



The Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce Opposes City Ordinance on Homeless Encampments

Bloomington, IN – February 23, 2021 – Based on overwhelming feedback from members, the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce opposes the proposed Bloomington Council Ordinance 12-06 that would allow encampments in public parks for extended periods.

“Over the past year we’ve heard increasing complaints and deep concerns voiced by members of the business community regarding encampments at Seminary Park and elsewhere,” said Erin Predmore, the Chamber’s president and CEO. “We must find an alternative way to support the needs of houseless residents that does not negatively impact local businesses, the jobs they provide, and the broader community.”

This situation poses three broad impacts:

Economic impact: Already struggling from the pandemic, businesses face even more costs from added security, cleanup of needles, bottles, feces, and other trash, and (in some cases) property damage. These employers are the lifeblood of our community, providing jobs and paying property taxes that in part support services for the most vulnerable. With encampments, we risk creating blighted areas where businesses won’t survive. When businesses fail, we all suffer.

Community impact: The city has invested millions in our parks, which are designed for the use of all residents. By allowing encampments, the city makes it less likely that other residents will be able to enjoy this community asset. Further, as residents grow afraid of coming downtown to work or play, we risk losing the quality of life that Bloomington has worked so hard to build. That quality of life also attracts visitors to our town, who go to our restaurants, shops, entertainment venues and other businesses. If Bloomington is perceived as unsafe, we will stop drawing these outside dollars that support our economy.

Individual impact: If we concede that sleeping outside is an acceptable option for the homeless, we are giving up on residents who most need our collective help. The Chamber supports the long-term work of the Homelessness & Housing Instability initiative, led by the United Way and Community Foundation. A collaborative, regional effort is crucial to address the systemic, underlying causes of homelessness.

“When we talk to our Chamber members, they express genuine concern for the plight of people who have no place to go,” Predmore said. “But the impact on our local businesses is profound. In a recent member survey we conducted, 85% of respondents oppose this ordinance.”

Many people who’ve contacted the Chamber are unwilling to speak publicly, for fear of reprisal from passionate advocates for the homeless. Their experiences are no less valid. Examples of this feedback are posted on [the Chamber’s website](#), extracted from emails and phone interviews with local business owners, as well as from survey responses from over 100 Chamber members.

“We urge Bloomington City Councilmembers to reflect on these issues as they make policy decisions for the city,” Predmore said. “We ask them to oppose Ordinance 12-06 and work to find viable solutions for our entire community.”

About the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce:

The Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce is a nonprofit membership organization serving as our community's leading advocate for business. We offer unique leadership opportunities, meaningful volunteer activities, and exclusive business-building programs focused on critical economic, civic, and social priorities. Chamber members support each other and community initiatives, sharing information and resources to help create economic opportunity and community well-being. At the Greater Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, we believe that better business leads to a better community.

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