PLAZA WESTPORT NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

May 30, 2025

Transportation, Infrastructure and Operations Committee
Kevin O'Neill, Chairperson
Melissa Robinson, Vice Chairperson
Councilmembers Eric Bunch, Johnathan Duncan and Lindsay French

Re: Ordinance No. 250430-Flood Control Project in Westport and Restoration and Park Enhancements of Dr. Jeremiah Cameron Park to honor Penn School and Steptoe Neighborhood

Dear Committee Members:

Plaza Westport Neighborhood Association (PWNA) is a part of **Steptoe Lives**, a coalition of multiple community-based organizations which coalesced to identify and implement action steps to recognize the former Steptoe Neighborhood in Kansas City, Missouri. A portion of the Steptoe Neighborhood lies within the geographical boundaries of PWNA.

Dr. Jeremiah Cameron Park (Park) is the site of a proposed underground major storm water detention facility, the first phase of which was the subject of Ordinance No. 240349, and now Ordinance No. 250340 which is on your Committee Agenda for June 3rd. This flood control project is important to our neighborhood, particularly the portions along Mill Creek Parkway, downstream from the flooding along Mill Street in Westport. PWNA supports the undertaking of this flood control project. Further, PWNA supports Amendment No. 2 which is the subject of Ordinance No. 250430. We appreciate the work of Burns and McDonnell and MultiStudio to engage stakeholders, including PWNA, former and current Steptoe residents, St. Luke's Health System, and the Mill Creek Parks Association, to develop a design to restore and enhance the Park. It significantly helped to design the flood control infrastructure and the design of the restoration and enhancement of the Park in tandem, so both can consider what the other project is doing in a most cohesive manner.

The Steptoe Neighborhood was an antebellum African American neighborhood roughly Jefferson to Wornall Road, from 42nd to 44th Streets. Some of its residents were formerly enslaved people. The Steptoe Neighborhood has been decimated by demolition of single-family residences and the Penn School, located at 4237 Pennsylvania. Penn School was founded in 1868 for the express

Robert K Martin, President – PWNA
plazawestport.association@gmail.com

purpose of educating African American children until it was closed in the mid-1950's. Dr. Jeremiah Cameron Park abuts up to the site of the former Penn School.

Steptoe's physical legacy is almost entirely lost. Its history may vanish unless steps are taken to recognize and honor that legacy.

PWNA encourages you to recommend passage of Ordinance No. 250430.

Respectfully,

Robert Martin, Pres. PWNA

CC: Councilmember Crispin Rea, 4th District At-Large

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