

Eugene City Council
February 13, 2012

RE: *Official Public Comment—Vote to Allow Downtown Public Safety Zone Ordinance to Sunset as Scheduled*

Dear City Council:

Please do not extend the Downtown Public Safety Zone.

It restricts freedom of movement. People have a right to congregate and take part in legal activities in public spaces. The right to move freely is fundamental to a free society. Rather than “revitalize” the downtown, the Exclusion Ordinance stifles our community and democracy.

It is unfair. People who are cited with the Exclusion Ordinance find the process confusing, requires up to four court appearances, and because they are not guaranteed an attorney, are unable to advocate for themselves effectively. The City created advocacy position has never been used because either police do not inform people about it, or they are unable to access the advocate. As a result, the most vulnerable citizens are at risk of being unfairly excluded. This ordinance also has lead to discrimination and harassment of low income and disabled individuals by police and others.

It lacks rigor and transparency. The Eugene Police Department lacks a clear standard for deciding who will be receive an Exclusion citation (i.e Notice to Show Cause), which has lead to different treatment based upon appearances and/or class distinctions. It also lacks a clear protocol for enforcing exclusions. As s a result, the process of deciding who receives a citation is left to the officer’s discretion. EPD has provided very little data on how the ordinance has been used, and with this lack of transparency, we cannot evaluate whether it is being enforced fairly.

Exclusions are ineffective. The police department has been unable to demonstrate that Exclusions cause a decline in criminal activity, much less that they increase public safety. Only 3% of charges brought with exclusion citations were for violent crimes. In fact, research suggests that Exclusions displace residents from the “safe haven” of the downtown to places of less traffic where they may be at higher risk of theft, assault, sexual violence, and the elements.

Sincerely,

Name
Address (if you want)