

Pro Bono Matter Helps Protect Residents of Historic KC Neighborhood from Rising Property Values

Press Release

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A team of Stinson LLP attorneys led by Partner [Chris Frantze](#) has secured a precedent-setting tax abatement plan on behalf of residents in Kansas City's historic Westside neighborhood.

In a Kansas City, Missouri City Council meeting held September 29, 2022, council members voted 10-2 to approve [Ordinance 220806](#), thus authorizing the Westside Owner-Occupant Residential Property Chapter 353 Development Plan.

With approval of the plan, the Westside neighborhood has been declared a blighted area, thus providing an opportunity to not only freeze Westside neighborhood residents' property taxes that have increased in recent years, but reduce them and bring the property tax amount in line with the average paid across Jackson County, Mo. To mitigate gentrification efforts, the plan and tax abatement benefits accrue only to existing Westside residents.

"This plan is a first-of-its-kind use of an economic development tool to protect low- and moderate-income homeowners from the effects of gentrification," Frantze said. "The recent property tax increases caused by rising property values in the Westside neighborhood threatened to displace the longtime residents, and we're thrilled that the City Council recognized this imminent harm and acted to prevent it."

For residents of the Westside neighborhood, this plan enables them to remain in the homes they were born and raised in and where they have raised their families.

"The passage of the Westside 353 Property Tax Relief measure was the single most important and impactful thing to happen to the Westside in 30 years," said current Westside resident, former CEO of the Kansas City Neighborhood Alliance and the national nonprofit Homeownership Preservation Foundation Colleen Hernandez. "Our efforts would not have prevailed without the talent, vigilance and strategic focus of our

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pro bono team, Chris and Dave Frantze.”

This matter, which builds on the firm’s continued commitment to using the law as a vehicle for change and giving pro bono clients a voice to champion the cause of justice, was handled in partnership with Legal Aid of Western Missouri and Michael Duffy, former Legal Aid of Western Missouri managing attorney. Other Stinson attorneys involved include [David Frantze](#).

Stinson’s pro bono program is led by Pro Bono Committee Co-Chairs [Amy Conway](#) and [Bradley Yeretsky](#) and implemented by Pro Bono Director Theresa Hughes and Senior Pro Bono Manager [Katie Cronin](#). The firm’s pro bono strategic plan expects all partners to contribute substantially to the firm’s legacy through pro bono legal work and community service, and it encourages and supports involvement from associates to paralegals to summer associates. Through pro bono, Stinson’s attorneys and paralegals gain skills and invest in their communities while championing the cause of justice.

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