



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

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The Manhattan [Modernism] Project

View of two modernist banks (now Commerce Bank and Landmark National Bank, dating from the late 1960s) from South Juliette Avenue.



Written by Christopher Fein and Michael Grogan

In the decades following the Second World War, Riley County and especially Manhattan, like many cities in the U. S., became an incubator for innovative modern architecture. The architectural movements and efforts that we label modernism were, in the U. S., mainly erected between the conclusion of World War II and the mid-1970s. Though represented by a wide range of building typologies and yielding a great variety of formal and aesthetic examples, generally these works are identified by certain physical characteristics: scarce use of ornamentation; the balance of elements and proportion rather than striving for symmetry; selective use and distribution of materials to achieve austere and clean aesthetics; often celebrating the incorporation of newer materials, such as aluminum, steel, and reinforced concrete; and incorporating systems such as glazed curtain walls and mass-produced components. This reductive nature of building materials and assemblies to create unified and simplified fenestration patterns and, usually, orthogonal geometries marks much of the postwar work.

The growth of Manhattan in the immediate



The current Yorgensen-Meloan-Londeen Funeral Home, built in 1959 off Poyntz Avenue.

decades after the war offered progressive architects in the city and state the opportunity to pursue newer modes of designing and translating progressive ideas into built form with a bold use of materials and structural systems. Postwar architects adapted principles of modernism imported from Europe that spread throughout the U. S., especially after the war, to the context of northeast Kansas. Here the architects translated the received modernist language into an array of solutions addressing the local climate, geography, access to natural and manufactured materials, and the social and cultural milieu of this university town. One notable example of this translation is through the frequent integration of regionally-sourced limestone in the form of precise, smoothly finished paneling or even through a more traditional, ashlar bonding pattern of rough-hewn stone juxtaposed with other more modernist materials.



U. S. Post Office in Ogden, built 1960.

Kansas and Riley County possess many fine examples of modernist work, representing a wide range of building types. One can see a notable consistency through the series of post offices, courthouses, and school buildings dotting the state. Many religious organizations and commercial developers sought out Kansas's top modernist architects—Schaefer, Schirmer, and Eflin and Ramey and Himes in Wichita, John A. Brown in Topeka, Robert E. Mann in Hutchinson, and, in Manhattan, William and Patricia Eidson and Floyd O. Wolfenbarger—to provide new and unique visions for their institutions, befitting the optimistic outlook of the U. S. following the return of World War II's victorious troops and paralleling the emergence of the Baby Boom generation with the attendant expanded needs for school (continued on pg. 2)

(continued from pg. 1)
 and other building types (also see “Manhattan” on Wolfenbarger in the February 2018 *M/RCPA Newsletter*). The 1951 Manhattan flood seems to have provided another catalyst for new and imaginative construction, or at least new commissions. Of course, the presence of Kansas State University’s architecture program had an impact, and visits by significant architectural luminaries such as the eminent architectural historian Henry Russell Hitchcock in 1955 (“Architectural”), and perhaps most notably, Frank Lloyd Wright, who in 1952 cast aspersions on the physical environment of Manhattan (“Emotions”). All of this, no doubt, provided stimuli for the emergence of these architectural trends.

The Ag Press building originally housed the Viking Manufacturing Co. and dates from 1946.



The collection of modern movement resources in Manhattan and Riley County that emerged through three decades of Manhattan’s growth represents different strains and interpretations of modernism. The range includes sophisticated distillations of rigorous International Style tenets to spirited and expressive examples, influenced by the commercial roadside culture emergent at mid-century. Chronologically, the city’s collection ranges from streamline modern examples such as the 1946 Ag Press building on Yuma Street that originally housed the Viking Manufacturing Company (apparently a different corporation to that currently known for their stainless steel ranges, see “Vanguard”) to the materially-layered, yet austere forms of two public housing structures downtown designed by William Eidson in the early 1970s.



Top, William and Pat Eidson’s Carlson Plaza housing, completed in 1970. Bottom, William and Pat Eidson’s 2020 Hunting Ave. is within the newly-designated Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District.



Evidence of modernism is spread through much of the city, with some notable clusters such as the many homes strung along the winding Grandview Terrace as well as Hunting Avenue’s group of eleven postwar homes that recently gained designation as the Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District (Dome). Various modernist apartment complexes were sprinkled throughout Manhattan, though mostly within the area west of the university that witnessed most of its growth in the decades after the conclusion of the war.



Top, three commercial buildings designed by Floyd Wolfenbarger spanning 15 years, clustered at the intersection of Poyntz Ave. and Eighth St. Bottom, a two-office building erected soon after the 1951 flood. The former PCA and NFLA office building (now Edward Jones and Ryan and Sons Realty) was designed by Wolfenbarger and Associates in 1951.



Most conspicuously, there is a collection of modernist buildings spreading from the intersection of Poyntz Avenue and Juliette Avenue that includes the 1971 Manhattan Public Library by the Eidsons (with subsequent additions by BBN Architects) and a number of banks, offices, and Catholic educational buildings forming a robust district of “recent-past” historic value. This collection charts the expansion of Manhattan’s downtown following the catastrophic 1951 flood. One quiet building, for example, designed by Wolfenbarger and Associates in 1956-57, now housing the offices of Arthur-Green, LLC, is even raised just above that flood plane’s level, a nod to the natural event (and to compel the original Manhattan Mutual Life Insurance Company to remain downtown, “Two Big Projects”), while also channeling the spirit of famed German-American architect, Mies van der Rohe and his 1951 Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois. Across Eighth Street a more dramatic expression of modernism erected in 1970, also by F. O. Wolfenbarger with his office then-called Wolfenbarger and McCulley, consists of a dramatic horizontal canopy clad in smooth, precast concrete panels that floats around the site’s perimeter while a six-story tower shoots up within, a laudable built essay, simultaneously minimalist and expressive.

Just west on Poyntz Avenue, one may find the 1963 First Lutheran Church addition to a 1930 stone original. Designed by Eidson, the church is composed of a soaring, steeply pitched roof, end walls with strips of glazing set between vertical timber elements, and an expressive
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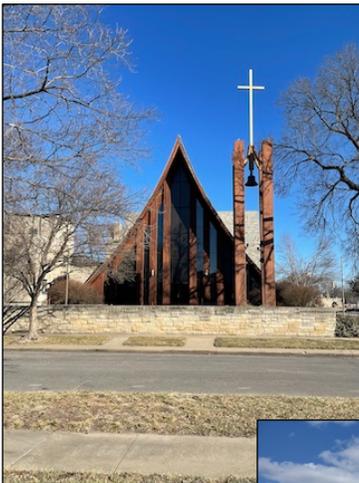
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Top, F. O. Wolfenbarger's 1959, Manhattan Mutual Life Insurance Company (now Arthur-Green, LLC). Bottom, Wolfenbarger and McCulley's 1970 First National Bank (now Commerce Bank).



timber bell tower. Just west of this, seemingly as a counterpart to this sacred, vertically-inclined structure, one finds the low-lying, former Conoco Station across from the southeast corner of City Park. In planning to be adapted as a café, the station was a variation on a 1963 prototype with two dynamic canopies visually engaging the two streets.



Top, William and Pat Eidson's soaring 1963 First Lutheran Church addition. Bottom, 1966 Dawson's Conoco Service Station awaits reuse as a café.



Throughout Manhattan and the Kansas State campus, one can find dozens more examples which form the modernist heritage of the city.

It might be stated that modernism, generally speaking, should be considered the last cohesive architectural movement in the U. S. Tendencies and efforts since have trailed off in innumerable directions, often representing short-lived trends, often guided purely by base expectations of commercial, budgetary, and zoning/code considerations. Whereas pluralism is not a bad quality to have in an always-evolving architectural culture, the postwar period of relative cohesion should be regarded,

arguably, as an important manifestation of the emergence of the U. S. as a superpower, guided by an unprecedented period of growth, technological progress, and optimism. The continued presence of these architectural resources enables the continuation of a collective memory for this vibrant and important period.



2021 demolition of a late modernist bank in Manhattan's Westloop shopping center.

As Manhattan's modernist architectural heritage is now reaching or, in most cases, has exceeded the important fifty-year benchmark for historical consideration, many of these built resources should be assessed, and their significance evaluated for their impact on both a local and regional level. Viewing the state more widely, the former Wichita Public Library and Century II Performing Arts Center, both dating from the late 1960s and both recently triple-listed on the local, state, and National Registers of Historic Places, still face an uncertain future. Closer to home, the Docking State Office Building has been the subject of demolition threats, studies, and much debate.

Manhattan recently lost at least two minor modernist examples—St. Isadore's Catholic Church dating from 1963 and a late modernist Westloop bank—with others having been threatened, such as the First Christian Church fronting Courthouse Plaza. This property holds a distinguished 1962 wing as the latest of two additions to the original 1909 original church. Designed by Ray Hutchins and Ray Lippenberger, the east-facing wing assumes a "New Formalist" style, defined by straight and pointed arches, redolent of more distant precedents revisited in a then-contemporary and streamlined manner. The whole building was threatened in mid-2021 to be replaced by a lawn or, likely, additional parking, despite the fact that surface parking already surrounds the structure. Fortunately, the property was approved for state and national historical listings, but the future of this, and some other distinguished, modernist resources in Manhattan, are uncertain.

Interest in our modernist architectural legacy has grown tremendously in recent years, so it is hoped that preservation and appropriate reuse of these resources will be considered and pursued in most cases. More knowledge about the works is needed to form a basis for discussions about what should be saved. Towards these (continued on pg. 4)

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ends, we (Kansas State Assistant Professors Christopher Fein and Michael Grogan) have begun work on a multi-tiered survey of modernist work throughout Manhattan—excepting single family residences and campus buildings, both easily warranting their own surveys—through a generous Preservation Fund Grant from the National Park Service and Kansas Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The goal is to establish a base, through site visits, research, and analysis, of all relevant Manhattan properties completed from 1945 to 1975.

Through windshield surveys we identified over 125 properties worthy of at least basic documentation, and through qualitative analysis, we are currently working with SHPO to identify a shortlist of buildings that may be deemed worthy of historical listing, specifically based on eligibility under Criterion C, of the National Register Criteria for Evaluation, based on the property’s architectural, engineering, and/or planning merit, as well as integrity (current conditions). For this select group, we will study the cases more closely, providing base documentation on those properties and providing recommendations and a framework for the further documentation and evaluations to form a basis for further efforts in pursuing historical listings and potentially protecting these works of architectural significance that, in recent decades, have often been vulnerable to demolition or drastic modifications.

Generally, the range of work will be incorporated into the great Kansas Historical Society’s portal, the Kansas Historic Resources Inventory (KHRI). Properties are searchable through inputting known information, such as the address, historic name, or use, or may be located through an interactive map. Some of the properties under our purview are represented already, but the database is mostly incomplete in regard to this period of work. We will also disseminate these efforts to the community in different ways, such as through a dedicated website (in the works), presentations at community and preservation advocacy venues, advocacy for buildings and historic

districts, and publications such as this newsletter.

Modern architecture has not been, at any time in history, “everyone’s cup of tea.” However, the spread of this type of architecture through every building type, except the single-family home (of which there are obviously many modernist examples, just never a majority) evidences that this was a quite pervasive and clearly widely-accepted paradigm for up to three decades, during a rather important time in U. S. history. Thus, it seems to us, the catalogue of works accrued in Manhattan and elsewhere should be understood as worthy of attention and consideration. We hope our work will add to previous efforts here and serve as a catalyst for more acknowledgment of this key period in architectural—and Manhattan’s—history.

All of the photographs in the article are courtesy of Christopher Fein and Michael Grogan.

Christopher Fein serves as an assistant professor at KSU. In addition to his work with the University, he is the founder of FORWARD Design/Architecture, a practice based in Kansas City, with a focus on post-war architectural restoration and remodeling.

Michael Grogan is an assistant professor of architecture at KSU. His current research focuses on post-World War II modernist architecture through the lens of preservation and building adaptation issues and histories.

“Manhattan’s Significant Post-War Architect.” [Manhattan/Riley County Preservation Alliance Newsletter](#). February 2018, vol. 24:1. 1-3.

Dome, A. J. “City Commission Makes Historic Designation for Lee Elementary Neighborhood Official.” [The Manhattan Mercury](#). 4 August 2021.

“Vanguard of Viking Here.” [The Manhattan Mercury](#). 23 September 1945.

“Two Big Projects Set Here.” [The Manhattan Mercury](#). 16 May 1956.

“Emotions Mixed on Architect’s Insult to City.” [The Manhattan Mercury](#). 30 March 1952.

Lone Survivor: The Winkler Schoolhouse

Written by Kathy Dzewaltowski

In Center Township in northern Riley County, there once was a small community known as Winkler. Though it was always a small town, Winkler had a grist mill, a sawmill, two general stores, a post office, a saloon, a blacksmith shop, a couple of churches, and a school. In those early days of Riley County, Winkler was a lively place, but as the years passed, the town slowly declined and was

ultimately lost to the construction of the Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir. Today, all that remains is the stone schoolhouse.

Winkler was named for its first settler, August Winkler, who was born in Germany and came to Riley County in 1857. August’s brother Frederick followed in 1860, and they settled on farms along Fancy Creek. In Germany, the brothers had been millers, and they later built a three-story limestone grist mill on the

banks of Fancy Creek. In those early days, the mill’s services were in such demand that farmers would travel several miles and wait three to four days for their grain to be ground. The success of the grist mill led to the Winkler brothers adding a sawmill, and the burgeoning community came to be known as “Winkler’s Mills” (McKnight and Winkler 492).

The town grew and added
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general stores, a post office, a saloon, a blacksmith shop, and Lutheran and Baptist churches. With community growth came interest in establishing a school. The Winkler school district, which was District No. 25, organized in 1870 with 22 taxpayers. Residents voted to construct a stone schoolhouse, which was to be 21 ft. by 35 ft. and have four windows and one door. The building cost \$532 to construct, and once completed, it was too late in the year to hold school, so no school was held that first year.

The following year, three residents were elected to serve on the school board, with August Winkler elected to serve as the board's treasurer. The board decided to have a three-month summer term of instruction to begin on April 17, 1871, and to hire a male teacher who would be paid \$25 per month. In 1872, the board chose to offer two three-month terms of school and to hire a female teacher at a salary of \$20 per month. The school board would decide each year whether to hire a male or female teacher and determine the monthly salary (Slagg 241).

In those days, enrollment at the Winkler school was typically 25-30 students, although enrollment declined in later years. During cold weather, the teacher would arrive early and start a fire in the stove, and on especially cold days, students would move their desks closer to the stove. If there was snow on the ground, the students sledged on the school's hillside. When it was warmer, students played baseball, tag, and other games during recess (Bogart et. al. 158).

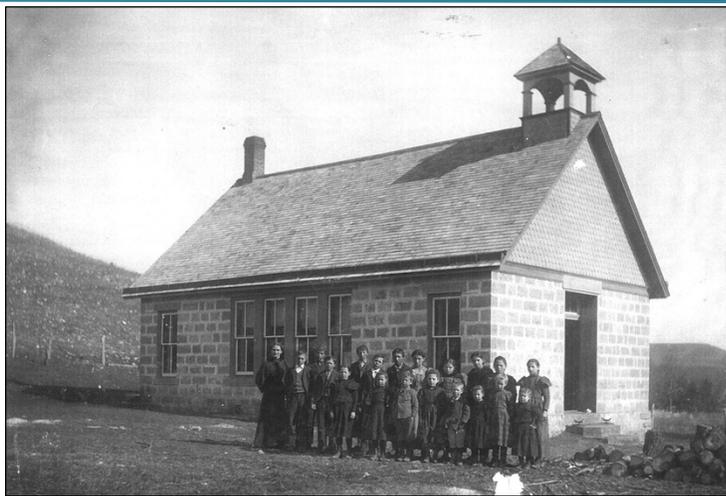
This first stone schoolhouse burned in 1876 and was replaced by a frame structure (Slagg 241). The precise date of when the second school was built is unclear, but newspaper notices indicate school was in session at Winkler in 1877,

so presumably, the new building was constructed fairly soon after the fire. The school that remains at the old Winkler townsite is stone, meaning it's not the wood-framed structure built following the 1876 fire and is a third iteration of a Winkler

schoolhouse. Firm documentation of when the existing stone school was built is lacking, but memories of Winkler written by Mrs. John Callahan and housed at the Riley County Historical Museum provide a clue. Mrs. Callahan's reminiscences, which were written in 1953, state the building was 55 years old at the time, giving the stone school a construction date of 1898.

Possibly Winkler's best-known student was Hannah Wetzig. Hannah grew up on a farm along Fancy Creek and attended the Winkler school, becoming the first Winkler student to attain a county diploma. She went on to attend Kansas State Agricultural College for three years and then the Kansas State Normal School ("normal school" referred to institutions designed to train teachers) in Emporia, KS, graduating in 1893. After graduation, she returned to Winkler and taught school, and in subsequent years, she taught school at Moehlman Bottoms, Leonardville, and Randolph and was the principal at Riley. In 1905, Hannah Wetzig was elected to serve as the County Superintendent of Public Instruction and was the first female elected to public office in Riley County ("Miss Wetzig in charge").

As more people settled in Riley County, other mills were built, resulting in declining business for the Winkler brothers' mill. The mill ceased operations in 1895 after August Winkler's death (McKnight and Winkler 492), although the



Above, an undated historic photo of the Winkler school. The photo is courtesy of the Riley County Historical Society and Museum.

building continued to be used as a granary and was still serving that purpose when it was torn down for the construction of the Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir (Slagg 240). After the mill closed in 1895, the town's name changed from "Winkler's Mills" to "Winkler" (Slagg 240).

Winkler was definitely a small town. The 1910 U.S. Census shows its population was 18 (McKnight and Winkler 492), which likely consisted of business owners and their families. The small population in 1910 indicates Winkler was in decline from its earlier days when the grist mill helped to make the community a bustling place and also indicates it had started to fade long before the dam's construction. While it's hard to know all the factors that led to Winkler's decrease in population, Winkler didn't have a railroad, and the lack of rail access to a town coupled with the rise of the automobile contributed to the decline of similarly small communities. With no rail line, it was difficult to ship and receive goods. The increasing popularity of the automobile allowed farmers to travel longer distances to larger communities where they could access additional services, decreasing the need for services in smaller towns.

(continued on pg. 6)

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The Winkler school also reflected the town's decline. The 1951-52 school year was the last year school was taught in the Winkler schoolhouse. Enrollment had dwindled to only three students. After that, Winkler's students attended school in Randolph (Slagg 241).

Though the mill and school had closed, Winkler was still hanging on at the time of the Tuttle Creek Dam and Reservoir's construction. At the minimum, a general store and a church were operational in Winkler, and the granary was still in use. Various newspaper notices show the Winkler schoolhouse continued to be used for meetings and as a polling place for voters residing in Center Township, and it served as a polling place until at least 1985. The remainder of the townsite and surrounding farms were either within the dam's easement or the flood stage areas, and thus, Winkler's remaining buildings were demolished as were neighboring farmhouses and barns. The Winkler schoolhouse was outside the area impacted by the dam's construction, and so the school remained and is Winkler's only surviving structure.

“It's the only building left of Winkler. People don't remember the town the way that it was.”

Today, the Winkler schoolhouse is showing its age and is a little worse for wear. Andy and Sara Larson are the current owners of the school, having acquired it approximately five years ago. The Larson family's Riley County roots run deep, with Larson ancestors first settling in Riley County in 1880. Andy's grandfather attended a rural school in the May Day and Winkler vicinities and had friends who attended the Winkler school. Andy's grandfather recalls visiting the Winkler school for various

functions, providing a close family tie to the school.

Andy and Sara Larson are very interested in history and preserving it, and their dream is to renovate the school at some point. The first step would be to replace the roof and repair the windows to stabilize it and better protect the building from the elements. The Larsons have done some preliminary investigations into what would be involved with renovating the school, but full plans for the school's renovation are yet to be determined, making it a while before a project would get underway. They hope to make the renovation project a family effort.

Sara says their motivation for wanting to renovate the school is driven by the desire to restore a part of the Fancy Creek valley. She said, “It's the only building left of Winkler. People don't remember the town the way that it was. The school could help give people an idea of what used to be there in these little thriving communities in the early 1900s before the dam came in.”

Another factor motivating the Larsons to renovate the Winkler schoolhouse is their young daughter, who represents the eighth generation of their family to live in Riley County. They want the school to be there for her and for future generations to appreciate and understand what life was like in small rural towns.

The communities lost to the dam's construction have been gone for half a century, slowly fading more and more from memory as each year passes. For Winkler, the schoolhouse survived the destruction caused by the dam's construction, and maybe one day in the not-so-distant future, a renovation will revive the building.



Both photos show the Winkler school in March 2022 and are courtesy of Sara Larson.

Until then, the school serves as a tangible reminder of all that once was.

Bogart, Jim, et. al. [The Rural Schools of Riley County Kansas](#). Riley County Historical Society, 2004.

Callahan, Mrs. John (Alice). “Winkler.” Personal memories. 17 September 1953.

McKnight, Lillian and Mrs. Harold Winkler. “Winkler.” [Pioneers of the Bluestem Prairie](#), edited by Evelyn Boseck Brown et. al. Riley County Genealogical Society, 1976.

“Miss Wetzig in charge.” [The Manhattan Nationalist](#). 8 May 1905: 1.

Slagg, Winifred N. [Riley County, Kansas: A Story of Early Settlements, Rich Valleys, Azure Skies and Sunflowers](#). Winifred N. Slagg, 1968.

Added to National Register

The former First Christian Church, located at 115 Court-house Plaza, was added to the Register of Historic Kansas Places in August 2021, and the building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in March 2022.

The former church is owned by Riley County, and the County had filed a property owner objection with the National Park Service (NPS), which is the entity that administers the National Register. NPS had contacted the State Historic Preservation Office and the historic preservation professional the M/RCPA hired to prepare the register nomination, requesting additional information about the building before making a determination.

The former First Christian Church was added to the National Register due to its architecture.



The former First Christian Church.

Manhattan/Riley County
Preservation Alliance
Linda Glasgow, President
P. O. Box 1893
Manhattan, KS 66505

E-mail: mrcpanewsletter@gmail.com
Website:
www.preservemanhattan.org

The Board of Directors meets the second Thursday of the month via Zoom. Members are welcome to participate in board meetings. Contact the M/RCPA if you would like to participate in a board meeting.

Newsletter editor: Kathy Dzewaltowski

Museum Decision to be Appealed

Written by Kathy Dzewaltowski

During the Historic Resources Board's (HRB) meeting on March 28, the board voted 2-3 (two members were absent) that the proposed art and light museum project, which falls within the boundaries of the Downtown Manhattan Historic District, met the U. S. Sec. of the Interior's standards, meaning the motion failed.

Developers of the art and light museum identified the parking lot on the northwest corner of the intersection of Third and Houston Streets as the preferred location for the new building. In addition to the new building, the project calls for utilizing the former Sears Building, located at Fourth and Houston Streets, and demolishing the former Sears service garage at 322 Pierre Street. The building's proposed location in a historic district, changes to the Sears Building, and demolition of the Sears garage meant a review of the project by the HRB was required.

Board members were split on the matter. Two board members felt the project met the standards for the treatment of historic properties. The proposed location for the museum is the outer edge of the historic district, and the board members thought there should be greater flexibility for a project on the district's fringe as compared to a location in the district's core.

Three board members felt the project as proposed didn't meet the standard that pertains to new construction, although the reasons for their concerns varied. The standard states that new construction should be differentiated from the old and also compatible with historic materials, features, size, scale, proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the historic environment.

The proposed museum will use a limited amount of smooth limestone

on the exterior, and other exterior materials include metal panels and glass. Board members were concerned that the building's exterior didn't utilize enough compatible and traditional materials. One board member indicated the material choice was his main concern, and he wanted to see exterior materials provide a connection to the rest of the historic district. Another board member thought the metal panels would harken back to an unfortunate period when metal slipcovers were installed over historic exteriors in decades past.

There were also concerns about the building's size. The building would be approximately 65 ft. tall, and the heights of adjacent buildings are 21 ft., 27 ft., and 38 ft. The concern was the proposed museum would tower over adjacent historic buildings and the difference in scale would be too obvious.

None of the board members appeared to have concerns about the interior renovations planned for the Sears Building or the demolition of the Sears garage. Both structures are noncontributing to the historic district due to past alterations that compromised their historic integrity.

The M/RCPA provided comments during the meeting in opposition to the project. The M/RCPA's opposition should not be interpreted as a criticism of the art and light museum concept. Rather, the M/RCPA thought the project as proposed was not compatible with the historic district in its massing, scale, and extremely contemporary design. The M/RCPA didn't want historic buildings to be overwhelmed or marginalized by the new building.

The failure of the motion meant the project is viewed as not meeting the standards. The developers have elected to appeal the HRB's findings to the City Commission, which will be discussed during the commission meeting on April 5, 2022.

M/RCPA P.O. Box 1893 MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1893
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