

Kansas Historical Society
Testimony to
Joint Committee on State Building Construction
December 16, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the capital improvement plan of the Kansas Historical Society. We have provided you with a copy of our five-year plan for capital improvements. The Kansas Historical Society was created in 1875, 14 years after statehood. Today, the agency owns 56 buildings, 5 monuments, and 6 structures throughout the state, many of these are historic, and we are responsible for a combined 600 acres of land.

Annual Emergency Repair Request

Each year the agency receives \$375,000 (State General Fund) in emergency repair monies to address cyclical maintenance issues and emergency repairs due to age, accidents, or weather-related causes. The annual request for emergency repair monies is always our top priority for capital improvements. We are grateful for this necessary support. We are requesting an enhancement of these funds for a total annual appropriation of \$625,000 in FY 2026.

Current Year Capital Improvements

Shawnee Indian Mission Roof Replacement

Shawnee Indian Mission is important to the state's history; three of the sites historic buildings remain. It served as a manual training school for boys and girls from the Shawnee, Delaware, and other Indian Tribes from 1839 to 1862. Kansas Territory was established in 1854, opening this area to settlement. The Reverend Thomas Johnson operated the mission; its manual training school program ceased in 1854. Andrew Reeder, newly-appointed territorial governor, had his offices at the mission. After the First Territorial Legislature adjourned its first session at the capitol in Pawnee in 1855, now part of Fort Riley, it held its next session at the mission. Their election had been ruled fraudulent after Missouri proslavery supporters crossed the border to vote and sway the results. For this reason the laws they passed during this second legislative session to perpetuate slavery in Kansas were called "bogus laws." The Johnson's oldest son, Alexander, operated the mission from 1858 until it closed in 1862. Westward bound settlers on the Oregon and California Trails and traders on the Santa Fe Trails purchased supplies at the mission; Union troops camped at the site during the Civil War.

The Kansas Historical Society partners with the City of Fairway to operate Shawnee Indian Mission. As owner of the property, the Historical Society remains responsible for capital improvements at the site, which is listed National Historic Landmark, the highest historical designation in the country, in 1968.

All three mission buildings have cedar shingle roofing installed in 2002 and are at end of life. This project was originally scheduled for consecutive years for each building in 2025, 2026, and 2027; however, recent storm damage has accelerated the need for replacement. \$237,946 were

reappropriated from FY 2024 to FY 2025. The North Building and garage roofs have been replaced. The East Building will be next, followed by the West Building. As always, all work will meet the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

KMH Main Facility AHU and Chiller

This capital improvement project was initially introduced in our FY 2022 5-year capital improvement plan. The current air handling unit (AHU) and chiller have been in service since 1984; lasting 39 years and covering 44,800 square feet. The typical equipment 20-year life span has been exceeded and essential upgrades to the obsolete control systems with direct digital controls are needed.

This project will include the refurbishing of the AHU for the museum, lobby, classrooms, and collection storage areas. Much of the space covered by this system must be environmentally controlled to preserve the historic collections. Integration of new direct digital controls will replace the non-supported original pneumatic controls, which will ensure continued protection of our collections. Collecting and preserving those collections are essential to our mission to tell the story of Kansas to students, adults, and future generations.

Charles Curtis House Acquisition

The Charles Curtis House, built in 1879, served as the Kansas residence for the Curtis family from 1907 until Charles's death in 1936. The house is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The legislature declared that the Charles Curtis home possessed unusual historical interest in 1986 with the bill K.S.A. 76-2049. At the same time, the Kansas Historical Society was authorized to acquire the historically significant property. During the 2024 legislative session, HB 2551 Sec. 48(a) provided an appropriation of \$300,000 for the procurement the historic home. The agency is currently working with the seller and realtor to acquire the property.

Kansas Museum of History: Exhibit walls and Ramp

The Kansas Museum of History opened in 1984 as the state history museum. It built a reputation for excellence, receiving numerous honors, and earning accreditation among peers. The requested \$905,000 funding will address necessary upgrades to the museum space, including new wall infrastructure to support the new exhibits and artifact displays. This includes addressing current life safety elements that have been revised since the museum opened.

Red Rocks: Window Restoration and Exterior Wood Repair

William Allen White was a Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaper publisher and author. From the 1896 through World War II White influenced state and national politics with his writings as the Sage of Emporia. Red Rocks, the family home, was named a National Historic Landmark in 1976. The site was acquired as a State Historic Site in 2001. Most of the windows, some of the exterior wood trim, and porch elements now require varying degrees of restoration or repair. The combination of weathering, age, and finish degradation along with more frequent storms has accelerated the need for repairs. Federal Funds will be used while following the Secretary of Interior's *Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Kansas Historical Society FY 2025 Capital Improvements			
Project	Funding Source	Amount	Description
Emergency Repairs (statewide)	SGF	\$375,000	This annual allocation covers routine cyclical maintenance and emergency repairs.
Roof Replacements at Shawnee Indian Mission (Fairway)	SGF	\$237,946	FY 2024 funds reappropriated for replacement of all 3 roofs (East, North, & West Bldgs.) and historic utility bldg. with cedar shingles to match historic appearance. \$112,054 expended in FY 2024.
Kansas Museum of History Main AHUs and Chiller	SGF	\$2,760,000	Refurbish the AHUs for the museum, lobby, classrooms and collection storage area. Replace one 200 Ton chiller unit.
Charles Curtis House Acquisition	SGF	\$300,000	Purchase of the Charles Curtis House
Museum Gallery Capital Improvement	SGF	\$905,000	Build interior infrastructure for exhibits within the main museum gallery.
Red Rocks: William Allen White House windows and wood repairs	Federal	\$100,000	Repair windows, exterior wood trim and wood porch elements.

FY 2026 Capital Improvements

Annual Emergency Repair Request

For FY 2026 the Kansas Historical Society is requesting a \$625,000 SGF Emergency and Rehabilitation Repairs allocation, which is an addition of \$250,000 from FY 2025. These funds are vital for the continuation of upkeep on the buildings, monuments, and structures. Over the past few years, inflationary costs on goods and services have increased exponentially.

Mobile Shelving Unit Repair

The Center for Historical Research opened in 1995 using a high-density mobile library records shelving system. This 4,500+ square foot unit maximizes space utilization for the State Archives. The electronic drive system and controls are at the end of life and fail frequently. Utilization of a temporary battery pack can assist with restoring movement. Due to the systems age, current maintenance providers are no longer able to obtain parts for the system. We will need to

disassemble and remove mechanical/electrical systems and replace with new motors and controls, which includes the safety system.

Grinter Place ADA and Visitor Parking

During America's westward expansion, troops traveling between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Scott sometimes crossed the Kansas River on a ferry operated by Moses Grinter. A native of Kentucky, Grinter married Annie Marshall, a Lenape (Delaware) Indian whose people had been relocated to the Fort Leavenworth Indian Agency in the early 1830s. Moses and Annie Grinter's later home, a two-story brick house completed in 1857, is preserved today as the oldest home in Wyandotte County. It became a State Historic Site in 1968 and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1971.

The existing ADA parking area and adjacent parking field has deteriorated and requires replacement to maintain handicapped and visitor access. The work will follow The Secretary of Interior's *Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties* and NPS Preservation Brief #32: *Making Historic Properties Accessible*. The agency is planning to apply for \$75,000 in federal grant funds to place four level II charging stations in the parking area.

Marais des Cygnes Visitor Experience Enhancement

On May 19, 1858, proslavery men killed five free-state men and wounded five others in a ravine that is now listed as a National Historic Landmark. This act became a pivotal event in the Bleeding Kansas era. A few months later, abolitionist John Brown came to the site and constructed a fortified cabin. Charles Hadsall, a friend of John Brown, bought the property in 1858 and build his house next to Brown's log cabin. The Hadsall house was acquired by the Pleasanton VFW Post No. 862 in 1939, and the State of Kansas accepted it as a gift in 1942. This house is a part of the National Historic Landmark designation.

The Hadsall House will become the visitor center (as it was from 1963 through 1995) for the Marais des Cygnes Massacre State Historic Site. The 62-acre site will be completed in phases. Initially, the Hadsall House will be prepared for utilities, then interpretive displays, and a site administrator office will be added. This project is planned over a 3-year period utilizing private and federal funds.

Kansas Historical Society FY 2026 Capital Improvements			
Project	Funding Source	Amount	Description
Emergency Repairs (statewide)	SGF	\$625,000	This annual allocation covers routine cyclical maintenance and emergency repairs for 56 buildings, 5 monuments and 6 structures.
Mobile Shelving Unit Repair	SGF	\$302,500	Refurbish and update the high-density mobile library records shelving system to maximize storage space.
Grinter Place: ADA and visitor parking	SGF and Federal	\$203,040	The ADA and visitor parking area has become deteriorated past repair. This will replace the asphalt ADA and visitor parking area for visitors.
Marais des Cygnes: Site Visitor Enhancement	Private	\$200,000	This is a multi-year project to restore utilities, landscape, Hadsall House visitor center, and narrate features at the site.

Conclusion

We greatly appreciate the support of the Joint Committee on State Building Construction. Today we are requesting that you concur with the Kansas Historical Society’s 5-year plan for capital improvements. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. Please feel free to contact either myself or Matthew if at any time you have questions.

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