

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Other names/site number Wichita Civic Cultural Auditorium Complex

Name of related Multiple Property Listing N/A

2. Location

Street & number <u>225 W. Douglas</u>	NA	vicinity
City or town <u>Wichita</u>	NA	
State <u>Kansas</u> Code <u>KS</u> County <u>Sedgwick</u>	Code <u>SG</u> Zip code <u>67202</u>	

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide local Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner, Deputy SHPO Date _____

Kansas State Historical Society
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____

Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater,
Auditorium, museum, music facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL: meeting hall

RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater,
Auditorium, museum, music facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Wrightian

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: CONCRETE

roof: CONCRETE

other: METAL: Structural Steel

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources, if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center (Century II), located at 225 W Douglas in Wichita, Kansas, was constructed over three years, from 1966-1968, with the grand opening in January 1969. Century II's most distinctive and unique feature is the large, blue domed, roof covering nearly 5 acres. The building is a circular structure built of concrete and steel. It is located on the west side of Wichita's dense commercial core and along the east bank of the Arkansas River between Douglas Avenue and Waterman Street. The building has occupies the same location, with the same landscaping, as when it was built. The only change of note is the addition of a glass lobby on the southwest side of the building to provide a connector to the Bob Brown Expo Hall. This addition was constructed in 1986 and does not detract from the historic integrity of Century II incredibly unique design.

The facility holds 94,500 square feet of contiguous exhibit space; Exhibition Hall with 62,500 square feet of exhibit space, 22 meeting rooms, Concert Hall that seats 2,197 people in continental seating, the Theatre seats 652 people in continental seating, and Convention Hall with 32,000 square feet of exhibit space that seats 5,022 people. Kennedy Plaza, located immediately outside the Convention Hall, can provide additional outdoor display area.¹ The building lobby encircles the main level with Convention Hall, Exhibition Hall, Concert Hall and Theater occupying wedge-shaped areas within the ring. The stages of the first three spaces are located in the building's central core. The promenade level contains meeting rooms, offices, and dressing rooms. The service level has an outside entrance from allowing trucks to enter the lower level, loading dock, freight elevator, service elevator, and mechanical equipment storage. The Exhibition Hall features terrazzo floors and expansive windows offering views of downtown Wichita.

The building is an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern architectural style and demonstrates the exceptional talents of architects John M. Hickman and Roy K. Varenhorst. They were both considered masters of Mid-Century Modern architecture and Century II was one of the most important buildings of their careers. The building meets the National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an outstanding and unique example of the Mid-Century Modern style. The building is historically significant and contains distinctive physical design elements unique to Wichita. The construction of the building required skilled craftsmanship and cannot be replicated today.

Century II is in good condition and has excellent architectural integrity. The setting is in the heart of downtown, and the building occupies a unique vantage point of the Arkansas river, which was historically important to the settlement of the city. Wichita citizens have a strong, emotional attachment to the blue domed building and deeply appreciate its unique, one-of-a kind design.

An additional exhibit hall named for former Mayor Bob Brown was adjoined to the original structure in 1986 by way of a glass lobby. Both of these later additions could easily be removed without effecting the architectural integrity of Century II. The Bob Brown Expo Hall (Expo Hall) contains an additional 93,000 square feet of exhibit space and adjoins the 8,000 square foot connecting lobby that connects Century II with Expo Hall. The connecting lobby is a large, boxlike glass structure and has double doors to the outdoors on the east and west sides, and double doors on the south and north sides inside lead either into Century II on the north or to Expo Hall on the south. In 1997, the 303 room Hyatt Regency Wichita hotel was constructed and connected to the meeting rooms on the Expo Hall promenade level center.²

¹ *Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center*, "Facilities," URL: <http://www.century2.org/Pages/default.aspx>

² *Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center*, "Bob Brown Expo Hall," URL: <http://www.century2.org/Pages/Expo.aspx>

United States Department of the Interior
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Elaboration

Site and Setting:

Century II is a public building for performing arts and convention center in Wichita, Kansas, United States. It is located between Douglas Street to the north and Waterman Street to the south. The property is surrounded to the west by Waco Street and the east bank of the Arkansas River, and to the east by Cancun Street. To the north is Douglas Street and to the South is English Street.

East of Century II is a short curving street named Cancun Street (see **photo 3**), and a bit more east is a small, landscaped park with benches and bronze statues. A large building, formerly the Public Library, is to the east of the park and is a Brutalist design Modern building that presently sits vacant. Cancun Street curves along the east side of Century II and is expanded for a drop-off area for unloading patrons in front of Century II ticket office. Cancun Street turns into English Street to the southwest of the Library, where it enters a roundabout that leads visitors to either the metered parking lot associated with the area on the south or to the north for the metered parking lot for the former Public Library or continues east where it intersects with Main Street. Surface parking for approximately 200 cars is on the southeast of the building and is bordered by English Street to the north, Waterman Street to the south, and Main Street to the east. Across Main Street is the Sedgwick County Historical Museum built in 1890 by Proudfoot and Bird and the Wichita Carnegie Library built in 1915 in Beaux-Arts style; both are listed in the National Register. This one block area is unique for capturing a period of Wichita history spanning three centuries.

North of Century II is Kennedy Plaza with a tiled plaza and landscaped areas (see **photo 31**). This plaza was dedicated to John Fitzgerald Kennedy shortly after his assassination. Surrounded by a curved, buff-colored, cast-in-place concrete wall, there is a landscaped plot with a stone edifice dedication "John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial Plaza" (see **photo 73**). There is a fountain located on the north side of the building facing Douglas Street. Several Modern architectural buildings surround this area and were built around the same time as Century II. Directly north across Douglas Street, are two Modern office buildings called O. W. Garvey and R. H. Garvey, and directly behind them to the north is the Garvey Center, the second tallest building in Wichita. Northeast of Century II, past Cancun Street, is Century II Drive, which turns into William Street to the East and Water Street on the North. Across from Century II Drive is a Modern high-rise building called Century Plaza. It is a ten-story concrete building with metered parking on the south, and a landscaped greenspace called Finlay Ross Park containing a small waterfall, benches, shrubs, and lower-level reflection pond. Northwest of Century II across Douglas Street is Drury Inn, the former Broadview Hotel and a neo-classic masonry high rise building constructed in 1927 (see **photo 5**), also listed in the National Register.

West of Century II is a small permit parking lot for vendors and large trucks (see **photo 23**). The street running behind Century II is Waco Street, and it turns from Douglas Street north and south between the building and the A. Price Woodard Park, which borders the river. Waco street ends just behind Bob Brown Expo Hall. There is a small circular drive for picking up and dropping off vendor equipment and materials right outside both Convention and Exhibition Hall (see **photo 29**). There is a truck entrance north of the permit parking with a ramp leading down into the service level of Century II (see **photo 28**), which features a high barrier for the truck ramp (see **photo 7**).

South of Century II is the Bob Brown Expo Hall, parking garage, and Hyatt Hotel (see **photo 26**). Southeast of Century II is a metered parking lot. The south side of Century II is adjoined by the glass lobby on a raised plinth with six risers from ground level to the entryway doors (see **photo 9**). This side also has a sloped ramp up from street level (see **photo 8**). The southwest area of Century II is adjoined by the glass lobby on a raised plinth with six risers from the ground level to the entryway doors (see **photo 24**). Further southwest is a fenced enclosure that contains the power source for both the former public library and Century II. There is a multi-level parking garage directly south of the Expo Hall. Behind Expo Hall on the west is parking for employees and vendors (see **photo 14**). South of the parking garage is the Hyatt Hotel, connected on the main level by an open breezeway (see **photo 18**), and to Expo Hall by another walkway through the garage (see **photo 21**). The open breezeway from the main floor of the Hyatt hotel allows hotel guests to wander down to the river, from either the hotel or from the parking garage (see **photo 20**).

Century II is located to the south of Wichita's densely constructed downtown commercial area. However, the site around Century II is not dense, and is along the river with designed greenspace, fountains, and landscaping. There are sidewalks along the riverbank and bicyclists, runners and pedestrians share the space. Benches are plentiful, and there many areas to rest and enjoy the unobstructed river views. A. Price Woodard Park is located to the west of Century II, between the building and the Arkansas River. Named after Wichita's first black mayor, A. Price Woodard Park provides an urban haven

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

of waterfalls and walkways with a view of James Rosati's freeform sculpture "Wichita Tripodal" (see **figure 34**) which sits on the northwest lawn of Century II.³ Douglas street bridge crosses this area and provides a thruway for cars and pedestrians to enter the Historic Delano District on the west river bank.

Building Layout:

Century II was designed to contain several performance and exhibition spaces under one roof and in a unique fashion.

Roy K. Varenhorst, one of the lead architects said it best in the Promotional Pamphlet:

"The auditorium complex building is designed on a unit system of dimensions and layouts. The unit system consists of radial unit lines (numbers) each 10 degrees of the circle, 36 units and concentric until lines (letter) each 20'-0" on centers from the center point of the building. All walls, partitions, screens and structural points are centered on a unit or half-unit lines and/or intersection thereon unless otherwise noted. Structural unity is based upon this system of layout. Continuity of all work (partitions, walls, ceilings, electrical, mechanical, floor covering, joints, millwork, furnishings, equipment) are located according to the unit system."⁴

Building - Exterior:

The most iconic feature is the light blue center-supported dome roof and the building's circular shape. As appropriate for a large civic structure, Century II is constructed of very sturdy materials, mostly concrete and steel. The exterior of the building is made primarily of precast concrete panels with an exposed aggregate finish, expanses of glass in aluminum frames, with some textured gunite around complex column shapes and textured gunite infill panels between columns or windows. A sand finish exterior plaster is used in some soffits where they do not take the brunt of the weather. The predominant material visible from the grounds is the horizontal bands of warm, earthen color, precast concrete, which is achieved with caramel and rose-colored exposed aggregates in a buff-colored matrix of cement. The building's gunite concrete is buff-colored throughout. The structure of the building is cast in place concrete, a mix of concrete and structural steel columns, steel arched trusses between the perimeter columns, and long-span steel roof trusses from the perimeter columns to the center core.

Dome Roof:

At the center of the light blue dome is a vertical light mast that can be illuminated, which rises above the top of the upper parapet 50 feet. This articulated mast or spire visually sits on a 120 feet diameter stage house core that projects above the surface of the blue dome to height of 100 feet above the first level finish floor. This stage house is an upward projection of the circular building core, which houses the stages below. The core walls below are also the resting point of the 217 feet trusses that span below the blue dome out to the perimeter columns. This roof core is a parapet that also hides mechanical equipment. This upper core parapet is clad in precast concrete wall panels with exposed aggregate and vertical joints. The core parapet contrasts sharply with the light blue dome.

The large, light blue dome roof surrounding the core parapet is articulated by four concentric raised ribs that are equidistant apart. The outermost area of the dome is further articulated with 36 large, equally spaced scallops or arced raised ribs that correspond to the structural spacing of the roof trusses curving upward and then back down to the circumference nearly meeting the next arc. The working drawings call these scallops, "water diverters," perhaps to keep them from being judged as purely decorative. At the intersection of each pair of scallops are 36 corresponding roof drains in a perimeter trough created by an outer roof parapet. This scallop theme is repeated throughout the building. The raised concentric rings and scallops are visible from miles away. The scallops or water diverters are highlighted at night with architectural lighting hidden by the parapet, one fixture at the center of each of the 36 scallops. This roof lighting makes the building unmistakable in the skyline at night. Interestingly, the design model shown in the promotional brochure in the City's *Reflections of Progress* Annual Report 1963 did not show the concentric rings or the scallops on the roof, arguably the building's most distinctive features.⁵

³ *City of Wichita*, "A. Price Woodard Park," URL: <https://www.wichita.gov/ParkandRec/CityParks/Pages/APWoodard.aspx>

⁴ Photograph of Inaugural / Promotional Brochure distributed 1/11/1969 – Auditorium Complex Civic Cultural Center – City of Wichita, Kansas – Prepared by Roy K. Varenhorst and Associates, Architects in cooperation with the Department of Community Facilities City of Wichita, Kansas May 1967; Courtesy of Personal Collection of Vincent L. Bogart, Commissioner and Mayor of Wichita and daughter, Celeste Bogart Racette

⁵ *Reflections of Progress*, Annual Report City of Wichita, Kansas 1963, page10.

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

The outer parapet of the dome is expressed on the outside face of the building with a heavy horizontal band of precast concrete panels with vertical joints and exposed aggregate. The bottom edge of the panels is highlighted with a recessed scalloped edge on the vertical surface. These small scallops, two half-scallops per panel, run continuously around the entire circumference of the building with the radius of the scallops curving downward. This bold parapet edge is 530 feet in diameter, 100 feet high and is a larger diameter than the balcony parapet below and provides shelter to people standing on the Promenade Level balcony below (see **photo 34**).

Promenade Level:

The entire outer perimeter of the roof is structurally supported on biconvex lens-shaped (football shaped) columns. A biconvex lens shape consists of two distinct curved lines, in this case of equal radius, that meet at opposite ends (see **figure 45**). There are 36 of the lens-shaped columns spaced evenly around the circumference of the building on a 120 feet radius. Half of each column is exposed to the outside of the building envelope, and the other half contained within the building's interior. These columns support the cantilevered roof above, passing through the promenade floor down to a raised plinth base below on the main level. The material of the lens-shaped columns is buff-colored textured gunite over two conventional concrete columns. Each column is 7'-0" x 17'-6" and is made by spraying on 1 ½" of concrete over a curved wire mesh lath over 1 ½" metal studs at 16" o.c. (see **figure 46**) The gunite is sprayed on with dry concrete and water that are mixed at the nozzle head of the sprayer. The gunite is finished with a pebble or splatter type texture finish. These columns resemble tall grass stems or wheat stalks.

Underneath the roof parapet, which cantilevers beyond the structural columns, is a flat, sand finished plaster soffit that extends back from the parapet to the tips of the lens-shaped columns. This soffit has expansion joints that start at the column area and extend out to the parapet in a radial pattern where the soffit joints then align with the precast panel joints in the parapet. There are two recessed can light fixtures in this flat ceiling plane on either side of each lens-shaped column to highlight both sides of each column at night. From the outer point of the columns extending back to the exterior wall is a new curved plane of sand finished plaster that angles downward at approximately a 45-degree angle and creates an arched header over the low arch windows and infill wall panels. Because of the curved plane, the second soffit has a unique bi-concave lens shape (see **figure 45**). The bi-concave soffit continues the scallop pattern in both the ceiling plane and the arched openings for windows and infill panels. Radial expansion joints that started in the flat soffit continue through the angled soffit.

The promenade wall's low arch openings are infilled with, 1) buff-colored textured gunite, or 2) aluminum framed glass windows, or 3) a mixture of both buff-colored textured gunite and flanking aluminum framed glass windows. The openings on the main level match the materials found right above on the openings for the promenade level.

The promenade or mezzanine level has yet another parapet that acts as a guardrail for the exterior promenade balconies. The diameter of the promenade parapet is 510 feet leaving the upper parapet overhanging 10 feet beyond the promenade. This parapet also reads like a heavy horizontal band of precast concrete panels with vertical joints and exposed aggregate. Like the parapet above, the bottom edge of these panels is highlighted with a recessed scalloped edge on the vertical surface. These small scallops, two half-scallops per panel, also run continuously around the entire circumference of the building. There are four exceptions to the continuous circumference of the promenade balconies, where diagonal walls project away from the continuous circular form and create larger terraces on the half diamond shaped projections. The scalloped precast panels continue to form a parapet at these projections on the northeast, northwest, southwest and southeast corners of the building.

Ground Level:

The half diamond shaped terraces of the promenade level mark the four distinctive entrances into the otherwise round building providing direct access to the particular area of an event. The area under the outer 90-degree corners of the terraces is set back, solid, and covered in precast concrete walls with exposed aggregate. This is the only place on the building where this type of exposed aggregate precast meets the ground level plinth. Each solid corner marks the location of a stair tower two offices and a ticket counter inside. On both sides of the solid wall is raised black lettering announcing the entrance to one of four entrances; Concert Hall (southeast side), Convention Hall (southwest side), Exhibition Hall

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

(northwest side), or Theater (northeast side). Between these solid outer corners and the main circular form is two pairs of glass and aluminum entry doors on either side of the projecting terrace for each section of the building.

At the ground level of the main circular form are windows, walls, or door openings (not arched due to the promenade floor line above) that match the material on the promenade level above (either glass, gunite or a mix of both). Openings (stairways) to the plinth are on either side of the projecting terraces and their respective entryways. The entire building sits on a plinth or podium and is six risers above the plaza level and extends from one entrance (under the terrace edge) to another. The podium steps have a diameter of 540 feet. There are waist high curved buff-colored cast-in-place concrete retaining walls surrounding the outside of these sections of the plinth. These reverse radius walls extend down to the plaza level along the stairs, are 5 feet high, and surround the plaza level where people can walk as they approach an entrance to the building. Each of the four projecting entry geometries have a handicap ramp on each side with cast in place concrete retaining walls on both sides. The plaza level extends all the way around the circular building and is only broken on the south side by the large box-like glass lobby attached between Century II and the Bob Brown Expo Hall addition, and at the west loading dock. The plaza level follows the circular curve of the building except for the ticket office drop off area outside the Concert Hall and at the north side to Kennedy Plaza. It is one step up from the street level.

The main entrance to Century II is on the southeast side to the Concert Hall and there are double doors on either side of the projecting entrance. A set of double glass doors on both the east and southeast of the SE balcony support lead into the ticket offices. There is a street-level drop off parking and short-term parking for ticket purchases.

To the west along the building's plinth, past the Concert Hall entrance, is a double door entrance to a large box-like glass lobby on the south. This large lobby, which was built with the Expo Hall, provide contiguous exhibition space between both; Century II and the Expo Hall. Within this lobby are two choices; to the north is the Convention Hall or to the south is the Expo Hall. This lobby also has an entrance on the north into dressing rooms, promenade level stairs, and service areas for the Concert Hall. Through the lobby and out the west glass double door entrance continues the walkway along the circumference of the building to the west. On the backside or west side of Century II (which faces the Arkansas River), is a service parking and the entrance to a below-ground loading dock. The loading dock adjoins a curved paved road leading from the surface level to below ground and is contained by six-foot high cast-in-place concrete retaining walls to shield the entrance of trucks into the building. The service parking and entrance to the loading dock connect to a short non-through street running north-south that abuts into Douglas Street, a major thoroughfare running on the north side of Century II.

On the north side of Century II, just past the loading dock, there is another double door glass entrance and ticket office to the Exhibition Hall located on either side of the northwest terrace. Sliding doors allow cars or larger exhibits to be moved into the exhibition hall directly from Kennedy Plaza. Expansive windows offer a view of downtown Wichita. To the east is another double door entrance and ticket office to Exhibition Hall. Further along the outside to the east is an entrance to the Theater, which has no outside ticket box office (see **photo 6**).

Building – Interior:

All four of the venues within Century II are entered through lobbies within the outer circumference of the circle. The focal point for each venue is at the center stage house core. All four stages are made of wood semi-circular proportioned to fit the apex of the wedge-shaped space. Walls on either side of the stages are sculpted with curved surfaces to enhance the acoustics of each space. Common design elements are seen throughout the interior; the floors in all of the lobbies are terrazzo, inside halves of the lens shaped columns are buff colored finished gunite that match the exterior half of the columns, stages are semi-circular with curved proscenium overhead. Convention Hall and Exhibition Hall stairways are narrow and terrazzo to match the lobbies. Both of these venues have balconies that overlook the main floor, one with fixed seating (Convention hall) and one with only floor space for additional exhibits (Exhibition hall). The balconies are curved underneath and finished with gunite. Concert Hall stairs are carpeted, spacious, and luxurious, lending an air of elegance to the venue. The Theater, which is the smaller venue of the four areas, has an intimate setting with carpeted stairs that lead from the stage to the aisles of the theaters (to the stage and to the balcony). Continental seating is found in both Concert Hall and the Theater. The materials used in Concert Hall are the most luxurious; aisle doors are solid wood, flooring is carpeted, seats are heavily padded and comfortable, stage lighting is more elaborate, and there is a movable stage to bring pianos up for concert performances, or to lengthen the stage for musical theater productions.

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Concert Hall Interior:

The main entrance is on the southeast side of Century II, and double glass doors lead into the Concert Hall ticket office from the drop off entrance. Inside, the ticket offices are situated on either side of the projecting entrance under the terrace. There is a small lobby for the ticket office with seating for waiting patrons with banquet seats. Everything is clean and modern and once inside; a concert patron instinctively notices the unique features of the building. The curved hallway of the lobby follows the circular pattern of the building, and walls are smooth, with interior finishes that are polished and professional. The interior half of the spheres are unique and arresting, lending to the impression of artistic excellence.

Two sets of double doors lead into the Concert Hall main floor from the lobby, on either side of the ticket office banquet seats. The hallways inside follow a circular pattern; Concert Hall left is to the west and Concert Hall right is to the east (see **photo 36**). Service support areas are located to the north of the lobby, and Century II staff reside there. There is a general box ticket office outside this service support area where tickets for all events are sold. There is a concession area at both Concert Hall left and right entrances with tables and chairs for patrons to sit at while eating and drinking (see **photo 35**). Announcements for upcoming theatrical events are hung from the ceiling, which is flat and contains recessed, canned lighting. Four restrooms are located on either of the box office doors, north and south of the lobby. Artwork displays are hung on the wall and change regularly. The floor is terrazzo and you notice how clean and modern the lobby is. The bathrooms have been renovated and are modern and updated.

Stairs and an elevator to the balcony and meeting rooms are near the Concert Hall left and right entrance. Carpeting begins right off of the circular hallway. On the second floor Promenade Level, in between Concert Hall and Exhibition Hall, are meeting rooms and offices. Entrance to the four balconies is gained from the second floor. A connecting walkway from the Promenade Level hallway allows people to move from the second floor of Century II into the adjacent south glass lobby and further into the newer Expo Hall. There is an open breezeway that continues south, allowing access to the parking garage, and if desired, on into the Hyatt Hotel all of which were constructed in the 1980s-1990s.

The first-floor lobby of Century II is a curved hallway that circles the inner circumference of the four sections, Concert Hall, Exhibition Hall, Convention Hall, and Theater, but navigation is only allowed through key access glass doors. This prevents unauthorized access throughout the building unless there is an event, or during regular ticket office hours. To the west in the lobby through glass double doors is access to the Concert Hall Promenade level stairs and stage door. There are meeting rooms, restrooms, and dressing rooms in this area of Century II.

A hallway off the main Concert Hall lobby provides access and entrance to the seating area for the Concert Hall. This hallway is carpeted and beautifully stained wooden doors line the outside aisle entryways. Steps and an adjacent ramp lead the way lower as you head towards the ten aisle doors. Enter through the aisle doors and you immediately notice the immensity of Concert Hall (see **photo 37**). The ceiling is tall, and recessed lighting is along the doors, on the floor, by the aisles, and above in the ceiling. Professional design is evident throughout; strategically placed mechanics for lighting, sound, and stage machinery appear hidden from the concert goer. Inside the Concert Hall, is the largest performance stage, with an extended additional outer area that can be raised for a pianist, or theater productions. The stage is 49 feet deep, proscenium 60 feet wide by 29 feet high with forestage lift and thirty-eight working line sets (see **photo 40**). There is a main level of continental seating and the seats are wide, comfortable, and newly installed (see **photo 38**). The second floor, Promenade (balcony) level also has continental seating that are wide, comfortable and new. There is seating in Concert Hall for 2,195 people.

From the stage on either stage left or stage right sides, are doors providing access to rehearsal rooms on stage left (see **photo 39**) and the sets workshop on stage right (see **photo 41**). There are also stairs on the stage that lead up into the area above the stage for lighting and set production. Concert Hall has state-of-the-art lighting and sound equipment to provide total sound performance, whether it is being used for a performance, lecture, or audiovisual presentation. The ceiling just beyond the stage area is softly curved, and the continental seating is curved as well, following the circular pattern of the building. The continental seats are located in a central section with no aisle down the middle that allows the maximum quantity of chairs per row, which greatly exceeds the limits established in a multiple-aisle arrangement.

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

The set workshops on stage right are shared between Concert Hall and the Theater. This unique facility allows for the complete production of a theatrical show, with design, construction, and painting of complete sets (see **photo 45**). This ability to create, rehearse, and produce a theatrical production from start to finish is a rarity, and the Director of Music Theater of Wichita has attributed to the success of Wichita's theatrical performance. Space for workshops and set design is normally found in performing arts centers, yet the designers of Century II deliberately created these workshops, a rarity in theater production (see **photo 42**). Completed stage sets can easily be moved into either the larger theater, Concert Hall, or the smaller Theater, to provide for both their theatrical needs (see **photo 44**). Theatrical productions from Broadway, Disney, or other areas, can move into Century II from the outside west loading ramp down into the service elevator. This ramp can accommodate trucks that are 44 feet or shorter.

Convention Hall Interior:

From the glass lobby, are double doors into the Convention Space, which is 32,000 gross square feet. The entire space, including the stage, follows the circular pattern of the building (see **photo 57**). The proscenium is 60 feet wide by 29 feet high with forestage lift and 38 working line sets. The roof above the stage is curved, followed by another roof arched above and beyond the first, followed by another roof arched above and beyond the second (see **photo 60**). The remaining roof is sharply sloped downward towards the outer building walls, and is different from the other venue roofs. There is the same recessed, fluorescent lighting in the ceiling, but a unique, more interesting ceiling line, in sets of three, exists above the stage. The recessed lighting is less utilitarian, and less harsh, with smaller lights above the stage and in the ceiling. This gives the stage a more prominent emphasis and there are stairs leading up to the stage on both sides, stage right and stage left (see **photo 58**).

This makes the venue more intimate than Exhibition Hall, and provides a space for dinner, dancing, and theater productions. It is a more flexible space, as you can leave the extra main floor seating stacked to provide space for tables and chairs, or open up the seating on the first floor and open the balcony for seating to accommodate larger crowds. Softly curved walls on either side of the stage enhance acoustics. The colors of the venue are varied, pastel colors on the ceiling and stage area, and indicate quality materials and thoughtful design with an emphasis on comfort and enjoyment. The lighting, fixtures, room decorations, and design style make this a pleasing venue more functional for entertainment and celebrations than Exhibition Hall.

Between the Convention Hall and Exhibition Hall is a 60 feet retractable wall that can provide more exhibit space. A balcony provides extra seating along the outer balcony edge back to the outer building wall in open aisle, sectional seating. The balcony edge is softly curved and matches the gunite in the other three venue areas. The main open floor area is flat and has retractable tiered seating for either performances or exhibitions. When the retractable seating is opened, there is still an open floor area around the stage (though smaller). When the retractable seating is stored, there is room for 100 tables and 800 chairs in the venue. The floor is flat and covered in terrazzo tile. The hall can seat 4,751 people for presentations or stage productions on a 33 feet deep stage. There are a bay loading dock and freight elevator from the service level, which allows for offloading of trucks entering from the west below ground service road with heavy goods transportation through the freight elevator to either the Convention or Exhibition Hall (see **photo 56**).

Exhibition Hall Interior:

The Exhibition Hall is 45,000 square feet of flat exhibition space and can be accessed through double doors or inside through access doors on the north east (see **photo 54**). The floor surface is flat and covered with heavy vinyl for durability and to allow smoother movement of wheeled tables, racks, easels and stands across the floor. The stage is made from wood, semi-circular, and 28" high, it is a permanent stage for presentations. Softly curved walls on either side of the stage enhance acoustics. The ceiling above the stage is softly curved and rounded above the stage. The remaining ceiling is flat is downward sloping towards the outer building walls and contains recessed fluorescent lighting. There colors in the venue are egg shell white, lighting is fluorescent throughout, and fixtures are plain, large and utilitarian. There is a sloping ramp up to one side of the stage. The balcony provides 17,500 square feet of exhibit space with no seating (see **photo 52**). The balcony edge is curved and matches the gunite in other three venue areas of Century II.

The hall's expansive windows offer a view of downtown Wichita, and there is enough banquet space for 1,848 people. Sliding doors provide access to the Exhibition Hall from the north and open onto Kennedy Plaza, allowing cars, trucks, and RVs to enter for shows and displays. A ticket office sits outside the building's double door entrance in the lobby area.

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

There is a steel freight elevator leading from Exhibition Hall down to the lower service level where equipment, trucks, and cars can be moved from one floor to another (see **photo 55**). This venue is utilitarian, spartan and functional for exhibitions.

The New York Paramount Theater's 1926 famous Wurlitzer pipe organ in Times Square accompanied silent films and provided music during intermission. It was removed in 1964, and a group of Wichitans raised money to buy the instrument and bring it into town. The white and gold console stands 6 feet tall and weighs 1,700 pounds. It was physically built into Exhibition Hall because the cement walls were the only ones in the building that could hold 50,000 pounds of pipes. It premiered at Century II in 1972. When it's not in use, the Wurlitzer is kept in a locked storage room stage right.⁶

Theater Interior:

The Theater is unique among the other venues in that it is a more eclectic. It was renamed Mary Jane Teall Theater in honor of a beloved Wichita theater teacher. Outside, to the east of the Exhibition Hall are two entrances into the Theater. The glass double doors outside lead into the lobby. Once inside the lobby, the design elements are interesting and attractive. Deep scarlet hues color the walls, and the carpet is a matching scarlet (see **photo 46**). This venue is smaller, unique, and more intimate. There are restrooms on either side of the lobby, and the lobby itself is a large box like room with a comfortable, but not spacious space for people to mingle. There is a small concession stand that is used on certain occasions. Deep, rich, scarlet carpeting begins at the hallway edge and continues into the theater. There are cushioned scarlet hue banquet seats on one side of the lobby with a scarlet hued pattern on the wall behind. Lights are recessed into the ceiling and fixtures appear modern and unique.

Stairs up to the Promenade Level lead off from either side of the lobby, but they do not go to seating in the balcony of the theater, instead they bring you to the hallway for Century II offices on the south, controlled by glass access doors, or to Exhibition Hall balcony on the north. This stairway hallway is carpeted and unique in scarlet hued colors. Entrance into the 652-seat theater is on theater left or theater right from the hallway and you can enter the stage from three different aisle doors. If you choose to go all the way down from the hallway, you enter off of the theater stage. If you exit at the very top, you find yourself in the balcony of Century II with access only to the walkway on the Promenade level of Century II on the south and Exhibition Hall on the north. The theater has continental seating on the main floor area in 16 rows with sharply sloped flooring so everyone has a good view of the stage. The seating is slightly curve to fit the circular pattern of the building.

This theater has a 32 feet deep stage, proscenium 40 feet wide by 20 feet high with forestage lift. The stage grid moves as a unit, professional stage lighting, and sound system provide for quality performances. The theater is hued in deep scarlet colors for the walls, floor, lobby, and seats. There are vertical stage lights three rows back from the stage, and design includes vertical wood panels at spaced intervals along the walls. The ceiling has smaller, recessed lighting and the stage has a slightly curved, smaller ceiling above the stage. The walls along the stage are not curved as in the other venues, but flat and covered with the vertical wood panels (see **photo 48**). The ceiling is different too, with a sharply sloped ceiling arching to the back wall, then another ceiling takes over and arches back to the balcony level where there is a set office for theater instruction and viewing window onto the stage. This set office is at the balcony level, and is sloped in a semi-circular fashion against the wall (see **photo 47**). Everything about this theater is striking and modern.

Service Level Interior:

The service level can be reached either by the main floor or promenade levels by elevator. Another entry point is through the service road, which leads from the backside (west) into the lower level service area. The loading dock has clearing space for unloading trucks, and access is provided to both the Exhibition Hall and Convention Center (see **photo 55**). A smaller passenger elevator carries visitors up to the main and promenade levels. The service level contains dressing rooms with access to Concert Hall and the Theater (see **photo 68**). The dressing rooms are rather plain, with cement block painted walls and fluorescent lights attached to the ceiling. Men and women bathroom facilities are available with shower stalls and locker areas (see **photo 69**). The bathroom areas are tiled, and appear clean and adequate. The dressing rooms and hallways are carpeted, doors and trim are painted to match colors in the carpet and walls. Concrete

⁶ Deborah Shaar, "Pipe Dreams," *KMUW*, URL: <https://www.kmuw.org/post/pipe-dreams-effort-keep-famous-wurlitzer-wichita-amid-century-ii-s-uncertain-future>

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

stairs lead up to the stage left from the dressing rooms, and another stairwell leads down to the service area (see **photo 70**). Utilitarian tables, chairs, mirrors, bulletin boards and benches provide adequate furnishings. Storage is provided in this service level for sets, costumes, furniture, equipment, and miscellaneous items. Service level is rather sparse and accommodations are modest.

Construction:

The Century II building structure utilizes a cast-in-place structural framing system for the elevated floor levels, for the roof levels, and the stage house grid-level above the stage areas. The center core area of the building's structural framing system and the structural support system occur within an approximately 120 feet diameter stage house, or ring, at the center of the building. The building support structure within the center core area generally consists of concrete walls to approximately 40 feet above the ground floor level and street framing lines above the concrete walls consisting of a grid of vertical steel columns, horizontal steel beams, and diagonal steel bracing. The supporting structure within the center core area provides the vertical and lateral support for all the floor and roof levels within the center core area, but also provides the vertical supports for the inner portion of the ground floor level projecting outward from the center core area and provides the vertical and lateral support for the inner half of the roof structure spanning over the existing theatre areas, concrete hall areas, and exhibition areas.

The building is constructed in a circle, and the inner core which supports the roof is a circular concrete tower. Attached to the top are 217 feet long steel trusses which extend from the core to the circumference of the building. The steel trusses between the columns form the shallow arch. A freight elevator is located in the lower service area and the adjacent loading dock leads out from a curved service road entrance to behind the building on the west side.

Adjacent - Bob Brown Expo Hall 1986:

The Bob Brown Expo Hall (Expo Hall) was built in 1986, and Schaffer, Johnson, Cox, Frey Architects designed the building. The building features a 1986 glass lobby connector between the two buildings. The front entry is sand blasted concrete and a glass lobby containing multiple double doors leads into the venue. This building is not directly attached to Century II and there is a common plaza area between the two buildings. The Expo Hall main entry way is on the building's east side, whereas the entrance to Century II is on the south side (see **photo 13**).

Attached to Century II on the southwest side is a large box-like glass lobby that connects to the northwest side of Expo Hall. This lobby was added at the same time Expo Hall was built and serves as a walkway between the two buildings (see **photo 12**). There are double door entrances to the glass lobby, from the east (see **photo 66**) and from the west (see **photo 64**). Once inside the lobby you can choose which building you want to enter, Expo Hall or Century II. A stairway on the south side of the lobby goes up to a second-floor hallway leading into the Expo Hall building. This hallway opens to Expo Hall meeting rooms, the parking garage, and to the Hyatt Hotel (see **photo 63**). A set of double doors underneath the stairway for Expo Halls leads into Expo Hall. A stairway on the north side of the lobby goes up to a second-floor hallway leading into Century II building. This hallway opens to Exhibition Hall, Concert Hall and Theater. A set of double doors underneath the stairway for Century II opens to a hallway leading to meeting rooms; 101 A & B, Pear A & B, 102 A & B, Apple A & B (see **photo 67**). Another set of double doors to the west lead into Convention Hall.

The Expo Hall does not share any design or style similarities nor any lobby space, ticketing offices, or performance features and is stand alone. The Expo Hall contains an additional 93,000 square feet of exhibit space with an 8,000 square foot connecting glass lobby. The building structure follows a rectangular grid pattern preferred by modern convention planners, and the ceiling is 32 feet high. Overhead ductwork is visible and there is no finished ceiling. The floors are concrete with no finish. The structure and mechanicals are left exposed with general appearance of a warehouse. The outside of the building is a tan EIFS with a rectangular, gridded, joint pattern (see **photo 16**). The building outside to the west is a loading dock off with limited parking.

Landscaping:

On the north side facing Douglas Street is the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Plaza. This plaza is made of brick pavers interwoven in a linear pattern over a border of contrasting color brick pavers. On the east of this plaza is a circular reflection pool that has a fountain in the middle (see **photo 2**). On the west of Kennedy Plaza is a circular landscaped area, bordered by buff-colored cast-in-place concrete retaining walls approximately 3 feet tall. A five-foot plaque in the

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

middle memorializes Role of Honor for citizens of Wichita who demonstrated unique qualities of heroism and bravery (see **photo 33**). Before reaching the service road on the west side of the building, there is a stainless steel, freeform sculpture entitled "Wichita Tripodal" by artist James Rosati built in 1972.

A. Price Woodard Park, named after Wichita's first black mayor, is to the west of Century II and follows the slope of the lawn to the river's edge (see **figure 33**). This multi-level park has a series of stairs, pathways, fountains, and waterfalls, leading down to a walkway along the Arkansas River's east riverbank. There are smaller landscaped areas around the building on this side, containing trees, flowers, and bordered by cast-in-place concrete curved retaining walls up to 3 feet high.

A sidewalk leading from Century II to the former Public Library contains five stone benches, trees, shrubs, and bronze sculptures by Babs Mellor, a famed Wichita sculptor; Mary Elizabeth Lease the Hypatia Club Founder (1850-1933) stands in a life-size upright pose, "The Promise of America" shows Farris George Jabara as a 15-year-old immigrant (1903) carrying his bag of belongings, "Freedom's Stand" features an American bald eagle and four bronze children at play grace limestones lining this sculpture park. Bronze four-foot plaques describe the narratives for these sculptures.

Historic Integrity:

Century II retains its historic integrity and character defining features which make it eligible listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Century II is as unique and iconic as the year it was opened. All original exterior construction is intact. The blue dome reminds folks they are home in Wichita as they fly into Dwight Eisenhower National Airport. The feeling of admiration by Wichitans for the elements of Kansas represented in the design are strong. The building resides in its historic location along the east Arkansas river bank where the Native Americans used to camp, and in the heart of Wichita downtown area. The design elements of Modern architecture are ever present, both architects John Hickman and Roy Varenhorst stayed true to their training and created an architectural legacy. The Brutalist Modern former public Library still sits to the east as the silent partner to the Modern Century II. The two buildings were built during the same period and share one remote central power source.⁷ Although there has been nearby recent construction, it does not detract from the overall integrity of the site and the unique characteristics of the building. The parks, landscaping, and terraced areas are original to the site. Unobstructed views of the Arkansas river can still be enjoyed from the river bank.

The interior has been updated with furnishings, concessions, and office renovations. All materials and forms remain in the original design. Renovation work included painting, installation of new seats, carpeting, draperies, and an upgrade of electrical systems. In 2010, the City of Wichita unveiled the renovated areas. No alterations have been made to the exterior, other than the glass lobby connecting Century II to the Expo Hall, both of which were built in 1986, and these new additions have not compromised the unique design or architectural characteristics of the building.

The materials and workmanship of the exterior building are well maintained, and the blue roof is visible from many miles away - it is a Wichita icon. The spherical buff-colored vertical concrete columns and the scalloped horizontal parapets embody the prairie character of Modernism from both John M. Hickman and Roy K. Varenhorst. Century II is significant for its unique, one of a kind design and Kansas prairie stylized design characteristics.

Century II is a significant and excellent example of Modern architecture. It is still in good condition and serves the community in much the same way as originally intended. Concert Hall exudes a feeling of elegance and comfort, concert goers enter a modern structure and immediately notice the beautiful, terrazzo floors and curved, elegant hallway. Convention Hall has elements of flexibility and comfort in the curved modulating walls and the curved proscenium overhead stage. Exhibition Hall also has elements of utilitarian functionality in the gracious open space with large windows and the view of the Mall and Kennedy Plaza. Mary Jane Teall Theater still projects an aura of intimacy and creativeness with its mauve colored carpet, walls, and seats, surprising all who enter with its unique freshness. This building deserves to be recognized for the icon it truly is, and for the unique position in Wichita and Kansas history that it represents.

Century II is an incredibly exceptionally designed building that was made to be a standalone structure just outside the densely commercial downtown area. The buildings design, construction, configuration, and location were specifically planned to distinguish the building from the surrounding area. Historically, the adjacent parcels contains low and dense

⁷ John M. Hickman Letter to T.J. Scanlon, Civic Cultural Center Proposal, January 31, 1963.

Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

warehouse district with numerous buildings. These were specifically removed from the setting around Century II to keep the original intent and design of the building intact. The 1986 Expo Hall and 1990s parking garage and hotel lack any design, construction, or architectural relationship to Century II and were constructed several years after the civic center was established. The property is oriented in a designed landscape adjacent the Arkansas River to provide a shift in atmosphere for those attending performances at the center. The building itself is a character defining icon of the Wichita area and is one-of-a-kind in its Modern form and design. The boundary is limited specifically to the footprint of the property to keep and acknowledge the significance of the design and original intent of the structure. Although there is a glass room connecting Century II to the 1986 Expo Hall, the lobby does not facilitate any part of Century II's function but is merely a covered space. Also, the design and construction of the Expo Hall share not relationship architectural with Century II's exceptional architectural design.

Century II
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1966-1968

Significant Dates

1966, 1968

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder

Architects: Hickman & Associates, John M. Hickman,
Roy K. Varenhorst & Associates Architects, Roy K. Varenhorst,
Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, William Wesley Peters

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance starts with the beginning of construction and ends with the grand opening in 1969.

Criteria Considerations (justification)

N/A

Century II
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Summary

The Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center located at 225 W. Douglas, Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for Architecture as an outstanding example of the work by John M. Hickman and Roy K. Varenhorst at the local level. Designed in the Modern Style, Century II is distinctively designed domed, circular public building that holds a public concert hall, convention hall, exhibition hall, and theater. Modern architecture in the Wichita area includes Henry J Allen House, Kansas Gas & Electric Company Building, Knightley's Parking Garage, Sutton Place, and Fourth National Bank Building. Across Kansas are even more Modern structures; Beal House, Crest Theater, and the Topeka Veterans Administration Hospital.⁸

The voters of the City of Wichita approved by referendum vote the construction of a new civic auditorium complex and a new central library on May 21, 1961. The city commissioned John M. Hickman and Associates, Wichita, Kansas, as the Project Architect for Phase I of the Civic Center and William Wesley Peters, of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation as a consultant to Mr. Hickman. Wichita's City Commission asked the architects to design the Wichita Civic Center to commemorate the centennial anniversary of Wichita's incorporation in 1870, to summarize the past century as much as to express aspirations for the next, future one. Century II was completed eight years after voters approved the construction. The grand opening on January 11, 1969, was held in conjunction with newly re-elected Governor Robert Docking's inauguration and the beginning of Wichita's second century.

The Board of City Commissioners gave the civic center 'grave importance' and "desires to enlist the widest community participation in the development of needs, selection of site and approval of plans for the carrying out the civic and cultural center development."⁹ It was constructed on the site of The Forum, a convention center and exposition hall that opened in 1911. Upon Mr. Hickman's death in 1964, Hickman's partner Roy Varenhorst, another protegee's of Wright's, completed the project. The building is a low circular structure with a shallow domed roof in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright. The method of construction was poured reinforced concrete with steel trusses spanning from core to outer roof edge. Examples of other buildings designed by Mr. Hickman and Mr. Varenhorst in the Modern Movement include the Wichita State University Ablah Library, Wichita State University Corbin Education Center, Kansas Gas & Electric Company Building, Vickers Gas Station, and Rea Woodman Elementary School. The period of significance for Century II is 1965-1969, the beginning of building construction through the grand opening.

Elaboration

History and Settlement of Wichita:

Wichita was incorporated in 1870. The townsite was first settled during the homestead boom after the Civil War. Native American Indians that had once populated the plains had been relocated or killed, as had the buffalo. Ranchers and farmers settled in the surrounding area. William Greiffenstein and D.S. Munger filed plats on March 25, 1870, which were joined in July when the City incorporated.¹⁰ In 1871, William "Dutch Bill" Greiffenstein built his 2-story home on South Water Street, at the site where Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center now stands. This area marks the riverbank site where Native American camped in the 1870s when meeting 'Dutch Bill', one of Wichita's first homesteaders. Greiffenstein served as mayor from 1878 to 1884 and William Street is named in his honor.¹¹

⁸ The follow properties are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and have a corresponding reference number. Henry J Allen House #73000775, Kansas Gas & Electric Company Building #12000064, Knightley's Parking Garage #16000707, Sutton Place #100004920, and Fourth National Bank Building #13000219. Beal House Kansas #045-3508, Crest Theater #05000003, and Topeka Veterans Administration Hospital #100003485

⁹ Board of City Commissioners of the City of Wichita Resolution dated September 5, 1961.

¹⁰ Charles J. Lawrence, "Century II" (Master of Art thesis, Wichita State University, 2004),page 32.

¹¹ *Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center*, "History of Century II," URL: <http://www.century2.org/Pages/History.aspx>

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

U.S. Government land surveyors laid out grid lines running on ordinal directions, and roads were built using the same north-south and east-west pattern. The city's growth accelerated in 1872 when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad laid its first rail into town. Wichita became a cow town where Texas cattle boarded train cars at its stockyards headed for Eastern markets. Agriculture grew rapidly as farmers now had the means to transport their grain and livestock to markets.¹²

Wichita grew into a major participant in the oil business when in 1915, oil was discovered on the farm of John Stapleton in El Dorado, Kansas. Frank Lloyd Wright built a Prairie Style residence in College Hill for newspaper publisher and former Governor of Kansas Henry J. Allen and his wife Elsie (1916-18). Jake Moellendick, considered the father of Wichita aviation, made a fortune in the oil business. Oil money funded the creation of Cessna, Stearman, and Beech, which developed classic aircraft; others joined later. In 1910 the Forum was built at the corner of English and Water Streets after a bond issue of \$150,000 was approved on April 6, 1909. William Greiffenstein's home was likely destroyed to make room for the forum.

By 1920, Wichita's earliest civic auditorium had become a venue for entertainment and the arts. The total cost of the building was approximately \$650,000, and it sheltered about 125,000 square feet of floor space.¹³ Streets were paved, brick buildings lined the business district, and streetcars traveled outward from the city center. Over the next 20 years, the city controlled much of the banks of the Little and Big Arkansas Rivers and a parkway was established on the west bank of the Little Arkansas through Riverside Park. Workers Progress Administration funding put concrete and stone rip-rap into place on the riverbanks to prevent erosion and to better define the river channel. Architects designed private homes for wealthy residents of College Hill, Riverside, and Indian Hills, which were further removed from Delano, Old Town, and Park Place, less desirable neighborhoods. Streetcars carried traffic from the bustling offices and shops of downtown to the outlying quieter neighborhoods of the citizens. A City Planning Commission was formed to determine city improvements and growth and to establish zoning laws.¹⁴

Wichita's economy has cycled through periods of boom and bust, depending on the recessionary or growth economic cycle of the aircraft industry, oil and agriculture, which fell during the Depression. The 1930s was a period of growth and innovation of the aircraft industry signaled by the construction of the Wichita Municipal Airport. Beech Aircraft Company was formed, Cessna grew, and Stearman Corporation was taken over by Boeing. The City built an art museum in the Riverside Park area, and there were entertainment venues throughout the city.

The aircraft industry drew thousands of workers to the city in the first half of the 1940s. In 1940 alone, Wichita companies received \$20 million in government contracts, and aircraft employment topped out at 60,000. By 1942 Wichita was the largest city in Kansas. World War II (WWII) caused a boom in the Aviation industry as the manufacturer stepped up production to meet the war demand. Boeing built the B-29 bombers, Beech and Cessna built various military aircraft models too. Government-funded housing developments such as Planeview, Beechwood, and Hilltop Manor were hastily erected to shelter workers. Around the state, smaller companies provided aircraft subcomponents.¹⁵ Neighborhoods such as Lincoln Heights, Benjamin Hills, Crown Heights continued to grow, and outlying developments such as Eastborough and Vickridge moved residents further away from the downtown area. The center city changed into a work zone, with the suburbs expanding as families moved further and further away from the city's center. Unfortunately, after WWII stopped, so did the high demand for planes. In just one day, 16,000 people were laid off from Boeing plants.

By the mid-1950s, Wichita's aircraft employment nearly equaled the boom years of WWII. Boeing began production of the B-47 and B-52 bombers, the B-52 model is still flying active missions today. Wichita built a new airport west of town, modern Mid-Continent Airport, and the old facility became part of the new McConnell Air Force Base. The base is still used today for crew training on the KC-135 Stratotankers and the newer Boeing KC-46 Pegasus. Parklane Shopping center opened in 1955 and was one of several shopping centers built away from downtown. On July 1, 1964, the city-operated Wichita University became part of the state university system, attracting more students. During the 1950s and 1960s, Wichita made plans for a new zoo and made improvements to its art museum.

¹² Lawrence, "Century II," page 32.

¹³ Lawrence, "Century II," page 33.

¹⁴ Lawrence, "Century II," page 38.

¹⁵ Lawrence, "Century II," page 40.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

The water distribution system was upgraded with expansion in wastewater treatment plants and a water conduit built to the Cheney water reservoir. Plans for a new civic center and library, a place for business and arts, were initially proposed in 1946 but languished until March 1959 when the city commission approved Robert Des Marteau as full-time director.¹⁶

In 1961 the community gave its support to the proposed downtown civic center by voting yes to a \$15 million bond issue to fund \$12.6 million for the civic center development and \$2.4 million for the public library. The city commissioned John M. Hickman of Architects Associated to design the Wichita civic center and as Project Architect, to oversee the work of the architect assigned to the public library.¹⁷ The catalyst for downtown construction programs in the 1960s was tied directly to the rise of the suburb. Downtown closed at night, and numerous malls sprang up to handle shopping and entertainment in outlying areas of Wichita: Towne East, Towne West, and Twin Lakes. Bill Lear brought production of his business jet, the Learjet, to Wichita in 1963. Wichita earned the moniker "Air Capital of the World." In January 1969, after eight years of planning and construction, Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center opened.

Today, Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center provides a center for the arts and opens up the downtown public space with accessibility to the Arkansas River waterfront. The building has a combination of practical unity and contemporary beauty. Symphonic concerts, theater performances, rock concerts, home and garden shows, and conventions still attract Wichita citizens and their guests to the east side of the river.

Modern Architecture:

Mid-Century Modern architecture is the design movement in interior, product, graphic design, architecture, and urban development that became popular after WWII in 1945 and continued until the late 1970s. This style emphasized creating structures with ample windows and open floor plans to open up interior spaces and bring the outdoors inside. Function was as important as form in Mid-Century designs, with particular emphasis on structural efficiency. A prime example of a mid-century building is the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan, designed by Eero Saarinen and built in 1955. In 2000 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places; fourteen years later it was designated a National Historic Landmark, primarily for its architecture.¹⁸ Another example is the North Christian Church in Columbus, Indiana, the final work of Eero Saarinen and lovingly referred to by Columbus citizens as the 'tin can' owing to its slender, tapered metal spire that rises 192 feet above the center of the hexagonal church.

Wichita's building boom in the 1950s and 1960 resulted in many Modern buildings, Colorado Derby building, 201 N. Water, is an example. Constructed in 1959-1960, the nine-story building is a Modern, speculative office tower designed by architect William I. Fisher and is listed in the State Register.¹⁹ Knightley's Parking Garage, 303 S. Broadway, opened in March 1950 is another classic example of the Modern multi-story parking garage defined by its skeletal building envelope comprised of concrete columns and floor slabs. Architects Overend and Boucher, with structural engineer George Hartwell, designed the Modern five-story, 500 car-garage, embracing the latest technology in concrete construction and minimalist exposed structure. The garage is a rare surviving example of a Modern post-war, privately owned and attendant-operated garage. A dual-function facility, the garage also served as home to the offices of Lauck Oil Company for more than 25 years. It was listed in the National Register in 2016.²⁰

The Wichita former public library, 223 S. Main, was designed by the architectural firm of Schaefer, Schirmer and Eflin under the oversight of Project Architect John Hickman and later, Roy Varenhorst.²¹ Based on the interior and exterior historic-integrity of the library building, it is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as an excellent example of mid-century/Brutalist architecture.

¹⁶ Lawrence, "Century II," page 55.

¹⁷ Agreement Between City of Wichita and John M. Hickman and Associates, February 5, 1963.

¹⁸ Carlos Huber, "General Motors Technical Center," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2000), Section 8.

¹⁹ Rachel Nugent and Lauren Rieke, "Colorado-Derby Building," Register of Historic Places Registration Form (Kansas State Historical Society, 2015), Section 8.

²⁰ Brenda R. Spencer with Michelle L. Spencer, "Knightley's Parking Garage," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2016), Section 8.

²¹ T.J. Scanlon Director of Administration Letter to Russell McClure City Manager, *Civic Center Architects' Contracts*, January 31, 1963.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

Dome Buildings & Wrightian Influences

Dome buildings were prolific throughout the country as an efficient way to cover a lot of space, both in terms of energy conservation and structural efficiency. R. Buckminster Fuller patented the geometry for geodesic domes, which became a common dome building form.²² Wichita has several dome buildings, including the Dymaxion house designed by R. Buckminster Fuller. Because of its lightweight and portability, the Dymaxion House was intended to be the ideal housing for individuals and families who wanted easy mobility. Fuller signed a two-year research contract with Beech Aircraft Industries and in 1946, completed two prototypes. Only one was built and it was in Wichita.²³

Henry Levitt Arena on the Wichita State University campus is a domed athletic venue, completed in 1955. It is home to the Wichita State Shockers basketball and volleyball teams and was originally designed by Architects Schmidt-McVay and Peddie.²⁴ Donlinger & Sons built the unique Lamella Dome, which was the first of its kind. The circular design of the arena gave nearly every fan a clear line of sight and put the seats close to the action, resulting in the nickname "The Roundhouse." The venue was renovated and added onto in 2003 and renamed Charles Koch Arena.²⁵

The Cotillion Ballroom off of US Highway 54, west of Wichita, is also a domed building. It was designed by Architect Robert Morris and completed in 1960. The circular design of the building has large wooden beams supporting a 24-foot high domed ceiling over an 11,000 square foot floating hardwood maple dance floor and a stage that features a neon-lit back shell.²⁶

Another significant domed building in Wichita was the Church of the Magdalen designed by Feagins & Kirsch Architects and Engineers. Like Century II, the building had a strong influence of Wrightian style. The interior of the building featured a scalloped dome ceiling with flat arch, stained glass windows and tile mosaics. The building was completed in 1968 but was demolished in 2002 for the widening of Kellogg into US Highway 54.²⁷

Frank Lloyd Wright had a fascination with round buildings and circular shapes throughout his career. By the mid-1950s, late in Wright's career, this fascination with circular structures had become a full-on obsession with the commission to design the Opera House in Baghdad, Iraq, in 1957. Wright's best-known circular building is the Guggenheim Museum in New York. The Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium at Arizona State University in Tempe was a round auditorium building with a dome, scallops, and continuous arched openings, and the building shared the same team of consultants as Century II with Wesley Peters as the architect of record, Dr. Vern O. Knudsen as Acoustical Consultant and George C. Izenour as Theatre Consultant. Two Wright-designed projects, the Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin and Marin Civic Center in San Raphael, California were most likely influential in the design of Century II and featured shallow-pitched blue dome roofs with scalloped edges and both of these projects were completed after Frank Lloyd Wright's death in 1959.

The circular building combined with an arched roof proved ideal for performance spaces. Century II contains two critical structural forms; the eternal balance and stability of the unbroken circle and the natural load-bearing capacity of the arched dome.²⁸ These structural forms, free of interior supports or columns, allow unobstructed sight and sound lines and also provide the architect with the freedom to divide the interior space into the most practical proportions using non-load bearing partitions. Both Hickman and Varenhorst studied at Taliesin West and were considered apprentices to Frank Lloyd Wright. They understood and practiced his reverent use of nature's elements in architectural design for organic, Usonian homes, and buildings. The design elements Frank Lloyd Wright utilized, the shallow domed roofs and scalloped detailing around the outside of circular buildings, are mirrored in Century II.

²² R. Buckmeister Fuller, Laminar Geodesic Dome Patent US3203144A, August 31, 1965

²³ "The Dymaxion House," The Henry Ford Magazine, January-May 2016 issue, URL:

<https://www.thehenryford.org/explore/inside/dymaxion-house/>; The Henry Ford Museum acquired the abandoned home in 1990 and moved it to Michigan, where they spent one million dollars meticulously restoring it. It is now on display inside the museum in Dearborn, Michigan

²⁴ Edward Tihen, "Tihen Notes," Wichita State University Special Collections. URL:

https://web.archive.org/web/20100629143351/http://specialcollections.wichita.edu/collections/local_history/tihen/pdf/People%26Places/henry_levitt_arena.pdf

²⁵ *Donlinger Construction*, "Charles Koch Arena," URL: <https://www.donlinger.biz/charles-koch-arena.html>

²⁶ *The Cotillion*, "History," URL: <https://thecotillion.com/history/>

²⁷ *Ateliers Loire Chartes*, "Catholic Church of the Magdalen," URL: <https://www.ateliers-loire.fr/en/gabriel-loire-usa-kansas-wichita-catholic-church-of-the-magdalen.php>

²⁸ Lawrence, "Century II," page 67.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

Architect History:

John M. Hickman was born in Amarillo, Texas, on May 28, 1925. When he was five, the family moved to Wichita where he spent much of his childhood, attending Robinson Intermediate and East High School. In high school, he worked as an illustrator for manuals at the Aero Parts Manufacturing Company but left his senior year to work as an illustrator for Lockheed Aircraft Company in California. During World War II, Hickman served as a fighter pilot in the Army Air Corps and earned his wings just as the war ended in 1944. After the war, he returned to Wichita and completed course work necessary for his high school diploma while working as an illustrator at Beech Aircraft Company. While there, he struck up a friendship with another illustrator, Frances Blackbear Bosin. He married Mary Jane Jackson on September 1, 1945, and they had four daughters. Hickman attended the University of Illinois and earned a degree in architecture. In 1947 and 1948, he spent one year studying with Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesin, a school for apprentice architects the Wrights built in Spring Green, Wisconsin and in the desert near Scottsdale, Arizona.²⁹ In 1952, Hickman returned to Wichita and worked for the architectural firm Thomas & Harris before starting a partnership with Arthur T. Woodman called Architects Associated in 1958. In 1961, Hickman and Varenhorst became partners, with Hickman the majority owner, and the name of the firm became John M. Hickman and Associates.³⁰

By 1961, Hickman had designed several of Wichita's landmark buildings and was considered a master of Mid-Century Modern architecture. Frank Lloyd Wright's influence can be subtly noted in Hickman's designs for Century II, as well as the Vickers Petroleum Service Station in Haysville, Kansas, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.³¹ Hickman designed public school buildings, including Rea Woodman Elementary School, located at Glenn and Pawnee.³² He designed several homes in Wichita, including his own home, a one-story ranch at 1560 Fairfield Lane, and his parent's home, Mr. and Mrs. John M. Hickman at 1570 Ridgewood Drive. Both homes in Spring Acres exhibit angular, linear architecture with vaulted ceilings and unpainted wood beams. Another characteristic of a Hickman designed house was flat eaves at the edges of his hipped roofs as seen at the Riverside Country Club Buildings and his own house. At Wichita State University, he designed the Ablah Library and served as a local consultant for the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Corbin Education Center.³³ Hickman described his approach as "Like an airplane, it is best not when there is nothing left to add but when there is nothing left to take away."³⁴

Hickman was friends with Frances Blackbear Bosin, and they shared artistic ideas. Blackbear Bosin painted "Wichita, My Son" depicting Native American Indians camped along the Arkansas River with Century II and the former public Library in the background. Blackbear planned to paint murals inside Century II but funding didn't allow this project to be realized. Ellen Hickman remembers fondly visits her father had with Blackbear Bosin, and she discovered a love for photography watching Mr. Bosin develop photographs in his dark room.³⁵ Blackbear Bosin went on to create Keeper of the Plains, a dramatic 44-foot-tall steel sculpture of a Native American Indiana, which he donated to the city. Keeper of the Plains sits at the confluence of the little and big Arkansas river, a sacred area for Native American Indians. He died in Wichita, 1980, at the age of 59.

The public was heavily involved during the construction of Century II, and Hickman was featured in the Wichita papers. Comments, criticisms, and opinions regarding numerous design elements were debated by the newspaper, city council, citizens and the advisory councils appointed by the mayor; the number of seats in the concert hall, Douglas Street access, construction delays, site location, etc. On April 23, 1964, two days after a contentious meeting regarding the optimal number of concert hall seats, John Hickman committed suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning. He was survived by his wife, four daughters, and parents.³⁶

Roy K. Varenhorst was born on September 25, 1928, in Conway Springs, Kansas. He graduated from Conway Springs High School in 1946. He received a degree in architecture from Kansas State University in 1950. Varenhorst served in

²⁹ Lawrence, "Century II", page 70.

³⁰ Lawrence, "Century II", page 71.

³¹ Kristy Johnson, "Vickers Petroleum Service Station," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2019.), Section 8.

³² Nina Davis, "A History of Wichita Public School Buildings," 1978, page 55. URL:

<https://www.usd259.org/cms/lib/KS01906405/Centricity/Domain/135/School%20Histories%20Updated%202007.pdf>

³³ *Wichita State University*, "Architecture of Corbin Education Center," URL:

https://www.wichita.edu/academics/applied_studies/Deans_Office/Corbin/Frank_Lloyd_Wright.php

³⁴ *Wichita Eagle*, "Architect Gains Philosophy of Profession from Mentor," June 6, 1961, page 7A.

³⁵ Hickman, Ellen, Telephone Interview conducted by Celeste Racette on October 12, 2019.

³⁶ *Wichita Eagle*, "Hickman Services Saturday Afternoon," April 24, 1964, page 8B.

Century II

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

Korea as a naval pilot, earning among other honors the Air Medal for Meritorious Achievement. He married Janice Claire Alcorn in 1953, and they adopted a son, Erich Jon. After his Honorable Discharge, Varenhorst was an apprentice with Frank Lloyd Wright at his Taliesin studios in 1957 (1956-1958). In 1958, Varenhorst joined Architects Associated with John Hickman and Arthur T. Woodman. In 1961 he partnered with Hickman to form John M. Hickman and Associates, Architects & Planning Consultants. After Hickman's death in 1964, Varenhorst maintained the firm, later renaming it Roy K. Varenhorst & Associates Architects in 1966.

Varenhorst reported to City Commission April 27, 1964, that planning of the Civic Cultural Center could be completed as envisioned despite Mr. Hickman's death.³⁷ He was on hand for opening ceremonies in 1969 and published a spectacular Inaugural Brochure that contained his drawings and personal reflections on design and art. Varenhorst was active in the Wichita Society of Architects and Affiliates and served as an adviser to the State Board of Registration. He was considered a master of Mid-Century Modern architecture and Century II was his most important architectural achievement. Varenhorst died April 24, 1997, at the age of 68, after having fallen ill and returning prematurely from an architect conference.³⁸

Frank Lloyd Wright had died in 1959, but the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, a school of architecture he created on his own, provided architects trained and versed in his originality of his uncompromising designs.

Additional Works by John Hickman and Roy Varenhorst:

Henry's Suburban Children's Store (Now Ferguson-Phillips Homeware) –
Architect, John M. Hickman & Arthur Woodman, 1954, Hickman & Woodman 1956 remodel –
4801 E. Douglas Avenue, Wichita, KS – Status: Extant, Slightly Altered
Eastside State Bank – Architect, John M. Hickman - 6225 E. Kellogg, Wichita, KS – 1955-56
Kellogg Medical Offices – Architect, John M. Hickman – 5025 E. Kellogg, Wichita, KS – 1955-56
Hickman House – Architect, John M. Hickman – 1560 Fairfield Lane, Wichita, KS – 1957-58
Photos by Julius Shulman #2893
Tilford House – Architect, John M. Hickman – 1545 Willow Lane, Wichita, KS – 1958 –
(J. Kean Tilford, owned a Chain Pharmacies in Wichita) – Photos by Julius Shulman #2894
MISCO Building – Architect, John Hickman – 257 N. Broadway – Wichita KS – 1958
(Incorporated into present Emprise Bank Complex & SCJF Architects)
(Mountain Iron and Supply Company) – Photos by Julius Shulman #2895
Oaklawn Junior High School – Architect, John M. Hickman – 3100 N. Rock Road, Derby, KS – 1958-59
Wineteer Elementary School – Architect, John M. Hickman – 120 East Washington, Derby, KS 67307 – 1958-59
Joe Hickman House (John Hickman's Parents) – Architect, John M. Hickman – 1570 Ridgewood Drive, Wichita, KS –
Circa 1958 – Status: Extant, but presumed in decline
Frank Isle House – Architect, John M. Hickman – 1531 Siefkin, Wichita, KS – 1961 (Status: Extant)
Pleasantview Elementary School – Architect Roy K. Varenhorst – 1101 N. Georgie, Derby – 1955 -1957
Payne Elementary School, Wichita, Kansas – Architect Roy K. Varenhorst, 1601 S. Edwards, Wichita, KS – 1956 - 1960

Ablah Library, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas

The Ablah Library, 1845 Fairmount Street, opened in 1962 and remains the main library on the Wichita State University Campus. John Hickman designed the Prairie Style building both outside and in terms of interior wood details. Most of these design elements have been obscured by the addition on the east, which houses the Media Resources Center, and the west addition, which contains the new two-story library entrance and a light well to provide windows for the basement level. The 1988 additions, plus major remodeling of the original building, were designed by the Wichita firm of Schaefer, Johnson, Cox and Frey.³⁹

Corbin Education Center, Wichita State University, Wichita, Kansas

The building was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, William Wesley Peters acted as Architect, John Hickman and Roy Varenhorst served as Kansas Representatives of the Taliesin Associated Architects. Agreements were signed with The Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation, University of Wichita, and E.W. Johnson, Inc. Frank Lloyd Wright's widow, Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, was present for opening ceremonies in 1964. The structure is actually two buildings and held together by the esplanade. The building is 40,000 square feet, including sheltered outdoor balconies and terraces. The building rests

³⁷ *Wichita Eagle*, "Civic Cultural Center on Schedule," April 28, 1964, page 5A.

³⁸ Stan Finger, "Century II Architect Lauded for His Vision," *Wichita Eagle*. May 3, 1997

³⁹ *Wichita State University*, URL: <https://libraries.wichita.edu/home>

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

on concrete bell columns and grade beams with a reinforced concrete slab covering the beams. A fountain runs down the center of the esplanade. Mrs. Wright selected the color scheme of terra cotta, turquoise, and black. Many of the original furnishings are still being used.⁴⁰

Rea Woodman Elementary School, Wichita, Kansas

Rea Woodman Elementary School, 2500 Hiram Street, opened in September of 1962 and was designed by John Hickman. The beautiful brick structure resembles a "helping hand." Mr. Hickman stated, "...the building resembles the hand; fingers outspread with the palm as the center. Classrooms run the length of the fingers, each for children of close age, ability and grade. All fingers join at the palm, which contains the more specialized spaces appropriate to elementary education."⁴¹

Kansas Gas & Electric Building

Kansas Gas and Electric Building, 120 E. 1st Street, was designed in 1953 by the architectural firm of Thomas & Harris. Its construction marked the beginning of the Modern era for the Central Business district and was the first in a major building boom for the city. Hallmark features include its form and massing, emphasis on the horizontal, ribboned fenestration, and large unadorned walls. The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. John Hickman worked for Thomas & Harris and likely had input on the design.⁴²

Vickers Gas Station, Haysville, Kansas

Vickers Petroleum Service Station, 140 N. Main, Haysville, Kansas, was constructed in 1954. Its primary material is reinforced concrete with its most character-defining feature the hyperbolic paraboloid form that creates a thin shell roof structure. The innovative form of the batwing building is designed to embody the technological and ambitious spirit of the company as a whole. The company commissioned John M. Hickman to design the gas station. The strong, orthogonal form and geometry of the columns and planters resemble Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture as well, anchoring the structure to the ground and displaying light, filigree infill with the storefront systems. The Vickers service station also displays notes of Hickman's past in aviation with its batwing design and light, lofty seeming roof shell and is on the National Register of Historic Places #100004455.⁴³

The Planning and Construction of Century II Civic Center

In March 1961, the City Commission reviewed the results of the *Center City Study Plan* and moved forward with the proposal. Preliminary estimates for the new civic facility included the cost of acquiring the site, constructing, furnishing, and equipping the facility for \$12.6 million. Following the city general election of April, 1961, a citizen movement brought request to have the concept of a civic cultural center submitted to a referendum. On May 23, 1961, a special bond election was held. "The results of the bond election as certified by the Election Commissioner on May 26, 1961 showed 18,084 to 13,135 in favor of the auditorium and 19,934 to 11,531 in favor of the Library."⁴⁴ The results were certified on May 26, 1961, and approved by the Mayor and Board of Commissioners. The proclamation also included an additional proposed bond issue of \$2.4 million for a new public library (to the east of Century II).

On June 23, 1961, Hickman and Varenhorst published their thoughts in a paper titled "Preliminary concepts and thoughts about The Wichita Civic and Cultural Center." They described the Wichita prairie town as "better than good climate, a central location in the nation, and the genuine claim to being friendly, hospitable and charming."⁴⁵ The civic center was perceived as a place of constant activity, the living room of the community, genuine and without pretense. The civic center should display "broad, light, clean surfaces...and present the eye with inviting contract to the center of the city."⁴⁶ The architects outlined three steps to the project. First, all potential users of the facility needs would be balanced with costs;

⁴⁰ *Wichita State University*, URL: https://www.wichita.edu/academics/applied_studies/Deans_Office/Corbin/Frank_Lloyd_Wright.php

⁴¹ Nina Davis, "A History of Wichita Public School Buildings," 1978, page 55. URL:

<https://www.usd259.org/cms/lib/KS01906405/Centricity/Domain/135/School%20Histories%20Updated%202007.pdf>

⁴² Cydney E. Millstein and MaryAnn Warfield, "Kansas Gas & Electric Building," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2011), Section 8.

⁴³ Kristy Johnson, "Vickers Petroleum Service Station," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2019), Section 8.

⁴⁴ The Wichita Board of City Commissioners City, Commission Communication, "Civic Cultural Center Development – Status Report", April 29, 1963.

⁴⁵ Lawrence, "Century II," page 72.

⁴⁶ Lawrence, "Century II," page 72.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

second, the individual pieces of the project would be designed to relate well to each other; third, quantity and quality would be balanced by the criteria of courtesy, hospitality, comfort, and convenience. "When the design is organized, the critique is complete, one step remains which is essential as all those steps to date – to commit the design faithfully to reality."⁴⁷

The city interviewed 20 architects intending to select a local one, and on August 8, 1961, the commission selected Mr. John M. Hickman as the Project Architect for Phase I of the Civic Center Project and also Mr. William Wesley Peters, of the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation as a consultant to Mr. Hickman. The City wanted this to be an extraordinary project having national prominence attached to it, and the best way to achieve that prominence was to associate the project with America's foremost architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. His stature as a unique and innovative architect in the US and around the world was unquestionable.⁴⁸ John Hickman and Roy Varenhorst both considered their years of study under Wright's tutelage to be the most important influence in their careers and their designs

The Phase I agreement with John M. Hickman and Associates, included data collection from various members of the community including the Mayor's Advisory Committee. The findings, along with a report prepared by the Stanford Research Institute of Menlo Park, California, made several recommendations for the facility.⁴⁹ The City Commission adopted the recommendation for final selection of Site A for the Civic Cultural Center on June 26, 1962 and accepted Project Architect John Hickman's preliminary design studies as submitted. The City Commission then instructed the City Manager to negotiate a contract with John M. Hickman & Associates to coordinate Phase II and design the auditorium complex.

The City of Wichita entered into an agreement with John M. Hickman and Associates on February 5, 1963, as Project Architect of Phase II of the proposed Civic Cultural Center based upon approval for his general design studies in Phase I. This agreement allowed the Project Architect \$685,165.95 for the employment of specialized consultants.⁵⁰ Progress Reports dated March 27, 1963, May 2, 1963, July 18, 1963, from Hickman showed he was holding discussions with consultants and feeling budget limitations for consulting service and project costs.⁵¹

Specialized consultants were then hired, sometimes for both the library and civic center.

- William Wesley Peters, Taliesin West, Arizona – Architectural Consultant. Wes Peters attended MIT and was Frank Lloyd Wright's first apprentice in 1932.⁵² Peters was an accomplished architect, registered in all 50 states and acted as project architect and structural engineer for many of Wright's major commissions.⁵³ He assisted as a special consultant on Phase I of Century II.⁵⁴
- Dr. Vern O. Knudsen, Los Angeles, California - Acoustics Consultant. Dr. Knudsen was published in *Scientific American* November 1963 and had done consulting work with the Museum of Modern Art and MGM sound studios. During WWII, he assisted with the development of sonar and guided anti-submarine devices. Dr. Knudsen consulted on the Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium (1964) at Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona by Architect Frank Lloyd Wright. He also consulted on the Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium (1971) by Architects Wesley Peters and Taliesin Associates in San Raphael, California. He worked as an acoustical consultant for various projects, including the Hollywood Bowl, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Schoenberg Hall at UCLA, the United Nations General Assembly building, and a variety of radio and motion picture studios.⁵⁵
- George C. Izenour, New Haven, Connecticut - Consultant for Stage Equipment & Lighting. His projects included the Jones Memorial Theater in Houston, the Tyrone Guthrie in Minneapolis, and he had an engineering

⁴⁷ Lawrence, "Century II," page 73.

⁴⁸ Lawrence, "Century II," page 65.

⁴⁹ The Wichita Board of City Commissioners City, Commission Communication, "Civic Cultural Center Development – Status Report", April 29, 1963.

⁵⁰ Agreement Between City of Wichita and John M Hickman and Associates, February 5, 1963, page 12.

⁵¹ Hickman, John M., *Progress Reports, Civic Cultural Center Project*, March 27, 1963, May 2, 1963, July 18, 1963.

⁵² Richard Eggleston, *AP News*, "William Wesley Peters, Wright Engineer, Dead at 78," URL:

<https://apnews.com/da9c89f0109599e6a572bd8e991763ff>

⁵³ [Nortoncenter.com](http://nortoncenter.com), "Wes Peters-The Early Years," URL: <http://nortoncenter.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Peters-Main-Bio.pdf>

⁵⁴ Master Schedule of Project Costs; John N. Hickman & Associates Architects; December 5, 1962; Consulting and Coordinator W. W. Peters, Courtesy of WSU Special Collections

⁵⁵ *Online Archives of California*, "Finding Aid of the Vern Oliver Knudsen papers," URL:

https://oac.cdlib.org/findaid/ark:/13030/kt109nc33w/entire_text/

Century II

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

background. Mr. Izenour worked on the Grady Gammage Memorial Auditorium (1961) designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. He also helped design the Marin Veterans Memorial Auditorium (1971) by Architects Wesley Peters and Taliesin Associates.⁵⁶

- D. Dana Price, Houston, Texas – Electrical Engineer tasked with designing energy conversion equipment and communication.⁵⁷ He was widely known in his field and understood the problems and details of the job to design the Central Energy Conversion Plant for both Library and Auditorium Complex.⁵⁸
- Dudley Williams, Wichita, Kansas – Structural Engineer
- Herbert D. Speyer - Mechanical Engineer
- Charles G. Bean – Project Inspector

Robert DesMarteau, Executive Director of the Urban Renewal Agency, assisted with land survey and planning, land acquisition, clearing. On October 31, 1963, Hickman wrote a letter to Robert Nelson, Editor Staff, Wichita Eagle-Beacon detailing the planning process as presented to over 35 groups on 52 occasions.⁵⁹

Following the assassination of the United States President on November 26, 1963, the City Commission passed a resolution to commemorate the passing of President, John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Hickman designed the plaza area to be named as John Fitzgerald Kennedy Memorial Mall to honor Mr. & Mrs. Kennedy's "...avid interest in the cultural development of our land..."⁶⁰ It was a somber occasion and a time of mourning for the nation.

Suggestions continued to be made that were printed in the local newspaper or posted in letters to city council members. The project architect's "Preliminary Plan Report," dated February 11, 1964, said, "We believe that the plans represent the best possible balance and that the plan is economically the most efficient in providing the facilities under one roof."⁶¹ Immediately after approval of preliminary plans, the firm of Kruse, Roberts & Smith assisted with work on the project.

D. Dana Price, Energy Conversion Consultant, met with Hickman and Engineers Herbert Speyer, Jerry Houck, and Dudley Williams, on March 14, 1964 to discuss the Central Energy Plan and the timeline for completion to coincide the Library construction. A recommendation was made on System "A" at an estimated cost of \$550,000.⁶²

In early April, Urban Renewal Office sent requests to Hickman for site plans.⁶³ On April 17, 1964, there was a meeting with Hickman and his consultants, where the main point discussed was a possible problem arising from an increase in the Music Hall capacity from 2,200 seats to 2,500 seats. The increase in capacity would require a complete redesign, delay in completion of final drawings, and cost an estimated one-half million dollars additional in construction.⁶⁴ Harry Peebles, a local promoter who brought country music entertainment to Wichita's stages, had sent a barrage of letters to city administrators pressing for more seats in the concert hall. The city commission began to push Hickman on proposed seating in the auditorium. In a letter dated April 20, Scanlon requested Hickman evaluate four alternatives for the size of the auditorium. Roy Varenhorst, Hickman's partner apologized for a delay in responding because Hickman was out of town for a rest. Varenhorst led the Civic Cultural Center Coordinating Committee meeting on April 22, 1964, when two opposing concepts were discussed, "...(1) the preservation of the Civic Cultural Center in a concept of a unit separate and apart from through traffic circulation, and (2) continued and complete traffic circulation through the center to maintain the

⁵⁶ Brochure distributed at the "Gala Opening" of the Marin Veterans Memorial Building on September 25, 1971, lists "George C. Izenour" as the "Theater Consultant"

⁵⁷ Hickman Civic Cultural Center Progress Report March 23, 1963 *Interviews With Special Consultants, Energy Conversion Plant Page 5*

⁵⁸ D. Dana Price, *When and What to Modernize*, Speech presented at School Facilities Conference, Houston, Texas March 29, 1961.

⁵⁹ Hickman Letter to Wichita Eagle-Beacon Editorial Staff Robert Nelson, October 31, 1963.

⁶⁰ Hickman Letter to City Manager Russell McClure, November 26, 1963.

⁶¹ *Wichita Eagle*, "Civic Cultural Center on Schedule," April 28, 1964, page 5A.

⁶² Hickman Letter to City Manager Russell McClure, March 23, 1964

⁶³ Hickman Letter to Scanlon, April 15, 1964.

⁶⁴ *Informal Report of the Meeting on the Afternoon of April 17, 1964 with Civic-Cultural Center Architect and His Consultants*, Dictated April 17, 1964 by Eric E. Duckstad Assistant Manager Economic Studies Stanford Research Institute.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

overall downtown traffic flow pattern.”⁶⁵ Ultimately, City Commission made the decision not to make a through street in front of the proposed civic center.⁶⁶

John Hickman succumbed to the pressure and committed suicide on April 23, 1964. Wichita City Commission Meeting Minutes from April 28, 1964 state “John Hickman gave too much to his project, let us be sure, Mr. Mayor, that all others give enough. Let us be sure that this work proceeds with all of the dedication, all of the vision, all of the beauty, all of the technical skills and yes...all of the uncompromising insistence for perfection that John poured into it in such measure that this tragedy occurred.”⁶⁷ Roy Varenhorst wrote Mayor Vincent Bogart a letter on April 27, 1964, explaining that two additional architects had been hired for later in the month along with additional support staff. He stated that “The project is presently on schedule. The design concept of John Hickman is developed to the point where it can be completed as he planned,” he also stated, “John’s loss should not be minimized, but this project has advanced to the point where his unique contribution has been made. My associates and I are confident that the work can now be completed as he envisioned, to the satisfaction of the Citizens of Wichita.”⁶⁸ With a unanimous decision, the city commission expressed their confidence in Varenhorst. “The project as a whole has advanced to the point where the unique contribution of John M. Hickman has been made. Mr. Varenhorst and his associates are confident that the work can now be completed as envisioned to the satisfaction of the citizens of Wichita.”⁶⁹

Eric Duckstad of the Stanford Research Institute provided proposals for equipment in the Music Hall and the auditorium.⁷⁰ Promoter Harry Peebles continued his criticisms and letter-writing campaign to force the issue on dressing rooms, footlights, equipment, seating, sound, office space, truck access, stage exists, restrooms, and concession stands. But the city commission moved ahead with their plans and turned their attention to buying land surrounding the building.

On August 11, 1964, the completion date was revised to early 1968 based on estimates from contractors.⁷¹ Mayor Bogart was concerned about further project delays. Varenhorst prepared a Project Architects Progress and Sequence Schedule for a three year period beginning in January 1965 and ending October 1967 showing timeline for construction and completion of both the library and civic center projects.⁷² The proposed Civic Cultural Center Budget was finally portioned between building construction, site development, power plant, land acquisition, and planning and contingencies.⁷³

By the beginning of 1965, the Urban Renewal Agency's acquisition of property in the civic center area was well underway.⁷⁴ In early May, the first hole was broken through an exterior wall of the Forum.⁷⁵ The Forum, along with 128 unattractive business and industry structures filling the area south of Douglas and between Main and the river, was razed to make room for the new civic center.⁷⁶

At the commission meeting on August 31, 1965, the city was ready to request bids for the construction of the auditorium. Requests for construction bids were published in numerous trade magazines and newspapers and included separate categories for elevators, mechanical systems, electrical, energy plant, and fire protection as well as the general construction contract. Bidding closed in November 1965 with general contractor work going to Martin K. Eby Construction Company, Inc. of Wichita.⁷⁷ On November 30, 1965, bids on Mechanical construction went to Central Air Conditioning, electrical to Linder & Mims Electric, Inc., building transportation work to Montgomery Elevator Company, and special service construction to Grinnell Company, Inc. Site Development agreement between Ritchie Brothers Construction Company and the City of Wichita was signed on September 6, 1966. The Construction Agreement between the City of Wichita and Eby and Company, Inc., a Joint Venture, dated December 14, 1965, was signed, with an option of exercising general construction work alternatives.

⁶⁵ Civic Cultural Center Coordinating Committee Minutes, April, 22, 1964.

⁶⁶ Roy K. Varenhorst letter to Director of Administration T. J. Scanlon June 4, 1964

⁶⁷ Lawrence, “Century II,” page 88.

⁶⁸ Roy K. Varenhorst Letter for John M. Hickman & Associates to the Honorable Vincent L. Bogart, Mayor, Board of City Commissioners April 27, 1964

⁶⁹ Notes of Wichita City Commission Special Meeting April 28, 1964.

⁷⁰ Eric Duckstad Letter to Scanlon, May 21, 1964.

⁷¹ Russell McClure to Board of City Commissioners, August 11, 1964.

⁷² Project Architect’s Progress and Sequence Schedule, Civic Cultural Center, City of Wichita, November 3, 1964.

⁷³ Proposed Civic Cultural Center Budget, City of Wichita, Ks, Revision No. 2, January 5, 1965.

⁷⁴ Lawrence, “Century II,” page 102.

⁷⁵ Lawrence, “Century II,” page 104.

⁷⁶ *Century II Performing Arts & Convention Center*, “History of Century II,” URL: <http://www.century2.org/Pages/History.aspx>

⁷⁷ Varenhorst Letter to Wichita Mayor William Tarrant, Board of City Commissioners, and McClure, November 22, 1965

Century II
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Construction of Century II

Ground was broken for the building on January 25, 1966, when "The blast of dynamite and powder on a cold and snowing day in late January, touched off construction for the new Civic Auditorium at Water and William."⁷⁸ Pilings were driven to a depth of 30 feet. A floor of reinforced concrete, was poured over the entire floor of the excavation supplying a base on which the building rests. A 40-foot wide sign went up on Douglas Avenue saying "Site of the Civic Cultural Center: another of the many good things in Downtown Wichita."⁷⁹ By summer, columns and walls with steel reinforced bars reached up into the air forming supports to grip the concrete as it began to fill the hole. The commission approved \$174,185 to make architectural improvements proposed by Varenhorst to use more decorative materials in the building. The option of general construction work alternatives was exercised on November 30, 1966; adding terrazzo flooring, colored concrete for the raised ground terrace, steps, ramps, and vertical walls of planters and service ramps, replace painted steel railing to aluminum, replace exposed satin aluminum material to bronze finish, etc.⁸⁰ A budget summary shows the addition over the years.⁸¹

In January 1967, the center stage took place and the outer walls supported 15-ton steel trusses that would support the concrete roof. These trusses were set into place by a giant crane with a 225-foot boom. By years end, the concrete roof was poured and from the outside the building looked more or less complete. Inside, the plastering of the interior was being staged with the set-up of a secure skeleton of scaffolding stretching from the floor to the ceiling. To prepare for plastering, diamond cut metal lathing materials were brought to the site. This metal lathing was tied to the supporting cold-rolled steel channels that were suspended with long metal tie-wires from the buildings steel rafters to carry the completed metal lath and plaster system load (see **figure 43**). Some of the metal tie-wires measured up to 60 feet in length.

National Gypsum Company was a leading building material company specializing in the manufacture of plaster, drywall, and other related wall and ceiling systems used in both commercial and residential construction. The interior walls and ceiling lath and plaster works, as well as the exterior stucco work, were subcontracted out to J.W. Prothero Lathing Company and Gehrher and Sons Plaster Company, both long-time Wichita based companies. Mr. Howard Gehrher managed the civic center project for plaster work. The gypsum needed for this plaster was brought from a mine located in Sun City, Kansas, and manufactured into plaster at the National Gypsum Company's plant located in Medicine Lodge, Kansas. The job required approximately 25 railroad carloads of plaster.

The plaster work on the ceiling and high side walls was hand trialed by the plasterers as they stood on the temporary scaffolding set up inside the building for that purpose. The plaster was mixed with sand and water on the job, and then hand-trialed (with limited spray application) onto the diamond cut metal lath in three separate operations. The 'scratch coat' was first, followed by the 'brown' coat in preparation for the third 'finish' coat of either 'gauging and lime', for either a smooth or texture finish, or as the base for acoustical plaster needed for sound control. This arduous work required highly skilled craftsmen trained in the process. The lathing and plastering craftsmen were the best, and their work represents the best of wall and ceiling construction.⁸²

Much of the exterior curtainwall (non-bearing exterior wall facade) construction was stucco installed over galvanized metal lath (see **figure 44**). Mr. Gehrher was quite concerned about mixing the coloring agent into the stucco and sand mix, all the while maintaining a consistent buff (wheat) color. The sand was a necessary ingredient in cutting the coloring agent into a consistent mix. The concrete steps and much of the concrete flatwork on the exterior of Century II was colored this same buff color to match the stucco. Recent repairs show the lack of attention and care shown to the current building. Concrete used for stair repairs is uneven, and the color used is whitish gray, not buff colored. A poor color match and lower quality handiwork when compared side-by-side to the painstaking care given by the lathing and plaster craftsmen from 50 years ago.⁸³

Once the plaster work was completed, the scaffolding was removed and flooring, lights, seats, doors, tiles, and plumbing fixtures were then installed. The building took on its blue, sky colored cap when layers of pigmented, rubberized paint were laid over the concrete and black primer of the roof. The circular building was divided into four uneven pie pieces housing four major venues: exhibition hall, concert hall, convention hall and theater. Meeting rooms, offices, dressing

⁷⁸ *City Time*. February-March, 1966, page1.

⁷⁹ Clayton Koppes, "Koch Site Added to Civic Center," *Wichita Eagle*. August 12, 1966, page1.

⁸⁰ Roy K. Varenhorst Letter to Wichita Mayor John S. Stevens, Board of City Commissioners, and Scanlon, November, 30, 1966.

⁸¹ McClure Letter to Scanlon, Civic Cultural Center Budget Summary, December 12, 1966.

⁸² John R. Todd, email message to Celeste Racette, December 29, 2019.

⁸³ John R. Todd, email message to Celeste Racette, December 29, 2019.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

room and theater shops were contained within the structure. The building contained 600 miles of steel reinforcing bar in addition to 4 million pounds of structural steel supporting its concrete body.⁸⁴

The construction took 3 full years to complete. The 1969 Home Show became the first event to sign up to use the facility, and by July, forty events had been planned in the first six months of business. After considering more than 150 suggestions, the name of "Century II" was chosen for the building, marking the "end of the first century of Wichita's history and the beginning of the second century of Wichita's great future" taking into consideration "the contemporary architecture, interior and exterior" of the building.⁸⁵ The building itself was the "color of Kansas," with its buff colored walls supporting five acres of sky blue roof.⁸⁶

Grand Opening:

On Saturday, January 11, 1969, Mayor William Anderson, Jr. cut the wide gold ribbon stretched across the north entrance to the convention hall of Wichita's new civic center. After considering more than 150 suggestions, the building, which was originally designated as the Wichita Civic Cultural Auditorium Complex, was given the name of "Century II", marking the "end of the first century of Wichita's history and the beginning of the second century of Wichita's great future."⁸⁷ Attending that day were many Wichita dignitaries, including Mayor William Anderson, Jr., former Mayor Carl Bell, Jr. and former Mayor Vincent Bogart. "The real credit", former Mayor Carl Bell, Jr. said, "goes to the thousands and thousands of Wichitans who supported and paid for the civic cultural center."⁸⁸ The citizens were treated to a tour of the facility.

The next day, on Sunday, January 12, 'Holiday on Ice' entertained crowds in the convention hall. Commemorative bronze medallions were handed out to memorialize the opening and had impressions on one side of wheat, windmill, prairie grasslands, civic center building, and an airplane racing up to the sky. Opening ceremonies took nine days and included events for the public; Holiday on Ice, performances by the Wichita Symphony Orchestra, Wichita Choral Society, Friends University Singing Quakers, Broadway actor Judd Jones, journalist John Cameron Swayze, jazz musician Stan Kenton and Soprano Helen Boatwright. On Monday, January 13, the inauguration of Kansas Governor Robert Docking took place. United States Tactical Air Command Band from Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, performed the opening concert. Justice Robert Price administered the Oath of Officers-Elect, and the Kansas Army and Air National Guard performed a military ceremony on the Mall of Century II.⁸⁹

Expo Hall Addition:

Available exhibition space was expanded with the construction of the Bob Brown Expo Hall, which opened in January 11, 1986. The \$12.5 million building provided 200,000 square feet of multi-use space including a kitchen for catering. On October 18, 1997 the grand opening of Hyatt Regency took place, adding a 303-guestroom hotel facility as well as additional convention and meeting rooms to the complex. The riverfront continues to improve around the facility, adding more public space, walkways, and bike paths.

Conclusion:

The Century II performing Arts and Convention Center was distinctly designed by well-known architects in a very characteristic style of the dome. It still has an important impact on the city and surrounding downtown and neighborhoods with its unique and large presence. Century II was championed by a city council that withstood many pressures and challenges of decision making, voted for by Wichita citizens, designed by visionary architects influenced by the elements of nature surrounding this mighty, great plains city, and built by premier craftsmen. The 1926 Wurlitzer organ from the Paramount Theatre in New York City was removed and installed in the Exhibition Hall, as the cement walls were the only ones in the building that could hold 50,000 pounds of pipes, and premiered in 1972.⁹⁰ The building and property have been integral to the community's entertainment, recreation, education, and other civic engagement activities since its grand opening in 1969.

Century II is among Wichita's largest centers for entertainment, consumer shows and conventions and is home to several arts organizations. – Wichita Symphony Orchestra, Music Theater Wichita, and Music Theatre for Young People. The

⁸⁴ *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, "Presenting Century II," January 5, 1969, Section C.

⁸⁵ *Wichita Beacon*, "Our Civic Center Named 'Century II'," October 10, 1968

⁸⁶ *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, "Presenting Century II," January 5, 1969, Section C.

⁸⁷ Lawrence, "Century II," page 116.

⁸⁸ Ward, Bernie, "Wichitans Realize An 8 Year Dream," *Wichita Eagle*. January 12.1969, page1.

⁸⁹ *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, "Presenting Century II," January 5, 1969, Section C.

⁹⁰ *Wichita Eagle Beacon*. September 3, 1986, Special Advertising Section, page 1.

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

Civic Center has hosted a variety of rock groups, gospel shows, comedians, and country singers. Several U.S. Presidents and elected officials have hosted events at Century II on their visits to Wichita.

Classical musicians and visiting symphony orchestras like the New York Philharmonic and Count Basie Orchestra have performed in the Civic Center. Numerous live performing artists have performed there throughout the decades. The Exhibition Hall has hosted wrestling matches, bride shows, boat shows, home shows, and Rod and Custom car shows. The Miss USA Pageant was held there from 1990 to 1993 and Miss Teen USA 1995. Many rock groups and country music artists have shared the stage.

The community actively embraces the property for its local activities: the Wichita Annual River Festival, Music Theater of Wichita, Wichita Jazz Festival holds, and many others. As the building celebrates its 50th anniversary, it is still an attractive, iconic domed sky-blue building recognizable to many as they fly into the Wichita Dwight D. Eisenhower National Airport. The building's architectural style is enhanced by the connection to Frank Lloyd Wright and design elements specific to the Kansas prairie. It still brings crowds to the round, domed venue. James Grier, Eby Construction Co., Inc. Project Manager for the Century II project, said, "In my honest opinion, certainly the city of Wichita got a real bargain on that thing. They did it at the right time. I think it's holding up pretty well in terms of what was put into it."⁹¹

The Century II Performing Arts and Convention Center (Century II) was approved by the citizens of Wichita for a bond issue in 1961. The budget of \$15 million included the construction of a public library in the same area of the east riverbank of the Arkansas River, in the heart of Wichita, Kansas. The Century II building was designed by the architectural firm of John M. Hickman and Associates. Mr. Hickman passed away in 1964, and the design and construction oversight was completed by Roy K. Varenhorst, an architect in the same firm. Both were apprentices of Frank Lloyd Wright and studied at Taliesin West.⁹² The building is a low circular structure with a shallow domed roof in the style of Frank Lloyd Wright (see **photo 72**).

The design elements are unique to Kansas prairie and to the site chosen; the pale blue dome represents the limitless prairie sky, the softly curved dome resembles the Great Plains Native American wigwams, the buff colored columns represent the vast fields of waving wheat, and the strong horizontal earthen colored parapet line around the building's light blue dome represents the horizon where the land meets the sky.⁹³ Century II is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as a unique and excellent example of Modern architecture in Wichita.

⁹¹ Stan Finger, "Century II Architect Lauded for His Vision," *Wichita Eagle*, May 3, 1997, page 10A.

⁹² Lawrence, "Century II", page 70.

⁹³ *Wichita Eagle and Beacon*, "Century II Comes to Wichita In...The Busy Dome," January 5, 1969, Parade Section.

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County and State

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Century II
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: personal family records

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Century II
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 9.55 acres

Provide latitude/longitude coordinates OR UTM coordinates.
(Place additional coordinates on a continuation page.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1	<u>37.685686°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.341954°</u> Longitude:	5	<u>37.684012°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.339775°</u> Longitude:
2	<u>37.685891°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.339595°</u> Longitude:	6	<u>37.684125°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.340441°</u> Longitude:
3	<u>37.685519°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.339639°</u> Longitude:	7	<u>37.684271°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.341320°</u> Longitude:
4	<u>37.684934°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.339487°</u> Longitude:	8	<u>37.684340°</u> Latitude:	<u>-97.341891°</u> Longitude:

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary for the Century II is contains the historic building footprint and the adjacent sidewalks, Kennedy Plaza, and landscaping that was constructed as part of the project and property. It is within the Wichita parcel: LOT 2 BLOCK 1 EAST BANK DEVELOPMENT ADD. EXEMPT 7394-86-TX.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Century II is an exceptionally designed building that was made to be a standalone structure just outside the densely commercial downtown area. The buildings design, construction, configuration, and location were specifically planned to distinguish the building from the surrounding area. Historically, the adjacent parcels contained a low and dense warehouse district with numerous buildings. These were specifically removed from the setting around Century II to keep the original intent and design of the building intact. The 1986 Expo Hall and 1990s parking garage and hotel lack any design, construction, or architectural relationship to Century II and were constructed several years after the civic center was established also as stand alone structures. The property is oriented in a designed landscape adjacent the Arkansas River to provide a shift in atmosphere for those attending performances at the center. The building itself is a character defining icon of the Wichita area and is one-of-a-kind in its Modern form and design. The boundary is limited specifically to include the historic footprint of the property to keep and acknowledge the significance of the design and original intent of the structure, and the surrounding adjacent sidewalk, designed landscaping, and Kennedy Plaza all of which were planned as part of the Century II project and property. Although there is a glass room connecting Century II to the 1986 Expo Hall, the lobby does not facilitate any part of Century II's function but is merely a covered space. Also, the design and construction of the Expo Hall share not relationship architectural with Century II's exceptional architectural design.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Celeste Bogart Racette

organization Save Century II date Winter 2019

street & number 2239 N. Tee Time Court telephone 765-491-6583

city or town Wichita state KS zip code 67205

e-mail mcrb@ksadvocates.com

Century II
Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas
County and State

Property Owner: (complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name City of Wichita
street & number 455 N. Main, 13th Floor telephone 316-268-4351
city or town Wichita state KS zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each digital image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to a sketch map or aerial map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: Historic Preservation Alliance of Wichita and Sedgwick County, Inc.
City or Vicinity: Wichita
County: Sedgwick County State: Kansas
Photographer: Gianna Flamingo Ink
Date Photographed: 08/28/19

- 1 of 73: Century II exterior from Douglas Street & Century II Drive intersection facing NE side of building
- 2 of 73: Century II exterior from Century II Drive on NE side of building looking S
- 3 of 73: Century II exterior from Douglas Street on NE side of building looking S
- 4 of 73: Century II exterior from Tlapiana Street on NE corner of building looking S
- 5 of 73: Century II exterior from lawn on NE side of building looking W
- 6 of 73: Century II exterior from circle drive on E side of building looking N
- 7 of 73: Century II exterior from plaza level on NE corner of building
- 8 of 73: Century II exterior from wheelchair ramp on SE corner of building and Expo Hall
- 9 of 73: Century II exterior from sidewalk on SE corner of building looking W
- 10 of 73: Century II exterior from plaza level on SE corner of building looking W
- 11 of 73: Century II exterior from circle drive on SE side of building looking W
- 12 of 73: Glass Lobby exterior from east side of building looking W

Century II

Sedgwick County, Kansas

Name of Property

County and State

- 13 of 73: Expo Hall exterior on E side of building looking SW
- 14 of 73: Expo Hall exterior on E side of building looking NE
- 15 of 73: Expo Hall exterior on E side of building looking NE
- 16 of 73: Expo Hall exterior on E side of building looking NW
- 17 of 73: Expo Hall parking garage on S side of building looking N
- 18 of 73: Expo Hall parking garage on S side of building looking S
- 19 of 73: Hyatt Hotel from on E side of building looking W
- 20 of 73: Breezeway on W side of Hyatt hotel connecting parking garage looking N
- 21 of 73: Breezeway on W side of Hyatt hotel connecting parking garage looking E
- 22 of 73: Century II exterior from west side of building showing Expo Hall
- 23 of 73: Century II exterior from west side of building showing Expo Hall
- 24 of 73: Century II exterior of connecting lobby to Expo Hall from service road facing southwest corner
- 25 of 73: Century II exterior from service road facing southwest corner
- 26 of 73: Century II exterior from service road facing southwest showing Expo Hall and Hyatt Hotel
- 27 of 73: Century II exterior from service road on S looking E
- 28 of 73: Century II exterior from service road on S looking E at loading entry
- 29 of 73: Century II exterior from service road on S looking E
- 30 of 73: Century II exterior from Kennedy Plaza on NW corner looking E.
- 31 of 73: Century II exterior from Kennedy Plaza on N side of building looking SW
- 32 of 73: Century II exterior from Kennedy Plaza on N side of building looking SE
- 33 of 73: Century II exterior NE balcony from Promenade level looking W
- 34 of 73: Century II exterior NE balcony from Promenade level looking E
- 35 of 73: Concert Hall main level from lobby at concert hall right looking N
- 36 of 73: Concert Hall main level from lobby at concert hall right looking W
- 37 of 73: Concert Hall main level from continental seating looking N at stage
- 38 of 73: Concert Hall main level from stage looking S at continental seating
- 39 of 73: Concert Hall stage level concert right looking S
- 40 of 73: Concert Hall stage level looking skyward into light racks
- 41 of 73: Concert Hall stage level concert left looking N
- 42 of 73: Concert Hall stage level inside stage shop looking E
- 43 of 73: Concert Hall stage level inside stage shop looking S
- 44 of 73: Concert Hall stage level inside stage shop looking N into Theater stage entrance
- 45 of 73: Concert Hall stage level inside stage shop looking N into Theater stage entrance
- 46 of 73: Theater from stage level looking E at continental seating
- 47 of 73: Theater from continental seating looking S
- 48 of 73 Theater from continental seating looking towards W towards stage
- 49 of 73: Exhibition Hall main level E side looking N
- 50 of 73: Exhibition Hall balcony level E looking NW
- 51 of 73: Exhibition Hall balcony level E looking S
- 52 of 73: Exhibition Hall balcony level W looking E
- 53 of 73: Exhibition Hall stage level looking N
- 54 of 73: Exhibition Hall stage level looking NW
- 55 of 73: Freight Elevator connecting Exhibition Hall and Convention Hall
- 56 of 73: Inside Freight Elevator connecting Exhibition Hall and Convention Hall
- 57 of 73: Convention Hall main level from stage looking W
- 58 of 73: Convention Hall stage looking SW
- 59 of 73: Convention Hall stage
- 60 of 73: Convention Hall main floor from the NW looking SE towards the stage
- 61 of 73: Convention Hall balcony level W looking towards the E
- 62 of 73: Convention Hall balcony level W looking towards the NE
- 63 of 73: Glass Lobby between Convention Hall and Expo Hall N looking S
- 64 of 73: Glass Lobby between Convention Hall and Expo Hall NE looking S
- 65 of 73: Glass Lobby
- 66 of 73: Glass Lobby
- 67 of 73: Backstage Hallway to Concert Hall looking N
- 68 of 73: Dressing Room on Main Level

Century II

Name of Property

Sedgwick County, Kansas

County and State

69 of 73: Dressing Room restroom on Main Level

70 of 73: Dressing Room open area on Main Level showing service level stairs

71 of 73: Outside exterior of parking garage on SE side looking NW

72 of 73: Century II Exterior from Garvey building 6th floor on N side of Douglas Street looking S

73 of 73: John Fitzgerald Kennedy Plaza Bronze memorial plaque affixed to retaining wall looking E