



January 19, 2024

Neighborhood Planning and Development Committee  
City of Kansas City Missouri  
414 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Kansas City, MO 64106  
Via Electronic Mail

RE: Ordinance No. 240023-4627 Madison [CD-CPC-2023-00155] and [CD-CPC-2023-00153]

Dear Committee Members:

Since its founding in 1974, Historic Kansas City (HKC) has been the only greater Kansas City nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of the area's heritage, neighborhoods, and historic built environment. Through advocacy, public policy, outreach, and educational programming, HKC is an advocate for the thoughtful and meaningful preservation and rehabilitation of historic buildings, landscapes, and neighborhoods.

Co-Developers Sunshine Development and Block Real Estate Services have applied for a rezoning [CD-CPC-2023-00155] and approval of a development plan [CD-CPC-2023-00153] for the property located at 4627 Madison. The development plan is for a new ten story, 202-unit multi-family structure, with a four level 476 stall garage structure on the east side of Madison north of what is historically referred to as the John Hancock Building fronting W. 47th St. The proposed garage structure will replace the deteriorating existing parking garage that will be demolished. The replacement garage will also serve the existing office building, which is to remain.

Part of the property is currently zoned UR, other portions are B4-5. The rezoning request is to shift all the property to B4-5, which permits a wide range of uses. That gives HKC some pause if for whatever reason the development plan isn't implemented, and construction as presently proposed isn't initiated and completed. This could allow undesirable land uses to be built by right under B4-5.

This site is within the area covered by the Midtown Plaza Area Plan (MPAP). The MPAP recommended a mixed-use community use, which generally corresponds with B2 zoning, Mixed use community contemplates a mix of business and residential uses as shown on the proposed development plan.

The eastern portion of the site is governed by the Plaza Bowl Overlay District, which prohibits certain uses that might otherwise be permitted within a B4-5 zoning district. The prohibited uses are specified in Code Section 88-120-03-H and are intended to preserve the integrity of the Plaza. **We would ask that the Committee place a further condition in Section B of the Ordinance that if the currently proposed development plan lapses, and isn't implemented, a subsequent development plan will be subject to Council approval. We think that condition is supported by the combined application of Sections 88-517-02-G and 88-515, but understand staff is not willing to recommend reference to those Sections as they may not be in effect when this development plan lapses. That condition would be a safeguard to assure that prohibited uses don't creep onto this site, only a portion of which is covered by the Plaza Bowl Overlay District.**

The apartment units are a mix of sizes, but as presented to HKC [the 103 one bedroom/one bath units, the 34 one bedroom/one bath/one den units, and 21 studio units, plus some larger sizes for the rest] will help address work force housing for the employees of businesses and institutions that are present in and around the Plaza, strengthening its vitality for the long term. That proposed use is consistent with the contemplated redevelopment uses of the MPAP.

The area sought to be rezoned is within the "bowl concept" of the MPAP. The bowl concept depicts a 45-90 feet height range at this site, and a minimum three story, and a maximum seven story future building at this site. However, the easterly portion of the property (primarily the existing parking garage to be demolished) is within the Plaza Bowl Overlay District. The required maximum height is 90 feet for that portion within such Overlay District.

This site has a topographic challenge: it is higher in the north, with a lowering of grade more than thirty feet to the south. That grade change is what pushed up the building and out of the design envelope recommended by the MPAP at the south end. Although the southeast portion of the project remains over the height limit of 90 feet, that deviation is eight feet as stated in Section B, Item 4 of the Ordinance.

The height of the south facing portion of the project doesn't dwarf the John Hancock Building and doesn't impact the visual corridor along 47<sup>th</sup> Street through the Plaza as emphasized by the MPAP. Certain architectural elements of the proposed apartment building and parking garage carry forward the architectural lines of the external structure of the John Hancock Building.

**Overall HKC sees this proposal as a reasonable solution for a geographically challenging site with its design and placement accommodating the needs of contemporary housing function and design, but in a manner that is compatible with the design, scale and form of the Plaza. Historic Kansas City is in support of Ordinance No. 240023 for redevelopment of 4627 Madison.**

More development is expected in this corridor in the future, and we want to emphasize that HKC and surrounding neighborhoods will not accept or support deviations from the height restrictions on every project that is proposed. This project has very specific site

issues, primarily topography, and the overall design within this site context makes sense from a design and construction perspective.

Historic Kansas City recognizes the need for the Plaza to evolve and adapt to a changing set of retail and economic circumstances. As stated above, Historic Kansas City see this proposal as a reasonable solution, its design and placement accommodating the needs of contemporary retail function and design, but in a manner that is compatible with the Plaza, and one that could bring new life to the Plaza and needed people to the area, while adequately providing off-street parking.

With this slight refinement to the Plaza Bowl Concept set forth in the MPAP, we believe stable, reliable planning for this critical civic asset -- the Plaza -- has been maintained and will be in good stead for many years to come.

As has been the case on other significant projects in recent years, HKC agrees that a slight deviation from the height requirement of 90 feet at this specific location is an acceptable aberration to accommodate this new structure providing housing and adequate parking for such housing, and the office building which will remain.

This proposal is an example of how the community and developers can work together for the best possible result. We appreciate the opportunity to be part of the process and believe that a cooperative approach involving all relevant stakeholders is key to the success of projects like this one.



Vicki Noteis, President



Lisa Lassman Briscoe, Executive Director

cc (via email): Andrea Bough, 6th District At-Large Councilmember  
Johnathan Duncan, In-District 6<sup>th</sup> District Councilmember  
HKC Board of Directors and Plaza Westport Neighborhood Association