

Respected City Councillors,

I have been a downtown business owner, property owner and resident for over 30 years, and up until the past few years I've always taken great pride in our downtown.

With the sad but visible rise of the effects of homelessness, mental illness and drug addiction, these past few years the downtown is considered by many a destination to avoid.

I hear from clients and friends on an almost daily basis that they hate coming downtown, that they avoid it if possible, that they don't feel safe.

I routinely have to clean up discarded garbage, used drug paraphernalia, and human waste outside my business. It has become commonplace to see open drug use, drug dealing, people screaming obscenities, people passed out on benches, gardens ruined by encampments; not a very inviting environment.

The city is making a massive investment in re-developing the downtown, but I honestly believe this will all be for nought if the current situation is not improved.

I would support City Council taking any steps that would offer affected people a better option than living in tents in the downtown core; ideally with basic facilities they are currently lacking (bathrooms, heat, water). With this I would also support stricter enforcement in seeing that people made use of this better, safer, healthier alternative.

To do so would be a clear Win-Win situation for both the encampment inhabitants and the community at large, who would like to visit, live, work, and shop in a cleaner, safer, more welcoming downtown.

Regards,

Paul Lucas