

Dear Members of La Crosse City Council,

I am writing to express both support and concern for the Crisis Stabilization Center that will soon be located at 1720 Jackson Street. I have read the support letters from the La Crosse Police Department and other local agencies. I also am very much in support of the needs for these services in our community. I was very pleased to hear of grant funding allotted to expand mental health services. I feel it is safe to say most of my neighbors would express the same compassion for people in crisis. We have a neighborhood filled with people who have dedicated their careers to serving the needs of people in the community. There are those who serve in education, as Gundersen employees, and as employees in the mental health field in multiple roles and agencies. We understand trauma and crisis. Several of us experienced the effects of crisis in our personal lives as well. As an educator, I was dedicated to learning more about the needs in our community and attended the Building for Learning Summits from 2013-2019, I understand how crucial these services are to people at risk.

When I received my letter explaining the upcoming hearings regarding Tellurian's expansion in our neighborhood, I admit I was concerned so I began trying to educate myself further. I scheduled a visit to the Care Center and admit that I was comforted by the warmth of the staff and my observations of the facility.

I feel fortunate to live in a quiet and connected neighborhood. Folks in our neighborhood enjoy the privacy of their backyards by gardening, grilling, chatting around backyard firepits, and neighborhood children enjoying play in their little pools, or on trampolines. We chat over our fences as we take out garbage or get ready to head to work. Our alley way is a safe place for children to shortcut on their way to and from school each day. I am very concerned at how the rise in police presence in our alley daily, because of the design of this center, will affect our privacy, and quality of life. More importantly I wonder how it may affect the perceptions of the children who witness this rise in police traffic in such close proximity to their homes.

The drop off area of the facility will be in close proximity to five properties that literally surround the proposed setting. (It will be within 25 – 50 feet of our back doors, backyard gates, or garage door entries.) The stabilization center is designed to be a short-term stay (approximately 24 hours) to assess needs and then refer people to other resources in a community-based model. They will be transported by the center for longer stays as deemed appropriate. The center is designed to aide about six people at a time. This means there will be a higher presence of police in our alley dropping off clients who are in crisis, multiple times daily. If there are additional calls for police service requests that presence will compound in our alley. I did a public records request and found from July 1 to Oct. 1 the Care Center had multiple police service requests. I would be happy to share that data if anyone is interested. I would also encourage council members to come and physically view the proximity to our entry ways and backyards for themselves before the vote on October 12th.

I feel because of the transient nature of this stabilization center, the design of this center needs to be considered and addressed by the city council. Twice now people have responded to my concern about the transient nature and frequent transport in our alley with the question: "You lived next to a dentist office. How will this be different?" Let me be clear: The dentist client's needs vs. the needs of people in crisis cannot be compared. The dentist office was open 9-5 Mon-Thurs. and served one client/family at a time. This center will be open 24/7. Most importantly, I didn't observe any police presence in our alley due to the dentist's clients.

If approved the center is scheduled to open in February. I would like to see this process slowed down by a couple months. My understanding was that Tellurian is willing to work with neighbors and our concerns. My proposal is that we be allowed to meet with our local council members and Tellurian to have more input into the design. I would suggest the front become the main drop off/transport area for patients, taking the police traffic away from the alley and our backyard sanctity. That is where transport is located for the Care Center on Mormon Coulee, which is a busier street. Perhaps the curb could be removed and a parking inlet (similar to the bus stop near Central) could be created for all transport in and out of the facility. Parking for staff could remain in back and then perhaps they would not need slots in Jackson Plaza. The privacy fence could enclose the back of the property, with greenery added to create the calming effect that I witnessed at the Care Center. I think that would be a win/win both satisfying some concerns of neighbors as well as creating a more serene feel for clients. Better ideas may arise if input is allowed and perhaps that would create a better sense of neighborhood acceptance for this facility. I realize this means plans for design would need to be adapted, but I feel it would be better to address now before construction starts. It would also demonstrate an appreciation by the council and Tellurian for the genuine concerns and interests many neighbors have.

Respectfully,

Deb Klaeser- neighbor at 1716 Jackson Street