

To the Residents of Davenport and the Greater Quad-City Area,

We would like to introduce ourselves as the Downtown Davenport Business Coalition.

We are a collection of business and building owners who have been affected either directly or indirectly by the flood of 2019.

We are not large corporations or national chains. We are small business operators with our homes directly tied to our business loans, all in an attempt to revive our city center.

We invest our time and resources into a once struggling area because we believe that the strength of a city is judged by the vibrancy of its downtown, and until the breach we were making great strides. Downtown Davenport, with three restaurants set to open the week of the breach was more alive than it has been since the 1960's.

Our livelihoods are now in jeopardy.

While at first glance it may appear that insurance will cover our expenses, this simply isn't true. Many of us have expenses that go far beyond what insurance will cover. For example, flood insurance will not cover loss of business.

How many people can afford to take work off for 3-6 months while they try to restart their lives? The reality is some of us may not make it.

For those of us fortunate enough to stay dry and remain open, we have seen our sales cut in half. We are doing what we can to stay afloat.

While the Quad-Cities Chamber of Commerce has been incredible in showing their support, as well as the countless city employees working relentlessly in the better interest of our community, the City of Davenport administration has taken a different tone.

In City Administrator Corri Spiegel's open letter from May 29th, 2019, she stated "Davenport's elected officials and public at large demand a government that is transparent, inclusive, and adaptable." However, the administration has not held itself to the same standard. A week after the breach, city officials called a closed-door meeting for downtown business owners. At that meeting, we were stunned to find out that we could not ask a single question regarding the HESCO barrier failing or what may have caused it. Instead, while most of our buildings were still filled with water and we were picking up the pieces of our lives, we were told how arduous the rebuilding process would be. If the administration's attempt was to convey any sort of empathy, it was missed by all of us.

While Ms. Spiegel does not want to become “hyper focused on the breach area”; we do. With an aggressively snowy winter and a projected wet spring, the administration acknowledged the expectation of a record flood at a meeting on March 28th—over a month before the breach.

The previous record was held by the flood of 1993, at 22.63 feet. The HESCO “half wall” was built to protect only up to 20.5 feet. From when the half wall was erected on March 15th, city representatives told us that the wall would be completed to HESCO’s specifications (if the projections held true). We would like to know why the plan wasn’t implemented. Was the height in compliance with the specifications under the forecasted crest?

That promise of completing the wall to HESCO standards gave each and every one of us a false sense of security. Just hours before the breach, we were given vague advice to “be careful,” but we were not evacuated. We are so fortunate that this happened on a Tuesday afternoon, because if it happened during downtown’s peak hours, the risk to lives would have been much greater.

Due to the lack of transparency, inclusiveness, and adaptability from the city, some business owners are reconsidering their commitment to downtown. We are at a crucial point of the revitalization process and without the City behind its businesses, the area can devolve into the empty storefronts that used to be the norm less than a decade ago.

This early in our revival, the downtown is still fragile—more so now. If the city administration truly supports us, it is time for them to step up.

The Downtown Davenport Business Coalition urges immediate action by the city on the following:

- 1) The city administration must be both proactive and transparent in its communications with downtown businesses, especially when it has to do with flood control, public safety issues, and preventative measures. Dodging our calls and e-mails, as well as avoiding interviews with the media, will not make this problem go away. City officials have a duty to be accountable to the public at large.

- 2) By August 1st, the city will provide written assurance that flood protection is intended to protect both public and private assets including but not limited to buildings, businesses, apartments, and condominiums. Included in this written assurance will be specifics about which barriers will be used, the size and placement of the barriers, and assurance that the barriers will be erected to manufacturer’s specifications. A city-provided map will show precise locations at which the barriers will be erected.

3) The city must understand that both time and capital are the two most crucial components of the rebuilding process.

Approval of rebuilding plans must be expedited and the process must be streamlined. Additionally, while we are committed to rebuilding safe spaces, our budgets and these extraordinary circumstances must be taken into account.

Lastly, the city must hold itself accountable and recognize approved and finalized plans as final. Change orders after the fact lead to unnecessary delays in getting back to business.

4) The city agrees to include two representatives from the Downtown Davenport Business Coalition on the Flood Task Force. The Downtown Davenport Business Coalition will designate these representatives.

We are looking for a city administration that shows, both in its words and its actions, that they want us here. We look forward to Ms. Spiegel exhibiting her leadership during this difficult time.

Respectfully,

Dan Bush, Analog Arcade Bar/Armored Gardens/Raccoon Motel

Rich Cooksey, Analog Arcade Bar/Armored Gardens/Raccoon Motel

Devon Wiese, Analog Arcade Bar/Raccoon Motel

Antonia Vitale, Antonella's

Giovanni Sgro, Antonella's II

Rick Harris, Bootleg Hill Meadery

Andy Lank, Carriage Haus/Kilkenny's

Mary Talbert, CraftedQC

Jacob Moylan, Cru

Marc Van Severen, Dam View/Van's Pizza

Tara Elkins, The Diner

Pete Stopulos, Emerson Holdings LLC/312 Partners LLC

Ed Kraklio, Fresh Deli

Tim Baldwin, Front Street Brewery

Mitch Dettman, The Full Kit

Matt Osborn, Half Nelson

Andrew Lopez, Lopiez Pizza

Peter Lopez, Lopiez Pizza

Bill Collins, Me & Billy

Frances Maus, Me & Billy

Amer Brankovic, The Office

Tiphane Cannon, Oh So Sweet

Pat Sherman, Perry Street LLC

Trisha Collins, Polished Hair Salon

Sean Moeller, Raccoon Motel

Bob Herington, Ragged Records

Nicole Rognoni, Raw

Sidney Rognoni, Raw/Ruby's

Joseph Stroehle, Riverbend Retro

Michelle Stroehle, Riverbend Retro

Dylan Steil, Roam

Griffin Steil, Roam

Ruben Garcia, Ruby's

Becke Dawson, SIS International Shop

Scott Florence, Streets Of Italy

Laura Heath, Trash Can Annie Vintage Clothing