

The Reverend Vern Barnet, DMn
3948 Wyandotte, Kansas City, MO 64111
email: vern@cres.org — desk: 816.753.1633 cell: 816.679.1633

Concerning the Opus Development proposal for Broadway and Westport Road

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City Planning Commission, Kansas City, MO — *Babette Macy, chair; the Rev Stan Archie, vice chair; Coby Crowl; Matthew Dameron; Bobbi Baker-Hughes; Trish Martin; Diane Burnette; Margaret May*

Dear Commission Members—

In 1993 I moved from Johnson County to purchase my home in Westport where I continue to live happily. Our Heart of Westport neighborhood association, in which I regularly participate, is a remarkable group of cooperating residents, businesses, and others who cherish our special part of the City. Like them, I support increased density in Westport. I question uncoordinated development.

While I praise other developers who have repeatedly met with neighbors and have carefully responded to our concerns, I worry about the lack of shared planning evidenced by misstatements and apparent misunderstandings by Opus Development. Its plan for a for a six-story, 254-unit residential building at Broadway and Westport Road raises a number of problems I outline briefly below.

Of course, I am writing without information about any revision from Opus which may be presented today. One would have hoped that Opus would have given the neighborhood a chance to learn about its revision before today's presentation to the Commission.

1. The Opus plan, from out-of-town developers obviously unfamiliar with Westport, should be slowed in order for it to be adequately studied along with the historic assessment plans now underway, and with the other developments planned within Westport. Uncoordinated developments lead to unexpected and unintended results which can be damaging.

2. While I understand the Opus Development would enhance the City's tax base, the costs to the character of the historic neighborhood would be considerable. As a home-owner, it seems unfair that a commercial effort in this situation could receive an assured level tax rate for 25 years when we homeowners recently voluntarily down-zoned our properties to single-family units to provide stability to the neighborhood without any such assurance.

3. Although it is doubtful that the oldest part of the building, currently a bank, has sufficient historic value to save, the fact that the newer portions were designed to fit into the appearance and character of Westport shows the kind of environmental respect Opus has not proved. The new wing of the Westport Presbyterian Church demonstrates that it is possible to design a modern structure that fits within the artistic character of existing buildings. Until now, Opus has not shown care in façade architectural design, nor in its excessive proposal for rezoning height restrictions and other problems with scale. The plans I have seen simply violate the neigh-

borhood by a developer who has shown more arrogance than care to learn about us, unlike other developers who understand their success here may ultimately depend on neighborhood support, not neighborhood destruction. The height proposal would literally cast a shadow in a key intersection of our neighborhood.

4. Parking and traffic movement in Westport is a long-standing problem. Approval of the Opus plan while traffic experiments on Westport Road are currently underway and parking plans are unresolved is decidedly premature.

5. The Opus presentation I heard did not demonstrate understanding of the severity of the problems of flooding and other infrastructure inadequacies. Perhaps City staff will find ways to study how Opus and the two other developments I know about can help to resolve such concerns, but to a non-engineer like myself who lives in the neighborhood, the scale of the Opus proposal considered even by itself seems daunting to accommodate without expensive infrastructure improvements which should be borne largely by the developer.

6. I have no expertise in imagining business mixes, but I do have a sense of loyalty to businesses that have helped build and support the neighborhood, and I would like reassurance that businesses planned in this development will fit into the kind of operations that make Westport so special.

In sum, while I welcome increased residential development in Westport, the Opus project as I have learned about it thus far causes overwhelming worry because of the arrogant style of its management, inattention to the historic and architectural character of Westport, lack of coordinated planning, and practical issues of scale and infrastructure. Unless these issues are resolved, I urge you to delay approval of requests from Opus.

Respectfully,