

Mayor Waters and Council Members,

My name is Tammy Carter, and I live at 2323 W. 51st Street.

I want to speak plainly today, because I think that's what this moment calls for.

A clear majority of Westwood residents want to see the old Shawnee Mission School property used for homes that actually fit our neighborhood—single-family houses, maybe brownstones or townhomes. What we don't want is big apartment complexes or office buildings that don't match the character of Westwood.

People are especially concerned about any development spilling onto the old Westwood Christian Church property. That land has been part of our park in every meaningful way, and residents don't want to lose it.

Let's also talk about the process here. You announced this meeting late on the Friday before a holiday weekend. You scheduled it during the workday. You gave the public just 48 hours with the materials. That feels rushed—like you're trying to push something through when people aren't paying attention. In your May 23rd update, you said the Council "values resident input." But one of the options on today's agenda is to hand over the City's purchase rights to some unknown "qualified buyer" who would wire \$2.785 million to the school district by tomorrow.

Who is this buyer? What are they planning? Residents haven't been told a thing. If that's what's really happening, it feels like the decision is already made. That's not community input. That's a done deal, done fast, behind closed doors.

On top of that, we've been told in the past that the City had no backup plan after the last development fell through. If today's meeting reveals otherwise, then past statements weren't just misleading—they were deceptive.

Westwood residents deserve better than this.

Back on April 1, the residents voted and sent a strong message: we want more park space, not less. The old church property should be officially named part of Joe D. Dennis Park. Back in November 2023, the City listed both 5000 and 5050 Rainbow as parkland under K.S.A. 12-1301. And when the Johnson County District Court ruled on this, it clearly said: "The 5000 and 5050 property contain the Park."

EXHIBIT TO 5/29/25 CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Under Kansas law, if land is used as a park consistently and publicly over time, it becomes a common law dedication. This land has been used by residents for years. Even the City's own history materials say that after the church was torn down, the field became an extension of the park.

So if you try to sell or build on that land, residents have a legal right to demand a vote under K.S.A. 12-1301. And if you're serious about valuing our input, that's exactly what should happen—not backroom deals, not holiday weekend meetings, and not surprise buyers.

We are paying attention. And we expect transparency.

Thank you for your time.

— Tammy Carter
Westwood Resident

My name is Stephen Platt. I live at 4910 Glendale in Westwood Hills. I have consistently commented to provide public input.

I attended the last planning commission meeting. At this meeting a lawyer was paid to provide some training for the committee members.

I have three observations.

- 1) It was repeatedly stated that the committee needs to consider the “spirit” of the community when dealing with planning issues. So, it is important that the spirit of the community’s interests and desires are met.
- 2) One member commented that the committee was not an Architecture Review Board. Why not? Should not design and esthetics as well as function be a consideration during reviews. This would be another opportunity for the planning committee to reflect on the “spirit” of the community.
- 3) There was no opportunity for public comments. This is a discouragement for citizens at large to provide input so the committee can gauge the “spirit” of the community. Many members all had anecdotes of someone in the grocery store saying something, but these are not comments on the record to engage the community. Several issues were touched on. The tree canopy and the tear downs were an example. One member even stated during the training that public comments were not solicited except for applications when neighbors could weigh in.

I encourage the city council to guide the planning committee to also engage in open public comments and discussions in order to appreciate the “spirit” of the community.

That “spirit” is one of single family homes, lower density, and height restrictions. It is the same message found in the master plans. It is not a program of rezoning and more commercial development that the city adopted in the Strategic Plan laid out in December 2024. Let the planning committee get out front and listen to the public.

In your next survey of City Engagement ask the question, “What is the satisfaction for public comments, engagements, and attendance at public meetings.”

Let the planning committee hear what the community is thinking. A planning committee that actively listens and incorporates public voices fosters greater trust and community harmony.

- Jennifer Westlake
2309 W. 51st Street
Westwood, KS 66205

I moved to Westwood in 2013 and I have been a neighbor that has been both fortunate and lucky to live right across the street from Joe D. Dennis Park, the green common law dedication space at 5050 Rainbow that was the former church property, and the SMSD old Westwood View building. The view out my front windows have allowed me the opportunity to witness many uses for this space including picnics, kids soccer and football practices, full tennis courts, Easter egg hunts, adult boot camps, sledding, snow angels, and lemonade stands for charity...and of course, the twin pink poodles. The church property has been used as a park before the demolition and after and I hope you will secure it and use it for future generations.

While these views bring me so much joy, and make me an invested citizen, I am also a concerned resident. I have constantly heard the Council state that they need revenue, that they don't have funds for the project and that the city is tied up in other endeavors- basically broke. H I have never heard of someone that is in dire need of cash not accepting free money like residents of Westwood have already pledged to do. There is a clear effort being made by the residents and it is baffling to the citizens, along with our neighboring communities that the city was willing to work with Karbank and their foundations to expand the park but not willing to further engage in using the Westwood Foundation as a 501c3 for a solution.

Thank you.