

Michael G. Bushnell – Public Testimony 3.31.2026

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

Neighborhood Planning & Development Committee

Ryana.Parks-Shaw@kcmo.org, Eric.Bunch@kcmo.org, Nathan.Willett@kcmo.org, mph@kcmo.org,

Dear Committee Members,

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.

The demolition of Smith Hall may lead to a range of negative consequences, including:

1. **Loss of Historical Significance:** Leonard Smith Hall represents a direct link back to the founders of Children's Mercy Hospital in 1897 by sisters Dr. Alice Berry Graham and Dr. Katharine Berry Richardson as The Free Bed Fund Association for Crippled, Deformed and Ruptured Children. The potential demolition would mean erasing this important chapter of Kansas City's history.
2. **Environmental Concerns:** The demolition process generates waste and contributes to environmental degradation. Preserving existing structures is an environmentally friendly practice that aligns with sustainable development goals.
3. **Community Discontent:** Under the guise of their MPD, (Master Plan Development) the Historic Northeast community has witnessed KCU proceed with the demolition of historic properties, all in the name of "progress". One example of this was the demolition of five, historically significant, Colonnaded apartment buildings in the 500 block of Maple Boulevard in July 2017. Despite opposition from the community as well as independent engineering reports that noted the strong integrity of the buildings, KCU proceeded with demolition anyway citing the demolition was part of the school's MPD and the buildings had deteriorated to a point where they were non-salvageable. That ground now serves as a paved, surface parking lot on the KCU campus.
4. **Potential for Rehabilitation:** There are adaptive reuse alternatives to demolition that can revitalize the site while preserving the historical elements of Smith Hall.

As a resident of Kansas City's Historic Northeast community and a strong proponent of Historic Preservation, I urge Kansas City's Neighborhood Planning & Development Committee to reconsider the plan for demolition and explore alternatives that honor our community's rich history and the memory of the Graham-Berry sisters that founded Children's Mercy Hospital over a century ago.

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 Scarritt Renaissance Neighborhood Association President

Former Owner/Publisher The Northeast News

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