

Students: Don't just deal with problem, fix it

■ **OUR OPINION:** The recent dog and skateboard ban on 13th Avenue will help, but the right people weren't behind it

The dogs and skateboards are gone. But is "the problem"? The city, namely the Eugene City Council and Police Department, describe the problem in the West University district as crime, congestion and just general annoyance for the estimated 30,000 people who walk through the area each day.

Most of us see the problem firsthand as well. Thirteenth Avenue between Kincaid and Patterson Streets and Alder Street between 12th and 14th Avenues is an area we can scarcely ignore. Whether it be going into the University Bookstore to buy textbooks or enjoying our daily caffeine at Coffee People, we all spend time in the dreaded West University area. And in doing so, we've all experienced its downsides as much as its benefits.

We all know about the endless lines of street people asking us for change or, better yet, in hushed voices, selling the "botanical" goods they peddle. We've all heard the ricketing of the skateboards across the pavement and instinctively stepped to the side. The biggest problem, however, lies not in the mere presence of these annoyances, but in the fact that we've all gotten used to them.

Nobody gets angry anymore at the filth and degradation in the busiest part of Eugene, especially not in the University student body. And this is the saddest part because when it comes down to it, 13th Avenue and its surrounding area is as much a part of campus as the EMU and Knight Library.

This area of shops, cafes and taverns is vital to, and well-used by, students, professors and vagrants alike. But it could be so much more. Unfortunately, we seem to have resigned ourselves to just living in the problem and trying to deal with it by nodding "No, thank you" politely and walking on down the street.

We shouldn't have to nod to anything. We should be able to go about our business in relative peace. But nobody seems will-



CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

ing to do anything to solve the problem. Except the city.

Eugene, in another bold move after last year's ordinances banning aggressive panhandling, has decided to actually take action — a concept the University (primarily students) hasn't seemed to grasp yet.

Banning dogs and skateboards is a good move — despite criticism to the contrary. As long as it's the part of a movement to clean up the area that is just beginning. And all indicators point to this indeed being true.

An all-out ban works better than any previous ordinance in the area. "Aggressive" panhandling is hard to define and hard to enforce. The mere presence of dogs and skateboards is easy to spot, both by civilians and police, and therefore violators of the new law have been few and far between since its enactment on Sept. 1.

Pedestrians and store owners have already noticed a difference, they say. Streets are cleaner and people actually have room

to walk in a straight line instead of weaving their way through the many loitering canine owners and skateboard riders. And very few people are getting harassed in the area — up to a point.

Once one walks across Patterson Street on 13th Avenue, the onslaught begins anew. The panhandling, drug-swapping and the people who love them have gathered in a new spot, just three blocks away from the epicenter of 13th and Kincaid. Moving the problem such a short distance is not a solution in itself. Instead, it is the beginning of a process — one that will ideally result in the dissipation of the problem.

The best thing about the new ban is that the city is not done yet. On Oct. 9, the City Council will meet to decide whether to expand the ban to a larger area. And a neighborhood task force, with some aid from the University administration, is slowly working to revitalize the area.

According to many city officials, the ban will most likely be extended and greater changes are expected in the future. The ultimate goal is to enlarge the area of the ban so much that eventually the group of violators is pushed out of the district completely.

However, while the city's efforts to rid itself of congestion and crime is valiant, it cannot be done alone. We, as students, need to help all we can.

With students making up 80 percent of the district's population, there is no doubt the problem is as much ours as it is the community's. After voting down a proposal on the student ballot to improve neighborhood relations last year, taking any steps to join in the improvement process would help. Possible proposals include widening 13th Avenue or eliminating parking on busy streets in the area. It's time we became involved in something that has begun without us.

The West University district is part of campus, part of our daily lives. But until we wake up and help save it, we'll never be able to enjoy its full potential.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

READER VOICES

What is your opinion on the new dog and skateboard ban on 13th Avenue?



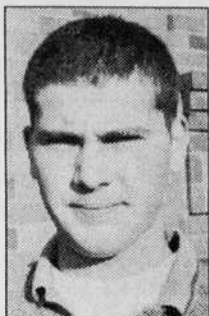
"[It] is not effective fighting crime in the area. I think a lot of people are being harassed. Just because you have a dog doesn't mean you deal drugs."

Carrie Pallister
junior,
environmental
studies



"I like [it] because it gets kind of ridiculous getting panhandled every time. If it helps clean up that, then I'm all for it."

Greg Walker
sophomore,
undeclared



"You've got guys riding up and down with skateboards. And you have to get out of their way. It's a hassle. Now [13th Ave.] seems a lot cleaner."

Kevin Adatto
sophomore,
business



"[It] will help but it won't solve the problem (of crime and congestion) completely. It just isn't something that can be solved."

Stefanie Swartz
freshman,
undeclared

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

■ JULY 24, 1996 :

A proposal outlining a possible dog and skateboard ban in the West University district was presented and discussed during a Eugene City Council meeting.

■ AUGUST 5 :

Citizens gave their opinions on the proposed ban during a public hearing before the council.

■ AUGUST 7 :

In a 5-1 vote, the council passed the ordinance banning dogs and skateboards on 13th Ave. between Kincaid and Ferry Streets and Alder St. between 12th and 14th Avenues.

■ SEPTEMBER 1 :

The ban officially went into effect after a two-week grace period. The Eugene Police Department began issuing \$50 citations to violators of the new law.

■ OCTOBER 9 :

The council will consider extending the ban to a larger area in hopes of eventually pushing potential offenders out of high pedestrian areas.

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