

**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS  
REVIEW REPORT  
TOPEKA PLANNING DEPARTMENT**

**CASE NO: CLGR16-09**

**by: Charles Curtis House**

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**PROPOSAL:** The applicant is requesting Certificate of Appropriateness review for the replacement of a free-standing monument sign facing S. Topeka Blvd. in front of the Charles Curtis House Museum, located at 1101 S. Topeka Blvd. The Charles Curtis House is individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and is listed as a local Historic Landmark.

**BACKGROUND:** This owner of this property is proposing to replace a roughly 4 sq. ft. wood and metal monument sign with a 40 sq. ft. granite monument sign. The applicant applied for, and received a Heritage Tourism Improvement Grant in 2016 to fund the costs associated with this sign replacement. The proposed sign will be engraved granite, and will not be internally, not externally illuminated, but will instead rely on ambient adjacent street lighting for its visibility. The grant sign is proposed for placement in the same location as the present wood and metal sign, and will face the same direction, parallel to S. Topeka Blvd.

**REVIEW SUMMARY:** The Kansas State Historic Preservation Office requires that all projects occurring on any property listed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places be reviewed for their affect on the listed property and the surrounding district. State law (K.S.A. 75-2724) establishes that the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation be used to evaluate changes proposed to any property that is individually listed, or is located within an historic district. The following is an analysis of the application of each Standard to the proposed project.

***Standard 1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.***

**Analysis:** All five buildings have been continuously used for commercial purposes since their original construction. Three of these buildings are proposed for continued commercial occupancy, while the remaining two buildings proposed for demolition will serve in support of the dedicated commercial activities of the entire project complex.

The owner and developer of the property have determined that the project cannot be functionally achieved within the envelopes of the existing structures. Therefore, the project architect has designed a substantial vertical addition, extending from the roof of one of the buildings to accommodate the intended new use. This addition contains more square footage than the original structure, but is recessed 25' from the building's front façade. This design feature removes the appearance of height of the structure from the street level, and retains the historic appearance of the street-level façade.

This addition may be justified in accordance with Standard #1 by utilizing a recommendation from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings. With regard to the alterations and additions to historic buildings, the recommendation reads as follows:

*“The construction of an exterior addition to a historic building may seem to be essential for the new use, but it is emphasized in the guidelines that such new additions should be avoided, if possible, and considered only after it is determined that those needs cannot be met by altering secondary, i.e., non-character-defining interior spaces. If, after a thorough evaluation of interior solutions, an exterior addition is still judged to be the only viable alternative, it should be designed and constructed to be clearly differentiated from the historic building and so that the character-defining features are not radically changed, obscured, damaged, or destroyed.”*

The building addition will be clearly differentiated in design from the original structure, and will not remove or alter any character-defining features from the building's original construction.

**Standard 2.** *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

**Analysis:** The proposed project will require alterations to 5 individual structures, three of which are listed as contributors to the South Kansas Avenue Historic District. Two buildings, including one contributing building, are proposed for complete demolition. The majority of 918-920 S. Kansas Ave. is also proposed for demolition. The demolished portion of this building is proposed for reconstruction as the 8-story Cyrus Hotel. The new construction is proposed to be recessed a depth of 25 feet behind the structures original façade along S. Kansas Avenue. The recessed design will help to ensure that the historic character of the building, as visible from the street level, will be retained and preserved.

All significant character-defining features within the project area are present along the three remaining and restored storefronts along S. Kansas Avenue, and these features will be restored and preserved.

**Standard 3.** *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

**Analysis:** This project will not introduce any features that will present a false sense of historical development to the structure. The exteriors of all remaining structures are designed to be compatible and complementary to their original time-periods of construction. Additionally, the tower that will extend vertically above 918-920 S. Kansas Avenue will be architecturally distinct from the lower historic portion of the structure, and is deemed to be compatible to the general character and historic integrity of the surrounding district.

**Standard 4.** *Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

**Analysis:** The brick in-fill of the lower storefronts of three buildings within the project area have not acquired their own historical significance. The two remaining structures proposed for demolition have been significantly altered since their original construction. 924 S. Kansas Ave. is listed as a contributor to the surrounding historic district, but has undergone several changes since its original construction, leaving only the exterior non-street-facing walls in their original conditions. The front façade of this building does exceed 50 years of age, but is not deemed to be a prominent element that adds to the historic qualities that comprise the remainder of the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District.

**Standard 5.** *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.*

**Analysis:** Although two structures are proposed for demolition, and a significant portion of a third structure is also proposed for demolition, the materials proposed for removal are not representative of distinctive features, finishes, or construction techniques that characterize the project area, or the surrounding historic district.

**Standard 6.** *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

**Analysis:** There are no deteriorated features or components of structures within the project area.

**Standard 7.** *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

**Analysis:** N/A

**Standard 8.** *Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.*

**Analysis:** N/A

**Standard 9.** *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

**Analysis:** The majority of alterations proposed for the three properties that will remain standing will be contained within the interior of these structures. An 8-story addition is proposed for the rear portion of 918-920 S. Kansas Ave. All interior

alterations will remove the minimal amount of historic materials, and in no case will historic materials that uniquely characterize the properties be removed.

New work within the project area will be differentiated from original architecture and construction, and will be compatible with the sizing, massing, and scale of the surrounding historic district.

From the National Park Service *Technical Preservation Services Report on New Additions to Historic Buildings*, the following treatments are recommended:

- Placing functions and services required for the new use in non-character-defining interior spaces rather than installing a new addition.
- Constructing a new addition so that there is the least possible loss of historic materials and so that character-defining features are not obscured, damaged, or destroyed.
- Locating the attached exterior addition at the rear or on an inconspicuous side of a historic building; and limiting its size and scale in relationship to the historic building.
- Designing new additions in a manner that makes clear what is historic and what is new.

**Standard 10.** *New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

**Analysis:** Removal of the tower proposed for construction behind the front elevation of 918-920 S. Kansas Avenue would leave the front façade intact, thus ensuring the preservation of all character-defining, contributing features of this structure to the historic district.

**CONCLUSION SUMMARY:** In formulating this recommendation, Staff has applied more emphasis on the application of the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation to the entire South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District, with less emphasis to the application of the Standards for each individual property within the project area. In this respect, the recommendation is based on the net cumulative impacts of all proposed changes within the project area to the District as a whole, rather than the unique effects on each property in isolation. It is acknowledged that a contributing structure, and a non-contributing structure within the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District are proposed for demolition in association with this project. It is further acknowledged that the majority of an additional contributing property within the District is also proposed for demolition to allow for the construction of a significant addition onto this property. This addition has been deemed necessary to allow for the adaptive reuse of this property, and the reuse of all properties subject to modification within the project area.

The National Parks Service’s *Technical Preservation Services Report on District or Neighborhood Setting* states the following as recommended treatments to ensure the preservation of historical character when multiple properties are involved:

- *Designing and constructing new additions to historic buildings when required by the new use. New work should be compatible with the historic character of the setting in terms of size, scale design, material, color, and texture.*

- *Removing nonsignificant buildings, additions or landscape features which detract from the historic character of the setting.*

It is Staff's conclusion that the cumulative effect of this project on the historic character of the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District does meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. These Standards, and all associated guidelines for their implementation, do allow for alterations to historic properties if the net effect of those alterations do not damage or destroy the historic integrity of the historic property. For the purposes of this review and analysis, Staff has treated the project area as single element within the surrounding Historic District. Staff's application of the Standards to the project area has determined that the historic integrity and the historic character of the surrounding Historic District will not be damaged or destroyed as a result of this project.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** In light of these standards and the preceding analysis, Planning Staff recommends to the Topeka Landmarks Commission a finding that the project for the redevelopment of the properties located at 912-924 S. Kansas Avenue **does not damage or destroy the historic character or the historic integrity of the South Kansas Avenue Commercial Historic District.** Staff further recommends that the Landmarks Commission require all further documentation pertaining to this project, necessary for construction purposes, reflect the conceptual renderings presented by the applicant to the Commission at this meeting, and that any deviation from these renderings will require subsequent review and approval by the full Landmarks Commission.

Prepared by: \_\_\_\_\_  
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