

Downtown STL, Inc.

Friday, March 10, 2017

Governor Eric Greitens
201 W. Capitol Avenue, Room 216
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Mr. Governor,

Downtown STL, Inc., a business organization within the region's core, wishes to share with you our concerns about the St. Louis Community Release Center (Release Center) at 1621 N. 1st Street, St. Louis, MO 63102. The Release Center is operated by the Missouri Department of Corrections and has been the source of many serious problems in both the area immediately adjacent to the facility as well as the broader Downtown community.

The Release Center allows residents to be released throughout the Downtown area on a daily basis with minimal supervision. These residents frequently travel throughout Downtown aggressively begging and attempting to procure drugs. Discussion with residents at the facility indicates that drug problems run rampant within the facility.

The Release Center is located within blocks of the financial center of St. Louis. Businesses in Downtown, as well as employees of these businesses, indicate that this facility leads to many problems in the area. We have attached to this letter, a few examples of aggressive crimes committed by individuals staying at the Release Center during their unsupervised time. These incidents include violent assaults of business people in Downtown. The attached incidents are jarring, but are no doubt underreported. The St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department indicates that residents of the facility will often give incorrect address information upon arrest, leading to significant underreporting.

We as an organization, as well as the various business leaders and organizations accounted for in the signature block below, feel that this facility must be closed for the good of the region. The location of the facility both limits development to the riverfront as well as Downtown and makes current businesses uncomfortable with the safety of their locations. We believe strongly that the facility is costing the City of St. Louis incalculable financial damage and is potentially an impediment to new development, as the result of safety concerns within a multi-mile radius of the facility.

Mr. Governor, we humbly request as leaders of the St. Louis business community, that you seriously consider closing this ineffectual facility.

Thank you,

Missy Kelley
President & CEO
Downtown STL, Inc.

Jack Coatar
7th Ward Alderman
City of St. Louis

Colonel D. Samuel Dotson
Police Chief
SLMPD

John Clark
President
Laclede's Landing

Patricia Hagen
President
T-REX

Amos Harris
Principal
Spinnaker St. Louis

Joe Hindsley
General Manager
Hyatt Regency St. Louis

Brian Marsh
Vice President & GM
Lumière Place Casino

Thomas Minogue
Chairman
Thompson Coburn LLP

Jared Opsal
Executive Director
DNA

Steve O'Loughlin
President
LHM

Steve Smith
President & CEO
Lawrence Group

Joe Reagan
President & CEO
St. Louis Regional Chamber

Ron Watermon
Vice President
St. Louis Cardinals

Violent Incidents

July 20, 2016 - Michael Paul Hopfer, either a current or past resident of the Community Release Center, shoved an 82 year old women to the ground during an attempted robbery. The victim eventually died as a result of head injuries incurred during the robbery.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/woman-shoved-to-ground-by-crystal-city-robber-dies-of/article_52bcf9ce-54e9-5a3c-858e-3237d7a15d5a.html

April 4, 2016 - Michael Smith, resident of the Community Release Center, slit the throat of a woman just north of Laclede's Landing. Other residents of the Center allege Michael Smith hit someone in the head while outside the facility with a tire iron a few days before.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/woman-stumbles-into-lumiere-place-casino-with-stab-wound-to/article_4a00195c-3b9b-584d-ae72-dfee66c60233.html

March 8, 2016 - Timothy Ates, resident of the Community Release Center and registered sex offender, committed a sexual assault in a Downtown parking garage.

<http://www.kctv5.com/story/31421319/concerns-arise-over-downtown-halfway-house-after-alleged-sexual-assault-by-resident>

December 25, 2015 - Toney Simpson, sex offender and resident of the Community Release Center, sexually assaulted a woman just north of Downtown.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/rapist-on-parole-for-conviction-rapes-again-in-st-louis/article_0c138c5c-4a84-5521-9e34-4e8bc66afdcf.html

October 24, 2015 - Michael Wiggins, of the 1600 block of North First Street (resident of the Release Center) was found shot to death in the Jeff-Vander-Lou neighborhood across from Yeatman Square Park.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/man-found-fatally-shot-on-north-leffingwell-in-st-louis/article_7a14ff28-24be-536b-a709-2bc18d95a397.html

October 15, 2015 – Kenneth Kindell, resident of the Community Release Center, was shot in the head and killed in the Walnut Park neighborhood.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/st-louis-police-identify-man-shot-in-walnut-park-neighborhood/article_eb901ba6-1527-51ea-b36d-95cf80bbbcd5.html

January, 2014 – Shawn Akery, sex offender and resident of the Community Release Center, sexually assaulted at woman at 9th Street and Pine, in Downtown.

http://www.stltoday.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/downtown-st-louis-leaders-worry-it-has-become-dumping-ground/article_a507f77f-7712-5115-bdae-e51a9dc06fcb.html