



Office of the Mayor

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIAL

Meeting Date: May 22, 2007

Item Number: 32

Item Description: Public Commons for Everyone Initiative

Mayor Bates posted the Public Commons for Everyone Initiative on the electronic forum Kitchen Democracy to provide another avenue for community feedback. As of Tuesday morning, 232 people had voted on the issue, many of them also providing commentary. 87% voted in support, 8% in opposition, and 5% were unsure.

The vote tally and all comments are provided in the attached document.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

The Kitchen Democracy Record as of May 22, 2007, 7:37 AM




www.KitchenDemocracy.org/40



Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Vote Tally

Registered Berkeley Voters

Yes		201
No		18
Neutral		0
Maybe		13
		Total: 232

Public Comments

Total registered Berkeley voters:	232
Berkeley voters who also posted comments:	87
Comments posted by others living within 50 miles of Berkeley:	2
Total comments posted:	89

As with any public comment process, participation in Kitchen Democracy is voluntary. The tally and comments in this record are not necessarily a representative sample of the whole population.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

(anonymous)

May 12, 2007, 8:56 AM

When my kids become old enough to ride 2-wheelers, I tried riding bikes with them to Telegraph Ave and Downtown Berkeley for meals, movies, ice cream, clothes, shoes, etc, but the street behavior was so offensive to me and scary to them that I stopped taking my kids to those Berkeley commercial areas.

As long as this street behavior persists, I don't shop at these Berkeley commercial areas, nor do I take my friends and extended family when they stay at my home in Berkeley.

I suspect that there are many people like me in Berkeley. Offensive street behavior is creating a huge lost opportunity for Berkeley.

The Mayor is proposing an effective but compassionate way to address this problem, and I wholeheartedly support it.

I also appreciate that the Mayor is using KitchenDemocracy to augment feedback, because my family and work situation prevent me from attending evening city council meetings.

Mary Ciddio

May 14, 2007, 9:51 PM

I have been spat upon, yelled at and pawed at by street people who have often declined social services as they choose this lifestyle. My son's girlfriend was the victim of racial slurs and antagonism from an out of control street person on Solano Avenue in Berkeley. We have runaways from wealthy families who come here to live off the streets. We have scam artists who dress up "poor" to be able to garner sympathy. We have a plethora of untreated individuals with Mental Illness and severe addiction problems that cannot be resolved with a handout nor with tolerance of their disrespectful behavior. The city is for all of us to enjoy, but it is not enjoyable to shop amidst the smell of fresh urine nor to observe someone defecating on the street and wiping themselves on a nearby bush. I have relatives coming from out of country and out of state and I am embarrassed to take them downtown.

The city belongs to all of us. The rules should apply to all of us. Rather than just adding more rules, why not just enforce the rules we have? Drug dealing on the streets is illegal anywhere as far as I know, as is camping outside of a campsite, defecating and urinating in public are also not legal. Why should we have to accept this and why can't we address these issues rather than just turning away and accepting it as we go off to shop in El Cerrito or Emeryville because we won't have to put up with abuse.

(anonymous)

May 14, 2007, 9:53 PM

I love being part of a tolerant community where street youth and homeless people are more safe than they might be elsewhere. But our jaded tolerance can make it harder for people who want help to find it, can leave public bathrooms magnets for intimidating behavior, and send folks to the bushes for pooping. Our shelters won't let an apparently drunk or high person spend the night, (and they shouldn't!), you can't stay if you start fights, but then, we tolerate all on our

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streets. I'll support the Mayor's proposal, and feel grateful that someone is attempting discourse and awareness.

leonard pitt

May 15, 2007, 5:20 AM

Resolving this issue will bring the greatest benefit to Berkeley, period!

Deborah Trillia

May 15, 2007, 9:15 AM

The time has come to be clear about what is acceptable behavior in our society. Berkeley prides itself on being tolerant and this has created a setting in which little children grow up exposed to abnormal, unacceptable public behavior which they misguidedly believe is the 'norm'. Why does Berkeley have so many crazy/homeless people on the streets? Because we let them be there! The silent majority cares about the mentally ill, but it is not caring to let these folks do as they wish. Tolerance for differences is a good thing but tolerance of inappropriate behavior in public is another matter all together. Young kids see begging as a viable lifestyle when we treat street people with 'kindness' by giving them hand-outs. No-one should give money directly to a street person...it seems to me that it encourages the behavior. Wouldn't the generosity be better channeled into a program that did not reinforce sitting on the sidewalks?

I am relieved that Mayor Bates is proposing some public debate on this issue. We all need to take a look at our own attitudes regarding this. We are afraid and embarrassed to confront people we see as less fortunate than ourselves (or simply mentally ill or drugged out). We recognize that it is almost an intractable problem so we deal with it by tolerating it! That approach has seen a huge increase in the numbers of street people in Berkeley. Berkeleyans do care, let's show it in a way that does not compound the problems! Mayor Bates should show leadership... we need it and we need to do something...soon.

Steven Donaldson

May 15, 2007, 10:23 AM

The streets are for everyone and everyone needs to respect the shared use of the public commons. Those who behave in unacceptable and often dangerous ways in public and refuse assistance because of mental problems or personal behavioral issues must not subject the rest of us to their unacceptable behavior.

This is not about protecting individual rights. It's about the rights of the community and providing options that are going to help problem individuals who need this help whether they want it or not.

I don't get to drive 70 miles an hour down Sacramento because "I want to". It's for the common safety and well-being of all that speed and safety laws exist and thus public community behavior falls into this same category of what's good for the community.

Councilmember Gordon Wozniak

May 15, 2007, 1:08 PM

No one wishes to criminalize homelessness. In fact, Berkeley is very generous in both the quantity and quality of services that it provides to its approximately 850 homeless. Because of Berkeley's tolerance and abundant services, it has two and a half times the number of homeless per capita as Alameda County as a whole. Furthermore, 40% of the county's chronic homeless

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Yes

have settled in Berkeley.

These chronic homeless are often called street people, some of whom prefer the freedom of living in the streets to public housing. The vast majority of Berkeley's homeless have addiction (alcohol and drugs) as well as mental problems. Many, left to their own devices, will not seek or accept help from city services. A small number due to their personal demons act in ways that appear threatening to other residents, causing the latter to avoid certain commercial districts.

Berkeley's current policy is complaint driven and is basically to move the homeless around to minimize complaints. In addition, some of its current laws are very cumbersome to enforce. For example, there is a law prohibiting obstructing pedestrians by lying on the sidewalk. Because Berkeley currently requires its police to give two verbal warnings before a citation can be issued and since the District Attorney dismisses the first two citations, a police officer has to interact with the person in violation of this ordinance nine times before he/she is fined. This cumbersome process can tie up a sizable amount of our police resources.

The Mayor is proposing a new policy which involves both additional services as well as increased enforcement of laws to curtail objectionable behavior in the public commons. This program will not be cheap and it will require a delicate balance between the rights & responsibilities of the individual and the collective body public.

The vast majority of Berkeley's small business owners support this initiative. Please support Mayor Bates in his attempt to make Berkeley's public spaces attractive and safe for everyone!

(anonymous)

May 15, 2007, 1:15 PM

We have problems not just in the commercial areas on Telegraph but other areas including, Willard Park where people are using drugs in a technically no drug area. Needles have been found in the tot lot and crack smoking has been observed. The police, so far, seem indifferent. It would make this park and other areas of the city more accessible to other members besides our growing homeless population. It seems to me the refusal of services implies what I suspect - that some of these homeless transient population are there because of lifestyle choice and do not want the services that would take them off the street. Which may mean we have to rethink our basic assumptions about why they are there and what the impact of this behavior means to us more permanent members of the community

(anonymous)

May 15, 2007, 6:28 PM

Berkeley cannot afford to continue to lose businesses. We need clean and safe streets free from the bullies and drug addicts that refer to themselves as homeless. They need to either get help or move on (Berkeley has been babying them for over thirty years now) We need to move forward and try to improve our city before it gets even worse.

GEORGE ORAM

May 17, 2007, 3:36 PM

cleaning up the mess this town is in, is an imperative. it is about time the mayor and council do

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

something for everyone and not just their friends on the street.

george oram

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 3:49 PM

I no longer shop on Telegraph or Shattuck Avenues. The main reason is aggressive homeless people. They DO need help, but if they refuse it, something needs to be done so that the majority of the citizens of Berkeley can feel safe on our streets. Also, the merchants cannot tolerate the loss of business forever, and will desert the downtown for a more welcoming community.

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 4:06 PM

It is unfair for the citizenry to be afraid of going to anyplace within the city for fear of being intruded upon. it has also been unfair that a few vocal people have been driving city policy. Both should end now. I also agree to the "maybe" comment that other cities should pay their fair share for what cities like Berkeley, Oakland and San Farnscisco are willing to tolerate.

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 4:34 PM

I believe the concept of a Public Commons for Everyone needs to be City wide, not just in our shopping districts. Every park, every street and every side walk need to have the same rules. People follow rules they believe are fair to everyone much more easily than they follow rules they see aimed at a small subgroup. People also are far more likely to follow rules they believe are being enforced.

I would like to see some of the non-profits that deal with our homeless population regularly actively involved in the outreach. A person that refuses help from a City worker might accept help from a person they know through the MASC Drop In Center in the Veterans Building, for instance. Further I'd like to have a wallet card with several phone numbers so that when I see a person who is clearly troubled and off of their medications, I can call one of the non-profits or a City office to suggest they come help the person deal with their demons.

Further, I think we all need to understand that many of the people asking for spare change actually are "housed." Asking for change is how they make their living. This is a life style choice. Just as at one time the "hobo's" who rode freight trains around the country made a life style choice to see America.

They are a very different population from people with severe mental or addiciton problems who need comprehensive support services to function at even a minimal level. Their "health" problems are just as serious as the problems a cancer or heart patient has. And just as no single treatment works for every cancer or heart patient, no single set of support services will work for everyone with psychological and/or addiction problems. We need to work with the County and with the State to develop a variety of programs. Schizophrenia is not a life style choice. It is a disease.

StClair Cameron

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

May 17, 2007, 5:00 PM

Back to real Berkeley City business at last. Will the proposal also include declaring Rumsfeld, a war criminal, to be an official public nuisance or just a man in need of mental health assistance? Of course, this proposal will violate Civil Rights, so we'll have to hire a consultant on that. Don't tell the ACLU what you are doing or this could get very expensive.

Sorry, but the City Council rightly deserves the sarcasm.

Howard Cook

May 17, 2007, 7:47 PM

This has been a long time coming. People have not felt comfortable on their own streets and many people needing help have not received it. This will go a long way in making Berkeley a better place to live for everyone.

Howard Cook

Teddi Baggins

May 17, 2007, 8:01 PM

My child has been harrassed by a beggar on the way to school, passing in front of the Bank of America in North Berkeley. Many people observed and came to his assistance, but this beggar still sits there, as she has for at least fifteen years. At what cost are we such a tolerant society?

robin wright

May 17, 2007, 8:26 PM

I avoid many areas of Berkeley including downtown, and Telegraph Av due to Street Behavior problems. In South Berkeley gatherings of apparent drug dealers are another reason to avoid areas near corner stores in particular. I'm tired of aggressive panhandling which is often a lifestyle choice for young people with an idealized fantasy of living on the streets of Berkeley. They may become entrenched in the harmful and disruptive lifestyle and find it hard to get out by the time reality sets in.

Robin Wright

Aran Kaufer

May 17, 2007, 9:21 PM

This is an idea whose time has come. The downtown areas of Berkeley have been suffering for too long because of this issue.

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 10:03 PM

We all sympathize with the plight of the homeless. However, the solution to the problem is not to have homeless people living on the streets of Berkeley. Lets help the homeless with services and shelters, but lets make the city liveable for all citizens of Berkeley and attractive to out of town visitors and shoppers.

Martha Baker

May 17, 2007, 10:04 PM

This initiative is long overdue. Enabling self-destructive behavior isn't compassionate. At best,

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Yes

it's misguided.

The cost of not coming to grips with this problem is enormous. Homeless are lulled into believing that their behavior is acceptable. Hard-working citizens hesitate to go to a movie on Shattuck. Tax revenues from businesses and property owners are eroded, forcing homeowners and landlords to cope with the highest property taxes in the state. (Don't be fooled: renters are footing a big part of the bill, whether via rent increases or landlords who refuse to spend money on property maintenance.) Money is diverted from schools, parks, and programs such as the Senior Center. Should our children and grandparents be asked to pay the bill for Berkeley's "tolerant" attitude?

In the long run, sensible law enforcement decreases the likelihood that a segment of the population will continue to live in squalor. Some people need "a nudge from the judge" to clean up their act.

My biggest concern with this proposal is that it is limited to "commercial districts." Many Berkeleyans live within walking distance of shopping areas (one of the reasons we love Berkeley). We are entitled to the same protections as business owners.

Furthermore, I think Berkeley should start a campaign to offer panhandlers fresh fruit instead of cash. It lets someone know that you care about his/her nutrition and health and that you aren't going to be duped into subsidizing drug and/or alcohol abuse. I have found that offering someone a banana or cup of yogurt is a good way to strike up a conversation, let them know that you care, and suggest that they seek support.

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 10:13 PM

The police must be given authority to deal effectively with people who refuse social services provided by the City to help them, and to keep the public commons safe and clean. If not, our public areas will continue to degrade and Berkeley businesses that make our community livable will continue to fail or not be willing to locate here. This issue must be addressed now!

Marcia Berman

May 17, 2007, 11:12 PM

This is the first time I'm seeing this and I appreciate it. I love Berkeley and have lived here over half a century. What occurred to me in addition to mental health workers on the streets encouraging people in emotional trouble to take the offer of therapeutic programs that may be available...encouraging and assisting them to use whatever facilities provide the help...and follow through. BUT, what I saw in my mind were areas on certain corners that have chairs and plants, trees and flowers, allowing street people to relax and feel part of the community. I don't know how this can be facilitated, but I know, people relate to kindness and thoughtfulness. If they feel welcome and part of, then perhaps their behavior will not be anti-social, but rather social. Just a thought. It could be foolish or someone else could have suggested it and for all I know it could already be implemented. Thanks for this opportunity.

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 11:24 PM

Unfortunately, my two young children had to jump over a river of urine freshly flowing across the sidewalk by Longs Drugs in North Berkeley. I was agast that someone would be urinating against the building in the middle of the day. I don't want this in my neighborhood, especially when there is a public bathroom a block away at Live Oak Park. Yuck.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

(anonymous)

May 17, 2007, 11:59 PM

This is a start, but the plan should segue into county-wide or state-wide policy so that Berkeley taxpayers are not bearing an undue portion of financial burden. The plan should also extend beyond commercial districts to our parks and residential areas.

Neil Cook

May 18, 2007, 12:11 AM

civil liberties are important.

Loitering, public drunkenness, blocking public sidewalks, harrassing others without provocation and panhandling are not, however, civil liberties. Such conduct limits the rights of others and should be curtailed.

A tradition of tolerance should not be mistaken for a license for lawlessness. Berkeley is a wonderful, diverse place to live and work. It can remain that way only if the rights of all are respected. Everyone has a right, for instance, to pass across City sidewalks. Allowing some to lounge, sleep, sit or otherwise block the public right-of-way infringes on this right.

Vincent Casalaina

May 18, 2007, 12:33 AM

I want to support Mayor Bates' effort to curb anti-social behavior on the streets of Berkeley. The "in your face" attitude that is so prevalent on our streets is one of the least attractive parts of our town. A lot of that behavior comes from people who need help, and incarceration is not the way to solve their problems. But neither is letting them do anything they want on our streets no matter how rude or injurious it is to them or to us.

We must find ways to keep our city civil and at the same time to make sure that we remain a bastion of free speech and free thought. I believe the mayor's proposals find that balance in almost every case. Berkeley is unique. We need to make sure it is not unique in being a city done in by its lack of will to remain civil.

Malcolm Smith

May 18, 2007, 7:21 AM

Parts of the city have become unlivable and certain business areas have lost patrons because of this ages old problem. Time to try a new solution.

Jim Rosenau

May 18, 2007, 7:41 AM

Berkeley provides more than its pro rata share of services to the region's woes and will never do enough to make a big difference. We do what we can, individually and collectively but that does not mean we have to tolerate all the attendant problems.

William Muir

May 18, 2007, 7:45 AM

The proposal strikes me as one that strikes an humane and reasonable balance between caring for the most vulnerable and assuring a sense of personal security. Well done in crafting a circumspect compromise of competing needs. WILLIAM K MUIR

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 8:00 AM

I avoid downtown Berkeley, especially around the BART station, due to the variety of offensive street life. I also avoid the downtown Berkely BART stop for the same reason. I do not feel safe.

Burl Willes

May 18, 2007, 8:11 AM

The Mayor has given much thought to this program and I encourage the Council to support it.

Burl Willes

Dena Watson-Lamprey

May 18, 2007, 8:45 AM

As a resident of Berkeley for 30 years, I've watched the decline in the downtown particularly Shattuck. I would like more resources go to improving the Shattuck area as a go-to location for retail business. If you live in Berkeley and you want to buy basic clothing (not boutique clothing) you have to leave town. Ever try to buy a pair of socks or underwear around here? I never go to Telegraph. The parking is atrocious, the business services are geared towards students and tourists, and the street people are offputting. I would like for the city to develop Shattuck. which used to be a retail destination, into a more residential shopping area. Like Emeryville in terms of a street of shops but not big box type of stores.

I also support the idea of helping street people with additional services. I have become jaded over the years by the number of requests for help by street people. We need to help them. The daily assault of being asked for money inures people and creates a negative attitude towards those who ask for money. There are instances of groups of people asking for money who are supervised by someone (you can see them walking around and talking to people stationed in different locations along the sidewalk) and I would like those people to be strongly discouraged from using panhandling to make a living.

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 8:52 AM

Janet Sluis

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 9:51 AM

Berkeley really needs to clean up its streets. I personally don't do any shopping in Berkeley except for groceries. Parking is difficult, expensive and the street atmosphere is not really inviting.

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 10:21 AM

As much as I love freedom of expression and choice, as I single woman living in the downtown Berkeley area that walks to venues downtown; I would be in favor or a code of ethics for the homeless. I realize this is not a simple issue, and hopefully there will be back-up services to help our homeless and get them out of the doorways, panhandling, and dumping of offensive waste material in public.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

Chris Hudson

May 18, 2007, 10:25 AM

As a downtown business person I witness inappropriate and probelmatic street behavior on a daily basis. I have seen people use the street as their toilet, I have listened to obscenity laden rants, and I have watched high school and college students, especially young women, get harrassed. We are currently considering relocating our office to a different area as a result of these daily problems that make doing business in the downtown very difficult.

It is time to update and modify the laws regarding problematic street behavior so these laws can be fairly enforced amongst all persons throughout the city.

Jennifer Cogley

May 18, 2007, 10:34 AM

Many, many businesses within berkeley cite pan handling and more extreme behavior -- peeing, pooing, etc. on the street to be a major deterrent to business. When I talk with people outside of our community -- many, many of them say that they do not feel comfortable shopping or hanging out in Berkeley because of the run down nature of our downtown and the discomfort they feel with the number of homeless people and the intensity of what goes on on the street here.

When we drive away "import" dollars from our community -- we deprive our City of the potential to raise money from increased sales tax revenue to create meaningful services and assistance for street people that homeless advocates would most likely support. So, yes while it may be uncomfortable to ask homeless people not to certain things in our public area -- I also think that it serves both the homeless and the larger community if we we don't lower our standards of behavior for certain sets of people

... Possibly with greater sales tax dollars we could pay for auto clean public toilets, shower services and even more meaningful assistance for people forced to live on the street.

David Early

May 18, 2007, 11:16 AM

I think the Mayor's initiative is a great first step toward humanely making Berkeley's streets and public spaces more livable for everyone. I hope that we can continue to work together to ensure that there are adequate services for homeless people while also ensuring that all residents and visitors feel welcome and safe.

Jim Hart

May 18, 2007, 11:18 AM

Some questions to be considered:

What percentage of Berkeley's populace

1. Finds his/her Berkeley experiences enhanced by the begging and other behavior of the generality of street people?
2. Knows of parents who prefer shopping with their children in Berkeley because of the presence of street people?

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Yes

3. Feels safer in Berkeley because of the presence of street people?

4. Thinks that the lives of street people are ameliorated by the local guilt-ridden or do-gooder mentality that tolerates their seemingly unregulated presence in Berkeley?

Jim Hart

Jean Peters

May 18, 2007, 11:23 AM

I agree that Berkeley's downtown has become a non-destination for myself as well as friends, largely due to the run-down condition and homeless encampments. My friends who run the Missing Link bike store have daily problems with homeless people outside their door, including personal assault.

I also think that financing this by raising parking rates is a bad idea. People will be driven out by the high price of parking especially when there are cheaper or free parking areas to patronize.

Fredora & Hank Darmstadt

May 18, 2007, 11:50 AM

Our church and many other churches and community organizations provide dinners, showers, clothing and other services to the homeless. The vast majority do not seem to be helpless at all. They know how to "use the system" to achieve their needs. Their abuse of our parks, streets etc. deters much needed business to our downtown. Everyone, not just the street people, is held accountable for keeping our city clean and harassment free.

Richard Marrus

May 18, 2007, 11:55 AM

Mayor Bates' proposal seems carefully constructed and there is no question that measures need to be taken to address street behavior problems in the south campus area, among others.

Roland Peterson

May 18, 2007, 12:12 PM

These steps are overdue, and I think the Mayor's steps to link enforcement with services is both compassionate and wise. I applaud Mayor Bates for taking the lead on this.

Jane Tierney

May 18, 2007, 12:51 PM

The public streets are not the proper place for homeless, mentally ill or drug dependent people to be spending their days or nights. Berkeley is a generous and tolerant city, but unenforced behavior laws make our commercial districts magnets for other communities' outcasts, and do these people no constructive service in addressing their problems. Unenforcement only delays constructive help and creates no-go zones for customers, citizens, businesses and children. I cannot take my child to many areas in Berkeley due to aggressive, anti-social, illegal and dangerous behaviors occurring there, which are not subject to enforcement as they should be. Make our city safe and hospitable to all who live here.

Tim Culvahouse

May 18, 2007, 12:52 PM

The proposal does appear to be a comprehensive approach. It is worth noting that the few "no"

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Yes

votes suggest other actions that are not in conflict with the Mayor's proposal--such as renewing efforts to work with adjacent municipalities on these common problems, or stricter control of traffic to make crosswalks safer for pedestrians. These other concerns do deserve attention, but are complementary to, rather than in conflict with, the current proposal.

Larry Hartsough

May 18, 2007, 1:28 PM

One possibility for providing integrated services is to have a portable 'office' available near area(s) where the targeted population is highest. Staff the office with people able and empowered to make and implement service decisions on the spot.

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 1:40 PM

No plan is perfect but this seems like a pretty good one.

Steve Koneffklatt

May 18, 2007, 2:02 PM

You are damn right, we cannot walk down the street with being assaulted by the homeless onslaught!

These people are in genuine need of help that a city cannot provide.

Enact the legislation!

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 2:34 PM

I support the Mayor's proposal and agree with some of the observations of the maybe and no replies that indicate that there are other, perhaps complimentary, issues to tackle in Berkeley especially aggressive driving. Street behavior is a problem downtown, with that said, there are also some considerate and kind homeless people in Berkeley that could benefit from the proposal.

Elmer Grossman

May 18, 2007, 4:06 PM

Berkeley has a well-deserved reputation for our live-and-let-live mentality in politics, life styles, dress (and undress.) We have gotten so used to deviance that we are in danger of forgetting that some kinds of public behavior are too disruptive to be allowed. We need to set standards and to enforce them. I look forward to a time when Berkeley is no longer hospitable to drug dealing, threatening behavior, sidewalk sleeping, property destruction and the offensive and dangerous activities that make many of us avoid the Telegraph and Shattuck Avenue business districts.

Phil Polishuk

May 18, 2007, 4:32 PM

Something new needs to be done. The current situation is not acceptable and puts Berkeley in a poor light.

Bernard M. Rosenthal

May 18, 2007, 5:14 PM

It should not be necessary to legislate what used to be called simply good manners. But alas, it is...

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

Deborah Diamond

May 18, 2007, 7:55 PM

I support the Mayor's proposal as a start to taking back our streets and nurturing them as healthy public places for urban vitality, economic development and community enjoyment. Though costly, the investment will be money well spent as a step in returning our commercial areas into thriving areas that generate business and sales tax for Berkeley... tax money that can be used for public amenities and programs. I used to brag that Berkeley is a very tolerant place, but we have gone way overboard. I encourage City leaders to continue to look at other models for dealing with homelessness.

Note: I would not consider public smoking a priority over some of the more offensive behavior.

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 9:22 PM

It is so frustrating that the City of Berkeley considers itself so compassionate simply because it lets people live on its streets. Compassion would be to HELP these people stop living on the streets. There is nothing compassionate about letting people sleep and live on the sidewalk in front of the empty Cody's storefront. The negative and depressing atmosphere of the vast number of homeless people all over the downtown and Telegraph Ave. areas is compounded by the abundance of vacant storefronts generated both by businesses leaving Berkeley and the explosion in building "mixed use" buildings of apartments with more storefronts that stay empty. The City of Berkeley should take an interest in stimulating and improving the economic health of the downtown area and the Telegraph Ave. area if for no other reason than to generate revenue for the City to use for more assistance programs to help the homeless people. Adding to these problems is that there is very little public parking and less exists all the time as the City removes parking lots and tears down parking structures. Everyone now shops at Bay Street in Emeryville instead of downtown Berkeley because there are nice stores (some that were formerly in Berkeley including: the Gap, Barnes and Noble Books, Sees Candy) AND parking is available. Why is this so hard to understand? All the money that people could have spent in Berkeley if the shopping atmosphere wasn't so depressing downtown and on Telegraph is being spent in Emeryville. The one area of Berkeley that seems to be doing well is 4th street. The reason 4th Street in Berkeley is popular and works so well is that there are interesting stores in which to shop AND parking lots are available (even if very crowded) for people to park in. People don't walk to 4th Street, they drive down there and then walk around. Please do something about the homeless situation and help Berkeley become a nice, safe, and interesting destination for people to visit! (even if they have to drive their car to do so).

Dean Hunsaker

May 18, 2007, 10:26 PM

I've been living in Southside for 20 years, and putting up with a lot of drunkenness, drug dealing and use, fights, filth, and noise. Not to mention urinating just about anywhere, day or night.

I've lost all tolerance and sympathy for these people. If they don't care about themselves, they certainly won't care about quality of life for others. It's time to take a different approach; one that does not encourage them to come here in the first place, and put up with them once they're here.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

You hear from a vocal group of homeless advocates; but very likely these people don't live near them, and probably never will. They would see things very differently if they did.

(anonymous)

May 19, 2007, 9:53 AM

This seems so obvious! Of course we should help people with problems- letting them live on the streets and ruin everyone else's experience of this city is Not Helping them! They know their behavior is destructive (they are human beings, after all!)and we are acting as if it's not and supporting the destructive side of them if we don't intervene. I've only lived in Berkeley for 4 years and there are parts of the city I do not visit because of the fear of harassment, bad smells and bad behavior!

I vote YES!

John Stock

May 19, 2007, 10:08 AM

By all means!

(anonymous)

May 19, 2007, 12:40 PM

I think this is a well designed plan that will benefit Berkeley as whole as well as the street people. I only wish it could be a regional approach but hopefully that will come.

Anita Eble

May 19, 2007, 3:56 PM

I strongly support the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems. I think the approach is a balanced one and is sensitive to the needs of all concerned. In my judgment, this proposal meets the goals not only of providing help to those who need it but also of providing an environment which will be clean and safe and will allow the restoration of civil behavior on our streets.

(anonymous)

May 19, 2007, 5:17 PM

If the proposal is paid for by raising parking meter rates, then overall parking time should be increased. It is a detriment to business when parking meters allow only 30 or even 60 minute parking limits as it requires more needless driving and encourages shoppers to go to malls where parking is easy, free and limitless.

Miriam Hawley

May 20, 2007, 9:39 AM

The proposal would benefit all of Berkeley, including many street people to whom appropriate services could be more easily made available. Living on the streets is obviously an unhealthy lifestyle. Berkeley can do better for homeless people.

Small business people all across the city are convinced that the ubiquity of street people is harming their businesses, and countless shoppers have declared that they will not go to specific downtown and neighborhood shopping areas because of the homeless persons and panhandlers. Without a thriving business community, Berkeley's services will have to be curtailed, damaging the quality of life in Berkeley for all of us.

(anonymous)

May 20, 2007, 11:56 AM

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

I am grateful for the Mayor's proposed plan simply because it is a step in the right direction to revitalize downtown Berkeley. I am among the many Berkeleyans who do avoid the area on Shattuck Avenue between, roughly, Oregon and Haste if at all possible. I do not shop there (in fact, there are hardly any interesting, useful shops left), I avoid going to a movie theater or restaurant there, do not use the Post Office or the Library. The area is seamy, dirty, unsafe and there is simply no available parking. I am in my seventies and will not take the bus after dark or wait sometimes for 45 or more minutes for transportation when one of those busses simply does not come at the scheduled time.

In Berkeley, I patronize the shopping districts of upper Shattuck around Vine Street, College at Alcatraz, Elmwood district, Solano Avenue and 4th Street. I very much enjoy doing business in Emeryville, Orinda and Walnut Creek.

All this being said, however, I do believe that the Mayor's plan ultimately is no solution to the plight of the homeless who need a safe place to stay, an address, a phone and some financial support and assistance and ultimately work/jobs. Simply driving them from one area to another in town, is no longterm solution.

I would very much like to see the City Council come up with a longterm plan toward solving this problem.

Gerald Abrams

May 20, 2007, 2:09 PM

That it should come to this. A progressive Berkeley, situated in a particularly blessed and prosperous corner of the universe. With a homeless/street person problem it is unable to come to grips with. The problem, it seems to me, is our toleration of gross social inequity. Until our society addresses this issue, we will have continual skirmishes at the fringes, but no real resolution. We must look much more to our social democratic friends in Europe to see more humane ways of addressing this problem on a society-wide basis.

Gerry Abrams

Anne Sparks

May 20, 2007, 2:31 PM

Thank-you for your courage Mayor Bates for proposing this initiative.

I'm so relieved and gratified that he cares and I hope you do too and are paying attention to this terribly distressing situation. Please, know that the silent majority in the hills and outer Berkeley who do not attend the council meetings are supporting this and I'm hoping you will too.

I've been a Berkeley resident since 1970, so I've watched the dissolution of our Shattuck Ave. downtown area during the last 12 years. Recently, I've begun working as a substitute librarian at the central library and am thoroughly distressed and angry. But, first let me say that I am completely in favor of housing the homeless.

I simply cannot understand why those of us who pay city taxes, are deprived of enjoying our own downtown at the expense of people who don't pay much if any taxes. But, I realize we need to provide services for more of the street people, and I'd happily pay more to house them.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

Why can't we provide an efficient and pleasant building similar to one of the Cal dorms? Each person could have her/his own room, a bathroom, a phone, and meals. It would be so much better than having them suffering on the streets. Why would this be so difficult or so terribly expensive? I think every city in the country should provide large dormitories for homeless people where they can get basic care. I know they don't want the housing that is generally provided because it doesn't afford them security or privacy such as they would receive with their own room. Why can't we do this? We do it at great expense for our prisoners! There has to be a way to stop this and revitalize Berkeley.

Walking on Shattuck Ave. is disgusting. I'm forced to walk around people who make rude remarks, urinate in public so that I step over their puddles and have to walk around the ones sleeping in doorways, and lounging all over the street. Nobody that I know ever shops or goes to dinner or the movies in downtown Berkeley anymore!! I've been poling my friends and neighbors who all say they wouldn't dream of going down at night to be perpetually pan-handled, shouted at, and forced to step over people who look frightening and act as if they might become violent.

I'm appalled that Berkeley, home to the world-class University of California, has a disgusting downtown which no business wants to enter -- in fact they keep leaving. I realize I'm supposed to be proud of our ARTS center, but realistically, all you have to do is step a block away and you're in big trouble. Will we be able to coerce yet another main business with the hope that it will attract others, and do we know the reason that BARNES and NOBLE is leaving in a few months? Could it be street people sleeping and loitering in their store?

This situation has got to be turned around. You must vote to help clean up our downtown area.

Anne Sparks

(anonymous)

May 20, 2007, 3:14 PM

My wife and I used to walk to work, on campus, 5 days a week, from our neighborhood near University and San Pablo. We still walk, but now we drive and park in NE Berkeley and we rarely shop south of University or west of College. We have been chased by street people 3 times while walking to and from our neighborhood in the last couple of years. Berkeley PD is fast to respond, but fearing bodily injury, we chose to change our habits.

I hope this proposal will help make our part of town more walkable too.

David Wilson

May 20, 2007, 5:36 PM

My only objection to the proposal is that it has been watered down in typical Berkeley fashion. As originally reported, the ordinance would have penalized a variety of behavior forms which effectively infringe on the right of the general public to use public spaces. These include urinating, defecating, and substance abuse in parks and on the sidewalks of the City. As it is, the proposal only talks of smoking, which while politically incorrect is hardly in the same league as other behavior which is all too common in the public commons.

A classic example is Willard Park, where a homeless encampment at the entrance to public restrooms bars access to the rest of us. This is particularly offensive because the Park also has a

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Yes

playground for infants that is extremely popular in the neighborhood. The self righteous few tell us to lighten up, and to be more tolerant of the twenty or more persons who have set up a permanent camp at the entrance of the rest rooms, but I wonder how many of them would shepherd their four year old grandchild into the bathrooms at any time of the day, let alone the night.

(anonymous)

May 21, 2007, 10:50 AM

How is it that Albany and El Cerrito police don't have to worry about the same "civil liberties" issues Berkeley police do when it comes to inappropriate street behaviors? Don't they operate under the same consistution? Or is it that these issues really aren't legitimate after all?

(anonymous)

May 21, 2007, 3:44 PM

Does not go far enough.
Take the New York approach.

Sara MacKusick

May 21, 2007, 8:06 PM

I am in favor of providing a more friendly atmosphere in public places throughout Berkeley, and the plan sounds reasonable and humane. If approved, I hope the measure is implemented with the positive and helpful spirit that characterizes the intent.

(anonymous)

May 21, 2007, 9:47 PM

I would like to give this proposal a try. However, I agree with most of the comments about giving community policing a try as well as I have seen this be effective in other parts of the Bay Area. Perhaps this approach can be added to the Mayor's proposal. I would also add that we do need to do much more with housing; particularly for those in need and who will utilize good transitional housing with support services.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

No

(anonymous)

May 14, 2007, 10:46 PM

Berkeley already supports over 40% of the adult male homeless population of Alameda County. This proposal requires Berkeley taxpayers to spend even more money on a bandaid which does not really deal with the problem. And the real solution is for all municipalities in Alameda County to do their fair share. The County should be subsidizing the extra services and costs, not us. And i really oppose providing more services in the downtown area, as that will just attract more of the problem, not solve it.

(anonymous)

May 15, 2007, 8:56 PM

Balanced? The Mayor's proposal isn't broad enough to enforce laws for antisocial behaviour on the public right of ways (common walkways and streets) for everyone by various rule breakers who victimize us. When I heard about the concept of public commons for everyone and something about street behavior problems I thought you meant the antisocial and dangerous rule breaking behaviors of drivers--both in cars and on bicycles who drive through stop signs and make turns at traffic signal and hit those of us walking in cross walks! Then they do not stop--keep on going. EVERYONE in my neighborhood on Milvia in North Shattuck has been hit by a car or a cyclist. Except for 2, these frightening incidents were not serious enough for the 911 operator to send an ambulance so you do not learn the high incidence of these vehicles grazing our trouser leg or hitting sometimes mangling our bicycle tyres. It is as if we do not belong out there crossing the street--they 'own' the right of ways and we are in the way. Some even honk at us to get out of the way faster. We live on a slow street--a bicycle route--still we are frightened as both cars and cyclists rush towards us and even drive around us when we are in the lane.

A balanced use of resources would be to review existing laws and enforce them for car drivers and cyclists as well as crazies and beggars who violate the law on the sidewalks and streets. These driver rule breakers are far more scary and can cause more harm than the beggars and crazies. Lately our neighborhood has opened several more upscale bars--at night when walking dogs many folks have been grazed or almost hit by cars--they say they believe those are drunk drivers. Please work for more enforcement across the City of ALL rule breakers.

Lorie Brillinger

May 17, 2007, 4:19 PM

We as a city need more comprehensive planning for those people who for various reasons are out on the streets. Partitioning them off, in the old "them" and "us" routine, will not help Berkeley become the socially-enlightened city it aspires to become. The City requires more social, medical and employment/educational services.

Carlos Rivas

May 17, 2007, 10:21 PM

Without fundamentally changing the way we enforce laws, and without fully understanding the relationship between homelessness, business, and law enforcement in a community, these initiatives are doomed to fail and waste our city's resources.

The Berkeley PD doesn't need more rules and laws to enforce. The current penal code is more than sufficient. Instead, we should train our officers in Community Policing. Community

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

No

Policing is a distinctly different method of law enforcement. Officers would live as a part of the community, would become very familiar with local business owners, home owners, and repeat offenders. Active residents and business owners in the community would be able to contact their Community Officer when a disturbance arose. This kind of relationship would build trust between the community and the Police Department, would improve the PD's ability appropriately divert the needy and mentally ill to local service providers, and would be a more comprehensive way of understanding and addressing the evolving needs of our City and all of its residents.

Council Member Kriss Worthington and others of the Telegraph community recently visited Haight Street in San Francisco to learn more about Community Policing and how it could be adapted to Telegraph (see the 05-08-07 issue of Berkeley Daily Planet). Please support the development of Community Policing in Berkeley.

Mark Lowe

May 18, 2007, 10:43 AM

It is obvious that Berkeley is faced with this very complicated problem of dealing with the homeless and street folk but it is NOT just a Berkeley issue.

It is a Regional issue that should demand Regional resources.

This proposal by the Mayor, while well intended, looks like the "same 'ol", throwing MORE Local resource and creating MORE bureaucracy that will more than likely just muddy the water.

What Happened to the Mayor's Joint Effort Proposal, announced not that long ago with SF Mayor Newsome, To address this Big Issue of Homelessness at the Regional Level ????

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 11:27 PM

A waste of tax payers dollars. Just enforce the existing laws.

Becky O'Malley

May 19, 2007, 12:05 AM

It's been almost forty years since I gave up smoking, but watching Tuesday's city council meeting made me feel for the first time in years that I'd really like a cigarette. Why? Well, watching the city council stumble and stutter their way through an agenda which came with a 1400 word packet which they clearly hadn't bothered to read was a nerve-racking experience. It culminated in a pathetic charade which purported to address the Mayor's heartfelt interest in "improving the quality of life of public commons in the City."

What's pathetic about that? Well, first, the grammar. Perhaps the drafter meant to say "in" or "on" the public commons. Whatever the "public commons" might be, it's inanimate, doesn't have any life of its own, nor any quality of same.

Maybe what was meant was the quality of life for "people" in or on the public commons. But what does "public" commons mean anyway? Is it to be contrasted with "private" commons, and if so what would a "private" commons be? Let's just assume for discussion purposes that "public" is simply redundancy for the purpose of emphasis, and that that the triple redundancy in the title "Public Commons for Everyone" initiative is meant to convey the very great sincerity of the proponents.

In case you were afraid that there might be some insincerity at work here, you might have

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

No

caught the mayor's introduction to the discussion on Tuesday night. He mandered on for several minutes, eyes downcast, seeming to be reading from a text written by someone else, assuring anyone who cared that he really really does feel their pain.

You might have missed the whole discussion, though, since it took place at 11:30 or later, after the allotted time for the council meeting had been extended. Presumably it was placed at the end of the agenda to make sure that as few people as possible saw it, and that even fewer were able to show up to express their opinions on the topic.

What was actually on the agenda for this item? Just five recommendations, all either obvious or pointless:

1. "Restrict smoking in public areas in commercial zones." Yes, yes, I'm fully aware that tobacco is the devil's weed, and that one of the privileges of living in the Berkeley Bubble is never having to inhale anything you believe to be health-threatening or simply offensive, whether it's tobacco smoke, cheap scent or body odor. (Perhaps medical marijuana is an exception, perhaps not. The no-smoking signs on the 51 bus my kids took to Berkeley High had hand-lettered "this means pot too", but whiffs of The Other Weed still drift in through the windows in some areas.) There are already laws against public smoking, widely ignored by the police. The proposal would extend the no-smoking zones to even wider areas, making them even less likely to be enforced.

But perhaps Proposal 4 would take care of that: "Provide for strict enforcement of all existing laws affecting the quality of life in public spaces and parks." Oh sure, and in the meantime the drug dealers down around Oregon and Sacramento are cheering. This one will keep the police off the streets and out of trouble, busy handing out tickets for public smoking.

Better get the officers some foreign language instruction too. Every year about this time Telegraph Avenue is deluged with French youth, guidebooks in hand, looking for excitement and puffing up a storm. If the cops are going to try to stop them, at least they should learn to say "Defense de Fumer". Some Chinese wouldn't hurt either, since sadly most people in China are still heavy smokers, even when they visit the U.S.

Which brings up, in a roundabout way, elimination. In many countries urination in alleys is no great sin if there's no public facility handy, particularly for men. I'm personally a bit too timid for that-- the reason I finally stopped buying clothes in downtown Berkeley is that Ross-Dress-for-Less closed the bathrooms in the building they took over from J.C. Penney, and it became virtually impossible to find a place to pee in peace downtown. We've told the city should "Develop prohibitions and increased fines for public urination"... but just wait until the police snag a hapless foreign tourist in an alley.

This will all be solved, however, by Proposal 2: "Install better directional signage to public restrooms." Turns out that when you find them there are only four public restrooms in the downtown/Telegraph area, and trust me, three of them you wouldn't want to go into. They're only open during business hours anyhow, though the mayor in his benevolence now suggests keeping them open longer, and of course the signs will be bigger....

But obviously the target of all this is not tourists or desperate shoppers, it's the homeless and/or crazy folks in the "public commons" who offend. That "Everyone" in the title of the proposal really means "everyone except anyone who offends someone else who's more important".

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

No

Councilmember Wozniak told a harrowing anecdote about the time his wife and son saw a vagrant deliberately peeing on the radiator grill of an expensive car on Telegraph—the horror! I'm sure that never happened back in Nebraska.

And there are urban legends that some of these types even defecate where they shouldn't to show their contempt for something or other. How often does this happen, in reality? Wouldn't a better explanation be that they just couldn't find a bathroom in time? Not pleasant, but not criminal, and until the city can provide enough public facilities in enough places it will be hard to prove intent-to-annoy. (On the other hand, in the defecation category don't get me started on dogs and their lazy owners.)

And the recommendation that is the red meat in this proposal is Number 5:

“Reduce warning provisions associated with regulations prohibiting lying on the sidewalk.” Anyone who's ever shopped with a two-year-old knows that lying on the sidewalk is a regular feature of the tired-of-shopping-tantrum. Anyone who occasionally gets dizzy knows that sitting or lying down helps. Even the mayor recognized problems like this with his suggestion that the city needs more approved places to sit down, but don't hold your breath waiting for new benches on Telly.

Again, however, it's not naughty toddlers or dizzy walkers who are being targeted. It's the homeless/disturbed/anti-social people who are the real problem for Everyone Else. And what do we propose to do about them? Give them tickets, of course, but now without the traditional and customary “okay, buddy, it's time to move on.” And if they get enough tickets, they go to jail, since of course they don't have money for fines. That'll show'em.

The latest North East Berkeley Association newsletter sums it all up without apparent irony:

“... serious impediments to safe and enjoyable use of our public spaces and commercial districts are inappropriate street behavior, drug-dealing, vagrancy, and panhandling.... Mayor Bates has, commendably, put forth a call for a serious examination and resolution of this issue, with an emphasis on making our public spaces more attractive to the vast majority of Berkeley residents. It remains to be seen whether common sense and the needs of the vast majority will prevail against well-organized homeless advocates.” That vast underprivileged silent majority of North East Berkeley homeowners speaks up for themselves for once! Thank God someone's finally looking out for their rights!

Oh, and by the way, earlier in the evening the council discussed plans for cutting the funding for social service programs in next year's budget. The “well-organized homeless advocates” were wringing their hands, but to no avail. And councilmembers stomped all over Kriss Worthington's excellent ideas for using genuine community policing to solve Telegraph Avenue problems. It's so much easier just to write some new laws, isn't it? But on Tuesday the council didn't even get around to that by the time the meeting ended.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

No

Peter Mutnick

May 19, 2007, 9:41 AM

I am a bit confused. Awhile back I seem to recall that the Council declared a Bob Avakian Day. I also seem to recall some attempts to move the Federal Government to the left, vis-a-vis the war and maybe even some other issues. And yet, everything you do locally, where you actually wield power, seems to have a fascistic overtone to it - you always seem to side with big business against the citizenry, especially the underclasses. Where is the attempt to start moving Berkeley toward a socialistic society? Or is the rhetoric involved in declaring a Bob Avakian Day and and in issuing proclamations to the Federal Government just pure hypocrisy?

Sydney Vilen

May 19, 2007, 10:33 AM

Everyday, Berkeley becomes a meaner, uglier, less progressive city. Mayor Bates' sleep out in the street with the homeless a few years back to show his "compassionate caring" was a bogus electoral stunt, nothing more.

The corrupt, mean-spirited politics of the federal government has trickled down to the state and, in turn, trickled down to the municipalities.

We are going the wrong direction and will have to pay the consequences eventually. We cannot destroy our humanity without consequence.

(anonymous)

May 19, 2007, 3:11 PM

I don't like the sterility of the places cited as examples of the Mayor's proposal. While I don't like the smell of urine or piles of feces that sometimes appear in Berkeley areas, this is better addressed by providing conveniently located, clean public restrooms, not by running people off. If someone approaches me, I just say no (and make donations to local charity).

I liked the community policing methods investigated on Haight St. in San Francisco and suggested by other council members. Why not spend the money Bates is looking for on these methods and clean bathrooms, rather than more draconian measures?

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Neutral

(No comments)

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Maybe

(anonymous)

May 15, 2007, 10:25 AM

I agree that something must be done. I am not sure whether these are the exact steps that should be taken, but I would like to support Mayor Bates and the City Council in addressing this important question. Quality of life is important to all of us, not just the "service resistant." I'd like to be able to stroll with my kids in the shopping areas of Berkeley, but it has become too dicey to do so.

Arthur Holden

May 18, 2007, 8:01 AM

Money talks and 'odd' behavior has to walk, as in "get outta here". While I agree that there should be limits, I think the authoritarians and business people have to have limits as well. As usual the devil is in the details of limit construction so I think I will judge the program by its results. I'm willing to give it a try.

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 8:23 AM

All of the points seem sound, however I object to the ban on smoking in all public places. I am not a smoker; but since smoking is legal, does this ban effects all citizens, even those workers who step out of the store to have a quick smoke?

Andrew Doran

May 18, 2007, 10:45 AM

I wholeheartedly support the mayor's stated goals of this program, however I have some concerns regarding the particular details and some suggestions for improvement.

Most importantly, I would like to see added the return of the "guides" that we experimented with downtown and on telegraph a few years ago. This would not necessarily be in lieu of more police presence and enforcement of existing laws, but I believe they can be an extremely effective tool in the improvement of public spaces that are seen as a problem.

For one, guides are more informal and potentially less anatagonizing than policemen in uniform. They are easier to approach for someone not wanting to "bother" a cop about something little, and less threatening to fellow citizens who have a propensity for mistrusting authority (a demographic that has been overrepresented, for good or bad, in our town since the free speech movement).

Second of all, the guide program is a great way to get young people in Berkeley involved in their community, and contributing to its improvement.

As a last comment, I think that increased trash pick up on sidewalks is a very important aspect to the proposed plan, but that the jobs to do the cleaning should be offered to our homeless citizens who live in the neighborhoods most in need. Perhaps some fast track hiring plans could be implemented for willing people, coupled with the increased social services alluded to in Mayor Bates' article. I have no idea of the feasibility, but it seems like a more persuasive argument if, after you tell someone, "look you can't stand here pissing on the wall, and yelling at people walking by to give you money" if you add, "but if you want to make \$10 an hour I've got a trash

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Maybe

can and a broom for you".

Mark Humbert

May 18, 2007, 11:29 AM

One of the anonymous "no" voters makes a very compelling point: The activities to be regulated by the measure are repulsive, but are not typically a threat to life and limb. In contrast, the awful drivers who drive through our neighborhoods at high speeds, and recklessly, violating pedestrian rights of way, do pose a serious and deadly threat. I am generally supportive of this measure, but I'd place in a higher priority the effort to protect our residents from dangers posed by bad drivers.

(It's also worth thinking about the following quote from Anatole France: "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal bread.")

(anonymous)

May 18, 2007, 3:25 PM

Another increase to citizens of Berkeley for such a waste! I always advocate to offering those who homeless who decline any form of assistance the best solution...offer them a one way ticket back from whence they originated..it just might prove interesting to find out just how many would except such an offer and leave Berkeley.

Berkeley Can NOT be the land of opportunity and we can NO longer continue giving more and more and see the money going to no benefits...this is ageless and has contineud to worsen as time goes bye...and bye it should be, be gone, go away just LEAVE.

If you make it more restrictive and define the laws more, who benefits...you loose police where needed elsewhere, and crime capitolizes on shortage of police and that is a fact. Just who will inact Mayor Bates' gibberish, is he going to go out and talk with these folks to except the assistance they need? Raise the fee on parking meters, now that's a laugh, try to find one that works or find one anywhere near a City Employee Facility and it meters are jammed with disability hang tags, being used fraudently by employees...that is fact, check out all the parking along Center from MLK to Milvia and who is parked there daily.

Then, provide more public bathroom facilities, and just who is going to clean them up...our City Workers? And open 24/7...hummm, sleeping there and who roused them out when it is time to clean the facility?

Unfortunately, these are the same ole suggestions that have been asked over and over, and even emplimated costing citizens more, what is actually done, nothing what so ever. It is a crisis that simply needs to be addressed as make it the most uncomfortable situation and move them out of Berkeley...violating their civil liberties, I think not...they offer nothing in return and they are violating my rights as well as the rights to our Businesses.

Gina Moreland

May 18, 2007, 5:13 PM

While I completely agree that the situation in downtown Berkeley is intolerable, and is largely responsible for driving away our financial supporters and MANY potential visitors (to Habitot Children's Museum), I am skeptical of the chances for success of Mayor Bates' proposal. Nevertheless, I do applaud him for making the effort. At last.

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Maybe

If I saw the whole city council on board with the proposal, I would be less skeptical. If the language about supposed violations of 'civil liberties was eliminated, I would be less skeptical. If the proposal addressed the existing off-campus privileges for Berkeley HS students with an enforced code of behavior while they are in the downtown area, I would be less skeptical. If the proposal did not finance any additional costs by increasing parking expense, which is already a deterrent to visiting downtown and will drive away more visitors, I would be less skeptical.

I agree with those who have written about a regional response - Berkeley can't be hand-out central - and any effort to address the homeless in particular needs to be implemented in coordination with other cities, regional health departments, etc.

I agree with those who mention that existing laws already exist to eliminate the most offensive behaviors; they just need to be enforced. Allow police to do their jobs.

Personally, I'd be happy if we started with a major cleaning of the streets, sidewalks and general filth in downtown, focusing the work of the existing public sanitation workers and a demand that the city, store owners and BART do their parts going forward, and broadly and consistently enforcing penal codes -- everything from littering, to spitting, to smoking in doorways, to public urination/defecation and drug dealing -- by our very well paid police force.

(anonymous)

May 19, 2007, 9:32 AM

The conditions of Berkeley's streets are reflective of the state of social conditions in our state and country. When you continually cut the help for mental illness and wellness programs it is natural that these social ills spill over into public view.

The tenor of this measure seems to be "Let's address the problems and work towards a solution". That is a positive step. My concern that keeps me from saying an unqualified "Yes", is there is a push and flavor of let's clean up the streets and sweep the problems to somewhere else. As long as there is help and support being provided to people desperately needing it I see this is a positive step to address the social ills of the USA. Dana Merryday

Derik Landry

May 19, 2007, 9:51 AM

This is another tax wrapped up to in a neat package. As long as we continue to welcome a resident homeless population we will have a resident homeless population problem.

Businesses don't come to Berkeley because they can be taxed out of business with each election. Look around...Emeryville and El Cerrito are leaving us in the 1950's. Berkeley residents need to shop in those towns for the staples. It's not about a homeless person smoking in a doorway.

The truth is that businesses, in conjunction with Police, are better able to resolve these matters when the business community is thriving. The sales tax revenue further supports these, and many other, civic objectives. The downtown problem is that the City is not aggressively tackling the vacancy problem. If it looks like skid row...

Should the City implement the Mayor's proposal to address street behavior problems?

Maybe

Opening the restrooms in parking garages 24 hours a day would be devastating to businesses...no more women shoppers or diners downtown.

Blaming our homelessness problem on a lack of resources is just false. Portland and Santa Cruz are operating success homelessness management programs on smaller budgets. Here is a more cost-effective idea:

1. Redirect existing resources with a measured plan to REDUCE the homeless number.
2. Enforce the existing code and back our skilled Police force.
3. Ban the 40-60 people who habitually infringe on the safety and well-being of the public.

This is about balancing compassion with the overall health of our City and requires rethinking how the City operates. If we are going to throw our money at the problem we should not do more of what is currently not working.

I know it's not the Mayor's intention, but the proposed plan could easily make Berkeley more attractive to transients.
