

# Centene Corporation Development Clayton, Missouri

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Presented by: Residents of the Crescent Condominiums

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## Introduction

Centene Corporation is proposing a \$771.8 million real estate development project in downtown Clayton, Missouri. This is the largest development project ever proposed in the City of Clayton.

The development properties are located east of Hanley Road and South of Forsyth Boulevard and total 9.7 acres. A portion of the development is located in University City. The project application submitted to the City of Clayton is predominantly 1.4 million square feet of new office development with above-ground parking on Forsyth. The proposed development does not comply with current zoning or the City's Master Plan. The development does not add significant new residential or retail.

The residents of The Crescent Condominiums in Clayton welcome a development that supports the growth and potential outlined by Centene, but the development must also be respectful of surrounding areas and consistent with the Clayton Master Plan, codes and ordinances.

## The City of Clayton Master Plan Should Guide All Clayton Development

The Master Plan was carefully and thoughtfully constructed by city leaders and the community to guide the future of Clayton and projects exactly like the Centene development. Many existing property owners relied on the provisions of the Master Plan in making their decisions to buy in Clayton. According to the Master Plan, the vision for the Forsyth Village District is to create a dense, walkable, mixed use district including a significant new urban residential development oriented around the Forsyth MetroLink Station with appropriate connection to the existing development at Carondelet Plaza and the adjacent neighborhoods. The Centene plan provides four percent of the new development as residential and less than one percent as retail. This is not a mixed-use development.

*“The city’s goal is to direct and shape private investment through consistent policies and targeted capital improvements.”*  
**Clayton Master Plan**

Unfortunately, the current Centene proposal is far from the Master Plan vision. While Centene officials have stated that their current plan is consistent with the Master Plan, Clayton Plaza Overlay, Forsyth Village District, and the Transportation Overlay District, Centene is in fact cherry-picking the parts of the plan that support their desired development even though the company's current proposal is clearly not aligned with these plans and is not in the best interests of the entire Clayton community. The City of Clayton belongs to all of its residents and businesses -- not one company or one resident.

## The Scale and Scope of the Centene Development Are Too Massive

Several issues concerning the Centene development proposal need to be addressed by city officials while the review process is still in the early stages. The proposed development is simply too large and too dense for the specific properties in the Forsyth Village District. The density created by the proposed structures is beyond acceptable limits for these locations. The buildings and garages are too massive, intrusive and inconsistent with the surrounding

community and the intention of the Master Plan. For example, The Hanley Tower is more than four times the size it should be according to current zoning. Because of the enormous size of the Hanley Tower, a very large above-ground parking structure is required. In addition, two garages will have to be built on Forsyth contrary to the Master Plan.

*“Parking requirements throughout the district should be modified to reflect the prevalence of public transit, rather than car travel, and remaining garages should not have frontage on key streets.”*

**Clayton Master Plan**

The vehicles will enter and exit on Forsyth, creating potentially massive traffic issues. While requiring vehicles to enter and exit on Lyle Avenue has been suggested, that is not a viable option. There simply is not enough space on Lyle to allow truck deliveries while residents and thousands of garage parkers are utilizing the same street. Simply put, these massive structures will be crammed into tight spaces encroaching on, dwarfing and overshadowing established residential buildings, neighborhoods and valued open spaces if they are built as proposed.

The proposed size and scope is also the key contributing factor to vehicle and pedestrian traffic issues brought forward by the traffic study, residents and city staff. Currently the proposed garages are 2,450,000 square feet, almost twice the square footage of the proposed office space for the development. An independent traffic expert has reviewed the current city traffic study and found a significant number of issues that must be addressed to minimize adverse impacts throughout Clayton and neighboring communities from the proposed development.

The Master Plan calls for mixed-use development with significant residential living in this part of the city for empty nesters and young professionals. Only four percent of the current plan allows for residential living. We strongly believe city officials should require Centene to reduce the size and scope of the overall plan to meet the needs of Centene’s growing business, without intruding and violating the Master Plan and the current harmony between business and residential communities in this district.

## **Centene Is Expanding Beyond Its Own Defined Growth Needs**

Centene officials have cited their size and growth success as the catalyst for their massive development proposal and have acknowledged that their proposed office space and parking garages exceed their own growth projections and will be leased to income-generating, third-party tenants. For example, over the next several years, the company plans to bring more than 1,000 new employees to the City of Clayton. These new employees will move into only a portion of the new buildings with currently planned capacity for thousands more people than Centene will employ. The size, scale and density of these office buildings are well beyond the company’s anticipated growth and the Master Plan’s defined density goals.

Additionally, Centene proposes oversized garage structures with the capacity of over 5,900 parking spaces to encompass more than an entire block along Forsyth Blvd. Centene’s parking consultant says this is 1,400 more spaces than required. Centene representatives have acknowledged that they exploring future uses of what they anticipate will become excess parking capacity. Oversized parking garages are inconsistent with the Master Plan and everything the city envisioned for a major city street like Forsyth as the eastern gateway to the Central Business District.

We propose that city officials require Centene to adhere to the Master Plan and limit the size and scope of the office and garage space to better accommodate their actual growth needs and provide reasonable retail space at street level

as defined by the Master Plan. This area of downtown cannot accommodate the office space capacity at the levels currently proposed by Centene. Rightsizing this development would greatly minimize the adverse impact on traffic, parking, pollution, green space and pedestrian access.

## Traffic Concerns Affecting Clayton Could be Alleviated by Rightsizing

The tremendous volume of traffic that would be generated by the massive office and parking structures currently proposed by Centene would create serious traffic problems and safety issues far beyond the Clayton borders. The proposed parking garages encompass more than half of the overall square footage of this entire development. Adding thousands more cars to the city will also create serious access issues to major arteries including Forest Park Parkway, I-170 and Highway 40. This proposal is also contrary to the Master Plan’s intent to promote public transportation.

Access, loading and traffic issues are of major concern to residents who use Lyle Avenue and Carondelet Plaza simply



to get into and out of their homes. The traffic study has identified that the added 400 – 500 cars per hour on Carondelet Plaza will significantly change the feel of the neighborhood.

*(The photo to the left is Lyle Avenue and the traffic jam issues Crescent residents currently face with the narrow street.)*

## The Centene Proposal Does Not Foster Pedestrian-Friendly Streets

Promoting pedestrian traffic in the Forsyth Village District on the eastern edge of Downtown Clayton is a major component in the Master Plan. The city vision called for major retail space in this area of town, yet Centene is only proposing 12,000 square feet of retail space (excluding the fitness center which, under Clayton regulations, does not qualify as retail space, and the civic center). Garage entrances on Forsyth and the volume of cars moving in and out of these facilities will also discourage pedestrian access along Forsyth and create serious safety issues. The tunnels, walkways and garages proposed by Centene for its employees do not foster pedestrian traffic. In addition, Centene has not clearly articulated the safety issues requiring tunnels and walkways for its employees. And if there is a safety issue for its employees to be walking along public streets, then wouldn’t there also be a safety issue for all pedestrians?

## Conclusion – Rightsizing the Development Is a Win/Win for Centene and the Entire Community

As the project sits today, the Clayton community is not a winner in this oversized development proposal.

The City of Clayton can accommodate the business and growth objectives of Centene Corporation and preserve the harmony between businesses and residents by:

- Moving the Hanley Tower closer to Forsyth Boulevard and reducing its size and scale to meet, but not exceed, the future defined growth of Centene. In fact, at an August 1, 2016 meeting of the Architectural

Review Board (ARB) the Chairman suggested Centene match the new Hanley Tower to the current Centene building.

- Reducing the size and scale of the parking garages to accommodate, but not exceed, retail parking needs and defined Centene growth. This would reduce the number of cars by more than half and provide a viable solution for many issues created by this development. It would also help reduce the encapsulation of the Crescent, mitigate potential safety issues, reduce the volume of cars coming in and out of the city, promote more pedestrian access on Forsyth, promote public transportation goals, and create a more welcoming environment for people coming into Clayton from the east. Building more parking spaces below ground in all parking structures and requiring that the garages on Forsyth have no more than four levels above ground, including retail space, will help achieve the goals of the Master Plan.
- Requiring smaller buildings because, as presently designed, the space behind the Hanley Tower, the parking garages and The Crescent does not provide enough space for loading and unloading of trucks for the Hanley Tower, while preserving ready access for The Crescent and the new residents proposed by Centene.



*(The photo to the right is an example of the loading process at Centene's current building.)*

- Adding green space between the Forsyth garages and in other areas throughout the proposed development
- Giving very careful consideration to Centene's request for public assistance/incentives for the overall project. Reducing the size and consequently the cost of this development may also decrease Centene's request for such assistance.

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***Clayton Master Plan***