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KNOX HERITAGE ANNOUNCES  
2014 “FRAGILE 15” LIST OF ENDANGERED HISTORIC PLACES

Knox Heritage announced its 2014 list of the most endangered historic buildings and places in Knoxville and Knox County on May 15, 2014. The announcement took place at the former Oakwood Elementary School, 232 E. Churchwell Avenue. Knox Heritage chose to release the list of threatened properties at Oakwood Elementary School, which was itself on the Fragile 15 list from 2004 until 2012. The current owner of the iconic building, Family Pride Corporation, is restoring the building to be reused as senior living facility which is scheduled to open this fall.

Every May during National Preservation Month, Knox Heritage releases its list of the most endangered historic buildings and places in Knox County to inform the public and local leaders about the plight of significant historic resources. Often, the endangered buildings and places are representative of issues that endanger other centerpieces of our heritage across the community.

The historic places included on the list are selected by the Knox Heritage Board of Directors from nominations received from members of Knox Heritage and the general public. The list provides a work plan for the organization over the next 12 months. Preservation strategies are developed for each site on the list and can include working with current property owners, government officials, citizens and/or potential new owners to preserve these important parts of Knox County’s heritage. Knox Heritage is committed to acting as an advocate for the endangered properties we identify each year. We invite the community to join us in our efforts to save our endangered heritage through advocacy and action. To volunteer, please contact Knox Heritage at 523-8008 or info@knoxheritage.org.
2014 Fragile Fifteen

1. Historic Fort Sanders Neighborhood

   Representative Properties:
   a. Fort Sanders Houses & Grocery - 307 18th Street, 1802, 1804, & 1810 Highland Avenue
   b. White Avenue Houses – 1302, 1308, & 1312 White Avenue
   c. The Pickle Mansion – 1633 Clinch Avenue

2. The Eugenia Williams House – 4848 Lyons View Pike

3. Tennessee Supreme Court Building – 617 Cumberland Avenue

4. Isaac Anderson Cabin – Creekrock Lane – Shannondale Valley Farms

5. Pryor Brown Garage – 314 & 322 W. Church Avenue

6. French Broad River Corridor

7. The Legg-England House – 8010 Rutledge Pike

8. Kern’s Bakery Building – 2110 Chapman Highway


10. University of Tennessee Knoxville Campus

    Representative Properties:
    a) Melrose Hall – 1616 Melrose Avenue
    b) Estabrook Hall – 1012 Estabrook Road

11. Magnolia Avenue Corridor

    Representative Properties:
    a. Magnolia Avenue United Methodist Church – 2700 E. Magnolia Avenue
    b. Rabbit & Poultry Barn – Chilhowee Park - 3301 E. Magnolia Avenue
12. **Historic School Buildings**
   
   Representative Properties:
   a. South High School – 801 Tipton Avenue
   b. Rule High School – 1901 Vermont Avenue
   c. Giffin School – 1834 Beech Street

13. **Knoxville College Historic District** – 901 Knoxville College Drive
   
   Representative Properties:
   a. McKee Hall
   b. Wallace Hall
   c. Elnathan Hall
   d. McMillan Chapel
   e. Giffen Memorial Gymnasium
   f. President's House

14. **The H.E. Christenberry House** – 3222 Kingston Pike

15. **The Lloyd Branson House** – 1423 Branson Avenue
2014 Fragile Fifteen

Descriptions

1. Fort Sanders Neighborhood

The Fort Sanders neighborhood is one of the first National Register listed neighborhoods created in Knoxville, and has been impacted for many years by market forces that are created by its location near the University of Tennessee, Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center and Children’s Hospital. These forces have created a neighborhood that is a mix of residential owners, apartment complexes, and uses that accompany these major institutions. An alarming number of properties in the neighborhood are threatened by deterioration, demolition or conversion to institutional uses. Even so, these properties retain their overall historic style, and are representative of the Fort Sanders Historic District.

The Fort Sanders Neighborhood stands at a crossroads as opportunities and threats converge to determine the future of East Tennessee’s most densely populated and eclectic neighborhood.

Opportunities: The rebirth of downtown Knoxville is spilling over into surrounding neighborhoods as developers can barely meet the demand for downtown housing that appeals to students, young professionals and empty nesters. Large numbers of students are abandoning the Fort for new rental properties in South Knoxville, opening up opportunities for new residents attracted by its central location and urban amenities. More and more Knoxvillians are opting for housing that allows walkability and access to public transit and greenways – and this includes University, hospital and downtown business employees. Historic preservation projects in center city neighborhoods are at an all-time high. The City of Knoxville’s long-awaited Cumberland Avenue improvements are on the verge of implementation in the neighborhood’s commercial district.

 Threats: Most of the absentee property owners who have mined the neighborhood rental market for decades are blind to the opportunities presented by the influx of young professionals in downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods, so few offer options that appeal to this market. The University of Tennessee, after a 10-plus-year hiatus from encroaching farther into the National Register-listed area north of Cumberland, has released a master plan that calls for demolition of historic structures inside the Neighborhood Conservation District. Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center / Covenant Health continues to purchase and demolish historic properties, even though those properties are outside areas zoned for hospital expansion and are protected by the Historic Zoning Commission. Even though the city has targeted the area for codes sweeps in recent years, prior decades of lax codes enforcement allowed many residential units to deteriorate
substantially. The current R-3 zoning in a large area of the neighborhood encourages development totally out of character with the historic residential architecture.

The time is now for residents, local government and institutional stakeholders to work together to make the neighborhood a vibrant and safe community that is an extension of downtown and an asset rather than a liability to the economic success of everyone invested in it. Knox Heritage calls upon the City of Knoxville, University of Tennessee, Fort Sanders Regional and Children’s Hospital to work with residents and other stakeholders to take advantage of the current opportunities and eliminate the threats to the neighborhood’s future. The same level of energy and vision the community focused on downtown in recent years should be directed at the residential portion of “Downtown’s Front Porch” neighborhood. If this is accomplished, Fort Sanders will become a model for communities across the country, as well as an amazing place to live, work and visit.

**Specific Properties Threatened:**

**a. Fort Sanders Houses & Grocery – 307 18th Street, 1802 & 1810 Highland Avenue**

These historic structures on the southwest corner of the 1800 block of Highland Avenue comprise one of the few remaining dividing lines between the residential and medical uses in the Historic Fort Sanders Neighborhood. They all were purchased by Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center in February of 2008. Though the houses have been protected by Neighborhood Conservation (NC-1) Zoning for almost 15 years, they are currently boarded up and deteriorating, thus the future of the historic structures is still uncertain.

**307 18th Street**

This Commercial Vernacular style building was constructed circa 1923 as the W.T. Roberts Grocery Store, but for many years has been known as the 18th Street IGA. Roberts owned and operated the store from 1923 until 1950, and afterwards it was owned by Fred McMahan, who lived on the second floor of the building.

**1802 Highland Avenue**

This Victorian style house was built circa 1891 for Ranson D. Whittle who owned and founded the Whittle Trunk and Bag Company; the Whittle Springs neighborhood is named for his family. From 1914 until 1950 William T. Roberts, owner of the 18th Street IGA around the corner lived in the house.

**1804 Highland Avenue**

This Victorian Cottage was built c. 1898 and the first owner was Reverend Isaac Van Dewater.

**1810 Highland Avenue**

This Victorian style home was built circa 1895 for Dr. Henry Patton Coile, a prominent surgeon and physician, who lived there from 1895 until 1900. His son Samuel A. Coile, the first pastor at Fort Sanders Presbyterian Church, became the owner of the family home.
These four properties offer the opportunity for a new era of cooperation between Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center and neighborhood residents. The hospital should partner with Knox Heritage and residents to preserve the buildings or sell the buildings to a new owner interested in restoring them. The best solution will be the retention of the neighborhood grocery while restoring the residential properties for single family occupancy. That outcome will further stabilize the neighborhood, as opposed to the permanent damage that will result from the demolition of these four highly visible historic buildings located in the Neighborhood Conservation District.

b. The White Avenue Houses – 1302, 1308, and 1312 White Avenue
These three Victorian houses form part of the southern boundary of the Fort Sanders National Register Historic District and Neighborhood Conservation District. They present a unified picture of the residential development common in the neighborhood 100 years ago when it was known as West Knoxville. Since that time development pressure from the University of Tennessee and the student housing market has threatened their survival. The current threat is a proposal in the University’s master plan that calls for the demolition of the houses to make way for an academic building.

Knox Heritage is engaged in a dialogue with the University in an attempt to craft an alternative to demolishing these privately owned properties. We call upon the University and the City of Knoxville to pursue alternatives that will preserve these properties and the southern portion of the Fort Sanders Neighborhood. We also call upon the University to end further expansion into the Fort Sanders National Register District by instead creating denser development on land it already owns on the south side of Cumberland Avenue.

1302 White Avenue
This Queen Anne-style house was built around 1896 for Cooper D. Schmitt. He worked for the University of Tennessee from 1889 until his death in 1910, serving as both an associate and full professor of Mathematics, University Bursar, University Registrar, and from 1907 until his death, as Dean of the University. Successive residents of the home include Hal H. Clements, a lawyer, and Walker E. Mynderse, a real estate developer who is credited with promoting Island Home, one of Knoxville’s prominent residential subdivisions.

1308 White Avenue
This 1894 Queen Anne-style house was built for James E. Ross, who was involved with Knoxville Marble; as ownership of the home changed over time it housed Gay Street merchants and UT faculty. It's commonly known as the “Judge's House,” since it was the home of Judge Charles Hayes Brown, who lived there from the early 1920s until his death in 1949. Judge Brown served as Knoxville Chancellor from 1920 to 1926.

1312 White Avenue
Prominent local attorney William M. Meek was the first owner of this circa 1896 Queen Anne-style house and lived there with his family until 1905. Its most prominent resident
was Charles E. Farris, who served as Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Tennessee.

c. The Pickle Mansion – 1633 Clinch Avenue
The Pickle Mansion was built in 1889 in the Queen Anne style. It features solid masonry construction with a brick veneer wall covering of glazed brick. Typical of grand houses of the Queen Anne era, it boasted a hip roof with lower cross gables, a turret, elaborate attic vent windows, window arches, transoms and large front and side wrap-around porches.

The house was the victim of a disastrous fire in August of 2002, and suffered extensive damage. The last owners undertook a necessary subdivision process which resulted in separate parcels for the Pickle Mansion, the Brighton Apartments behind it, and a vacant lot to the east. Fire debris was removed and a design for completing an extensive restoration of the house’s signature exterior elements were completed, but work to get the house under roof and stop its deterioration was not.

The Pickle Mansion now has new owners who have already rehabilitated the Brighton Apartments. The new owners began stabilization efforts this spring and plan to restore the structure for residential use. Knox Heritage and the owners are now working together to insure the long-term preservation of the building.

2. The Eugenia Williams House – 4848 Kingston Pike
Eugenia Williams was born to Dr. David H. Williams and Ella Cornick Williams in January 1900. Dr. Williams was a prominent physician and one of the original financial backers who introduced Coca-Cola to East Tennessee. In 1940, Eugenia commissioned her childhood friend, John Fanz Staub, to design her new residence. Staub, a native Knoxvillian from one of the city’s prominent families, is best known for designing homes for many of the wealthiest and most influential Texans, with a little over half of his design work located in Houston. He was also the architect for the well-loved Hopecote on the UT Knoxville campus. Miss Williams’ Regency-style home sits on 24 acres bordering the Tennessee River and Lyons View Pike and features a three-car garage with automatic garage door openers, which was a novelty in 1940. In 1998, the house was willed to the University of Tennessee as a memorial to Eugenia’s father. For many years after her death, Miss Williams’ house was plagued by vandals and a lack of basic maintenance, but its character-defining details remain and the house is still solid.

Recently the University of Tennessee formed a committee to study options for the future of the house. We strongly encourage UT to move forward with plans for this signature property and maximize its benefit to the University and the Knoxville area before it is too late. Specifically, Knox Heritage stands ready to assist the University in navigating the legal means available to sell the property to a private buyer interested in fulfilling Miss Williams’ wishes that the house and property be preserved while benefitting the University and honoring her father.
3. Tennessee Supreme Court Building – 617 Cumberland Avenue

The Tennessee Supreme Court Building was design by the Knoxville architectural firm of Baumann and Baumann, and was constructed with $4.7 million appropriated by the Tennessee legislature in 1951. The building was dedicated in 1954, and its noteworthy design includes large expanses of East Tennessee marble, glass walls, and other characteristics of Mid-century Modern architecture. The building and surrounding site that covers an entire city block was recently the subject of a Request for Proposals for redevelopment. The proposal chosen for implementation has since been withdrawn and the City of Knoxville has opted to delay a second RFP until next year.

Knox Heritage offers its assistance to any eventual purchaser to help retain and adaptively reuse the courtroom section of the building, which is located in the front portion of the building facing Locust Street and includes its most noteworthy design elements. This portion of the structure lends itself well to adaptive reuse, while the site would be large enough to allow for additional construction to accommodate a new use.

4. Isaac Anderson Cabin – Creekrock Lane – Shannondale Valley Farms

In 1802, Isaac Anderson’s family constructed this two-story log house on their land in north Knox County. Anderson had recently been named the pastor for Washington Presbyterian Church, and during his tenure at Washington Presbyterian, built a large, two-story log school building near the home. That school has since been demolished. Anderson named his school Union Academy, but it was known to many as Mr. Anderson’s Log College. The academy operated there until 1812 when Anderson moved his school to Maryville and became pastor of New Providence Presbyterian Church. His school became the nucleus for Maryville College, which he founded in 1819.

The hewn-log Anderson cabin survived for the next 200 years before residential development literally encircled it and put its future in jeopardy. It now stands in the backyard of a modern suburban house.

Although moving historic buildings is rarely recommended, Knox Heritage supports efforts to move this building to an appropriate new location, since it is unlikely to survive in its present location. We encourage East Tennessee residents to work with the preservationists spearheading this effort to identify funding to relocate and restore the structure.

5. Pryor Brown Garage – 314 & 322 W. Clinch Avenue

Pryor Brown Garage was built in two stages, the first in 1925 and the second in 1929. The garage was built by Pryor Brown, a Knoxville business man who was born around 1849 on Brown’s Mountain in South Knox County. After the Civil War, Brown moved to Knoxville and found work in local livery stables. By the 1890s he was running his own stable on this site along Church Avenue. After a fire in 1916, Brown rebuilt his stable with concrete floors capable of accommodating cars, and ran the Pryor Brown Transfer Company. Following the popularity of the automobile, in 1925 Brown built the first section of the garage along Market Street and in 1929 expanded the garage, covering the area of his old livery stable.
Pryor Brown Garage was known for many years as “The House of Brown” and is thought to be the first ramp-style parking garage in Knoxville and one of the oldest garages still standing and in use in the United States.

In the last year, the owners of the Pryor Brown Garage and the surface parking lot that surrounds it announced plans to demolish the building in order to create more surface parking in its place. Their Use on Review request was denied by MPC and that denial was upheld by the Knoxville City Council. Unfortunately, the City of Knoxville issued the demolition permit requested by the owners. The plight of the building has caused a groundswell of support for saving this unique building that could be revitalized as the mixed-use structure it was originally built to be. Knox Heritage encourages the owners to consider other options and work with the City of Knoxville and other interested parties to craft a plan that will save the building while benefitting them and downtown as a whole.

6. French Broad River Corridor

The French Broad River was a significant settlement area for prehistoric peoples, and was one of the earliest settlement paths in Knox County after European-related settlement began. By the mid-1780s, early homes and industries were located on both sides of the river. The French Broad was the highway for commerce and social interaction, with ferry landings on both of its banks. Francis Alexander Ramsey settled in this corridor and the stone Ramsey House still stands today. There is evidence to suggest that James White built his first house in the area. In *The Annals of Tennessee* by Dr. J.G.M. Ramsey, the French Broad Corridor is described as the home of Alexander Campbell; the large Georgian style house he built still stands. On both sides of the French Broad are some of the most intact architectural examples of early Knox County including a mill, churches, homes built using the technique of noggin construction, a cantilevered barn, log homes, and early cemeteries and ferry landings.

The French Broad River corridor, because of its relative isolation and lack of urban infrastructure, has retained its historic places, scenery, breathtaking views and vistas and its glimpses of Knox County history during the 18th and early 19th centuries and for centuries before. Some of its buildings are well-maintained, and still utilized by descendants of the families prominent in the 18th and 19th centuries. Others are vacant or deteriorating; if they are lost, a large portion of this portrait of early Knox County will also be lost.

The East County Sector Plan approved by Knox County Commission calls for protection of the river corridor’s historic resources through historic overlay zoning. The Metropolitan Planning Commission is in the early stages of implementing this important tool and Knox Heritage encourages them to make that process a priority in order to protect this endangered treasure in east Knox County from being destroyed by rampant development.
7. The Legg-England House – 8010 Rutledge Pike

This Federal style home was built in 1846 for John Wesley Legg. The house was a tavern, inn, and early stage coach stop, as Rutledge Pike was located on the early stage coach route to Washington DC. It is rumored that the stage stop entertained prominent politicians such as James Polk, who later became President of the U.S. The house was inherited by Legg’s daughter, Mary Jane, who married Payne England. Civil War battles were reportedly fought in the immediate area with the house serving as a command post and field hospital.

The house currently sits on over 17 acres of land.

Although the house sits on a large parcel, it is near a front corner of that parcel which could be subdivided to give the house a parcel of its own and allow it to be restored. Knox Heritage calls on MPC, the Knox County Historic Zoning Commission, and the Knox County Commission to work with the owner to place the house under a protective HZ overlay, and secure a positive future for this significant property. In addition, appropriate site archeology prior to any redevelopment of the larger site should be undertaken.

8. Kern’s Bakery Building – 2110 Chapman Highway

Kern’s was established on Market Square in 1875. The Kern family sold the business in 1925. It was purchased by the Brown family, which kept the name but moved their bakery to this facility in 1931. The building, with its unique neon sign, is a South Knoxville landmark. The building and its large parcel of land are now for sale, and early interest was in the land for redevelopment without retention of the building or the sign.

Knox Heritage calls on any eventual purchaser of the property to commit to incorporating the historic building and sign into any redevelopment plans for this South Knoxville landmark.


This circa 1945 building is the only remaining structure associated with Standard Knitting Mill. Standard was founded in 1900 with 50 employees. By the 1930s Standard was the largest textile and knitting mill in Knoxville, and employed over 4,000 Knoxvillians. Standard eventually produced over one million garments a week and inspired Knoxville’s title as “Underwear Capital of the World.”

The future is uncertain for the remaining building of the Standard Knitting Mill complex. Located in the industrial swath of land between the historic Parkridge and Fourth and Gill Neighborhoods, the original portion of the mill was in place along Washington Avenue by 1903. Later additions almost doubled the size of the complex, but the earliest portion was destroyed in the early 1990s. The current footprint still comes in at over 400,000 square feet and was the home of Delta Apparel until 2007.

The mill was recently purchased by Henry & Wallace, LLC, who have plans to rehabilitate the property. Knox Heritage is providing assistance that will encourage the preservation of its historic character while utilizing available tax incentives. A mixed use development
combining office, retail and residential tenants would have a positive impact on the surrounding community. Plus, its redevelopment will add to the city’s tax base, and spur on the renaissance underway in the surrounding historic neighborhoods.

10. University of Tennessee

Founded as Blount College in 1794, designated East Tennessee College in 1807, then East Tennessee University in 1840, and eventually the University of Tennessee in 1879, this local institution is tightly woven into the history and geography of Knoxville. Its first home was on Gay Street, but in 1826, construction began atop “The Hill” just west of downtown. The Civil War devastated the campus and its buildings were occupied by both Union and Confederate troops, but it survived and by 1904, there were 16 buildings on the campus. The 20th century saw a rapid expansion of the campus as it overtook surrounding historic residential neighborhoods and many historic buildings were demolished. As a result, even though the university boasts a campus with a 185-year history, only four buildings under its control remain that were constructed before 1900, two of which were originally private residences.

Recent efforts, such as the restoration of Ayres Hall; the completion of a Getty Trust-funded Campus Preservation Plan; and the nominations of Ayres Hall, Tyson House and Hopecote to the National Register of Historic Places, show an apparent evolution in the university’s appreciation for its architectural history, but historic buildings on and off campus are still threatened with demolition or neglect and the preservation plan has not been truly integrated into the new UTK Campus Master Plan.

As UTK strives to enter the ranks of the top 25 public research institutions in the country, it should be noted that preservation is a priority for the majority of those top universities and a significant factor for students as they choose where they will study, especially the millennial generation. History and preservation add a weight and sense of place to university campuses and can create strong bonds with alumni and donors considering financial support of those institutions. In addition, in the current economic environment the maintenance and re-use of existing structures is a fiscally prudent path to take considering the amount of taxpayer funding used to finance construction on campus.

Historic buildings are valued and utilized by top universities around the world. Knox Heritage will continue to work with the administration and the State of Tennessee to devise innovative and cost effective strategies that will preserve the campus while enhancing the learning experience for students and benefiting the entire Knoxville community. Included in those strategies must be rehabilitation that is architecturally sensitive to the historic structures that are its subject, a diminishing role for demolition, and a commitment to ongoing maintenance that values the architectural features of the remaining historic buildings on campus.

Specific Properties Threatened:
  a. Melrose Hall – 1616 Melrose Avenue

Built in 1946 and designed by Knoxville architects Barber & McMurry, the building serves as a dormitory and offices. Melrose is one of the last great Collegiate Gothic designs at the university. It represents an important part of the university’s expansion
west of the Hill in the postwar era and reflects the increase in student enrollment following World War II. The UTK Campus Master Plan calls for the demolition of Melrose Hall, but

b. Estabrook Hall – 1012 Estabrook Hall

Estabrook Hall was built in 1898 and named for Mr. Joseph Estabrook, the fifth president of University of Tennessee from 1834 until 1850. Estabrook led the movement to change the name of school from East Tennessee College to East Tennessee University in 1840. The building has a strong association with the Engineering program at the school, housing classrooms, offices, and an engineering experiment station in 1921. During the 1930’s, TVA associate and nationally recognized chemical engineer, Harry Curtis kept an office here. Estabrook Hall is also associated with the school’s architectural program, having been the main home for the program before the Art & Architecture building was constructed in 1982.

Estabrook Hall was used by Summer School of the South from 1902 until it’s closing in 1918. It and South College are the only UT buildings left from the Summer School, which had a national impact. Started in 1902, Summer School of the South was a major instrument of regional educational improvements that over the years instructed over 32,000 teachers in the art of education.

In 1906, an addition was added to the building, and this marks the first university facility to have state appropriated funds obtained for its construction. University representatives have expressed a willingness to preserve both buildings if building code and security issues can be addressed in a cost effective manner. Knox Heritage stands ready to assist in this process and connect UT with experts in the reuse of historic academic buildings in order to determine a strategy for incorporating the historic structures into the University’s future.

11. Magnolia Avenue Corridor

The Magnolia Avenue Corridor began with the industrial expansion that followed the 1855 construction of the East Tennessee & Virginia and East Tennessee & Georgia railroads. Workers drawn by that economic boost located in newly developed residential neighborhoods east of downtown. The development of Lake Ottosee (now Chilhowee Park) in 1875, urged urban expansion farther to the east.

In 1890, Fernando Cortes Beaman, with William Gibbs McAdoo, extended an electric streetcar line to Chilhowee Park, with additional lines along McCalla Avenue to Burlington, and the conversion of a horse drawn line to electric streetcars on Washington Avenue. Park City became a strong residential area, with Chilhowee Park as a venue for concerts and fairs. It also hosted baseball and football games, including the 1907 Kentucky-Tennessee game. Magnolia was lined with large homes, and schools and churches also located in the corridor, including Park City Junior High School (1925) and Standard
Knitting Mills (1910). Exclusive apartment complexes such as the Aston (2736 E. Magnolia) and the Lakewood (2736 E. Magnolia) were also built in the trolley era.

The next era of growth for the corridor came after World War II, when automobiles and their related commercial uses eclipsed the use of trolleys. Magnolia was designated a Federal Highway (Asheville Highway) and businesses such as the Pizza Palace (3132 E. Magnolia) and the bus terminal (100 E. Magnolia) are reminders of that transition.

The construction of I-40 split the neighborhood, separating Park City from other neighborhoods that had grown up along Broadway and were from the same era, and removed a large portion of the traffic that had created the demand for auto-oriented business. That isolation has continued; the corridor awaits reinvestment and redevelopment, with a focus on preserving the significant historic buildings that remain. The following properties have been singled out as being important examples of the type of consideration that should be given to Magnolia Corridor properties.

**Specific Properties Threatened:**

**a. Magnolia Avenue United Methodist Church** – 2700 E. Magnolia Avenue

This 1927 building is the third home for the Magnolia Avenue Methodist Church; the congregation relocated to the corner of East Park (now Magnolia) Avenue and Harrison in 1902 and constructed the current building when the original church building on that site was destroyed by fire. Generations of prominent Knoxvillians have belonged to the congregation, including actress Patricia Neal.

Members of the congregation nominated the building to the Fragile 15 list to highlight the need for additional resources to maintain the important building and make needed repairs to its roof. In addition to church services, the congregation provides services to the low-income and homeless Knoxville residents.

Knox Heritage has worked with the East Tennessee Community Design Center and the church to review the condition of the property and identify needed improvements. We call upon other local congregations and businesses to help with the church’s efforts to stabilize its building and fully utilize its facilities.

**b. Rabbit & Poultry Barn – Chilhowee Park** - 3301 E. Magnolia Avenue

The Rabbit & Poultry Barn was built in the 1930s and incorporated wood salvaged from the dismantled roller coaster built for the 1910 Appalachian Exposition and reused windows from the 1910 Exposition Building. A section added in the 1950s housed the rabbits. The existing wood floor was laid over a pond and fountain that provided a location for fish and ducks.

During the 2011 Tennessee Valley Fair, the barn housed approximately 1,300 poultry exhibits and over 400 rabbit exhibits. The current Poultry/Rabbit Barn is approximately 9,000 square feet and is one of the most visited buildings during the Tennessee Valley
Fair. Through this site, the public gains an educational awareness of poultry and rabbit farming.

The building is now in need of significant repairs in order to continue as one of the most recognized and visited historic structures remaining in Chilhowee Park. The building is owned by the City of Knoxville. Knox Heritage pledges to work with the City to determine cost-effective ways to restore and use this unique historic structure.

12. Historic School Buildings

Knox Heritage believes that historic buildings can play a vital role in encouraging redevelopment that includes their rehabilitation. To that end, Knox Heritage has worked with allied preservation organizations across the state to garner approval of state legislation that will allow local governments to enter into contracts with private non-profit entities that wish to insure the preservation and reuse historic buildings; we encourage the local governments to take advantage of that legislation when seeking to dispose of historic structures. Knox Heritage looks forward to working with Knoxville and Knox County to devise a plan for preserving our community’s heritage while being good stewards of these valuable assets.

Specific Properties Threatened:

a. South High School – 801 Tipton Avenue

South High was designed by noted local architect Charles Barber and was built in 1935-1936 as South Knoxville Junior High School. The school opened in 1937. Barber was the primary architect of 14 schools in Knoxville and Knox County prior to 1940. South High served as a junior high school and a high school until the last graduating class in 1976. The building sustained serious roof damage over the next three decades and that water infiltration harmed the structural integrity of parts of the building.

Preservationists and residents of South Knoxville began their efforts to save historic South High in 2002. In 2004, the Knox County School Board surplused the building to Knox County so it could be redeveloped as a community asset. County Commission voted to auction the building to the highest bidder in 2008. The high bidder at the June 2008 auction was Bahman Kasraei. Mr. Kasraei expressed his intent to preserve the building, but construction was delayed. A portion of the building’s roof was replaced, but the rear of portion of the building stood open to vandals until the City of Knoxville secured the property this spring through its Demolition by Neglect powers.

The building remains vacant and continues to deteriorate. Knox Heritage calls upon the owner to restore the property immediately or sell it to a new owner with the ability to do so. If not, the City of Knoxville should continue to use all available tools to insure its redevelopment by a new owner.
b. **Rule High School** – 1901 Vermont Avenue
Rule High School was named after Captain William Rule, a former Union Army Captain who went on to become the mayor of Knoxville, as well as publisher and editor of the Knoxville Journal from 1885 until his death in 1928. Rule High School was built in 1926-1927 and opened in the fall of 1927. The school closed in 1991 and is currently owned by the Knox County School Board. The school continues to languish in a deteriorated state and the resources for its preservation are lacking. The East Tennessee Community Design Center prepared a feasibility study on potential for reuse of the property and the School Board is considering issuing a Request for Proposals to identify potential developers.

Knox Heritage encourages the Knox County School Board to continue its efforts to identify a new owner who will make the necessary investment to restore the property for a new use. In the interim, the School Board and Knox County should secure the property and identify ways to stop further deterioration that is increasing the cost of redevelopment every day.

c. **Giffin School** – 1834 Beech Street

The school was named for Mr. Andy Giffin, who donated the land for the original building. Construction of a physical plant for the new school was started in 1919 and the original section of the school building was completed in 1920 and designed by Barber & McMurry and included seven classrooms. The original section was used from 1920 until 1928, when at this time, the community served by Giffin continued to grow and it was necessary to increase the size of the school building. The addition was most likely also designed by Barber & McMurry, as it looks almost identical to the original section. The addition was opened in the Fall of 1928 and adding three more classrooms. After a number of years, once again the school building proved to be too small again and in an effort to correct the overcrowding, one more addition was added in the late 1940s. This addition added six more classrooms, a gym, and a cafeteria. The final addition opened in the Fall of 1950 and was designed by the Knoxville architectural firm of Rutherford and Painter Architects.

Until recently the school was occupied by the non-profit group Remote Area Medical, although it is still owned by Knox County. The building is located in South Knoxville, an area that is seeing renewed energy and investment in the wake of efforts surrounding waterfront redevelopment and the Urban Wilderness. This situation offers the perfect opportunity for Knox County to issue a Request for Proposals to attract a quality developer to restore and reuse this former school building.

13. **Knoxville College Historic District** – 901 Knoxville College Drive

Knoxville College was founded in 1875 as part of the missionary effort of the United Presbyterian Church of North America to promote religious, moral and educational leadership among freed men and women. The National Register District is composed of ten buildings, eight of which contribute to the district. Knoxville College has significantly contributed to the educational and spiritual welfare of the African American population in Tennessee since 1875. The campus was the first African American college in East Tennessee and hosted prominent figures such as Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois and Martin Luther King, Jr. The buildings at Knoxville College are a tribute to the
creativity and resourcefulness of the student body. While pursuing their education, students assisted in the design and construction of these historic buildings using bricks they manufactured at the campus. This spirit of involvement continues today, even as Knoxville College struggles to continue its mission. The historic buildings, with their fine craftsmanship and solid design, are deserving of support from the entire community and their preservation is a critical part of the rebirth of the college.

The situation at Knoxville College has become dire with barely 20 students enrolled and several campus buildings either condemned or suffering from a lack of maintenance. Now is the time for bold action and an openness to out-of-the-box thinking that may or may not include its traditional operational model. We call upon the college's administration and board of trustees to partner with other organizations and companies to bring needed financial resources to bear before they are in a situation of having “loved the college to death” and the historic buildings are lost forever. Knox Heritage and its members stand ready to assist the college in its efforts to preserve its architectural heritage.

Specific Properties Threatened:

a. McKee Hall
McKee Hall is the oldest building on campus, originally built in 1876, largely rebuilt in 1895 following a fire. The building is named for the Reverend O.S. McKee, who had established the first school for African-American children in Nashville in 1862. This building currently houses administration offices and is suffering from structural damage.

b. Wallace Hall
Wallace Hall was built in 1890 as an orphanage—This building is named for Eliza B. Wallace, the school’s principal of female students from 1877–1897.

c. Elnathan Hall
Elnathan Hall was built in 1898 following the destruction by fire of the original Elnathan Hall, and altered in 1905 and 1971. This building has served variously as a women's dorm, administration building, and classroom building.

d. McMillan Chapel
McMillan Chapel, built in 1913, was designed by Knoxville College alumnus, William Thomas Jones. Along with church services, the chapel served as the campus's primary performance venue. Notable guests who have delivered speeches at the chapel include George Washington Carver, Countee Cullen, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jesse Owens, William H. Hastie and Jackie Robinson

e. Giffen Memorial Gymnasium
Giffen Gym was built in 1929.

f. President’s House
The president’s House was built in the late 1880s. The house was originally had wood siding, but brick siding was added in 1905.

14. The H.E. Christenberry House – 3222 Kingston Pike
This prominent craftsman residence along Kingston Pike was built in 1925 for James D. Varnell, a dry goods businessman in Knoxville and longtime treasure and co-founder of Miller’s Department Store. Varnell lived in the house with his elder daughter, Katherine Varnell Rose, and her husband Mr. Daniel Morton Rose, Jr. Rose was associated with his family lumber manufacturing firm, D.M. Rose & Company. Varnell’s wife, Lucy, died right before the house was built in 1924, after a short illness. Varnell and his family remained living in the house until 1946.

From 1947 until his death in 2005, the house was associated with Dr. Henry Edward Christenberry, Jr. Christenberry begin his medical career in 1935, joining is father, a prominent physician, in his downtown Knoxville medical practice, the Christenberry Infirmary & Hospital on Church Avenue. Christenberry retired in 1988 and died in 2005.

This stately home on Kingston Pike sits on over four acres and overlooks the Tennessee River. It has been for sale for more than two years and has recently been at the center of two development proposals that call for multi-family housing on the site. The first would have resulted in the demolition of the house and the City of Knoxville issued a demolition permit for the house before that developer backed out of the project. A new developer proposes to preserve the house as part of a development requiring zoning with higher density that MPC has approved and City Council will hear this summer. However, the Kingston Pike / Sequoyah Hills Neighborhood Association opposes the rezoning, fearing it will unleash a flood of similar development along the pike that will destroy even more historic homes and the character of the road. The fate of the Christenberry House is unknown at this time.

Knox Heritage calls upon all parties involved to work together to come up with a compromise that preserves the Christenberry House while insuring the long-term protection of other historic houses along that stretch of Kingston Pike and the preservation of the neighborhood’s residential character. A failure to do so will doom everyone to frequent battles such as this in the future and endanger the future of one of Knoxville’s signature streets.

15. The Lloyd Branson House – 1423 Branson Avenue

This house was built in 1920 by noted local artist Lloyd Branson (1853-1925). In his later life, Branson developed the surrounding tract of land. The street was named for him. An American artist best known for his portraits of Southern politicians and depictions of early East Tennessee history, Branson was one of the most influential figures in Knoxville’s early art circles. He received training at the National Academy of Design in the 1870s and subsequently toured the great art centers of Europe. He was a mentor to fellow Knoxville artist Catherine Wiley and is credited with discovering twentieth-century portraitist Beauford Delaney. Branson reached the height of his career in 1910, when his work, *Hauling Marble*, won the gold medal at Knoxville's Appalachian Exposition. Branson died suddenly on June 12, 1925. His funeral was in the house and he is buried in Old Gray Cemetery.
Knox Heritage has committed to purchasing this home, rehabilitating it and selling it to a subsequent owner and resident. Problems have arisen with the legal title to the home, and the City of Knoxville is pursuing acquisition in order to correct those title problems. In the meantime, Knox Heritage has taken steps to secure the home, repair leaks and associated water problems, and maintain the lot. Knox Heritage encourages the City to continue its efforts to purchase the home and correct its title problems so that we can undertake its eventual rehabilitation. Continued neglect must be avoided so this house is not lost as have been the homes once occupied by James Agee, Nikki Giovanni and Cormac McCarthy.

About Oakwood School

Oakwood Elementary School was the centerpiece of the Oakwood community from the time of its construction, in 1914. Its role as a school ended in 1995 when it closed. However, it has continued to occupy a position of prominence in Knoxville and the Oakwood community.

The original portion of the existing building was designed by L. C. Waters, an architect who moved to Knoxville in 1900 and was a founding partner in the architectural firm of Waters and Tarwater, which was in business from 1900-1922. He designed a number of schools in Knoxville and Knox County, of which only Oakwood and Beaumont Schools survive. He was also the architect of the Emporium Building in downtown Knoxville. Oakwood Elementary was built by Claiborne & Brooks, Contractors. Later additions to Oakwood Elementary were made in 1946 and in 1955. These additions were designed by the architectural firm of Lindsay & Maples, with Emory & Richards as Contractors. The building grew to comprise 54,637 sq.ft. on 1.8 acres of land.

Knox Heritage advocates for the preservation of places and structures with historic or cultural significance. Founded in 1974, Knox Heritage is the non-profit historic preservation organization for Knoxville and Knox County. It is governed by a board of directors with representatives from across our community. Knox Heritage carries out its mission through a variety of programs and encourages community support through education and advocacy.

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