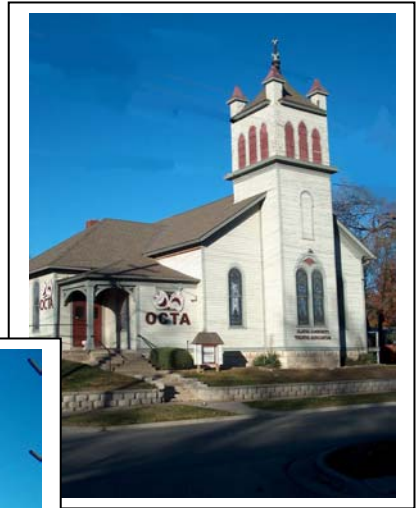


Historic Preservation Management Recommendations

ORIGINAL TOWN OLATHE, KANSAS



Prepared for
The City of Olathe

by
Historic Preservation Services, LLC

with
180° Design Studio

January 2004

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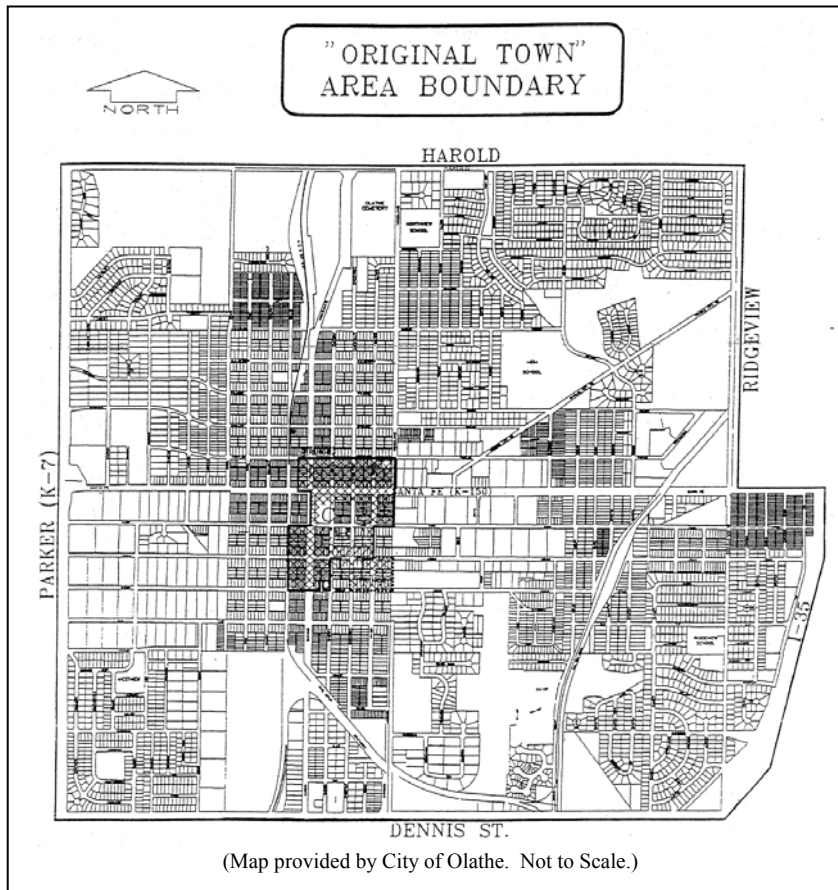
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INTRODUCTION

The City of Olathe, Kansas contracted Historic Preservation Services, LLC (HPS) and 180° Design Studio, Inc. to prepare historic preservation management recommendations for the Original Town area of Olathe. This work was funded by a Community Capacity Building Grant from the Kansas Department of Commerce and Housing and was completed in conjunction with an update of the City's Original Town Enhancement plan. Project staff conducted the activities described in this report between September and November 2003.

The goal of this project was to review the status of historic resource survey and designation in Original Town and to prepare a strategy for the future preservation of the area's historic resources. The findings of this report include recommendations for future survey efforts, identification of individual buildings and groups of buildings that may be potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or in the Register of Historic Kansas Places, and strategies and tools for preserving the historic built environment of the Original Town area of Olathe.



METHODOLOGY

SCOPE OF WORK

The scope of work for the project included the following.

- Compilation of data, using archival maps and existing cultural resource surveys and reports, to provide an understanding of development patterns in Olathe.
- Windshield survey of buildings within the Original Town project area to verify integrity of individual buildings, as well as to identify concentrations of buildings that may be eligible for listing in the National and/or state historic registers.
- Preparation of a report that includes a preliminary discussion of the broad patterns of development that occurred within the Original Town area, including historic contexts and the range of architectural styles and property types found within the project area. Management recommendations address future survey, resources that may be eligible for nomination to the National or state historic registers, creation of conservation districts, and other incentives that the City can use to encourage property owners to preserve the historic character of the Original Town area.

COMPILATION OF DATA

To prepare for the windshield survey, HPS identified buildings in the project area currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and in the Register of Historic Kansas Places, as well as properties included in earlier surveys of Olathe's historic architectural resources. Three previous cultural resource surveys provided valuable information to this analysis.

The first was a 1984 report on "Victorian Olathe." Judy Dumler Jenkins completed this study for the Olathe Historical Society and the Friends of the Mahaffie House and Farmstead Museum — 1865. It examined eighty properties constructed in Original Town before 1902 and included a historic context for the development of Olathe during this time period. The report identifies eight properties that the author judged to be the most historically significant, and thirty properties determined to be the most architecturally significant. A table in the report also indicates which properties in the community are the oldest, as determined by their appearance in 1874 and 1881 town atlases.

Completed in 2000, a second historic resource survey including Original Town was done by volunteers working with the Johnson County Museums as part of the Museums' nine-year

survey of historic resources in Johnson County. This project recorded over 1,000 properties throughout Olathe built before 1950. The Museums recorded the survey information in a database and provided HPS with an Excel spreadsheet containing address, date of construction, survey identification number, and section, township, and range information for each of the resources surveyed in Olathe. HPS culled the data in the Excel spreadsheet, removing all the properties not located in Original Town.¹ The Museums have not yet produced the final project report, and recommendations for historic register designation of surveyed properties in Olathe were not available at this time.

The third pertinent project conducted in Original Town was a cultural resources report prepared in 1979 by the Archaeology Laboratory, Wichita State University in preparation for an Olathe sewer improvement project.² This report included some history of the survey area and identified archaeological sites and significant historic buildings in the project area.

Historic Preservation Services also reviewed a selection of archival materials, most of which were found at the Kansas Room of the Olathe Public Library. This information included the 1881 and 1922 Johnson County atlases; city directories for the post-World War II period; *The City Beautiful*, an historical album published for the Olathe Centennial in 1957; and historic photographs of Olathe. The Kansas Room is also the repository for the 1979 Wichita State University cultural resources survey report. Sanborn maps of Olathe dating from 1884 to 1945 were accessed online through the Kansas City, Missouri Public Library. Historic Preservation Services used this information to supplement the existing written reports and to expand the context for development patterns in Original Town, particularly in the twentieth century.

To further assist in understanding the history and development of the Original Town area, the City provided HPS with a set of GIS base maps. One map showed the project area in great detail, including parcel boundaries, building footprints, and addresses. The second map indicated the dates of plats and subdivisions filed in Original Town, beginning with the 1838 Original Town Plat and continuing through to the present.

¹ The Excel spreadsheet included some properties for which there was no address information, only a survey identification number. It is possible that some of these properties could be in the Original Town area.

² While the project area for this study included Original Town, it also included resources outside the current project area.

WINDSHIELD SURVEY

During the windshield survey, HPS drove every street within the project area. Special attention was given to the areas that were heavily recorded during the Johnson County Museums's survey in 2000 and to significant properties noted in the 1979 and 1984 reports. Historic Preservation Services recorded on a base map and in field notes the locations of clusters of buildings that retain a high degree of architectural integrity, as well as individual properties that are architecturally distinctive.

DATA ANALYSIS

Historic Preservation Services used the base maps provided by the City to analyze and illustrate the findings of this project. On one map (Map 1), HPS identified the location of properties listed in historic registers, resources previously surveyed, properties shown on the 1945 Sanborn map of Olathe, and subdivisions platted since 1945. This helped HPS visualize the cultural landscape and to anticipate concentrations of resources that might be potentially eligible for listing as historic districts.

In order to make management recommendations, HPS conducted rudimentary evaluations of all properties in accordance with the National Register Criteria for Evaluation established by the National Park Service, which are used to evaluate the National Register eligibility of individual properties and historic districts. This included a preliminary assessment of eligibility for the Register of Historic Kansas Places or the National Register of Historic Places as individual landmarks or as contributing elements to a potential historic district. This evaluation was based primarily on architectural integrity. A property's historic architectural integrity reflects its ability to convey the architectural style in which it was constructed as well as the period of historical associations for which it is significant.

Historic Preservation Services recorded register-listed resources, potentially eligible landmark properties, potential historic districts, and possible conservation districts on a second map (Map 2). The individually eligible properties include those identified in the earlier surveys that continue to retain a high degree of integrity, as well as other architecturally notable properties HPS identified during the windshield survey. Alterations to many of the properties previously identified as architecturally significant, most commonly the application of non-historic siding, currently precludes their eligibility for listing in the National Register. A few resources have been demolished.

Finally, 180° Design Studio reviewed the existing City Ordinances and Design Guidelines for the Original Town Overlay District. In conjunction with the report findings, 180° Design Studio offered suggestions for strengthening both the ordinances and guidelines to support Conservation Districts that reinforce the historic character of Original Town. These recommendations are present in Appendix A.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING SIGNIFICANCE

Properties listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places or the National Register of Historic Places must meet certain criteria for historic significance. Historic significance is the importance of a property to the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture of a community, a state, or the nation. To be listed, properties must have significance in at least one of the following areas.

- Criterion A: Association with events, activities, or broad patterns of history.
- Criterion B: Association with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- Criterion C: Embody distinctive characteristics of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- Criterion D: Have yielded, or be likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

EVALUATION OF INTEGRITY

All properties eligible for listing in the local or National Register, whether for individual significance or as contributing elements to a district, must retain sufficient architectural integrity to convey the period of time in which they are significant.³ There are seven areas of integrity, and a property must retain integrity in a majority of these areas.

- Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
- Design: The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- Setting: The physical environment of a historic property.
- Materials: The physical elements that were combined during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.

³ A contributing property to a historic district does not have to meet the threshold for individual significance, but it must contribute to the significance of the district. Properties contributing to a district that is significant in the area of architecture must retain a higher degree of architectural integrity than properties in a district significant for associations with an important individual or with historical events or patterns of history.

- Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- Feeling: A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- Association: The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.⁴

⁴ U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, 1997 (rev), 44, 45.

HISTORIC CONTEXTS

To thoroughly evaluate register eligibility, the architectural integrity and history of each property or potential district must be examined within the context of the history of the Original Town area of Olathe. This report presents an overview of the historic development and architectural evolution of Original Town.

AN OVERVIEW HISTORY OF ORIGINAL TOWN OLATHE

Olathe was the first town established in Johnson County after the Kansas Territory opened to Euro-American settlement in 1854.⁵ In the conflict between abolitionist and pro-slavery groups for control of the Kansas Legislature, Dr. John Barton established the Olathe Town Company as a pro-slavery stronghold to balance free-state settlements in Lawrence and elsewhere in eastern Kansas. Hoping that the new town would become the county seat, Barton platted it in the center of Johnson County.

Settlement in Olathe began in earnest in 1857 when the Olathe Town Company began selling lots in the new community. Dr. Barton and Charles Osgood, another Olathe Town Company member, erected a frame house on the west side of Kansas Avenue, between Park and Santa Fe streets. This multi-purpose building housed the grocery store, dry goods store, drug store, saloon, and hotel. Within a few years, the 1860 Federal Census reported 341 free residents in Olathe City. Additional settlers in the township expanded the population to 520.

In addition to being at the center of Johnson County, Olathe became a stop along the Santa Fe Trail. Just one day's travel west from Westport, Missouri, then the eastern terminus of the Trail, this association generated abundant economic activity as a steady flow of travelers passed through the community during the period of westward migration.

The years leading up to and during the Civil War wrought havoc on the newly established community. The debate over Kansas' slavery status resulted in tremendous guerrilla activity between pro-slavery and abolitionist settlers, with pro-slavery forces dominating

⁵ The context for the development of Olathe is drawn from two reports: Judy Dumler Jenkins, "Victorian Olathe: A Historic Preservation Project for Olathe Historical Society and Friends of Mahaffie House and Farmstead Museum — 1865," 1984, City of Olathe Community Planning Department, Olathe, Kansas and Arthur H. Rohn, Principal Investigator; Roger Boydston, and Marsha King, "Cultural Resource Inventory, Olathe Sewerage Project, Kansas" (Wichita, Kansas: Archaeology Laboratory, Wichita State University, 1979).

Johnson County. On September 6, 1862, William Quantrill led a band of marauders on a raid of Olathe, burning both newspaper offices, looting businesses, and killing six people. The two companies of soldiers stationed in Olathe that fall could not assuage the fears of local business owners and residents. By the end of the Civil War, more than half the buildings standing in Olathe in 1860 were gone, having been moved to outlying areas or destroyed.

After the war, the community's fortunes changed again. New settlers arrived from Missouri, Arkansas, and Indian Territory, and wagon trains passing through Olathe on their way west revived the economy. In 1865, a public school opened in the old courthouse building and there were over seventy-seven land claims reported in agricultural production. By 1870, the town saw the establishment of numerous churches and social organizations, the Kansas School for the Deaf (1866), and two newspapers. While some free blacks left the South seeking better opportunities, the establishment of an African Methodist Episcopal ("AME") church on East Santa Fe Street during this period affirms that a community settled in Olathe.⁶

Olathe's place in the regional economy continued to improve. Between 1867 and 1871, the construction of branches for four railroads through Olathe linked the community to points in all directions. Olathe now boasted rail connections to Kansas City and Pleasant Hill, Missouri; Lawrence, Kansas; and other cities in the region. Improved access to regional markets and distributions centers boosted the largely agricultural local economy.

Arrival of the railroads also generated new commercial growth and additional residential development. In 1870, the City of Olathe boasted a population of 1,817. Five years later, the population had grown to 2,146; and, in 1885, Olathe had 3,042 residents. Permanent buildings filled nearly all of the commercial lots platted in the original townsite. During this period, numerous subdivisions were platted to accommodate the new residents. Additionally, the City saw the establishment of many new businesses as well as community organizations, including the Johnson County Co-Operative Association and the Olathe Grange.

Transportation continued to play a key role the growth of Olathe. In 1907, W. B. Strang completed the construction of the Missouri and Kansas Interurban Electric Railway between Olathe and Kansas City, Missouri. The trip between Olathe and Kansas City took

⁶ St. Paul's AME Church, built in 1879, remains extant at 316 East Santa Fe. Although alterations to the building include the addition of asbestos siding and the replacement of some windows and doors, the form and massing of the early church are still legible and it retains its distinctive, heavily arched wood window surrounds.

about an hour and cost 65 cents for a round trip. Workers rode the “Strangline” to jobs in Overland Park, Kansas and in downtown Kansas City; shoppers visited stores in downtown Kansas City; and Johnson County property owners used the service to pay taxes at the county offices in Olathe. The Strangline also provided freight service to Overland Park through a connection with the Santa Fe Railroad, improving the ability of local farmers to ship their wares to market points. The interurban line was a huge success. In 1910, it reported gross earnings in excess of \$4,500 per mile, a record for interurban railroads nationwide. The line continued operation until 1940.

The decline of the interurban line reflected, in part, the dramatic increase in automobile ownership and improved roads that occurred nationwide after 1910. In 1925, Kansas City Road became the first paved road connecting Olathe and Kansas City, Missouri. Ten thousand people attended the festivities celebrating its opening, which included a parade, speeches, and a contest between two men racing to lay the final 416 feet of brick paving. In the subsequent decades, at least nine trucking firms established facilities in Olathe, attesting to its central location and its access to hard-surfaced roads.

During the lean Depression years, Olathe benefited from the federal New Deal programs that infused local economies nationwide. Funds from these programs put the unemployed back to work building a wide variety of public projects that included new civic buildings and infrastructure. New Deal-era construction projects in Olathe included a new swimming pool in 1934 (Poplar and Woodland streets, now demolished); the City’s first permanent post office in 1939 (126 South Cherry Street); and a city garage in 1940 (405 North Chestnut Street). Nationwide, over one thousand New Deal-era post offices included a public art mural, usually depicting an event or theme from local history. Olathe’s new facility featured a mural by Albert T. Reid entitled “Romance of the Mail.”⁷



During World War II, Olathe was selected as the site for the U.S. Naval Air Station (now New Century Airport). Commissioned in 1942, the facility provided flight training to naval cadets and later became the headquarters of the Naval Air Transport Service.⁸ While the air station itself is located outside the Original Town area of Olathe, the Navy

⁷ Olathe Centennial, Inc., *Olathe “The City Beautiful” Centennial, 1857 – 1957: Souvenir Program, Celebration September 1-7, 1957. A Historical Album of Olathe, Kansas* (Olathe, KS: Olathe Centennial, Inc. 1957), 50-51. Kansas Room. Olathe Public Library, Olathe, Kansas.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

commissioned the construction of housing for cadets and staff off of East Cedar Street, in an area that came to be known as “Navy Hill.”

At the end of World War II, Original Town looked much as it had in the late nineteenth century. Over the past decade, private housing starts had been deferred — first due to the lean economic years of the Depression and later as building materials went into the war effort. With relatively few outlets for consumer goods, people were saving and by the end of the war, there was a substantial pent-up demand for housing and a supply of private money. Returning veterans, anxious to reclaim a more normal life, got married and began having children. New industrial development in the 1950s and the construction of Interstate 35 in the late 1960s made Olathe attractive to young middle-class families and spurred the development of massive new subdivisions. In the two decades following the war, the population nearly tripled, growing to more than 18,000 in 1970. During the 1960s, Olathe’s growth rate exceeded 87 percent.⁹

The 1956 construction of the Delco-Remy battery plant (now Delphi), at the southern edge of Original Town, was the single most important industrial development in the Original Town area at this time. A subsidiary of General Motors, the Delco-Remy factory on West Dennis Road represented a multi-million dollar investment and employed more than 300 people during its first year of operation.¹⁰ Its construction spurred the development of many new residential subdivisions in the southern portions of Original Town.

The desire for new construction during the post-World War II period also led to the demolition of existing buildings and the construction of new facilities through urban renewal programs. The sleek Modern design of new County Courthouse, erected in 1951, epitomized the idealistic spirit of the post-war period. Many of the historic commercial and civic buildings that formed the nucleus of the Original Town central business district were lost. Among these were the 1892 Johnson County Courthouse; the 1911 City Hall; the 1881 Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad Depot; and the 1913 Masonic Hall.



Johnson County Courthouse.

⁹ R. L. Polk and Company, *Polk’s Olathe (Johnson County) City Directory*, (Kansas City, Missouri: R. L. Polk & Company, 1971), vii.

¹⁰ Olathe Centennial, Inc., 53.

THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT OF ORIGINAL TOWN

The Original Town area of Olathe encompasses roughly 2,000 acres and contains more than 6,000 residential, institutional, governmental, and commercial properties dating from circa 1865 to the present. Individual parcels vary in size, reflecting their use and their date of platting. Likewise, the properties represent a full spectrum of architectural design, including residential, institutional, commercial, and governmental property types.

Residential Development

Residential neighborhoods dominate Original Town. In the oldest portions of the project area, a rectilinear grid of blocks contains rectangular lots that are configured with their narrow ends facing the street. Alleys bisect most of the blocks, primarily west of Harrison Street and east of North Iowa and South Pine streets. These residential blocks have a general uniformity in the placement of buildings on their lots, although their development occurred over a period of time, resulting in a spectrum of housing styles and some variations in building setbacks.

West of Kansas Avenue, particularly south of Santa Fe Street, the development, although platted in the 1880s, reflects a more suburban scale and density. Long east-west blocks feature a mix of older houses interspersed with post-World War II construction. The older houses represent a range of architectural styles, including several ornate high-style Victorian properties.

Beginning in the 1940s, after World War II in particular, subdivision development reflected the planning directives developed by the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) between 1936 and 1940. These directives encouraged curvilinear streets that follow the topography; longer blocks; wider, shallower lots; and greater uniformity in the style of dwellings and placement of buildings on lots. Subdivisions that illustrate these trends include the Edgemere additions (1952–1956); Highland Park (platted in 1924, developed in 1942–1943); Lakeside Acres (1954); and the Ridgeview additions (1950s). In some of these subdivisions, nearly all the houses are identical, suggesting speculative development by a single builder.

A few smaller subdivisions from the post-World War II period incorporate older houses on one or more of their lots, suggesting the division of historically larger properties. The Farmstead subdivisions adjacent to the Mahaffie House would be the most obvious examples of such activity, although Elmwood Meadows 1st Plat and Parker Place also illustrate this trend.

Modern multi-family housing is found in new subdivisions and on bundled (and often replatted) lots in older residential neighborhoods. Aside from the converted mill on East Cedar Street and a series of duplexes developed on “Navy Hill” in the early 1940s, there is no pre-World War II multi-family housing in the Original Town area.

Residential properties in Original Town exhibit a wide variety of designs and influences. They derive their significance from the information they impart about the continuum of single-family dwellings in the community that reflect blue- and white-collar working-class families, middle-class and upper-middle-class families, as well as the homes of substantial size erected by the town’s upper class. The Original Town area of Olathe includes examples of popular high-style architecture, as well as vernacular building forms produced by builders who adapted elements of formal architectural styles to common building forms. Nineteenth century examples range from very simple National Folk House forms to ornate, high-style examples of Victorian design. Early twentieth century housing stock includes simple vernacular cottages, Eclectic Revival style pattern book houses, and Craftsman bungalows.



Houses constructed after 1940 tend not to reflect historic design influences. The small, massed plan houses that proliferate in the Colliver Addition (1949), for instance, are clearly precursors to the ranch houses in the neighboring Edgemere additions (1952–1956).

The earliest example of the modern ranch house in Original Town appears in the Highland Park Addition, also referred to as “Navy Hill,” which was platted in 1924. The ranch duplexes in this subdivision were constructed in 1942–1943 to provide housing for the new Olathe Naval Air Station. Two designs appear to have been built in this subdivision. One design features detached double garages behind the dwelling; the second design features integrated double garages separating the two living units at the center of the main façade. A variety



of Minimal Traditional house designs, a later variant of the Tudor Revival house, ring the perimeter of this subdivision. It is unclear if these were also constructed as Navy housing.

Institutional Development

A variety of institutional buildings are scattered throughout Original Town. Most of these are schools and churches that service nearby residents.

Churches in Original Town appear in a wide variety of historic and modern architectural styles. They typically occupy prominent corner lots that are larger than the surrounding



First Christian Church,
200 South Chestnut Street..

All of the active schools present in Original Town are of recent construction and occupy large parcels at the center of a residential cluster. The only surviving historic public school is the former John P. St. John Memorial High School (now the Mill Creek Technical Education Center) at the southeast corner of East Park and South Water streets, which has been converted into a community center. The original 1926 school building is a Jacobethan design that features polychrome terracotta ornament punctuating its brick façade.

The most prominent institutional land use in Original Town is that of the Kansas School for the Deaf, which occupies a large parcel east of the central business district between Santa Fe and Park streets. Although the school dates to 1866, it appears that the extant campus of buildings date from the early 20th century to the present. The main building is a wonderful example of Colonial Revival design applied to an educational building.

Another notable institutional structure in Original Town is the Salvation Army building at 588 East Santa Fe. This building is distinguished by its unusual paraboloid roofline.



Salvation Army, 420 East Santa Fe Avenue.

Governmental and Commercial Development

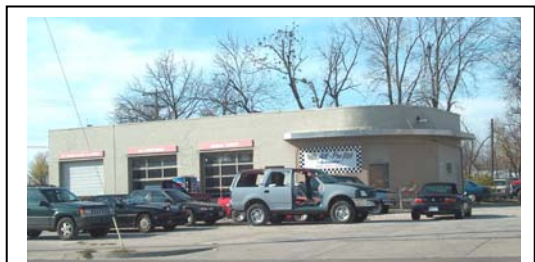
Located around the 1951 Johnson County Courthouse at the southeast corner of Kansas Avenue and Santa Fe Street are Johnson County’s governmental offices. New City offices (2003) are located across the street at the corner of Santa Fe and North Cherry streets.



Park-Cherry Building,
Northeast Corner Park and Cherry Streets.

The City’s central business district forms a tight node east of the courthouse, bounded roughly by Santa Fe Street on the north, the courthouse on the west, Loula Street on the south, and Water Street on the east. The buildings at the intersection of Park and Cherry streets define the historic core of the commercial district. Those on the north side of Park are two- and three-story examples of late Victorian commercial design. Previous surveys indicate that the building on the southwest corner of the intersection also dates to the early twentieth century, although its facade was substantially altered in the early 1950s to match the Modern design of the new courthouse.

From the core business district, commercial development stretches out along Kansas Avenue to the south and Santa Fe Street to the east and the west. Much of the development outside the main commercial node includes early commercial strips that evolved into a “Miracle Mile.”¹¹ This is particularly noticeable to the east of downtown as Santa Fe Street approaches Interstate 35. Beginning early in the twentieth century, strips of one-story brick commercial buildings developed along the primary thoroughfares (Kansas Avenue and Santa Fe Street), extending Olathe’s traditional business district. Unlike the nineteenth century development next to the courthouse, these strips were designed to accommodate automobile parking in front. The Doubletree Center at the northeast corner of Santa Fe and Buchanan Street is a notable World War II-era shopping strip. The building is arranged in an L-shape to accommodate ample parking in front of the stores. Design elements, such as the barrel tile roof, cupola and rooftop balustrade reference the popular architectural styles of the era. By mid-century, the primacy of the automobile generated the construction of larger one-story commercial buildings at the fringe of the existing commercial



1940s Gas Station,
203 South Kansas Avenue.

¹¹ Chester Liebs, *Main Street to Miracle Mile: American Roadside Architecture* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 10-29.

strips, each occupying a distinct lot with ample parking and a large illuminated sign to attract the attention of passing motorists.

Additional non-historic commercial and office development has occurred in planned office parks along North Rawhide Drive on the eastern edge of Original Town next to the interstate, as well as along Dennis Avenue south of the Original Town area. An industrial facility constructed on West Dennis Avenue in 1956 is the Delphi manufacturing plant (originally Delco-Remy). This facility is nearly fifty years of age and, because of its impact on the post-World War II development of Olathe, could be considered eligible for listing in the historic register.

FINDINGS

ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

While many buildings in Original Town retain their significant character-defining features, many have experienced alterations that compromise their historic register eligibility. The most common alterations to houses include the application of non-historic siding (such as asbestos shingles, aluminum, or vinyl); replacement windows that do not match the configuration or materials of the original windows; and inappropriate porch alterations (such as porch replacements or enclosures). While properties with these types of alterations may be included in a historic district, closer inspection will be required to determine if they will be contributing resources and eligible for incentives, such as the state historic tax credit. The Kansas State Historical Society generally declines to include a property with non-historic siding as a contributing element to a historic district. However, these properties remain vital elements of their neighborhoods by conveying information about size, scale, massing, and setbacks.

INTEGRITY THRESHOLDS

As described on page 5 of this report, the National Park Service has established criteria for listing properties on the National Register of Historic Places. The same criteria have been adopted by the Kansas State Historical Society for listing properties on the Register of Historic Kansas Places. To qualify for listing in the national or state historic register under Criterion A and/or C, properties must retain a strong integrity of association and location. To be eligible for individual listing under Criterion A, a building should retain a high degree of architectural integrity in setting, materials, and workmanship for its period of significance. It should also be an excellent example of its property type, possessing the distinct physical characteristics that define it as this property type. For example, because many commercial resources are one or two stories tall and have restrained commercial styling, it is important that the primary façade retain its original fenestration and spatial arrangements; in particular, the historic storefront elements or entrance treatment that define the property type.

In addition to the above requirements, to be listed as an individual resource under Criterion C, the property must be an excellent example of a specific style of architecture, retaining a high degree of integrity in setting, materials, and architectural elements that define the style.

Properties significant under Criterion B must demonstrate significance for their association with a person of local, regional, or national importance. The property should reflect, rather than commemorate, the person's achievements during the active period of his or her life. Birthplaces and burial sites are typically not eligible under Criterion B. It must also retain sufficient architectural integrity to reflect the period of time during which it was associated with the significant person.

To be listed under Criterion A as a contributing element to a historic district, a property should retain sufficient stylistic and structural features to link the property with its period of significance. Specifically, integrity of façade arrangement and fenestration is important. Additions are acceptable if they are on secondary elevations and are subordinate in size, scale, and massing to the original building. Common alterations to residences include the addition of non-historic siding, enclosure of porches, replacement of porch elements or porches in their entirety, and new windows. Inappropriate siding is a particular concern when evaluating integrity. An individual property with non-historic siding cannot be nominated to the National Register nor will it be considered as a contributing element to a historic district.



On commercial buildings, integrity of façade arrangement and fenestration is important. The primary façade should have sufficient character-defining elements to retain the distinct separation of upper floors from the ground floor. Window, door, or storefront replacement should not destroy or obscure original openings. These types of alterations must be judged in accordance with the architectural style and the impact on character-defining features to determine if the property retains sufficient integrity to contribute to a district. Alterations to the primary façades of large buildings may be acceptable if they do not alter a significant portion of the façade and the original appearance of the façade can be restored. Alterations

to the façade of simple small buildings should be minimal and should not significantly impact the original appearance of the building.

In addition to the above requirements, buildings that are part of a larger grouping may also be eligible under Criterion C as contributing elements to a district representing examples of specific architectural styles or property types. In both instances, integrity of design, materials, and workmanship associated with its period of significance is necessary.

REGISTER ELIGIBILITY

The compilation of archival resources, GIS information, and visual inspection identified both individual resources and groups of buildings in the Original Town area of Olathe that appear to be potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places. This includes residential, institutional, commercial, and governmental properties that date from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. The properties represent the full range of architectural styles and developmental contexts that are present in Original Town.

SIGNIFICANT INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

Four properties in Original Town are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places and three properties are currently listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.¹² Several of these properties were designated as historic landmarks subsequent to the recommendations of register eligibility published in the 1979 and 1984 survey reports.

National Register of Historic Places

1. J. B. Mahaffie House (1865), 1100 Kansas City Road
2. Albert Ott House (1894), 401 South Harrison Street
3. Martin Van Buren Parker House (1880), 631 West Park Street
4. I. O. Pickering House (1869), 507 West Park Street

Register of Historic Kansas Places

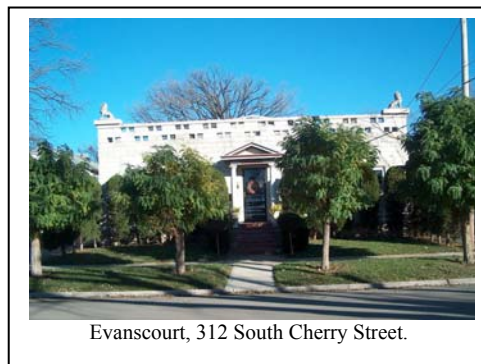
1. George Hodges House (1892, altered 1921), 425 South Harrison Street
2. Hycrest (1881, altered 1919), 505 East Cedar Street
3. Frank Lanter House (1901), 562 West Park Street

¹² Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are automatically listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places as well.

Twenty-five additional properties in Original Town appear to possess sufficient architectural and/or historical significance as well as architectural integrity to merit individual listing in the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places for their local significance. If listed in the National Register, income-producing properties will become eligible for the 20 percent federal rehabilitation tax credit and the 25 percent Kansas rehabilitation tax credit. Owner-occupied, non-commercial properties will also become eligible for the 25 percent Kansas rehabilitation tax credit. These incentives can assist owners in preserving Olathe's significant properties.

To develop this list, project staff verified the integrity of the properties noted as significant in the 1979 and 1984 survey reports and augmented that list with additional properties identified during the Windshield Survey completed for this scope of work. Because this scope of work focused on identifying historic districts and not surveying individual resources, it is possible that other buildings in Original Town may be individually eligible if they meet the previously described criteria.¹³ The properties that appear to be eligible for individual nomination are:

- **414 East Cedar Street, Ott Mills:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Manufacturing.
- **318 West Cedar Street, Charles W. Eckengren House:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **126 South Cherry Street, Old Olathe Post Office:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Government and Criterion C for Architecture.
- **312 South Cherry Street, Evanscourt:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **329 South Cherry Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **405 North Chestnut Street, City Garage:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Government.
- **214 South Chestnut Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **335 South Chestnut Street, H. L. Phillips House:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **461 South Chestnut Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **811 South Chestnut Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **West Dennis Avenue, Delphi (Declo-Remy) Manufacturing Plant:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Community Planning and Development.



¹³ The National Register Criteria for Evaluation Significance and Integrity are described on pages 5-6 of this report.

- **Southeast corner of Kansas Avenue and Santa Fe Street, Johnson County Courthouse:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Government and Criterion C for Architecture.
- **520 East Kansas City Road:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Commerce and Criterion C for Architecture.
- **200 East Loula Street, First Christian Church:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **500 East Loula Street, Covenanter Church (Olathe Community Theater Association):** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **505 East Loula Street, Gilbert-Keefer House:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **1006 East Park Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **422 West Park Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **301 South Parker Street, Hubbard House:** ¹⁴ Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture and Criterion B for its association with David Hubbard, Johnson County Surveyor.
- **133 South Pine Street, George Abbott House:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture. Additional research will determine if this property is also significant under Criterion B for its association with local builder George Abbott.
- **213 South Pine Street:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **235 South Pine Street, T. G. Graham House:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **420 East Santa Fe Street, Salvation Army Building:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture.
- **600 East Santa Fe Street:** Locally significant under Criterion A for Commerce and Criterion C for Architecture.
- **432 South Water Street, Frank Hodges House:** Locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture and Criterion B for its association with local lumberman Frank



1920s Gas Station,
520 East Kansas City Road.



1006 East Park Street.



George Abbott House, 133 South Pine Street.

Hodges. The house of Frank's brother, George Hodges, on the adjoining property at 425-429 South Harrison is listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places.

POTENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Project staff identified nine potential historic districts in Original Town Olathe. The districts represent the range of resource types, dates, and styles extant in Original Town and include several of the individually significant properties listed above. Before preparing a nomination, each of the districts should be closely reviewed to determine exact boundaries. The Kansas State Historical Society typically requires that at least 50 percent of resources be counted as contributing to the historic district. Depending on the changes made to an individual building before a nomination is prepared, either more properties than those shown or fewer than those shown may be contributing to a district. As a result, it is possible for the historic district boundaries to shrink or expand. Potential historic districts within the Original Town area of Olathe include the following.

- **West Original Town Historic District.** This district encompasses a nine-block area south and west of downtown, west of the railroad tracks, and south of Santa Fe Avenue. The building stock includes a wide variety of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century residential styles that range from elaborate Queen Anne Victorian designs to modest Four Square plans. The variety of designs illustrates a cross-section of residential architecture in Original Town in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and, as such, this district would be locally significant under Criterion C for the area of Architecture.



- **Southeast Original Town Historic District.** This district encompasses a roughly twelve-block area south of downtown, east of Kansas Avenue, north of Southgate Street, and East of Harrison Street. The building stock includes a wide range of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century residential styles ranging from vernacular hall-and-parlor cottages with Victorian porch ornament to

¹⁴ While this property is technically outside the Original Town project area, it is extremely distinctive and clearly architecturally significant.

elegant Craftsman bungalows. The eclectic mix of resources represents the evolution of residential architecture in Original Town and, as such, this district would be locally significant under Criterion C for the area of Architecture.

- **East Cedar Street Historic District.** This district includes twelve residential properties adjacent to and immediately west of Hycrest, a property listed in the Register of Historic Kansas Places and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Moderate to large examples of Colonial Revival and Tudor Revival residences dominate this district. The other distinctive feature about this district is the substantial size of the lots. Although no plat is shown for this block on the GIS map provided by the City, the size of the lots and style of the dwellings suggests a large lot subdivision was created in the early to mid twentieth century. This district would be locally significant under Criterion C for the area of Architecture and Criterion A for the area of Community Planning and Development.



- **East Loula Street Historic District.** This district includes twenty-six dwellings and one church constructed on lots facing East Loula Street. In contrast with the East Cedar Street Historic District one block to the south, this collection of resources reflects a period of construction approximately twenty years earlier as distinguished by the



smaller lots, denser construction pattern, and mix of late Victorian and early twentieth century architectural styles. This district would be locally significant under Criterion C for the area of Architecture. The suggested boundaries for this district reflect the increased frequency of inappropriate alterations exhibited by properties on the surrounding lots to the east and north, in particular. When a nomination is prepared, closer examination of these adjacent properties may reveal that the historic district in fact encompasses a greater number of resources than is identified at this time.

- **Navy Hill Historic District.** This district includes twenty-five duplexes constructed in 1942–1943 as housing for the Olathe Naval Air Station. The duplexes have generally experienced few alterations and retain a very high degree of architectural integrity.

Additionally, the layout of the subdivision is notable for the small triangle of green space located at the intersection of East Glendale and South Lane streets. This district would be locally significant under Criterion C for the area of Architecture and Criterion A for the area of Community Planning and Development.

- **North Cherry — West Poplar Streets Historic District.** This district includes a dense node of sixteen early twentieth century properties constructed just north of the central business district. The resources retain a high degree of architectural integrity and would be locally significant under Criterion C for the area of Architecture.



- **Cherry Street Commercial District.** This district encompasses three buildings on the east side of South Cherry Street at the intersection of Park Street. The buildings include the Park-Cherry building (100-108 North Cherry; 100 East Park); the adjacent Cherry Place building (110 North Cherry); and the Patrons Building (104 South Cherry). While these buildings significantly represent the remaining vestiges of Olathe’s historic commercial district, the variety of alterations made to these buildings probably exclude them from individual eligibility. The Park-Cherry and Cherry Place buildings clearly convey the massing, form, and style of their period of construction. The Patrons Building, remodeled in the early 1950s, conveys associations from that period of design and the updating of downtown Olathe after the construction of the new Johnson County Courthouse. This district would be locally significant under Criterion A for the area of Commerce and Criterion C for the area of Architecture.

- **Kansas School for the Deaf Campus.** Located on East Park Street, the campus has evolved from its founding in 1866 into its present-day appearance. Although the school’s earliest buildings no longer appear to survive, the campus includes several buildings that are more than fifty years of age, including the monumental main building, which is an excellent example of the Colonial Revival style applied to a substantial educational building. This district would be locally significant under Criterion A for the area of Education and Criterion C for the area of Architecture.



- **Olathe Memorial Cemetery.** Located at the southwest corner of Harold Street and South Woodland Road, this cemetery appears locally significant under Criterion C for its landscape architecture and architecture. Developed beginning in the late nineteenth century, its significant elements include the layout and organization of the cemetery, the flowing system of circular roads, the architecture of the chapel, and the evolution of its design in the early twentieth century to include memorials to Olathe's war dead.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CAPITALIZING ON ORIGINAL TOWN'S HISTORIC ASSETS

The historic development of the Original Town area of Olathe is a unique and important story. It defines the culture of the community and it is a tangible reminder of the past that creates a unique “sense of place.” The story of Olathe is intrinsically entwined with the story of development throughout the United States, the region, and Johnson County.

As Olathe continues to evolve, change provides the opportunity to strengthen and enrich the visual character of Original Town and to enhance the quality of life already appreciated by its residents. The goal of this project was to develop strategies to protect the historic resources of Original Town while accommodating positive change. To achieve this goal, it is necessary first to recognize and understand the assets that contribute to Original Town's unique physical and cultural character; second to forge a consensus in the community regarding their preservation; then to develop goals, policies, and initiatives to assist the City in the future identification, interpretation, evaluation, and protection of its remaining cultural resources.

To aid the City's future development efforts, Olathe should develop a clear public policy that promotes historic preservation (particularly when integrated into the planning process and targeted at identifiable districts) and provides a level of certainty and stability that is necessary to attract investment. Preserved neighborhoods create a stable population, a greater tax base, increased job retention, and less drain on City services.

Based on an analysis of the data collected, the consultants offer the following recommendations for historic resources found in the Original Town area.

ADDITIONAL SURVEY

- The historic resources survey completed by the Johnson County Museums should provide a thorough documentation of the pre-World War II resources extant in Olathe. The City should request copies of the survey forms prepared for Olathe as well as an MS Access database and/or Excel spreadsheets containing as many exportable fields as possible. Historic Preservation Services recommends that the City enter the non-downloaded information from the survey forms into an Excel or Access format, which will enable integration with the City's GIS system to facilitate planning activities as

well as a better understanding of cultural resource issues throughout City departments in general.

- The survey completed by the Johnson County Museums appears to have omitted some properties that appear on the 1945 Sanborn map. Because these properties have already achieved fifty years of age and thereby meet the initial threshold for register eligibility, they should be surveyed and the information added to the City's survey database to ensure a complete record of information about Original Town Olathe's historic resources. Historic Preservation Services strongly recommends that the City complete, at a minimum, a reconnaissance-level survey of the omitted properties that includes information about each property's address, approximate date of construction, architectural style/property type, original function, and integrity. Inclusion of this information with the results of the 2000 survey will enhance the ability of the City to define historic district boundaries, as well as to more accurately address preservation issues within the scope of ongoing planning efforts.
- The City should continue to monitor its post-World War II development, both residential and commercial. Significant new development of residential, commercial, and institutional properties occurred in Original Town during the decade following World War II. Over the coming decade, many of these properties will reach fifty years of age and become eligible for register listing and for incentives such as rehabilitation tax credits. The analysis completed for this report examined new plats filed before 1960 and after 1960. The current appearance of the dwellings in the pre-1960 plats suggests construction dates circa 1960, which means these resources may become eligible for register listing as soon as 2010. Awareness of subdivision platting dates and general construction trends will help City staff anticipate when these resources will reach the fifty-year threshold and which individual properties or clusters of buildings may be or become eligible for listing. Because building permits for these properties are no longer on file, city directories should be used to establish more specific construction dates. The City should also verify that the resources within the proposed district boundaries retain sufficient integrity for register listing before a nomination is initiated for mid-twentieth century resources.

NOMINATION OF RESOURCES TO THE NATIONAL REGISTER

- The City should develop a policy that encourages the nomination of Olathe's historically and architecturally significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places. This will support the efforts of property owners to maintain the distinctive character of

their properties and will enable them to capitalize on the financial benefits available to National Register properties, such as the state and federal rehabilitation tax credits.

- Only seven resources in Original Town are currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places or the Register of Historic Kansas Places. This survey identified twenty-five individual resources that appear eligible for listing now or within the next few years. The individual resources, shown on Map 2, reflect significance under National Register Criteria A, B, and C.
- This project identified nine groups of buildings that retain historical/architectural integrity and appear to meet at least one of the four National Register criteria. These buildings contribute to the significance of the Original Town area of Olathe in the areas of Architecture, Commerce and Community Planning and Development. These potential districts, illustrated on Map 2, contain buildings that represent a continuum of uses and architectural styles that define Original Town Olathe between the mid-nineteenth century and the early 1950s. As groupings of resources, their setting, design, materials, and workmanship convey feelings and provide associations with the City's residential, commercial, and institutional past as it evolved from a small county seat to a railroad town and finally to a suburban enclave.
- At the time a historic district nomination is prepared, all of the resources within the proposed district boundaries should be examined to verify the integrity of individual resources and exact district boundaries.
- Two properties identified as potential individual landmarks may qualify for listing in the National Register through an existing Multiple Property Submission (MPS) for *New Deal-Era Resources of Kansas*. This MPS was developed to facilitate the preservation of resources constructed with funding from one or more State or federal Depression-era programs. Both the City Garage (405 North Chestnut Street) and the old Olathe Post Office (126 South Park Street) may be eligible for listing in the National Register through this MPS.

MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION

- One vehicle to facilitate future nominations is a National Register Multiple Property Submission (MPS). An MPS would address the range of historic resources found throughout Original Town Olathe, describing property types and integrity requirements for register listing. Subsequent individual or district nominations need only provide the physical description and history of the resource(s) being nominated and can refer to the

MPS for the context. This makes the nomination process significantly easier, quicker, and more cost-effective. With an MPS in place, property owners or the City can initiate nominations that require significantly less time and effort to prepare. Preparation of an MPS for *Historic Resources of Original Town, Olathe, Kansas* would be an efficient and proactive way for the City to approach historic preservation.

- In 2003, the National Park Service issued an MPS for *Historic Residential Suburbs in the United States, 1830-1960*. Navy Hill and many of the post-World War II planned subdivisions in Original Town might qualify for listing in the National Register directly through this MPS. In addition, much of the discussion in this MPS regarding property types and context, particularly influences of transportation, would apply to the general development of Original Town and could be incorporated into an Original Town MPS.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A LOCAL HISTORIC REGISTER

Listing in the National Register enables property owners to receive tax credits for qualified rehabilitation work. However, when tax credits are not used, the National Register is primarily an honorific recognition and does not guarantee that the historic character of a property will be preserved. Conversely, designation to a local historic register invokes design review by a local historic preservation commission for subsequent exterior alterations. Local design review has proven to be a powerful stabilizer of property values and historic neighborhood character in communities nationwide, but there is no obvious “carrot,” such as the tax credits, that accompanies the design review “stick.” Because of this, the City may want to pursue a strategy that initially encourages owners of eligible resources to pursue National Register designation, enabling the property owners to have access to the available tax credits. Either concurrently or at some time in the future, when owners have been educated to and are comfortable with the implications of register listing, the City can work with property owners and neighborhood groups to pursue local register status. Once the Historic Preservation Office, Kansas State Historical Society has recognized Olathe as a Certified Local Government, the historic preservation commission automatically becomes involved in the review of any National Register nomination proposed in Olathe. At that point, the City may choose to piggyback local register designation to the National Register process, so that the design review “stick” is automatically attached to the tax credit “carrot.”

CONSERVATION DISTRICTS

The creation of conservation districts is gaining popularity nationwide as a tool that can be used to upgrade properties to meet National Register standards or to provide protection to

historic resources that do not retain sufficient integrity to be listed in the local or National Register. Locally designated conservation districts can be used to stabilize and increase property values in older neighborhoods and to buffer National Register or local historic districts. Conservation districts can also establish specific design guidelines to direct improvements that will upgrade historic resources to meet National Register criteria as contributing elements to a National Register and/or local district. For instance, non-historic siding is a common alteration that will preclude many properties from being listed as contributing resources in the potential historic districts identified in this report. By creating a conservation district prior to designating a historic district, the City can encourage property owners to reverse siding alterations, increasing the number of properties that contribute to a district and, correspondingly, the number of properties eligible for incentives such as rehabilitation tax credits. Design review of major changes (such as new construction and demolition) also occurs in conservation districts in an effort to limit adverse changes to the visual context of the district, while encouraging property owners to make appropriate changes to their buildings. Appendix A discusses Conservation District Design Guidelines in greater detail.

An area designated as a “Conservation District” by city ordinance possesses special historic, architectural, or cultural significance as part of the heritage of the city, but is of lesser historic or architectural significance than a Historic District. A sufficient amount of historic and architectural character is retained to help interpret the development of the City, although individual buildings have generally experienced a greater degree of alteration than would be found in a historic district.

Criteria for Designation of Conservation Districts

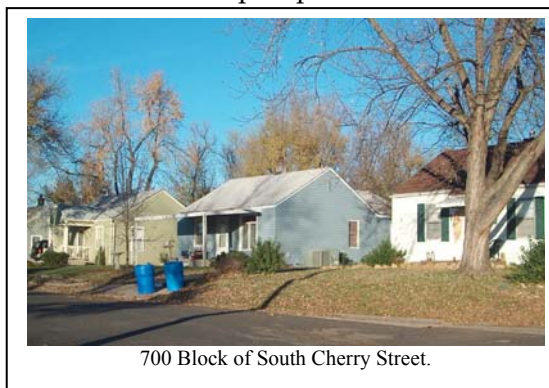
To be designated as a Conservation District, a group of structures and/or landscape elements should meet one or more of the following criteria.

- The district as developed at least fifty years ago and retains distinctive architectural and historical characteristics that are worthy of conservation, but which has less historical, architectural, or cultural significance than a Historic District.
- The district possesses a recognized neighborhood identity and character expressed by unifying exterior features or by environmental characteristics that create an identifiable setting, character, or association.
- The district has a relationship to an identifiable neighborhood center or historic area where preservation of this relationship is critical to the protection of such center or historic area.

- Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristics, the district represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or city.

The project identified six areas that retain sufficient historic and architectural character for interpretation as part of the development of Original Town and are worthy of conservation. These are illustrated on Map 2. The potential Conservation Districts include the following.

- **Colliver Conservation District.** Located in far southwestern Original Town Olathe, immediately west of the Delphi manufacturing plant, this two-block area is a very cohesive development of early post-World War II housing. Architecturally, these houses illustrate a cusp in vernacular residential design that bridges the Minimal Traditional and Ranch House styles. This potential district appears to retain a high degree of integrity and once it achieves fifty years of age, appears to be eligible for listing in the National Register.
- **North Pine — West Poplar Conservation District.** Like many parts of Original Town, this grouping of approximately three residential blocks includes an interesting mix of late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses. The houses in this group are smaller, more eclectic and have more alterations than those in some of the other neighborhoods discussed as potential historic districts. In spite of this, these blocks continue to convey information about the historic development of Original Town.
- **Belmont — Tillotson Conservation District.** This four-block area is also located in the most southern part of Original Town, just east of the Delphi plant and Kansas Avenue. Similar to the Colliver Conservation District, small post-World War II houses dominate this grouping. The architecture, which again illustrates the cusp between vernacular Minimal Traditional and Ranch House design, is very cohesive and retains a high degree of integrity. When these properties reach fifty years of age, this district may be eligible for listing in the National Register.
- **Navy Hill Conservation District.** This group of buildings encircles the west, south, and east sides of the proposed Navy Hill Historic District. Unlike the duplexes in the historic district, the conservation district is composed entirely of single-family houses.



Although the district includes a few examples of Ranch Houses, variations of Minimal Traditional design dominate the architectural styling. Although they break from the uniform design of the Navy Hill Historic District, these houses were built during the same period and reinforce the chronological associations of the duplexes. The entire subdivision, organized around the horseshoe formed by Ochletree and Lane streets, also reflects the design parameters issued by the FHA in the late 1930s and, as such, the Historic District and Conservation District reflect one of the earliest examples of modern residential planning in Original Town. Although it is currently unclear if the houses in the Conservation District were also built as Navy housing, if additional research documents that they were part of the naval project, it is likely that they could be included in the Navy Hill Historic District.

- **East Loula and Park Streets Conservation District.** This grouping of approximately thirty-three residential buildings flanks the proposed East Loula Historic District on the north, east, and south. Like the adjacent historic district, the conservation district includes an eclectic mix of late-Victorian and early twentieth century architectural houses densely arranged on small residential lots. Unlike the houses in the historic district, the houses in the Conservation District exhibit a greater number of inappropriate alterations, in particular non-historic siding. However, this Conservation District also includes buildings with excellent architectural integrity. In spite of the alterations, this Conservation District conveys information about the historic development of Original Town and provides a good buffer for the historic district from nearby non-sympathetic uses and architectural designs. When a nomination is prepared for the potential East Loula Street Historic District, closer examination of these properties may reveal that the historic district in fact encompasses some, and possibly all, of the resources included in the Conservation District.



563 East Park Street.

- **North Original Town Conservation District.** This group of approximately thirty-seven residential buildings encircles the North Cherry — West Poplar Streets Historic District. They are similar to the historic district properties in architectural style and period of construction, but they exhibit a much higher rate of inappropriate alterations, particularly the application of non-historic siding. Although its architectural integrity is weakened, this potential Conservation District conveys information about the historic

development of Original Town and provides a good buffer for the historic district from the non-sympathetic uses and architectural designs that proliferate nearby.

Additional comments on integrating historic-based conservation districts into Olathe's existing Original Town Overlay District and Design Guidelines are presented in Appendix A.

BENEFITS OF PRESERVATION

Preservation has its own intrinsic value in celebrating a community's history. As John W. Lawrence, Dean of the School of Architecture at Tulane University, noted, it enables the citizens of today and tomorrow "to understand the present as a product of the past and a modifier of the future." It allows a greater awareness of the relationships of the past, the present, and the future — a deeper understanding of the continuity and contrasts of life.

Another compelling argument for protecting historic resources is simply that people like them. People seek out historic settings because they offer quality craftsmanship and materials, create variety, and encourage human interaction in a familiar context. Moreover, preservation has proven utilitarian value as a tool for economic development and environmental stewardship.

Economic Benefits

As nationally recognized real estate professional Donovan D. Rypkema noted in his book *The Economics of Historic Preservation*, commitment to preservation may be one of the most effective acts of fiscal responsibility governmental entities can undertake. Older neighborhoods and commercial centers represent a considerable taxpayer investment in infrastructure and building stock. Conservation of buildings, neighborhoods, and sites of historic and aesthetic value is one of the best tools for recovering the worth of past investments while fueling new economic activity.

The most successful revitalization efforts in the country utilize historic rehabilitation as the core of their revitalization strategies. These efforts document that the most successful approach to creating sustainable cities merges the old and the new. The creative combination of preservation, adaptive reuse, and new construction capitalizes on the aesthetics and craftsmanship of other eras, provides opportunities for architectural innovation, and promotes problem solving, thereby enhancing the community's character and fabric.

EXAMPLES OF THE BENEFITS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- ✓ The physical appearance of its buildings and streetscapes reflects the community's overall vitality and economic health.
- ✓ Maintaining the vitality of the city's older commercial and residential areas, including rehabilitating older buildings and designing quality new buildings, can attract larger commercial ventures to the community, even if these ventures do not locate in the historic core of the city.
- ✓ Rehabilitation of individual buildings is more attainable and stabilizing to a local economy than a single large economic development project.
- ✓ Cultural resources most clearly reflect a community and region's evolution, history, diversity, and differentiation from other areas. Rehabilitating older buildings and sites distinguishes one community from another by preserving the unique character of each.
- ✓ The buildings, public improvements, and activities around a property determine its value. Rehabilitation of a historic property directly benefits adjacent property owners and nearby businesses.
- ✓ The value of rehabilitated properties in a city's historic core increases more rapidly than the real estate market in the larger community.
- ✓ Older buildings with easy access to professional and support services are ideal for many smaller and start-up businesses that typically generate a majority of new permanent jobs.

Environmental Stewardship

Using preservation as a tool for the conservation of resources provides a rational and effective economic and environmental strategy for the future. There is growing consensus in support of environmental conservation efforts. After years of exploiting resources, people are now beginning to consider how their surroundings fit into the larger environment. This includes recognizing the embodied energy contained in built resources and encouraging better stewardship of older buildings and structures. Buildings contain energy that has already been expended in materials that have been mined or harvested, manufactured, shipped, and assembled. Material from demolished buildings accounts for up to 40 percent of landfill contents — the cost of which is indirectly borne by taxpayers. At the same time, new construction consumes new energy and resources.

WHY LIST PROPERTIES IN THE HISTORIC REGISTERS

Commitment to preservation can be the single most effective act of fiscal responsibility governmental entities can undertake. The existing built environment represents a massive taxpayer investment in infrastructure and building stock including Olathe's sizable inventory of valuable buildings, established businesses, and neighborhoods. Decisions regarding Olathe's existing built environment require both short-term and long-term fiscal accountability. In particular, conservation of buildings, neighborhoods, and sites of historic value is one of the best tools for recovering the worth of past investments while fueling a new economic force. The most successful revitalization efforts, in both large and small communities, use rehabilitation as the core of their revitalization strategies.

The State of Kansas and the federal government recognize the role rehabilitation of historic buildings can play in strengthening the local economy. To encourage sustainable neighborhoods and communities, as well as to encourage preservation of important cultural resources, they provide incentives to encourage rehabilitation of historic buildings. Investment tax credits for rehabilitation of historic buildings are available from both of these governmental entities. Eligible properties must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places.¹⁵

The 20 percent Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit applies to owners and some renters of income-producing National Register properties. The law also permits depreciation of such improvements over 27.5 years for a rental residential property and over 31.5 years for a nonresidential property. The rehabilitated building must be subject to depreciation.

All of the state's National Register properties (commercial and residential) are eligible for a 25 percent Kansas Rehabilitation Tax Credit. When used together, the federal and state tax credits can recapture up to 38 percent of eligible rehabilitation costs in tax credits. The state tax credits can be sold and, while federal tax credits cannot be sold directly, a project can involve an equity partner, such as a bank, who participates in the project by contributing funds toward the rehabilitation in exchange for some or all of the tax credits.

To qualify for the tax credits, the rehabilitation work must comply with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. The Standards are designed to accommodate changes that will allow older buildings to function in the twenty-first century without

¹⁵ A property can be certified as eligible for listing in the National Register and for tax credits. Owners have up to twenty-four months after completing certified rehabilitation work to get the property listed in the National Register.

sacrificing their historic character. The common sense guidelines address new construction (such as additions) as well as rehabilitation.

These incentive programs are part of a larger pool of federal, state, and local government preservation programs aimed at the identification, evaluation, and protection of historic resources. Cultural resource survey is an important first step in the identification and evaluation of cultural resources and the integration of protection and incentive programs into community planning efforts. The survey of the Original Town area of Olathe identified a number of properties worthy of preservation and eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as contributing elements to a historic district.

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APPENDIX A

Recommendations for Original Town Conservation District Guidelines

Prepared by 180° Design Studio

ORIGINAL TOWN CONSERVATION DISTRICT GUIDELINES

CURRENT ORDINANCES AND PROCESS

The current Original Town guidelines emanate from Chapter 18.52 of the City's Municipal Code, the Original Town Overlay District. The chapter designates the boundaries of the Original Town area, the purpose of the ordinance, the process, and the items to be reviewed.

The companion piece to the ordinance is the City's publication "Guidelines to Architectural Review for one- and two-family dwellings in the Original Town." This four-page document, effective January 1, 1998, defines the features to be reviewed and a few criteria for each item. Notably, it leaves a great deal of interpretation to the applicant and to the reviewer. It encourages compatibility with the current development in the area, but gives limited graphic information as to how to achieve this.

In addition, recent planning efforts have been undertaken for the Downtown area (Downtown Master Plan) and an action plan is in place for the Westview neighborhood, one of the designated areas in Original Town. Many of these projects have overlapping goals and techniques, and should be reviewed for compatibility with any new guidelines for Original Town.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

The neighborhoods within Original Town run the gamut from cohesively historic to isolated structures within more typically suburban development patterns. While earlier sections of this report highlighted these specifics, it is important to note that design guidelines and ordinances should reflect this diversity of character. One-size-fits-all solutions should be avoided, as they would lack credibility. A neighborhood-specific approach that looks at each area within Original Town at a finer level of detail than typical ordinances provide is encouraged. For example, significant assets identified in the Central Core and Water Works neighborhoods merit different treatments than might be found in Westview or Fairview.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSERVATION DISTRICT ORDINANCES AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

The success of new ordinances and guidelines for the Original Town area should be measured against the following criteria.

- Are they legible and easily understandable for the average property owner?

- Do they protect designated historic structures and promote the integrity of historic districts?
- Do they promote economic development?
- Are they consistent with the City's other plans, notably the Downtown Master Plan?

The original guidelines, dated January 1, 1998, are an excellent beginning for establishing guidelines. However, they should be more specific in reference to the guidelines set forth by Chapter 18.52. Flexibility is important in implementation, but property owners should be provided with more clearly elucidated drawings that indicate what the City's objective is with the guidelines. Too much room for interpretation can be frustrating to both citizens and enforcement officials.

In addition, nothing within the guidelines specifically protects the historic assets of the area. Again, while this is addressed in more detail elsewhere in the report, the City should adopt separate processes for structures and areas of specific historic integrity. Additionally, guidelines should respond in different ways to the varied contexts of historic integrity.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Simply put, the City should strive to establish more clarity in the City's guidelines. Notably, within the guidelines, information with regard to bulk, height, orientation, setbacks, and specific architectural features should be clarified. The City is encouraged to work with residents to establish specific solutions that are flexible, yet achieve the community's goals, rather than developing them in-house with little public input.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS TO CONSIDER FOR FUTURE ORDINANCES AND GUIDELINES IN ORIGINAL TOWN

- Review the City's first zoning and development ordinances for applicability to the Original Town area. Some cities have adopted the original 1920s ordinances for their historic districts, as they are more compatible than current ordinances with the older community fabric.
- Ensure that transportation changes/improvements enhance the City's historic assets. In the past, many improvements ignored or destroyed the historic fabric. Care should be taken to enforce context-sensitive transportation strategies.
- Investigate establishing by-right density bonuses for existing lots. The City has a goal of increasing density adjacent to Downtown, as well as enhancing the Original Town area. Some communities have utilized by-right bonuses for additional density on existing lots as

a measure to achieve these goals. While the solutions need to be very specific, so as to protect the character of the neighborhoods, they can achieve both preservation and economic development goals.

- Establish a carrot-and-stick approach to enforcing the guidelines. Alternative processes should be established that encourage compliance, rather than treating every application the same. If an application meets the guidelines exactly, find ways to speed them through the permitting process.
- Consider establishing a form-based zoning code for the Original Town area. Form-based codes emphasize building form over use and tend to be more appropriate for historic neighborhoods than use-based codes, as older structures were meant to be more flexible over time. Form-based codes can allow a neighborhood to evolve more dynamically over time, while still protecting key resources.
- Encourage the use of the Dynamic Planning process, as promoted by the National Charrette Institute, to run parallel with the process of adopting new guidelines and ordinances (<http://www.charretteinstitute.org/>).