

Craig, Sondra

From: Kristie L <kristie2005@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 5:20 AM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: rezoning for the REACH Center at 212 11th St in La Crosse

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I am for the rezoning of the REACH Center at 212 11th St in La Crosse. The proposed rezoning is only for that one parcel of land, and I don't see that as a danger to the historic neighborhood nearby.

The entire length of West Avenue is already full of small businesses, and it is a very busy street. So I also don't see how this will drastically increase the traffic in the historic district.

The REACH Center helps so many low-income people in the La Crosse area. My understanding is REACH wants to expand to be able to provide dental services. They are NOT going to provide drug counseling or house the homeless. Therefore, rezoning is NOT a threat to the historic neighborhood.

The services REACH currently provides are vital to the city, especially now with the number of homeless we do have. REACH helps people with low incomes get housing and keep the housing they have so they are not homeless. Without REACH we would have many more homeless in La Crosse.

I have heard many people online against this proposal worried it will drastically increase the crime rate in their neighborhood. They worry they will be finding homeless people sleeping in their alleys find needles on their boulevards. I have heard them call the people REACH helps "vermin." They don't even want to see a homeless person using Walgreens on West Ave. Even seeing a homeless person outside a store makes them uncomfortable and some have actually said they switched stores because of it. I am very worried this paranoia will prevent the rezoning. Many are worried providing social services to the homeless in our area acts as a magnet attracting the homeless to La Crosse. Therefore, they are against ANY expansion of services to help the homeless and low-income individuals. But even the homeless are still PEOPLE. Just because a person is poor does not mean they are criminals. Too many people in today's world are one paycheck from being evicted without help. A major health emergency or job loss and they could be on the street. Just because a person or family is poor does not mean they are criminals.

I am from a low-income family that often had trouble making the mortgage payments on our home and other bills. While growing up my dad often did yard work for people to make ends meet, and my mom babysat. Once we even came close to losing our home when my dad had a heart attack and huge hospital bills. Home prices and rental rates have far outpaced wages for many years now. Today many people just like my parents simply can not make ends meet without help. Retired people on fixed incomes can not find places to live.

I have accompanied my sister to reach out to the homeless. I have talked to them one-on-one. I have met women over 50 who are homeless because they lost their jobs. I have met a farmer who was homeless because his wife died of cancer and the bills cost him the family farm. I have met people in their twenties who are homeless because they lost their job, or had an emergency expense come up. I have also met people with mental health issues who are not a danger to others but simply can't take care of themselves to the extent of maintaining a job and a place to live.

REACH also helps people so they don't become homeless. My Dad, a WWII vet, recently died and he made frequent use of CouleeCap to heat his home and get affordable health care. My Dad was lucky. He had me to fill out all the confusing paperwork every year to apply for benefits and help. Many people his age don't have people to help them fill out the paperwork or even tell them where to get help. These people need places like REACH.

So please rezone this one parcel of land so REACH can help even more people than they currently help.

Thank you
Kristie Lawrence