



May 4, 2020

TO: Mayor Lundberg and Springfield City Councilors
RE: Solutions Sought for Homeless Shelter at A and 7th Street

Dear Mayor Lundberg and Springfield City Councilors,

I'm writing with regard to concerns voiced by downtown merchants stemming in part from the temporary homeless shelter located at the Memorial Building on the corner of A and 7th Street.

These are not individuals without compassion for the unhoused. Many are the same community members who generously donate their time as well as their business and personal earnings to causes that serve the most vulnerable members of our community. They have questions that are deserving of our Council's attention as you consider provisions for serving the homeless population.

Identifying the building for temporary shelter use during the COVID-19 pandemic is understandable as the circumstances necessitated emergency measures. I understand that the efforts of those individuals managing the shelter are genuinely centered. I know they are working tirelessly to provide service and support to these individuals housed there.

While we support solutions for the compassionate care of vulnerable populations, we stress the need to avoid consequences detrimental to the hard-earned revitalization of our downtown core. Based on repeated inquiries received over a number of months from downtown community members, we believe there is cause for concern should this building - or another within our family-friendly, downtown business core - be considered as an extended homeless shelter without proper attention given to mitigating the impacts on our businesses.

In the weeks ahead we will be planning and advising on reopening our businesses. Now more than ever, we must remember those who have invested in preserving, building, and improving our downtown area. As you explore further proposals to provide services and housing to the homeless community, I urge you to consider equally as carefully the genuine concerns you are hearing from our business community, many of whom are fighting to keep the doors open and the lights on so they can be ready to provide for an inviting customer experience and a return to business when the time is right.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "V. Mikkelsen", written in a cursive style.

Vonnie Mikkelsen, President and CEO