RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY OF COLLINS PARK

PROJECT REPORT

Prepared for the City of Topeka by
Landmark Preservation Associates

January 2002
Project Overview and Methodology Discussion

In 2001 the City of Topeka (the City) was awarded a survey and planning grant from the Kansas State Historical Society (the KSHS) to undertake a reconnaissance-level survey of the Collins Park neighborhood in Topeka, Kansas. Landmark Preservation Associates, a preservation consulting firm based in Lexington, Virginia, provided the City products and services towards the completion of the survey. The project was administered by the Topeka-Shawnee County Metropolitan Planning Department, represented by Dan Warner, Planner I, and Robert Beardsley, AICP, Planner II, and conducted by J. Daniel Pezzoni and Leslie A. Giles of Landmark Preservation Associates.

The project area was the residential neighborhood known as Collins Park, bounded by Huntoon and 15th Streets and Oakley and Randolph Avenues in the southwest quadrant of the city. The Collins Park neighborhood, initially developed in the 1920s, is characterized by curvilinear streets, a central park (Collins Park), and a relatively complete and well-preserved assemblage of houses dating mostly to the late 1920s and 1930s and primarily Tudor Revival and Colonial Revival in style.

Fieldwork was conducted in November 2001 and resulted in the survey of all primary resources within the project area and the partial completion of 186 Kansas Historic Resources Inventory Reconnaissance Forms. In addition, secondary resources such as garages and sheds that were visible from public thoroughfares were recorded. The information gathered on primary and secondary resources included architectural style, basic building form, height, roof material and type, wall material and type, foundation material, chimney/flue material (if applicable), front porch characteristics (if applicable), and the noting of features such as dormers, wings, other porches, notable decorative details, and so forth. During the survey phase, on November 14, 2001, Warner, Beardsley, and Pezzoni made a presentation on the project to Collins Park residents. Also in November, KSHS Architectural Historian Martha Hagedorn-Krass evaluated the project area for its National Register of Historic Places potential.

Recommendations

Based on the architectural significance, age, and integrity of a majority of the resources in the project area, the KSHS is of the opinion that a large portion of Collins Park has potential for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district (see map for potential boundaries). National Register listing would confer a number of benefits to residents and to the City. Foremost among these is official recognition of the architectural and historical significance of Collins Park, recognition that can foster public and private-sector appreciation for and protection of historic properties. Certain types of construction and remodeling work within and near a district would be reviewed for architectural appropriateness, as provided for by Kansas state law. The effects of federal undertakings on National Register listed or eligible resources are
reviewed by the KSHS and mitigation of adverse affects are considered. The National Register process is an excellent vehicle for documenting the history and architecture of a given area and the individual buildings within the district.

Also beneficial are federal and state tax credits that are available to property owners who undertake certified rehabilitations of contributing buildings within a National Register historic district or properties that are individually listed in the register. The federal rehabilitation tax credit is available for income-producing properties and amounts to 20% of certified rehabilitation expenses. The 25% state credit is available for both income and non-income producing properties. Rehabilitation work must conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and must be certified by the KSHS (for the state credit) and the National Park Service (for the federal credit). For additional information on these programs contact the KSHS at (785) 272-8681. Note: participation in the rehabilitation tax credit programs is voluntary. In addition to the 20% and 25% credits there is a 10% credit that is available only for rehabilitation of certain non-historic commercial buildings (noncontributing buildings in listed National Register historic districts) constructed before 1936.

The survey was designed to generate sufficient descriptive information to support the preparation of a nomination inventory, if National Register listing is pursued. Several sources may be helpful in more accurately determining construction dates for properties. Shawnee County lists construction dates for many if not all of the project area's primary resources on its website, www.co.shawnee.ks.us. (Note: selective comparison of these dates and dates provided by some property owners revealed discrepancies.) Sanborn Map Company insurance maps, if they exist for the project area, would provide information on the existence of primary and secondary resources for a given year as well as other helpful information. City directories; historic maps, photographs, and other graphic sources; the reminiscences of former and present residents; and other sources may be helpful in providing general and property-specific information on the project area.
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Collins Park Reconnaissance Survey Project Area

boundary of potential National Register district