



MANHATTAN/RILEY COUNTY PRESERVATION ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

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Concrete and Stone: The Legacy of Architects Patricia and William Eidson

Written by Christopher Fein and Michael Grogan

During the three decades following World War II, the city of Manhattan, KS, amassed a rich collection of modernist buildings (see the April *M/RCPA Newsletter* article by the authors). Though some were predictably designed by faculty from Kansas State University's architecture program and various external architects, much of this legacy is attributable to two Manhattan architectural firms. Floyd O. Wolfenbarger maintained a prolific practice for over four decades, garnering many of the city's public and religious school commissions, key university works, banks, and office buildings. The work of Wolfenbarger has been highlighted in previous newsletter articles (see "Manhattan's Significant" and Dzewaltowski). William "Bill" Eidson (1928-1979), in 1973 joined by his wife Patricia L. "Pat" Eidson (1932-1994) in partnership, similarly accumulated many commissions for public and religious institutions, two important public housing projects, and various academic and commercial structures over a 25-year period. Their careers, cut relatively short by Bill's sudden death, followed by Patricia's transition into academia, is unique nonetheless for the collaborative nature of the two.

The work of this husband-and-wife duo exemplified the project of regional modernism, utilizing vernacular materials and forms, augmented with a stripped, contemporary language (Corn). Their ability to manipulate the site, native limestone, and the language of modernism created a body of work that is simultaneously familiar and unique. The Eidsons' oeuvre consists of projects clearly of their place—reflecting "the spirit of the region" according to the authors of the [Guide to Kansas Architecture](#) (Sachs, 193)—while still relating to the larger dialog of modern architecture during this time globally. Through a variety of typologies ranging from single- and multi-family residences to the Manhattan Public Library, their practice model evidenced a particular, personal trajectory through the 1950s-1970s.

William Rex "Bill" Eidson was born in Clifton, KS. His family moved to Manhattan in 1933 to found the Manhattan Oil Company. He attended the Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science (now



This complex A-frame structure on the corner of Grandview Terrace and Sunset Avenue was completed in 1965 and served as the Eidsons' studio and home.

Kansas State University, KSU) and graduated in 1951 with a Bachelor of Science in architecture. Bill worked briefly in Salina, KS, for the firm Shaver and Associates; then, in the early 1950s, he established himself as a Manhattan architect. His first completed project was a modest, low-slung home for his parents at 300 South Delaware Avenue, completed in 1950 while he was still a student (Rickabaugh). Over the subsequent decades, his and Pat's commissions grew in scale and diversity, garnering numerous American Institute of Architecture (AIA) awards for their work.

Bill passed away from a heart attack on January 13, 1979 ("Attack"). Soon after, the firm was reorganized under the direction of Pat Eidson and Brent Bowman as Eidson & Bowman, Architects. Having served as an adjunct member of the faculty within KSU's Interior Architecture program until 1979, Pat spent a year teaching at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, then enrolled for graduate studies at the University of Cincinnati. After receiving her degree, she became an Associate Professor at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst from 1983 through 1988. She then joined the College of Architecture's Interior Division at the University of Oklahoma in Norman. She was an Associate Professor and Director of the Interior Design program, beginning in 1988—becoming the first female to hold a full-time teaching position within their architecture program—and soon became the Assistant Dean in 1992 and Associate Dean the following year. Pat accomplished a remarkable career in practice and teaching, winning accolades such as the Manhattan
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Woman of the Year Award in 1976 and the 1994-95 Distinguished Service Award from KSU, despite passing away at a relatively young age, soon after receiving the KSU award (“Prominent”). The Eidsons’ successor firm, headed by Bowman, was Brent Bowman and Associates, and was renamed BBN Architects, Inc. in 2004 (“About BBN”).

During the postwar period within which the firm produced work, the tenets of orthodox modernism from the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s, predominantly formulated in Europe, began to be supplanted by a more humanistic approach to architecture. The general optimism and economic growth of the U. S. and the rebuilding of war-torn Europe fueled ideas about reconciling a more worldly modernism with regional and historical contingencies. Architects who were the leading proponents of the International Style, such as Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius, transitioned towards a new language based less on the machine and more on human occupation and material tactility. Although Bill and Pat were both from Kansas and their understanding of the region is evident, there are clear outside influences on the work. The work of modernist architect Marcel Breuer (1901-1981) might be the most obvious ([Marcel Breuer](#)).

Born in Hungary, Breuer trained and then taught at the Bauhaus school in Germany, arguably the most important program in design during the 20th century. During the late 1930s after a two-year stint in London, he immigrated to the U. S. and to Harvard’s Graduate School of Design (GSD) to join Bauhaus founder Gropius in both instruction and practice. His work into the 1960s was widely published and greatly admired by Bill. Breuer’s residential work especially was inspired by the materiality and vernacular forms he was introduced to in the northeastern U. S. context, becoming an important contributor to a postwar avant-garde of American modernism. The designs utilized natural materials with a reductive and minimal aesthetic as seen in his recently demolished Geller House I in Long Island (1944-1947, demolished 2022) and more locally with the Snower Residence in Kansas City, MO (1953-1954, see “Snower”).

Influenced by Breuer and other notable U. S. and foreign architects, the firm would design a significant

Right, Marcel Breuer’s Snower Residence, Kansas City, MO, 1953-1954. Photograph courtesy of Bob Greenpsan.



portion of the most representative postwar modernist architecture in Manhattan. Their output formed an unbelievably diverse body of work from a typological and programmatic perspective. They would design the city’s main library, civic buildings, religious institutions, multifamily housing, single-family residences, academic projects, as well as commercial work throughout Manhattan.



Above, the Eidsons’ 1961 education building addition next to St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, which was designed by the Wichita firm Ramey and Hime in 1953. The addition offers a similar materiality as the original with subtle contrasts in siting and formal devices, notably more complex roof geometries.

This interweaving of contemporary international trends with considerate attention to the landscape and vernacular structures of the Flint Hills may be well understood with two of the firm’s educational buildings. The KSU International Student Center, opened in 1977, nestles into a wooded site at the corner of Claflin Road and Mid-Campus Drive (“Festive” and “KSU’s International”). Bounded by low, random ashlar limestone walls, the building maintains a thoughtful presence in relation to the landscape, with an elegant glulam wood entrance bridge, projecting from a low stone planter bed, establishing a subtle entry procession over a small creek, the one conspicuous gesture of this otherwise quiet structure. The U-shaped building shields an intimate courtyard, or *cortile*, surrounded by a cylindrical concrete colonnade with exposed timber beams. Similarly understated, the firm’s 1965 (now Robinson) Education Building fronts Poyntz Avenue and the Manhattan High School with a low, austere limestone wall to the north, belying the more monumental, concrete framed array of glazing (much of which now has weathered wood infill, still elegantly incorporated) for the two-story south elevation. The transition between the two sides of this linear building and the significant grade change are deftly handled by a projecting, two-story entry porch and gently curved, stone site wall, in the manner of Breuer’s early U. S. work. Both buildings reference the heritage of 19th century stone buildings dotting the Riley County landscape with a definitively modernist spin.

One of the firm’s most recognizable civic buildings is the monumental Manhattan Public Library, the original Eidsons-designed building completed in 1971 (Belt). An icon at the west edge of downtown on Poyntz Avenue, it utilizes a thick, projecting waffle slab concrete roof and site-cast concrete frame combined, like the Robinson and

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Left and below right, the 1977 International Student Center, quietly nestles into its site just north of KSU's main quads.

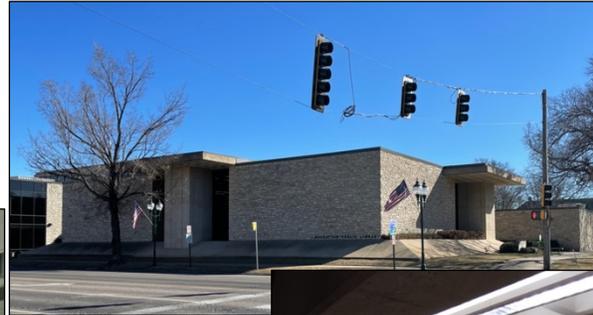
Below, the current Robinson Education Building's austere stone walls fronting Poyntz Ave. and Manhattan High School contrast with the more machined and monumental south elevation, with an elegant transition at the west entrance.



International Student Center buildings, with native prairie limestone walls, which had become a regionally-inspired trademark of sorts for the duo. A battered, concrete base anchors the composition to the ground, extending out east and west to incorporate base planters, a reinvigorated reference to the turn of the 20th century, Prairie style work of Frank Lloyd Wright. This device perhaps also relates to vernacular "dugout" housing types of early settlers to the Plains territories, and the stone walls certainly reference many such 19th century buildings in Manhattan and the region. All such formal and material devices further enhance the language of solidity common to "Brutalist" architectural trends at the time, especially for government and institutional works (see note below—*Banham). This solidity is relieved by recessed zones of glazing that transition between the two main exterior materials, and the building, overall, transitions from a symmetrical and taller north elevation along Poyntz to a more informally stepped, lower zone fronting the residential blocks to the south (even incorporating a tiled hip roof zone, likely a nod to the homes nearby).

Library patrons once entered through various recesses into this robust shell to discover a lofty interior containing central, double height spaces ringed with mezzanines, accessed by a series of wood floating stairs

with minimal but well-crafted railings. The concrete coffers of the higher ceiling plane are counterbalanced by linear wood paneled ceilings and guardrail faces near and around the central spaces.



Above, Manhattan Public Library's exterior, and right, the library's interior.



Across Poyntz three blocks to the west resides one of the best examples of the Eidson firm's

religious work, the First Lutheran Church ("Lutherans"). Completed in 1963, the building is an addition to the original 1930 limestone church. The form of the building is that of a soaring, steeply-pitched gable roof with glazed end walls, structured through spaced glulam wood columns. The roof eave on the south comes to within four feet of the ground, where the building appears to rise out of a moat, of sorts, allowing the lower-level church programs to have sizable expanses of glazing into the perimeter light well. This provides the visual effect of a floating building, in purposeful contrast to its heavier predecessor wings. The entry is positioned on the west side, set back from Tenth Street through a landscaped, stepped terrace bounded by low stone site walls. An expressive timber bell tower, formed from four spaced glulam wood columns, similar to the end walls, rises out of the southwest portion of the terrace to anchor the corner. These support a single bell and an elegant and light crucifix extends from the top.

Also downtown, one may find the Eidsons' designs (continued on pg. 4)



The First Lutheran Church as seen from Poyntz Avenue was completed in 1963 as an addition to a 1930 limestone wing.

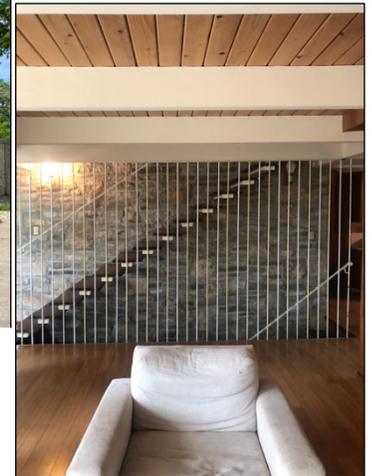
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for two federally-funded, multifamily housing projects (Midcap). The tallest, completed in 1974, is the modern twelve-story residential tower at the corner of Fifth and Leavenworth Streets. Composed of limestone, site-cast concrete, and concrete block, the massing represents a slight pinwheel form off the central service tower. Limestone walls extend out from the base condition, creating a welcoming entry datum (“Elderly”). The other multifamily housing design resides four blocks south, the Carlson Plaza Apartment Building at Fourth and Pierre Streets. Completed by 1975, this five-story rectangular structure is comprised of an expressed concrete frame with “fluted” concrete block infill, set flush with the backside of the concrete frame. This allows for the thin slabs of the building to project and cast varying shadows across the façade. The whole is book-ended on the east and west by heavy brick walls. To form an entry to the south, the infill is pulled one bay in, connecting to a projecting, linear concrete slab loggia on the main level and, on the north, an entry is positioned in the corner of the building setback, protected by open corner balconies above. The units’ floor-to-ceiling glazing forms a reveal between the concrete columns and block infill walls. Generally, the building design takes cues from the work of notable postwar architects Louis Kahn and Paul Rudolph.

The firm designed many single-family residential projects that may be found throughout Manhattan, mainly to the west of the KSU campus and the recently renamed MLK Jr. Drive. One of the more sophisticated examples can be found in the newly formed Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District at 2020 Hunting Avenue (Dome). This house is defined by a flat roof-topped composition of limestone walls, glass, and wood siding, redolent of Breuer’s early U. S. residential work. The home has exposed post and beam wood framing with a series of rough limestone walls subdividing the living zones from the private spaces. Transitioning to a double height elevation for part of the rear, north side—the home is significantly more spacious than implied when viewed from the street—the interior spaces consist of exposed wood beams and an expressive floating stair suspended by steel rods and a native limestone wall.

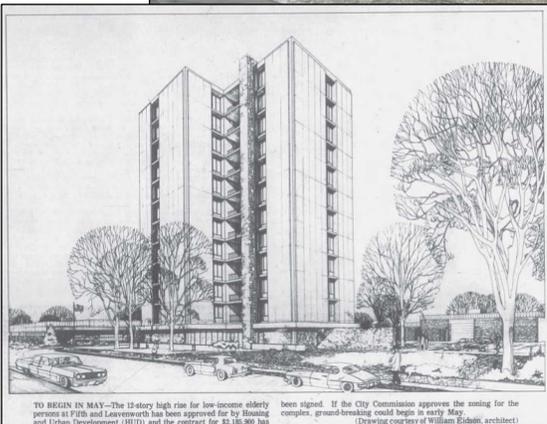


The elegant residence at 2020 Hunting Avenue forms the architectural centerpiece to the newly formed Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District.



The couple also designed the Manhattan Vo-Tech (now Manhattan Area Technical) College located at 3136 Dickens in 1967 with a 1972 addition (“Bids Received”). The two resulting buildings show the influence of famed German émigré Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, especially his work for the Illinois Institute of Technology campus in Chicago. The larger L-shaped structure is a modernist brick and steel building that, at the corners, has an expressed steel frame with brick and glazed infill. The brick extends to the height of the doors with linear clerestory windows above, visually detaching the originally flat and projecting roof structure, now concealed within thicker, mono-pitched roof additions. Along the east side of the building, walls are set back from the frame and roof by one bay, creating a lengthy, covered outdoor work area. At the northeast corner of the site lies a handsome rectangular addition, designed in a similar architectural language with few apparent modifications.

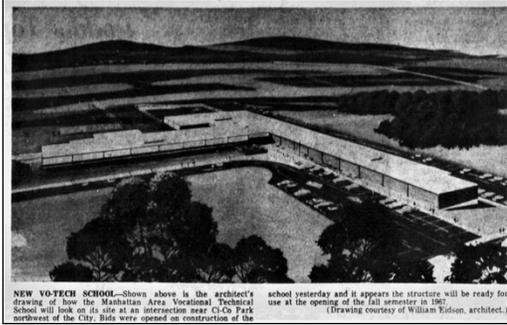
If the Technical College has faced noticeable alterations, a more unfortunate fate has met the Eidsons’ design for the 1962 Blue Hills Shopping Center on (continued on pg. 5)



Top, the Carlson Plaza Apartments offer an essay in layered materiality, inspired by the late modernist work of Louis Kahn and Paul Rudolph. Bottom, the twelve-story tower designed by the Eidsons and completed in 1974 is across Fifth Street from the modernist main post office. Rendering courtesy of *The Manhattan Mercury*.

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The Manhattan Vo-Tech College complex contains two buildings completed in 1967 and 1972. Modifications to the main building reduce the minimalist horizontality of the larger L-shaped wing. The separate structure to the northeast maintains its original architectural qualities. The top image is courtesy of *The Manhattan Mercury*.



NEW VO-TECH SCHOOL—Shown above is the architect's drawing of how the Manhattan Area Vocational Technical School will look on its site at an intersection near C.O. Park northwest of the City. Bills were opened on construction of the school yesterday and it appears the structure will be ready for use at the opening of the fall semester in 1967. (Drawing courtesy of William Eidson, architect.)



Tuttle Creek Boulevard (“New Multi-Shop”). Now unrecognizable except through glimpses within the front loggia, the original commercial strip center consisted of an exposed wood post and beam structure with large expanses of storefront glazing arrayed along the covered and lower front circulation zone. Though the project still stands, the dramatic exterior modifications from 1998 lead one to believe this is a much newer structure, in the spirit of typical suburban commercial strip centers anywhere. However, the visitor with a keen eye will note that within the front connecting loggia the wood structure and original storefronts remain. It may be hoped that someday the owner might restore this former modernist work to its previous state.



FIFTY-SECOND YEAR MANHATTAN, KANSAS, WEDNESDAY, JULY 25, 1962 10 Cents NO. 146



NEW SHOPPING CENTER—Above is the architect's drawing showing the superstructure portion and part of the parking area of the new shopping center that will be located at the junction of North Manhattan extended and R23 in the northeast area of the city. Construction is scheduled to begin soon, according to the developers of the center that is to be located on property at the northwest corner of the intersection owned by Mr. and Mrs. Lester Frey.

Reskinned in the early 1990s, the original Blue Hills Shopping Center design may be understood from this 1962 rendering. Recent photographs evidence the great disparity of the newer façade and the traces still visible through the front circulation spine of the original exposed wooden framework with infill glazing and brick walls. Rendering courtesy of *The Manhattan Mercury*.

The collaborative firm of Bill and Pat Eidson produced in a relatively short period a diverse and highly skilled body of work. The firm's work not only broke gender stereotypes of the time but developed work that is at such a high level of execution it may be speculated that, had it been produced outside of Manhattan, many of these projects would have been nationally recognized for design excellence. The pair contributed significantly to Manhattan's rich modernist heritage and, though their design approaches vary based on era and building type, a certain consistency and thoughtful attention to materiality—modern and regionally sourced—pervade their additions to the city's urban landscape.

All photographs are courtesy of the authors except where otherwise noted.

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.

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*Banham, Reyner

The term and style often referred to as "Brutalism" emanates mainly from Reyner Banham's essay "The New Brutalism" of 1955. Though increasingly a loose label, reappraisal and a renewed appreciation of such architectural examples globally have resulted in scores of publications in the early 21st century. Though the tag "Brutalism" is sometimes applied

in a derogatory manner, in relation to the rough and opaque nature of much of the ascribed work, the architects of the 1960s and 1970s often intended their work to evoke a civic monumentality and egalitarian expression as a transition away from established International Style tenets that dominated in the U. S. for the first decades after World War II and, by the middle 1960s, were increasingly seen as elitist and old guard, even a bit dull and predictable to the younger generation of emerging architects. Predictably, a number of these buildings have faced threats or demolition (notably with the work of Paul Rudolph) as they near or have recently surpassed the half-century mark in age, a commonly-considered benchmark for historical register listing criteria in the U. S. See Banham, Reyner. "The New Brutalism." [The Architectural Review](#), 9 December 1955 as well as recent books such as Elser, Oliver, et. al., eds. [SOS Brutalism: A Global Survey](#). Zürich: Park Books, 2015 and [Atlas of Brutalist Architecture](#). New York: Phaidon Press, 2020.

HRB's Art and Light Museum Decision Overturned

Written by Kathy Dzewaltowski

During the April 5 City Commission meeting, commissioners unanimously voted to overturn the Historic Resources Board's (HRB) decision that the proposed art and light museum failed to meet the U. S. Sec. of the Interior's Standards.

The location for the proposed art and light museum is on the north side of Pierre Street in the block between Third and Fourth Streets, which is within the boundaries of the Downtown Manhattan Historic District. In addition to the new building, the project will utilize the former Sears Building at Fourth and Houston Streets and will demolish the former Sears service garage at 322 Pierre Street. The location within a historic district, alterations to the Sears building, and demolition of the Sears garage meant the art and light museum project was required to be reviewed by the HRB.

The HRB reviewed the project on March 28, and the board was split on the matter. Two board members felt the project met the standards for the treatment of historic properties and thought there should be greater flexibility for a project on the outer edge of the historic district. Three members thought the project didn't meet the standard that pertains to new construction, and the reasons for their concerns varied, ranging from concerns about the choice of

materials to the building's size and scale. (The HRB is a seven-member board. One member was absent, and one of the seats was vacant at the time.) 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 HRB voted 2-3 that the project met the standards, meaning the motion failed. The art and light museum's developers elected to appeal the HRB's findings to the City Commission.

When the HRB reviewed the art and light museum project, the project was evaluated based on its compliance with the U. S. Sec. of the Interior's standards. When the HRB's findings were appealed to the City Commission, the commission acted in a quasi-judicial capacity and acted in accordance with state statute. According to state statute, commissioners were required to determine "based on a consideration of all relevant factors, that there is no feasible and prudent alternative to the proposal and that the program includes all possible planning to minimize harm to such historic property resulting from such use." Relevant factors commissioners considered included technical, design, and economic issues, and also the project's relationship to the

community-wide plan. The city staff report recommended approval of the project.

In terms of technical issues, the proposed site is adjacent to the existing STAR bond (sales tax and revenue bond) district. The City Commission and the Kansas Dept. of Commerce had previously approved expansion of the STAR bond district to include the site, and approximately \$23 million of the project would be funded by STAR bonds. Manhattan's STAR bond district expires in 2026, providing a shortened window of time to utilize the STAR bond funds for the project and meaning there was a desire to move the project along as quickly as possible.

A portion of the museum's site is a city-owned parking lot, and the Manhattan Town Center Mall had a long-term lease agreement for its use. The museum's developers negotiated to buy the remaining years of the mall's lease. The staff report indicated it was unlikely that another entity would come along with plans to redevelop the parking lot, and retention of the parking lot was not viewed as a reasonable alternative. Technical issues, such as the use of STAR bonds and buying the mall's lease of the parking lot, are not part of the standards used by the HRB, making these factors unable to be considered by the HRB.

For economic issues, the
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museum's projected economic impact on Manhattan was highlighted. The overall investment in the project would be \$43 million, making it one of the community's largest private endeavors. In addition, it was estimated the museum would attract 75,000 visitors annually, with each visitor generating \$313 per day. Increases in sales tax and transient guest tax revenues were also anticipated. The standards the HRB uses to evaluate projects don't include economic factors, meaning this aspect was not within the HRB's purview to consider.

In terms of design issues, the staff report noted the HRB's concerns with the project were primarily related to the building's design and its relationship to Standard 9. Standard 9 states, "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old *and* shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment [emphasis added]." In this instance because the site is within a historic district, "property" refers to not only the Sears Building and the Sears garage directly affected by the project, but also means the entire historic district.

The HRB members who voted against the project expressed concerns about the building's height, design, and material choices. The new building would be three times as tall as the adjacent building to the west. The staff report stated that because the new building would be on the edge of the historic district, it would serve as a transitional building between the district and surrounding blocks, and thus, could be taller. The report also mentioned there are taller buildings on Poyntz in the district's core. During public comment, the M/RCPA noted the buildings on Poyntz stair step in height to create a gradual change, and there isn't an abrupt change as would be created

between the museum and adjacent buildings.

The new building would use a limited amount of smooth limestone, and other materials included glass and metal panels. HRB members wanted to see more traditional materials, such as stone or brick. While design guidelines for downtown have been discussed multiple times over the years, none have been formally adopted, which means the use of so-called traditional materials is not required and the amount needed to improve compatibility would be subjective.

The staff report mentioned the delay caused by redesigning the project to adjust the materials and the height could lead to higher overall costs as the nation experiences fluctuating material and labor costs. A delay would also potentially reduce the amount the project would generate in STAR bonds to be invested in the project. The M/RCPA's comments noted the project was originally proposed to be located southeast of the Flint Hills Discovery Center, and the project had been able to be paused then and redesigned for the new location within the historic district, despite fluctuating prices and the impact on the STAR bonds.

The city's Downtown Tomorrow Plan adopted in 2000 was cited in the staff report as the most relevant planning document in terms of the project's relationship to the community-wide plan. The Downtown Tomorrow Plan envisioned the creation of an "entertainment district" with large venues, which was used to demonstrate the museum's compatibility with the community-wide plan. The Entertainment District was established in 2009, and the M/RCPA's comments noted the museum's site is not within the boundaries of the Entertainment District. The M/RCPA's comments also pointed out that the Downtown Tomorrow Plan provided guidance for the redevelopment of the east side of South Fourth Street. The plan states, "The scale and design of any redevelopment project in the area will be

extremely important to ensure its integration with the overall character and with the adjoining historic Union Pacific Depot. The design of buildings on both sides of Fourth Street should also be in harmony with the general character created along Poyntz Avenue." The Downtown Tomorrow Plan recommends using the historic buildings on Poyntz to inform design choices for new construction to create harmony, which means the HRB's concerns about the building's compatibility were not in conflict with the Downtown Tomorrow Plan.

In an effort to minimize harm to the historic district, the staff report noted the building's footprint was reduced from the original plan to fit the site, and the project would be reversible with the exception of the demolition of the Sears garage. During public comment, the owner of a building adjacent to the site stated he had not been contacted by the developers about the impact the museum might have on his building. He was concerned the museum could potentially overshadow his building. He added his building's tenants have made substantial investments and long-term plans for their spaces and are concerned about the availability of parking resulting from the removal of the city-owned parking lot.

Commissioners followed the staff recommendation and were supportive of the project. Commissioner John Matta thought there were no feasible and prudent alternatives, and there's a sense of urgency due to inflation and the STAR bond issue. Commissioner Mark Hatesohl commented the economics carried the day, and no one has had other ideas for the lot over the past 22 years. Commissioner Wynn Butler agreed with Matta and Hatesohl and added that he understood the concerns about parking. Commissioner Usha Reddi was also swayed by the economics. She was concerned *(continued on pg. 8)*

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about the new building's size and mass but also thought the building may become Manhattan's next iconic structure. Mayor Linda Morse appreciated the work of the HRB and commented that the economics were compelling. She thought city staff had

done a thorough job of reviewing the project, and she didn't see a feasible and prudent alternative.

In general, commissioners indicated the economics of the project weighed heavily upon their decision, and economic factors are not part of the standards that the HRB is required

to use when evaluating projects.

City commissioners voted unanimously to overturn the HRB's decision, which means the art and light museum project may move forward as proposed.

Advisory Board Controversy

Written by Kathy Dzewaltowski

During the City Commission meeting on April 19, the majority of commissioners rejected a citizen the mayor had presented for reappointment to the Historic Resources Board (HRB), citing the HRB member's lack of support of the proposed art and light museum project as one of the reasons for their objection. While it's not unheard of for commissioners to challenge a mayoral appointment to an advisory board, more often than not, mayoral appointments are approved without discussion.

The HRB is a seven-member board, and at least three members must be preservation-related professionals. Three of the HRB's seats were needing to be filled. One member had resigned because she moved from Manhattan. The board has a two-term limit, and another member had served two terms and could not be reappointed. A third member had completed one term and applied for reappointment. The three commissioners with concerns had no issues with the two new-to-the-board individuals recommended by the mayor to fill two of the seats and only objected to the HRB member the mayor had recommended for reappointment.

Commissioner John Matta requested the mayoral appointments to the HRB and the Human Rights and Services Board be pulled from the consent agenda to allow for further discussion by commissioners at the end of the meeting. He began the discussion by saying he hadn't appreciated some of the recent actions taken by the HRB and thought commissioners needed to take a hard look at the board. Commissioner Wynn Butler agreed and said he'd been disappointed with decisions

made by the HRB. Butler said, "Just to be clear, everybody currently on the Historic Resources Board, I will probably not vote to have any of them reappointed. It's just that simple. We need some fresh people in there with some better outlooks."

Commissioner Mark Hatesohl's perspective was the historic review process can sometimes make commissioners powerless to overturn HRB decisions. He thought the only way to change the situation would be to change the members of the board. He believed the HRB has the ability to consider economic impacts, which in fact, is not a factor reflected in the U. S. Sec. of the Interior's Standards that the HRB is required to use when evaluating projects.

"Just to be clear, everybody currently on the Historic Resources Board, I will probably not vote to have any of them reappointed. It's just that simple."

Mayor Linda Morse thought the review process worked as intended, meaning the HRB provided the initial review, and then applicants may appeal an HRB decision to the City Commission if desired, where commissioners are able to consider additional factors, such as the economic impact. Commissioner Usha Reddi commented that even if new people are appointed to the HRB, it isn't known how they will vote, and the City Commission has the final say, which is the case if an applicant appeals an HRB decision to the City Commission. She noted that advisory

board members are volunteers, and she thought it was insulting to replace volunteer members because one doesn't like how they voted based on the board's required criteria. Reddi added that commissioners don't always agree with the recommendations from advisory boards, so she didn't find that to be a reason to remove current members from the HRB.

Commissioners voted 3-2 to not reappoint the HRB member the mayor had recommended for reappointment, with Butler, Hatesohl, and Matta voting to not reappoint the HRB member, and Morse and Reddi voting in favor of reappointment.

The three commissioners against reappointment indicated unhappiness with HRB decisions during the past two years, including the Community House's redevelopment project, the fraternity near Lee Elementary School, the Boys and Girls Club's request to demolish a house to create a gardening program, and the recent art and light museum project decision.

In terms of the Community House, the HRB approved the redevelopment project in March 2020, which was in keeping with the city staff recommendation. Several months later, the redevelopment project was significantly revised and returned to the HRB for review. The staff report cautiously recommended approval and noted that adding conditions for approval might be warranted. The HRB voted the
(continued on pg. 9)

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amended plan didn't meet the standards. A few months later, the developer submitted another amendment to the plan, and the HRB unanimously approved the plan, which followed the staff recommendation.

While it's not clear precisely what commissioners meant when referencing the fraternity near Lee Elementary School, one possibility is the Acacia fraternity, which is located within the boundaries of the Lee Elementary Neighborhood Historic District, and which the fraternity objected to establishing. The HRB followed the staff recommendation to approve the creation of the local historic district, and the City Commission also voted to approve the establishment of the historic district.

The Boys and Girls Club wanted to demolish a house within a historic district to create a gardening program on the lot. When the HRB reviewed the demolition request, board members voted to follow the staff recommendation to deny the demolition request. The Boys and Girls Club appealed the decision to the City Commission, and commissioners unanimously voted to uphold the HRB's decision, which was in keeping with the staff recommendation.

The recent decision surrounding the art and light museum project is discussed in more detail on pages 6-8.

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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

None of the commissioners commented on the impact staff recommendations may have on HRB members and their decisions.

Following the vote, Morse asked the commissioners who voted against the HRB member's reappointment what type of candidate would they support. Hatesohl commented, "That as far as I'm concerned, this is a one-shot deal with the Historic Resources Board change. I don't really feel strongly about any of the other appointments for any of the other boards at this point." When Morse asked if his intention was to purge the HRB, Hatesohl answered, "We'll see what happens over the next year. Over the next year, if we don't have to try to overturn them all the time, because we can't hardly very well, then there's no reason to think -- we won't have to get rid of the other ones."

When commissioners discussed the mayor's reappointment recommendations for the Human Rights and Services Board, Matta indicated a preference of getting "new blood" on the board as his reason for not reappointing the nominee who had already served one full term. Despite Matta's stated preference for new perspectives on advisory boards, two other individuals were reappointed during the same meeting to serve additional terms on two other boards without comment. Matta attempted to nominate another person to fill the seat on the Human Rights and Services Board during the meeting, but Katie Jackson, city attorney, said the charter ordinance for the board required the mayor to appoint board members with the advice and consent of the governing body, meaning appointments were required to originate with the mayor. Matta then asked if the mayor could be changed for the evening, although no action was taken.

The City Commission further discussed mayoral appointments during the May 3 and May 17 meetings. Jackson informed com-

missioners that, in accordance with state statute, if a governing body wants to reject a nominee, commissioners have to approve a resolution that indicates the nominee is unfit or unqualified to hold the position, though commissioners are not required to state the reasons they feel that way. If a mayoral appointment isn't acted on within 45 days, then the appointment is viewed as approved.

Butler wanted to see the city adopt a process by which the mayor makes a recommendation based on the applications received, commissioners vote yes or no on the mayor's recommendation, and if it's no, then the commission can recommend another person from the list of applicants and vote on the matter the same evening. Jackson indicated commissioners would have to adopt a charter ordinance to set up a process as Butler described.

During the May 17 meeting, commissioners approved 3-2 resolutions to not reappoint the citizens nominated to the HRB and the Human Rights and Services Board. Hatesohl commented that in his opinion the only thing the HRB member who wasn't reappointed was guilty of was not seeing the big picture and being too focused on historic preservation. Morse felt both citizens acted in good faith, and she objected to calling out citizens as being unfit or unqualified.

The next time HRB seats will be open will be April 30, 2023, when two board members' terms expire. A third HRB member's term was also set to expire April 30, 2023, but the third board member recently resigned, citing the perceived lack of respect coming from certain commissioners as the reason for the resignation. This means there are currently two open seats on the HRB.

To be considered for service on an advisory board, an applicant needs to complete an interest form, which is available on the city's website at <https://cityofmhk.com/forms.aspx?FI D=54>.

M/RCPA P.O. Box 1893 MANHATTAN, KS 66505-1893
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2021-22 M/RCPA Membership Roster

\$35 Historic Level

Barbara G. Anderson, Steven Brewer, Dede Brokesh, Charlene Brownson, Bruce McMillan Architects, Preston & Diana Chapel, Margaret Conrow, Randi Dale, Mike & Jan Danenberg, Nancy Danner, Calvin & Genie Emig, David & Jana Fallin, Wanda Fateley, Sara Fisher, Rick & Judy Glowiak, Richard Harris, Debra Hielt, Jean Bigbee Hill, Marianne Korten, Melissa Janulis, Claudia Jones, Steve Lee & Nancy Raleigh, Brad Logan & Lauren W. Ritterbush, Dawn Munger, Larry & Sandy Murphy, Philip Nel & Karin Westman, Bill Pallett, Allana Parker, Barbara Peck, Jerry & Martha Powell, Gloria Juhl Raney, Mary Beth Reese, Roger & Virginia Reitz, Linda Rice, Tom & Karen Roberts, Catherine Roy-Tremblay, Sharlin Sargent, Richard & Kimberly Smith, Brenda Spencer, Elizabeth Stevens, Alicia Stott, Ronald E. Wells, Ron & Dixie West, Nancy B. Williams, Judith Willingham

\$100 Preservation Level

Phil & Dawn Anderson, Mimi Balderson, BBN Architects, Borst Restoration, Diana Caldwell, G. W. Clift, Gary & Paula Ellis, Joe & Janette Gelroth, Ann Kosch, John & Karen McCulloh, Dori Milldyke, Linda Morse, Debbie Nuss

\$125 Corporate Preservation

Colene Lind & Rex Fowles

\$250 Landmark Level

David & Kathy Dzewaltowski, Larry & Linda Glasgow, Mark & Ann Knackendoffel, Barbara Poresky

Honorary Lifetime Members

Mel Borst, Enell Foerster (in memory of Bernd Foerster), Edna L. Williams