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March 8, 2013

RECEIVED

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Mayor Sam Kooiker
300 Sixth Street
Rapid City, SD 57701

MAYOR'S OFFICE

via E-Mail Followed by U.S. Mail

RE: Summer Nights Street Dance

Dear Mayor Kooiker:

I am hoping you can help us address the Summer Nights Street Dance problem downtown. Up front, and for the record, I would like to say that I am not against a fun party or Summer Nights in particular, but shutting down our streets for it is extremely detrimental to downtown businesses, as well as the entire district on a number of levels. In the past the organizers of Summer Nights have succeeded in attaching pejorative labels to anyone who was anything other than an adamant supporter of their operation, and thereby suppressed the dialogue. I suppose I take that risk here as well, but it is critical that we get the Summer Nights moved to a more appropriate location before it continues to grow and spread harm.

Last December some of us on St. Joseph Street met and discussed this issue. Later we spoke with the organizers of the Summer Nights Street Dance who assured us they would follow up, listen to and address our concerns. They never followed through with that commitment.

Unfortunately what events such as the Summer Nights Street dance do is create an illusion of revitalization. A big crowd of people having fun and partying does not equal customers, or a vital business district. Worse, there is an illusion that has crept into the public consciousness that believes even though the people partying are not customers that night, they have seen our businesses and so they might come back someday, and so we should be happy. This is not how customers move within the marketplace, not even close. Beyond that, we have customers, very hard earned customers who are not coming downtown on Thursdays. In fact, pretty much everyone in Rapid City knows not to come downtown on Thursdays (except for at night for the party) because the streets are closed off. That is one-fifth of our gross revenue each week! Small businesses operate on very thin profit margins, and so losing this kind of revenue is not just damaging, it is devastating. I also think the illusion created that a crowd equals customers may be

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encouraging some new businesses to open which are gambling on this false metric for success. In that event, we are actually undermining our efforts to create a vital business district.

The complete lack of a cacophony of voices from Main Street merchants objecting to the proposed move to St. Joseph Street is most illustrative.

The best part is that there is no reason to discontinue the fun. Summer Nights should be moved to Memorial Park, the correct facility for such events. This would buttress and enhance our continued efforts to link Downtown with Memorial Park via the Promenade. Allowing it to continue to be downtown is only causing more harm and putting off the inevitable.

I would like to follow up with you in the near future. Perhaps I could have a few minutes of your valuable time to further discuss this. I would likewise be willing to come address the City Council. If you should want to speak with me prior to that my cell phone number is 484 8655. I have sent a similar letter to Alderman Charity Doyle. I have also corresponded with the Chief of Police as well as we are utilizing a lot of resources under the mistaken belief that The Summer Nights Street Dance is helping downtown businesses. Thank you very much for your help.

Most Sincerely,

Dennis D. Halterman
Creative Director

DDH/ssd

Always 100% Guaranteed!