

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

November 12, 1987

West County

Cities To Drop Suite As Developer Drops Plans For Hotel

By Virgil Tipton
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A development firm has agreed to drop plans for a 13-story hotel near Interstate 270 and Manchester Road in an out-of-court settlement with Town and Country and Des Peres.

In place of the hotel, Kelley Properties Inc. of Des Peres will build an eight-story office building in addition to two others planned for the site.

Des Peres "looks at the settlement as a victory," said Des Peres City Manager Douglas I. Harms, Town and Country Mayor Alan C. Wheeler said, "The best thing is that there's not going to be a 13-story hotel next to our residential area.

Also as part of the agreement, the municipalities will drop a lawsuit they had filed to stop the development northeast of the intersection. The agreement was reached this week, Des Peres Mayor Shirley M. Sweet, Kelley Property officials and Wheeler signed copies of the agreement Monday after approval from the municipalities' boards of aldermen.

The agreement removes from the developers' plan the element that Des Peres and Town and Country most objected to — the hotel, officials said. The hotel would have drawn 24-hour traffic, officials said. The site abuts a Des Peres subdivision and an undeveloped area of Town and Country that is zoned residential.

Officials said they were pleased with the decision for an office complex, which would draw traffic only during business hours.

And an attorney for the company said the company's president, Joseph J. Kelley Jr., was pleased as well. The attorney, Jerome Wallach, said, "If it's an equal profit, it's academic whether it's a hotel or an office building."

Remaining in the project are plans for a bridge over 1-270 to connect Des Peres Road with the project, some

thing Des Peres officials had objected to. But the settlement calls for access to 1-270 without using Manchester Road, a compromise officials that believe will cut much of the congestion. Plans for a street connecting Ballas Road and the bridge also have been eliminated.

The 14-acre tract lies in an unincorporated part of St. Louis County between the municipal limits of Town and Country and Des Peres. In April, the county approved zoning that would have allowed the hotel, two office buildings and parking garages at the site. In May, the municipalities filed suit

to block Kelley from moving forward with the plan; they called the project poor planning. Officials said the complex would increase traffic congestion on roads and highways to the area.

Attorneys for both sides developed the agreement in an effort to avoid protracted litigation.

As part of the settlement:

Kelley will not build a hotel on the site. Kelley is allowed to build three office buildings, one eight stories, one five stories and the third two stories. The largest office building replaces the hotel in the plans; it is scheduled to be built last. Accompanying parking garages cannot be more than one story above the ground. Kelley must provide landscaping to screen the development from nearby residential neighborhoods. None of the buildings or parking garages can be built closer than 70 feet to the boundaries of Town and Country and Des Peres. Kelley must install improved sanitary and storm-water sewage systems.

One building at a time will be contracted, Wallach said. Work on the five-story building site will begin in December, he said.