

FLAWED LAW

The City Council's **cruising ordinance** is an example of knee-jerk lawmaking at its worst. The last time Portland's leaders did something this silly was a year ago, when they passed the notorious 50-decibel ordinance specifically in order to rid the Morrill's Corner neighborhood of a single business, The Garage.

In the case of cruising, the council decided

to put a law on the books that would prohibit cars from driving past the same spot more than three times in two hours in posted areas. The ordinance is intended to prevent cruising for sex

SO NOTED



in Parkside and the West End.

It'll never work.

As noted in this week's cover story (see page 8), people looking for quick, anonymous sex have been pushed around this city by various initiatives for years. They don't go away. The new ordinance, while it grabbed headlines for a few days and made the councilors look like they were doing something, won't make people cruising for sex go away either. It poses an unnecessary limitation on the civil rights of Portland citizens. It implicitly and unfairly singles out homosexuals. And it is virtually unenforceable.

So what is the answer? Is it to allow people to treat Deering Oaks or any other Portland venue as a one-stop sex-shopping destination? No. The answer is to use the community policing techniques that are so effective at preventing other kinds of unwanted activity in our neighborhoods and to enforce existing state laws concerning indecent exposure. Consensual sex that happens out of public view is not a crime. Picking people up in bars isn't a crime. Driving around the block shouldn't be against city rules, either.

The city council should not think of laws as Band-Aids to slap on every time something hurts a neighborhood. Cluttering up the lawbooks with this type of reactive ordinance is a waste of time.

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