

*For Immediate Release*  
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## 2016 MOST ENDANGERED LIST

*Kansas City, MO, June 22nd 2016* - Every year Historic Kansas City publishes the Most Endangered List to raise awareness and advocate for our city's historic buildings and resources.

Historic KC's Most Endangered list is a non-exhaustive roster of notable places threatened with demolition or extreme alteration. 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 from all stakeholders and is not a compendium of endangered historic places in our region or even all significant historic places threatened. List is in no particular order.

### 1. The "Nelsonhood", KCMO

The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art is considering expanding their footprint, which threatens a number of historic homes including the Kirkwood Mansion. The "Nelsonhood" is at the heart of the city's cultural district and encompasses some of the city's quintessential Parks and Boulevards neighborhoods, including Southmoreland and Rockhill. The Nelson's announcement of a conceptual Cultural Arts District plan in June 2014 included the demolition of five large, architecturally significant homes listed on the



**Kirkwood Mansion at 46<sup>th</sup> and Rockhill Road**

Kansas City Register and would destroy the context of an entire neighborhood block. This proposal again raises concerns about institutional expansion that neighborhood residents have in the past repeatedly opposed in the interest of protecting the integrity of their community.

### 2. KCI Airport

Kansas City International Airport, designed by noted modernist firm Kivett and Myers, opened in 1972. The unique design reflected TWA's grandiose ambitions and featured an innovative "Drive to Your Gate" design in which each circular terminal allowed passengers to park nearby and walk roughly 75 feet to their gate. This concept



**KCI Airport**

inspired the design of several other international airports including Munich Airport in Germany.

The possibility of replacing KCI with a single terminal has been at the forefront of civic discussion for the past several years, but in May of 2016 –with only 39% of residents supporting a new single terminal--the public vote was put on hold. Architectural significance aside, the prospect of replacing KCI brings up several major concerns. First, whether the quality of construction can be replaced--and at what cost--and whether investing in a brand new structure is wise given the advanced pace in which technology and security standards are advancing. As a civic policy, our City shouldn't make a habit of tearing down major buildings every 40 years, especially those iconic and influential designs that may prove fashionable and functional in the not too distant future.

### 3. MGM Building, 220 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, KCMO

The MGM distribution building was designed by architect Robert Gornall and built in 1930. Hollywood has a strong connection to Kansas City; when the movie industry needed more centralized distribution points to ship their features nationwide, Hollywood chose Kansas City as one of its largest and Film Row was born. The industrial enclave occupied nearly twenty buildings in a four square block area of the Crossroads District near downtown. Film Row included major studio tenants such as MGM, 20th Century Fox, Warner Brothers, Paramount and United Artists. It also housed peripheral suppliers to the industry, notably the Manley Popcorn Company. Today, Kansas City has one of the most intact Film Row districts in the nation, but lacks historic recognition and a formal protection strategy.



MGM Building, 220-224 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, MO

In particular, the MGM building is threatened by owner neglect. The building has a lack of routine maintenance and has had numerous citations from the city, despite attempts by neighborhood residents and developers to purchase the building to renovate.

### 4. Modern Architecture, KC Metro Area

The recent good news about 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 has not yet been completed in Kansas City, MO and many metro areas known to have significant modern structures have not been fully

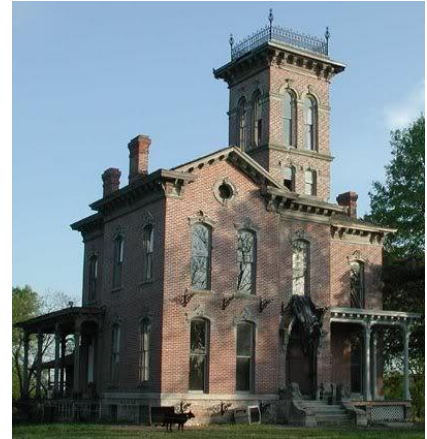


Metcalf Bank, 75<sup>th</sup> Street Branch

evaluated for buildings that could be eligible for historic designation. For example, the Metcalf corridor from 75th Street to 103<sup>rd</sup> Street contains many notable structures of the modern era, including Phillips 66, Newcomer's Funeral Home, Metcalf Bank, CVS and the old French Market.

#### 5. Sauer Castle, 935 Shawnee Rd, Kansas City, KS

The Anthony Sauer residence (popularly known as the Sauer Castle) was built in 1872 and is one of the most architecturally and historically significant houses in Kansas City, Kansas. The Sauer Castle is one of the finest examples of "Italianate Villa" architecture in the State of Kansas. The home may represent the work of one of the first trained architects in the Kansas City area, Asa Beebe Cross.



Sauer Castle, 935 Shawnee Road, KCK

The house sits on the old Shawnee Indian trail that was part of the Santa Fe Trail. Sauer was an important business figure in Kansas City following the Civil War, as well as a pillar of the German-American immigrant community. When choosing a location, Sauer wanted a place that reminded him of his hometown along the Rhine River in the Swiss Alps. The home included a winery, grape arbor, bakery and schoolhouse for the children. The building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and was 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. Efforts of the Kansas City, Kansas Landmarks Commission to make owner keep the property up to code have proved unsuccessful.

#### 6. 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine and African American Heritage Sites

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, including Charlie Parker. The 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine Historic District has long suffered from a lack of investment and building neglect. Since the 1990s when redevelopment efforts began, several historic buildings have been lost and many more sit vacant and deteriorating. Currently the City Council is having a serious discussion about appropriating funds to stabilize historic structures and improve the district through redevelopment and infrastructure projects. A decision is expected in mid-July. This is a significant step forward and a beacon of hope in the effort to save the buildings that remain in the district. But still, much work must be done to turn the area into the vibrant, cultural district that it should be. For one, there should be clear policies that prioritize building rehabilitation, and there should be design guidelines for rehabilitation and new construction to ensure that historic character is retained.



Vacant buildings on Vine Street owned by the City of Kansas City

A related category of sites that is threatened by disinvestment and a lack of comprehensive survey are African American heritage sites. Vacant buildings include the Rector Mansion at 2000 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, former home of the first black female millionaire where she entertained guests such as Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Joe Louis and Jack Johnson. The Wheatley Provident Hospital at 1826 Forest 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. There is a strong need for a comprehensive city-wide survey to identify additional sites of significance in order to develop a protection strategy for these important historic resources.

## 7. 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 in Kansas City, KS is St. John the Divine. Originally built in 1887 but remodeled in 1909, this brick church is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival style. The building was sold to the Catholic diocese in 1937 and became a cultural anchor in the historically Mexican-American neighborhood of Argentine. Unfortunately, with diminishing attendance the building has been vacant since 1992 and has since suffered neglect. St. John the Divine is one of less than 100 sites on the National Register associated with Hispanic heritage, and the only one in the State of Kansas designated because of its historical association with the Mexican-American community. Though threatened with demolition by the Unified Government of Wyandotte County, the current owner, the St. John the Divine Community Art and Education Center, is working to develop a plan for stabilization and rehabilitation of the building. The group engaged the Section 106 review process and is pursuing options to get the demo order lifted. The Kansas Historical Society has offered the Unified Government a \$30,000 Heritage Trust Fund grant to fund part of the stabilization and rehabilitation.



St. John the Divine, Argentine neighborhood of KCK

In the case of church adaptive reuse, funding and creative planning are certainly key. Other regions and communities in the Northeast, but also as close as St. Louis, have seen churches adaptively reused as private residences, offices for design firms, nightclubs and restaurants.

## 8. 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 former warehouses downtown and in the West Bottoms as well as neighborhood corner stores that dot our urban residential neighborhoods.



Luzier Cosmetics building, 3212 Gillham Plaza, KCMO

In Midtown Kansas City near the Costco development, just blocks away from each other, are two architecturally significant commercial buildings. The old Acme Cleansing and Luzier Cosmetics buildings are both currently vacant and deteriorating, and designs of noted female architect Nelle Peters. The Acme Cleansing building is owned by the Land Bank and available for purchase. As a measure to protect the building from demolition or alteration the Land Bank will require a façade easement as a condition of the sale.

## 9. Old Northeast

The Historic Northeast is a group of neighborhoods that housed judges, doctors and captains of industry that 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 like 1031 Park Ave sit vacant and deteriorating. Unfortunately, not enough formal protections prevent 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. Furthermore, the possible discussion among homeowners to delist Pendleton Heights as a Historic District would set a dangerous precedent and be a significant blow to neighborhood preservation efforts in the Northeast and across Kansas City.



**Aladdin Theater, 6044 East Truman Road, KCMO**

## 10. Plaza Environs

The updated Midtown Plaza Area Plan, adopted in January 2016 after years of effort by city planners, businesses, organizations and neighborhood leaders, is soon to be tested. Most of the Plaza has been receiving a great deal of interest from developers, but the north side of the Plaza particularly is under tremendous pressure, perhaps more than any other area of the city. An eight story hotel and apartment at 46th and Wornall was recently approved after extensive conversations and compromise between area residents and the developer. Several other proposals are in preliminary discussions or have applications pending with the city: 169 new construction apartments at 44th and Washington, 30 new construction apartments at 45th and Wornall, and the redevelopment of the Plaza Medical Building at 46th Terrace and JC Nichols Parkway into an assisted facility, a project which involves a three story addition, surpassing the height limit of the bowl concept and rising higher than its neighbor, the Courtyard Marriott (formerly the Park Lane Apartments).



**Nelle Peters apartments at 47<sup>th</sup> and Summit mid-demolition, to be replaced by new residential construction**

It's important that any new development that gets city approval follow the new 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 Council when they reviewed pieces of land parcel by parcel. The City should set the precedent now to developers to *follow 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.

#### 11. 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. Particularly, the apartment hotel in which small unit size necessitates either a creative design solutions or new uses that expand upon the idea of the traditional apartment rental. For example, The Hawthorn Plaza Apartments (originally the Netherland Hotel, and also known as The Tacoma) at 39<sup>th</sup> and Main has 270 efficiency sized apartment/hotel rooms. It was designed in the Spanish Revival style by Robert F.



[Knickerbocker Apartments at 501-535 Knickerbocker Place](#)

Gornall in 1927. It has been sitting vacant through stalled rehabilitation efforts and a lack of financing. The building is listed on the Kansas City Register and the National Register of Historic Places. The building is also part of the 39<sup>th</sup> and Main Historic District. Another endangered building of the apartment/hotel type is the Steuben Club/Boulevard Manor Hotel at Armour and Troost.

The Knickerbocker Apartments at 501 – 535 Knickerbocker Place represents a grander scale apartment but an endangered historic apartment building none the less. This apartment building designed by Leon Grant Middaugh was built in 1909 in the Century Revival style. The building is significant for its architecture and was listed on the National Register in 2003. The building, located in the Valentine Neighborhood, is owned by the KC Life Insurance Company. The building is currently vacant due to a stalled rehabilitation effort and the intention of the owner and the future of the building is uncertain.

#### WATCH LIST:

- Quindaro Ruins, Kansas City, KS
- St. Francis Xavier School, 1001 E 52nd St, KCMO
- Epperson House, 5200 Cherry Street, KCMO
- Midwest Hotel, 1925 Main Street
- Lane Blueprint, 16<sup>th</sup> and Main Street, KCMO

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