

THEN + NOW

Housing Access, Insecurity, and
Discrimination in La Crosse





WELCOME



**LA CROSSE
PUBLIC LIBRARY**
Archives & Local
History Department

Couleecap
your local community *action* program



Habitat
for Humanity®
of the Greater
La Crosse Region



Cia Siab, Inc.

01.

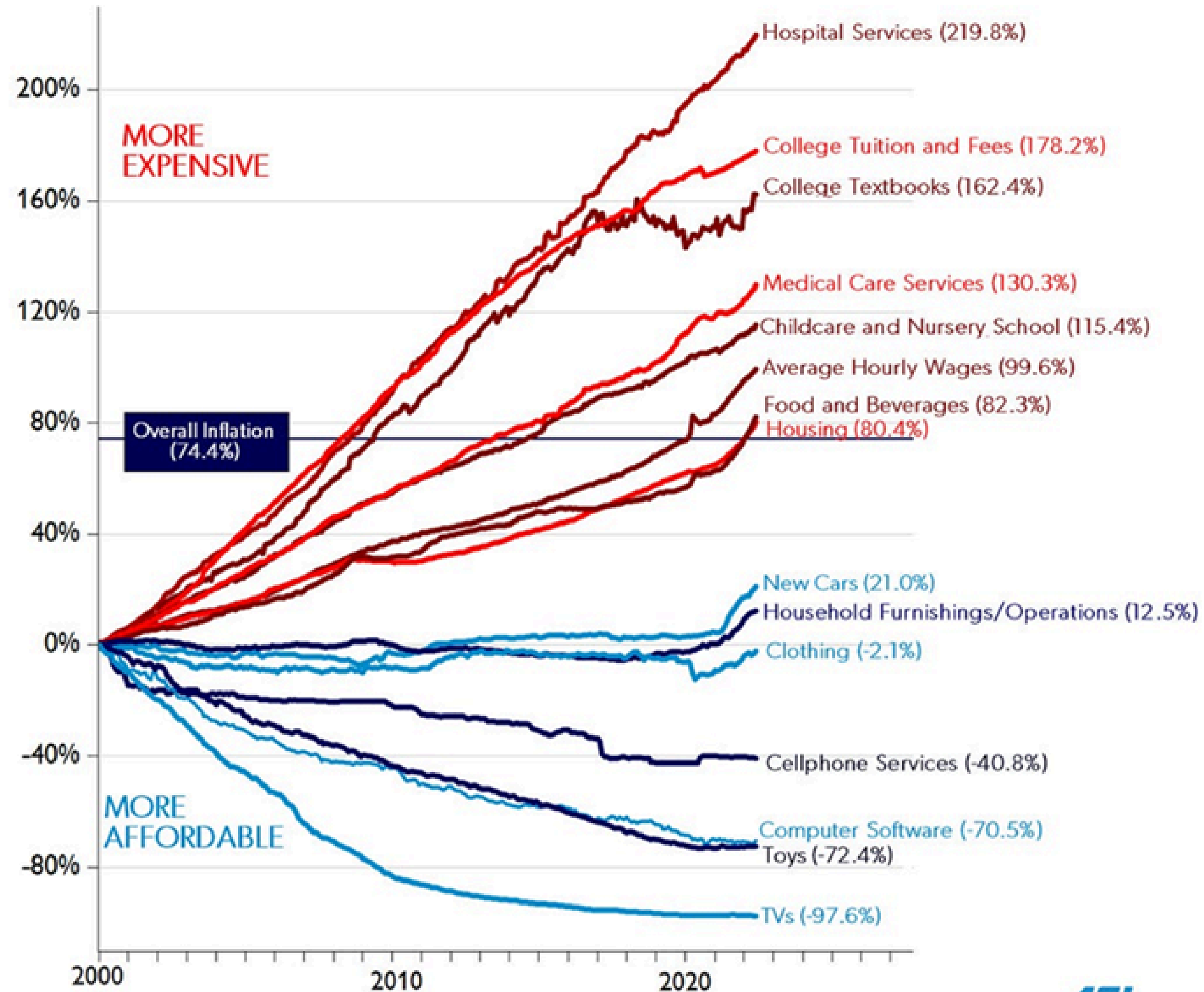
THE STATE OF HOUSING TODAY

IDENTIFYING THE BLIND SPOTS



Price Changes: January 2000 to June 2022

Selected US Consumer Goods and Services, Wages



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

City of La Crosse	1999 Census	2020 Census
Number of owner-occupied units	9,198	10,610
Median home value	\$85,100	\$183,300
% spending 30% or more on housing	18%	13.6%
Number of renter-occupied units	10,380	11,661
Median monthly rent	\$449	\$941
% spending 30% or more on rent	36.2%	44.1%*
Minimum wage	\$5.15/hour	\$7.25/hour
Median salary (county)	\$39,483	\$46,438

***24.7% spend more than 50% of income on rent**

LET'S DO SOME MATH

Average home price = \$183,300
20% down payment = \$36,660

\$7 avocado toast + \$5 latte + \$1 tip = \$13/day
X30 days = \$390/month

It would take you 7 years and 10 months to save up for a down payment.

This assumes you buy this DAILY...and that the price of avocado toast doesn't go up...oh, and by the time you save this the value of the house has gone up again so you now need \$46,500.

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TABLE 10 – HOMEOWNERSHIP AND RENTAL RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race/Ethnicity	City of La Crosse			La Crosse County		
	Owner Households	Renter Households	Home-ownership Rate	Owner Households	Renter Households	Home-ownership Rate
Non-Hispanic						
White	10,185	9,330	52.2%	28,970	14,795	66.2%
Black	0	245	0.0%	40	284	12.3%
Asian	265	320	45.3%	674	645	51.1%
Native American	4	120	3.2%	52	105	33.1%
Other	4	80	4.8%	78	145	35.0%
Hispanic	105	125	45.7%	269	285	48.6%
Total	10,565	10,220	50.8%	30,083	16,259	64.9%

Note: Data presented are number of households, not individuals.

Source: CHAS

2018-2022 Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing Choice

TABLE 11 – LOAN APPROVAL RATES BY RACE AND ETHNICITY IN LA CROSSE AND MONROE COUNTIES, 2013 – 2017

Applicant Income		Applicant Race and Ethnicity					All Applicants
		Non-Latino				Latino	
		White	Black	Asian	Other		
Home Purchase Loans							
Low Income	Completed Applications	3,107	23	104	31	40	3,305
	Denial Rate	15.0%	34.8%	22.1%	25.8%	22.5%	15.5%
Middle Income	Completed Applications	2,239	11	68	26	29	2,373
	Denial Rate	9.2%	9.1%	11.8%	15.4%	10.3%	9.4%
High Income	Completed Applications	2,642	9	56	22	32	2,761
	Denial Rate	5.6%	22.2%	5.4%	13.6%	6.3%	5.7%
All Applicants	Completed Applications	7,988	43	228	79	101	8,439
	Denial Rate	10.3%	25.6%	14.9%	19.0%	13.9%	10.6%
Home Refinance Loans							
Low Income	Completed Applications	3,110	4	72	19	37	3,242
	Denial Rate	28.3%	25.0%	37.5%	57.9%	37.8%	28.8%
Middle Income	Completed Applications	2,398	6	40	13	31	2,488
	Denial Rate	19.5%	50.0%	32.5%	38.5%	16.1%	19.9%
High Income	Completed Applications	3,206	16	43	14	30	3,309
	Denial Rate	14.8%	50.0%	9.3%	21.4%	30.0%	15.0%
All Applicants	Completed Applications	8,714	26	155	46	98	9,039
	Denial Rate	20.9%	46.2%	28.4%	41.3%	28.6%	21.3%

Note: “Completed applications” includes applications that were approved but not accepted, denied, and approved with a loan originated. It does not include applications withdrawn by the applicant or closed for incompleteness.

Data Source: FFIEC 2013-2017 Home Mortgage Disclosure Act Data, Accessed via www.consumerfinance.gov/data-research/hmda

02.

LA CROSSE HISTORY TOUR



LA CROSSE HISTORY TOUR

- Sundown Town
- Responses to homelessness
- Creation of La Crosse Housing Authority
- Racially restrictive covenants
- Community response to new development
- Zoning reform

HOW DO WE KNOW LA CROSSE WAS A SUNDOWN TOWN?

YEAR	BLACK POPULATION
1852-1906	1-2% (on average)
1910	0.002%
1920	0.001%
1930	0.0009%
1950	0.0006%
1980	0.003%
1990	0.007%
2000	1.6%
2010	2.3%
2020	2.45%

In 1980, the U.S. Census *reportedly* listed La Crosse as the 5th whitest metropolitan area in the nation*

*despite HMoob immigration beginning in late 1970s; Census data skewed

Note: anti-Black racist language on next slide

FREEZE-OUT STRATEGIES

- Segregation signs
- Local KKK presence
- Service refused at stores
- Racist language (local newspapers, landmark names, etc.)
- Racially restrictive covenants

Headlines from the *La Crosse Tribune*, 1920s-1940s.

500 MEMBERS IN LA CROSSE, IS CLAIM OF KU KLUX HEAD

King Kleagle of Wisconsin Says
Order Has 15,000 Members
in the Entire State

ORGANIZERS WERE IN CITY
DURING SUMMER AND FALL

GEORGE R. CHILDERS KILLS SHE-WOLF AT NIGGER NATHAN HILL

Mother of Pack Numbered
Among the Slain; Seven
Fall Before Hunters

George R. Childers, 1027 Jackson
street, a street car employe, shot a
wolf Sunday near Nigger Nathan hill.

Negro Sues Hotel

James Tate, Chicago, was testifying at noon Monday in circuit court that the Northern Hotel company, a corporation, used a "discriminatory policy, but not courtesy," in his reception at a local hotel on June 8, 1946. Tate, a Negro, maintained that he was asked by an employe of the hotel to "use the stairs, rather than use the elevator."

He admitted that he had not rung the bell to summon the lift, assuming that because he had been asked to use the stairs he would abide by the hotel's request.

City 'Out Of Bounds' For Negro Soldiers

Because of the attempted attacks on La Crosse young women Saturday night, the city has been placed on the "out of bounds" list for all Negro Soldiers at Camp McCoy, except sergeants who live in the city.

Police were notified of the order Monday night by camp au-

LA CROSSE HOUSING AUTHORITY

The La Crosse Tribune

VOLUME XLII NUMBER 235

FOURTEEN PAGES

LA CROSSE, WISCONSIN, WEDNESDAY EVENING, JANUARY 9, 1946

FINAL HOME EDITION

PRICE FIVE CENTS

Approve Housing Authority Here

City Council Groups Favor Mayor's Plan

Aldermen Will Take Formal Action On Recommendation At Meeting On Friday

Recommendation of the establishment of a housing authority to take immediate initiative in obtaining living quarters for veterans and others was approved Tuesday night at a meeting of the common council in committee session.

The action came after a number of interested citizens pictured the emergency of the situation in La Crosse and offered as a temporary solution the use of buildings formerly occupied by the Sixth service command in the old airport area.

Mayor J. J. Vevchota's suggestion to the council was that a resolution creating a housing authority be drawn up and presented at the Friday regular meeting. Alderman W. P. Hoelling urged this be recommended for adoption.

Advocates Action

The Rt. Rev. Mgr. Alphons N. Schult, chairman of the housing committee of the Central Council of Social Agencies, told the aldermen that the council must open the way if immediate action is to be taken.

He showed the aldermen a plan for remodeling the ordnance shop building to accommodate 75 families at a cost of from \$200 to \$700 a unit.

Typical quarters in these units include a living room large enough to provide for extra sleeping space, a bedroom, kitchen and bath. In another sketch apartments with two bedrooms are sketched.

Dr. L. W. Ender, who pointed out that the housing problem is one not only of living space but also one that concerns the morale of families, said that the total cost for subdividing the barracks into apartments would be \$27,500, which would be returned to the city in one and one-half to two years at rentals of \$25 a month each.

Veterans would be given the first opportunity to rent the quarters, with persons in low income brackets who have been evicted next. As planned, the rooms would be small, but superior to trailer homes.

Not In Competition

Ray Smith, speaking for the CIO, told of the difficulty of finding homes for veterans who are looking for work. The council in setting up a housing authority is not going into business in competition with free enterprise, he said. The situation is temporary only until materials are available and houses can be built.

Referring to a petition to the council from the Roy L. Vingers post, American Legion, which asked that body to establish a housing authority, to provide funds for housing units and to investigate the possibility of obtaining the Sixth service command buildings, L. V. Weissauer, commander, urged its consideration.

"This will be a Godsend to some of the boys coming back as a temporary solution to their problem," he said. "Personally I believe that plenty of houses will be built if material is made available. We should put pressure on congress to see that these things are released."

Many Share Homes

Alvin Davidson, president of Local 296, UAW-CIO, is urging consideration of the Legion's recommendations, spoke of the many families who have to share homes and of veterans who have no place to live when they return. A legal adviser employed by the local devotes 75 per cent of his time to staying evictions in cases where houses have been sold and the tenants have no place to go.

Mrs. Owen Jackson, representing the Community council and the Twentieth Century club, said that while other cities have the same problem, reports indicate they are doing something about it. Madison has a trailer camp and Eau Claire has obtained demountable houses.

"It is a problem that needs the backing of the city and of private enterprise," she continued. "I hope that you can find some solution and help for it."

Mrs. L. W. Ender of the special committee of the Central Council of Social Agencies, read from newspaper clippings what other cities in Wisconsin are doing.

Tells Of Other Cities

Among those she cited were Racine, appropriation of \$100,000 for home to construct 132 units, some of which will be ready in three or four months; Appleton, erection of 100 demountable units on city owned land with plans for 50 more; Manitowish, 500 unit project; Menomonie, 50 demountable units; Stevens Point, 28 five to six-room dwellings.

Congressman William Stevenson, asked to speak to the council, said that a shortage of 12 million homes exists in the United States, of which 1,200,000 are needed by veterans.

An amendment to the Lanham act provides \$200 million more than already appropriated to take care of the emergency. This, which will take care of 100,000 units, he termed as a drop in the bucket. Still more money is expected to be appropriated for the housing situation, he said, and La Crosse should be ready to take advantage of it.

"Get started now," he advised, "and when funds are available, you will be in a better position to share in them."

Must Be Ready

Stevenson cited the municipal airport as an example of the importance of being ready. Because all the preliminary work had been done and the construction was ready to begin, President Roosevelt changed his mind on the order halting the project. Stevenson expressed his willingness to do all that he can to help the city.

After Alderman Walter Roth spoke in favor of sending messages at once to the authorities concerned with the buildings of the Sixth service command in order to eliminate red tape, Stevenson said, "I'll take off my coat and go to bat for it tomorrow."

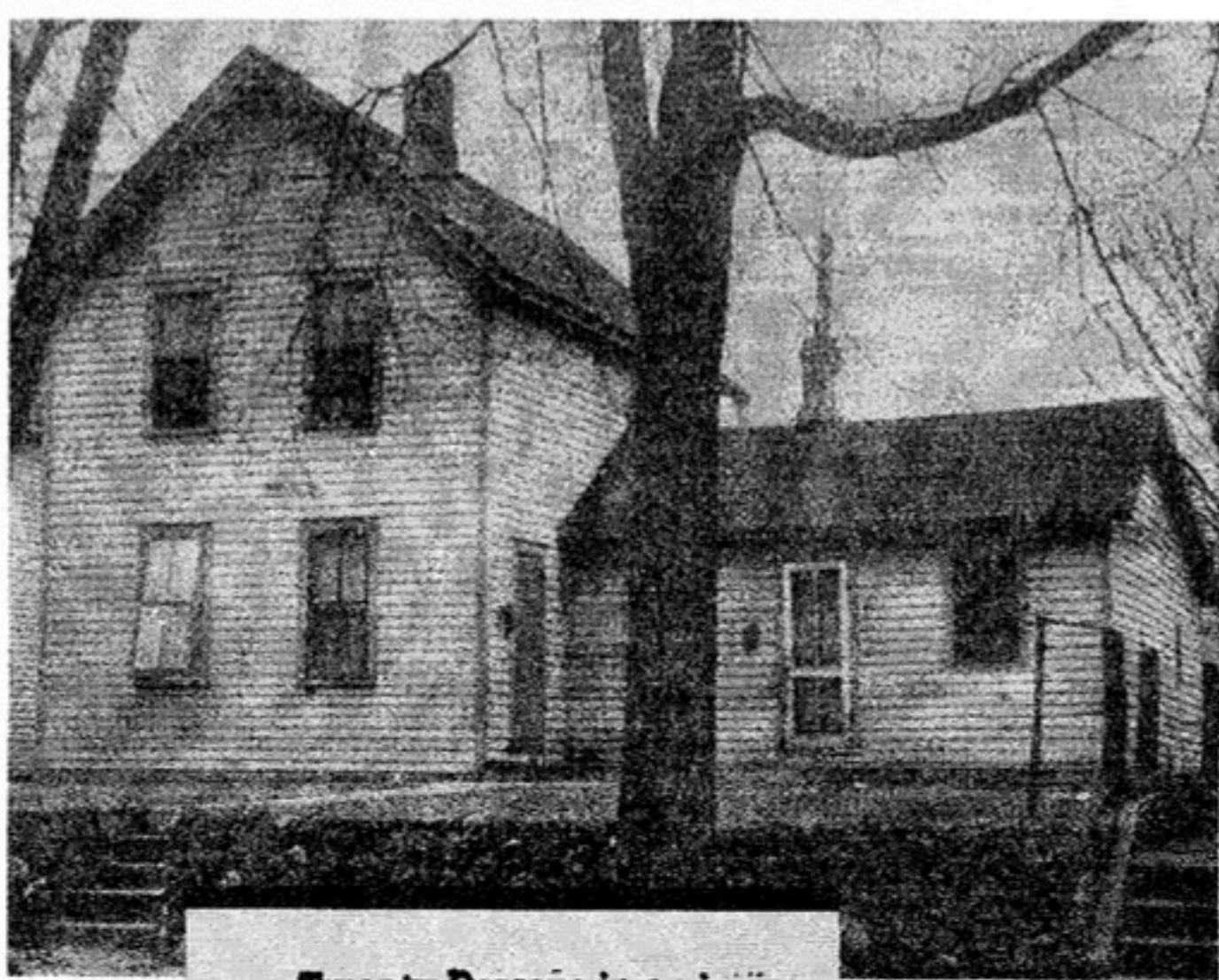
City Clerk Fred Kramer recalled the council that the city had already written letters relative to the land concerned, which, he said, is not entirely owned by the city. Five acres were sold to the department of agriculture five years ago, and that agency turned it over to the war department, which is now in the process of turning it back again.

The city began on Aug. 21 to try to obtain the buildings, Kramer said.

Appointed By Mayor

Creation of the housing authority may be done by resolution of the council under the Wisconsin statutes, said City Attorney Fred Steele. Five members will be appointed by the mayor.

Alderman Franklin Pamperin read petitions urging action for housing from the La Crosse Community council, Twentieth Century club, women's auxiliary to the CIO, Hamilton Homemakers, American Association of University Women and the American Legion.



Twenty Persons in a nine-room house—10 living in six rooms and 10 in three rooms—is evidence of the critical housing situation in La Crosse. The house (left) is the center of interest in eviction proceedings brought by Wilford G. Buchholtz, 421 North 11th street, against Roy Artis, 421½ North 11th street, at which a justice court jury Friday decided in favor of the latter. Members of the Buchholtz household number 10 as do also those of the Artis family. Buchholtz is a veteran of World War II and Artis of World War I.

—Tribune Photo

Hessel, Susan T. *We Need a Roof Over Our Heads: The Story of the La Crosse Housing Authority.*

Better Housing Conditions Urged By Social Agencies

Progress being made by the Central Council of Social Agencies in its current study of poor housing conditions in La Crosse was reported by the Rev. A. N. Schuh, chairman of the council's housing committee, as the organization held its monthly dinner session at the Trane Tea Room Wednesday evening.

"It is vitally important that the public recognize that correction of bad housing conditions is just as definitely the responsibility of municipal government as provision of a pure water supply, cleaning of streets, maintenance of parks and playgrounds, policing of the city, and protection of the public health," Father Schuh emphasized.

All social agencies in the central are now engaged in surveys and the making of maps in an effort to determine areas in this city where low-income families are obliged to live in structures unfit for human habitation.

Presented at the meeting was a letter from Max Raskin, president of the Milwaukee Housing council, in which he offered his assistance to the local Social Agencies Council or to any other local body interested in the subject of housing.

Conditions In La Crosse

"In La Crosse you have the usual picture of cities that are unable to meet the housing problem with their own means and through private capital," Raskin wrote.

"The fact is that situations of that kind have moved the federal government to establish a United States housing authority under the Wagner-Steagall act. Through this law it is possible to build homes, either single or multiple, for the lowest income groups.

"Under this act, the federal government will loan 90 per cent of the total cost of the project at about 3 per cent interest for a period no greater than 60 years; the other 10 per cent must be raised within your own locality.

"In order to insure low rents for these projects, the federal government further, under this law, consents to subsidize the deficit or the difference between the gross income and the economic rent to the extent of 80 per cent. The other 20 per cent must be raised annually by various methods, the most successful being through tax remission. Twenty per cent, however, will not mean a full tax exemption, but in most cases, one-third."

Also brought before the council Wednesday night was a communi-

cation from Fred W. Ramsay, director of public health and welfare of Cleveland, O. Ramsay stated:

Municipal Responsibility

"The time has arrived when municipal governments must accept large responsibility for co-operation with and promotion of all valid programs designated to correct the great social wrong of wretched housing conditions. We have accepted responsibility as municipal governments for many phases and aspects of human welfare, and are keen to provide these public welfare services with ever mounting effectiveness. But we have sadly neglected a vast area of human need in our cities.

"To free a city from the blight and menace of bad housing is an undertaking worthy of the most devoted effort of all public authorities and of all private citizens. Every dollar spent in prudent, remedial measures will prove an investment of extraordinary social and economic value."

Pointing out that the most important American institution is the American home and American home and American family, Ramsay stressed the fact that no condition is so destructive to home and family life as the condition of bad housing. He presented the view that "it is a primary obligation of our citizenship and of all public authorities to provide for every family, decent, livable housing conditions.

Lax In Their Duty

"Most cities have been lax in their duty to get rid of unfit housing," Ramsay said. "One of the reasons has always been that there seemed no prospect for better dwellings for low-income families. After all, they had to have some place to stay.

"The Wagner-Steagall program should be able to break this vicious circle. As it stands now the federal act requires demolition substantially equal to new development, which promises serious administrative difficulties.

"But in many other fields involving health, security and general welfare of the community we employ severe measures in the public interest. There must be no excuse for the tolerance of housing conditions that menace the health and morals of the families concerned."

A guest of the Central Council Wednesday night was A. L. Reurn, member of the Catholic Big Brother committee.

La Crosse Tribune,
13 January 1938

RACIALLY RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Salzer Land Company)
to)
The Public)

PROTECTIVE COVENANTS AND RESTRICTIONS

PROTECTIVE COVENANTS AND RESTRICTIONS
APPLICABLE TO CLIFFVIEW ADDITION TO THE
CITY OF LA CROSSE, LA CROSSE COUNTY, WISCONSIN

For the benefit of the respective owners of Lots or parcels of land located in Cliffview Addition to the City of La Crosse, the following restrictions and covenants shall apply to all lots in said addition, and shall run with the land and be binding on all owners of said property until January 1, 1966, at which

back line.

(e) No noxious or offensive trade or activity shall be carried on upon any lot, nor shall anything be done thereon which may be or become an annoyance or nuisance to the neighborhood.

(f) No trailer, basement, tent, shack, garage, barn or other outbuilding erected in this Addition shall at any time be used as a residence, temporarily or permanently, nor shall any structure of a temporary character be used as a residence.

(g) No person of any race other than the white race shall use or occupy any building or any lot, except that this covenant shall not prevent occupancy by domestic servants or employees of a different race who may be domiciled with the owner or tenant.

(h) No dwelling costing less than four thousand (\$4,000.00) Dollars shall be permitted on any of the following lots in this tract, to-wit: All lots in Blocks One (1), Two (2), Three (3) and Four (4), and Lots One (1) to Eleven (11), inclusive, in Block Five (5). No dwelling costing less than Thirty-five Hundred (\$3500.00) Dollars shall be permitted on any of the other lots in this tract. The ground floor area of the main structure, exclusive of one story open porches and garages shall be not less than six hundred fifty square feet in the case of a one story structure and not less than four hundred fifty square feet in the case of a one and one-half or two story structure.

(i) An easement is reserved over the rear two and one-half feet of each lot for utility installation and maintenance, and any easements shown upon the recorded plat are likewise reserved. The easement for this purpose as to Lots Three (3) to Six (6), inclusive in Block Seven (7) shall be five feet in lieu of two and one-half feet.

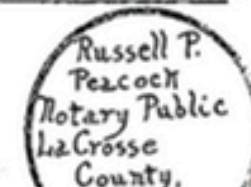
LA CROSSE COUNTY)

Personally appeared before me this 17th day of April, A.D., 1941, K.E. Salzer, President and D.A. Gordon, Secretary of Salzer Land Company, a Wisconsin corporation, and to me known to be such officers and acknowledged that they executed the foregoing instrument as such officers by authority of the Salzer Land Company, and as their free act and deed for the uses therein mentioned.

Russell P. Peacock
Notary Public,
La Crosse County, Wisconsin.

Notary Public-LaCrosse County, Wis.
My commission expires My Commission Expires Feb. 7, 1943

Recorded June 20, 1941 at 3:00 P.M.



Covenant for the Cliffview Addition, 20 June 1941. Laredo Land Records Document Search Engine, Fidar Technologies, accessed 4 March 2024.

CLIFF VIEW ADDITION

Part of the SE 1/4 of the SW 1/4 of Section 4 T15N R7W

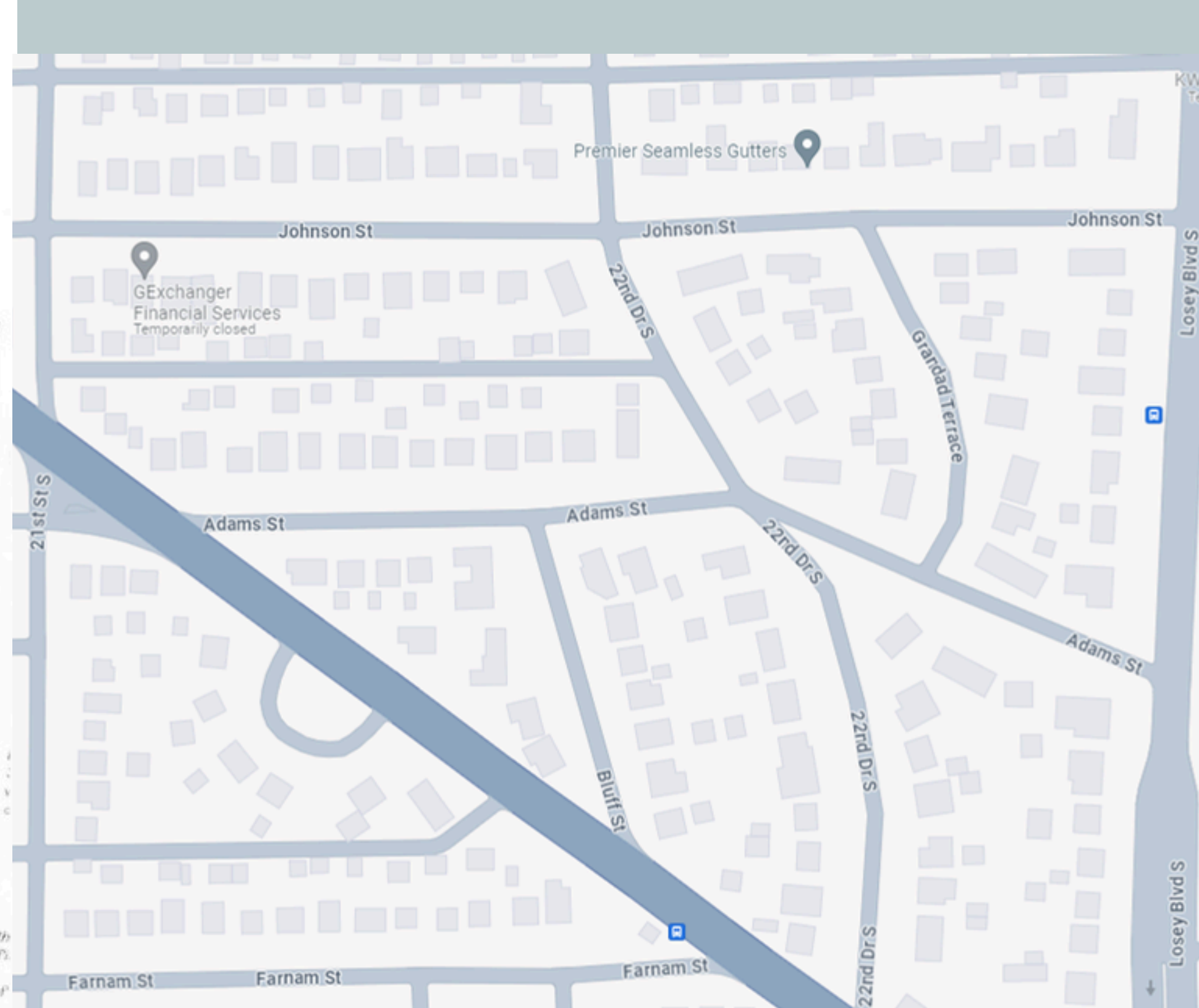
CITY OF LA CROSSE WISCONSIN

Frank J. Davy & Son, Engineers
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Curve Data

Curve	A	D	Tang.	Length	L.Chord
A	23°	16'	65.04	127.77	127.46
B	1°	6'30"	106.65	216.66	216.30
C	29°40'	12'	126.7	247.22	244.74
D	18°10'	11'	83.4	165.15	164.70
E	11°16'	15'	37.78	75.0	75.18
F	39°	15'	135.65	260.0	255.73
G	28°13'	12'	120.15	235.10	233.04
H	40°	30"	70.32	133.33	132.14
I	17°	10'30"	81.66	161.19	161.52
J	9°28'	6'	79.12	157.7	157.60
K	7°18'	7'	52.24	104.28	104.26
L	64°54'	126'28"	34.0	57.3	57.38
N	100°42'	122'36"	66.8	82.7	87.8

Scale 1"=100'-0"



Left: Cliffview Addition, 1948, Engineering Department Plats, La Crosse Series 005, La Crosse Public Library Archives, La Crosse, WI.

Right: Google Maps.

NEIGHBORHOOD RESPONSE

28—La Crosse Tribune, Sunday, September 4, 1977

Housing unit protested; 'Undersirables' feared

By SUSAN T. HESSEL
Of the Tribune staff

Neighbors of a proposed housing project are claiming that "undersirables," not elderly will be housed there.

"The real reason behind this housing is they are trying to shove undesirables onto our community and we are supposed to mother and father them," said Mitchell Klody, 60, of 2165 Green Bay St.

Klody was speaking to a group of about 25 persons at the home of Gerald Johnston, 2160 Green Bay St.

Asked what he meant by undesirables, Klody said the neighbors are middle class and they don't want anyone who "doesn't conform to the community."

He said the La Crosse Housing Authority told residents that it cannot guarantee that only elderly or handicapped will be housed in the building.

"This leaves the door open to undesirables," he said. "I'm talking about loafers and irresponsible people that will be a detriment to the community."

None of the neighbors object to having elderly and handicapped persons in the neighborhood, Klody said, but they feel single family houses are preferable to large high-rise or mid-rise buildings.

"I'm against all high-rises," he said, "especially five story ones in front of my house."

The neighbors met to organize against a proposed La Crosse Housing Authority 100-unit mid-rise building for low and middle-income elderly and handicapped.

"They have hired David Joanis, a La Crosse lawyer, to help fight the project, claiming they would fight it to the Supreme Court if necessary."

"Once you take the first step, let's walk the rest of the mile. Let's not let them bulldoze us the next time we go down to City Hall," Klody said.

The building, at Green Bay Street and Hyde Avenue, would be west of the Naval Reserve Training Center on land now owned by the city.

A preliminary plan calls for a four-to-five floor structure.

The City Plan Commission and the Common Council's Highways, Properties and Utilities Committee, last week recommended that the city transfer the land to the authority. It goes to the full Council this week.

Willis Knight, 2161 Hyde Ave, said they are not against housing for the aging.



Protest leader — Mitchell Klody urges neighbors to band together to block a proposed public housing project at Green Bay Street and Hyde Avenue. The get-together was held in yard of Gerald Johnston, 2160 Green Bay St.

"We are against it in this particular place. We have been told that neighbors around other high rises, love them after they are built. There are other places in the city. Put them downtown where they love it," he said.

Neighbors also claimed that the building would lower their property values, and suggested that the building be built in Harborview Plaza.

At the meeting last week, neighbors claimed that there were restrictive covenants forbidding that kind of development of the land.

Joseph Becker, authority chairman, was asked to respond to the comments of the residents.

"It is strictly for the elderly or people who meet the Social Security definition of handicapped, total disability," said Becker, who was not at the meeting.

Becker said 95 per cent of the residents in housing authority buildings are life-long city residents. But he said the authority is required to leave one apartment in the newly completed Forest Park high rise open for a minority person meeting the qualifications for that building for the elderly.

Efforts to find a minority person have been unsuccessful so far, he said.

Becker said the property owners may be organizing for nothing. City Atty John Flanagan is researching the covenants. If they exist, the authority will have to find another location, he said.

On Harborview, Becker said he personally would support construction there, but that would have to be approved by the Council. That area would mean there would be ample shopping and transportation for

the elderly and handicapped. That area does not have a full-service grocery store.

He said the location on Green Bay Street has two close shopping centers. There are stoplights at Green Bay Street and State Road, which would enable those persons to cross the street.

On the question of property values, Becker said adjacent land has actually gone up in value. As an example he mentioned, a recent acquisition of a lot and home between Stoffel Court, Stokke Tower and Becker Plaza.

That home, which he said was little more than a "shack" was purchased for a parking lot for \$27,500. He said its value increased from \$5,000 about five years ago.

If there are no restrictive covenants, the Council may have to approve the land transfer by a two-thirds vote.

Such a vote is required if 60 per cent of the legal objectors (those living within 100 feet) sign notarized forms opposing the project.

If the land is transferred, it will still have to be rezoned from residential to multiple dwelling to allow the project's construction.

Alderman Lee Foley (8th Dist.), who opposes the project, said the group's strength may be in the objectors.

"To get something through the Council on a two-thirds vote is really something down there, especially if it is an emotional subject," Foley told the group.

He suggested that the neighbors call any aldermen and appear in numbers at the Committee of the Whole Tuesday and full Council Thursday.

"You still have a voice down there, especially if you have numbers," he said.

Citizens bill city for fight on apartment

A citizens group which pleaded a case against construction of an apartment building before the Common Council last September wants the city to foot its legal bills for the fight.

Mitchell Klody, 2165 Green Bay St., sent a letter to City Attorney John Flanagan Wednesday demanding payment for \$260 in legal fees and expenses for a fight Klody headed to prevent the city housing authority from building an apartment building in the Verchota Addition.

The authority wanted to buy 10 lots in the Verchota Addition for construction of a 100-unit, mid-rise apartment building for low-income elderly and handicapped persons.

The building site was proposed for the northwest side of the Verchota Addition, bounded by Green Bay Street on the north, Hyde Avenue on the south, 22nd Street on the west, and 21st Street on the east.

Klody said his group retained La Crosse lawyer David Joanis to represent a group of homeowners in the immediate area who opposed the construction. Joanis did research and appeared on behalf of the group at a Common Council meeting in September.

The council turned down the plans for an apartment building in the area based on a covenant of the Verchota Addition which prohibited construction of anything but single story, family dwellings there.

The 10 lots were sold last month at public auction for development as single family homes.

In his letter to Flanagan, Klody claims the group is entitled to

repayment for the legal fees based on a provision of the Wisconsin Constitution which states, in part:

"Every person is entitled to a certain remedy in the law for all injuries...he ought to receive justice freely, and without being obliged to purchase it."

Klody said between 10 and 20 residents contributed to paying for the legal defense.

Flanagan said he couldn't remember any other citizens attempting to collect reimbursement for legal charges related to a fight against City Hall.

"To the best of my knowledge, I don't think we've ever had a person represented by counsel at a meeting and ask us to pay the costs," Flanagan said.

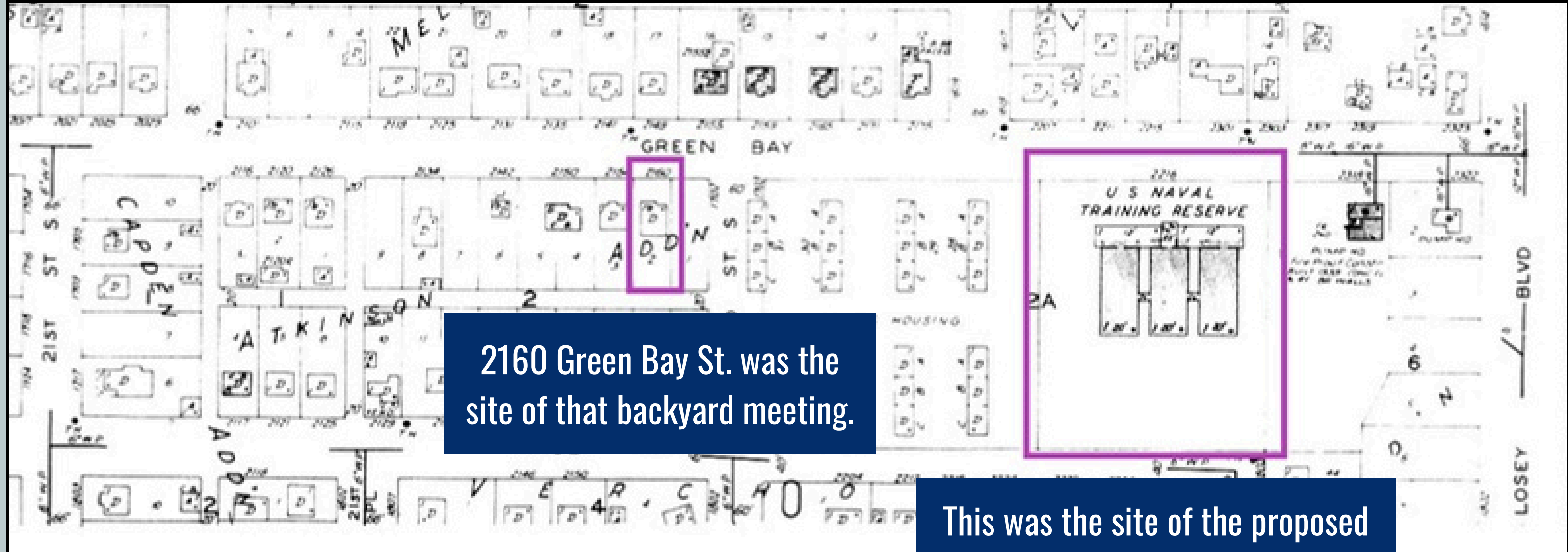
In regard to the constitutional provision Klody bases his claim on, Flanagan said he would have to study that provision to determine whether Klody is entitled to repayment.

"I don't understand this letter particularly, but I'll look at it and file it as a claim against the city at the July council meeting," Flanagan said.

Asked if he thought the taxpayers should pay for the group's legal bills, Klody said, "Sure. So many rights have been taken away from the average citizen and now we're starting to find out what rights we have."

Klody said the services of a lawyer were crucial to the fight against the apartment building.

"Up until the point where it went to the council, everyone was in doubt about the outcome and you've got to have a legal representative. You can't do things like that on your own," Klody said.



2160 Green Bay St. was the site of that backyard meeting.

This was the site of the proposed housing development.

Origins of low-cost renters queried

★ Residency queried

By BETA PACYNA
Of the Tribune Staff

In La Crosse allowing non-residents into its low-cost housing units?

Alderman Keith Ellison (D-1st) asked the question, but ran into a roadblock in trying to find an answer.

Angie Weimerlage, executive director of the La Crosse Housing Authority, said the board of commissioners wants a legal opinion before it gives out the information.

Ellison doesn't understand why the opinion is necessary. "As elected officials should have the right to know," Ellison replied.

Mrs. Weimerlage said the commissioners did not want to release the information since the files of those who apply for housing occupancy are confidential.

In response to whether the confidentiality applies to the applicants' place of origin as well as their names, she said, "I don't know. I'm not an attorney."

She has requested an opinion from the Housing and Urban Development Authority, Mrs. Weimerlage said, but hasn't received a response.

Related editorial, "Housing queries," on page 4.

Mrs. Weimerlage disagrees with Ellison's contention that the city's housing needs have been fulfilled. She said there are persons from the city and the county on the waiting list for housing.

Since federal funds are used for the projects, she added, the housing authority cannot discriminate based on residency. However, the authority has set up its own policy and persons who live outside the city have a lower priority on the list of applicants than city residents, Mrs. Weimerlage said.

Mrs. Weimerlage also said the city housing authority was set up 20 years ago for the purpose of providing housing for the people of the county of La Crosse.

He contends that if the residents being served by the units are from surrounding towns of Shelby, Campbell or Onalaska and the city of Onalaska, then those municipalities should be the ones building the units. He is concerned with where the applicants are from rather than what their names are.

Mrs. Weimerlage also said the city housing authority has 60 rental units and the county housing authority has 60 rental units.

Roland Solberg, chairman of the county housing authority, said the county is seeking more housing as is the city. However, it is not always a question of need, he said, but of the availability of federal money.

He added the city is fortunate to be in a priority position for funding.

"It's federal and state money," Solberg said. "I don't know how you could tell them (the applicants for subsidized housing) to go elsewhere."

Ellison said he became concerned over who is living in the housing units when his mother, who lived in Spencer, came to live with him and was told by a social worker she should apply to live in one of the city's elderly housing units.

Diane Collins, a social service aid with the La Crosse County Social Services Department, said the department has referred persons from outside the county to the housing authority, but she said the applicant must first establish county residency.

Someone living with a relative would qualify, for instance, but a person commuting from La Crosse, Miss., would not, she explained.

Mrs. Collins said she has no idea of the breakdown on the number of city residents versus non-residents who apply to live in the housing units. She said the information could be obtained through her office, but it would require a "lot of digging" and tracing the cases of each social worker.

She said names, not locations of the individuals, are confidential.

Mrs. Collins said her experience with persons applying for the low-income units shows there are still many residents from the city as well as the county who are on the waiting list. Those who sign up often have to wait for as long as six or eight months until they can move into a unit, Mrs. Collins said.

Ellison wants to find out if La Crosse has fulfilled the need for public housing for its own residents, he said. If it has, he believes additional housing should be built in the surrounding areas rather than in La Crosse.

If the housing authority continues to build more units within the city limits, Ellison believes it will take away more of the tax base and ultimately force more elderly residents from their homes. He said more units also mean the city must furnish more police and fire protection and utilities, which require extra tax dollars.

"The point is, we've got to increase the tax base in the city if the elderly are to remain in their homes, instead of taxing them out of their homes," Ellison said.

Carol Reynolds, special assistant to the area director of the Milwaukee HUD office, said she sees no confidentiality problems in releasing the information Ellison has requested.

"I can see questioning giving out names," Mr. Reynolds said. "But with numbers I see no problems."

She added it may require some record searching on the part of the housing office, but as long as names are not associated with where the applicants are from, she wouldn't refuse, if the request were made through her office.

However, Mr. Reynolds said her office cannot require the local housing authority to give out the information if it refuses.

Mr. Reynolds said residents within a city are generally given first priority on the housing lists, but it is up to the local housing authority to establish its own administrative policy. She added that anyone may apply.

Ellison said he intends to introduce legislation through which the Common Council will make a request for the figures he has requested from the housing authority.

"I think it should be made public," Ellison said. "If the residency question isn't resolved the city's low-cost housing may be taking in persons from within a 50-mile area around the city," he added.



Angie Weimerlage



Keith Ellison

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HOW THE 1980S & 1990S BRING US TO TODAY: ZONING REFORM TO HOUSING CRISIS

✓ ① La Crosse Ordinances - Zoning

La Crosse needs quality housing

② Lax Housing

Over the years a considerable amount of attention has been paid by the city of La Crosse to economic development and downtown business issues.

Far less emphasis is given to the quality of housing in La Crosse — and the stability and health of our neighborhoods. It's time we gave those concerns more time and attention. LAX TRIB P. 4

This issue was one of several studied in a recent La Crosse Foundation needs assessment of the city, "To Make a Difference." 5-25-88 University of Wisconsin-La Crosse sociologist Jac D. Bulk studied housing issues and concluded that La Crosse had some problems.

"It is no secret," he wrote, "that the city of La Crosse is undergoing some serious housing deterioration in certain areas. This deterioration is clearly connected to joint tenant and landlord irresponsibility in city sectors that are predominately constituted by rental units."

Bulk noted problems in a number of areas, including a general lack of awareness of the laws on the part of both landlords and tenants.

There are plenty of problems inherent in the landlord-tenant relationship. Those problems are exacerbated in a university community such as ours where being a landlord has become a local cottage industry.

Renting to students and others people has become a minor industry in La Crosse. But there are other interested parties besides landlords and tenants, and there are other concerns about rental housing besides landlord-tenant relationships.

Most of La Crosse is zoned to enable building owners to convert from single-family to multiple-family use simply by obtaining a permit from the city. In almost all city neighborhoods, no zoning change is necessary to tear down a home and build an apartment house.

Sometimes this procession of

apartment buildings can create problems in the neighborhood.

That is why the city planning director is now working on a zoning map that will restrict what can be done with houses in La Crosse. The effort is the result of a lengthy study by a committee of city council members and citizens — including some landlords.

Mayor Patrick Zielke was concerned that the stringent changes would be approved by the council without adequate public notice. So he threatened to veto the legislation which started the process — unless city meetings are held in all 18 council districts.

That makes sense. Now, under the council's plan, when the proposed zoning changes are unveiled this fall, public meetings will be held by each council member. Block by block, the changes can be discussed.

That's a positive approach, but we would recommend another positive way of looking at the zoning and housing issues.

Simply put, good housing and pleasant neighborhoods have an economic development aspect that is too often forgotten by city officials.

People moving into the area have concerns about a whole range of issues — including tax rate, schools and quality housing.

If our zoning laws are too lax, we'll end up ruining good family neighborhoods — those that aren't ruined already, that is. Let's take as broad a view as possible of issues that affect La Crosse's neighborhoods.

Those include landlord-tenant relationships as outlined in the report for the La Crosse Foundation. But they also include the impact of rental housing on primarily single-family neighborhoods, and that has an effect on our ability to attract young families to the city.

And that is as valid an economic development goal as the solicitation of potential new employers.

✓ ① Lax Ordinances - Zoning

Laws would protect single-family areas

② Lax Housing

By GARY RADLOFF
Of the Tribune staff

City ordinances attempting to reduce the encroachment of duplex homes and apartments into single-family residential neighborhoods were passed by the La Crosse Plan Commission Monday.

The commission approved the final pieces of legislation stemming from a year long, comprehensive study of zoning and housing ordinances. LAX TRIB P. 7

The major part of the plan approved Monday is a citywide zoning map study attempting to create a more standard zoning plan for the city. 1-5-88

A mayoral veto looms over the plan because it may change the zoning designation for large parts of the city.

The zoning map change may create more areas zoned for single-family homes. There is currently only one area of the city zoned single-family.

The building of apartments and duplexes is restricted in single-family zoned areas.

"There is a lot of erosion of single-family neighborhoods," said Ron Bracegirdle, city planning director. "The existing (zoning) ordinances did not envision as many multi-family dwellings as we have had."

Bracegirdle said the existing city zoning map was drawn sometime in the 1930s.

Mayor Patrick Zielke said he objects to city government telling people the zoning on their home has changed because the city redrew its zoning map.

"Are we doing more than we need? I think the only problems are in the university area," Zielke said.

But other members of the plan commission say a new city zoning map is needed.

"It is long overdue for the city to do something like that," said Don Meinert, a commission member.

"There are certain sections of the city occupied by middle-aged people. When they die

the house will probably be purchased ... then five more students will move in."

Bracegirdle said changes need to be made in the zoning map to prevent more high-density housing such as duplexes and apartments replacing single-family homes.

"There will be substantial zoning changes and this will reduce the allowable density," Bracegirdle said.

The commission approved legislation that takes a two-pronged approach to the problem.

The first ordinance addressing the problem would change the city zoning map. This would likely result in more areas zoned for single-family homes.

Most city homes are in areas zoned residence district, which which allows a variety of uses such as duplexes and larger apartments.

The second piece of legislation would require a conditional use permit for any owner-occupied home in single-family or residence zoned districts to be leased or occupied by more than two unrelated people.

This conditional use requirement also sets standards by which the permit could be granted or denied.

The standards are rather general and subject to interpretation with language such as the new use of a home should "not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort or general welfare."

The plan commission and council still would be interpreting whether a zoning change runs contrary to the standards.

Council member Shirley Haas (8th District) said the proposed zoning map change will be hard to pass if the mayor opposes it.

Still, the conditional use requirement on apartments with more than two unrelated people may serve the purpose of controlling the encroachment of duplexes and apartments in single-family neighborhoods.

The legislation next will be considered by the La Crosse Common Council.

✓ ② Lax Housing

La Crosse needs tougher zoning

LAX TRIB P. 10

La Crosse's neighborhoods are in trouble. Here are a few of the symptoms: 1-8-88

• The construction of apartment buildings in areas that once were dominated by owner-occupied, single-family homes.

• Problems arising in neighborhoods where the only residents are either student renters or elderly homeowners. These include noise and vandalism.

• Parking problems, associated with the apartments.

Last year, a special committee of Common Council members and citizens studied these problems and recommended several sweeping changes in La Crosse's housing and zoning laws — including a proposal now under consideration that the city draw up a new zoning map, restricting where new apartments may be built.

Current zoning laws allow apartment buildings in many parts of the city. Generally, the areas west of West Avenue on the South Side and west of George Street and south of Gillette Street on the North Side, are zoned for multiple family housing. Drive through some neighborhoods and you'll see what we mean. There may be a single-family house on the corner, and then two 12-unit apartment buildings, followed by another single-family house, and then more apartments.

A committee of council members and citizens spent several months studying the issues, and came up with a sweeping series of recommendations. Some of those, providing stiffer penalties for noise and yard-clutter violations, have already been approved.

But the restrictions on apartments could be the most controversial. Mayor Patrick Zielke has already threatened to veto them.

Here is what is proposed:

- An expansion of the area limited to single-family homes. Since there are apartments all over the city, this will be con-

troversial. What happens to apartments already in existence? They would probably be allowed as "nonconforming uses" but properties that are vacant for at least a year may have to comply with the newer restrictive zoning.

- A law that any apartment occupied by more than two unrelated persons would require a conditional use permit from the city. This is specifically intended to limit the number of students or other tenants allowed in apartments. Donald Meinert, a member of the City Plan Commission, put the issue this way: "There are certain sections of the city occupied by middle-aged people. When they die the house will probably be purchased...then five more students will move in."

There is a broader issue behind these proposals — the gradual deterioration of many of La Crosse's residential neighborhoods. This deterioration has been taking place all over the city, for a variety of reasons.

Obviously, the haphazard introduction of apartment buildings into what had formerly been single-family neighborhoods is a factor in this deterioration. But it is not the only one.

Poverty, landlord neglect and destruction of property by tenants are also factors. While we support the efforts to tighten up La Crosse's zoning laws, we realize that those measures alone will not restore neighborhoods that have declined. That will take the combined effort of both the city and the private sector. In addition to making order out of our chaotic zoning laws, new investment must be made, on the part of landlords and in the form of new families moving in.

There is much that needs to be done, but tough new zoning laws would be a step in the right direction.

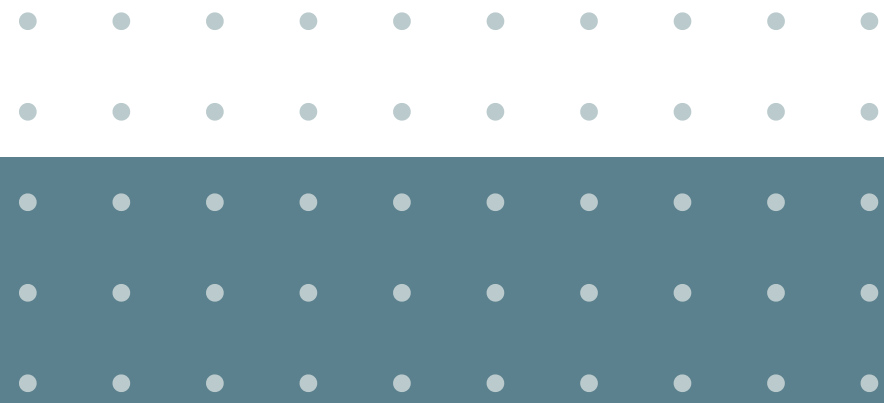
CONTACT

Natalie (Habitat) – Natalie@habitatlacrosse.org

Anna (Habitat) – Anna@habitatlacrosse.org

Dalia (Couleecap) – Migdalia.Servi@couleecap.org

Jenny (LPL) – jderocher@lacrosselibrary.org



THANK YOU

