

January 31, 2013

Dear Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission:

In the last two years, artists, cultural organizations, historians, merchants, restaurants, Downtown Lawrence, Inc., the East Lawrence Neighborhood Association, the Lawrence Public Library, members of the Chamber of Commerce, and the City of Lawrence have been imagining the creation of a cultural district for Lawrence and have invested in Final Fridays, an event based in the concept of such an officially designated area. This cultural district has not been defined; though conversations about it have been lively, they are unofficial. This letter is to ask the City of Lawrence to take an expansive geographical view of creating a cultural district, defining its boundaries, and developing it within a greater cultural plan for the city.

We ask the City to consider an acknowledgement of the area defined by the Kansas River, Vermont Street, 15th Street, and the northern terminus of Burroughs Creek Trail as a cultural district and begin to consider developing a plan for the entire area that includes an improved system of lighted, safe sidewalks and shared use pathways which would act as a pedestrian and bicycle linkage between our historic, arts, natural, and cultural heritage sites such as Downtown Lawrence, city center historic districts, the Arts Center, New York School, and myriad galleries downtown and in the Warehouse District, and the Kansas River.

We respectfully request that the city consider designating this geographical district as a cultural district and begin the process of developing a plan that includes consideration of the following:

1. Street and alley improvements including repairing brick streets and rebricking streets
2. Public art: possibly including placement areas for public art in this expanded cultural district
3. Pedestrian accessible, sidewalks with solar powered lighting ;shared use pathways between cultural and historic nodes
4. General connectivity between walkable destinations currently separated by dark streets and impassable sidewalks.
5. Commitment to grant writing, Community Develop Block Grant Money, and an expanded Final Fridays event that highlights connectivity
6. Free internet access
7. A commitment to affordable housing and work space for people in creative sectors.
8. Inclusion of East Lawrence Neighborhood Association and Downtown residents in the formation and implementation of the cultural district.
9. Preservation of historical housing stock.
10. Dedication to maintaining the unique culture and socio-economic mixture of the area.
11. Development of a community cultural Plan for the city as a whole.
12. A city arts and culture administrator to implement such a plan.

We firmly believe that this will put Lawrence, Kansas in the running for national recognition in the areas of public health for walkability and biking, historic preservation, support for the arts, creative placemaking, and neighborhood revitalization. A nonrestrictive and broadly defined “Cultural District” designation will strengthen grant applications from the City of Lawrence and all arts, historical, and cultural entities with this framework.

We stand ready to assist you in creating a vibrant cultural district in the heart of Lawrence that will convey Lawrence’s commitment to public health, the environment, history, and art. The time has come to broaden our community vision. Let’s think big.

Sincerely,

Cathy Hamilton, Director Downtown Lawrence, Inc. and Board of Directors

Brad Allen, Director Lawrence Public Library

Fred Conboy, Destination Management/Freedom’s Frontier

Fred Conboy, Convention and Visitors Bureau

Seed Co. Artist Collective

Nancy Thellman, County Commissioner

Doug Gaumer, Intrust Bank

Scott Elliot, The Summit

Mike Myers, architect and preservationist

Tony Krsnich, Poehler Development and Warehouse Art District

Susan Tate, Director, Lawrence Arts Center

Ben Ahlvers, Exhibitions Director, Lawrence Arts Center, artist

Margaret Weisbrod Morris Lawrence Arts Center, artist

Adam Smith, The Invisible Hand Gallery, artist

Molly Murphy, coordinator Final Fridays, artist

Lynne Green, Director, Van Go Mobile Arts

Steve Nowak, Director, Watkins Community History Museum

Eric Kirkendall, Lawrence Creates

George Paley, artist and property owner

John Hachmeister, sculptor, professor University of Kansas

Barb Kerr, START

Joan Golden, Destination Management Inc. Board , Arts Center Board

Bill Tuttle, University of Kansas Professor Emeritus, History & American Studies

The Lawrence Art Guild, an art collective

Greg Williams, Lawrence Chamber of Commerce

Reverend Verdell Taylor, Pastor St. Luke's AME Church

Deanell Tacha Freedom's Frontier Trustee

East Lawrence Neighborhood Association