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City of Westwood KS

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~~Dear Neighbor,~~ *City of Westwood*

My name is Ellen Marsee. I have been a resident of Westwood Kansas for almost 60 years. I love our city and the neighborly small town feel an engaged citizenry has maintained. I am writing with my concerns about a proposed development project. I hope you will join me and attend the public meeting at city hall on August 7th at 7 p.m.

Admittedly, I am steadfastly opposed to the project. I live in the house on the corner of 50th and Adams directly across from the park and tennis courts. How lucky my late husband and I have been to raise our family in such a safe and connected community. We have always enjoyed a beautiful view of Westwood's only park and school. My objection is foremost due to our darling park being replaced by office and retail space within 200 feet of my property.

However, my concerns are not only self serving. I am equally concerned that our city might move forward with a development project that is not in the best interest of our city, either in the short or long term, and in fact, conflicts with citizens' desires as expressed in recent surveys and recommendations given in the 2017 City of Westwood Master Plan (this can be found on the city's website).

My major concerns are as follows:

In 2017 the city published its Master Plan and paid \$70,000 for the research and creation of this plan. The Karbank development proposal conflicts with this Master plan in many ways. Some of those are:

- Includes development which is not focused only on the corridors of 47th Street and Rainbow Blvd. as recommended (pg. 27). In fact the proposed development encroaches and disrupts purely residential areas on both 50th and 51st Streets.
- Includes commercial development of more than two-stories with great negative impact on adjacent residential areas (pg. 47).
- Ignores the survey responses and priorities citizens volunteered throughout the creation of the Master Plan (pg. 17). Here are a few excerpts: Survey respondents desire: • Livable neighborhoods • Schools • Appearance of the community • Public safety • Small-town character. Survey respondents said they prefer to see residential (single-family) land uses in the community (64 percent of respondents), followed by mixed use businesses that include residential and commercial (38 percent of respondents). Survey respondents expressed concern about: • Potential conflict between businesses and residential areas • Development of apartment and senior living units. Most important issues to address in the next ten years: • Aging infrastructure • Balancing what people want versus spending/capacity • Aging housing stock In addition, survey respondents recommended focusing on preserving and enhancing the existing

residential areas rather than building new. A majority of respondents did not want to grow the community, but rather protect and enhance the existing community character.

The proposed development will bring major traffic into residential areas and most importantly into a proposed new park and in close proximity to our new school. Citizens often cite the safety and walkability of Westwood, and specifically, the ability of children and families to walk to school as a priority. Instead of a plan to divert traffic away from our only school and park, this design will draw it in.

Likely you have followed news of communities strained by the challenges to fill office and retail spaces in a post covid era. Much has been reported on this national trend and the negative economic impacts it has had. Locally we have seen this in our own Country Club Plaza with reporting on the historic number of vacancies. Our neighboring city of Fairway currently has vacancies in their small commercial area including a restaurant space that has remained vacant since 2019. I shudder to think of the disaster of the Mission Gateway development and the impact such an experience could have on Westwood.

Finally, with only one plan for citizens and the Westwood City Council to consider, along with an exclusivity agreement with Karbank (the timeline can be found on the city's site), interesting and innovative proposals that may exist will not even be considered. How do we hold developers accountable to the contributions of citizens in the City Master Plan when we have eliminated any competition? Instead, we should be fostering an arena in which the best plan for Westwood is able to be drawn out through a commitment to citizens' priorities and desires for the future.

I hope you find this helpful as you prepare to consider your own position on the development. Wishing you a safe and happy rest of the summer.

Your neighbor,
Ellen

*I submit this letter as my petition
of protest. August 8, 2013*