

NORTHEAST NEWS

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YOUR NORTHEAST NEWS TEAM

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Dear Northeast News readers,

Community news remains a vital thread in the fabric of Northeast—connecting neighbors, sharing stories, and ensuring that local voices are heard. For nearly three decades, the NEKC Chamber of Commerce has stood as our strongest supporter, helping sustain this mission and reinforcing the importance of accessible, community-centered journalism.

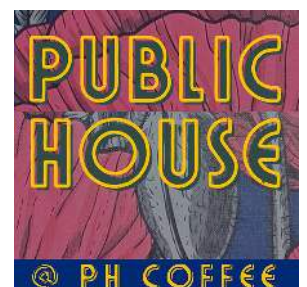
We are deeply grateful to the Chamber's board members and partners whose generosity makes this work possible. Their continued support ensures that Northeast residents have a reliable source of local news and information.

We would like to recognize and thank board members representing the following local businesses and organizations: Jerry Potocnik Law Office, Commerce Bank, Northeast Realty, Custom Truck, Awesome Remodel & Construction, Express Stop, Tamale Kitchen, Central Bank of KC, Ed Kendrick DDS & Associates, Craft & Sage Wealth, Krtek Real Estate Inc., and Your Medicare Helpers.

Warmly,

The Northeast News Staff

The Northeast News is sustained through our advertisers, community support, and donations, including In-Kind Donations from the businesses listed below:



Neighborhood Council Wins Negligence Case Against Apartment Management

Dorri Partain
Managing Editor

Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council and Neighborhood Legal Services announced on Thursday, April 9, a final judgment against Millenia Management, owners of Olive Park Village, to secure and clean the property.

Olive Park Village, a multi-family housing complex located between Ninth and Seventh streets, from Olive to Wabash Avenue, has been the site of neglected maintenance, fires, and vermin infestations. Numerous inspections through the City's Healthy Homes department and a growing concern for the health and safety of Olive Park tenants lead Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council (IPNC), through assistance with Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), filed a Civil Nuisance suit against the property owner on Dec. 23, 2025.

This multi-unit complex of apartments and townhomes is owned and operated by The Millenia

Companies, with a main office located in Cleveland, Ohio. According to the company's web page, Millenia owns /operates more than 280 apartment developments in 26 states, housing 86,000 people. Their mission statement offers "Millenia's development and management teams have preserved affordable housing and transformed communities."

On October 20, 2025, NLS sent a letter on behalf of the tenants and IPNC, to notify said owner of the suit filed against their company. This letter outlined numerous issues tenants had encountered in the past two years regarding the condition of the apartments units and site overall, documenting a continuous pattern of negligence.

This letter stated that "pursuant to R.S. Mo Section 82.1025 (which is incorporated herein by reference) to put you on notice that the Property is a nuisance as defined by that statute and to inform you that, if you do not repair the damage to the Property within 60



Olive Park Village Unit A has extensive fire damage and will be demolished soon in accordance with a Circuit Court judgement.

Photo by Dorri Partain

days of the date of this letter to fully abate that nuisance, then the IPNC will bring a civil action in Jackson County Circuit Court in Kansas City, Missouri under R.S. Mo. Section 82.1025 for injunctive relief to ask the Court to require you to abate the nuisance."

Millenia did not respond to the letter or make any improvements during the required 60 days, according to Gregg Lombardi, head counsel for NLS.

With assistance from the City's Public Safety Task Force,

Olive Park Village tenants were relocated and all buildings in the complex were boarded and posted with Do Not Enter orders on January 14. Boarding of 329 doors and windows, a cost paid by the City, totaled more than \$28,000.

Court proceedings in the Civil Nuisance case began February 19 with a preliminary injunction hearing, followed by a priority setting bench trial on March 17 in Jackson County Circuit Court.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Wednesday, April 15- Income Tax Filing Deadline, visit www.irs.gov for more information.

Thursday, April 16- Twelfth Street Corridor Crime Coalition, 6 p.m., Victory Temple, 3301 E. 12th St. Concerned residents are invited to discuss issues and seek solutions to crime occurring along the 12th St. corridor.

Thursday, April 16- NikkiFit Yoga, 6:30 p.m., North-East Branch Library, 6000 Wilson ave. Free yoga classes for adults.

Saturday, April 18- Kessler Park Beautification, 9 a.m. to 12 p.m., Cliff Drive Gate 4 (Gladstone Blvd at Elmwood Ave.) and The Concourse/ Colonnade, 200 Benton Blvd. Come volunteer to collect trash and cut back invasive honeysuckle bushes. Trash bags, gloves and tools provided.

Saturday, April 18- PH Earth Day Celebration, 12 to 5:30 p.m., PH Coffee, 2200 Lexington Ave. Reuse, reduce, recycle during this event featuring a Mini Repair Cafe, clothing swap, book swap, seed and plant swap and trash collection challenge. Hosted by PH Coffee and Re.Use. Full. Free.

Saturday, April 18- Community Carnival, 12 to 2 p.m., KC Girls Prep Academy, 5000 E. 17th St. This free community event features games, prizes and activities for an afternoon of family fun.

Saturday, April 18- Back Door Pottery 40 Year Celebration, 6 to 11:30 p.m., St. John Gardens, 3922 St. John Ave. Join clay artist Rebecca Koop as she celebrates 40 years, featuring music, food and fun. For more information, visit www.backdoorpottery.com.

Sunday, April 19- Scarritt Renaissance Adopt-A-Street, 11 a.m., Roberts & Thompson Avenues. Trash collection to beautify neighborhood streets, trash bags provided. Meet at Benton Blvd, crews will collect trash eastward to Myrtle Avenue.

Wednesday, April 22- Earth Day Kessler Park Beautification, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., Cliff Drive Gate 4 (Gladstone Blvd. at Elmwood Ave.) Come volunteer to collect trash and cut back invasive honeysuckle bushes. Trash bags, gloves and tools provided.

'Celebrating Diversity,' Sensory Friendly Festival brings autism awareness to Northeast families

Daisy Garcia Montoya
Education Reporter

Azul Esperanza (Blue Hope) hosted its first sensory friendly festival, Celebrating Diversity, in the Northeast to bring a safe and welcoming event for neurodivergent children during Autism Awareness Month.

The organization, founded by Miriam Galan in 2024, is a community initiative that supports families raising neurodivergent and youth, with a focus on Latino families by connecting them with resources, early intervention, and creating accessible environments and events.

With April being Autism Awareness Month, Galan saw the need to create more events for neurodivergent children and youth and developed Azul Esperanza's first sensory friendly festival.

The event took place on Saturday, April 4th from 4-7pm at Revolucion Educativa (RevEd)'s space located at 2301 Lexington Ave.

As the event began,

children participated in a high-energy mini trampoline class for participants which was followed by an interactive music session led by The Harmony Project.

Although the organization has hosted other neurodivergent friendly events that merge the arts, this was the first festival hosted by Azul Esperanza which began planning the event last year.

"We decided to create this event because although activities for kids with special needs exist, many times they're not accessible in Spanish or multicultural," Galan said. "As a mother and advocate, I've seen firsthand the need for a safe space for our Latino families to feel included, have the resources, and not have to worry about language barriers."

Galan says that her goal is to not only make events for children to enjoy but for their families and parents to also be able to partake in the activities, share in creating new memories, and continue to build a strong community.

At the festival, com-



The founders of Azul Esperanza joined by the Easter Bunny.
Photo by Daisy Garcia Montoya

munity organizations involving autism or education participated by tabling and offering more information to attendees. Many organizations were present including: Mision Despegue, Neuru, Literacy KC, El Centro, Ollin Amellaly, Show Me KC, True Voice, Harmony Project, and Revolucion Educativa among others.

Community members and family walked around as they received new information, made connections, and got free goodies to take. With over 40 participants, the festival remained a

full house as community members stopped by and participated. Additionally, families participated in giveaways including games and activities for children.

True Voice's founder, Stephanie Answer, a licensed Spellers Method provider, who participated as a partner and parent, said that the Sensory Festival gave the Northeast community an opportunity to bring people together to celebrate children and families in an environment of genuine welcome.

True Voice, which is an organization fo-

cused on supporting nonspeaking, minimal speaking, and unreliably speaking individuals through one-on-one sessions, parents and caregiver coaching, and collaboration with schools, participated in the festival providing parents with more information on its mission and how it could further aid parents.

"Azul Esperanza is an essential partner and collaborator, offering encouragement not only to the families they serve but also to the community alongside them. They are filling a critical gap

by raising awareness about children with disabilities, expanding access to information, resources, and support while working to break down the barriers many families face," Answer said.

Since the festival was sensory friendly, Answer said that her family was able to enjoy an outing together with her whole family. "As a parent of an autistic, nonspeaking child with high support needs, I can say there are very few places where our whole family can truly show up

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Waiting for a Second Life: Scarritt School's Uncertain Future Reflects a Decade of Northeast Closures

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

At 3509 Anderson Ave., the former Scarritt Elementary School still stands behind boarded windows and locked doors — a sturdy brick reminder of a different era in public education in Kansas City, Missouri.

For many residents, the vacant building is more than an empty school. It's the last physical link to a neighborhood network of public schools that steadily disappeared over the past 15 years.

Those closures began during the tenure of former superintendent John Covington. Following the 2009–10 school year, Kansas City Public Schools implemented what officials called a “right-sizing” program. Facing declining enrollment and financial strain, the district shuttered dozens of campuses across the city.

What followed left lasting scars in the Northeast.

McCoy Elementary, located at 1524 White Ave., was closed and

later demolished after years of vandalism and deterioration. Thacher School, at 5008 Independence Ave., once considered the oldest standing structure on the corridor and originally built in 1900, also closed. After suffering fire damage, it too was torn down despite neighborhood efforts to preserve it. Today, only a marker remains. The adjacent middle school soccer field bears the name Thacher Field, a quiet tribute to what was lost.

Scarritt, however, still stands — vacant, but not forgotten.

In recent years, neighbors and artists tried to keep the building from becoming another casualty of neglect.

Students from the Kansas City Art Institute created large murals for the school under the direction of professor Hector Casanova, a Pendleton Heights resident. The multi-year effort began around 2014 and continued through 2016, with students painting wooden panels that covered doors and windows.



Scarritt School, 3509 Anderson Ave
Photo © Northeast News, 2022

The goal was simple: deter vandalism while transforming the hulking structure into something colorful and welcoming rather than blighted.

For a time, the bright murals did just that. The building looked less abandoned and more cared for — a canvas instead of an eyesore.

But the years have taken their toll. Some panels have been vandalized or damaged. Trespassers have entered the building. Copper thefts and interior deterioration have added to the challenges of preservation.

Now, officials say there is renewed effort to move the property forward.

Since closing in 2010, the school has sat mostly vacant. The district eventually declared the property surplus and listed it for sale, seeking redevelopment proposals. Two formal proposals emerged in 2023 after a public meeting hosted by Kansas City Public Schools.

One, submitted by Exact Architects, proposed converting the building into 38 to 50 market-rate and affordable loft-style apartments, with 40% of units designated for low-income residents. The plan also included a pet park, community garden and shared commercial space.

A second proposal, led by developer Laura McGrew of 405 De-

velopment, outlined a \$10.5 million plan to transform the school into an arts-focused community hub. The concept featured artist studios, a performance space in the existing auditorium and community gathering areas, with the possibility of housing in a later phase.

Despite early interest, both proposals stalled in 2024 after a key financing obstacle emerged.

Each plan relied heavily on Historic Tax Credits to be financially viable. However, a preservation consultant hired by the district determined the building did not meet the criteria for listing on the National Register of

Historic Places — a requirement for accessing those credits.

Without that designation, both development teams indicated they did not see a clear path forward and withdrew from consideration. The setback effectively reset the process. The property was re-listed for sale through Block Real Estate Services, LLC, where it remains on the market as officials seek new proposals.

To encourage action, the district has set a deadline of May 15 for developers to submit proposals. In addition, a site tour for potential buyers is scheduled for 10 a.m.

**Continued on
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Historic Theater Re-envisioned, Offers Public Tours

Dorri Partain
Managing Editor

Nearly 20 years after the screens went dark and doors were locked, Independence's Englewood Theater (10917 E. Winner Rd.) has a nonprofit owner working to revitalize and reopen this venue with modern amenities while maintaining the theater's unique character.

Friends of Englewood Theater completed the purchase in September 2025 and began ticking off boxes to obtain placement on the National Registry of Historic Places, create architectural renderings and work with contractors to replace the theater's leaking roof.

The theater's Gala Opening on July 7, 1949 drew thousands of residents and movie fans ready to view Colorado Territory, a black-and-white Western feature starring Joel McCrae and Virginia Mayo. This 1000 seat theater was designed by Luther Orville in the Modern Movement International Style, with professional offices on the second level. A 50-foot screen al-

lowed for projection of Cinemascope film productions.

After the theater closed in 1978, owner Tuffy Williams operated a country music venue named KC Opry. The building's interior plan was altered to create a larger stage, which removed 400 seats. Performers signed their names and left notes in an area backstage, which was preserved after the Opry closed in 1993.

New owner Wade Williams II returned Englewood's operations as a movie theatre, showing classic films and special runs in a restored venue until closing in 2007.

As part of a growing Englewood Arts District, Friends of Englewood Theater formed last year and has made huge strides. In February, placement on the National Registry was awarded, which allows an eligible 35 percent interstate Historic Preservation tax credits.

Plans produced by DRAW Architecture and Urban Design feature a new 300 seat plan, larger stage, updated lighting and sound systems, dressing rooms and expansion into the adjacent vacant Ben Franklin department store building.

Brent Schondelmeyer, president of the nonprofit, stated that the group sees the theater as "the Hub for various activities, multiple community purposes and needs."

During Englewood Arts District's Third Friday event on March 20, Friends of Englewood Theater members offered their first public tours of the venue, from the lobby to backstage to view hundreds of signatures left by KC Opry performers and discussion of plans for renovation.

Tours will be offered during each Third Friday event until interior renovations begin. No reservations are

required and tours are free; the next Friday is scheduled for April 17, with the-

ater tours conducted from 6 to 8:00 p.m. For more information about the Engle-

wood Theater renovation project visit www.EnglewoodTheater.org



Built in 1949, Englewood Theater has retained its Modern Movement International style and original marquee.



Modern improvements during the theater's renovation will include an enlarged stage while retaining many original elements.

Photos by Dorri Partain



Implementing Construction Law Protections

Dr. Adrienne B. Haynes, Esq., Contributor

As the season turns from winter to spring, we can hear more residential, commercial, and industrial construction. For construction contractors, this is a great time to review policies, procedures, and relationship agreements.

Construction law is a complex body of law that applies to almost every business decision a construction firm must make in day to day operations and in the development of their strategic plan. Being aware of these legal rights and obligations allows an owner to make more confident decisions, protect rights, minimize risk, and save money. In considering essential construction law protections, we encourage our clients at SEED Law to prioritize the following objectives:

Build a Firm Foundation

Risk and liability are inherent in the construction industry. Make the move from contractor to CEO by

making an informed choice of entity decision and understanding tax obligations. Next, obtain and maintain the appropriate licenses and certifications to make sure the business is up to date on industry trends, safety, and any license and code requirements. If you qualify for a business certification, it may be a strategic way to leverage competitive advantages.

An ongoing task for building a firm foundation includes setting up good habits and processes. It takes time and intention to document business workflows such as employee and subcontractor onboarding, estimating, billing, and job site documentation. Using technology can help expedite this process and allow for easy updates in the future.

Paper the Deal

Construction contract and relationship terms can show up in oral agreements, letters of intent, purchase orders, subcontractor agreements, change orders, and more.

For each relationship, ask yourself:

- Are the expectations of the parties clearly articulated and reasonably integrated?

- Are the rights and obligations of the parties clearly expressed?

- Are the risks and rewards fairly allocated?

- Is each source of risk allocated to the party in the best position to control or otherwise manage that risk?

- Is insurance available to support any common law or contractual indemnity obligation?

- Do mechanisms exist to accommodate changes during the course of the project?

- How much time has been allocated for each scope of work? When is the project scheduled to begin and end?

- What is the payment schedule? How much retainage will be held?

- Are prompt payment laws incorporated into the writing?

- Are all of the mutual understanding of the parties confirmed in writing?

Taking the time to

document each of the construction company's relationships will protect your profits and prevent headaches in the future.

The next SEED Law workshop, Recruiting and Hiring Considerations, will be hosted virtually on Wednesday, May 6th from 12-1 pm. Building a dream team in your construction business requires a multitude of strategies to build a competitive employment package, including policies, procedures, and legal compliance. This session will provide owners with a legal perspective on ten considerations to plan for when recruiting, hiring, and firing. To register for free and see the full list of virtual and in person events through the end of the year, please visit <https://showmenetwork.org/calendar/>

Mind the Money

Getting paid is essential in keeping any business in operation and construction is historically a slow paying industry. Knowing key terms and provisions around change

orders, payment schedules and consequences for late payment or failure to pay, mechanic's liens, and warranties can help keep a company's cash flow unencumbered and minimize surprises.

This article is only an overview of construction law considerations and is not intended to cover every legal right or obligation, consideration, exception, or restriction. These documentations and decisions are complex and should be well researched and



Dr. Adrienne B. Haynes, Esq.

discussed with a legal professional before being made.

Thanks for reading!

My name is Dr. Adrienne B. Haynes and I'm an entrepreneur and attorney based here in Kansas City. My law firm, SEED Law, has been partnering with business owners across the Northeast and the city for almost 11 years. I loved living in the Northeast and I was fortunate to serve as an Entrepreneur in Residence for the Kauffman Foundation in 2017. Together with a dedicated group of Northeast residents and leaders, we explored a community designed innovation district pilot program. I was able to present this work during a TEDxUMKC Talk on Community Innovation Design in 2020.

Over the next few weeks, I'll be contributing articles and resources on small business and estate planning legal considerations. If you have questions, please reach out directly at adrienne@seed.legal.



EXPLORE • DISCOVER

Our Avenue, The World's Stage

Long before the first whistle blows at Arrowhead, the world will arrive on Independence Avenue. As Kansas City prepares to host the world's largest international soccer tournament, the Independence Avenue corridor stands in a unique position. While other districts are learning about global cultures for the first time, Independence Avenue has been living them for decades.

From the Halal markets of Somalia to the panaderías of Mexico and the hidden gems of Vietnam, the Avenue is a microcosm of the nations competing on the pitch. But being 'culturally ready' is only half the battle. The Independence Avenue CID is equipping local entrepreneurs with the digital tools, hospitality training, and 'curb appeal' necessary to turn a tourist's stroll into a lifelong customer relationship.



Pho Bowl 1447 Independence Ave

In the fast-paced world of international travel, tourists look for two things: authenticity and efficiency. Pho Bowl delivers both. Known

across Kansas City for its aromatic, slow-simmered broths and fresh ingredients, this Vietnamese staple is a masterclass in the "Game Plan" strategy of consistency. As fans move between downtown and the stadium, Pho Bowl offers a nutritious, high-energy meal that transcends language barriers. A steaming bowl of Pho is a universal symbol of comfort, making this storefront a vital destination for the global soccer fan seeking a healthy, world-class dining experience on the Avenue.



Catrachas Mex 4807 Independence Ave

Soccer is a celebration of different cultures coming together, and no business captures that synergy quite like Catrachas Mex.

By blending Honduran and Mexican culinary traditions, they offer a "fusion" experience that mirrors the diverse evolution of the Independence Avenue corridor. Their signature Baleadas—thick, handmade flour tortillas stuffed with savory ingredients—are the ultimate "grab-and-go" food for tourists exploring the CID. Catracha Mex highlights how local businesses can innovate their products to capture foot traffic, offering unique, portable, and delicious options that fans won't find anywhere else in the city.



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represents the "Discovery Independence Avenue" experience. Tourists may come for the Somali tea and injera, or the traditional coffee ceremony of Bariis Iskukaris. Yet, the Avenue is more than just a community hub where locals and guests are treated like family. It's an embodiment of the "Concurrence" concept, where it's not just a cafe; it's an invitation to experience a culture that has helped



This information is provided for you through the Independence Avenue CID (Community Improvement District) the Northeast Kansas City Chamber Of Commerce

ER • EXPERIENCE



FOUR CORNERS COMMUNITY CALL



Last week's Independence Avenue Community Improvement District 4-Corners Community Call was at Core Coffee located at 546 Olive Ave

Gringo Loco
3825 Independence Ave

JOIN US THIS FRIDAY AT 3PM FOR OUR 4 CORNERS COMMUNITY CALL

The CID isn't just preparing for a soccer tournament; they are preparing to show the world that the heartbeat of Kansas City pulses right here, along the Avenue. Whether it's swapping translating menus for international fans or creating a website to help tourists navigate the International Marketplace, the CID and the Chamber are ensuring that when the world looks at KC, they see the best of us.

Yasmeen Cafe

7 Independence Ave
To step into Yasmeen is to experience the legendary hospitality of the Horn of Africa. For the the Soccer tournament, Yasmeen "y" factor that makes it so special. While soccer, they will stay the rich, spiced flavors Yasmeen Cafe serves where news is shared like family—a perfect "Berger Spirit". It's not to experience a d define the modern Northeast.



El Paso Del Norte

3430 Independence Ave
With Mexico serving as one of the three host nations for the 2026 Soccer Tournament, El Paso del Norte stands as a local headquarters for the passion of the pitch. This long-standing pillar of the Independence Avenue CID brings the true flavors of Northern Mexico to the heart of Kansas City. From their authentic street tacos to their traditional platters, El Paso del Norte offers the kind of "Fan Zone" atmosphere that international visitors crave. Their presence on the Avenue ensures that the spirit of the Mexico City and Monterrey matches is felt right here in the Northeast, providing a festive, family-friendly anchor for soccer fans of all stripes.



Taqueria Mexico 2

5920 Independence Ave
Soccer isn't just a game—it's a shared ritual. Taqueria Mexico #2 is perfectly positioned to be the Avenue's premier "Match Day" destination. With its spacious seating and vibrant atmosphere, it captures the high-energy spirit of the world's most popular sport. Crucially for the 2026 tournament, the restaurant serves as a vital community viewing hub, featuring multiple televisions that will be tuned into the matches. Here, the "Game Plan" is simple: providing a place where the cheers of the crowd meet the sizzle of the grill. Taqueria Mexico #2 offers the perfect environment to experience the tournament's biggest moments.



'Fast-track' Effort to Speed Up Affordable Housing Development

Bryan Stalder
Contributor

During a session on Thursday, April 9, Kansas City Council approved a new initiative aimed at accelerating the construction of affordable housing by cutting through permitting delays and reducing upfront costs for developers.

As part of this measure, the city will create a new "Affordable Housing Permit Navigator" position within the City Manager's office. The role is intended to guide qualifying projects through the development process, waive certain fees, and help expedite timelines

that have historically slowed the delivery of new housing.

Ordinance 260313 was sponsored by Quinton Lucas and comes as city leaders continue to look for ways to address Kansas City's ongoing housing shortage—particularly for residents at lower income levels.

This fast-track effort builds on a series of recent policies designed to incentivize affordable housing construction. Under existing rules, developers who receive city tax incentives are generally required to designate a portion of their units as affordable or contribute to the city's

housing trust fund, which has supported the creation of thousands of units in recent years.

City leaders have also introduced a "pre-approved plans" program to reduce design costs and speed up construction. The initiative offers a set of ready-to-use housing designs—including bungalows, duplexes, and smaller homes—allowing builders to bypass architectural fees and avoid lengthy design reviews. Readers can view these seven Pre-Approved Housing Master Plans at www.kcmo.gov/city-hall/departments/city-planning-development/permits/

affordable-housing-master-plans

"Kansas City just made it easier to build homes, and it starts with a free blueprint," Mayor Lucas said in a recent post on social media. "That means no architect fees, no design delays. Just pick a plan, select your lot, and get building."

He added that the effort is part of a broader push to expand access to housing across the city.

"This is part of our commitment to making sure every Kansan has access to safe, quality, affordable housing," Lucas said. "We're removing



Image from KCMO.gov

the barriers, one plan at a time."

In addition to the new navigator role, developers pursuing affordable housing projects can access support through the city's Development Assistance Team and may be required to meet Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) participation goals.

Supporters of the fast-track approach say reducing permitting

delays and soft costs is critical to getting more projects off the ground—especially as rising construction expenses continue to challenge developers.

As the policy takes effect, city officials will be watching to see whether streamlining the process leads to a measurable increase in affordable housing units, particularly in neighborhoods where demand continues to outpace supply.

Olive Park Village *Continued from page 3*

During an inspection two days prior to the preliminary injunction hearing, 40 of the 100 complex units were found to be open to public access and at least six units unlawfully occupied by trespassers. A February 25 court order required defendant Millennia to take additional steps to secure doors and windows, retain a two-person security patrol to perform drive-by and walk-through inspections and re-securing

insecure units.

On March 17, City Codes Inspector Craig Straws and Kansas City Fire Department (KCFD) Battalion Chief James Cooley testified on behalf of the plaintiffs IPNC and NLS regarding continued issues with buildings open to entry and fire hazards, including a March 11 blaze that temporarily trapped three fire fighters when a floor collapsed. Citing the overall conditions of the eight remaining buildings in the Ol-

ive Park complex, the plaintiff requested that five be demolished and the remaining three rehabilitated.

A heavily fire-damaged three-unit building at 2410 E. Ninth was demolished the same day of the trial. Permits for additional demolitions have been approved, with a six-unit building at 2300 E. Ninth completed soon.

The judgement by Circuit Court Division 18 Judge Kevin D. Harrell orders that

within ten days, Defendant shall erect a six-foot high chain link fence with posts set in concrete around the entire perimeter of the property, within seven days, will remove at least one 40-yard dumpster of trash, debris, and displaced building materials per day until property is free of said items and free from all trash no later than two weeks, and that the Defendant continues to submit bi-weekly progress reports to the

court in compliance with requirements.

Chloe Willett, an Independence Plaza neighborhood resident who lives near the Olive Park Village Complex, stated that she was relieved regarding the judgement but also worried about the continuing fire risk.

"I'm excited for the impact that this Judgement is going to have on our community and public safety," stated Willett. "I'm still worried that more

buildings are going to burn down because the buildings have not been fully secured yet, but I'm hopeful for what will happen next."

On Friday, April 10, KCFD responded to a fire call at 3:51 a.m. and extinguished a blaze at 759-757-755 Park Ave. This building suffered fire damage previously on March 2.

A compliance hearing to evaluate progress in this Judgement against Millennia is set for May 14.

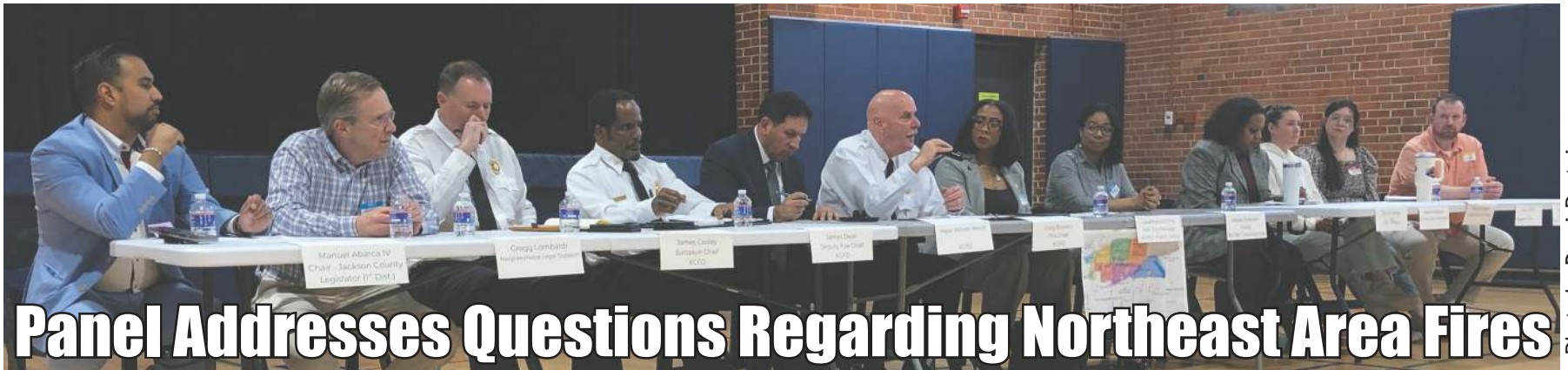


Photo by Dorri Partain

Panel Addresses Questions Regarding Northeast Area Fires

Dorri Partain
Managing Editor

A panel discussion regarding finding solutions to reduce the number of fires occurring in Historic Northeast was held on Monday, April 6 at Don Bosco Community Center, 526 Campbell Ave. Hosted by the Northeast Neighborhood Coalition (NNC), this two hour question and answer session brought city and county officials together with representatives from the Kansas City Police and Fire departments to address concerns prepared by the NNC and attendees.

The NNC is composed of leaders and representatives from nine Northeast neighborhoods: Columbus Park, Indian Mound, Independence Plaza, Forgotten Homes, Lykins, Paseo West, Pendleton Heights, Scarritt Renaissance and Sheffield to combat common issues

affecting these neighborhoods.

President Dylan Van Gerpen welcomed members of the panel and attendees to Fighting Fires in the Historic Northeast, the first forum hosted by this organization. Treasurer Evie Craig acted as moderator, while member Jonathan Cokely served as timekeeper.

Noting that this topic involved older housing stock, displacement, vacant properties, enforcement and public accountability, Craig stated that, "Residents deserve real responses and officials deserve the opportunity to respond."

Invited Forum Panelists included

- Manuel Abarca, Jackson County Legislature 1st District
- Craig Buckley, KCFD Fire Chief
- Lace Cline, Asst. City Manager, Public Safety
- James Cooley, KCFD Battalion Chief

- David Cornelius, Asst. Director, Neighborhood Services
- James Dean, Deputy Chief, KCFD
- Gregg Lombardi, Director, Neighborhood Legal Support
- Megan Morgan, Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council
- Melissa Patterson-Hazley, City Council, 3rd District
- Melissa Robinson, City Council, 3rd District
- Mario Vasquez, City Manager
- Chloe Willet, Independence Plaza Neighborhood Council

Seeking answers to "what's happening, what's missing, and what specific action departments will take moving forward," Craig asked Fire Chief Buckley about best practices to reduce heating, electrical and cooking fires.

Buckley responded that the fire department takes a proactive approach with com-

munity risk reduction, which involves educational materials and the availability of free smoke alarms. Fire Prevention Chief Dean offered that they offered installation of smoke alarms and other public outreach programs,

Smoke alarms were also available to attendees during the forum.

Craig highlighted a map produced by The Northeast News that showed fire locations in 2024 and questioned if any panelist was aware of an updated map or table.

Councilwoman Robinson offered that with "Fifty percent vacancies in a particular area, we have to address the vacancies. That is the root cause of why we're in this situation, we do need more tools, especially more development and developers."

Robinson later stated that in zip codes 64127, 64124, 64123, 64126, 64120, 64106

and 64125, more than 100 fires had occurred in each in the past year.

Lombardi offered that Neighbor Legal Services offered assistance to neighborhoods to address vacant properties, they all have "assess risk" if not secured and he was aware of 10 to 15 properties constantly open to public access in the Lykins neighborhood.

Throughout the evening, several panelists mentioned the effectiveness of DAWG (Door and Window Guards), a steel enforced product that is installed from the inside to secure vacant buildings, as opposed to the current method of plywood screwed into place.

Neighborhood panelist Morgan stated that she lived in zip code 64124 and felt that every house on her block was at risk, even those that were lived in.

"We have cameras

and alarms and we see people light fires on porches with people living in them (homes)," she said.

Panelist Willet stated she had witnessed two fires in Olive Park Village in one day and feared for her and her neighbor's homes due to the proximity.

"It's very scary, seeing the smoke and flames shooting into the air," Willet said.

Chief Buckley offered that if someone sees something suspicious they should call 911 and have it checked out, while Councilwoman Patterson-Hazley countered that residents see the process "like a ping pong ball" because the fire department can't respond and the police and prosecutors see it as a petty crime, but with no response the petty crime escalates to major crime and it's a continued behavior.

**Continued on
page 14**

Scarritt School*Continued from page 5*

on Thursday, April 16. Interested parties must pre-register through the brokerage team.

Even with this renewed push, the building remains in a familiar state of limbo — too historic to ignore, too costly to easily convert.

Still, some neighbors aren't ready to give up.

Pendleton Heights resident Margarita Friedman has emerged as one of the most persistent advocates for a new vision. Friedman hopes to transform the former

school into a cultural arts and community center offering art classes, youth programming, immigrant services and family resources.

"This project is thought of as an association of organizations that together will solve the problems of the community," Friedman said.

Her concept includes tutoring for struggling students, English-as-a-second-language courses for parents, and partnerships with local nonprofits — all housed within the old class-

rooms.

"The core of services has to be helping public schools, helping parents," she said.

For now, however, funding remains elusive, and her proposal has stalled as the property continues to be marketed to potential buyers.

Scarritt's story stretches back generations. Like many neighborhood schools built in the early 20th century, it served as more than a place for lessons. It functioned as a polling site, a gathering space and a cornerstone of daily

life for families who walked there from surrounding blocks.

Alumni still recall assemblies in the auditorium, recess on the playground and community events inside the brick building that today sits quiet except for the wind and the occasional creak of plywood.

That history is part of why residents say the building deserves another chance.

After watching other Northeast schools disappear — first closed, then damaged, then demolished — many see Scarritt as

REGISTER FOR THE APRIL 16 SITE TOUR

A site tour of the former Scarritt Elementary School will be held at 10 a.m. Thursday, April 16, at 3509 Anderson Ave.

Phone: 816-756-1400

Attendees will be able to tour the building and gather information for redevelopment proposals.

Proposal deadline: May 15, 2026

the last opportunity to preserve a piece of neighborhood heritage.

While the future of the building remains uncertain — it's not entirely stagnant. With a proposal deadline set and new tours underway, the coming months may prove pivotal, But unlike

McCoy or Thacher, Scarritt hasn't been reduced to a memory or a plaque. Its walls still stand. Its halls still echo.

And for neighbors who remember what it once meant, that's reason enough to keep trying.

**Azul Esperanza** *Continued from page 4*

together. I watched my son be his full self and have a wonderful time," Answer said.

As parents walked around observing and learning about different organizations, children walked and played among the various sensory activities placed on different tables. Children participated in cookie decorating, making bracelets, exploring different textures, and making their own water globes.

Families shared the sentiment that the event allowed them to meet other families that faced a similar

journey with their children and autism while celebrating that same diversity and bringing fun to the children.

Attendees enjoyed pizza, fruit and music as the laughter of children was heard around the room as they went from table to table exploring the different activities.

Community member Genesis Sagastume says that she's been involved with the organization for the past two years, participating in events and conferences hosted by Azul Esperanza.

As a mother of a young girl with special

needs, Sagastume felt that the organization provided her with important information regarding education rights for children with special needs, how to get involved and more activities where children can feel included.

"Azul Esperanza became a pillar for our family. I am grateful to this organization for all the information and support they have provided for us," Sagastume said.

For more information on Azul Esperanza or upcoming events, please visit their page on Facebook.

Names in print

Historical fiction written by Bryan Stalder

Kansas City, Fall 1932

By the time The Northeast News had published its first ten issues, the 1932 presidential election was in full swing. Campaign posters clung to telephone poles, and candidates for local office were eager to buy space in the paper. Orr was happy to cash their checks. President Herbert Hoover was facing a determined challenge from Democratic Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York. In Missouri, Roosevelt's message carried broad appeal, and Democrats were sweeping nearly every statewide contest: from Roosevelt's commanding lead in the presidential vote to the election of Bennett Champ Clark to the United States Senate, as well as Democratic control of offices like governor and attorney general. Democrats seemed unstoppable that year, and Boss Tom Pendergast was shoring up votes in Northeast as part of that larger tide.

The Northeast News dutifully listed polling locations and noted when candidates would speak in church basements or community halls. Beyond those notices, politics stayed mostly out of Matthew Orr's pages. His readers wanted to see their streets, their schools, their lives in print—not campaign rhetoric or distant promises.

Autumn had settled over the neighborhood with a steady hand. The air carried the smell of smoke from the steel mill and the damp sweetness of fallen leaves pressed into alleyways. The aroma of fresh bread drifted from bakeries along St. John Avenue, mingling with the faint diesel tang of delivery trucks idling at the loading docks. Only a week earlier, a truck hauling an oversized sign had struck the rail bridge, scattering splintered wood and curses across the intersection—it wouldn't be the last time that happened. Horse-drawn milk wagons still rattled over the brick streets in the early mornings. The neighborhood moved at a familiar pace—neither hurried nor idle—and Orr was beginning to hear its rhythm as clearly as a church bell tolling the hour down the street at Holy Cross.

On his desk—the one he had borrowed from storage in the basement of Budd Park Christian Church—lay the week's notices. They had been carefully written or dictated at counters, in kitchens, and at church doors: the DiSimone-Russo wedding at the Assumption Parish; Mrs. Oyer's sister arriving from St. Louis for the holidays; a school recital at Thacher Elementary; a pie social at the Oakley Methodist Episcopal Church on Independence Avenue. Orr read each one slowly before pressing the keys of his typewriter. Names mattered. So did spelling them correctly. A misspelled name had a way of lingering.

The neighborhood's character emerged in these small items. Italian shopkeepers were opening new groceries and bakeries, their windows stacked with cheeses, breads, and sweets

that carried the scent of another homeland. Families shopped where they felt known, creating subtle shifts in the rhythms of the streets. Some longtime residents grumbled about the changing culture. Others simply adjusted. Orr noticed the tension, but he did not judge. Everyone, after all, read the paper.

Advertising paid the bills. Hardware stores, tailors, butchers, grocers—businesses run by people who stood behind counters all day and knew their customers by name. Candidates for local office bought space alongside them, their portraits sharing columns with price lists and holiday specials. Orr sold ads as he reported news: carefully, honestly, never promising more than he could deliver. "People will see your name," he told them. "That's enough to start."

Schools filled more column inches than anything else. Debates at Northeast High, spelling bees at James Elementary, parent-teacher conferences at Garfield Elementary—each item a small proof that children still learned, teachers still assigned lessons, and parents still worried. Orr liked writing those notices best. They asked for no opinion and required no judgment. Only attention.

One afternoon, as he sorted advertisements by size and price, a woman knocked lightly at the open door. She carried a portfolio under her arm and a boy by the hand, his coat sleeves slightly too long.

"I saw your newspaper," she said, "and I thought you might need an illustrator."

Orr gestured to the chair across from his desk. "I might," he said honestly. "But I can't afford much."

"That's what you all say," she replied, smiling as she set the portfolio down.

Her name was Carolyn Walker. She had done illustration work before—newspapers, advertisements, small jobs wherever they appeared. The boy clutched a tin soldier, its paint chipped from use.

Carolyn opened the portfolio. Christmas scenes spilled across the desk: store windows dressed with garlands, a wagon piled high with gifts, a toboggan skimming fresh snow, wooden trucks, dolls with painted faces, mischievous-looking sock monkeys. "I can help with advertisements for some of the local shops," she said. "People like to buy things they can see in the newspaper."



Continued on next page

Walking St. John Avenue

Continued from previous page

Orr nodded. "I can offer a short contract," he said. "Holiday ads. That's all I can manage right now."

"That'll do," she said, without hesitation.

As she gathered her drawings, a loose page slipped free and fluttered to the floor. Orr bent to retrieve it. It wasn't an advertisement. It was a small cartoon of a dog barking and a man barking back.

"That's my son's," Carolyn said. "He loves to draw. Just like his mother."

The boy was on his hands and knees, moving the tin soldier across the floor as though it were navigating a trench.

"Keep at it," Orr said, glancing down. He handed the paper

back to her. "The world always needs a good laugh."

Mrs. Walker gathered her artwork and called for her son to follow her out the door, but he remained absorbed in his imagined battlefield. "Addison Morton Walker!" she said sharply. The boy froze, then scooped up his soldier and hurried after her.

That evening, as Orr assembled the next issue, he felt something settle quietly into place. The paper wasn't about ambition or influence or recognition. It was about noticing who lived here—and proving, once a week in black ink, that they mattered enough to be named.

He sharpened his pencil again. There were more names to write.

Fire Forum *Continued from page 11*

Responding on patrol in her neighborhood.

To much applause, Councilwoman Patterson-Halsey stated that the disbursement of social services needs to be placed city-wide and not just the Third District. "We have so much of the homeless population in such a small square foot, so these folks end up on our property, on our back porch," she said. "If you have a parcel that's undeveloped behind you, you may experience a homeless camp right behind you."

Patterson-Hazley also discussed the idea of a "vacancy tax", a higher property tax that could incentivise selling or rehabilitating a vacant property. While a vacancy fee could

easily be activated through an ordinance, a tax would have to be approved by voters, she explained.

City Manager Vasquez offered that his office was working on a program to address and assist the homeless population as the City was committed to funding \$2 million towards the Homeless Gateway program.

A question directed to Neighborhood Service Asst. Director Cornelius sparked discussion about the boarding up of vacant or fire-damaged buildings and the timeline to do so. Cornelius stated the process sometimes involved compliance from the property owner but Willet pointed out that boards are re-

moved by firefighters to gain entry then sit open to access for a week, even after it's been reported.

Several attendees remarked that the process to communicate between all the departments was complicated and needed improvement.

Asst. City Manager Cline suggested creation of a task force, composed of residents and organizations, that would address department communication issues.

Van Gerpen agreed, stating, "That's kind of why we formed ourselves (the NNC) from all the neighborhood associations, to hopefully bridge this gap between residents and neighborhood associations, city-level

Poem by Kiki Swift

Life is like driving
It's fast and it's slow.
Sometimes it's confusing,
Which way should you go?

Wrong turns are easy
And then you are lost
And finding the right road...
Well, who knows the cost?

But find the right route
Hold the road as it turns
And destiny finds you
Your happiness earned.

Haiku by Sam Crowley

Garter snake in the garden
I thought I would have some fun
Until he bit me

officials and other up communications. Each panelist was allowed to make a final statement about solutions moving forward regarding reduction of fires and related issues.

Craig stated that due to time limits, not all questions were presented to the panel but would be asked in follow-up communications. For more information about the Northeast Neighborhood coalition, visit www.nnckc.org

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