

Craig, Sondra

From: Jane Benzschawel <jbenzschawel@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, July 29, 2024 7:52 PM
To: ZZ Council Members
Subject: REACH Rezoning Petition

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Greetings City Council Members;

Please reconsider the rezoning petition for the REACH space to support the critical work and care provided to this community and its members by the REACH partners- YWCA La Crosse, Couleecap, Inc., and Scenic Bluffs Health Center. I'm resending this letter in hopes that the right side of history will prevail this time for those most impacted by systemic barriers reinforced by the previous decision to deny people in poverty access to dental care and to block energy and cost savings for nonprofit agencies carrying the workload that the city and county rely on for serving community members surviving poverty.

My following comments remain unchanged from my previous letter to you. As a community member, I have witnessed the meaningful impact of co-located social services in an accessible area on decreasing individual barriers to accessing health and safety for neighbors who are most impacted by systemic barriers. Neighbors served at REACH have had the benefit of accessing resources to increase safety and stability in one location as envisioned at its inception. Now neighbors will be able to access basic healthcare including medical, dental, and behavioral health as long as system barriers like fear, oppression, and policies that reinforce barriers can be reduced. As a local mental health provider, I have a deep appreciation for the despair caused by the long wait lists, among many other barriers, facing all of our community members seeking to access behavioral healthcare. As a volunteer in runaway and homeless youth work, I rely on REACH to be the strong resource it has been. This is where your leadership is critical.

You have the power to make policy that has the opportunity to reduce barriers to survival, health and safety. You have the power to role model a care community for neighbors who, when led by fear of witnessing the suffering of others, engage in behaviors that shame, avoid and reject provision of care to those who directly benefit from receiving care in their proximity. You have the power to assist these visionary nonprofits in providing a large public good with minimal effort on your part; that will not only reduce expenses of service delivery but reduce carbon footprint on the community. When you exercise your power to center the needs of the most vulnerable, everyone benefits. We can build healthier, safer communities where cultures of care are the norm. The alternative option of being driven by fear and disconnection results in more of the same.

I implore you to move forward the rezone of the REACH building from "Washburn Residential" to "Traditional Neighborhood Development" to continue the current good work and conserve the traditional use and scope of work of this building's history. Please use policy as a vehicle for the public good- environmentally and socially, and not as a tool for increasing barriers and suffering for those most impacted by disparity. Thank you for your considerable service on behalf of our great community and please reach out if you have follow up questions.

Sincerely,
Jane Benzschawel

1624 Johnson St

La Crosse, WI

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

-Arundhati Roy

"I believe in the idea that the process is the product."

- Emily Sturm