

Mayor Frey and Minneapolis City Council:

We are a group of more than 40 small-business owners and leaders in Downtown Minneapolis—the heart of your city—with a concentration in restaurants. And we are in a state of desolation.

It's not just because of COVID. When it comes to this virus, businesses have built a weary resilience with a sense of optimism: There are plans to be followed, protective measures in place, and an eventual light at the end of the tunnel. The caveat is that we need you, the government, to help to get the people back downtown and to their offices (we're looking at you, Governor Walz). We need you to allow dining at bars again, Mayor Frey, without penalizing the whole for the actions of the few, so that restaurants can choose how to weather this storm and come out in one—albeit damaged—piece.

But this goes beyond COVID. There is no current plan of action, cure, or sense of “We're all in this together” for the other worries plaguing downtown, specifically, the real and perceived rising rates of crime.

Even those who refuse to let fear run their lives, even those who live in the city and have spent years feeling relatively safe despite the occasional incident, are turning away. The numbers speak for themselves, and the vibrations throughout Minneapolis can't be ignored: Perception begets reality, and the strong feelings of unsafety in our downtown are very real. No matter which side of the “defund the police” debate you fall on, the absence of communication and transparency about public safety plans creates even more fear, uncertainty and frustration.

Our business are struggling. Some are failing; several have already closed. Many others have been boarded up for months, yet continue to be hit with rent and property taxes. Our patrons are paying entertainment and stadium taxes, even with no events or activity. *We are still supporting the city, but the city is not supporting us.* If this trend continues, a city can take decades of work and a major movement to recover. History has proven it, and we need to reverse course before we become a lost city.

It's exciting and encouraging to see more companies signing leases downtown, but behind the scenes, a large number of businesses are considering or are already moving outside of the city. Losing us puts at risk the very infrastructure that energizes and makes an urban environment compelling. It's becoming too easy to celebrate in the good news while turning a blind eye to the bad.

We are asking for acknowledgement from you of the Minneapolis crisis, and yes, it is a crisis. We are asking for practices that will encourage a return to business and a return to the downtown offices. We are asking for the city to *do its job* in the prevention of theft and destruction, with no tolerance for violence and assault. We are asking for support for the businesses that have long served as blocks in the city's foundation—some even for decades.

We are asking you to stand up, take action, help us fight, and help us be part of the city's future to make this city vibrant again before it's too late. We need the people back, and we need to ensure their safety.

Please let us know your plan.

**Group Description:**

More than 40 downtown Minneapolis small-businesses, concentrating on restaurants. An alliance of businesses formed to create a collective voice, developing initiatives designed to make our city safer and help our operations survive.

**Why:**

Our employees and patrons feel unsafe in downtown Minneapolis. Crime has increased, and there is a general perception of lawlessness in the city's core. COVID dealt small businesses a blow, but the downtown safety issues are just as formidable and, after stacking up for several years, have come to a head.