

Portland's cruising a public health issue

As a former resident of the Eastern Promenade, I understand and share the concerns the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization has with "cruising."

However, your reporter left out some very valuable information.

While this activity is referred to as "homosexual sex," your readers should have been told that this does not mean that the participants are gay. Police Lt. Ted Ross should know, through the work of the Department of Public Health, that the majority of men found in these environments are either married men or do not self-identify themselves as gay.

By your reporter calling the Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance for a quote, the article implies that this is a gay issue. It is not. It is a public health issue.

The police department is well aware that when you close down one venue where sexual activity occurs, it simply moves elsewhere. Discussions have been occurring for years now between law enforcement, public health workers, and safe-sex advocates on how to best handle this problem.

There is no doubt that it is important to keep neighborhoods safe, but it is also important to educate this hard-to-reach population. Public sex environments will continue to thrive no matter where the location. As long as officials know where they are, then this activity can be monitored and these men can get the information they need in order to protect themselves (hence, their wives and girlfriends) from AIDS or other sexually transmitted diseases.

Hopefully, now when this issue is discussed, it can be done so intelligently - without making scapegoats.

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