



Rebuilding & Redeveloping: People & Community

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 23, 2021

CONTACT: FeliceSkye Hutchinson, WCC President
Ashley Langston, Housing Committee Chair

FROM: Wellston Community Coalition

TO: **Residents of Wellston;** City of Wellston; Land Clearance Redevelopment Authority of St. Louis County

CC: Federation of Block Units, Rachel Waterman, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri; Jerryl T. Christmas, Attorney at Law

RE: Wellston Community Coalition (WCC) recommendations to City of Wellston and Land Clearance Redevelopment Authority on Future Land Use.

The Wellston Community Coalition (WCC) focuses on helping make the Wellston community a great place to live, work and play. Part of making Wellston a better community is planned growth. Empower Wellston seeks to pull together these efforts to create a cohesive, cooperative vision for the future of Wellston residents that want the community to grow and thrive. The WCC wants it to be done in a way that protects our community, our environment, and our quality of life.

We are concerned with the draft redevelopment plan of Empower Wellston and the subsequent legislation that enforces it. We acknowledge our community has had decades long systemic disinvestment. Because of historical injustice, we have vowed to work to ensure resident review and response to current and future development efforts. Citizens in Wellston suffer from lack of access and mobility to participate in predominately all Wellston engagement efforts. As a result, residents are not fully connected, engaged, and able to share insights into the future of their city in a reasonable timeframe. Recognizing these barriers, it is important for us to allow more time and space to properly educate, engage and empower the citizens, especially during this pandemic.

The PGAV Planning Agency published the draft plan on the Empower Wellston website for viewing and for feedback. Empower Wellston seeks to pull together these efforts to create a cohesive, cooperative vision for the future of Wellston. Residents have reported to WCC that they have not been able to adequately review and respond to the draft plan. As a result, WCC has hosted several meetings through its Housing Committee to further engage Wellston residents and decipher their thoughts and feedback on the Empower Wellston plan. We are asking the City of Wellston and planners of the Empower Wellston Redevelopment Plan to consider the concerns of the residents of Wellston and consider implementing our recommendations. We kindly submit these recommendations as we have expressed serious concerns within it that require further consultation with legal representation and our elected leaders. We strongly urge for changes to be made before pushing to final adoption.

The Wellston Community Coalition **OPPOSES** the current draft Empower Wellston Plan and the Proposed Ordinance 3408 in its current form and makes the following recommendations:



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I. TRANSPARENCY

1. Formally separate the Wellston Zoning Commission from the Wellston City Council as prescribed in ***RS MO Statute 89 (89.010 - 89.491)***.
 - a) The Wellston City Council should pass an ordinance creating a Zoning Commission that is a separate entity from the City Council.
 - b) The Wellston City Council should pass an ordinance that states the commission has no less than 6 or no more than 12 who are Wellston residents. This shall include the mayor and a representative from the City Council.
 - c) Members are appointed by the mayor with four-year terms subject to approval by majority of the City Council. The commission shall have the same number of equal representations of each of Wellston (6) wards.
 - d) Members must undergo zoning training conducted by WCC and its partners. The members must be recommended by WCC, members are 21 years of age or older, resident of Wellston 3 years or homeowner. Members must NOT hold dual offices where a conflict of interest may rise.
2. Require that WCEC hold public Board meetings, give notice of Board meetings to Wellston residents, and issue publicly available minutes after every meeting.
3. The WCEC Bylaws should be revised to reflect these requirements.

II. ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Require that the WCEC board be composed of majority Wellston residents.
 - a) The Board should consist of 9 members:
 - i. Four (4) Wellston stakeholders, one of whom must be a Wellston resident, nominated by the mayor and confirmed by the City Council.
 - ii. Two (2) Wellston public housing residents, nominated by Tenants Association and confirmed by the City Council.
 - iii. Three (3) Wellston residents, renters, or homeowners, nominated by the Wellston Community Coalition and confirmed by the City Council
 - iv. Members must undergo Professional Development & Leadership Training conducted by WCC and its partner. Training shall consist of Communication, Block Unit Training, Leadership and Management
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Training, Professional Development, Strategic Thinking & Planning that shall be ongoing on a quarterly schedule.

2. County LCRA should not formally adopt the Empower Wellston plan without the approval of the Wellston City Council.
3. WCC believes that if the Empower Wellston plan is truly for Wellston, the County LCRA should not act without coordination with Wellston Community Coalition.
4. The WCEC bylaws should be revised to reflect these requirements.

III. EQUITY

1. Remove the power of eminent domain from WCEC and place it exclusively with the Wellston City Council.
 - a) The Proposed Ordinance should be redrafted to reflect this requirement and should clarify that the County LCRA and the Wellston Redevelopment Corporation, which were given eminent domain powers in Wellston in 1999, no longer hold such power.
 2. Restrict the use of eminent domain on all occupied residences.
 - a) Eminent domain should be used on occupied residences only with the approval of supermajority of both the Wellston City Council and the WCEC Board.
 3. Guarantee full and fair relocation assistance when eminent domain is used on an owner-occupied residence.
 - a) The market value of properties in Wellston has been depressed by decades of disinvestments. Market value will not be enough to ensure that owners displaced by eminent domain are able to maintain the same standard of living. Owners should be guaranteed compensation equivalent to the average regional market value of a similar sized home.
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