

May 30, 2025

City Plan Commission
City of Kansas City Missouri
414 E. 12th Street, 15th Floor
Kansas City, MO 64106

Via Electronic Mail To: publicengagement@kcmo.org

Via Electronic Mail To: genevieve.kohn@kcmo.org

RE: 39th Street corridor at Roanoke Rd.

An Open Letter to City Council and City Planners

I am conveying my feelings about the built environment of cities in part to challenge our city. There is importance that buildings have in our hearts and minds. How those buildings affect their locales.

Many examples of adding to the personality of a place and subtracting from place come to mind:

Miami is famous for its art deco built environment. Chicago has an early 20th century modernist commercial look of solid but well-appointed buildings. Other, smaller cities have their own unique styles. Indianapolis built around its center monument. Anchorage offers a bow to the natural environment, taking away as little as possible.

Then there are cities that I ask, what were they thinking? I assume they were thinking of pocketing riches instead of planting them. Denver has unfortunately been a victim. The canyons of multistory 'tenements' of the modern age detract from the beauty that the older structures imbued.

The romantic feeling of being in San Francisco contrasts with the features of California's other large cities. Nobody left their heart in Los Angeles. Kansas City, not Wichita, is known as the Paris of the Plains because of the work of our early planners.

It is important to keep these things in mind when planning for our growth. We can look at and understand our legacy or make the mistake of valuing the opportunity for personal riches over the public enrichment we all want.

This applies to builds throughout the city, but I am going to narrow this down now to the area around 39th and Roanoke Road, across from the Loretto building.

The neighborhood saw a presentation from a developer wanting to build a 66-foot building on the northeast corner of 39/Roanoke. Currently the northwest corner is for sale, also. There are at least three other areas that could be considered 'inefficiently used to a less

than best use.' If those were developed similarly to this proposed development, there would be a canyon that shades the street and neighborhood four months of the year.

The midtown plan puts a 50-foot height limit upon buildings in this area! Even this, duplicated four or five times, would cause too much traffic and noise on 39th Street. Please look at development areas holistically. The beauty we can develop is not an elusive goal, nor is it a by chance phenomenon. I am opposed to wresting large areas of the sky and our sunny lawns from the public and neighborhood for private profits.

Three story brownstones or row houses would fit into the area while adding the density the area can handle. Replicated four or five times, it would be a smaller strain than four or five times going up with huge buildings. Please visit the location with board members of our neighborhoods to understand the scale and its impact on our communities.

For positive ways to increase density in our communities,

Joel Awaken