

THE DAILY TEXAN

Serving the University of Texas at Austin community since 1900

Students help to replace fountain on West Mall with gateway



Steps would also make the sign wall more prominent

UT West Mall
Grading & Site study 05.01.2018

Proposed change
looking east

TEN EYCK
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

[Photo Credit: Courtesy of Ten Eyck Landscape Architects](#) | Daily Texan Staff

Published on July 20, 2018 at 8:42 am Last update on July 20, 2018 at 1:03 pm
By [Savana Dunning](#)

With the help of UT students, the fountain on the West Mall is being replaced after years of being out of operation to make way for a sign that will serve as a formal gateway to campus.

Tony Guzman, the project manager for the West Mall project, said the completed sign will look similar to the stone sign at the end of University Avenue.

"We've been saying we want to replace it and make it a more friendly place for pedestrians, our students, staff and visitors to campus," Guzman said. "We're going to do that by taking out the existing fountain and putting paving and oak trees and a signage element."

Austin Gleeson, a physics professor who was chairman of the Campus Master Planning Committee, said the fountain was originally going to be redone in the '90s as part of the campus master plan at the time.

Gleeson said the redesign of the fountain was going to be designed by the architects of the fountain outside the Bellagio hotel in Las Vegas. The project was well underway until it lost its main financial support.

"Almost every campus in this country of some significance has what we call a 'major gateway,'" Gleeson said. "It should be something spectacular, and it was universally agreed upon that that fountain was not spectacular."

The initial push for the current replacement project came in 2015. Vaishali Jayaraman, computer science senior, thought of replacing the fountain as a project for UT's Design for America chapter, a student organization that uses design-oriented thinking to solve social problems. Members of the organization wanted to look into new uses for the unused fountains on campus and chose the West Mall fountain as a starting point.

"It was a prime location, and we wanted it to have a long-lasting good first impression to people who come there," Jayaraman said. "Students come every single day from West Campus, they cross that area to go to class. ... You always see it, it's inevitable."

Two years of brainstorming and tabling went by and some members in Design for America turned to other projects, but Jayaraman continued working on West Mall. In January, Jayaraman got in contact with Grace Gilker, a member of the President's Student Advisory Committee at the time, who was working on a project for the same area.

Plan II alumna Gilker said she thought of the project as a way to be productive within the committee.

"We were more sounding boards than leaders of change," Gilker said. "So I figured I should probably just, like, go get my own little project to just ask about every month, and then I passed that crater outside the Union. "

Gilker and Jayaraman began a student group that met monthly with a project manager and the architecture firm Ten Eyck Landscape Architects to complete the design.

"It's kind of incredible," Gilker said. "There are so many points in which it could have died that I kind of thought it might die. And the fact that it managed to hang around is really amazing. "

Construction is currently underway and is expected to be finished this December.

