

September 12, 2024

Mayor Julie Sayers
City of Lenexa
17101 W. 87th St. Pkwy.
Lenexa, KS 66219

Mayor Sayers and City Council members,

Thank you for the time and attention you've already dedicated to the Special Use Permit Application from reStart for operations of the Homeless Services Center. As you know, over the last 15 months, the County has worked in collaboration with City of Lenexa leadership and staff to develop a proposal for the HSC and potentially fill a critical gap for unhoused adults in our continuum of housing services. The facility proposed would offer intensive supportive services, shelter and transitional housing with the goal of exiting folks out of homelessness.

Given this new approach to addressing homelessness in Johnson County, it understandably comes with concerns and hesitations. While we appreciate these concerns, we respectfully disagree with staff's rationale for denial and with how staff and the Planning Commission applied the Golden Factor criteria in its recommendation.

Along with the fact that we found a willing seller of an existing hotel, this site was chosen because a non-congregate shelter is a permitted use in the CP-3, Planned Regional Commercial zoning district with a Special Use Permit, indicating that the project area of CP-3 would not have negative impacts on property values.

Because there are limited areas in the City with CP-3 zoning, the proposed site presented an ideal location surrounded by commercial uses and direct access to arterial streets, interstate highways, and various transportation opportunities. It also would not require a rezoning. Further, a TIF district, as an economic incentive tool, does not prohibit this use.

We appreciate that the staff indicated the best use of this location is a hotel for transient guests. Corollary to that recognition, the HSC includes housing similar to that for individuals, albeit functioning more like a commercial or service use and providing mental health and employment services — services that would not fit in residential areas but complementing the commercial character of surrounding businesses.

We believe this project is consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, will not negatively impact property values in the area, and will have a significant positive effect on public health, safety and welfare.

When we can address homelessness via housing and supportive services instead of through criminalization and hospitalization, we get a much better return on our investment and give folks a much higher chance of exiting homelessness. We want to continue working together to best serve some of the most vulnerable members of the community. We appreciate that funding for potential increased law enforcement needs and the impact that the proximity of HSC and Project 1020 remain concerns. As you consider these factors, please know that:

1. Should the SUP be approved, Johnson County will work with Lenexa to expand the extraterritorial agreement and provide additional service by the Sheriff's Office's Crisis Intervention Team trained deputies and increase mental health co-responders to address the potential for increased calls for law enforcement support.
2. Johnson County will explore the use of programs and funding, including but not limited to Housing Choice Vouchers, for Project 1020 to offset overflow of homeless occupancy at Project 1020 during peak times.

We feel this project is a solution at a crucial time and hope you support the SUP application on Tuesday, Sept. 17. In the interim, please don't hesitate to reach out before then with questions or ideas. Regardless, we look forward to working together with the City of Lenexa to address the necessities of the present and opportunities for the future for our shared constituents.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Sincerely,

Mike Kelly
Chairman
Johnson County Board of County Commissioners