



July 29th, 2020

City Council Members
400 La Crosse Street
La Crosse, WI 54601

Dear City Council Members,

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse recently purchased the building located at 508 5th Ave. South, La Crosse from Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Medical Center, Inc. The purpose is to use this building for the Franciscan Community Resource Center (FCRC), a community facility offering a variety of services that help improve the lives of the homeless and low-income persons we serve in La Crosse.

Catholic Charities operates programs that are designed to keep people from becoming homeless in the first place. Our facilities offer an opportunity, as well as concentrated services to help patrons stabilize their lives and achieve their goals. Our goal is to provide a warm and clean environment where they can get services that help them get back on the path to self-sufficiency.

At the FCRC, community members will be able to come in, shower, do their laundry, receive hospitality, and gain a sense of community. They will also have the opportunity to meet with caseworkers and receive information on local providers' available resources. These include potential job opportunities, job training, and professional social services, such as mental health counselors, legal consultations, addiction treatment, housing referrals, and more. At the FCRC, we will coordinate services with other non-profits, churches, corporations, and government agencies to help the individuals in need, thus avoiding duplication.

The core of homelessness contains many complex issues, including skyrocketing rents, shortage of affordable housing, resistance to new shelters and housing developments downtown, and the lack of a cohesive safety net for hundreds of people struggling with mental health and substance use disorders. At Catholic Charities, we affirm every person's dignity and safety, and everyone is welcome; however, no drugs, alcohol, or weapons are allowed at the FCRC at any time. Anyone found violating these rules is escorted out immediately, and if necessary, the police are called.

We strongly believe that all citizens, business owners, and all our neighbors deserve dignity and respect. Therefore, unconditional love also includes an emphasis on accountability; hence, if persons seeking our service commit crimes against people or property, they must be held



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accountable by law enforcement and the criminal justice system.

In the end, how we see helping our neighbors in need and those experiencing homelessness comes down to what we each believe in our work lives, faith lives, and as citizens and members of our community. There are many sides and views to this complex issue, and we strongly feel that it is an opportunity for dialogue and openness to discuss new ways to approach these challenging concerns. It can be easy to dehumanize another person when you do not understand their situation or background. At Catholic Charities, we welcome all of the hard questions and suggestions of how we might find ways to serve individuals and families in need. We are open to finding solutions that involve us all working together.

We sincerely appreciate your support for this program.

Best Regards,


Roberto Partarrieu
Executive Director



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