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To: [planadmin](#)
Subject: Letter n support of the Computational Research facility and discuss. Address is 5825 w. Hope ave Milwaukee WI.
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Statement Supporting Conditional Approval of the Midtown Center Redevelopment 5825 West Hope Avenue, Milwaukee

Chair and members of the City Plan Commission:

I respectfully ask the Commission to approve the proposed redevelopment of the former Midtown Center Walmart, subject to clear and enforceable conditions protecting the surrounding community.

This project should be evaluated according to its actual size, design and neighborhood impacts —not according to the impacts of unrelated hyperscale data-center campuses proposed elsewhere in Wisconsin.

The former Walmart contains approximately 160,000 square feet and has remained vacant since 2016. The proposed computational research facility would occupy no more than 19,000 square feet in the rear of the existing building. That represents only about 12 percent of the former Walmart's total floor area. It is not a new million-square-foot campus, and it would not consume hundreds of acres of land.

The computing component is also only one part of a much broader neighborhood redevelopment. The plan would provide approximately 200 affordable apartments, a replacement Milwaukee Public Library branch, city and community-service space, a reading garden, landscaping and the rehabilitation of a long-vacant commercial property.

This is an important distinction. The proposal does not remove housing, library space or community facilities to make room for computers. The revenue-producing uses in the rear of this difficult-to-reuse building help make the public-facing and residential portions of the overall project financially achievable.

Some residents have suggested that the building should instead become a grocery store, clothing retailer or another traditional retail operation. Those would be welcome uses if a financially qualified operator were prepared to occupy the property. However, the City cannot approve a hypothetical tenant that has not committed to the site. The former Walmart has remained empty for approximately ten years, demonstrating how difficult it has been to secure another large-scale retail occupant.

Continued vacancy is not a neutral outcome. An empty 160,000-square-foot building produces no housing, no library, no community space, no permanent economic activity and no improvement to the surrounding property.

The project also represents responsible adaptive reuse. It preserves an existing structure rather than demolishing a sound building, transporting demolition material to landfills and constructing an entirely new facility somewhere else. It uses the rear of the former store for lower-traffic activities while preserving the Hope Avenue frontage for community-oriented uses.

The environmental concerns raised by residents should be treated seriously, but they can be addressed through conditions rather than project rejection.

The proposed computing facility is expected to use a closed-loop cooling system. Unlike an evaporative cooling tower that continually consumes water, a properly designed closed-loop system recirculates its coolant and can use very little water during normal operation. The Commission should require final engineering documentation proving that the system does not rely upon continuous evaporative water consumption and should establish a binding annual water-use limit.

Noise should be handled in the same manner. The computing equipment will be indoors, and the cooling equipment and backup generators are proposed at the rear of the building facing commercial property. Approval should nevertheless require an independent acoustic study, nighttime limits, testing after installation and mandatory corrective action if the facility exceeds Milwaukee's noise standards.

The Commission should also establish limits on generator testing, require disclosure of the number and size of the generators, and prohibit any future expansion of the computing operation without additional public review.

Concerns about the identity of the technology tenant are understandable. Business confidentiality should not prevent the City from obtaining the operational information necessary to protect the public. The City should require disclosure to its professional staff of the facility's maximum power demand, cooling system, generator equipment, expected employment, fire-safety plan and environmental characteristics.

The approval should also prohibit conversion of the site into cryptocurrency mining or another materially different high-impact use without returning to the Commission.

Most importantly, the commercial uses should remain tied to delivery of the community benefits. Occupancy should be conditioned on measurable progress toward the affordable housing, library and community-space commitments. This will ensure that the neighborhood receives the complete redevelopment package rather than only the revenue-producing

components.

This proposal offers Milwaukee a realistic opportunity to replace a decade of vacancy with affordable housing, public services, technological investment and productive reuse of an existing building. Rejecting the project will not guarantee a grocery store or major retailer. It may simply guarantee that the property remains vacant for additional years.

The appropriate decision is therefore not unconditional approval and not blanket rejection. It is conditional approval with measurable limits, public reporting and enforceable community protections.

I respectfully urge the City Plan Commission and Common Council to approve the Midtown Center redevelopment subject to those safeguards.

Mark Bayliss

FCC TAC Member