't know much about it," said Student President Dan Riordan. His biggest concern was whether the ski hill will cost students any more money.

If the university can prove that it won't, then Riordan sees no problem with it.



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Wed, Sep 28,
2022