Chapter 1:

Introduction

The University of Kansas campus is widely recognized as one of the most beautiful in the country, listed as #12 of the “Top Fifty Campuses” by Thomas Gaines in his 1991 book *The Campus as a Work of Art*. No matter how this quality is defined, we know that KU’s unique identity evolved with the influences of the topography, local ecology and historic trends in national and regional planning and design. Officially opened in 1866, the University responded to institutional demands and cultural forces and was shaped by notable planning and design efforts that created several distinct eras, delivering many of the high quality sites, buildings and landscapes we enjoy today.

Cultural influences, such as the Abolitionist movement, the English landscape ideal of the late 19th century and the rise of the City Beautiful movement with Chicago’s Columbian Exposition of 1893 played to local design efforts. Later World’s Fairs, most notably the 1904 fair in St. Louis designed by George Kessler, took place when Kessler worked at KU. Resources for development of a campus were allocated sparingly but achieved extraordinary results.

In the course of this project, it became clear that the growth of the campus responded directly to the topography and prominent hilltop along a narrow ridge between two river valleys. As such, Mount Oread is KU’s original landscape. The regional contribution of stone building materials and the period craftsmen of Eastern Kansas shaped the earliest buildings. The intent behind the early campus composition and high-style architecture of New England was familiar to many of the founders and the first generation of architects of campus buildings who trained in Eastern schools with experience on other campuses and urban centers. These early influences are evident in the evolution of this place; the paramount historic and contemporary character of the University of Kansas Lawrence campus evolved as both a very local and a very worldly place.

The campus skyline.
Source: University of Kansas, Office of University Relations. Image c. 1994. Doug Koch, photographer
The Study Process

The University of Kansas was awarded the Campus Heritage Initiative grant from the Getty Foundation in the spring of 2006. Consultants known for their expertise in the areas of architecture, landscape architecture, historic preservation, cultural landscape history, and the preparation of complex report layouts and specialized graphics were selected for the project team.

Provost Richard Lariviere appointed a Steering Committee of 17 members comprised of representatives from the University, the City, the Chamber of Commerce, alumni and groups with interests in the history of the campus to provide oversight for the project. A smaller working group, the Executive Committee, also met to guide the day-to-day implementation of the project.

On-site work sessions were conducted with the consultant team during the subsequent months to complete the research, analysis, evaluation and recommendations necessary for this project. Several meetings were conducted with Campus Historic Preservation Board members to keep them informed about the project and to request their input.

Scheduled meetings with the Steering Committee were held at intervals throughout the process to provide status updates and reports on the findings of the team, as well as to request its input and evaluation of the project findings and recommendations. Once the draft of the report document was ready for review, meetings were scheduled with Chancellor Hemenway, Provost Lariviere and representative groups within the University community.

This document represents the final version of the report after receiving and including the appropriate comments and suggestions from all of these groups and individuals. Their assistance in this process has been invaluable.

Overview of the Campus Heritage Plan

College and university campuses may be America’s best collections of landscape and architecture and the best examples of institutional planning and development. They reflect a comparable mission with the changing tastes of many generations while often remaining under the control of a single owner and planning authority. Whether large public land-grant institutions or compact private four-year colleges, historic campuses reflect national design trends for both landscapes and buildings. Yet until recently, their gardens, lawns, drives, courtyards, quads and their contributions to buildings and sites, so valued by alumni, have remained outside the scope of traditional historic preservation. Thanks to the Getty Foundation’s Campus Heritage Initiative, the University of Kansas has an extraordinary opportunity to forge an efficient strategy for bringing a consistent approach to historic preservation/conservation to projects of all scales.

Since 2000, the Getty Foundation has funded more than 75 campus preservation and conservation studies, of which about 15, including this one, have included a strong focus on landscape history. “Landscape” in this context references the broadest sense of the word to include the ground plane of the campus, its character and features — not simply a reference to the plant materials alone. Into this landscape the structures, notable historic buildings and various other campus features all play a role in defining campus context.

In most of the Getty-funded campus preservation studies, investment priorities are geared to restoring or rehabilitating sites and features (or “resources” in the preservationist’s lingo) tied to “periods of significance” — namely, the historic era or multiple periods that the preservation planners deem significant. For KU, this report examines an equivalent timeframe represented by three major “Periods of Development.” In 1901, 1928 and 1957, the campus reached an apex of completion of building elements, site development and landscape treatments. During these periods, the work of a previous generation came to fruition and the plans and visions along with the advent of the next wave of social action led to the next significant physical change.

The chronological history provided in the previous chapter documents the development of the University of Kansas campus during the three significant periods of growth and development, beginning in the late 1850’s through 1957. The year 1957 was selected as the ending date for the focus of the study process because it coincides with the 50-year requirement (from the time of this study) to qualify buildings and sites for eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places. While many opportunities of various scales exist for stewardship efforts for all historic resources on the campus regardless of age or consideration for the National Register, the focus of this study to a time up to 50 years ago provides a logical “stopping point” that is based upon a national standard.

Looking at the campus through the lens of these Periods of Development helps us to understand the contributions of campus leaders, planners, architects and landscape architects from each distinct time. By examining the periods from KU’s founding years in 1856-1901, from 1902-1928 and from 1929-1957, we can evaluate the relative intactness and significance for purposes of addressing...
conservation of elements from each period. In addition, this analysis and plan explores the social and cultural context and historic value of resources including buildings, sites and landscapes. By evaluating physical resources as expressions of their own time, the contribution as a combined historic resource underlying the contemporary campus is more evident.

This document is not intended to duplicate the many resources already published about the history of the University of Kansas (refer to the bibliography for a partial list of these resources). Rather, the intent of this plan is to focus on those physical elements tied to historic events and investments that guided and shaped development of the campus of today. This development has been based on ideals and visions of the time and derived from a variety of sources, both public and private, which impacted the way in which the KU campus evolved. This analysis and plan will propose various levels of preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction along with interpretation of features that were lost in order to knit the historic fabric together as a more coherent institutional resource.

Why a “Stewardship” approach instead of a “Preservation” Plan?

While the definitions of the words “conservation” and “preservation” may convey similar meaning, the word “stewardship” brings with it an added dimension addressing the management of change. The proposal and intended purpose in the original grant application to the Getty Foundation is to establish the historic significance based on local development circumstances and national design trends evident in the campus over the decades. Conscious of this historic context, there is a role for the University community to serve as “steward” of the historic resources of this campus. This is the intent under which this study has proceeded, rather than a regulatory edict that precludes renovation, conversion of uses, or new construction.

Stewarding the campus for the future means preserving vestiges of each of the stories related to planning, campus development and physical outcomes while creating room for new programs, buildings and changing needs. Stewardship of the campus physical environment is not about freezing change; it is about providing the relevant information and focus for making informed choices.

The Institutional Benefits of a Campus Heritage Plan

There are compelling reasons for KU to embrace a stewardship role and consistent approach to management of its historic resources. Beyond the beauty of its sites, buildings and landscapes, the University is blessed with a variety of assets including an exceptional collection of talented people, a loyal and growing network of alumni around the state and the world and loyal contributors to a large and well-managed endowment that is among the oldest in the country.

Contributing to this community and underlying the programs and individual contributions is a substantial, beautiful environment — sited, built and landscaped over more than a century of time — that encompasses the significant history of this place. The result is a vestige of many generations of contribu-
tions, investments and gifts to match the ever-evolving requirements and needs for progressive academic, research, service and entertainment activities.

The benefits of a well-composed campus that values its history are many. Maintaining this beauty and protecting the historic resources associated with the rich traditions of KU will assist both in recruiting new participants, promoting alumni interests and garnering public loyalty and support, which, in turn, leads to future generations of support to advance the goals of the University.

It is our responsibility to pass on to the future the impressive beauty of the KU campus. Maintaining this beauty and protecting the historic resources associated with the rich traditions of KU assist both in promoting alumni loyalty in financially supporting the goals of the University and in recruiting. A legacy of preservation builds upon institutional integrity. To advance an approach to campus preservation that recognizes and reinvests in these features connects the past to the future and extends and builds upon the underlying vision and integrity of the place.

A vision for stewardship and preservation planning provides a critical opportunity within the University community to continue the dialogue on how best to manage change and development opportunities on the campus in a manner that protects the historic resources of the campus while meeting the academic, research, programmatic and facility goals of the University. Although change is inevitable, compromise of certain time-held qualities and specific campus features — sometimes as part of a focused effort to expand the campus but often just because of the effects of time and deterioration — should not be accepted without an understanding of the historic physical context, the connections to campus quality and the ties to historic resources. This is true for sites, buildings and landscapes.

As a state, Kansas has developed preservation law and policies that give KU rare opportunities to guide and financially benefit from the standards for stewardship and preservation outlined in this report. These policies include generous rehabilitation tax credits, the application of “Environments” reviews to buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and Register of Historic Kansas Places, and the local coordinating authority with the designation of KU’s Campus Historic Preservation Board (CHPB) as responsible for preservation process, measures and requirements of the state historic preservation statutes. (Further information may be found in Chapter 2.)

The Goal of the Campus Heritage Plan

The goal of this Campus Heritage Plan is to promote the stewardship of KU’s historic campus by identifying, interpreting and protecting the most important vestiges of sites, architecture and landscape design. The goal is to preserve for future generations a university campus that tells stories of the challenges, investments and achievements of the previous administrations, students, faculty and staff who have participated in this university environment.

In the long term, these historic attributes, seen as evidence of time and change, can provide the University a distinct and valued asset in drawing and enlightening future members of this community.
Objectives of the Campus Heritage Plan:

1. To understand the unique role of the Mount Oread site in the founding and growth of the campus.

2. To identify “Periods of Development” when the campus exhibited significant changes in formative characteristics related to site, architectural and landscape development based on the efforts of preceding years.

3. To create historic contexts for understanding the value and relative importance of sites, buildings and landscapes from all periods.

4. To document the most important remaining vestiges and lost features of the historic campus in order to assess their relative importance within given historic contexts.

5. To further clarify the Environ reviews and capital planning processes by identifying the most appropriate, sustainable and cost-effective treatments for historic resources.

6. To create a base of historic understanding of the evolution of campus and its historic resources that can inform projects that may change the campus environment.

7. To further a commitment to stewardship of the historic physical attributes of the University of Kansas campus in Lawrence.

Building a Culture of Stewardship

In summary, this plan can infuse a new spirit of institutional pride at KU. It can build a commitment to the stewardship of the physical attributes from chapters in KU history so that we might learn from them. Stewardship of historic landscapes and buildings preserves the chance for future generations to learn from the stories and to remember the moments of struggle, debate, discovery and participation that have emerged at KU since its earliest days.

As Americans, our sense of what is “historic” continues to evolve. For this reason, KU should continue a conversation to further define the notion. Indeed, the best stewardship plan is one that is updated over time to include new periods of significance and areas of interest, such as mid-century Modernism, campus interiors (which include many of the best views of Marvin Grove and surrounding horizons) and Modernist landscape architecture. Buildings such as Lindley Hall and the Wesley Foundation Building (University Relations) that exemplify the “Modern” style are now important vestiges of an era 50 years past. Where these physical assets fit in the history of the institution may not yet be entirely evident. But a focus on historic context and relative contribution to the future will allow these to be weighted appropriately. Whether these features are to be preserved is yet another level of evaluation. And if larger campus initiatives require the removal or conversion of sites, buildings or landscapes, the relevant value and context of these projects should be documented and evaluated in the course of a sound campus planning and development process.

This plan should be considered the basis for an evolving approach to campus preservation and management. Over time this analysis and list of recommen-
Historic stewardship preservation at KU must be seen as a strategy for responsible asset management and not as an impediment to change.

How to Use This Report

This report is intended as a tool for a variety of campus purposes:

- To provide an inventory of significant campus historic resources
- To stabilize and preserve valued historic resources
- To inform and guide the University in evaluating future opportunities for growth and change on the campus
- To further document the history of the campus to be used in a process involving the Campus Historic Preservation Board (CHPB) for evaluating specific development plans

While proposals for direct intervention (preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction) for notable historic resources and the process to assess the potential impact of new development on historic resources may require the review of comparable information, they require the application of very different processes. The need exists to accomplish both the preservation of individual site, building and landscape projects and the retention and preservation of certain qualities of historic character of the campus in the face of new development.

In every case, the work on the scale of individual projects contributes to the overall campus environment at the larger scale. There are few features on this campus that are more overarching and connected than the topography, spatial qualities and relationships, and views and vistas. The process of evaluation, both for those impacts related to specific sites, buildings and landscapes and those that are definitive qualities of the overall campus must be considered.

This report is structured into sections that follow the time-tested historic preservation practice of general historic research, site and building inventory, recommendations for preservation approaches or “treatments” and policy recommendations for long-term implementation. Lists of recommendations for specific projects, ideas regarding policy and steps to implementation are provided in Chapter 8.

To evaluate the historic resources and potential impacts for a specific site, the following process is recommended:

1. **Historic Context:** First, review the general history of the Periods of Development contained within Chapter 4 to gain an overall understanding of the history of the development of the KU campus.
   a. Consider the contribution of individual components

2. **Impact to the Landscape:** Next, check the Landscape Treatment
Zone map in Chapter 6 to determine in which Zone the specific site is located.

a. Refer to the specific Treatment Zone section for analysis of the historic resources contained within this zone. The process is briefly explained in Chapter 6, with full information for all Treatment Zones included in Appendix E.

b. Each Treatment Zone in the Appendix includes one or more pages of analysis, immediately followed by the Treatment Recommendation sheet(s) for the specific treatments that are recommended within the landscape of this zone.

c. Also refer to the “campus-wide” treatment recommendations found in Chapter 6 that present generally applicable treatment principles for the entire campus.

3. Building Impact: Finally, determine whether a currently registered or eligible building or site on the National Register of Historic Places is located within this zone, as this will require additional consideration. These properties are referenced on the Treatment Zone maps and listed in Chapter 7.

a. Refer to Chapter 2 for information about specific architectural design guidelines and environs reviews for the listed and eligible properties. Detailed information is included in Appendices C and G.

4. CHPB Review: The information gleaned from this review process should provide the Campus Historic Preservation Board (CHPB) the necessary basic information on which to base its review. Additional information and analysis will be required by the professional support staff of the CHPB for a complete review.