

To: Members of the Westwood Planning Commission, Westwood City Council, and Mayor David Waters

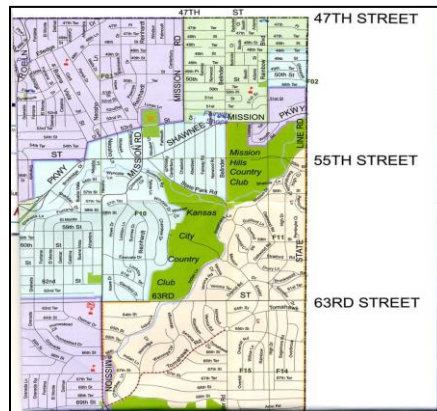
Subject: Comments on the Various Zoning Applications for a proposed new mixed-use commercial development at 5000 and 5050 Rainbow Blvd., Westwood, KS from R-1 (Single-Family Residential) to PD (Planned Development).

My name is Karen I. Johnson and I own and reside within 200 feet of the above-described property at 4950 Adams Street where I have lived since 1966.

I have reviewed the plans for this development and, as proposed, I do not approve of the application. I will outline the reasons for my disapproval, but first a few preliminary comments.

I agree with the mayor that city planning is important as is transparency for that planning. Much can be said in recent years about the planning process. In June 2017, the City, after much deliberation and requests for input from the residents, adopted its revised City of Westwood Master Plan/Comprehensive Land Use Plan. All decisions on land use should follow the guidance provided in that Master Plan (hereafter MP). And so it is necessary to look to the MP to see if the current proposal fits within the policies there outlined.

As a reminder, Westwood is a small city within a large metropolitan area. How small can be seen in this map detail. Westwood is in light green.



As a small city, it should not come as a surprise that we are focused on being a single-family residential city. “Survey respondents said they prefer to see residential (single-family) land uses in the community (64 percent of respondents)...” (MP1-9) City policies should “Protect character of established neighborhoods.” (MP 4-16). Further, the residents seek to “protect and minimize impacts to adjacent residential property.”

In the Community Survey Summary, “there was a concern expressed for the conflict of businesses and residential areas...” (4/7) To address this concern, “[t]he Plan seeks to protect

and enhance these residential areas by focusing and encouraging commercial redevelopment activity only on to two exterior corridors of the community. Commercial redevelopment activity should be focused along the 47<sup>th</sup> Street and Rainbow Boulevard corridors.” (MP 2-3).

The Master Plan also states “Prohibit isolated commercial rezoning in established residential developments.” (MP 4-10)

The Westwood Master Plan Community Survey asked residents “Within the next 15 years, Westwood should be a community that: [fill in the blank]. Residents did fill in those blanks. One would be hard pressed to find any comment that wishes for more commercial development. The least desirable focus was in fact “growing the community rather than protecting and enhancing the existing community character.” (page 5/7).

A sample of what the residents thought Westwood should be in 15 years:

“Provides basic services and promotes and maintains well-kept single family residences.”

“Increases the number of single family residences and the percentage of total single family homes that are owner occupied.”

“Remains a family focused fiscally responsible city—not given to whims of developers but retaining a long term focus.”

“Where people seek out to live here due to the small town feel, great location, locally owned businesses and well-kept properties.”

And with those preliminary, but important comments, here are my concerns about the current proposal.

1. I consider this proposal prohibited because of the isolated nature of the proposal which is in an established residential development.
2. If this development is allowed, it sets a precedent for future commercial development all along Rainbow. Does Westwood really want to look like Metcalf Avenue in Overland Park?
3. Although Rainbow is one of the two streets singled out for commercial development, 50<sup>th</sup> Street and 51<sup>st</sup> Street are certainly not. If I am not mistaken, the revised plans for this development include a building that is to run west along 50<sup>th</sup> Street all the way to Adams Street, and a building that is to run along 51<sup>st</sup> Street, which are not only not allowed by the MP, but would bring all the buildings closer to the residential areas on Adams Street and on 51<sup>st</sup> Street.
4. The buildings are too tall for this area—again, it is in a residential area and there are no 3 or 4 story houses nearby. Sitting in the City Council chamber as a visitor and looking at the apartments across Rainbow can provide an idea of just how massive this development

will look. The apartments under construction on Martway in Mission can also provide an idea of the height of this development—paper plans do not give you the sense of size.

5. Not only are the buildings too tall for “The Heart of Westwood,” (an important description used by the Mayor in the last newsletter) but the mass of 4 buildings is excessive.
6. Unless the effects of the pandemic on office building occupants have reversed, many office buildings are empty. What sort of guarantee is there that occupants will be found?
7. Likewise, retail has suffered from the pandemic with folks ordering goods online. Additionally there is not a lot of foot traffic on Rainbow. Will retail there survive? And if not, what then?
8. Although the concern may be outdated, I include it because when it comes to universities and land use, one never knows what might happen, planned or unplanned. There is always the possibility that Karbank could sell these buildings to someone like KU which would pay no taxes.
9. How can we guarantee that there would be no drive-through businesses in this development, now or ever—no banks, no fast food, no coffee shop drive-ups.
10. Traffic on 50<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> Street will definitely increase to the detriment of the neighbors, and 50<sup>th</sup> Street is already a busy street. And Adams Street is often used to avoid the traffic light which will likely increase with all the additional traffic on 50<sup>th</sup> Street.
11. What kind of light pollution will these buildings and their parking lots create?
12. I know that it has been said that mature trees on Rainbow will be saved. At my last count in the Joe D. Dennis Park, there were 16 deciduous trees and 3 pines there. How many will be saved?
13. The fountain at the corner of 50<sup>th</sup> and Rainbow has always been popular. It should not be lost.

I do not have any concerns about the park plans at this time although I definitely have thoughts about what should be included and not included. It is my hope that most of the area will be left as green space with trails and one Chat Bench.

Thank you for reading my comments.

July 26, 2023.