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Sent: Wednesday, July 6, 2022 9:39 AM

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Subject: Public Behavior Update

Mayor and Commissioners –

The Grand Rapids Chamber shares many of the values and priorities set by the City's Strategic Plan, including goals for economic prosperity and a safe community. Unfortunately, as many of you are hearing, the high rate of shootings, violent crimes, trespassing, harassment and many other unacceptable actions continue to harm businesses and their employees in downtown, neighborhood business districts and other critical commercial corridors.

It is with great alarm that I share more examples of some of the feedback I frequently receive from employers who are investing in the people and success of Grand Rapids. Here a few of the more recent encounters that have caused particular distress (edited to remove identifying information or simplify/summarize):

1. A store was robbed. Someone walked in, grabbed some expensive items and ran out the door. It was in the middle of the day.
2. An individual refused to depart a restaurant/bar after the manager informed him that he needed to leave since he failed to secure his dog (not a service animal) and was becoming aggressive towards staff. GRPD responded and escorted him out of the building. GRPD officers informed the manager that they had been dealing with him all day.
 - a. the same individual returned two days later and attempted to gain access. He was stopped by our door staff since they had just witnessed him being escorted out of nearby building by their security. The man started shouting and swung his dog by its leash. Several of our employees and guests witnessed the incident. The other business called GRPD and when they arrived they apprehended the individual.
3. An individual was kicked out of the closed area of the restaurant/bar by one of our employees who noticed him walking around. After reviewing the camera footage, it was revealed that the man masturbated in this common area, wiped several pairs of underwear on public door handles and tables, and laid several pairs of underwear out on tables. GRPD responded but the man had long departed by the time they arrived.
4. Contractors have had thefts and other damage/vandalization from breaking into project sites (several examples of this so I combined it).
5. Our door staff felt something was off about an individual who entered the restaurant and when they checked on them in the restroom they noticed the individual was "shooting up" in one of the bathroom stalls. The individual was confronted by security and removed.
6. I am just giving you an update that we had a similar feces incident in one of our doorway entrances. Each time something like this happens we most certainly are at risk of losing clients, in addition to impacts on the health, safety and workplace experience of our personnel. As I'm sure you know, there are likely additional business impacts from this as well as our personnel

are more likely to elect to work from home impacting other downtown businesses since those people won't be eating in restaurants, etc.

7. A few times an individual became belligerent when asked to leave. The person would leave once more pressure was applied, like our receptionist preparing to call the police (of course, applying additional pressure presents its own safety risks for the person applying it). This became such a repeated situation causing safety concerns that we have installed a buzzer/intercom system so that our space is always locked and the receptionist must buzz anyone who does not have a pass card/fob into the space.
8. I was leaving our space around 11:20am via a stairwell that leads to a ground level exit door main entrance. As I opened the door to the outside I just missed stepping into a pile of human feces. This is not the first time we have had this problem either. Fortunately, someone from the Downtown Ambassadors did respond to our call and cleaned the mess. While that is appreciated, we obviously really need this to stop!
9. A young woman leaving work at the end of the day was physically attacked and sprayed with an unknown liquid.
10. Several companies have felt it necessary to purchase security including specifically for overnight staff who did not feel safe.
11. An individual in a coffee shop had to be removed after repeatedly spitting water onto the tables near other guests including on the back of my jacket.
12. A tenant's car was stolen. They parked it on the road, ran inside and within 5 minutes it was gone.
13. A small camp was set up in a wooded area near a business. One nearby employer witnessed drugs being sold and employees who parked nearby expressed concerns. The HOT Team was helpful in advising the property owner and removing the tents but the owner was warned to expect a reoccurrence. Staff cleaning up identified needles and other paraphernalia at the site.

Another common remark I hear from those suffering the worst and/or most repetitive issues is the uncertainty of the ability for GRPD to respond quickly given the amount of priority calls they are dealing to. I received two more notes of significant issues just in the last 12 hours – one specifically mentioned it took 40 minutes for a response, during which the individuals was shouting curses in a place of business and refusing to leave. The reaction I have heard from DGRI's security contract have been positive but that is for a very narrow area and time window.

This is putting additional stress on employees who are placed into uncomfortable or even dangerous situations with no certainty on quick and safe resolution. I appreciate the ongoing engagement from both GRPD and City staff. I have shared suggested actions, including the City's "who to call" memo with a wide swathe of employers to raise awareness on what a businesses' rights and responsibilities are (including encouraging them to file police reports for serious issues so that we can better track what is going on). I also appreciate and support the City's recent budget investments such as mental health response, housing, the Homeless Outreach Team and much more designed to be a part of the solution, along with long term strategies to address root causes.

That being said, it takes a long time to build a reputation as a clean, safe city and only a short time to lose it. We know there is not an easy fix or we'd already have done it, but I feel compelled to share it with you and increase awareness of the serious nature of what people are experiencing. The general feedback I get from many is that problems are getting worse and they don't expect this to change. I look forward to further discussions and working with you and all stakeholders to promote the vibrant, safe environment that everyone in our community deserves.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss further, thank you.

Joshua Lunger

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