

9600 Natural Bridge Road Blighted Area Qualifications Study

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

AREA DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND

The 9600 Natural Bridge Road Area (hereinafter referred to as the “Area”) comprises approximately 3.27 acres of land within the City of Berkeley, MO (the “City”). The Area includes the St. Louis Airport Hotel (the “Hotel”). The boundaries of the Area are shown on **Area Boundary** included in **Appendix A** and further described in the description also contained in **Appendix A**.

GENERAL HISTORY OF THE AREA

The Hotel was originally constructed in 1972. The 52-year-old Hotel advertises 90 rooms available for guests to rent by the night. However, only four of the building’s seven floors are habitable, which includes the lobby. The second floor and the top two floors of the Hotel are not able to be rented out because the rooms are in such poor condition.

SECTION 2

BASIS FOR DESIGNATION AS A BLIGHTED AREA

STATUTORY DEFINITION OF BLIGHTED AREA

Missouri law allows cities and counties to identify and designate areas as “blighted areas” under the Community Improvement District Act, Sections 67.1401 – 67.1571 RSMo. (the “CID Act”).

To qualify as an “blighted area” under the CID Act, the land that is to be designated must exhibit certain characteristics that meet the criteria as established in the definition for a “blighted area.” The definition of “blighted area” in the CID Act references the definition of “blighted area” in Section 99.805, RSMo.:

“Blighted area”, an area which, by reason of the predominance of insanitary or unsafe conditions, deterioration of site improvements, or the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, or any combination of such factors, retards the provision of housing accommodations or constitutes an economic or social liability or a menace to the public health, safety, or welfare in its present condition and use. (Section 99.805(1), RSMo.)

ANALYSIS OF BLIGHTED AREA FACTORS

This Section documents the conditions found to be present in the Area and contains the analysis of how such conditions cause the Area to be a “blighted area” under the CID Act.

This analysis is based upon on-site investigations of the Area conducted by PGAV Planners staff in December 2024. PGAV Planners staff also relied upon their extensive experience, knowledge of the real estate market, and professional expertise in the preparation of this analysis. Photographs illustrating representative blighting conditions were taken during the site visit and are displayed in **Appendix B – Existing Conditions Photos**. This report will not reflect changes in conditions or events that have occurred after the date of the site visits or publication of this report.

Findings Regarding Insanitary or Unsafe Conditions:

Lack of secure access points to the building have led to apparent evidence of homelessness and vagrancy within the Area. Human feces was observed in a hidden area in the Area. Staff reports that homeless persons have entered the building and hidden inside while looking for shelter.

Staff report that prostitution has taken place at the Hotel. Police were called to deal with the circumstance.

Findings Regarding Deterioration of Site Improvements:

Deterioration refers to the physical deterioration of buildings and other above-ground improvements, below-grade supporting structures such as water, sewer, and electric utilities, and surface site improvements such as parking areas, roadways and drives, and lighting fixtures, signage, etc.

Deterioration may be evident in a variety of exterior and interior building components, including foundation, exterior walls, doors, windows, floors, roofs, wiring, plumbing, etc. Minor defects, such as a lack of painting, loose or missing roof tiles, floor or ceiling plates, holes and cracks over limited areas, or damaged fascia materials, may indicate deterioration resulting from deferred maintenance.

The Area exhibits several physical conditions that exemplify deterioration of site improvements, including:

Site Improvements:

- The asphalt parking lot surfaces within the Area show signs of “alligator cracking,” which is a condition of widespread cracks across the surface and which indicate the top surface and subsurface have both lost structural integrity and require replacement.

Buildings:

- Windows exhibit worn seals and in need of repair.
- Portions of the exterior of the building are worn, cracked, and crumbling.
- Interior rooms and hallways suffer from water damage from leaky or broken pipes.
- Interior ceiling materials exhibit cracks, holes, discoloration, and sagging from water damage.
- Roof is deteriorated and leaking in portions of the building.

Findings Regarding the Existence of Conditions Which Endanger Life or Property by Fire and Other Causes:

Mold growth is present as a result of water damage due to deferred maintenance and the deterioration of building components and presents a health hazard.

The building and its systems require updates to bring the Area into compliance with modern fire safety codes, the lack of which indicate a condition which endangers life or property by fire.

Findings Regarding Economic Liability

In 2019 and 2020, the County Assessor appraised the value of the Area as \$5.5 million. In 2023 and 2024, the Area had an appraised value of \$5,297,300. Since 2019, the value of the Area has declined approximately 3.7 percent. The value of the Area is not keeping up with inflation and is not generating economic value and tax value in keeping with market trends and economic needs.

From just 2023 to 2024, commercial property values across St. Louis County increased 0.54%. The Area, in its present condition and use, is not generating economic value and tax revenue at a level commensurate with productive commercial property in St. Louis County and is a drag on public tax revenue generation.

The Hotel in its present condition is capable of operating only at a maximum of 50% capacity as three floors of hotel rooms are not in suitable condition for renting. This fact means that the Hotel is not capable of generating the economic activity it should, or as much as it could were the Hotel in proper operating condition.

Findings Regarding Social Liability

Conditions within the Area present a social liability. Reports of illicit, criminal activity indicate that the Area is a social liability in its present condition.

SUMMARY

The Area meets the definition of a “blighted area” as set forth in the CID Act because of the predominance and combination of the aforescribed factors. The Area, due to unsafe conditions, deterioration of site improvements, and the existence of conditions which endanger life or property by fire and other causes, render the Area a “blighted area” as an economic liability and a social liability in its present condition and use.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

AREA BOUNDARY MAP AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION



Area Boundary
9600 Natural Bridge Road Area Berkeley, Missouri



Legal Description of Area

Parcel 1: A parcel of land in U.S. Survey 49, Township 46 North Range 6 East, City of Berkeley, St. Louis County, Missouri being described as follows: Beginning at a point in the Southerly line of Natural Bridge Road (East), 100.00 feet wide at a point being distant South 42 degrees 59 minutes East a distance of 345.00 feet from the Eastern line of Brown Road, 60.00 feet wide said beginning point being also the Northeastern corner of a parcel of land described by instrument as recorded in Book 4802 page 540 of said County records, thence South 42 degrees 59 minutes East along said Southern line of Natural Bridge Road (East) a distance of 238.36 feet to a point in the Western line of Marshall Avenue, 40.00 feet wide, thence South 20 degrees 47 minutes West along said Marshall Avenue a distance of 542.00 feet to a point thence North 64 degrees 06 minutes West along a line being as Easterly prolongation of the Southern line of the Parcel as described in said Book 4802 page 540 a distance of 270.68 feet to a point being the Southeast corner of said parcel described in Book 4802 page 540 thence North 25 degrees 54 minutes East along said line a distance of 625.71 feet to the point of beginning.

APPENDIX B

EXISTING CONDITIONS PHOTOS

1



Above and below: Deteriorated asphalt pavement.

2



Above: Deteriorated runway.

3



Above: Water damage in the interior of the Hotel.

4



Above: Water damage and mold in the interior of the Hotel.

5



Left: Deteriorated Hotel exterior. These platforms were once used as balconies but now serve no functional purpose.

6



Left: Inhabitable hotel room.

7



Left: Evidence of interior hotel room water damage.

8

Right: An image of the inoperable air handles associated with the pool building.



9

Right: Image of moldy, disused, deteriorated pool and building.

