



Catholic Charities – Waukesha Area

717 N East Avenue, Waukesha, WI 53186

Project Narrative

August 6, 2024

Founded in 1920, Catholic Charities has been providing supportive services and counseling, with dignity and respect, for people stricken by poverty and vulnerable populations in southeastern Wisconsin; we are proud to provide these services to the Waukesha community through our location at 717 N East Avenue. Catholic Charities – Waukesha Area, has been a member of the greater Waukesha community for many years and we look forward to continuing to help people in need in the Waukesha area for many more years to come.

Unfortunately, the front of the building that we own at 717 N East Avenue does not convey the same welcoming and open environment that our programs and staff portray. The front yard of our building is dominated by concrete paving for parking stalls that we do not need, including two parking stalls that are somewhat unsafe due to clients being required to back directly out onto East Avenue. We also have a monument sign that is tired, does not reflect our current corporate image, and does not match the architecture of the building. The front of our building is also not very inviting because the window openings are infilled with glass-block that does not allow views in-to or out-of the building. In addition, the handicap accessible parking stall at the front of our building does not meet current code requirements. Finally, with many of our clients arriving by public transportation or walking, those individuals with mobility impairments are required to walk up the alley in order to access the ramp to our front door, which is not very elegant.

We also have some building maintenance issues that need attention on the north, south and east (rear) sides of the building that need to be addressed in order to reflect our desire to be a good corporate citizen and enhance the beauty of the neighborhood. The exterior concrete block walls of the building are in need of paint and they do not currently match the masonry color of the stone on the west (front) side of the building. There is also an old wooden canopy over our rear staff entrance door that needs to be removed due to its poor condition. Finally, the rear door itself is in need of replacement and it currently does not allow our staff to observe the rear parking lot before leaving the building.

Keeping in mind that we are a not-for-profit organization with limited funds, the project that we are proposing is to address the issues stated above. Our main goal is to beautify the front of our building so that we are more welcoming to our clients and more presentable to the public. We propose to achieve this through the enhanced landscaping and the new clear-glazed front windows and door. We also propose to address the handicap parking stall deficiencies by making the handicap parking stall compliant and to provide greater access to people with mobility impairments by reworking the front access ramp to approach the building directly from the public sidewalk. Due to this work, we will be replacing the cracked and discolored concrete paving at the front of the building. Finally, we desire to upgrade our monument sign so that it more accurately represents our current corporate image and so it ties-in better with the architecture of the building by providing a matching stone base for the new sign enclosure.

Member Catholic Charities USA



A Proud Partner Agency

Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee

PO Box 070912

Milwaukee, WI 53207-0912

414-769-3400 | www.ccmke.org



On the sides and rear of the building, we are proposing to repaint the building in a color that more accurately matches the color scheme on the front of the building, and we desire to replace the dilapidated awning at the rear with a new fabric awning. The rear door will also be replaced with a secure metal door that also includes a half-light window so that staff can, for security reasons, surveille the parking lot before leaving the building.

In order to achieve these goals, we are in need of the Planning Commission to grant us some relief from the Zoning Code. In particular, we are asking for a reduction in parking stalls in order to address the parking stall safety hazard and to achieve the landscaping enhancements in the front yard. We are also asking for a variance from the Sign Code to allow us to replace our existing non-conforming sign with a more decorative and harmonious sign.

To address the parking, our site already has fewer parking stalls than the current zoning code requires – and we are asking to remove two additional stalls from the front yard. We currently have eleven stalls, with four stalls in the front yard and seven stalls in the rear parking lot. However, we currently have more parking stalls than we actually need. As part of our mission, we “bring our services out to the community” so the majority of our appointments are out of the office. Our family support staff spends about 90% of their time providing services in client’s homes. Our case managers, spend as much as 50% of their time out in the community. And, as has happened with many other industries since the pandemic, we provide many of our services via telephone, text, email and teleconference and video chat. Our telehealth services have actually increased access to our counseling services by providing services to people who do not have access to transportation. However, most of our mental health counseling is still provided in-person, which is where most of the demand for on-site parking comes from.

We have six full-time staff that have offices at our building. We also often have three additional temporary or visiting staff members, and one maintenance person. At any one time, we might have five clients driving to their appointments at the building and one or two people taking public transportation or walking to visit us. That may seem like a lot of demand for the parking stalls but we have an agreement with the First Congregational Church immediately to the south of our property, which allows Catholic Charities staff to use the church parking lot during our business hours and the church can use our parking lot in the evenings and on weekends. Therefore, during our business hours, most of our office staff parks behind the church during the day, so that the parking stalls on our property are available to our visiting staff and clients. On a typical day, we need less than nine parking stalls and on a busy day, we might need as many as fifteen stalls; however, that demand is easily accommodated by the nine stalls we will still have on-site and the cross-parking that we have with the church to the south.

With respect to the requested sign variance, we are asking the Planning Commission to grant us permission to replace the existing tired monument sign with a more contemporary and aesthetically compatible sign, which we intend to locate in the newly created landscape area provided by the removal of the two hazardous parking stalls currently located in our front yard.

In closing, we hope that the aesthetic and functional enhancements provided by this project will win favor with the Planning Commission, and allow the Commission to approve our project.

