



July 10, 2020

Dear Members of the Wichita Historic Preservation Board

I am writing in regard to Case Number HPC2020-00011, the submission of Century II for listing on the State and National Historic Register. To assist the Board with its consideration of this submission, I would like to provide information about the current functionality of this facility.

During the past ten years, a number of studies and assessments of Century II have been performed. All of these reviews have determined that the facility is no longer viable as a convention center and performing arts facility. A 2013 report prepared by Conventions, Sports & Leisure (CSL) found that the "pie slice" layout, apportionment and configuration of the event and convention space severely limits its functionality and does not conform to national standards. The round design of the building prevents it from being modified to correct this deficiency.

In 2014, a similar analysis of Century II's performance arts space was conducted by AMS & Fisher Dachs Associates. The study found that the stage size, wing space, dressing rooms and loading docks are inadequate and that sound bleed disrupts performances whenever other events are conducted in adjacent spaces. A subsequent structural engineering analysis determined that these performance issues could not be adequately addressed within the current building.

To complete the due diligence process, CSL was also asked to determine the cost for bringing Century II's spaces to base operation and safety standards through 2030. It was understood that the improvements would not address the functionality issues noted above but would position the facility for possible reuse. The cost estimate for this repair, remodeling and upgrade work was \$271 million.

At the present time, there are no tangible plans for the reuse of the Century II building. Additionally, no funds have been identified to address the base operation and safety standards improvements or to remodel the facility for a new use. It had been anticipated that an extensive public engagement process would have been completed in 2020 to address the future use of Century II. However, the Covid-19 outbreak has halted the engagement process. For these reasons, it is requested that the Board delay its consideration of the nomination of this building to the State and National Historic Register until the community process can be completed.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Layton'.

Robert Layton
City Manager

Wichita-Sedgwick County Historic Preservation Board
Sedgwick County Planning
271 W. 3rd St., Ste. 201
Wichita, KS 67202
Attention: Kathy Morgan, Senior Planner MAPD
Via Email to KMorgan@wichita.gov

July 10, 2020

Dear Members of the Wichita-Sedgwick County Historic Preservation Board:

We are writing on behalf of the private-sector and non-profit leaders representing the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan Coalition. To the extent you are able, we request that you pause or otherwise defer decisions on two nominations on your July 13, 2020, agenda:

- **Item No. 7A- HPC2020-00011**, requesting Century II nomination to the Register of Historic Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places, and
- **Item No. 7C – HPC2020-00021**, requesting support of the Wichita Public Library (Main) nomination to the Register of Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

Located within the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan master planning footprint, these two buildings have been the subject of much community dialogue and analysis. The Riverfront Legacy Master Plan began analyzing these buildings within the context of a larger development site, but temporarily suspended the community engagement and design initiatives as our community responds to the continued COVID-19 crisis. As the pandemic approached, the master planning process was moving forward with design from global architecture firms and a robust community engagement effort, with four open houses, 50-plus community presentations, 5,000 community comments, and five public Coalition meetings.

Our reasons for requesting a deferral from this board are severalfold. First, this community is in the grips of a global pandemic affecting the health and economic conditions of our region. These broad community conversations have been and continue to be critical in determining a holistic vision for the east bank of the River. Our community deserves the opportunity to have a fully involved process to weigh in on the future of this area without the distraction of vast unemployment, and with a better understanding of the economic landscape of our community.

The Riverfront Legacy Master Plan carries a critical opportunity to address talent and economic growth and recovery for the community. To consider this action at this time sacrifices a more informed opportunity to evaluate economic policy and talent attraction and retention. A more robust understanding of the pandemic's effect on the convention and tourism industry is required to empower our community to have a meaningful dialogue about how best to invest in industry standard convention facilities—and the regional economic impact of those facilities—in the future.

Secondly, without the future uses of these two buildings defined, this action carries with it potential renovation restrictions that put at risk the viability of future building uses. Furthermore,

the restrictions that may come with this potential designation may have an impact on Music Theatre Wichita's future ability to attract performances and the need for industry standard convention facilities to contribute to regional economic recovery. This point is further supported by the City's recent comments reflecting their consideration of a private sector operator of Century II.

Finally, there does not appear to be an urgent need for this designation. There are no immediate plans to replace or demolish either of these buildings. While the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan drafted a potential vision that does not include either of these buildings, more community and public sector engagement, as well as post-pandemic funding strategies are necessary in order to bring that vision about. Additionally, given the City's budget deficits caused by COVID-19, material investment in either of these buildings appears unlikely.

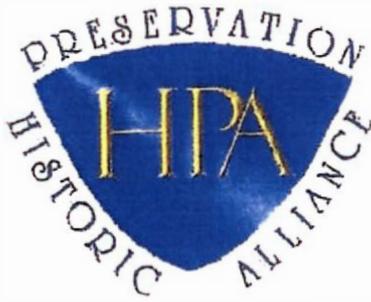
For all these reasons we request that you exercise the options you have to defer action on the nomination of Century II and the Wichita Public Library (main) on the Register of Historic Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places, and preserve the community's opportunity to continue to the broad-level dialogue about its future on the east bank of the Arkansas River.

Respectfully,

Private Sector Partners of the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan



CC:
Mayor Dr. Brandon Whipple
Councilmember Brandon Johnson, District I
Councilmember Becky Tuttle, District II
Councilmember James Clendenin, District III
Councilmember Jeff Blubaugh, District IV
Councilmember Bryan Frye, District V
Councilmember Dr. Cindy Claycomb, District VI
Robert Layton, City Manager



July 12, 2020

Kathy Morgan
Wichita Historic Preservation Officer
271 West 3rd Street, Suite 201
Wichita, Kansas 67202

Re: H.P.B. Meeting/July 13, 2020
Item No. 7 Project Review
A. Major: HPC 2020-00011/Century II
C. Major: HPC2020-00021/Public Library
Response to Letter of Riverfront Legacy

Dear Kathy:

I am writing in regard to the nominations of Century II and the former Public Library to the Register of Historic Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places, which will be considered by the Wichita Historic Preservation Board on Monday, July 13, 2020.

It has come to my attention the organizations that created the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan group have submitted a letter in opposition to both nominations. They have offered three (3) reasons to justify their position:

1. Consideration of the historic designations shouldn't take place during the pandemic and the community deserves a "fully involved process" to weigh the future of the area.
2. A historic designation for Century II could affect Music Theatre Wichita's ability to attract performances meeting industry standards.
3. What was the urgent need for the designations since there are no imminent plans to tear down the buildings.

In response to No. 1, as you are aware, consideration of the historic designations is to be based solely on the historical importance and architectural significance of the buildings themselves, NOT on whether or not other circumstances are present. The argument a pandemic exists is no more relevant than would be the existence of a tornado or a dust bowl! Regardless of a pandemic or other irrelevant outside circumstance, the community will receive the same "fully involved process" from the City and the State as do all nominations submitted to them.

In response to No. 2, a historic designation for Century II has NO relationship, correlation or requirement to meet industry standards that could otherwise affect Music Theatre Wichita's ability to attract performances. Music Theatre Wichita will have exactly the same ability to attract performances as it did before the historic designation. Again, consideration of "outside" influences is not relevant to a determination of historical importance and architectural significance of a structure. The phrase "industry standards" would appear to be used for no reason other than to attempt to cloak the suggestion with credibility.

In response to No. 3, contrary to Riverfront Legacy's assertion, there is, in fact, an urgent need for the designations because the ONLY remaining Master Plan of Riverfront Legacy specifically calls for the demolition of both Century II and the former Public Library. While implementation of the plans may not be imminent, they most certainly and definitely exist and one can deduce Riverfront Legacy will do all it can to implement these plans as is demonstrated by the fact they have raised an objection to the historic designations of Century II and the former Public Library. Clearly, Riverfront Legacy's action reveals it is NOT a matter of IF its plan is implemented, but ONLY a matter of WHEN, thereby making action to protect these structures by appropriate historic designations even more critical at this time.

Sometimes the best way to evaluate the legitimacy of a position is to review not what is said, but what is not said. If the Riverfront Legacy group actually had a substantive basis to oppose the nominations, it would contest whether: 1) the submissions are complete, 2) the structures are historically important and/or architecturally significant, and 3) the nominations meet all of the requisite criteria. Instead, the Riverfront Legacy group presents unrelated and irrelevant propositions.

In conclusion, I find it outrageous that the Riverfront Legacy group had the audacity to oppose the nominations of Century II and the former Public Library when, of course, it is none other than the Riverfront Legacy group itself that wants to demolish both buildings. I believe the reasons given by the Riverfront Legacy group are nothing more than disingenuous excuses.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts and concerns.

Best Regards,


J. Greg Kite, President
Historic Preservation Alliance of
Wichita & Sedgwick County, Inc.
Treasurer, Save Century II

Wichita-Sedgwick County Historic Preservation Board
Sedgwick County Planning
271 W. 3rd St., Ste.201
Wichita, KS 67202
Attention: Board Member
Via email:
July 12, 2020

Dear Members of the Wichita-Sedgwick County Historic Preservation Board;

I am writing as a lifelong Wichitan and an active Volunteer in the Wichita Citizens organization **Save Century 2**. This is in regards to the deferment request asked for by the Riverfront Legacy Master Plan Coalition for two items on your July 13, 2020 agenda:

***Item No. 7A-HPC2020-00011**, requesting Century II nomination to the Register of Historic Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places and

***Item No. 7C -HPC2020-00021**, requesting support of the Wichita Public Library (Main) nomination to the Register of Kansas Places and the National Register of Historic Places.

I personally spoke with thousands of the 17,300+ people who signed the petition to Save Century II. I was continually told that Century II was **irreplaceable** and was the one building that **instantly symbolized Wichita** in their minds. Both Century II and the Wichita Public Library buildings are **architecturally unique and significant** not only to our community but to the whole state of Kansas. I could write a book with all the stories and memories that people shared with me.

I strongly disagree with the request to postpone the historical designation consideration.

1. The Riverfront Legacy Master Plan Coalition has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to come up with multiple plans for this area, all of which involve tearing down these buildings. They argue that there are no imminent plans to tear these buildings down. Just because they use the word "imminent" does not negate the fact that they do plan on tearing these buildings down.
2. The community has been fully involved in this process. The Riverfront Legacy Master Plan Coalition has had multiple community information meetings and articles in the paper detailing their potential plans to tear these buildings down. The response from the community was that over 17,300 people signed a petition to "Save Century II".

Not designating these buildings as Historical could be an irreversible decision. I have seen historically significant buildings in this city torn down quickly to get ahead of the Historic designation.

July 13, 2020 **YOU** and your fellow Board members are tasked with your mission and the decision of being the FIRST link in RENOVATING, NOT DETONATING.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND THOUGHT.

Jean Ann Cusick
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WICHITA, KS 67208
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Email:
<mailto:ictdramamama@gmail.com>

"The Notion that "Culture" is a luxury persists in the minds of those that do not realize that culture is the best of what we are and what we hope to become. The culture enterprise consists of exhibiting and displaying those qualities which are significant, instructive, entertaining, attractive and which add to our appreciation of the place in which we live and work"
Roy K Varenhost: Architect

Morgan, Kathy

From: george@ncmodernist.org
Sent: Sunday, July 12, 2020 8:51 PM
To: Morgan, Kathy
Cc: 'Ringler Katrina [KSHS]'; Whipple, Brandon; Johnson, Brandon J; Tuttle, Becky; Clendenin, James; Blubaugh, Jeff; Frye, Bryan; Claycomb, Cindy; Layton, Robert; 'Celeste Racette (Bruce)'
Subject: Century II



Ms. Kathy Morgan
Wichita Historic Preservation Officer
July 12, 2020

Dear Ms. Morgan,

Tomorrow, July 13, the Board will consider nominating Century II to the National Register of Historic Places. As Executive Director of USModernist, a national archive and advocacy nonprofit for mid-century Modernist architecture, I encourage the Board to approve this nomination.

- The Riverfront Legacy group has always wanted to bulldoze Century II. They do not want the possibility of any pesky historic designation slowing that process, while claiming there are “no plans” to tear it down. From politics to development, the “no plans” statement is a common tactic to mislead the public without actually lying. The statement is literally true – today, maybe next week, maybe next month - indeed there are “no plans.” At any time, however, you can count on that those plans can and will emerge, and the building will be rubble. A tragic loss. Don’t fall for it.
- The argument that historic status will create all kinds of havoc, like reducing the ability to attract quality performances, is ridiculous. Performances take place all over the world every day (when we’re not in a pandemic) in historically protected buildings.
- The argument that the Board should wait until the pandemic passes, and/or subject this to excessive public review, is just a stalling tactic to kick the can down the road. This is not rocket science.

As there is no factual evidence to reject giving this masterful building the status it deserves, let's look at the win/win scenario. Major redevelopment is not a bad thing, done right. Century II has many more years to go and will be a perfect compliment to any larger sports or performing arts space the developers wish to build. Two spaces are indeed better than one, as audiences and artists have different needs. Not everything works, or works well, in a monster arena. Keeping Century II, a symbol of Wichita, preserves a place for small and medium events.

Thank you very much.

Kind regards,

George

George Smart | Executive Director

Modernist Archive Inc. | [USModernist®](#) | [NCModernist®](#)
Host and Executive Producer, [USModernist Radio](#)
Instagram: [@mr.modernism](#)

A 501C3 Nonprofit Educational Archive for the Documentation, Preservation, and Promotion of Modernist Architecture
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