

December 6, 2022

Grand Rapids City Commission
300 Monroe Ave NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

RE: Request to address public health and safety

Dear Mayor and Commissioners:

We, the undersigned employers and residents of Grand Rapids, urge you to take immediate action to promote the safety, health and well-being of unhoused individuals, residents and all persons working in or visiting the City of Grand Rapids.

We are thankful for the investments already made by the City of Grand Rapids in shelter space, increased outreach, mental health support and storage capacity for personal belongings, and are hopeful Kent County's plan to invest and work with partners will provide new mental health crisis services and outreach.

Despite these important steps, it is clear there are gaps remaining in the effort to create a destination city that is welcoming to all as well as outcomes for those in need of services. The ongoing concerns from residents and employers related to harassment, public defecation, trespassing, assault and other disruptive and disturbing behavior needs to be addressed with an intentional and compassionate focus on improving outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness or struggling with mental health.

Cities across the country are facing similar circumstances and have adopted measures that have shown to provide significant improvements to safety, cleanliness and enjoyment, while working on the foundational elements to create a thriving and prosperous community for all.

We request that you adopt an ordinance to regulate appropriate access and use of the public right of way and solicitation.

The City has a responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of its residents. The proposed regulations are narrowly tailored to serve a compelling and substantial governmental interest, while preserving ample alternative areas for the valid exercise of constitutional rights. This action, paired with previous, ongoing and future investments, will contribute greatly to reversing the loss of access to and enjoyment of public places and the sense of fear, intimidation, disorder and actual danger to public health, safety and welfare.

This action is not intended to limit any person from exercising constitutionally protected activity, when conducted in a legal manner. The goal is to promote better outcomes for all through appropriate regulation acting to encourage the use of available services, prevent the incentivization of unsafe activities in public spaces and protect individuals from the fear and intimidation by regulating the time, place, and manner for the use of the public right of way and solicitation.

Combined with other efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing, provide mental health support, improve outcomes amongst service providers, these regulations will encourage greater use of available resources while preventing unsafe and unhealthy conditions for unhoused individuals and all other stakeholders.

In true Grand Rapids fashion, we can be the best practice. We have the capacity, commitment, compassion and community support to move forward. This targeted approach to addressing only the most concerning behavior will serve a compelling public interest, preserve ample alternatives, and reduce the heightened sense of intimidation and disorder.

Again, we urge you to support the requested changes. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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CEO & Founder
Rockford Construction

Richard A. Winn
President
AHC Hospitality

Ross Bartlett
Regional General Manager
Amway Grand Plaza Hotel

Norina Cadili
General Manager
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Melissa Stanley
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Doug Small
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Johnny Brann Jr
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Woodrows Duckpin Bowling

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Mike Ellis
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Ryan Wheeler
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RDV

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President West Michigan
KeyBank

Bill & Tami Coyne
Residents
Rowe

Jeff Lobdell
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Birgit Klohs
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Thomas Tooley
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Matt Wikander
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West Michigan Community Bank

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Jim McKinley
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Amy McCulloch
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Dick & Diane Sherlock
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Rick Baker
President & CEO
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Greg Williams
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President
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Matt Dowdy
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Tim Hall
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Alexander Drolett
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Mackenzie Coristine
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Trudy McLaughlin
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LC

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