

7/1/2025

To La Crosse City Council Members,

My name is Jennifer Peickert and I am the property manager of RiverPlace Apartments that neighbors Riverside Park, the bike trail, and the International Friendship Gardens.

I am writing to express my concerns about the Byerson Security contract not being renewed and the problems it is already creating. Immediately after the contract stopped, we began to have problems with the unsheltered population again. While I have sympathy for the unsheltered, there are concerns that come with them camping wherever they so choose.

I am so frustrated that my residents are sharing with me their fear of safety again. Having gone through so many months of fear and chaos with the last encampment issue, I fear we are heading down this path again.

Additionally, there have been several unsheltered individuals on the bike trail with pit bulls and other aggressive dogs who are NOT on leashes. Many of my residents walk this bike trail and have come to me in fear. They have asked where to purchase pepper spray and have said they may no longer be able to walk their beloved trail out of fear of being hurt. I hear daily about residents and local businesspeople who will no longer walk on the local trails out of fear for those they are encountering along the way.

Furthermore, pollution and littering are back. There are large amounts of garbage in and around the International Gardens and bike trail. The Parks and Rec Department is working tirelessly in this area and others around the city to keep it cleaned up, but it is not their responsibility to do so. These unsheltered individuals have no respect for the rivers or adjoining parks. Do we want another pollution problem on our hands? What if someone gets stuck with a needle or an unsafe object left behind?

I have gone back to having to call non-emergency services almost daily since the Byerson Security contract was stopped and my residents have too. This burdens the police department and sends the wrong message to residents as well as visitors.

Riverfest and Viking boat cruise season is upon us. Is this what we want visitors to see when they are in our parks and visiting our city? Do we want them to be fearful?

When Byerson Security was working with the unsheltered population, these instances were few and far between. It was rare that I had to call to report problems. Marion and

his team established rapport with the unsheltered but also had a no-nonsense stance on crime and littering.

As I'm sure you are aware, and while not related to the unsheltered, an individual had a gun and used it to commit suicide last week in the International Gardens. There were several people in the park and the gardens when this happened. A passerby could've been hit by a stray bullet, and not to mention those who witnessed this horrific scene. This was a tragic situation, but it could have also ended much worse with additional fatalities or injuries. Had Byerson Security still have been active; would this situation have never happened? Maybe not, but it is one more level of protection for our residents and visitors.

I beg that you renew the security contract for the peace of mind of all La Crosse residents and business owners.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or comments. I can be reached by phone at 608-782-0202 or email at jpeickert@stuartco.com

Kind regards,

Jennifer Peickert, RiverPlace Property Manager