

# Public 'pleased' with Downtown Mall guides

By June Russell  
Emerald Reporter

It's still too early for the statistics to be in, but one thing is clear: the downtown guides' impact on the mall is becoming apparent.

"We're very pleased. They've done a great job so far, and overall their performance has been excellent," said Russ Brink, Downtown Eugene Inc. executive director. "The most important criteria to me for judging success is how the businessmen feel they're doing."

"We haven't done a questionnaire yet, but from the anecdotes people are telling us they're very pleased with the service."

Naturally any improvement in the perceptions and comfort level of people visiting the mall

EPD, businesses also happy with performance after nearly three months of patrolling shopping area

will take time, but Brink remains optimistic.

The guides began patrolling the mall Feb. 16, replacing the security guards from Absolute Security. Modelled after Portland's successful "street ambassador" program, the guides are entrusted with making the mall a friendlier place to visit.

Don Zadoff, owner of Backstage Dancewear, 41 W. Broadway, said the guides are making their presence known.

"They seem to be in authority here," he said. "They look no-nonsense. My impression is that they are making people more comfortable. I think they're working very well."

"The only improvement I

would make would be to give them more authority, so they can back up what they say."

Except for calling the police to handle fights, most of the guides' duties are routine, such as giving directions and stopping people riding bikes on the mall, Brink said.

"Anything that involves physical threat or harm, they call the police immediately, and also for any medical emergency they call 911," Brink said. "Obviously, if there's a crime in progress they also call 911, but there hasn't been any of that so far."

Brink said the guides have experienced no problems with "wannabe" gang members or

the street kids on the mall.

"We try to recognize them as people and not stereotype them," he said. "If they offer us information, it goes in the daily reports. But we're obviously not going to try to harass them, and they're not going to harass us."

Feedback from the public has been mostly positive, he said.

No surveys to gauge the guides' impact with the public are being planned yet, Brink said.

The biggest problem the guides have experienced so far involves communication techniques, using radios, calling 911 and communicating among themselves, Brink said.

The Eugene Public Safety Department has been very helpful in improving the guides' performance and will provide ongoing training, Brink said. One area they are working to improve on is the writing of daily

reports to include all pieces of vital information and observations. The reports are then sent to the Eugene police department.

EPD Sgt. Greg Zahar said the information in these reports and observations made by the guides have helped officers solve several cases.

"So far it's working very well," he said. "We've gotten some valuable information from them through the reports and observations. We actually discourage them from any overt action; that's not what they're there for. They do have an ongoing relationship with the street kids, and are able to put names on them and provide other information."

"Actually, we haven't gotten that many calls from the guides — a few assault victims, a few drunks," Zahar said. "They're helping to some degree to control intoxicated or disorderly people on the mall, and collecting information to revoke or deny permits."

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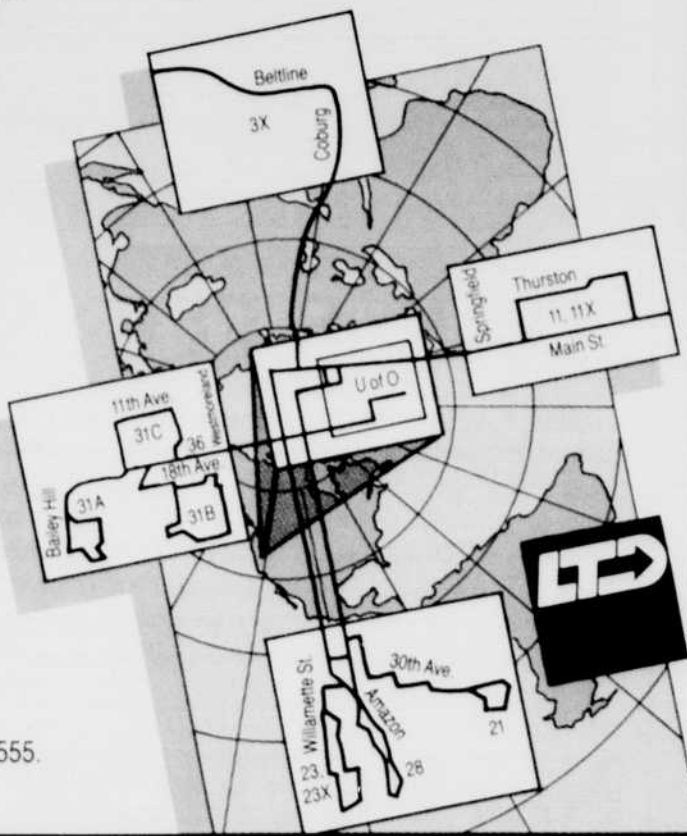


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