



Latest Developments on the Shawnee Indian Mission

For previous announcements about the Shawnee Indian Mission, [click here](#).

Yesterday, City Administrator Nogelmeier participated in an on camera interview with KMBC 9 News regarding the Architecture Resources Group (ARG) study of the three historic buildings remaining at the site. The interview covered a variety of topics including the Tribes recent release of a September letter from the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP). We'd like to share parts of the interview that did not make it in the final cut.

The Shawnee Tribe, one of three successors to the historic Shawnee Tribe (others being the Absentee Shawnee Tribe and the Eastern Shawnee Tribe), never shared the study with us however we were recently able to acquire a copy. It's been mentioned before, but it bares repeating that ARG did not review state records on what actions had been taken by the Kansas Historical Society in its preservation efforts in nearly 100 years of ownership. By intentionally omitting this information, the report paints a bleak picture of the condition of the buildings. As just one example, the study includes photographs of the East Building attic. When you compare the photo in the study to a photo from 1939 which is publicly available on KHS's website, you will see the condition of the attic is similar in both photos.

If you contextualize the condition of the site based on this singular study, you're likely to draw a misinformed conclusion that the buildings are neglected and risk being lost. Unfortunately, that is what happened with the NTHP. Without ever visiting the site and without talking to KHS or the City, the NTHP decided to label the Shawnee Indian Mission as "endangered" based solely on their conversation with Shawnee Chief Ben Barnes. In doing so, the NTHP disregarded its own processes and standards when considering such a designation.

By their own admission, ARG did not review state drawings or documents and did not talk with those responsible for maintenance. As a result, they "assumed a worst-case scenario for work listed in the construction projects". The report estimates costs to restore the buildings could be as high as \$12.5 million dollars. However, a closer look shows roughly \$4.5 million would go toward construction with the remaining \$8 million going toward new displays and exhibits which have nothing to do with the condition of the buildings. Further, construction costs include adding new elements that don't currently exist. For example, new restrooms for the West Building are included in the estimate which they say will cost nearly \$200,000. Some of the suggested work more closely resembles a remodel rather than a restoration.

Another topic was a recent letter from the Kaw Nation to Governor Kelly with the City of Fairway being one of the parties copied. (For more information regarding the Kaw's aboriginal ties to this area, see a [previous announcement](#).) In the letter, the Kaw state they are "very concerned" that the Shawnee is ignoring the "historical presence of the Kaw people in the state of Kansas." In addition, they point out that the Shawnee were temporary occupants of land stolen from the Kaw people.

For more than a year, KHS, the City and the Shawnee Indian Mission Foundation (SIMF) have been working to promote an understanding that the Shawnee Indian Mission is deeper than just one story. From when the land belonged to the Kaw, to when it served as a Mission, to its ties with Kansas history, the Civil War and beyond, the Shawnee Indian Mission has countless

stories to share. Today, the people of Kansas own the site due to the efforts of several people nearly 100 years ago when the state acquired it. It's the most historically significant site in the state and one of the most historically significant sites in the Midwest. Ensuring future generations can learn and hear all the true stories of the Mission has been and will continue to be important to the KHS, SIMF and the City of Fairway.

As you've likely seen, the Shawnee Indian Mission has received much media attention this week. We are committed to keeping our residents informed with accurate information. We will continue to provide updates when appropriate.

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