



Friends of the Plaza, Inc.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FRIENDS OF THE PLAZA ANNOUNCES AGREEMENT TO REPEAL CONTROVERSIAL PLAZA OFFICE TOWER REZONING

Kansas City, MO, 8/17/11: Friends of the Plaza today announced that it had reached an agreement with Highwoods Properties that would result in the repeal of the rezoning permitting construction of a 200,000 square foot office tower on an historic block of the Country Club Plaza. Under the agreement, the rezoning of the site at 46th Terr. and Broadway granted earlier this year by the City Council would be revoked, which would return the site to the residential land use specified in the Plaza Plan.

Friends of the Plaza had fought the rezoning for nearly a year. Highwoods twice redesigned the proposed project but, until recently, had insisted it would place an office tower on the site. In June, Friends of the Plaza submitted more than 18,000 signatures to city officials which was more than twice the number necessary to place the issue on the November ballot. The agreement announced today, once confirmed by City Council action next Thursday, makes the referendum election unnecessary.

“This is the win-win resolution Friends of the Plaza has sought from the beginning,” noted Michael Koon, a Friends executive board member. “The city is spared a costly and potentially divisive election, in favor of cooperative work between Highwoods and concerned Kansas City residents. We want to thank the Mayor and City Council for giving us an opportunity to resolve this important issue short of referendum.”

Dan Cofran, legal counsel for the Friends, agreed. “Friends of the Plaza has continually maintained that other sites on the Plaza were far more appropriate for this kind of intense land use. We are very pleased that Highwoods has decided to modify its position on this site without waiting for the outcome of the November referendum. Mayor James and the leaders on the Council deserve a lot of credit for this outcome.”

As part of the resolution of the dispute, Friends of the Plaza agreed that it would not oppose the construction of a similarly-sized office tower on a site to the west of the disputed block, provided traffic and parking issues can be satisfactorily resolved. Vickie Noteis, a city planner and consultant to the Friends group, noted that this second site had been designated as one for which such development was appropriate for many years. “The use Highwoods proposes for this new site is generally consistent with the Plaza Plan, as Friends of the Plaza has continually pointed out. The group has never been opposed to development on the Plaza. We have only opposed development that is inconsistent with the planning and land use principles that have served the Plaza well for decades. This resolution furthers those interests.”

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