



August 14, 2020

Dear Washburn Neighbor:

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of La Crosse recently purchased the building located at 508 5th Ave. South from Mayo Clinic Health System-Franciscan Medical Center, Inc. We are making plans for this new building and thinking of how the use of this building could serve our community. Currently, we hope to open the Franciscan Community Resource Center (FCRC) at this location. The FCRC would be a place where multiple services are offered to improve the lives of the people of our community!

Here is an overview of what our potential services for the FCRC:

- **St. Lawrence Community Services** – We have trained staff who can assist community members with financial needs and work with them on setting and achieving financial goals. Staff is available to educate about local resources and offer assistance with rent, utilities, medical, and housing needs. They assist families and individuals in evaluating income and expenses while helping them determine a budget to obtain a healthier financial situation. This service is free and available to anyone who requires assistance.
- **Day Services** – We strongly believe that every human being is made in God's image and likeness and deserves the basic human dignity of a meal, a shower, and a toilet. At the Franciscan Community Resource Center, our plan is for community members to come in, shower, do their laundry, meet with a caseworker if needed, and learn about available resources.
- **Men's Clothes Closet** – We hope to move our Men's Clothing Closet to this new location. Again this service is available to anyone in the community looking for men's clothing. Whether he needs dress clothes to wear to a funeral or steel-toed shoes to wear to work, if we have it in our clothing closet, it is free to whoever needs it. We are excited about the possibility of being right down the street from the Women's Clothes Closet located at Our Savior's Lutheran Church.
- **Food Pantry**- Food Pantry items will be available to all community members. Often, we do not have finances to offer direct aid for what the community member is requesting, but we are always able to make sure those who need help will have food on their table. No one should ever go hungry. If we have it, we give it!
- **Community Collaborative Partners** – To ensure that the Franciscan Community Resource Center is truly that, a resource center, we hope to coordinate services with other non-profits, churches, corporations, and government agencies, thus avoiding duplication. We genuinely hope to make this a center where anyone in need has a place to go to seek information and direction on how to get the services they need for themselves and their families.
- **Community Meeting Room** – We hope to be able to offer meeting space for the Washburn neighborhood. We hope to create a safe space that local neighbors can call to reserve and utilize for possible meetings. We want to be a partner with the neighbors!



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Community Partner



Member Agency

- **Possible location for overflow** warming center if needed. Because of COVID-19 pandemic and nights of extreme cold, we know that special circumstances might require additional space. Intakes and evening meals would still occur at our downtown warming center location, but in severe cases, when the La Crosse Warming Center and the Salvation Army are at capacity, we may offer up space for individuals experiencing homelessness to sleep.

All of this becoming possible is based on this property being re-zoned. Over the next few months, the city will be reviewing our application regarding this. It needs to be re-zoned for all of this work to become possible, and we hope that we can count on your support.

Many hear the word homeless, and automatically, many stereotypes come to mind. 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 cohesive safety net for hundreds of people struggling with mental health and other issues. I want you to know that at Catholic Charities, we affirm every person's dignity and safety. Everyone is welcome; however, no drugs, alcohol, or weapons will be 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.

In the end, 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 concerns. 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. I ask that you please review the pamphlet, *Hard Questions and Important Answers About Homelessness*.

Our ultimate goal is to prevent homelessness by working with those who are living on the edge of homelessness and giving a helping hand to those without a place to call home. We would sincerely appreciate your support, and if you have any questions, please contact me at (608)519-8001.

God Bless,



Roberto Partarrieu
Executive Director, Catholic Charities

