

From: [Dickinson ND](#)
To: [Sylvia Miller](#)
Subject: United Way Shelter
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Name: Miki Thompson
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Message: Planning & Zoning Commissioners My name is Miki Thompson. I live on 22nd near the site of the new “temporary” homeless shelter. I attended the last zoning meeting and also the special informational meeting ran by Tracey Tooz and Dakota Gant that was a stipulation in order to get their special use permit approved. I attended the informational meeting with an open mind and to find out more information as to the facility they were bringing into my neighborhood. Unfortunately I was unable to get very many questions answered at that meeting. It was a very eye-opening meeting regarding the thoughts the agencies had about the neighborhood and its residents that they are going to work beside. The hard questions were brought up and unfortunately answered with disdain, contempt, or just plain rudeness. Instead of the reassurance residents sought, we were met with sneering comments and unprofessional attitudes. I personally had to email Dakota with questions because the meeting got out of control many times. I am including those emails in this letter. I can tell you this. This venture will only work if there is respect for the residents and businesses in this neighborhood. The people who already live and work here have the most to lose in this situation. And we do need to acknowledge that homeless shelters have horrible reputations for a reason. The residents do deserve respect and patience. This is their home. We have worked hard to make this a desirable place to live. The agencies and investors involved need to remember that this facility quite literally looks into the backyard of the condos next door. This isn't a lack of compassion on the residents part. It is them protecting the safety, health, and comfort of the place we live and call home. And that is now that is being threatened. I do not know of any American that would not fight to maintain that! This will change the area forever. We are being railroaded by this, and at the same time being told it is all going to be puppies and rainbows. When we inquire about the cons of this moving to our neighborhood, we are met with rudeness and honestly, gaslighting. The programs that fund this are at risk of being cut by our current presidential administration. Our governor who sent a representative to speak for this facility at the last meeting, just vetoed 35 million dollars for housing assistance. We are being told no tax money is being used. From what I gathered at the meeting ONLY tax money is being used. It is just coming from our income instead of our property. The individuals that work at this facility get to leave and go home at the end of the day. We have to live here. This is not a decision that should be made rashly or taken lightly. Our city should be prepared. Appropriate zoning needs to be implemented to take on a facility like this. Protective ordinances need to be adopted. Unbiased sources regarding home value and crime rates need to be considered. We need to be proactive, not reactive. I believe all this should be in place before any approvals are made. Use Bismarck and Fargo as examples. Both have growing homeless population, numerous different shelters, and yet they are trying to pass ordinances that should have been done before the first shelter was opened. No panhandling/begging on public roads, no camping on public property, and so on. Bismarck's United Way is closed during the day due to lack of funding. Forcing that population to wander the streets, causing problems with businesses and residents in that area. KFYY just recently did a report on that very fact. The end of the article was a call out for 250 people to donate \$2500 each so they can reopen the shelter during the day. This is only one shelter out of the many in Bismarck. Clearly what is being done is not working. So why imitate that here? One of Fargo's shelters asked for millions of dollars

during the legislative session from the state, so they can be added to the state budget. It was denied, rightly so. We keep hearing that the city will not be contributing to this. Just because they haven't asked for money yet does not mean the city will not be monetarily affected. Traffic, both pedestrian and vehicle will rise greatly. We have no studies being done or data being gathered as to the effect of the facility on this. Those studies should be done before the zoning is approved. If there is no data on that, then it is up to the United Way and investors to do the studies and provide that assurance and mitigated risk. Especially when they are planning to add the House of Manna. There is only one turn directly into the property from 21st. Other than that you have to take the frontage road from Prairie Ave, in front of residential driveways, or enter from 6th Ave. The traffic from donations alone will be a significant increase. Safety improvements would need to be made. I also want to address the Hope's Landing House in the area. It has been used as an example many times that we already have a shelter in the area. Hope's Landing and an emergency United Way homeless shelter are not comparable. Hope's Landing is a charity onto themselves that does run on donations. Their board has the utmost respect for the surrounding neighborhood. They make sure that property is well maintained and clean. They have so much respect for the neighborhood that they built a separate area in the back to conceal the residents that choose to smoke. They operate so well that many of the people living in the area had no idea that Hope's Landing is there. Also a 10 person transitional living in a house should not be compared to a 13 room emergency shelter. Very different. Maybe we can learn a few things from the way Hope's Landing and their board operates. In conclusion, I ask you to be proactive. To set in place appropriate protections for the city, businesses and residents who have no stake in this venture. The hurried nature of this project is concerning. And we all have been advised not to rush into things in our life. We have time to research this, adapt it to our town and area via appropriate zoning. There is no rush. Taking a step back to do more research is in the best interest of the health, safety, and future of our town. Thank you for your consideration and time on reading my thoughts on the matter. I unfortunately am unable to attend this next meeting due to previously scheduled appointments, but hope to watch later that day. Please have a good week and thank you for your service on this board. Miki Thompson Emailed questions to Dakota: Hello Dakota, Miki Thompson here. We met at the meeting on Wednesday morning. I have some follow up questions and some clarification questions about the shelter that were asked, but got overshadowed by other agencies or citizens responding instead. I have several questions and I think listing them off would be convenient for both of us. 1. In the last month of May Bismarck and Williston have had High Risk Sexual Offenders register as homeless and move into their cities. Would this shelter house an individual that is a sexual offender? Does the shelter have policies and security measures ready to implement that would not only protect the neighborhood around the shelter from these individuals but also the women and children already in the facility? 2. Do you have any data showing that a facility like this has improved or eliminated the homelessness in the areas they have been implemented? 3. An older gentleman at the meeting brought up a rise in crime due to shelters moving into neighborhoods, fearful of letting his daughters walk the neighborhood they live in after the shelter moves in. Unfortunately instead of getting a direct answer to that question, he got a rude response by several people. The question remained unanswered and the reassurance he was seeking was not provided. How would the shelter reassure that the residential neighborhood and businesses nearby would not have to deal with a rising crime rate that is associated with temporary shelters? 4. The issue of property value came up of course. I heard many answers to that in the uproar that question caused at the meeting. The one that was most surprising was that home values would not be affected and will not fall.. Do you know of any data showing that home values rise or stay the same after a shelter moves into the neighborhood? 5. A question now from someone who was not able to attend the meeting and

could not hear the recording properly. As you well know some homeless and transient individuals choose that as their lifestyle. So how will the shelter deal with those individuals that will come to only use the services provided, but still remain outside the facility? Will individuals be required to move into transitional housing or recovery after a certain length of stay at the shelter? Also will they be allowed to actively be under the influence and using while at the shelter? Will illegal drugs be allowed in the temporary shelter? (I believe the gentleman in the first row asked a similar question, but the people behind me were trying to talk over the answer and discussion you were having.) 6. Is it confirmed that the House of Manna is moving into part of the facility? Also, if you are informed or not, how will it be assured that dumping will no longer be tolerated. Unfortunately, the outside of the current facility gets filled with trash. People will just about dump anything. We have thrift stores in our neighborhood that are pristine. They make sure their building and grounds are well taken care of and do not tolerate any dumping. How would House of Manna meet that expectation? 7. You mentioned at the planning and zoning meeting pets are going to be welcome. Are licenses and up to date vaccinations going to be required for pet admittance? Where would the residents with dogs go so the pet can do its business? If there is a certain area, will that area be maintained? I thank you once again for the grace you showed at the meeting. It was an eye opening meeting in many ways for me. I look forward to hearing from you soon! Please have a wonderful weekend and blessings to you and your family! Miki Thompson Hello Miki, 1. Regarding High-Risk Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders: We are absolutely not accepting high-risk sex offenders or high-risk violent offenders into our facility—period. The safety of the women, children, and all residents inside the facility, as well as the safety of the surrounding neighborhood, is our top priority. In addition to strict intake procedures, including background checks and risk assessments, we are designing the facility with separate, secure areas specifically for women and children. These areas will provide privacy, protection, and peace of mind for our most vulnerable residents. We will also have trained security on site 24/7 and a close working relationship with local law enforcement to help ensure everyone's safety both inside and outside the facility. 2. Data on Impact: While no shelter alone can eliminate homelessness, facilities like this are proven to reduce visible homelessness, increase access to services, and improve long-term housing outcomes when paired with supportive services like case management and recovery programs. I can provide examples that show how a facility like this contributes to a healthier, safer community. I would be happy to send those resources over. - Housing First Model: This approach prioritizes providing permanent housing to individuals experiencing homelessness, followed by supportive services. Studies have shown that: Nine out of ten people remain housed a year after receiving Housing First assistance. Housing First can be three times cheaper than criminalization approaches. The model pays for itself within 1.5 years and can reduce homelessness and government reliance, all while getting people back to work. WikipediaWikipedia+5USICH+5National Low Income Housing Coalition+5 UCLA Study: Research by Elior Cohen at UCLA found that targeted housing assistance to people experiencing homelessness: Reduces the probability of committing a crime by 80%. Increases the probability of reporting employment by 24 percentage points. Lowers the number of emergency department visits by 80%. National Low Income Housing Coalition Systematic Review: A comprehensive review of 43 studies concluded that interventions like high-intensity case management, Housing First, and critical time intervention are more effective than usual services in reducing homelessness and improving housing stability. PMC These findings underscore the effectiveness of structured, supportive housing solutions in not only reducing homelessness but also in enhancing overall community well-being. 3. Crime and Safety Concerns: The gentleman who expressed concern about crime and the safety of his daughters in the neighborhood raised a very valid point, and I want to make sure it is answered directly and respectfully. First and foremost, this facility will

not be housing high-risk sexual offenders, violent offenders, murderers, rapists, or individuals who take advantage of others. That is not who this facility is for. We are housing individuals who are already living in our community, many who are quietly struggling with addiction, mental health challenges, or homelessness. These are people who are asking for help, who want to change their lives but may not know how. This facility is for those who voluntarily choose to be part of a structured program, not for individuals forced in by the system or coming from incarceration. Addiction, alcoholism, and behavioral health issues exist on every street in every town, including ours. The difference with this facility is that we are providing support and accountability within a safe, structured, and supervised environment. That includes 24/7 staff, trained security, secure and separate areas for women and children, and regular collaboration with local law enforcement. Rather than causing crime to rise, facilities like this help reduce it, by removing people from unsafe situations and connecting them with real support. This is about creating solutions, not problems. And we are fully committed to making sure this facility is a positive part of the neighborhood it is in.

4. Property Values: This question has come up in many communities, and understandably so. National data shows that well-managed, service-based shelters and housing programs like ours do not decrease surrounding property values—especially when the property is kept clean, well-secured, and the program is responsibly managed. In some cases, values remain stable or even rise due to community investment and improvement in social conditions. I can share specific studies upon request. - Concerns about property values are completely understandable, and I want to be transparent and data-driven in responding to this. Multiple studies have shown that well-managed supportive housing and shelter facilities do not lower property values—and in some cases, property values have actually increased. For example, a study conducted by the NYU Furman Center in New York City found that property values in neighborhoods with supportive housing increased at similar or even greater rates than those without such housing. The key factor was proper management, community engagement, and strong operational standards (Furman Center, 2008). In Minneapolis, a study on affordable and supportive housing developments showed no negative impact on surrounding property values, and in several cases, modest increases were observed in adjacent neighborhoods (Family Housing Fund, 2000). Additionally, a report by Enterprise Community Partners found that investing in affordable and supportive housing often stabilizes and improves neighborhoods, especially when combined with services like job support, addiction treatment, and mental health care (Enterprise Community Partners, 2014). Our facility is being designed with these same principles in mind: it will be clean, well-maintained, secured, and structured with safety and support as top priorities. We believe this project will contribute to a healthier, more stable community—one where fewer people are living on the streets, fewer emergency services are needed, and more individuals are on a path to recovery and independence.

5. Individuals Who Decline Services: Our program is designed to be far more than just a place to sleep—it is built to help individuals take real, lasting steps toward a better life. People coming into this facility are doing so voluntarily. They are not being forced or court-ordered to be here. They have made the choice to seek help, which is a powerful first step. When someone wants to be there, and when they are provided with the right support, the odds of lasting success increase dramatically. We will have clear policies in place that limit the length of stay in emergency shelter, with the goal of moving individuals into transitional housing, treatment programs, or permanent housing as quickly and appropriately as possible. Every person will be connected with a dedicated case manager who will work with them on individualized plans for recovery, stability, and long-term housing. Although we believe in a low-barrier approach to entry—meaning we do not turn people away just because they are struggling—we will not tolerate drug use or illegal activity within the facility. If someone is actively using in a way that puts others at risk, they will be asked to leave and referred to appropriate services. Our focus is on

creating a supportive, structured, and safe environment that respects both the individuals inside and the surrounding community. 6. House of Manna Concerns: Yes, House of Manna is planning to occupy a portion of the new facility. I want to acknowledge that I fully understand the concerns raised about its relocation—particularly around issues like increased traffic, drop-off dumping, or changes to the appearance of the property. These are valid concerns, and I have had open and ongoing conversations with House of Manna’s leadership to ensure we are aligned on maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness, order, and respect for the surrounding neighborhood. We will have security cameras and enforcement policies in place to strictly prohibit illegal dumping and to maintain a clean and welcoming exterior. House of Manna, like United Way Dickinson, is committed to being a good neighbor. That said, we also recognize the importance of listening to the community. If, after further evaluation and input from residents, it becomes clear that moving House of Manna into the new facility would not be in the best interest of the surrounding area—due to traffic flow, misuse of donation areas, or any other disruption—then they will remain at their current location. Our priority is to build a facility that lifts the community up, not one that creates added stress or frustration for those who live and work nearby. 7. Pets at the Shelter: Yes, we do plan to allow pets at the facility because we recognize that many individuals experiencing homelessness will not seek shelter if it means leaving their animals behind. However, we will have strict policies in place to ensure that pet ownership is managed responsibly and in full alignment with local laws. All pets will be required to be up to date on vaccinations, licensed, and kept on a leash at all times while on the property. We will follow every pet-related ordinance and law currently in place in our community. In addition, there will be a designated pet area on-site for walking and bathroom needs, and this space will be routinely maintained to ensure cleanliness and safety for all residents and visitors. Our goal is to make the shelter welcoming while maintaining structure, hygiene, and respect for all individuals—both residents and neighbors. In Conclusion: United Way Dickinson is fully committed to building a facility that not only meets the urgent needs of those experiencing homelessness, addiction, and mental health challenges—but also honors and protects the surrounding community. We are not doing this in isolation; we are doing this with the community. If there are ideas, suggestions, or conditions that you believe would strengthen the safety and success of this facility, I genuinely welcome your input. I am fully committed to working hand-in-hand with residents, local leaders, and stakeholders to ensure that this becomes the safest, most effective, and most respected facility of its kind in North Dakota. The need is real, and it is here. But with the right approach, we can be part of a solution that uplifts both the individuals we serve and the neighborhoods we serve within. Please do not hesitate to reach out. I am here, I am listening, and I am ready to work together. Thanks, Dakota Gant Executive Director, United Way Dickinson