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To: [planadmin](#)
Subject: support of Files 260029 and 260030 and the proposed redevelopment of the former Walmart property at 5825 West Hope Avenue.
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Subject: Letter of Support for the Midtown Center Redevelopment at 5825 West Hope Avenue

Chair and Members of the Milwaukee City Plan Commission:

I am writing in strong support of Files 260029 and 260030 and the proposed redevelopment of the former Walmart property at 5825 West Hope Avenue.

This proposal represents the kind of innovative, balanced redevelopment that cities across the country should be working to encourage. It combines the reuse of a large commercial building that has remained vacant for more than a decade with affordable housing, a new library, community-serving space, commercial storage and a limited high-performance computing facility intended to support computational and medical research.

Rather than viewing these components as unrelated uses, the Commission should recognize the strength of the integrated plan. The proposal combines modern technology with direct community investment and turns an underused property into a mixed-use center that can serve residents, researchers, families and local institutions.

The approximately 160,000-square-foot former Walmart building has remained vacant since January 2016. Large abandoned retail buildings are difficult to replace with a single new retailer, particularly when no grocery store, department store or other major commercial operator has committed to the property. Continued vacancy does not provide housing, educational services, economic activity, public resources or neighborhood improvement.

This proposal offers a realistic and financeable alternative.

The project would reuse the existing structure rather than demolish it and construct a new complex on undeveloped land. Approximately 51,000 square feet at the front of the building is anticipated for community-serving uses, including approximately 17,000 square feet for a Milwaukee Public Library location and approximately 33,000 square feet for adjacent City or community tenant space. Separate plans approved for the surrounding property provide for two phases of affordable housing totaling approximately 200 residences.

The high-performance computing component would occupy no more than approximately 19,000 square feet in the rear portion of the existing building. That is only about 12 percent of

the former Walmart building and a very small portion of the total redevelopment site.

It should therefore be evaluated according to its actual scale and operating characteristics—not compared with hyperscale data-center campuses that occupy hundreds of acres and consume hundreds of megawatts of electricity.

High-performance computing is an increasingly important part of modern medical and scientific research. Researchers use advanced computing resources to process large medical datasets, analyze biological systems, support genomic research, improve medical imaging, conduct computational chemistry and accelerate the evaluation of possible treatments.

The National Institutes of Health operates and supports high-performance computing because complex medical and biological research often requires the ability to perform enormous numbers of calculations and analyze large datasets simultaneously. Bringing this type of technological capability into a neighborhood redevelopment can connect Milwaukee to an expanding field of biomedical and computational innovation.

The City should also recognize that technology infrastructure and community development do not have to compete with one another.

The Midtown proposal demonstrates that a carefully designed technology facility can help support a broader redevelopment that provides:

- Affordable housing;
- A public library;
- Community-serving facilities;
- New educational and research opportunities;
- Productive reuse of an abandoned commercial structure;
- Commercial storage;
- Construction activity and technical employment;
- Improved landscaping and building appearance; and
- Renewed economic activity at a property that has remained vacant for approximately ten years.

This is precisely the kind of development model communities should be encouraging: technology that is integrated into, and helps support, tangible public benefits.

The environmental design of the computing facility is also important. The proposal calls for

closed-loop cooling rather than a large evaporative cooling system. A properly designed closed-loop dry-cooling system recirculates coolant and can dramatically reduce routine water consumption compared with cooling systems that continuously evaporate municipal water.

The computing equipment would be located inside the existing building, with cooling and related mechanical equipment placed toward the rear of the property. The project can be further protected through enforceable conditions governing water use, noise, maximum electrical demand, generator testing, equipment screening and future expansion.

The existence of reasonable operating conditions should be viewed as a strength rather than an objection. Conditions allow the City to support the redevelopment while ensuring that the project operates according to the environmental and neighborhood protections presented during the approval process.

Approval would send an important message that Milwaukee is prepared to support development that combines technology, healthcare research, housing and public resources in an environmentally responsible manner.

The project could become a showcase for Milwaukee and Wisconsin by demonstrating how communities can benefit from the growth of advanced computing without abandoning neighborhood needs. Instead of separating technological progress from community development, this plan brings them together.

It shows that high-performance computing can be placed inside an existing building, limited in size, designed to minimize water and noise impacts, and integrated with housing, education and community facilities.

This is a forward-looking approach to urban redevelopment.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the City Plan Commission to approve Files 260029 and 260030, subject to the proposed operating and community-benefit conditions.

The Midtown Center redevelopment offers an opportunity to transform a long-vacant property into a productive, innovative and community-serving destination. It deserves the Commission's support.

Respectfully submitted,

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