

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Project Opponents Lowering Goal

Des Peres

By Jim Dustin
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

Des Peres residents opposed to a proposal for an hotel- office complex at Manchester Road and Interstate 270 have yet to give up their fight, but they are starting to lower their sights somewhat.

Municipal officials have been leading spirited opposition to the project, but opponents suffered a major setback Monday night.. The St. Louis County Planning Commission voted 5-2- with one abstention Monday to recommend rezoning that would allow the \$10 million project.

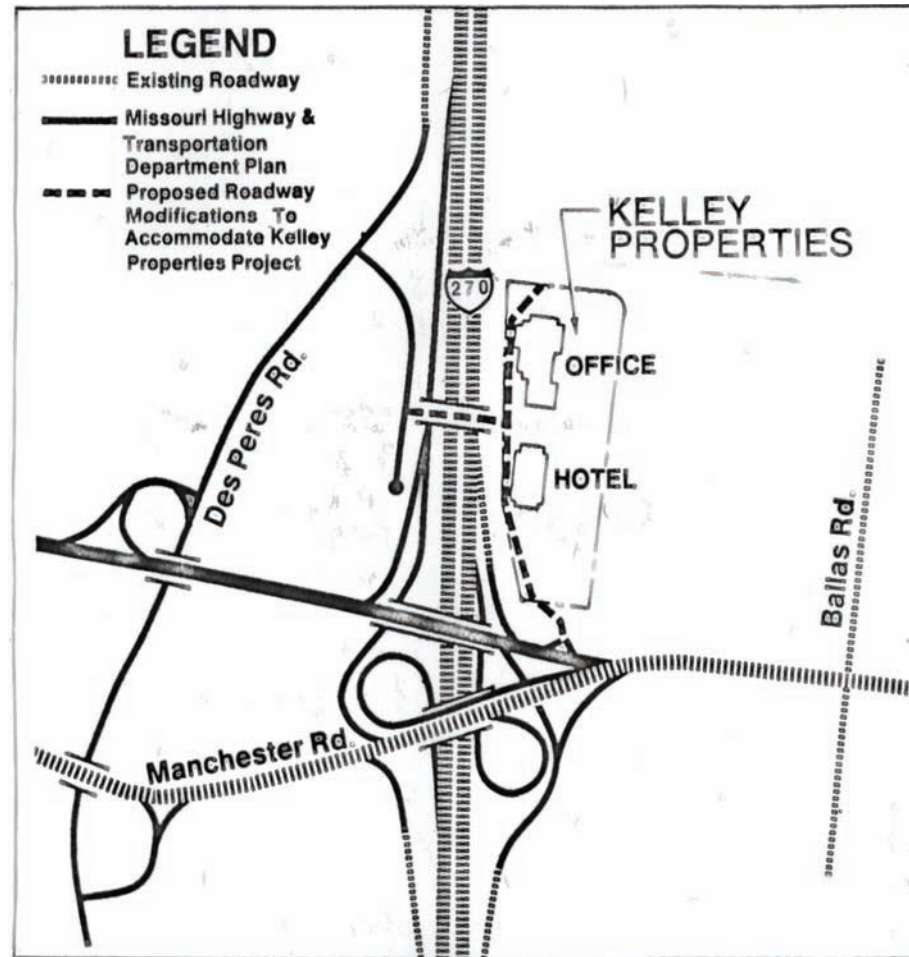
Kelley Properties Inc. of Des Peres plans to build a 350 room motel and 172,000 square feet of office space on 14 acres northeast of the I-270 Interchange with Manchester Road. The tract is an island of unincorporated area that is nearly surrounded by municipalities.

The St. Louis County Council has the final say on the matter, and that body will be the target of the opposition's next efforts.

"I have drafted letters today requesting a public hearing before the County Council, or at least before the Public Works Committee," Des Peres Mayor Shirley M. Sweet said Tuesday. She said if the opposition is unable to defeat the whole proposal, it would try to get the hotel knocked out of the plan.

Des Peres dislikes hotels so much that it has an ordinance banning them.

I-270 And Manchester Road Highway Improvement Plan



Sweet said that a residents group was raising money to finance opposition efforts. It is distributing petitions for people to sign and is giving out pre-addressed postcards to be sent to County Council members. Sweet said the group also was considering an effort to get an injunction against the project.

The people are organized, they have a bank account, and I have heard they are ready to sue," she said. But she added that a decision on a suit would be made only after the County Council has acted.

The opposition stems from the belief that the development would be inappropriate for the area; the site is next to residential property on the north and east. Residents also fear that a hotel-office complex would aggravate traffic problems in the area.

Traffic was also a concern of the Planning Commission. "I guess I've got problems with the traffic that is going to dump onto Manchester Road," Commissioner R.E. Bates said.

Joseph J. Kelley Jr., president of Kelley Properties, offered to build a bridge over I-270 north of Manchester Road to provide an entrance to his project. A traffic study he commissioned said such an overpass would help relieve traffic congestion at Manchester and I-270, and the state and county highway department agreed.

A new overpass would allow drivers trying to go north on I-270 from such office complexes as Corporate Hill, just west of the bridge Site, to bypass the Manchester intersection with I-270 entirely.

But to do that, drivers would have to use a short stretch of Manchester Road. They would first cross the new bridge over I-270, then go south on a road that cuts through the Kelley Property. Then they would turn west on Manchester briefly before feeding onto I-270 north.

Bates said, "In the evening, I think Corporate Hill people going north are going to come across that bridge and dump onto Manchester and create a mess." He eventually abstained from voting on Kelley's proposal.