Morgan Johnston

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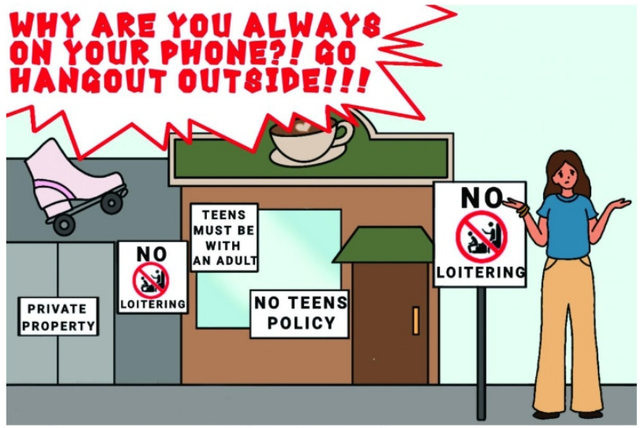
OPINION: Bored and Banned

Despite complaints from adults about screen time and socialization, teens lack spaces to hang out with friends.

OPINION by Izzy Matya, Staff Writer



Where are we to go?

As a teenager I have found it increasingly more difficult to connect with others my age. Maybe it's partially due to social media but I believe there is a larger problem in our society. It seems every space once meant for teens or sometimes referred to as "third-spaces" has turned into either one that is unsafe or very unwelcoming of young adults.

For teens like myself who live in or near small cities it can be a struggle finding things to do with my friends that are not sitting in an empty parking lot, however even that seems to be restricted now. I have seen more and more "no loitering" signs placed in parking lots. These signs never made sense to me as adults always complain that we can just go sit somewhere and talk with friends, yet they turn around and restrict said places to just hangout.

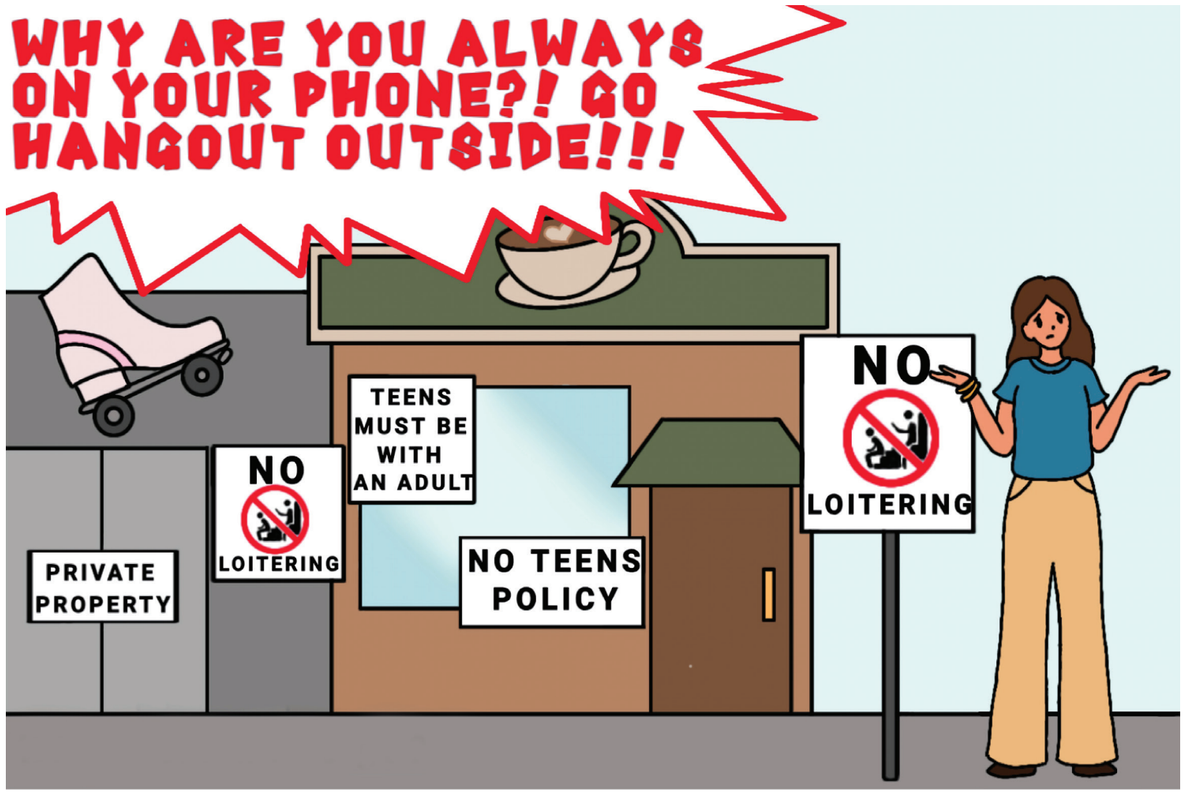
Furthermore, why are adults so quick to push teens out of these spaces? All it seems to take is one group or even individual for businesses to ban all teens. No one treats one adult as a reflection of the entire population, so why is that logic applied to teenagers?

It is not just parking lots teens are barred from. In cities and other nearby urban areas it is almost impossible to shop around without an adult. More and more stores either outright ban teens, or require an adult with them past the early afternoon.

How are others my age and myself supposed to have a life outside of school if as soon as we leave stores are already closing their doors to us? Where are we supposed to go with our friends? It seems as if the freedom of being a teen everyone talks about does not exist anymore.

The problem goes beyond heavy restrictions on teens, many of these "third-spaces" just do not exist anymore. So many malls nearby are almost completely abandoned, roller rinks and arcades are shut down, and places like movie theaters are far too expensive for the average teenager to go consistently.

It is completely unrealistic to expect teenagers to find places to be off their phones, or meet new people when every space that once existed for that purpose has been shut down, is unsafe or blocks teens from even entering, solely because they are under 18. Meeting others and being out with friends is such an important part of the teenage experience, and when teenagers are continuously deprived of these experiences, life starts to feel very boring and isolating.



Where are we to go?

Artist's Statement - Morgan Johnston

The entire cartoon was created from scratch in ibisPaint X, beginning with just a blank canvas, the opinion story, and the idea of a lack of teen spaces for guidance. After brainstorming several concepts, I landed on an image that not only captured the main idea of the opinion piece, but also matched one of the author's personal experiences that she references. I gathered various reference photos to further my idea mentally and to accurately depict certain details, such as the signage present. I sketched multiple drafts throughout my process, ultimately restarting the piece entirely to strengthen the clarity of my message. Once I was finally satisfied, I carefully refined the line art and completed the coloring process. The cartoon was developed over four hours over the span of only a few days. Throughout my process, I paid careful attention to visual storytelling, clarity and originality to ensure my message was clear and powerful.