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Rehab agency deserves fair hearing for proposed Itasca facility

The Daily Herald Editorial Board

We spoke in favor of a nonprofit group's proposal 18 months ago to open a drug and alcohol treatment center in Wheaton, but its rejection in the face of community opposition might prove to have been fortunate.

That's because a plan rolled out this week would house more patients in a much larger building in Itasca and includes space for those transitioning out of inpatient treatment.

There's little doubt the suburbs need more places that treat, supervise and support addicts seeking to break the grip of drug abuse. In DuPage County alone, more than 300 people have died of a drug overdose since 2015 and more than 600 have been treated with naloxone, a drug that counters opioid overdoses and prevents deaths. Nationally, deaths are projected to more than double by 2025 compared to 2015, a study in the [February Journal of the American Medical Association](#) projects, with treatment one prong in the effort to hasten reversal of the trend.

The Haymarket Center apparently learned from its experience in Wheaton, where the city council ultimately voted down the plan. This time, Haymarket lined up an impressive list of supporters led by DuPage County Board Chairman Dan Cronin, who has been out in front on addressing opioids' toll. Haymarket expects to formally present plans to Itasca officials next month.

Haymarket aims to take over a Holiday Inn on the west side of I-290 at Irving Park Road and convert it into a roughly 200-bed facility. It would provide inpatient and outpatient care and have beds for treatment and recovery. The hotel site seems nearly ideal. Located in an industrial area, it's closer to a police station than to homes, potentially muting one source of opposition that arose in Wheaton. Though purchase of the hotel by the nonprofit would remove it from the tax rolls, Haymarket would bring 162 jobs to the community.

Backers anticipate they'll have to be persuasive. As Cronin says, "When people first hear about a heroin treatment facility in their town, the initial reaction of most people -- knowing human nature -- is that they're going to be opposed to it."

Yet, those who need treatment are our children, neighbors, co-workers, friends. We urge Itasca officials and residents to remember that, and to evaluate Haymarket's proposal with open minds and level heads.

Haymarket Center's CEO Dan Lustig says thousands of suburban residents have been treated at the Haymarket Center in Chicago. But drug abuse is a significant problem in our suburbs. Treatment should be widely available here, too.