



CITIZENS FOR A GREATER DOWNTOWN ST. LOUIS

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July 7, 2020

Hon. Lyda Krewson, Mayor
City of St. Louis
City Hall, Room 200
1200 Market Street
Saint Louis, MO 63103

Dear Mayor Krewson:

I am writing on behalf of our organization, Citizens for a Greater Downtown St. Louis, a group of residential and commercial property owners concerned about the future of Downtown St. Louis. Our principal interest has been the authorization of a new Downtown Community Improvement District to replace the current CID when its term expires in December 2021. We believe the current CID has been largely ineffectual in confronting the challenges that we face downtown, and we believe that substantial reform in both structure and programming is needed. However, we are *not* reaching out to you now about CID issues, but about the very serious deterioration of conditions Downtown – conditions that have been dramatically worsened as a consequence of the current pandemic.

We recognize that the City of St. Louis is faced with many serious challenges right now, ranging from social unrest to law enforcement to budget shortfalls. We know that there are many competing interests for your attention and the City's resources. However, we believe that conditions have worsened to the point where we are in danger of effectively losing the region's downtown to growing chaos and lawlessness. If we lose our downtown it will have dramatic economic and financial impacts on the entire city, and will be a serious blow to any hope of sustaining a growing, prosperous and healthy City of St. Louis in the future.

The reputation of Downtown is rapidly deteriorating, even among many of us who are passionately committed to living and working here. Social media reflects many discussions among residents and businesses who are now seriously discussing leaving Downtown and discouraging others from moving here. Just to be clear, while the problems of Downtown have been laid bare and exacerbated by the pandemic, they have been growing for the past several years. As a result of the pandemic and the loss of conventions and sporting events Downtown has effectively become an "attractive nuisance" that invites illegal and destructive activity. Wide unobstructed streets are becoming known for loud racing motor vehicles and cruising, surface parking lots serve as hosts for large gatherings of people, problem properties dispensing alcoholic beverages are becoming assembly places for drug sales and use, traffic regulations are totally unenforced, and the incidence of gunfire is increasing dramatically. None of this is new to those of us who live and work Downtown, but the pandemic has accelerated the growth of this destructive behavior. It should be obvious to everyone that these conditions, if allowed to persist, will destroy Downtown as we know it. Billions of dollars of public and private investment will be threatened, as will the economy of the City.

Directors: Les Sterman / Arnold Stricker / Ken Aston / Matt O'Leary / Amos Harris / Jason Gifford / Earl Westfall
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While SLMPD does a good job with the resources they have, we believe that these are problems that cannot be solved by law enforcement alone. Certainly, more officers would help, but the police are becoming overwhelmed by the scale of disruptive and often violent behavior. In our view, we need a collaborative approach among civic leaders, property owners, government, law enforcement and others to address our issues. This requires leadership to motivate and mobilize the various parties to work together. Neither the CID nor Downtown STL has shown any interest or ability to step up into this role, so it is incumbent on city government to provide that leadership.

There are some things that we can do together to mitigate the attractive nuisance that downtown has become. Here are just a few:

- Narrow or close certain downtown streets
- Work with landlords to limit Airbnb rental units downtown that are used primarily to host parties
- Require landlords to be accountable for dealing with problem tenants
- Reduce the number of scooters downtown and have them programmed to turn off after 9:00 pm
- Strictly enforce liquor laws
- Step up enforcement of traffic laws
- Enforce regulations requiring parking lot owners to provide security for their properties
- Better coordinate and make more effective use of private security furnished by property owners and the CID

We are requesting that you establish a task force made up of a range of affected parties to coordinate safety and security measures in downtown. One key to making downtown safer is to develop meaningful accountability measures to determine the most effective strategies. The crime statistics often presented by law enforcement and others simply do not accurately reflect the conditions downtown. The task force should use meaningful performance measures to communicate frequently and honestly with downtown residents, businesses, and property owners.

Our hope is that by working together, we can change the trajectory of Downtown without further straining city resources. What we need from you is to provide the leadership necessary to make this happen. We stand ready to help and would like to schedule a meeting with you at your earliest convenience to discuss how to move forward together. Please let me know when you are available to meet.

Sincerely,

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cc: Chief John Hayden Hon. Tammika Hubbard
 Hon. Jimmie Edwards Hon. Marlene Davis
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