

GUNDERSEN HEALTH SYSTEM®

May 6, 2021

City of La Crosse Common Council
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601



Common Council Members:

I am writing today on behalf of Gundersen Health System (GHS) to request a five-year extension to the conditional use permit (CUP) in Resolution #16-0263 from the spring of 2016 (aka the “Orange Lot”).

The CUP’s original intent for the Orange Lot was to be redeveloped for residential use. It was GHS’s intent to meet this expectation—the end of the CUP timeframe (calendar year 2020) would have been the window our organization would have pursued redevelopment. It may go without saying, but during this period GHS has been overwhelmingly focused on responding to the pandemic needs of the community. Unfortunately, pursuing redevelopment of the Orange Lot was not feasible because of the demands and continued uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

Related circumstances are also at play. As required in the original CUP, GHS has developed a master campus plan and traffic analysis. That stated, the pandemic has likely rendered these documents moot. The pandemic has shifted portions of our patient-base and our workforce to telehealth and remote work. This is the primary reason we are requesting the extension—we ask the City’s indulgence while our organization determines if these are long-term shifts in our industry or short-term trends that will subside with the pandemic. With a better perspective on these matters, we can more responsibly evolve as an organization and reassess our services and our campus to best serve the community. Keeping the Orange Lot for the time being provides flexibility as we reorient to ever-changing dynamics.

Finally, GHS has had ongoing and productive conversations with the Planning and Development Department about maintaining flexibility with our main campus properties to help meet mutual goals. The prime example is our collaboration to place a restaurant and grocery store in our neighborhood to increase healthy food options. GHS properties are possibilities for these endeavors, should opportunities arise. The more properties available to offer developers, the more likely we can achieve these shared objectives. Again, keeping the Orange Lot in the near term allows us to reimagine some of these other spaces in the long run as options for these aspirations.

I am in communication with Lewis Kuhlman in the Planning and Development Department and the goal is to advance this extension this month. I am available to discuss this matter or answer questions at any time—please do not hesitate to contact me as you consider the matter. I will be available for the appropriate public meetings to discuss these issues as well.

Sincerely,



Nathan S. Franklin

Nathan S. Franklin
Director, External Affairs