

## **Analysis of Environs of 645 Mississippi Street, Robert E. House Residence**

### ***Step One***

#### ***Historical Significance and Context***

According to the application for Historic Landmark Designation, the property was constructed c. 1918. The property is being nominated to the Lawrence Register of Historic Places under local criterion six. Local criterion 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. The structure's architectural significance is important in the environs definition process because it is an excellent example of a Prairie architectural style. The structure also maintains a high degree of integrity.

### ***Step Two***

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

Historical character is the primary issue 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 property is located in Lane's First Addition adjacent to the Original Townsite. The environs consist of platted lots on relatively flat ground. There were no significant natural features in the environs of the subject property except the natural ravine (now Watson Park) that separated this residential area from the commercial downtown.

**Property Boundaries and Ownership Patterns** The area surrounding 645 Mississippi Street was platted as part of the Original Townsite and in 1865 as Lane's First Addition. The traditional pattern of individual residential structures on single or multiple lots was established by the time of construction. Ownership patterns were consistent with the boundaries of the properties.

**Land Use Patterns and Zoning** Land use in the surrounding area when the structure was constructed was single family residential. When the property was zoned after the construction of the House residence, it was zoned for residential uses.

**Circulation Patterns** The streets in the area reflect the traditional grid pattern of the original town site. With the introduction of the automobile at the turn of the century, streets began to

be paved with brick. The brick-paved streets typically had stone curbs. Garages were located on the rear of the lot lines and accessed from the alley. Sidewalks were typically constructed of brick, with a few areas of stone slab paving.

**Planned Vegetation Patterns** The planned vegetation patterns were lawns around the houses. Street trees were common before the 1920s. Residential areas had flower beds, kitchen gardens, trees, shrubs, etc.

**Signs and Pedestrian Amenities** Typically the historic signs were street name signs. Pedestrian amenities were limited to the sidewalks in the area.

**Primary Structures** The primary structures in the environs of the property were predominantly single-family residences. The structures were typically 1, 1 ½, and 2 stories in height and constructed of wood or masonry materials. Various styles were represented in the area.

**Secondary Structures** Secondary structures were nearly always carriage houses or garages, smoke houses, sheds, and garden structures. There may have been a few kitchen buildings. They would have been constructed of brick, stone, or wood. They typically would have been 1 to 2 ½, stories in height. There were also retaining walls, and wood and iron fences that generally marked property line boundaries.

**Outdoor Activity Spaces** Clinton Park was one block to the north and Central Park (now Watson Park) was four blocks to the east.

**Utilities and Mechanical Equipment** Electrical and telephone lines were common by 1937. Water and sewer and natural gas lines were buried underground.

**Views** The views to the listed property were typical of urban lots. Properties were visible through the small breaks between residential structures.

### ***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** There are no significant natural features in the environs of the subject property except the natural ravine (now Watson Park) that separated this residential area from the commercial downtown.

**Property Boundaries and Ownership Patterns** Property boundaries and ownership patterns along Mississippi Street reflect the original townsite and Lane's First Addition with lots under multiple ownerships – typically one owner per lot.

**Land Use Patterns and Zoning** Land use and zoning support individual dwellings on individual lots. The property is zoned RS5 - Single Dwelling Residential District. The environs area includes a few properties that are nonconforming, converted dwellings containing apartments. A vacant lot on the west side of Indiana Street is currently used as a community garden.

**Circulation Patterns** The circulation patterns are the originally platted grid system. Access to the properties is primarily from the state and numbered named streets and alleyways.

**Planned Vegetation Patterns** The planned vegetation patterns are lawns, trees, shrubs, and flower beds. The area includes large street trees lining the streets and foundation plantings. Landscaped areas, particularly in the rear yard, have been partially replaced with parking areas to accommodate the increased number of automobiles.

**Signs and Pedestrian Amenities** The signs within the area are almost entirely street names and traffic control signs. Some hitching posts and stone steps are still in place on a few of the streets.

**Primary Structures** The primary structures surrounding the subject property are typical of the residential structures in the historic neighborhoods in the core of the city. Brick, stone, and wood structures in a variety of styles exist in the area. There have been a few modern residential buildings introduced into the area.

**Secondary Structures** Some of the secondary structures associated with the residential uses remain. The number of secondary structures has been reduced to provide for additional parking areas. Most of the front yard fences have been removed. New rear yard privacy fences have been constructed.

**Outdoor Activity Spaces** Central Park now named Watson Park remains a city park for the area. A portion of Clinton Park remains, but part of the park is used for the site of Pinckney Elementary School. The amount of private green outdoor activity space has been reduced. There are numerous private patios, and several decks at the rear of the residences.

**Utilities and Mechanical Equipment** There are storm sewer inlets, traffic signs and some street lighting along the streets in the area. Water meter and manhole covers are typical throughout the area. Fire hydrants are located along the streets. Electrical and telephone lines are both above ground and below ground in the area. A newer intrusion of large utility boxes in the public right-of-way is now present.

**Views** The views to the listed property are typical of urban lots. Properties are visible through the small breaks between residential structures.

## ***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 platting of the property has not changed. The ownership patterns in the area have not changed.

**Land Use Patterns and Zoning** The land use and zoning patterns have not changed. There was a period of time when the area supported more multi-family uses, but the pattern has reverted back to primarily single family uses.

**Circulation Patterns** Street and sidewalk patterns have changed very little, but the paving materials have changed in some areas.

**Planned Vegetation Patterns** The planned vegetation patterns remain the same.

**Signs and Pedestrian Amenities** The signs within the area are almost entirely street names and traffic control signs.

**Primary Structures** Primary structures remain the same; many of the structures have been preserved and maintain significant historic detailing.

**Secondary Structures** Overall, the number of secondary structures has been reduced. Some secondary structures have been replaced with new structures. New rear yard decks and patio areas have been constructed. The introduction of rear yard privacy fences is common in the area.

**Outdoor Activity Spaces** There is less green outdoor activity area space than was present during the historic period. There is more private manmade outdoor activity space present in the side and rear yards of the residences. Central (Watson) Park and Clinton Park remain as public outdoor activity spaces.

**Utilities and Mechanical Equipment** The utilities and mechanical equipment in the area has increased over time with the primary intrusion of large utility boxes in the public right-of-way.

**Views** The views to and from the subject property have not changed significantly.

## ***Conclusion***

The Environs for 645 Mississippi Street, the Robert E. House Residence, should be reviewed in the following manner.

The area consists of residential structures. The residential character of the environs in this area 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. Main structure demolitions would be approved only if documentation was provided that indicated that the structure was unsound and/or a certificate of economic hardship was approved and compatible new construction is proposed. 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, or large additions (25% or greater than the footprint of the existing structure) 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 issues in the review are the continuation of the residential character of the area and whether the project will encroach upon, damage or destroy the environs of 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.

Major projects (demolition of main structures, new infill construction, and large additions greater than 25% of the footprint of the existing structure) 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 issues in the review are the continuation of the residential character of the area and if the project will encroach upon, damage or destroy the environs of the listed property.



# 645 Mississippi Street

