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From: Matthew Bersagel Braley <matthewbersagelbraley@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 28, 2024 9:27 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Cc: khawthorne@scenicbluffs.org
Subject: Support for Rezoning Application: Reach Center / Scenic Bluffs

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Matthew Bersagel Braley
809 19th Street South
La Crosse, WI 54601

Re: REACH Center TND Rezoning

I am writing to support the proposed TND rezoning application requested by CouleeCap/YWCA/Scenic Bluffs for the REACH Center property (# 24-0190 - Rezoning the Reach Center).

I write as a member of the community who has lived within a mile of the REACH center for the past fourteen years, a faculty member at Viterbo University actively involved in a national network of community health and development organizations working to build prosilience around the leading causes of life model, and as a board member of Scenic Bluffs Community Health Center.

I do not believe the location of affordable, accessible primary health care services, dental, and behavioral health services conflicts with the city's vision for revitalizing neighborhoods that constitute its urban core, including Washburn. Indeed, I believe any commitment to increasing affordable housing in La Crosse must also include a commitment to equitable access for meeting one's other basic needs including health care.

I recognize that Washburn and adjacent neighborhoods already include many non-residential neighbors including health care and educational institutions. Yet, the neighborhood is currently finding ways to increase housing options all around the REACH Center through new development and proposed redevelopment (e.g., the former Lincoln Middle School). Denying the rezoning application will not result in additional residential housing in the neighborhood given the current terms of the property deed for the REACH Center. Indeed, restricting the ability of the property owners to make improvements to the property are, arguably, more likely to lead to the depreciation and decay that animate many of the concerns voiced by neighborhood residents.

As an ethics professor at Viterbo University, I introduce incoming students each year to their "new neighbors." This introduction begins with community assets mapping. The presence of caring organizations embedded in an economically diverse neighborhood - their neighborhood, if even for only four years - makes visible the assets of Washburn that can be leveraged for human flourishing across all income levels. For our students - many of whom will stay in La Crosse after graduation as nurses, teachers, and employees of local businesses - Washburn offers a model for what is possible when a city commits to revitalization efforts that benefit all members of the community.

Thank you for your diligence in reviewing the application and community input.

Respectfully,

Matthew Bersagel Braley