



May 14, 2024,

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City Plan Commission
City Planning & Development Department
Kansas City Missouri City Hall
414 East 12th Street, 15th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64106

**Re: CD-CPC-2024-00049
101 W. Linwood Blvd. the Carmen Building Historic Designation Nomination**

To Members of the City Plan Commission:

We write on behalf of Historic Kansas City (HKC) and in support of the Old Hyde Park Historic District Neighborhoods nomination of 101 W. Linwood Blvd. listing on the Kansas City Register of Historic Places. Since its founding in 1974, Historic Kansas City 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.

We have been working with a coalition of neighborhoods along Main Street concerned about the potential impact of the Main Street streetcar on the character of those neighborhoods. The goal is to balance the pressure for new development along with the need to preserve the existing historic character of the Main Street neighborhoods. Because most of the historic properties along Main Street have already been lost, we feel it is especially important at this time to carefully evaluate the remaining properties before they are destroyed.

The Camen building tells a unique and important story, defines the development history of the community, and provides tangible reminders of the past that create a unique sense of place.

The owner has no material plans for the property beyond the demolition of the building. No development plans have been shared with the neighborhood or filed with the City. The neighborhood will not accept another vacant lot. Vacant lots in their neighborhood become places for tent encampments, which have spurred an increase in property crimes, and endanger the safety of children, business owners and residents.

Demolition by neglect is when old buildings are destroyed not by the wrecking ball, but by time and neglect from owners who either don't care about their condition or wish to raze a historic structure but can't get permission to do so.

More often, neglect is an affirmative strategy used by an owner who wants to develop the property. The community is in the middle, with the city issuing citations to repair the building, and the owner ignoring the citations. Leaving the community frustrated and at risk. Everyone blaming the building.

The property owner is using demolition by neglect as a tactic to work around local laws and will argue that the prohibitive cost of repairs and deferred maintenance creates an economic hardship. The owner's own neglect should not be allowed to create an economic hardship.

Saving this building for a 3-year reprieve offers a chance to reimagine this property more thoughtfully and contact developers who are experienced in creating a coherent adaptive re-use or renovation opportunity. This is an opportunity to find a much better solution that enhances the context around it and the Old Hyde Park Historic District Neighborhood residents who have committed their own resources and investments into the area.

It is unusual to designate buildings without the owner's support, but this is an unusual circumstance. No development plans have been shared with the neighborhood or filed with the City. Demolishing this structure without any plan for its replacement makes no sense. Once this building is gone, - it's permanent. Should years of adopted city policy that addresses these exact situations be discarded without any viable supported plan for its replacement?

Demolition is a Choice – The use of Demolition by Neglect as a tactic is a cancer on the neighborhood.

Historic Designation Criterion for Evaluation

In reviewing and making decisions on proposed historic landmarks and historic district designations, the **City Plan Commission** must consider the following factors:

- a. **the criteria used in determining eligibility for listing on the U.S. Department of Interior's National Register of Historic Places, including the historic, cultural, aesthetic, or architectural significance of the building, structure, site, object, or district; and;**

The Carmen building would be eligible under the National Register of Historic Places Criterion A in Social History for its significance in the labor movement as the national headquarters of the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America from 1927 to 1949. While the building at 101-13 West Linwood was designed for the Deane Dental Institute in 1923, by 1927 it has been purchased by the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America. The international labor organization was founded in Topeka, Kansas on September 9, 1890, with the Brotherhood of Railway Car Repairers merging with the Carmen's Mutual Aid Association. The organization established its headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri in the Hall Block at 822 Walnut in 1899. The organization stayed at this location until 1927, when they purchased 101 W Linwood and named it the Carmen Building. The Brotherhood followed the national trend of organized labor to advocate for better pay, benefits and working conditions. One of the great accomplishments while the brotherhood was headquartered at 101 W . Linwood was the passage of the Railroad Retirement Act of 1937. The act transferred 50,000 private railroad pensions into a public system, which covered employees for retirement and disability. Initially, disability regulations were extremely stringent, and the new public pension system relieved workers from private pensions that were generally inadequate, liable to capricious termination, and of little assistance to disabled employees.

- b. **Conformance With The City's Adopted Plans And Planning Policies;**

*The property is designated a Transit Node (FAR 1.0) within the **Main Street Special Character Overlay District**; that status does not include demolition review.*

*The property lies within the North Central Sub Area of the **Midtown Plaza Area Plan**. The proposed historic designation is in conformance with the plan as follows:*

GUIDING PRINCIPLES WITH AREA-WIDE RECOMMENDATIONS (page 25)

ENCOURAGE THE PRESERVATION AND ADAPTIVE REUSE OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Historic districts and structures exist throughout the Midtown / Plaza area and many significant historic buildings exist that are not formally designated. Retaining historic structures is important to the character of the Midtown / Plaza area and steps should be taken to ensure the buildings are preserved for future generations.

- To protect historically and/or architecturally significant structures, they should be listed on the National and/or Local Register of Historic Places (Local Register of Historic Places offers more "protection.")*
- This Plan encourages the preservation and adaptive re-use of historic buildings. Historic buildings (whether designated or not) contribute to the area identity and should be preserved and integrated into new development. Even if the original intent of the structures is obsolete, reusing the buildings in new ways may be the best solution to retain the structure.*
- When a historic building (designed or potentially eligible for historic designation) is part of a redevelopment, the Recommended Land Use map's recommendations should be flexible, in order to retain historic resources, while achieving the goals of this Plan. Any impacts should be minimized, and the physical attributes of the structure should remain and appear to fit within the character of the Recommended Land Use and surrounding neighborhood.*
- In order to maintain the historic fabric of the area, tools such as tax incentives, overlay districts or other appropriate measures should be utilized when a historic property is redeveloped.*

SUBJECT PROPERTY IS LOCATED IN A MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD AREA.

Primarily intended to accommodate and promote neighborhood serving retail sales or service uses, as well as mixed-use development consisting of business uses on a building's lower floors and residential uses on upper floors. This type of vertical, mixed-use

development that includes a variety of business and residential choices should enhance the pedestrian environment of the community. Encouraging residential development in mixed-use areas provides increased housing choice and promotes higher density housing. This land use classification generally corresponds with the "B1" zoning category within the zoning ordinance.

DEVELOPMENT FORM GUIDELINES

The Development Form Guidelines should be used in conjunction with the Recommended Land Use Map (RLU) and Development Form Map to provide a framework to shape future development. Both the RLU and the Development Form recommendations should be used together to evaluate and guide future development proposals and zoning changes.

SUBJECT PROPERTY IS LOCATED IN A CORRIDOR AREA - Pink Designation – Linear land use patterns typically along major roadways that quickly transition to different patterns – either at nodes or off of side streets (1/2 to 1 block depth of corridor pattern is typical). Corridors are generally Residential or Mixed-Use. Corridors are typically major roadways that connect districts, nodes, and neighborhoods featuring a greater density of commercial and/or residential uses.

Changing the zoning is acceptable only if the new zoning district (or land use if UR or MPD zoning) is consistent with the Recommended Land Use Map.

c. The Economic Impact Of The Designation On The Subject Property And The Surrounding Area.

Finding the right balance of architectural history and new development is especially important with the return of the new streetcar service to Main Street. Developers from all over the country are eyeing the potential for redevelopment along the streetcar line. Land assemblage and speculative development is underway, with various developers purchasing large swaths of commercial blocks on Main Street. As the corridor continues to be developed there will be more pressure on the remaining historic buildings to be demolished to make way for large-scale development projects. Developers have now snapped up strategic corners at four of the six streetcar stops between downtown and the Country Club Plaza: 31st, 39th, 45th streets and Armour Blvd.

It's important to understand and respect the existing context of the area that attracted the new streetcar line to Main Street in the first place, and the economic development factors that must be considered. This is an existing urban fabric where cultural institutions and residential opportunities can blend together into a truly transit oriented neighborhood. The City did not choose Main as the streetcar route in order to devastate what's already there! Or adversely impact neighborhoods that have stuck it out thru thick and thin in this area only to be adversely affected by a development decision that doesn't support their efforts and investment commitments. That's a formula for gentrification and inequitable economic development.

Almost all of the historic buildings along the original Main Street streetcar line are gone now, making the few that remain even more important. Main Street is also an important entrance to historic neighborhoods such as the Old Hyde Park Historic District, Union Hill, Heart of Westport, Southmoreland, and South Plaza. We should be careful to ensure we are preserving and enhancing the character of those neighborhoods as the streetcar is built.

HKC recommends that the Commission vote to APPROVE Case CD-CPC-2024-00049, 101 W. Linwood Blvd for listing on the Kansas City Register of Historic Places.

Best regards,

Katheryn Shields
President

Lisa Lassman Briscoe,
Executive Director

cc: Old Hyde Park Historic District Neighborhood, Historic Kansas City,
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