



March 15, 2021

City Plan Commission of Kansas City, Missouri
City Planning and Development Department
414 E. 12th St., 15th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64106

Re: Statement by Historic Kansas City - Case No. CD-CPC-2020-00207_Katz Drugstore

Dear City Plan Commissioners:

For over 45 years, Historic Kansas City (HKC) has worked for the advancement and protection of the scenic and historic assets of Kansas City. The community and economic revival power of historic places is demonstrated and real, and in the bedrock of it all is historic neighborhoods and commercial districts.

As preservationists, we know from years of experience that adaptive reuse is frequently the best outcome and sometimes the only outcome for saving historic places. A prime example is Union Station in Kansas City. This must be one of the most massive adaptive reuses in the history of the field and something we as a community can be very proud of.

The Katz Drugstore building on Main Street at Westport Road is an architectural icon and landmark in this community and a high priority save for preservationists. Built in 1934, it was the first major work of famed architect Clarence Kivett, incorporating elements of both Art Deco and Art Moderne styling. We are willing to accept that this may entail additional construction in or around the historic building, and if properly done that is a price we believe can be paid. Further, there is an historic context where this property sits. There is a business district full of historic buildings and historic residential neighborhoods all around. If we give the Katz building new purpose and enliven that site, hopefully there will be great spillover effect to environs. That is a worthy preservation goal.

On two occasions, Historic Kansas City (HKC) was invited to meet with members of the development team of the Katz Drugstore redevelopment project. We found the enhanced architectural illustrations and discussion to be informative. Transparency in the Westport Road entrance is a great improvement. Stepping back the upper most floors of the adjacent tower from the historic Katz clock tower is a step in the right direction.

We don't usually endorse projects unless they are rather faithful restorations or stellar reuses. And of course we can't always rely on what we are shown beforehand. Different outcomes do eventuate and require vigilance from all interested parties. Still, we feel inclined to recommend the proposed redevelopment of the Katz building and site with the following reservations.

- Although we understand that economics may compel otherwise, certainly if we had our preference the addition would be shorter and smaller in scale so to match the area context of smaller-scale buildings. And certainly there would be further pulling back of the high-rise structure from the existing historic structure.
- The architectural illustrations are well done, yet they do not represent the authentic materials and colors of the historic Katz Drugstore building. HKC remains concerned with the grey palette of materials and colors used. We believe revised authentic renderings should be prepared.

- Stepping back the upper most floors of the adjacent tower from the historic Katz clock tower is a step in the right direction. The “Overlook” continues to dominate the clock tower. The clock tower needs to be viewed with sky on all four side.
- Many bodies, such as the City Plan Commission, Preservation Commission, and National Park Service, some with great preservation expertise, will be reviewing this project. We believe that with this level of oversight good outcomes can and will be attained. Given such review different outcomes will eventuate and require final review with submission of material samples to HKC prior to an official endorsement.

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.

We ask that the City Plan Commission recommend approval of the development plan in Case No. CD-CPC-2020-00207_Katz Drugstore subject to the conditions outlined in this letter

Best regards,



Greg Allen
President



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Executive Director

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