

## 2020 – 2021 Historic Kansas City’s Most Endangered Places List

Once it’s gone, it’s gone forever.

Kansas City, MO, May 17, 2021 – The Colonnade. Corner neighborhood stores. Old gas stations. Nuisance sites. Schools. Churches. Places we pass by so often we no longer notice. But these places face threats every day – perhaps more so because we’ve grown accustomed to seeing them we can’t imagine them gone. That is why Historic Kansas City (HKC) manages this list to highlight important historic buildings, districts and landscapes that are in danger because of the threat of demolition, poor condition and maintenance, neglect, alterations, redevelopment pressures, inappropriate development, insensitive public policy, or lack of funds.

Since the inception of the Most Endangered Places List in the late 1980s, HKC has recognized that the threat to endangered resources vastly exceeded the resources of our organization. That is why we use the list to prompt wide media exposure for the value and plight of these historic resources in the hope that interested parties can come together to help return these assets to a vital use while preserving their historic character. The Most Endangered Places List includes threatened properties that HKC has been, or is currently, actively involved in. It also includes properties with champions seeking awareness, properties with owners seeking awareness of their challenges, and properties in need of a champion.

“The list of Most Endangered Places calls attention to threatened unique resources throughout Kansas City and galvanizes the local community to help save them,” said Greg Allen, president of Historic Kansas City. “Historic Kansas City’s Most Endangered Places List provides a powerful spotlight that raises awareness of the cultural and economic value of our historic buildings, schools, theaters, homes, and neighborhoods, and the lack of financial support in Kansas City for their preservation and reuse.” Added Historic Kansas City Executive Director Lisa Briscoe: “Kansas City’s Endangered Places need creativity, vision, and committed investment to escape demolition and neglect. We hope this year’s list will gain the attention to go from endangered to saved.”

This year’s list includes the Colonnade park structure, Katz Drug Store, African-American cultural sites, commercial districts and corridors, modern architecture, and historic sites, churches, and theaters. Historic properties are selected for listing based on several criteria. Sites must be listed or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or the Kansas City Register of Historic Places, and sites must be subject to a serious threat to their existence or historical and/or architectural integrity.

The list is based on information publicly available 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 no prioritization order.

To find out more about these Endangered Places visit <https://www.historickansascity.org/2020-most-endangered-list/>

View the Most Endangered Places List video at <https://vimeo.com/549030228>

## **The Colonnade and JFK Memorial at Concourse Park** **200 Benton Blvd**

### **THE STORY**

New to the list in 2021, the Colonnade is a contributing structure to Kessler (Concourse Park) Park within the Kansas City Parks and Boulevards Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Designed by Henry Wright and constructed in 1908, the Colonnade is a historic Beaux Arts structure of reinforced concrete faced with smooth limestone and a red clay tile roofing with portions of open trellis. A memorial to President John F. Kennedy, designed by Salvatore Arnone in 1965, is sited in the center of the Colonnade. A contributing object, it replaced a fountain and reflecting pool that was part of the original 1908 Colonnade design.

### **THE THREAT**

The Colonnade is in need of significant repair and safety enhancements due to decades of neglected maintenance related to chronic shortfalls in city budgets. The roof and cupola ceilings are in various stages of decay with the pergola in danger of collapse. Roof leaks continue to cause significant water damage to other areas. The structure's overall decline has increased in recent years. The John F. Kennedy Memorial is in better condition and requires minor repair and maintenance.

A current estimate from Kansas City Parks and Rec to restore the structure is approximately \$600,000, which represents a significant financial undertaking for a department with already limited resources and tasked with maintaining over 12,000 acres of parkland. Securing funds is a significant challenge given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on city tax revenue, tight competition for Public Improvement (PIAC) grants and independent donations, and city-funded infrastructure project dollars going to service general obligation bond debts.

The Scarritt Renaissance Neighborhood Association (SRNA) is leading the effort to save and restore The Colonnade and JFK Memorial. To date, the following organizations have precursory involvement with the restoration effort: KC Parks and Rec, Northeast Alliance Together (NEAT), Kansas City Museum, and KEM Studio. SRNA plans to fund the restoration with various grant applications such as PIAC and MARC-administered, local philanthropists or company sponsorships, private-sector donations, and Parks & Rec funding. A previous application for a 2020 PIAC grant was denied, but SRNA is in process of applying for 2021 PIAC funds to support Phase I (\$175,000).

Our hope in placing this structure on the Most Endangered Places List is to encourage others to reach out and partner with SRNA.



The Colonnade, 200 Benton Blvd.  
Photos by Jeff Linville

## Katz Drug Store

### **3948 MAIN ST.**

#### **THE STORY**

This iconic Kansas City building was built in 1934 as home to the first Katz Drug Store outside the central business district. It was the first major work by Clarence Kivett, who would go on to become the most famous and influential of Kansas City architects. It incorporated elements of both Art Deco (the clock tower) and Art Moderne (the horizontal bands and curved storefront) styling. Various commercial tenants have occupied the space including the drug store chains that purchased Katz.

The building is currently owned by Redeemer Fellowship. HKC placed the Katz Drug Store on our Most Endangered Places list in 2019 following a meeting with Redeemer Fellowship in which HKC requested that restrictive covenants be a part of any future sale agreement.

#### **THE THREAT**

On December 29, 2020, a development proposal was filed with the city planning department by St Louis firm Lux Living. The project includes a building addition of six stories, or seven including a mezzanine, and about 192 apartments on the surface parking lot behind the existing building. The plan would require demolition of the non-historic rear addition. The historic Katz building will be adaptively reused as offices, with some retail, and as an amenity center for the residents, including the addition of a rooftop pool. Lux Living also contemplates the use of state and federal historic tax credits.

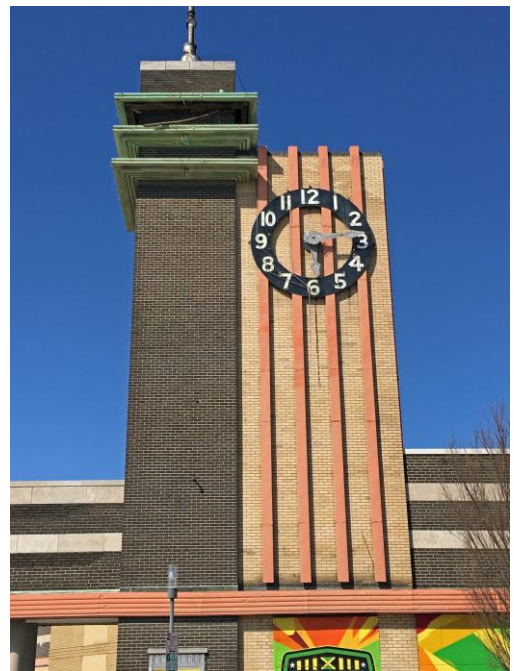
HKC has met twice with the developer and project team. HKC recognizes the need for the historic building to evolve and adapt to a changing set of retail and economic circumstances. As preservationists, we know from years of experience that adaptive reuse is frequently the best outcome and sometimes the only outcome for saving historic places.

The Katz building is a high priority save for preservationists. We are willing to accept that this may entail additional construction in or around the historic building, and if properly done that is a price we believe can be paid. Surrounding the Katz building is a business district full of historic buildings and historic residential neighborhoods. If we give the Katz building new purpose and enliven that site, we hope that can positively affect the historical context around it. That is a worthy preservation goal.

We don't usually endorse projects unless they are rather faithful restorations or stellar reuses. In this case, new infill development and density is placed at a designated commercial intersection, not within or abutting historic single-family residential neighborhoods. Transparency in the Westport Road entrance is a great improvement. Stepping back the upper most floors of the adjacent tower from the historic Katz clock tower is a step in the right direction.

Still, we felt inclined to recommend the proposed redevelopment to the City Plan Commission, City Council, and Preservation Commission, with the stated reservation that the upper most floors of the building addition be stepped back further from the historic clock tower. This proposal is an example of how HKC and developers can work together for the best possible result.

The project awaits needed gap financing and National Park Service review to receive historic tax credits. Its ultimate fate remains uncertain.



Katz Drug, 3948 Main St.  
Photo by: Michael Kruse

## Retail Commercial Structures

Will the pandemic change American retail forever? As e-commerce grows, it will pull more stores out of ground-floor retail locations. Those industries that survive and are resilient to e-commerce encroachment are more likely, in the short term, to be dominated by ubiquitous chains. Our streets are in danger of becoming homogenous with an array of chain stores with their cold sterility and predictability.

For decades, American cities have fought a battle against monotony. In a period where many mom-and-pop stores die and chains expand, it seems inevitable that what once separated Kansas City from other places will be destroyed through the mass commercialization of the streetscape, as everywhere you go feels even more like everywhere you've been. But rebirth after COVID is also possible. When rents fall, mom-and-pop stores will rise again. Cheaper empty historic spaces will be incubators. Something new will grow in these historic spaces if we preserve them. These historic places still need the support of the Kansas City community to keep them alive.

An example of this real threat can be seen along commercial arterial corridors and at neighborhood corners throughout the community.

### MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

#### THE STORY/THREAT

The Kansas City Streetcar Main Street extension will flank or pass through numerous historic districts including the Longmeadow Historic District, Armour Boulevard Historic District, Old Hyde Park Historic District, South Side Historic District, 39th and Main Historic District, as well as several individually listed National Register properties. These historic resources tell a unique and important story, define the development history of the community, and provide tangible reminders of the past that create a unique sense of place.

A significant issue is the loss of the corridor's remaining historic identity as a unique community within the Midtown area. Land assemblage and speculative development is underway, with various developers purchasing large swaths of commercial blocks on Main Street. As the corridor continues to be successful there will be more pressure on the historic buildings to be demolished to make way for large-scale development projects. Developers have now snapped up strategic corners at four of the six streetcar stops between downtown and the Country Club Plaza: 31st, 39th, 45th streets and Armour Blvd.

Although the Main Street Corridor is under the jurisdiction of the Main Street Special Character Overlay District, that status does not include demolition review. In addition, only select areas are included in local historic districts, which do necessitate demolition review. If a certificate of appropriateness is denied, then the property owner must wait three years before proceeding with the proposed alterations or demolition. While this gives the property a significant level of protection from outright demolition, it does not safeguard it indefinitely.

Other locations are without historic district protection, such as the corner of 31<sup>st</sup> and Main. A half-dozen properties have been acquired by an entity controlled by Price Brothers of Overland Park, including two structures identified by a KC Streetcar federal study as eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places: the Jeserich building, 3041-45 Main, and Lutfi's Fried Fish, 3035-37 Main. The fate of these properties remains unknown. However, Price Brothers is currently building a residential development at 44th and Belleview that required the demolition of several bungalows. In 2016, the firm razed the Green Gables apartment buildings designed by architect Nelle Peters west of the Country Club Plaza over the objections of HKC. That site remains vacant.

HKC is actively reaching out to area stakeholders to discuss their future.



Linwood and Main



Longmeadow Historic District



39<sup>th</sup> and Main



39<sup>th</sup> and Main



31<sup>st</sup> and Main

Photos by: Michael Kruse

## **INDEPENDENCE AVENUE CORRIDOR, FROM PASEO TO HARDESTY**

### **THE STORY/THREAT**

Independence Avenue has evolved over time. The avenue was once an elegant residential street, as well as a bustling commercial corridor served by a streetcar line. Shifting demographic and employment patterns, changes in transportation technologies, and changing consumer preferences have altered the avenue's economy and streetscape. Much of this commercial corridors' positive image is created by the character of historic residential and commercial structures – most of which were built prior to 1940. Neglect of the remaining historic building stock threatens to erase the remnants of the neighborhood's history and legacy. Renovation of these resources will be necessary to protect the corridor's remaining historic character. All new projects should be designed and developed in a manner that maintains and strengthens the historic character of the corridor.



Example Character Defining Commercial Structures  
(2500 E. Independence Ave.; 3000 E. Independence Ave.; 4600 E. Independence Ave.)  
Photos by: Michael Kruse

## **NEIGHBORHOOD CORNER STORE**

### **THE STORY/THREAT**

The Neighborhood Corner Store was once ubiquitous along Kansas City's urban corridors and were constructed to provide essential neighborhood services such as groceries, shoe repair, and general merchandise. They were often owned and operated by families who lived in second floor apartments. These buildings were an essential part of neighborhood identity, yet few buildings continue to provide these historic services. As the retail landscape of our country is changing, and more and more business is done online, a multitude of neighborhood corner stores along numerous corridors are either vacant or left to find new uses. These neighborhood corner stores are generally not protected by landmark status and anyone who purchased them could demolish this piece of Kansas City history. Timely action is needed to instigate tools and incentives needed.



Example Intersection at 39<sup>th</sup> and Woodland  
Photos by: Michael Kruse

## Nuisance Sites

### THE STORY/THE THREAT

There are many vacant properties in Kansas City neighborhoods. Some have been fully abandoned, often by absentee, out of state owners. As a result, the properties can continue deteriorating, becoming nuisances that blight the neighborhoods, or even be dangerous to the public. The city has a set of tools it uses to address the cycle of abandonment and deterioration. When other enforcement options fail, these properties can be candidates for Receivership. Receivership is a process where the city asks a court to appoint a third party to take control of the property and address the vacancy and nuisance issues, preventing the property from continuing to harm the neighborhood, and allowing it to return to productive use. The following are examples of historic properties under review by the city to correct a range of deficiencies. Code enforcement activity continues on these properties; some may end up in receivership. The city hopes to work with property owners or other interested parties to encourage someone to step up and save these structures.

### **611-613 FOREST AVENUE**

This Italianate double townhouse stands on the east side of downtown Kansas City. The townhouse was built c. 1885 and is a particularly refined yet vernacular expression of the Italianate style for what is essentially a working-class apartment house. It is one of the city's few remaining examples of this design influence.



611 Forest, KCMO

### **318-20 E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street**

New to the list in 2021, Spalding Commercial College was built in 1912 by James Franklin Spalding, co-founder with his father E. H. Spalding, who led one of the largest institutions of its kind in the West. It prepared young men and women for a business education. Abdiana Properties unveiled plans in 2006 to convert the building into commercial space and apartments utilizing 10-year, 100 percent property tax abatement and historic tax credits. The project later stalled and remains vacant.



318 – 20 E. 10<sup>th</sup> Street

### **3303 Harrison Street**

New to the list in 2021, 3303 Harrison Street is a contributing structure within the North Hyde Park Historic District listed on the Kansas City Register of Historic Places. Built in 1890, the home was damaged by fire in 2017 and has remained open to the weather and vandalism. The property has changed ownership twice since the fire; discussions are underway with the Historic Preservation Commission.



3303 Harrison  
Photos by HKC

## Pandemic-Caused Challenge — Museum Houses and Historic Sites

### THE STORY/THREAT

New to the list in 2021 is this general challenge, caused by the pandemic shutdowns, facing many small historic sites and museum houses. In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic, many historic house museums and sites struggled with figuring out how to save and maintain the buildings that define their community's past, present, and future—especially when that mission so heavily relies on the participation of the public? Many nonprofits who operate historic sites are faced with the loss of important revenue sources. Some have moved quickly to innovate ways to stay connected with devoted audiences and create new partnerships. Social media and live streams are no replacement for walking into a place and being awed by its architecture and backstory.

These historic places still need the support of the Kansas City community to keep them alive. Please visit or donate to an historic site in your neighborhood or community soon.



Example Harris-Kearney House



Example Mutual Musicians Foundation Inc.

Photos by HKC

## Pandemic-Caused Challenge — Historic Theaters

### THE STORY

New to the list in 2021, a pandemic caused challenge to historic theaters. By mid-March of 2020 theaters of all types across the United States had closed their doors, canceled the remainder of their seasons, and in most cases announced layoffs and furloughs, due to mandates for social distancing to stem the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Historic theaters provide significant economic benefit, promote a sense of place, and build community identity in our commercial districts and neighborhoods. Historic theaters are treasured places. They're architecturally and functionally unique. The entire community benefits from their presence.

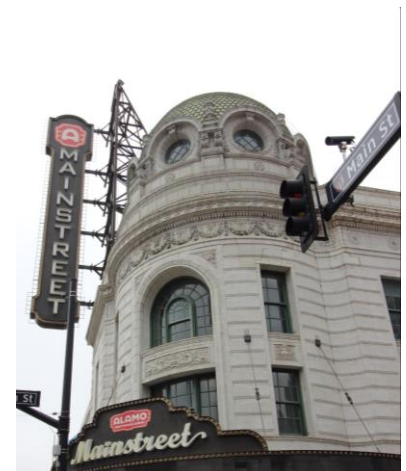
Right now they need our help. Theaters have been devastated by the pandemic. With no revenue, historic theater operators are unable to implement critical capital projects, leading to deferred maintenance. Loss of a theater is a loss for American culture. These historic places still need the support of the Kansas City community to keep them alive.

A recent example, the Alamo Drafthouse. The historic Mainstreet Theater at 14th and Main has played many roles throughout its history—Orpheum, RKO, Empire, AMC and most recently the Alamo Drafthouse. Opened a century ago this October, the theater has so much history in its walls, having hosted the likes of Cab Calloway, Charlie Chaplin, and the Marx rothers.

In March 2021, the Alamo Drafthouse decided not to reopen after going dark a year ago because of the COVID pandemic. The Austin-based theater chain declared bankruptcy and is closing many of its theaters around the country.

Liberty-based B & B Theatres has signed a deal with the Cordish Company to take over the historic theater. B & B expressed interest in the location soon after Alamo Drafthouse's announcement, noting that the theater is a historic landmark with great visibility in the heart of the Kansas City Power & Light District. B & B plans a fall reopening.

Our hope in placing historic theaters of all types, on the Most Endangered Places List, is to encourage the community to support your local theater, to keep them alive.



The Main Street Theater, 1400 Main St.

Photos by HKC

## African American Heritage Sites

Kansas City's African American community has a rich and long history. From the first settlements at the Town of Kansas; to the small communities such as Steptoe, Hell's Half Acre, and Belvidere; then as segregation became more prominent, the rich culture in the 18th & Vine Area, African Americans lived and worked throughout the area. Many significant sites, such as the Armour Building on the Western Baptist Bible College campus, have been lost. African American heritage sites are threatened by disinvestment and lack of maintenance. Example sites include the 18th and Vine Historic District; the former home of Satchel Paige, 2626 E. 28th Street; and the Rector Mansion, 2000 E. 12th Street.

It is hoped that this listing will bring new awareness to the plight of these important historic sites and encourage both financial and volunteer investment in African American heritage sites.

### **18TH AND VINE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

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 city's initial investment in July 2016 covered Phase I of a larger \$27.6 million venture and recognized the importance of rehabbing and energizing one of Kansas City's most important historic districts. The city and the 18th & Vine Development Policy Committee are overseeing multiple projects. By 2018, 12 projects had been complete. Recent private investment includes Chicago-based Gateway Investment Partners LLC intended \$20 million renovation of the Crispus Attucks School building at 18th and Woodland into an arts and culture center. Other private investments include the renovation of the Old City Public Works and Water Buildings, and restoration of 1819 Vine.

The **18<sup>th</sup> and Vine 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. The district in 1991 was composed of forty-two buildings and structures. Of the buildings remaining, thirty-one of the buildings are historic. Those demolished have become parking lots or vacant lots. Eleven buildings have been added. Some of the 25 city-owned sites are at risk.

Other at-risk properties include **The Kansas City Call building complex** at 1715-1723 E. 18th Street. From the Call's inception, news policy has been constructive, presenting the achievements and worthwhile happenings among the African American community, rather than dwelling on crime and other stereotypical aspects of the news. Through the years, the Call has continued to urge the community to be politically empowered and to speak out on issues affecting the welfare of African American people. The three structures suffer from water infiltration and are in very poor condition.

The **Holy Ghost New Testament Church**, 1815 Paseo, was designed by architect Charles M. Williams in 1926. In 2017 the roof was blown off and windows were shattered. A GoFundMe page to raise money for the church's repairs/restoration was not successful. Temporary repairs were made.

With a plan in place to guide 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine's future, now is an important time to urge Kansas City new lawmakers to reinforce the City's commitment to preserve and protect the remaining historic buildings within this epicenter of America's musical, cultural, and social heritage.



18<sup>th</sup> & Vine Historic District looking East



The KC Call, 1715 East 18<sup>th</sup> Street



Holy Ghost New Testament Church, 1815 Paseo



18<sup>th</sup> and Vine Historic District looking West

Photos by HKC



## **FORMER HOME of SACHEL PAIGE, 2626 E. 28TH STREET**

### **THE STORY/THREAT**

The site is the former home of Satchel Paige, a Negro League and Major League Baseball player who was inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971. He is known as the best pitcher in baseball history, due to his longevity in the game and the record crowds he drew first in the Negro Leagues, then with Major League Baseball. Satchel Paige died in this house in 1982. Built in 1910, the house was designed by Smith & Bois Architects in the Shirtwaist style and is a contributing property within the Santa Fe Neighborhood Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

After a fire in 2018, HKC and our partners—the Santa Fe Neighborhood, Kansas City Homesteading Authority (KCMHA), U.S. Rep. Emanuel Cleaver II, and many others—set out to honor Paige’s local legacy by stabilizing his former home. HKC received two grants from the National Trust’s African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. The first grant funded a structural assessment of the house, followed by the second grant to stabilize and secure it. KCMHA purchased the home in 2019 to protect the structure for future use. Cleaning, stabilization, and reroofing have been completed. KCMHA will solicit qualifications and proposals from potential developers for the complete restoration of the property to make it a neighborhood asset that celebrates Paige’s legacy. The partners who will make recommendations to the KCMHA in the redevelopment of this project include Historic Kansas City, The National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the Santa Fe Area Council, the neighborhood association in which the house is located and is dedicated to preserving their neighborhood. These groups have worked diligently to stabilize and preserve the house.



**Former Home - Satchel Paige after Stabilization**  
Photos by Kansas City Homesteading Authority



**Former Home - Satchel Paige after Stabilization**  
Photo by HKC

## **RECTOR MANSION, 2000 E. 12TH STREET**

### **THE STORY/THREAT**

The Rector Mansion is the former home of Sarah Rector, the first black female millionaire, who entertained guests such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Joe Louis, and Jack Johnson. As members of the Creek Nation, Rector and her family members each received allotments of 160 acres of land in Oklahoma. By the time Sarah was 12, “a gusher” was discovered on her land, and the young girl became a millionaire. Sarah Rector Campbell Crawford, (c. 1901-1963) lived in this American foursquare until the stock market crash in 1929. Over the years, the “Rector Mansion” had several tenants. The building has been vacant for many years.

The house is owned by the United Inner-City Services. As a part of our field service outreach, HKC established a relationship with UICS and continues to support their efforts to seek grant funding and professional services as they explore restoration of the house. UICS received a \$5,000 grant in 2018 from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which laid the groundwork for their efforts. Currently they await news of two grants to assist with remediation and master planning. In late January, a National Register nomination was approved by the local Preservation Commission and will be heard by the State Historic Preservation Office in July. UICS has actively re-engaged with descendants of Sarah Rector, and have their family's blessing with their work in renovating the home. Sarah Rector’s story is a relatively untold story of American success and a woman's prosperity during a time where she faced the consequences of slavery and Reconstruction, discrimination, and sexism.



**Rector Mansion, 2000 E. 12th Street**  
Photo: Brad Finch, f-Stop Photography

## Westport Area

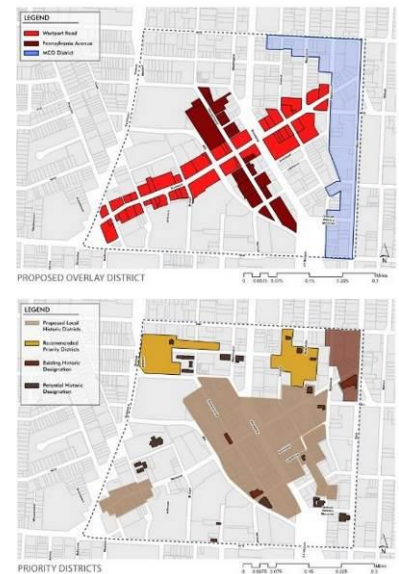
### THE STORY/THREAT

Westport and the surrounding commercial, residential, and institutional buildings illustrate the development of an independent trading post settlement to a thriving business and entertainment center in Midtown Kansas City. The buildings, sites, and structures tell a unique and important story. They define the development history of the community and provide tangible reminders of the past that create a unique sense of place.

Westport contains a little bit of everything, from architectural styles, building heights, and materials to dates of construction, integrity, and functions. The on-going continuum of development already obscures some of the area's beginnings and early development.

Westport is one of Kansas City's most distinct places and lies in one of the fastest developing areas of the city. With a few minor exception, the buildings in Westport are not protected by landmark status and are at risk of demolition or speculative development.

Following a two-year planning effort led by the Westport Regional Business League, the city, and Historic Kansas City, the city officially recognized the Westport District Plan in June 2019. The plan defines a blueprint for the way Westport can and should build into the future. A top priority of the plan is the adoption of a Special Character Overlay District for the commercial corridors of Westport Road and Pennsylvania, which would allow Westport to evolve in a way that is sensitive to the existing context and consistent in character. Westport remains at risk until these implementation steps are completed. Ongoing land assemblage demonstrates the current urgency. Our hope in listing Westport on the Most Endangered Places List is to raise public awareness of the need for the adoption of these protection solutions.



Westport District Master Plan  
City of Kansas City, MO. Westport District Master Plan

## Epperson House

### 5200 CHERRY STREET

### THE STORY

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 House then began a new life, first housing aviation cadets during WWII. It became a university dormitory in 1949, and in 1957, it became the school of education. More recently, the building housed the Department of Architecture, Urban Planning and Design.



Epperson House 5200 Cherry Street, UMKC  
Photo by HKC

### THE THREAT

Over its years of vacancy Epperson has fallen into a state of disrepair. An article published by University News in 2013 detailed the state of neglect the building had suffered, including deteriorating stained-glass windows, water damage and crumbling crenellations on the house's tower. UMKC identifies the Americans with Disabilities Act as the trigger. In 2018, Chancellor C. Mauli Agrawal assembled a task force consisting of faculty, staff, students, and alumni to address restoration efforts: The task force discussed ideas for future uses of the building as well as how the project could be funded. On January 9, 2020, UMKC issued a Request for Information seeking proposals for the development of Epperson House. The project intent was to complete the historic restoration of the Epperson House exterior, interior public spaces, and grounds; along with a strategic renovation and repurposing of the private spaces for compatible market rate revenue generating office or hospitality uses that support the urban engagement mission of UMKC, the desire of the community to see the house restored and the interests of the Developer while covering the operating costs of the facility. In August 2020, Agrawal outlined his steps forward to address the COVID crisis, including his intent to "sell or ground lease the Epperson House. This historic home is dear to our hearts. UMKC is not financially in a position to save it, so we must find someone who will."

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

## Historic Churches

One of the most emotionally charged challenges facing preservation is the preservation of churches, synagogues, and other religious structures. Historic religious properties are significant elements of the American cultural landscape. But, as a result of economic, social, and demographic changes, they are, as a category, one of our most endangered property types. Shifts in population, the decline in congregations, and the diminished role of the church in everyday life have placed many in jeopardy. 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.

### **SEVENTH CHURCH OF CHRIST SCIENTIST, 604 WEST 47TH STREET**

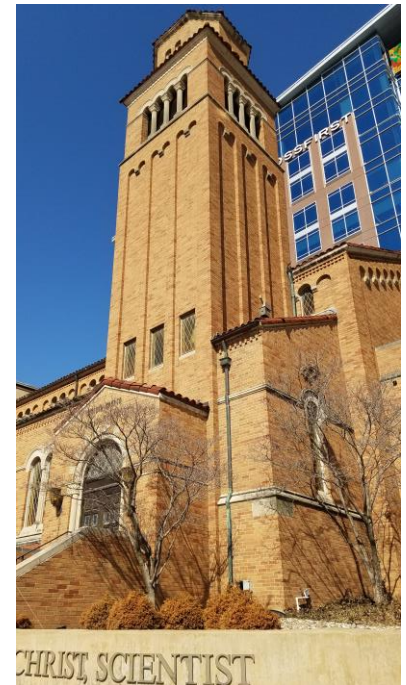
#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

The church building is an excellent example of the Romanesque Revival style. Constructed in 1941-1942, it was designed by Indianapolis architect Charles Wilbur Foster to blend with existing buildings that comprise the Country Club Plaza. Developer J.C. Nichols designed regional shopping centers for his residential developments in the early twentieth century. The presence of ecclesiastical resources is in keeping with Nichols' original intention for the mixed-use area, as his idea was to build community.

In 2019, due to diminishing congregation size, the Seventh Church of Christ Scientist elected to pursue a development agreement with Legacy Development that would allow for the demolition of the historic church and construction of a 13-story tower, allowing the congregation to have facilities in the new building. The development plan was never heard by the City Plan Commission.

The church was purchased in 2020 by JH Investors, associated with DRAKE development, the developer of the Jack Henry Building. As reported by City Scene KC in April, the developer states "I want it to be known, neither property, Jack Henry nor the church, are on the National Historic Register." "The church has a ton of asbestos and is obsolete" He goes on to say, "he is mulling over a redevelopment concept for the property." The developer's intent is to demolish the church and replace it with a box that may, or may not, conform to the Overlay District height restrictions – of 45 feet.

The future of the church remains uncertain. A recently adopted Special Character Overlay District along the 47<sup>th</sup> Street corridor caps the height in this area at 45 feet and restricts unwanted uses. However, the Overlay does not protect the church from 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 throughout the country have seen churches adaptively reused as offices for design firms, nightclubs, and restaurants.



7th Church of Christ Scientist, 604 W 47th St  
Photos by HKC

### **THE HOPE CENTER INC, 2800 E LINWOOD BLVD**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

This Romanesque church, designed by Frederick Gunn and completed in 1924, was originally called Annunciation Roman Catholic Church. The stain glass windows were made in Innsbruck, Austria, and installed in 1924. The original plan for the church called for piers/steeple on the towers. The church design was modeled after a church in Chicago. In 1940 the church interior was remodeled, and in 1953 a new school building was added to the west. In 1975 the parishes of Annunciation, Holy Name and St. Vincent were consolidated and renamed Church of the Risen Christ. The structure is currently owned by The Hope Center KC, a Community Development organization that provides family outreach programs; child and youth development programs; housing initiatives; charter school partnership; and a community family care clinic. In 2018, the church received new attention as the site of a multi-media art installation by the noted artist Nick Cave, as part of the city's Open Spaces cultural festival. It is hoped that this listing will bring further awareness to their challenge ahead toward funding a full reuse and rehabilitation plan.



The Hope Center Inc, 2800 E Linwood Blvd  
Photos by HKC

## Modern Architecture

It's not easy being a neglected modern building. Design that felt cutting edge several decades ago may still feel too avant-garde to people viewing it today. These buildings are old, but often not felt to be "old enough" to be considered as "historic" and therefore "worth saving." You have experienced modern architecture if you've been to KCI, Arrowhead or The K. Drive-thru restaurants, drive-in movie theaters and drive-up banks are all examples of architecture influenced by 20<sup>th</sup>-century progress and the concept of Modernism. Many neglected modern structures sit awaiting saviors, often unable to be saved from the wrecking ball. Examples of Modernism include the Jewish Community Center, 8201 Holmes Road, and a handful of Phillips automotive service stations built with "Gull Wing" designs.

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.

### **The Jewish Community Center, 8201 Holmes Road**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

Built in 1961 as the Jewish Community Center, this magnificent midcentury modern building was designed by architect Manuel Morris and occupied between 1961 and 1984. It was acquired by Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) and opened as Robeson Middle School in 1985.

Because its association with the school district is less than 50 years, it is not eligible for the National Register in conjunction with the Historic Schools of Kansas City Multiple Property Documentation Form. It appears, however, to retain integrity and significance for its original recreational function and may be National Register eligible under that context.

KCPS sold the Robeson school site to Robeson Holding Co, LLC, a partnership between South Waldo Community Investors (SWCI) and O'Reilly Development Company in 2018.

The partnership plans to convert the 20-acre site into a recreation center with athletic fields, indoor courts, a 24-hour day care center, community theater, retail shops and community programming, as well as apartments for senior citizens. The development team, KCPS and the local neighborhood associations have entered into a Community Benefits Agreement to ensure that low-income youth and families will have access to the recreation center and its programs. The development team is currently conducting additional due diligence and planning for the project. Additional meetings will be held with the community as the project planning progresses.



The Jewish Community Center, 8201 Holmes Rd.  
Photo by HKC

### **PHILLIPS SERVICE STATIONS – Gull Wing Design**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

A city-led survey of Post-World War II architecture identified properties of particular note, such as the Phillips Service Station(s) - Willy's Petroleum Co., 5901 Prospect Ave, (currently Calley Tires), whose distinctive gull-wing design was built in 1963. An example of The Modern Movement: Neo-Expressionism, "This unique standardized design produced by the Phillips Petroleum Company was developed by company architect Clarence Reinhardt who incorporated mid-twentieth-century angular forms – seen in drive-ins and the tail fins of Cadillacs – in his station design"

As an example of the "small box with canopy" station form, this service station represents a distinct period in the evolution of gas station design, of which, few possessing this high degree of integrity remain." Other threatened gull-wing designs include 5901 Prospect Ave. (Calley Tires) and 1300 Prospect Ave. (The Big Lot).



Phillips Service Station - Willy's Petroleum Co.  
5901 Prospect Ave.  
Photos by KCModern Survey



Phillips Service Station - Creative Automotive  
1610 E. 63rd St  
Photos by HKC

## The Country Club Plaza Environs

### THE STORY

The Country Club Plaza became the most influential comprehensively planned retail complex established in the United States before the mid-twentieth century. The shopping center established real estate developer J. C. Nichols as the nation's foremost author of a groundbreaking approach to the creation of a mixed-use district, an approach that significantly altered the American landscape after World War II. Today, hundreds of new apartments are proposed, approved and/or under construction in the area, particularly north of the Plaza. New hotel proposals emerge while simultaneously subsidies are sought, and the lodging community expands its offerings. Retail properties are constantly changing, and office use has grown in recent years.

The Plaza was threatened. The need for protection was based on underlying zoning that was not consistent with the Plaza Plan and left open the possibility for development that would be out of scale and potentially damaging to the urban design and historic character of the area. Since 2016, HKC has been involved in a multi-phase planning process involving property owners and city officials to adopt land use and the height restrictions established by the Midtown Plaza Area Plan "Bowl Concept." The third expansion of the overlay ordinance was adopted in 2019 and codifies existing recommendations, adding more "teeth" to height and use regulations for the heart of our iconic Country Club Plaza. Adoption of the overlay district enables future developers and current owners to reasonably rely upon and predict what heights and uses will be allowed for future buildings.

### THE THREAT

Covid-19, however, has sent retail real estate into a tailspin nationwide. And those concepts that are built on in-person experiences, such as the Plaza, are suffering the most. From major retailer closings to tenant shuffles, the Country Club Plaza is undergoing changes and has several vacant storefronts.

In addition to Covid-19, e-commerce is an added challenge. It's a pain felt nationwide by retail centers. Increased competition from e-commerce has contributed to recently shuttered Plaza locations.

The Plaza has seen many changes through the decades. It's in another state of transition today. The Plaza's ability to successfully navigate this latest wave of changes will have an impact on retailers throughout the area and it will radiate out to the companies that have located their offices on or near the district and to the apartments that surround it.



Plaza Environs  
Photos by HKC

## Sauer Castle

### **935 SHAWNEE ROAD, KANSAS CITY, KS**

#### **THE STORY**

The Anthony Sauer residence (popularly known as the Sauer Castle) was completed in 1872 and is one of the most architecturally and historically significant houses in Kansas City, Kansas. It is also one of the finest examples of "Italianate Villa" architecture in the State of Kansas and may represent the work of one of the first trained architects in the Kansas City area, Asa Beebe Cross. The building was placed on the National Register in 1977 and designated a Kansas City, Kansas Historic Landmark in 1987.

#### **THE THREAT**

Carl Lopp, a descendant of the Sauer family, purchased the home in 1988 and says he has plans to renovate it. Yet, for 30 years, Sauer Castle has sat vacant and deteriorated. The Unified Government has made several attempts to take action on the property and tried to gain control of it decades ago, to no avail. Efforts of the Kansas City, Kansas, Landmarks Commission to make the owner keep the property up to code proved unsuccessful.

The Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas, has now deemed the Sauer Castle unsafe, and a judge issued a warrant on Dec. 10, 2020, allowing for the "boarding and securing" of the property due to violations of city ordinances. As reported by Channel 5 News, a spokesperson for the Unified Government said, "this action was taken after multiple requests to secure the property went unanswered by the owner." The Unified Government began boarding up Sauer Castle December 14, 2020, to keep out vandals and the elements.

A Sauer Castle Facebook page was initiated several years ago and has attracted more than 11,000 followers. The site includes historic facts, photos, and comments about possible futures for the building. The Facebook community's mission is to save it and the group 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 Places List is that the owner might be encouraged to finally fix up or sell – and that the local government seeks stronger and enhanced laws to protect buildings from owners who would practice demolition by neglect.



Sauer Castle, 935 Shawnee Road, KCKS  
Photos by Peter Foy

## KCMO Closed Schools

In the last 20 years, enrollment in urban schools across the country has dropped, forcing more and more schools to be closed. Though the challenges are many when it comes to renovating these old school buildings, the opportunities are also extensive. With the help of visionary agencies, neighborhoods, and developers, these intriguing parts of history can be preserved and reimagined for a modern purpose. Because these schools are located in the urban core with existing transportation and utility connections, the renovation can be done with far less material than a greenfield development.

The KCMO Repurposing Initiative is responsible for the strategy, design, and conveyance of 30 school properties in Kansas City that the school district closed in 2010. Winner of the 2012 HKC Historic Preservation Award for Innovation, the Initiative continues to work with community members and prospective buyers to identify new uses for the remaining vacant buildings. The KCMO Repurposing Initiative hopes to work with interested parties to encourage someone to step up and save these structures.

### **MARLBOROUGH SCHOOL, 1300 E. 75TH STREET**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

Through 2017, Exact Partners 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 rejected historic designation. In October 2020, Exact Marlborough, LLC entered into a letter of intent with the Marlborough Community Coalition (MCC) that would allow for the sale of the property if MCC received an allocation of low income housing tax credits by early 2021. If MCC does not receive a LIHTC allocation, Exact Marlborough has developed an alternative reuse proposal for the site, allowing for demolition of the school. KCPS hosted a virtual meeting on December 8, 2020, to learn about new reuse plan concepts for the Marlborough School Site.”



Marlborough School  
1300 E. 75th Street

### **PERSHING SCHOOL, 5915 PARK AVE**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

No proposals have been received for Pershing to date. Pershing was built in several stages between 1924 and 1953. Overall, the building illustrates the philosophy of Progressive Era elementary school design, and it is an unusual example of a school executed in the Mediterranean Revival style. Few changes have been made to its historic plan and finishes. The building appears eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



Pershing School, 5915 Park Ave

### **LADD SCHOOL, 3640 BENTON BLVD**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

In 2018, the Palestine Economic Development Corporation (PEDC) advised KCPS that it was no longer pursuing the Ladd school site for the development of an assisted living center due to uncertainty regarding historic tax credits. KCPS is accepting proposals.



Ladd School, 3640 Benton Blvd

### **MESERVEY SCHOOL, 4210 E 45TH ST**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

Meservey was previously under contract with Yarco-Devco, LLC (Yarco) in 2018. The sale was contingent upon Yarco receiving a low income housing tax credit (LIHTC) allocation, but the Missouri Housing and Development Corporation did not award LIHTC to the project during the Fall 2018 round. Kansas City Public Schools (KCPS) is accepting proposals.



Meservey School, 4210 E 45th St.  
Photos by HKC

## Midtown Apartments and Apartment Hotels

One building type that poses a particular challenge in rehabilitation efforts is early 20<sup>th</sup>-century apartment buildings. In particular, apartment hotels with small unit sizes necessitate either creative design solutions or new uses that expand upon the idea of the traditional apartment rental. 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 MARQUETTE CLUB OF THE KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS (BOULEVARD MANOR HOTEL/STEBEN CLUB), 1115 E. ARMOUR**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

In the 1920s, the Armour and Troost intersection was a lively part of Armour Boulevard's apartment hotel district; a thoroughfare lined with impressive fashionable apartment buildings that served to provide needed housing for the increasing population during a period in which the city was undergoing rapid growth. The businesses that once lined the Armour and Troost intersection are mostly gone. Around the corner on Armour between Troost and Forest, sits the Marquette Club. Built in 1923 and designed by architect A.F. Adams, the Renaissance Revival building, substantial in its brick and stone construction, incorporated living spaces with club facilities. In later iterations, it would become the Boulevard Manor Hotel and Steuben Club. Although partly fenced, the building is often open at multiple first floor locations. City reports indicate that unusual retail activities, such as "futon bed" sales, take place. Transformative projects are underway at the Troost/Amour intersection. The Marquette Club is at risk and should be included in any future redevelopment efforts.



The Marquette Club, 1115 E. Armour  
Photo by HKC and MVRSC

### **BELMONT HOTEL, 911 E. LINWOOD BLVD**

#### **THE STORY/THREAT**

The Belmont Hotel is the oldest of the four surviving apartment hotels on Linwood Boulevard. The Belmont is an excellent example of an early 20<sup>th</sup>-century mid-rise apartment hotel, a building that provided a specific set of accommodations that distinguished it from hotels and flats or apartment houses. These units were private rooms or suites designed without kitchens, an important distinguishing feature of the apartment hotel property type. Kansas City architect L. Grant Middaugh designed the six-story building for hotel developer John H. Van Closter and the Belmont Building Company in 1912. Restrained Prairie style elements reflect the architectural trends popular for residential resources at the time of construction. Its history has included a range of uses.

Midtown Development Partners is pursuing a \$162 million redevelopment concept that would energize the historic commercial heart of Troost Avenue by adding apartments, retail, office and an amphitheater. Called Troost Village, a key element of Phase 3 includes renovating the Belmont. The plan calls for the first two floors to be used as Airbnb space and the upper floors as 99 units of affordable housing geared toward single-parent households. The developers will seek a combination of federal HUD funding, new market tax credits and historic tax credits to help finance the project. The plan also includes a potential parking garage.



Belmont Hotel, 911 E. Linwood Blvd  
Photos by HKC and City of KCMO



## WATCH LIST

- 3226 Karnes Street
- 4701 Rockhill Road
- The Progress Club, 1051 Washington St.
- Breech Academy, 6300 Lamar Ave., OPKS
- Aladdin Theater, 6044 Truman Rd
- Curtis Studio Building, 1118 McGee St.
- Askew Elementary, 2630 Topping (development pending)
- Metcalf Bank, 7200 W 75th St, Overland Park, KS
- CVS Drug, 7501 Metcalf Ave, Overland Park, KS
- Community State Bank, 3328 Troost Ave
- Suburban Bank of Kansas City, 6909 Prospect Ave
- Suburban Bank of Kansas City, 6920 Prospect Ave

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