

Members of the La Crosse Common Council:

First of all, thank you for the work you are doing during this difficult time. The City of La Crosse is facing unprecedented challenges. The work you are doing warrants full recognition.

I am writing in support of the effort to expand community services for the growing demands people facing of homelessness. The pandemic and resulting economic downturn have exacerbated the need for these services. The Franciscan Community Resource Center is positioned to provide much needed support in this area. At the same time, the pandemic and economic downturn are also having a significant impact on the downtown and adjacent Washburn neighborhood. Deteriorating housing and empty store fronts in this vital part of the city will have a profound impact on the city as a whole. Simply put, there is a need to respond to both increased homelessness and the economic livelihood of the downtown and Washburn neighborhood. Thoughtful, collaborative planning is needed so that we don't address one need at the expense of the other.

I encourage the City Council to move forward in response to these combined needs, but do so as an outgrowth of community involvement in the process. If the current timeline does not allow this level of involvement, a referral would be an appropriate next step.

Once again, thank you for your efforts to navigate through these difficult times and build for a better future.

Sincerely, in service,

Lee Rasch
August 31, 2020