

## Lehrke, Teri

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**From:** Kabat, Tim  
**Sent:** Friday, August 28, 2020 8:56 AM  
**To:** Acklin, Tim; Lehrke, Teri  
**Subject:** FW: For your consideration...

Catholic Charities request.

### *Tim Kabat*

Mayor  
City of La Crosse  
400 La Crosse Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601  
(608) 789-7500  
[www.cityoflacrosse.org](http://www.cityoflacrosse.org)

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**From:** Drift Mercantile <[driftmercantile@gmail.com](mailto:driftmercantile@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, August 25, 2020 3:17 PM  
**To:** Kabat, Tim <[kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org](mailto:kabatt@cityoflacrosse.org)>  
**Subject:** For your consideration...

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Hello Mayor Kabat,

We hope this finds you well. You are dealing with a lot on your plate right now and the current climate has been less than easy to lead our community in. We at least hope that you are able to find some pockets of space to enjoy the rest of your summer!

The reason for us reaching out is to address our concerns with a present legislative proposal regarding the Catholic Charities expansion in downtown La Crosse. We wanted to offer our perspective as young entrepreneurs in downtown La Crosse, who have spent the better part of 2020 adapting to the current business climate and still remain hopeful as we plan future endeavors in the downtown.

We know that the current homeless state in La Crosse and nationwide is a complex issue. However, we feel that additional facilities offered within downtown La Crosse should not be a priority over solutions that should be offered by the county as a whole, including neighboring communities like Onalaska and Holmen. Business owners are trying to survive in the downtown, which will likely be faced with increased vacancies following this pandemic. Homelessness in our community needs to be addressed and a solution put on the table. Downtown should definitely be a part of this solution, but not the *only* solution. We worry that more services congested together in the downtown will create a surge in the homelessness population that we have already seen increase recently. We were speaking with La Crosse police officers in our shop just last week about a woman who congregates in Cameron Park that stole \$70 worth of merchandise (all non-essential items) from Drift Mercantile. We had to press charges against her and were told many other merchants had too as well. We are writing because this decision does and will affect our business, our time dedicated to this community, and our outlook on being invested entrepreneurs in the downtown.

There are many business and property owners (ourselves included) who are near a tipping point with issues in downtown La Crosse. We have even talked about starting new endeavors elsewhere, for these reasons. However, we still have hope that downtown La Crosse is worth investing our futures into and are holding onto that hope. We believe that allowing more services for the homeless population in the immediate downtown area will only magnify a. The homeless population b. Issues that surround the downtown businesses (shoplifting, littering, public defecation/urination/nudity, loitering, etc.) c. The ease of drug accessibility & networking for a portion of that population.

Other avenues should be looked at first and more importantly, research shows that those solutions could be better for the population they are serving, i.e. the downtown provides an environment more conducive to drugs and people who deal drugs (we have seen a huge increase of traffic in our alleyway of people dealing).

We have heard our parents reference the "good old days" on Pearl Street that honestly didn't sound *that* good. It was a dangerous part of town back when TJ bought his first building on Pearl Street. We feel grateful that we had the opportunity to invest our time during a point when downtown's future is bright..We can all agree that 2020 has been a challenging year, and there will be problems to address after the dust settles. However, we are concerned that this proposed expansion will only add to those future problems. We ask that you first consider more opportunities for services from our neighbors in La Crosse County, and try to alleviate the current pressure on downtown when voting on this legislation. We appreciate your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Dani and Azia Peterslie

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DRIFT MERCANTILE Co.  
211 Pearl Street  
Downtown La Crosse, Wis.  
[www.driftmercantileco.com](http://www.driftmercantileco.com)