



History

The 5th District is a microcosm of Kansas City. It contains not only part of the core city west of the Blue River, but also suburban and even rural areas east of the Blue River and as far east as the Little Blue Valley area. It has many of the natural features that define the character of the city: rolling topography, two rivers, and a major creek. Some of the largest public investments in the city have been in the 5th District: the New Zoo, new lakes as part of the Brush Creek enhancements, and a new Blue Parkway boulevard segment.

The next section contains detailed information about the 5th Councilmanic District, including facts and trends. There are five subsections:

- ✦ History
- ✦ Land Use and Development
- ✦ Employment
- ✦ People
- ✦ Housing

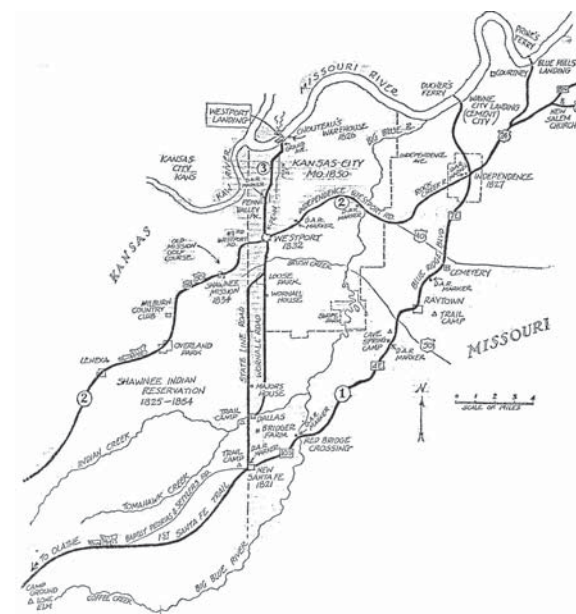
There is information in each of these subsections about the district in the form of maps, charts, and a brief explanation, set in the context of issues that particularly affect the district.

History of the 5th District

Even before any of what is now the Fifth Council District was annexed, it was making history. The Santa Fe Trail, the Civil War, and the City Beautiful movement all touched the area.

Originating in 1821 in the Boonslick town of Franklin, Missouri, the Santa Fe trade initiated a lucrative exchange of Mexican silver and mules for American dry goods (furs, flour, ammunitions) which proved a significant factor in the economic growth of Missouri and the West. By 1828, the newly founded village of Independence, Missouri with its landing on the Missouri River at Blue Mills, had become the outfitting headquarters for the Santa Fe trade. Independence maintained this dominance for a decade until Westport began to offer a strong rivalry twelve miles to the west.

In the 1840s and 1850s Cave Springs Park at Gregory and Blue Ridge Boulevards, established itself as one of the campgrounds along the Santa Fe Trail. Cave Springs is significant as a rare surviving Santa Fe Trail landmark



Sante Fe Trail in the Kansas City Region

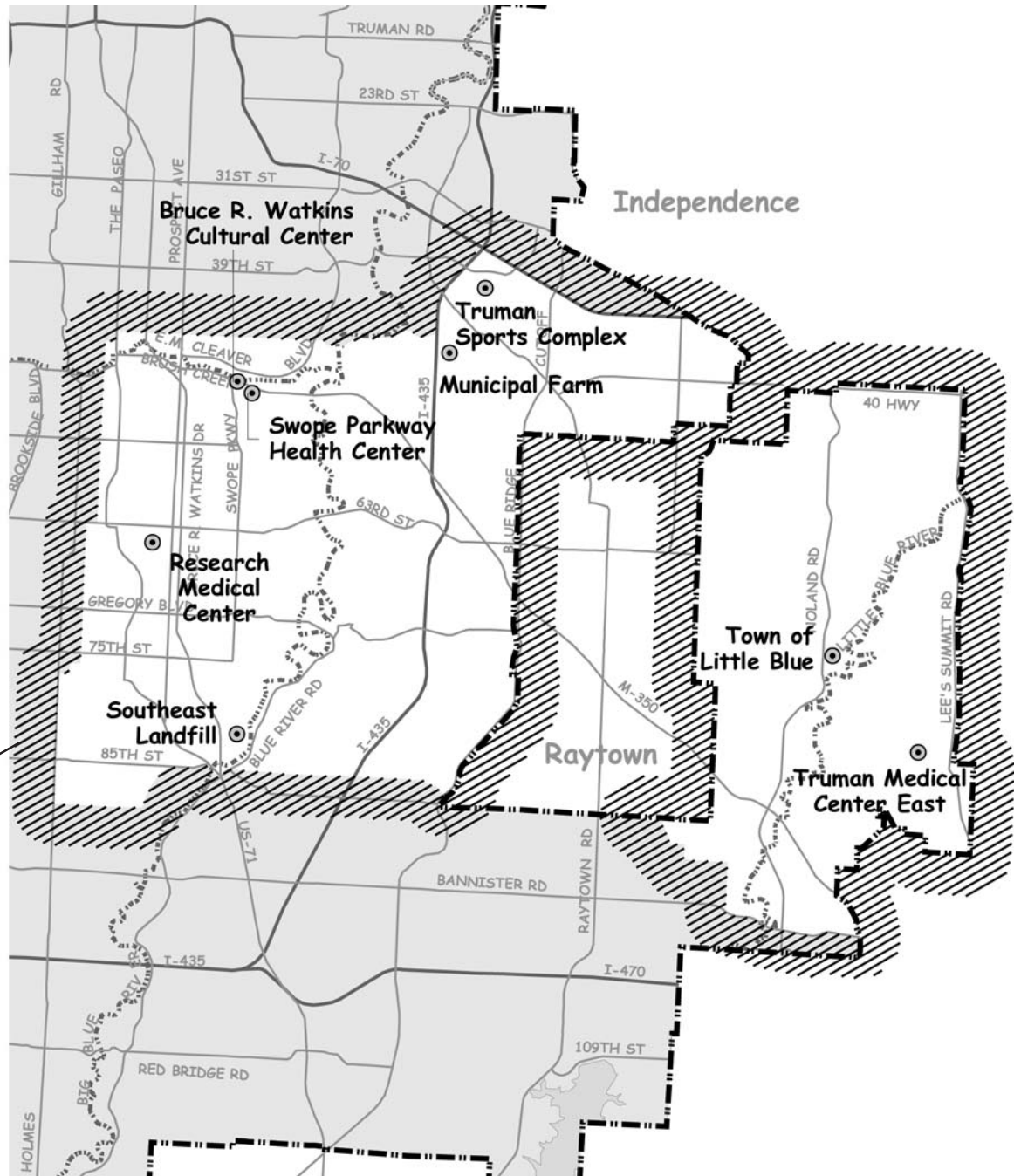
HISTORY

District Attributes



City Limit Line

5th Council District Boundary



that has escaped profound alteration, unlike the remainder of the trail, most of which passes through the urbanized part of Jackson County. Cave Spring is located on the Independence branch of the Santa Fe Trail, about ten miles south of Independence. This branch was the original or “old Santa Fe road” that George Sibley traveled when he surveyed the trail in 1825-1826. Cave Spring is commonly thought of today as a Santa Fe campground.

In 1864, Confederate and Union forces clashed in a battle at Byram’s Ford over the Big Blue River (just north of what is now 63rd Street). The site contains landscape features and a road associated with the Battle of Westport fought in 1864 during the Civil War. The Byram’s Ford National Register Historic District consists of the Byram’s Ford site and the Byram’s Ford road site. The historic ford of the Big Blue River and the historic wagon road leading to the ford figured prominently in the Battle of Westport’s easternmost component, commonly referred to as the Battle of the Big Blue. Although the Battle of the Big Blue

raged over an area that included the high ground on both sides of the river, Byram’s Ford and its immediate environs was the focal point of the battle. Furthermore, the Byram’s Ford Historic District possesses the only identified remnants of the Big Blue Battlefield which retain integrity in location, setting, feeling and association reminiscent of the environment found by the contending Union and Confederate forces on October 22-23, 1864.

The City Beautiful Movement in Kansas City grew out of the 1893 Report of the Board of Park and Boulevard Commissions of Kansas City, MO, presented by George Kessler, a landscape architect, to the Board of Park Commissioners. Although the entire parks and boulevard system, and its effect on city development, is a representation of the City Beautiful movement, Swope Park is perhaps most closely associated with the movement in Kansas City. Swope Park is Kansas City’s most prominent landscape architectural contribution to the City Beautiful Movement.



National Historic Register Marker at Byram's Ford

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Swope Park Interpretive Center

In 1896, Thomas H. Swope, a real estate investor, gave 1,350 acres of land to the City for what is now known as Swope Memorial Park. In celebration of the generosity of Swope, most of the city's businesses closed on June 25th of that year and 18,000 people swarmed to the site for a "Jubilee." In his later years, "Colonel" Swope, as he liked to be called, was fond of saying that he felt he owed a debt to the working people of the community whose labors had enhanced the value of Swope's real estate holdings, the basis of his fortune. William Rockhill Nelson, publisher of the *Kansas City Star*, encouraged Swope to make his gift by waging a long campaign in his newspaper on behalf of a park and boulevard system for Kansas City. In 1896 many citizens of the community felt that Swope Park, miles beyond the city limits, was so remote that ordinary people, for whose use it was intended, would never be able to reach or enjoy it. However, the park proved to be very popular and on December 13, 1909, the Kansas City Zoo opened in the park and expanded rapidly through private and public support.

Yet, much of the growth in Kansas City has been to the southwest, along the ridgelines between Turkey Creek and the Big Blue River. Since a large portion of the 5th District is east of this growth corridor, it has developed more slowly, and in many locations, still has a rural character. The first strip of what is now known as the 5th District, north of 49th Street and west of Prospect, was annexed in 1897. The city annexed the area that included Swope Park east to approximately the Big Blue River in 1909.

From 1909 to the 1940s, residential development continued outside the annexed areas beyond the Big Blue River. In the 1920s, J.J. Swofford was developing Eastwood Hills as a residential neighborhood.

The City of Kansas City annexed the Dodson area in 1947; a small industrial community located around 85th and Prospect. This community had been linked to Kansas City via a steam-powered rail line since the 1880s. The line ran south from Westport to today's 87th Street and Brook-

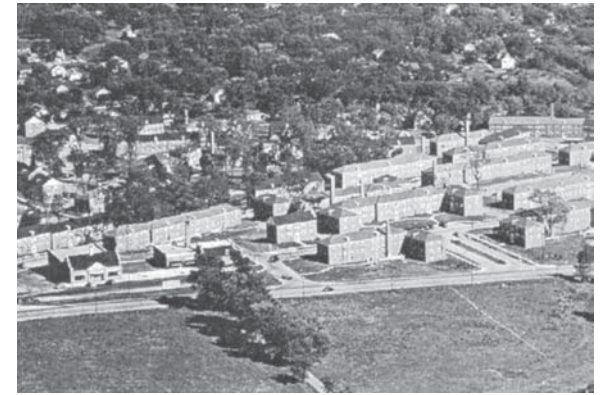
lyn. The service was called a “dummy line” because the engine was hidden within the steam car so that the machinery would not frighten horses. Because of the noise and smoke associated with the steam engine, J.C. Nichols led a group, the Westport and South Side Improvement Association, to help subsidize the Metropolitan Street Railway Company in electrifying the line in 1906.

The 1947 annexation also recognized the nationwide movement of annexation to provide space for growth in cities to accommodate needed housing and industry after World War II. The President Garden Apartments at 82nd and Troost were constructed between 1944-48 as worker housing for the Pratt Whitney factory. They were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1998.

The last two portions annexed in 1957 (the area between the Big Blue River and Raytown City limits), and in 1961 (the Little Blue Valley area) completed the 5th District. The Little Blue Valley area included the historic town of Little Blue,

which had grown up around the railroad crossing at Little Blue Road, and now has almost disappeared.

In the 1950s, a transportation link between downtown and southeast Kansas City was proposed. However, construction on today’s Bruce R. Watkins Drive was blocked by a 1973 lawsuit in which several groups asserted that a freeway would be damaging to the neighborhoods and the environment. In 1985 the state, city, and neighborhood groups reached an agreement that allowed construction to begin and directed part of the roadway to be a parkway, rather than a freeway, and thus more neighborhood friendly. The city named the roadway in 1987 in honor of Bruce Watkins (1924-1980), a political and social activist. Watkins made innumerable contributions to the development of Kansas City and towards the advancement of civil rights for African-Americans. The entire project including enhancements to bridge design and landscaping the full length of the roadway, is anticipated to cost approximately \$300 million, including \$32.5 million for the



The President Garden Apartments

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The Kansas City Zoo Located Within Swope Park

enhancements. Highway crews completed the final segment into downtown in 2001. Currently, city departments are working with the Missouri Department of Transportation on landscaping along the roadway.

Interstate 435 also runs through the 5th District and I-70 forms one of its borders with the Third District. The construction of I-435 within the district occurred over a four-year span, from 1966 to 1970. At the intersection of these two freeways is the Harry S. Truman Sports Complex, one of the District's most significant modern developments. The Truman Sports Complex houses both Kauffman Stadium and Arrowhead Stadium. Jackson County issued bonds for construction in 1967 and it opened in 1972.

The Kansas City Zoo expanded when in 1990 voters approved a \$50 million bond issue to completely overhaul the Zoo with authentic new exhibits and more exotic animals. Bolstered by fundraising efforts of

the Friends of the Zoo, the \$71 million renovation took only five years to complete. Recently, Friends of the Zoo were designated as the management entity for the Zoo.

Swope Park today, replete with both natural and built attractions, is a tribute not only to Colonel Swope but also to the vision of civic leaders who accepted Swope's original benefaction and immediately began planning its development. Additional tracts of land have been acquired since 1896, bringing today's total acreage to 1,763 with the zoo encompassing over 200 acres, making it the second-largest municipal park in the nation.

The Santa Fe Trail, Civil War battles, Swope Park, Bruce R. Watkins Drive, I-435, and Truman Sports Complex represent the major historical and developmental highlights of the 5th District. These significant resources continue to provide information about the past and important physical access to the District's many assets.