

Opposing Special Use Permit SUP-002-2025 – United Way Group Living Facility

Bruce Koppinger

President, North Hills Townhouse Association | Resident of Dickinson for most of my life.

To the Dickinson City and Planning & Zoning Board:

My name is Bruce Koppinger, and I reside at 2160 Prairie Avenue. I have lived in this home for over 24 years and currently serve as the President of the North Hills Townhouse Association, representing 14 homeowners who live directly adjacent, less than 300 feet to the proposed site at 2143 6th Avenue West.

I am writing to formally oppose the approval of Special Use Permit SUP-002-2025 for the operation of a group living facility by the United Way at the former Evergreen Assisted Living site.

We do believe that these services are needed—but **this isn't the right location.**

1. Zoning Incompatibility

, Dickinson's zoning ordinance (Section 39.08.050) still requires that proposed uses demonstrate compatibility with surrounding properties, especially when adjacent to residential homes.

The proposed facility would directly border homes in a quiet residential area. That is not compatible use. **This is the wrong location**

2. Lack of Screening in Homeless Shelter Component (Pages 73-74)

The United Way's own facility guidelines state that only the homeless shelter portion of the project will operate on a "come-as-you-are" basis, meaning:

- No identification is required to stay
- Sobriety is not a requirement for entry or continued stay
- Visitors are allowed daily from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM
- Pets are permitted, with no outlined behavioral or containment policies

This means that individuals can enter the shelter without ID, background checks, or sobriety, and may bring guests and animals onto the property with little oversight. For a facility located directly next to homes with children, this introduces significant safety concerns.

In contrast, the mental health and substance abuse programs in the same building will require screening and ID. But those safeguards do not apply to the general shelter, where residents may come and go freely.

3. Emergency Response Plan Highlights Inherent Risk (Pages 71–77)

The applicant's own plan includes:

- Protocols for overdose and Narcan administration
- Mental health crisis intervention procedures
- Emergency response coordination with law enforcement
- 24/7 surveillance and staffing

These are critical safety measures—but if this level of intervention is anticipated, why locate the facility next to family homes in the first place?

4. Dickinson Already Provides Shelter Services—None Like This

Dickinson already supports vulnerable populations through:

- The Emergency Shelter on 21st Street West
- Hope's Landing (sober living with screening)
- The Transitional Living Center (with clinical support)

None of these are located near homes, nor do they operate with an open-access model like the one proposed here.

5. Other North Dakota Cities Don't Place Shelters in Neighborhoods

We reviewed zoning and facility placement in Williston, Jamestown, Bismarck, and Minot:

- None place homeless shelters immediately adjacent to residential homes
- Williston has enforced zoning to block such placement
- Bismarck and Minot site their group facilities near services, not neighborhoods

If other North Dakota cities can uphold this standard, so can Dickinson.

6. Property Values Will Be Affected

Research shows that low-barrier, high-turnover shelters can reduce surrounding property values by 5–12.7%.

In North Hills, where homes average around \$250,000, that could mean \$12,000–\$30,000 in lost equity per household. That's not just theoretical—it's real money for working families, retirees, and homeowners who've built their lives here.

Another important factor that must be taken into consideration is the increase in pedestrian and vehicle traffic.

6-2-25

Final Statement

We believe in compassion. We believe in recovery. But placing a partially unsupervised, 60-bed facility within feet of established homes—without community input or appropriate location planning—is not the right answer.

This is about responsible zoning, safety, and preserving the stability of our neighborhoods.

On behalf of the North Hills Townhouse Association, I respectfully urge the Dickinson City Planning and Zoning Commission to deny Special Use Permit SUP-002-2025.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.


Sincerely,

Bruce Koppinger

President, North Hills Townhouse Association

2160 Prairie Avenue, Dickinson, ND

24-year resident