GREG FISCHER
MAYOR

August 5, 2015

Dear citizens:

In early January, I announced a transformational investment in our city with Omni Hotels – a 30 floor multi-purpose structure that includes a 600-room four diamond hotel and 225 apartments. This new architectural landmark on our skyline will be the third tallest building in the city, and will also include two restaurants, a lobby lounge, 70,000 square-feet of meeting space, local art galleries, a rooftop cafe, spa and fitness center, swimming pool and a much-needed urban market and grocery. The $289 million project is estimated to create 765 construction jobs and 320 permanent jobs.

The Omni design has now been approved by the Downtown Development Review Overlay Committee and the Board of Zoning Adjustment. The public has been heard, the decisions have been made, and the project is now ready to move forward.

The Omni will be located on an underdeveloped downtown block bounded by 2nd Street, Liberty, 3rd St. and Muhammad Ali Boulevard. The construction site currently contains a vacant building formerly occupied by the Louisville Water Company.

Preservation of our city's historic sites is a value of my administration. Consequently, we have worked diligently to find a new use for the vacant Water Company building. On May 21, the city committed $1 million in taxpayer funds to move all or parts of the building – money that otherwise would be used for demolition – and asked for interested parties to submit partnership proposals for the reuse of the building within 30 days. We subsequently extended the deadline another 30 days. The city also participated in a design meeting hosted by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and its Preservation Green Lab program. In addition, we set up meetings in Dallas between preservation leaders and Omni executives.

Despite months of working with businesses, individuals, non-profits and others to find a viable solution to move the building to a new location, no workable proposals have been offered. The city received three written proposals and a few inquiries to move portions of the building to various locations. None of the proposals advocated moving the entire structure; the proposals were either to move the facade or move the façade and the first 25/30 feet of the side walls. These proposals were not accepted because they either required city tax dollars in addition to the $1 million already committed, had feasibility issues, or did not effectively reuse this historic building.

Now that Omni's development and design have been approved through public processes, the city has hired a contractor to begin dismantling the Water Company building in order to move forward with the Omni development. We will be applying for necessary permits this week. Demolition work will then proceed on the additions to the Water Company building located in the rear.

There is a 30-day notice requirement before work can be undertaken to remove the 1910 and 1914 Water Company buildings. The most architecturally significant portions of the buildings - the façade, portico and a portion of the side walls — will be carefully removed and placed in storage. We will then, sometime in the next 12 to 18 months, solicit proposals for the reassembly and reuse of the building. This will allow sufficient time for interested parties to fully develop a proposal and business plan that will make the best use of the Water Company building and will hopefully make it productive and relevant for generations to come.

As I stated on May 21, there were two unacceptable options related to the Water Company building and the Omni:

1. The building could not remain in place due to the cost of including it in the Omni project; and
2. The Water Company building could not be completely demolished.

The path we are on achieves both of these objectives while moving forward with this landmark project.

Thanks to all of the people that have engaged to make this outcome one that has broad community support – and welcome once again to the Omni team.

Sincerely,

Greg Fischer
Mayor