

## **Analysis of Environs of 809 Vermont Street, Lucy Hobbs Taylor House**

### *Step One*

#### *Historical Significance and Context*

According to the application for Historic Landmark Designation, the property was constructed in 1871. The property is being nominated to the Lawrence Register of Historic Places under local criteria three and six. Local criteria three is a structures identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, state, or nation. Local criteria six is embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant.

The importance of this structure's visual and physical characteristics influences the environs definition process in that it is good example of the Italianate style of architecture. The structure maintains a high degree of integrity.

The period of significance for the related nomination categories is as follows:

Local Register Criteria Three

Association with Lucy Hobbs Taylor 1871-1910

Local Register Criteria Six

Because this criterion is based on architectural elements there is no specific period of significance.

### *Step Two*

#### *Historical Character of the Area Surrounding the Property*

Historical character is the primary issued considered in this section. Historic photographs, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, *the nomination information, 1873 Douglas County Atlas, Living with History: A Historic Preservation Plan for Lawrence, Kansas*, by Dale Nimz, and Historic Resources of Lawrence, Douglas County, Kansas Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) were the primary sources used to identify the historic character of the area.

**Natural Features** The environs consist of flat ground.

**Property Boundaries and Ownership Patterns** Property boundaries in downtown Lawrence were typically consistent with the standard lot size, which was 50' wide by 117' deep. In the case of the commercial buildings on Massachusetts, many properties were one-half of the lot size (25' x 117'). There were also structures that faced the east/west streets. There were some areas of downtown Lawrence, particularly in the 600 block and 1000 block of Massachusetts and the 600, 700, 800 and 900 blocks of Vermont, that were owned in larger parcels.

**Land Use Patterns and Zoning** Land use downtown between the River and South Park was residential, commercial, office, and industrial from 1871 through the 1940's. This area has historically been the heart of the historic Lawrence commercial district. The numbered streets (originally they were named) and Vermont and New Hampshire between Sixth and Eleventh Streets were used for residential, commercial, institutional, civic, and religious purposes. With the exception of the Methodist Church, the majority of structures along the 900 block of Vermont Street were residential in nature. By 1910, the County Courthouse and jail were constructed on four lots on the southeast corner of Eleventh Street and Massachusetts which is adjacent to South Park. These civic buildings and South Park define the southern boundary of the downtown Lawrence commercial district. A complete zoning ordinance plan was enacted in June 1926.

**Circulation Patterns** Massachusetts Street, which is 100 feet wide, defines the heart of the downtown Lawrence commercial district. In 1871, Massachusetts Street was not paved and had no curbs. By 1928, Massachusetts was four lanes wide with two lanes of traffic going each direction. There were no parking lots but there was angled (45°) street-side parking provided for automobiles. What is now Seventh Street was a highway. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad tracks that run along the river at the north end of downtown helped to reinforce the northern boundary of downtown Lawrence. There was a spur that provided rail service to the foundry and iron works located at Sixth Street (formerly Pinckney) and Massachusetts. Some form of streetcar system began in the 1890s. The streetcar system was in its peak between 1922 and 1927. The main route of the system ran along Massachusetts from the Depot in North Lawrence to the south end of Massachusetts. Gradually after 1927, the trolleys were replaced with buses. The streetcar rails were removed by 1960.

**Planned Vegetation Patterns** Historically there was little vegetation on Vermont Street. The typical historical vegetation patterns were lawns around houses and religious, civic, and commercial buildings that were set back from the lot lines. In many cases, these areas were planted with trees and bushes, flowerbeds, and kitchen gardens.

**Signs and Pedestrian amenities** In 1871, there was a system of wood plank sidewalks along Massachusetts Street. By the 1920s, the sidewalk was constructed of cement. Historically signs in downtown Lawrence were simple and varied in size. By the 1920s, there were single globe streetlights along Massachusetts Street. By 1940 signage was still fairly simple and varied in size.

**Primary Structures** The primary structures on Massachusetts Street in downtown Lawrence were commercial buildings that were mostly two stories tall and constructed of brick and stone with brick facades. The commercial buildings generally maintained the same setback and were constructed with common party walls. They had parapets with flat roofs. The principal facades had the characteristic cornice, upper facade with windows, and lower storefront with display windows, and a recessed entry. Vermont Street had several vacant lots in 1883. Commercial buildings lined the south side of 8<sup>th</sup> Street at Vermont Street. The Lawrence Hotel was to the south of the Lucy Hobbs Taylor House. There were a variety of architectural styles present in downtown Lawrence by 1940, including Italianate, Romanesque, Queen Anne, and Classical Revival styles. The rear facades were more varied and utilitarian in design. The materials used on rear facades tended to be rubble stone or poor quality brick.

**Secondary Structures.** There were few secondary structures in historic downtown Lawrence.

There were carriage houses for residential structures, and kitchens and sheds for commercial structures. These buildings were all located on the alleys. They were typically constructed of wood or brick and were one or one-and-one-half stories in height. In some instances, there were wood and iron fences demarking the property boundaries of residential structures.

**Outdoor Activity Spaces** South Park and Watson Park (originally Central Park) were defined in the original city plats, and provided definition to the southern and northwestern edges of downtown Lawrence.

**Utilities and mechanical Equipment** Telegraph lines were common in the downtown area by the 1890s. Electrical and telegraph and telephone lines on poles were common in the alleys in downtown Lawrence by the 1920s. There were overhead trolley line on Massachusetts Street by 1923, and they remained until the 1940s. The water and natural gas lines were buried under the street.

**Views** The views to the listed property were typical of town lots of the surveyed city.

### *Step Three*

#### *Present Character of the Area Surrounding the Property*

The primary source of information on this section is personal observation, city zoning maps, and recent aerial photographs.

**Natural Features** The environs consist of flat ground. The Kansas River forms the northern boundary of the core commercial area. South Park forms the southern boundary of the commercial area.

**Property Boundaries and Ownership Patterns** Property boundaries in downtown Lawrence are typically consistent with the standard lot size, which is 50' wide by 117' deep. In the case of the commercial buildings on Massachusetts, many properties are one-half of the lot size (25' x 117'). The 600 block and 1000 block (east only) of Massachusetts, and the properties along Vermont and New Hampshire, are typically constructed on parcels of land that include two or more lots. Larger lot consolidation has occurred for City parking lots.

**Land Use Patterns and Zoning** The land use patterns along Vermont and New Hampshire are commercial with parking and institutional (churches). Vermont is primarily office uses with second story residential uses. Zoning is CD for Downtown Commercial.

**Circulation Patterns** Today, the majority of downtown vehicular traffic is on New Hampshire and Vermont. There are two locations (east side of 700 block and west side of 800 block) where pedestrians can cut through from parking lots on New Hampshire and Vermont to the sidewalks on Massachusetts. In addition to these openings in the building mass, there are many stores with both rear and front entrances which act as an informal way for pedestrians to move from parking lots off of New Hampshire and Vermont to Massachusetts Street. The 600 block of Vermont has been changed to one-way traffic going south, and Kentucky has been changed to

one-way traffic going north. Concrete sidewalks span the distance between building facades and the street curb. In the core of the downtown, streetscape improvements have included the addition of tinted concrete that is stamped to look like brick pavers at all crosswalks. A number of parking lots have been added to the downtown area, and all streets provide either angled or parallel parking. Street-side parking is typically metered.

**Planned Vegetation Patterns** The Massachusetts Street “streetscape” improvements implemented between Sixth and Eleventh Streets on Massachusetts have added raised and flush planting beds that contain deciduous trees and ground cover. The parking lots are typically located off of Vermont, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and the numbered streets. Typically, parking lots include plantings (shrubs and trees) along the perimeter in raised planters and in flush planting beds.

**Signs and Pedestrian amenities** Signs in the downtown area vary, but typically they meet contemporary design standards rather than repeating the historic sign designs. The range of sign types includes traffic signs of painted metal, painted wood sign boards, individual letters mounted on building elements, letters painted on glass, neon signs in windows, signs on awnings, signs hung perpendicular to the building facade on the upper facade and at the pedestrian level, temporary signs on paper or cardboard attached to the inside of windows, and easel type signs located on the sidewalks. The Massachusetts “streetscape” improvements implemented in the recent past have added wood benches, banners on light standards at the corners of each intersection, and occasional sculptures along the sidewalk. Downtown pedestrian scale street lights are installed as properties redevelop in the Downtown. Traffic signal lights and street name signs are mounted on the street light poles.

**Primary Structures** The Lucy Hobbs Taylor house is the only residential type structure left in the 800 block of Vermont Street. The other two structures that face Vermont are commercial. The Carnegie Library is at the south end of the block but faces south. The majority of the block is the City parking lot on the east site of Vermont.

**Secondary Structures** Some of the secondary structures associated with the residential uses remain. The number of secondary structures has been reduced to provide for development. New rear yard privacy fences have been constructed on Kentucky Street.

**Outdoor Activity Spaces** The outdoor activity spaces that bound the commercial district are South Park and Watson Park. A city-owned swimming pool was constructed on the south end of Watson Park. There is one designed outdoor space south of the Eldridge Hotel that is used for outdoor dining. There are several areas along the sidewalk in front of restaurants that provide outdoor seating for patrons. To a certain extent, the entire pedestrian zone has the character of an outdoor activity space because of the unusually high level of pedestrian traffic along Massachusetts Street.

**Utilities and mechanical Equipment** There are storm sewer inlets, traffic signs and street lighting along all of the streets in the area. Water meter and manhole covers are typical through the area. Fire hydrants are located along the streets. Electrical and telephone lines are both above ground and below ground in the area. Most overhead lines are located in alleyways and cross numbered streets at mid-block. Most building mechanical equipment is located on rooftops

or in the alleys.

**Views** There is a full views of the subject property from the south due to the vacant lot to the south of the property. The view from the north is confined to the street view due to the commercial buildings to the north of the property. The subject property's primary viewshed is the large City parking lot on the east side of Vermont.

**Time** Time of the day has an impact on the perception of the subject property, especially during peak hour traffic. Nighttime appearance with lighted signs and storefronts is also quite different from the normal day time appearance. Nighttime lighting for the parking lot is significant. Seasonal changes in vegetation are an important aspect of the experiential quality of the area.

**Weather** The full range of weather conditions common to this area influence the perception of this place.

**Sounds, Smells, Tastes** In general this area has the usual sounds of cars and conversation associated with commercial areas. There are no unusual or distinct sounds, smells, or tastes that characterize the area. There are smells of food near restaurants, especially near their exhaust fans which are generally located in the rear of the building.

**Imagination and Expectation** Downtown Lawrence is an economically viable, traditional downtown. The retail businesses tend to be specialty shops rather than basic shopper goods which give it a unique quality. These characteristics contribute to the expectation of visitors and residents alike. It is a matter of pride for most Lawrence residents that they have a vital and beautiful downtown commercial area. The private investment, city planning efforts, and political decisions that have contributed to its continued existence as a strong downtown have not come without controversy. These struggles and successes contribute to the importance it has in the collective memory of residents of the city, and to those who are interested in the vitality of traditional downtowns in the region.

#### *Step Four*

#### *Comparison of the Historic and Present Character of the Area Surrounding the Property.*

**Natural Features** The natural features remain the same.

**Property Boundaries and Ownership Patterns** The typical property boundaries are similar today to what they were historically, with the exception of lots that have been consolidated along Vermont, New Hampshire

**Land Use Patterns and Zoning** The areas that have undergone the greatest change are the 600 block of Massachusetts, which has changed from primarily industrial to commercial use, and the areas along New Hampshire and west of Vermont that have changed from residential to commercial and parking. There have always been many buildings containing offices in downtown

Lawrence.

**Circulation Patterns** The main street grid pattern is still intact in this area. The extensive addition of parking lots has the greatest impact on the character of the downtown since 1871. The streets and sidewalks are in the same locations and, for the most part, are unchanged. Massachusetts Street is now only one lane of traffic each direction instead of two lanes each direction. The surface materials have been replaced, and crosswalks are a substantially different color and texture.

**Primary Structures** Residential structures no longer exist in the area on Vermont Street. Kentucky Street retains residential types of structures. The majority of structures are commercial.

**Secondary Structures** The few secondary structures that remain in relationship to historic residential structures along Kentucky and Rhode Island, generally contribute to the character of the downtown area. The secondary structures that had been associated with commercial buildings have vanished.

**Outdoor Activity Spaces** South Park and Watson Park have been modified, but they perform their historic functions well and for the most part, maintain their historic character. The swimming pool constructed on the south end of Watson Park has some impact on the character of the outdoor space that helps to define the western edge of downtown Lawrence.

**Utilities and Mechanical Equipment** Downtown Lawrence is brighter at night now than it was in 1940 because lighting standards and public expectations have changed. There are fewer overhead utility lines along Massachusetts and more of them along the alleys. The mechanical equipment of most buildings is much larger than it was in 1940.

**Views** The differences in the views of the area have been caused by removal and redevelopment of lots in the area.

**Time** The amount of nighttime lighting has increased over time. Traffic has increased and is particularly heavy during peak hours.

**Weather** While the weather patterns are generally similar to the historic period of significance, the advent of air conditioning has altered the way the residents may react to weather.

**Sounds, Smells, Tastes** The introduction of more traffic and higher density living has introduced more sounds and smells.

**Imagination and Expectation** Downtown Lawrence was the primary retail area of the city in 1870 and 1940. Today downtown Lawrence is not the primary retail area in the city, but it is a concentration of shops with unique retail products. Most of the retail businesses in Lawrence are now located in outlying areas. Downtown Lawrence continues to be the cultural center of Lawrence.

## ***Conclusion***

The Environs for 809 Vermont Street, the Lucy Hobbs Taylor House, have changed since the period of significance. The environs should be divided into two areas and reviewed in the following manner.

### **Area One**

The area primarily consists of commercial structures and parking lots. The commercial character of the environs in this area is important. The area should maintain the overall commercial character of the historic environs and the following should apply:

The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Criteria set forth in 22-505. Important design elements include scale, massing, site placement, height, directional expression, percentage of building coverage to site, setback, roof shapes, rhythm of openings, and sense of entry. Demolition of properties shall be approved if a compatible structure is proposed on the site. Maintaining views to the listed property and maintaining the rhythm and pattern within the environs are the primary focus of review.

All projects except for demolition of main structures, new infill construction, significant additions, etc. will be reviewed administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Criteria set forth in 22-505. The main issue in the review is whether the project will encroach upon the listed property.

Major projects (demolition of main structures, new infill construction, significant additions-greater than 20% of the original structure, etc.) will be reviewed by the Historic Resources Commission. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Criteria set forth in 22-505. The main issue in the review is whether the project will encroach upon the listed property.

Commercial redevelopment in this area should not block the views to and from the listed property. In addition, commercial redevelopment in this area should create a transition zone from the commercial development on Massachusetts and the east side of Vermont to the west side of Vermont and finally Kentucky Street.

### **Area Two**

The area primarily consists of single dwelling, residential structures on individual lots although the uses are mixed with residential and office uses. The residential character of the environs is important. The area should maintain the overall residential character of the historic environs and the following should apply:

The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Criteria set forth in 22-505. Important design elements include scale, massing, site placement, height, directional expression, percentage of building coverage to site, setback, roof shapes, rhythm of openings, and sense of entry. Demolition of properties shall be approved if a compatible structure is proposed on the site. Maintaining views to the listed property and maintaining the rhythm and pattern within the environs are the primary focus of review.

All projects will be reviewed administratively by the Historic Resources Administrator. The proposed alteration or construction should meet the intent of the Criteria set forth in 22-505. The main issue in the review is whether the project will encroach upon the listed property. If the project does not meet the Criteria set forth in 22-505, the project will be forwarded to the Historic Resources Commission for review.

