

April 9, 2026

City of Kansas City, MO
City Council
414 E. 12th Street
Kansas City, MO 64106

Ordinance 260283, Smith Hall Historic Designation

Please consider this letter as formal support of **Ordinance # 260283**, designating Leonard Smith Hall a Historic Building on the campus of Kansas City University located at 1700 Independence Boulevard in the heart of the Pendleton Heights Historic District. This historic site is not only a significant part of our community's heritage but also holds great cultural and historical value that should be preserved for future generations.

As a brief roadmap, this ordinance was passed unanimously with a vote of **DO PASS** out of the city's Historic Preservation Commission during their February meeting.

The City Planning Commission **STAFF REPORT** on the ordinance recommended a **DO PASS** but the actual Planning Commission shot it down on a 4-1 vote which was interesting to say the least.

In last week's Neighborhood Planning & Development Meeting, committee chair Parks-Shaw along with committee member Melissa Patterson Hazley ordered the two parties to "*negotiate a compromise*" prior to this week's committee meeting. Our committee attempted to negotiate with KCU's lawyer Jim Bowers in good faith but sadly, KCU and Bowers refused to, in good faith, negotiate a compromise.

The matter was taken up again by Neighborhood Planning & Development on Tuesday, April 7th and on a 4-0 vote, was passed out of committee with **NO RECOMMENDATION** despite every committee member present recognizing the building's eligibility as a Historic Property and lamenting the continued destruction of the city's historic fabric. Councilwoman Patterson-Hazley even compared the issue to our neighbors in Johnson County, Kansas by stating that: "*if the city continues to tear down its historic structures, we'll look all new like Leawood.*"

I bring this to your attention for this reason, the question on the table is Smith Hall's eligibility to be placed on the Local Register of Historic Places. Nothing more, nothing less.

Yet testimony from KCU circumvents this by clouding the issue with superfluous information related to how many doctors they graduate; how beneficial their institution is to the medical community and the importance of their MPD even though MPD's, according to earlier testimony on this ordinance can be changed at any time. More to the point- their master plan was vague and did not state specifically Smith Hall would be demolished, stating it was eligible to **remain, be revitalized or be removed.**

Operative word **“OR.”**

The ask from the Save Smith Hall Committee and the Historic Northeast community is simple. Vote to **PASS Ordinance # 260283**, officially designating Smith Hall as a Historic Structure on the Kansas City Register of Historic Places.

The dissention on this ordinance by the various committees and city staff, all of whom agree that the building is eligible for listing as a Historic structure make a yes vote clear in order to protect the historic integrity of our community.

As a resident of Kansas City's Historic Northeast community and a strong proponent of Historic Preservation, I urge Kansas City's full City Council to reconsider the plan for demolition and explore alternatives that honor our community's rich history and the memory of Dr. Alice Berry Graham and Dr. Katharine Berry Richardson, the founders of Children's Mercy Hospital.

Thank you for your strong consideration in this matter, it is my sincere hope to see a decision made in favor of preservation. Should there be any questions regarding my position in this matter, please feel free to reach out at the above noted email address.

Sincerely,

Michael G. Bushnell
Former Owner/Publisher of The Northeast News,
Former President Scarritt Renaissance Neighborhood Association
Thirty-six year resident of Historic Northeast Kansas City