



Historic Kansas City Gazette ~ Special Issue

2017 - 2018 Most Endangered List

Each year Historic Kansas City announces our Most Endangered list of buildings and other places around Kansas City at risk of being demolished or of crumbling into obscurity. We do this to draw attention to their plight, and in hopes of attracting new owners, developers, or community groups who will commit to restore, repurpose and maintain their unique appeal. These historic places are irreplaceable community assets that tell the story of the city and its development.

The list recognizes the many significant properties that make up our neighborhoods, reflecting the lives of community leaders, important architects and buildings and the families who made Kansas City their home. The list also highlights the value of the city's architectural styles and building types of rapidly disappearing residential, commercial and public architecture. They are places that are important to the diverse history of our city and are tied to the neighborhoods and communities where they are located.

“The list of Most Endangered Buildings calls attention to threatened one-of-a-kind resources throughout Kansas City and galvanizes the local community to help save them,” said Jim Wanser, president of Historic Kansas City. “We also know that many important places throughout Kansas City remain endangered,” said Lisa Briscoe, executive director of Historic Kansas City. “The list includes a diverse mix of historic places facing a combination of problems rather than a single threat, such as, abandonment, neglect, dilapidation, obsolete use, unreasonable above-market asking price, owners who simply lack money for repairs, remote location, or its opposite, encroaching development. Buildings that once seemed safely preserved can later confront new, unforeseen threats. HKC remains committed to keeping a watchful eye on the list to make sure these community assets endure for the benefit of future generations.”

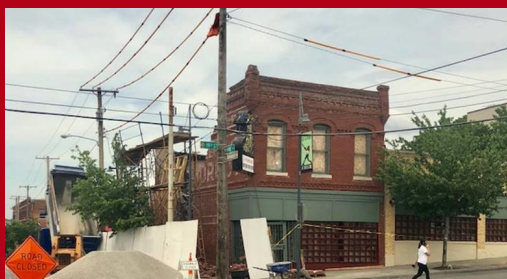
Historic KC's Most Endangered list is a non-exhaustive roster of notable places threatened with demolition or extreme alteration. From African American sites to Modern Architecture, to historic resources in Westport, the Old Northeast, and the Country Club Plaza, to categories of resources including historic churches, apartment buildings, closed schools, and commercial neighborhood structures, to individual sites such as Epperson House, this year's list reflects both the diversity of Kansas City's historic places and the variety of threats they face. The list is based on information publicly available (and circulated) at the time of deliberation and allowing a reasonable interval for preparing the list and publishing it. The list is a call for action by all stakeholders. It follows in

no particular order.

See the [Press Release here](#).

For more on the Most Endangered List story - follow [HKC on Facebook](#) daily.

18th & Vine and African American Heritage Sites



Recently designated as a City of Music by UNESCO, 18th and Vine is internationally recognized as one of the cradles of jazz music. Many notable jazz musicians of the 1930s & 1940s made 18th and Vine their home base, including Count Basie, Charlie Parker and Jay McShann. The Historic District had long suffered from a lack of private investment and building neglect. Since the 1990s when redevelopment efforts began, several historic buildings have been lost and many more sit vacant and deteriorating, such as the **Mardi Gras Club**, 1600 E. 19th St., and the Holy Ghost New Testament Church (the historic Jamison Temple C.M.E. Church), 1815 Paseo.

The City of Kansas City recognized the importance of rehabbing and energizing one of Kansas City's most important historic districts by investing \$27.6 million in a three-phase plan. This is a significant step forward in the effort to save the remaining buildings. In collaboration with the City, HKC recognized that clear policies that prioritize building rehabilitation and design guidelines for new construction were needed to better ensure that historic character is retained. This collaboration resulted in the preparation



A related category of sites that is threatened by disinvestment and a lack of comprehensive survey are African American heritage sites. The Wheatley Provident Hospital, 1826 Forest, redevelopment recently announced, is the only remaining hospital building in Kansas City, MO that was established by and run for the African-American community during the era of racial segregation.

Other at-risk sites include the **Satchel Paige residence**, 2626 E. 28th Street (Santa Fe Historic District), recently damaged by fire; the Buck O'Neil residence, 3049 E. 32nd St.; and the Rector Mansion, 2000 E. 12th Street, former home of the first black female millionaire, who entertained guests such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Joe Louis and Jack Johnson.

It is hoped that this listing will publicize the plight of these important historic sites and result in increased visibility and encouraging both financial and volunteer investment in African American heritage sites.

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of infill urban design guidelines to further the historic integrity of this world-renowned district.

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Modern Architecture

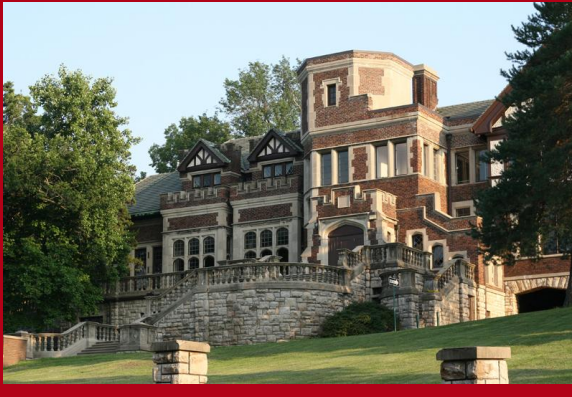
The planned rehabilitation of Kemper Arena is an important milestone in efforts to increase awareness and preservation of Kansas City's modern architectural heritage. Yet, many other structures are still at risk. Threats include the demolition of buildings which are not yet widely understood to be significant and the removal or alternation of original materials that contribute to the design aesthetics of Modernism. A survey of Post-World War II architecture was recently completed by the City of Kansas City, MO. Of particular note is the **Phillips Service Station** - Willy's Petroleum Co., 5901 Prospect Ave, (currently Calley Tires), whose unique gull-wing design was built in 1963.

Other examples of Modernism include KCI Airport; **Board of Education building** 311 E. 12th St.; **IBM Building** 1400 Baltimore Ave.; a former bank building at 3328 Troost; and the Four Acre Motel, 8220 Hickman. Yet, many metro area communities known to be home to significant modern structures have not been fully evaluated for buildings that could be eligible for historic designation. For example, the Metcalf corridor in Overland Park, from 75th Street to 103rd Street, contains many notable structures of the modern era, including Phillips 66, Newcomer's Funeral Home, **Metcalf Bank**, CVS and the old French Market. By listing modern architecture, we hope to raise public awareness of this rich Modernist architectural heritage both locally and as part of an important genre of design.

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Epperson House



The once magnificent mansion now sits empty overlooking the UMKC campus. Construction of Epperson House, a 56-room brick Collegiate-Gothic style mansion, began in 1919. Architect Horace LaPierre designed the home for philanthropist Uriah Epperson. It later became the property of J.J. Lynn, a business associate of Epperson, who in 1942 donated the building to what is now UMKC. Epperson slowly deteriorates with minimal maintenance work done.

As reported by *The Pitch* (Dec. 22, 2017), Epperson House will remain vacant for the foreseeable future. Robert Simmons, UMKC associate vice chancellor of facilities, said, "We've estimated that to really restore in a historic sense, the exterior of the building, to add the elevators, and to really make the building purposefully good for the next century is probably about an \$8 to \$10 million project." Simmons said UMKC spends about \$60,000 each year heating, cooling and maintaining the property.

Epperson House has great potential. A collaboration among philanthropic, state and local officials, developers, and preservationists will be necessary for a full restoration and 21st century adaptive reuse of this local landmark.

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Westport Area

By 1836 the village of Westport served as the last place for immigrants to purchase supplies before heading west on the Oregon, Santa Fe or California trails. Kansas City continued expanding southward from the Missouri River and in the late 1890s, annexed Westport. Today, Westport is one of Kansas City's most distinct places and lies in one of the fastest developing areas of the City. Westport is not protected. In response to development threats, Historic Kansas City and its partners initiated the completion of a comprehensive survey to inventory Westport's cultural resources and identify those resources eligible



for historic designation. Completion of the survey was followed by development of a strategic partnership between HKC, the Westport Regional Business League and the City of Kansas City to conduct a collaborative planning process to develop a long-term District Plan for Westport. We're only halfway through the process and there is much work to be done. Meanwhile, Westport remains at risk. Our hope is to raise public awareness of the remaining threat to Westport, the need for protection solutions and the need for the community to participate in the public planning process.

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Historic Churches

Historic Churches across the Kansas City metro--particularly in abundance in Midtown Kansas City--are at risk due to diminishing congregation size and building layouts that make reuse a challenge. One example is **St. John the Divine**, 2511 Metropolitan Ave, Kansas City, Kansas, on the List since 2013, is a Gothic Revival structure built in 1887.



Another is the **Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist**, 604 West 47th Street, located in the heart of the Country Club Plaza. In 1941, Indianapolis architect Charles Wilbur Foster designed for Seventh Church a broad basilica with clerestory in a brick Romanesque Revival design featuring a picturesque tower and tile roof. Unfortunately, due to diminishing congregation size the Seventh Church of Christ has elected to pursue a development agreement that would allow for the demolition of the historic church and construction of a 13-story office tower. The congregation would remain on site with facilities in the new office tower.



This important religious structure is not protected, putting it at increased risk for demolition. Any and all alternatives to demolition should be explored. Options for

the most sympathetic reuse possible of the historic church could include: reuse as a place of worship by another denomination, cultural or educational purposes as a “social gathering” place, or a creative development plan that incorporates the historic church into a mixed-use development. Other cities such as St. Louis, have seen churches adaptively reused as offices for design firms, nightclubs and restaurants.

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KCMO Closed Schools

The KCMO Repurposing Initiative has sold seventeen school properties, leased one, have three under contract or MOU, three reused by KCPS, and demolished five. Still at risk is the **Marlborough School**, 1300 E. 75th Street, built in three phases (1927, 1938, and 1952), expressing Romanesque Revival details and bands of glass block and hopper windows that reflect a distinctly mid-century modern aesthetic. The community and the school board accepted Exact Partners LLC offer to acquire the building in 2016 with its plan for revitalized school house apartments. Exact worked to obtain historic status on the property allowing needed State and Federal Historic Tax Credits to make the preservation work financially feasible. The State Historic Preservation Office has, to date, rejected Historic designation. Without Historic status, Exact will not have the resources to rehabilitate the property and will need to look at demolition. Exact has asked the community to contact the SHPO and NPS as well as their local representatives to speak up for the school’s value.

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Neighborhood Commercial Structures

As the retail landscape of our country is changing and more and more business is done



online, a multitude of commercial structures are left to find new uses. These include neighborhood corner stores that dot our urban residential neighborhoods. This 1920s era commercial property type, the Corner Neighborhood Store, was once ubiquitous in Kansas City's Midtown area. An example of this real threat, the Vermillion Building, 3500 Troost Ave., was listed on the National Register in 1983, it was designed by R.E. Peden and built in 1923 to provide services to the growing residences along Armour Boulevard. MAC Properties demolished the property in May. The City Plan Commission recently approved MAC's development plan for the new construction of four 6- to 8-story mixed-use buildings at the four corners of Armour and Troost.

Other areas that bear watching include the Main Street Corridor. The Kansas City Streetcar Authority Inc. unveiled potential alignments for the planned 3.5-mile Main Street extension in March. Eight stops were recommended. The proposed route goes through the Armour Boulevard Historic District, South Side Historic District and 39th and Main Historic District. It goes near or within a half block of the Longmeadow Historic District, Old Hyde Park Historic District, several individually listed National Register properties and the potentially eligible Whittier Place Historic District.

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Midtown Apartments & Apartment Hotels

One building type that poses a particular challenge in rehabilitation efforts is early 20th century apartment buildings. The apartment hotel was a popular housing option for those who wished to live in upscale residential areas without the hassle of property ownership. Examples include, the **Knickerbocker Apartments** at 501 – 535 Knickerbocker Place, designed by L. Grant Middaugh, and built in 1909 in the Century Revival style. **The Belmont**



Hotel, 911 E. Linwood Blvd, listed on the National Register in 2016, exhibits Classical Revival and Prairie style elements, designed architect L. Grant Middaugh. The Blackstone Hotel (also Jewell Bldg), 817 Cherry, designed by architect Phillip Drotts in 1925, was listed on the National Register in 2003.



The **Armour Boulevard Historic District** listed on the National Register in 1983, is divided into three districts. Five resources are now demolished in District III. The latest, the Vermillion Building, 3500 Troost Ave., was designed by R.E. Peden and built in 1923 to provide commercial services to the growing residences along Armour Boulevard. MAC Properties demolished the property in May. The City Plan Commission recently approved MAC's development plan for the new construction of four 6- to 8-story mixed-use buildings at the four corners of Armour and Troost. The remaining structures are at risk and should be included in any future redevelopment efforts. They include: **Chalfonte Apartment**, 1110-1112 East Armour, 1909, Classical Revival; Marquette Club of the Knights of Columbus (Boulevard Manor Hotel/Steuben Club), 1115 E. Armour Boulevard, 1923, Renaissance Revival; **Juliet Apartments**, 1114-1116 E. Armour Boulevard, 1907.



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The Country Club Plaza Environs

The Country Club Plaza became the most influential comprehensively planned retail complex established in the United States before the mid-twentieth century. Today, hundreds of new apartments are proposed, approved and/or building in the area, particularly north of the Plaza. New hotel proposals emerge while simultaneous subsidies are sought, and the lodging community expands its offerings. Retail properties are constantly changing, and office use has grown in recent years. Due to increased development pressure, it's important that any new development follow the Midtown Plaza Area Plan closely in terms of land use, zoning, height, density, architecture and relationship to the area as a whole. These are all details that were carefully considered by the Plaza subgroup of the Midtown/Plaza Area Plan Advisory Committee. The City should enforce the plan and complete a comprehensive traffic study for the Plaza so that the impact on road and traffic can be fully understood and evaluated.

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Old Northeast Area

The Historic Old Northeast area is a group of neighborhoods that housed judges, doctors and captains of industry who built the foundation of early Kansas City. Today, skeletal remains of historic and beautiful homes still line the many blocks of these neighborhoods. Significant houses sit vacant and deteriorating. Neighborhood commercial services are left to find new uses, as the retail landscape of our country is changing, and more and more business is done online. The **Aladdin Theater**, 6044 Truman Rd., is a beautiful Moorish style theater designed in 1927 by the Boller Brothers architectural firm,

and is one of a few remaining Boller Brothers theaters in the Kansas City. Over the years, the building has served as a music venue, chapel, and hosted retail vendors including a pharmacy, a candy store, a barber shop, and a restaurant. In 2015, a local family fell in love with the Aladdin and sought its preservation. To date, they have established the “Save The Aladdin” campaign, applied for listing on the National Register and for HKC’s Most Endangered List, established a partnership with leaders in the Blue Valley Neighborhood Association to help get the word out about their efforts, and they are currently trying to raise money to file for 501c3 status.

Unfortunately, only an insufficient number of formal protections prevents these forgotten gems from being lost forever. In the last few years several notable structures and cornerstones of this historic neighborhood, including commercial structures along Independence Avenue, have been lost, and many more are being threatened without the protection of a comprehensive designation that encompasses all of the eligible historic resources.

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Sauer Castle

The Anthony Sauer residence, 935 Shawnee Rd. KCKS (Sauer Castle), built in 1872, is attributed to architect Asa Beebe Cross, and is one of the finest examples of "Italianate Villa" architecture in the State of Kansas. The building was placed on the National Register in 1977 and designated a Kansas City, Kansas Historic Landmark in 1987. The house is currently owned by a descendant of the Sauer family. The owner has said he has plans to rehabilitate the structure however there is



little evidence of progress. Meanwhile, Sauer Castle continues to sit vacant and deteriorate. The Unified Government has made several attempts to take action on the property and tried to gain control of it two decades ago, to no avail. Efforts of the Kansas City, Kansas, Landmarks Commission to make the owner keep the property up to code have proved unsuccessful. A Facebook campaign was initiated two years ago and made its mission to save it and has hopes that the city, or owners, will find the funds to bring the castle back to its former glory. Our hope in placing this house on the Most Endangered List is that the owner might be encouraged to finally fix up or sell – and that the local government seek stronger and enhanced laws to protect buildings from owners who would practice demolition by neglect.

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Watch List:

- Midwest Hotel, 1925 Main St., KCMO (redevelopment pending)
- Quindaro Ruins, 27th and Sewell, KCKS (National Historic Landmark Status pending)
- Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Building, 220-224 W. 18th St., KCMO
- Acme Cleaning Company Building, 3200 Gillham Road, KCMO (redevelopment pending)
- Luzier Cosmetic Building, 3216 Gillham Plaza, KCMO (redevelopment pending)
- Crispus Attucks School, 1815 Woodland Ave., KCMO (redevelopment plan pending)
- KC Star Building, 1729 Grand Blvd, KCMO (redevelopment pending)
- River Market Area (area redevelopment pending)
- Lyric Theater, 1029 Central Ave., KCMO (fundraising/redevelopment pending)
- Broadway Church, 3931 Washington (redevelopment pending)

[For more details see the Press Release here.](#)

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