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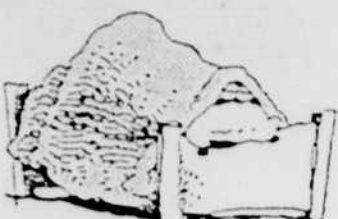


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## COMMUNITY



Photo by Andre Ranieri

Mike Schwartz, speaking at a public forum Monday to debate the proposed reopening of the Eugene Mall, said he is in favor of the proposal.

### Majority supports mall reopening

By Brian Bloch  
 Emerald Reporter

Overwhelming support dominated testimonies given to the Eugene City Council in the final public forum on the proposed downtown redesign project Monday night.

Thirty-three businesspersons, merchants and concerned citizens voiced support for the redesign project calling for the opening of Willamette and Olive streets and East Broadway on the downtown mall.

Only about 10 people testified in opposition to the proposal.

The city council is scheduled to take action on the redesign proposal during a work session Wednesday at Eugene City Hall. If the council approves the proposal, it will likely be placed on the May ballot.

Business owners cried out for changes they hope will bring better access, more patrons and a revitalized downtown.

"Closed streets are like closed doors," said Ali Lazar, owner of two downtown businesses.

Mike Schwartz said revenues from downtown businesses have dropped from \$91 million in 1975 to a projected \$75 million this year because of a failing downtown.

"The mall has not been the success that we had originally hoped," said Don Amacher, a downtown real estate agent.

"The mall just simply doesn't function, it's too park-like," said Roger Neustadter. "Moving more people through our downtown ... can only be

positive."

Gene Swan, president of the representative Eugene Downtown Inc., said a recent survey of the organizations' 82 downtown member businesses showed that 67 support the redesign proposal.

Many citizens and business owners said they do not believe the redesign will completely solve all of downtown's problems, but that it offers a starting point for improvement.

"Downtown is dying. I feel we need a change and we need new strategies," said Richard Green. "This is a beginning."

"There are fewer and fewer reasons for the average citizen to come downtown," said Margaret Burke. "The arteries must be opened before gangrene sets in."

"I can't understand how doing nothing can be an option," said local business owner Bob Rubenstein. "We need to take action and save downtown by opening the streets."

However, a handful of citizens disagreed with the proposal.

"The question here is who's going to pay for it," said William Mason. "There's no guarantee this will solve any of downtown's problems. We cannot afford this."

"The owners downtown should pay for their own experiments," said William Eaton.

"One of the city's most livable areas would be destroyed," said George Schafer. "The problem isn't accessibility, it's content."

"Many people have asked for change," said Merton Saling. "It will change, just leave it alone."

### Group seeks drug legalization

By Kim Wuebbenhorst  
 Emerald Contributor

Students for the Oregon Marijuana Initiative is a small, but determined group of University students working to decriminalize marijuana in Oregon.

"We think the laws are based on oppression of people who behave peacefully but are other wise law-abiding citizens," said Adam Handwerger, a junior physics major and SOMI member.

The group formed in late 1988 when a couple of friends, who wish to remain anonymous, got together to officially voice their opinions.

The group does not have much of an official membership because people who are for the legalization of mari-

juana are also afraid of government action, Handwerger said.

Regardless of its lack of numbers, SOMI will petition for the initiative as soon as the final draft is finished, probably within a few months.

The last Oregon Marijuana Initiative would have allowed people 21 years or older to cultivate three marijuana plants on their own property or possess four ounces in their home. The initiative did not discuss use or possession outside a person's private property, but did prohibit selling marijuana or driving under the influence of marijuana.

Under current Oregon law, possession of marijuana can result in a \$500 to \$1,000 fine for less than one ounce, or up to 10 years in

jail and \$100,000 fine for more than one ounce. A judge can impose an additional fine of twice the value of any resulting property or money gain, regardless of the amount of marijuana sold.

The group believes these laws are excessive, Handwerger said, and it will work to get the initiative on the ballot for the 1992 election. Voters rejected the measure during the 1986 election, and it did not receive enough petition signatures to be placed on the ballot in the 1988 or 1990 elections.

Another of the group's objectives is to educate people on the marijuana issue and its uses, which members say include paper products, pe-

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