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Chancellor Gray-Little
University of Kansas
230 Strong Hall
Lawrence, KS 66044

Dear Chancellor Gray-Little,

In April, I had the opportunity to visit your beautiful campus and participate in an exciting colloquium on aging, culture, and the built environment organized by Professors Dennis Domer and Cheryl Lester from the Department of American Studies, Professor Keith Diaz-Moore from the School of Architecture, Design, and Planning, and Professor David Ekerdt, Director of the Gerontology Center. This colloquium, held in conjunction with an architecture design studio and situated in an interdisciplinary, studio-based learning environment in Snow Hall, brought together noted scholars and faculty from around the nation and across KU to address one of America's most compelling questions: how can new built environments be designed to extend the quality of life of more than 80 million Baby Boomers who are likely to live 30 years in retirement?

KU's interdisciplinary approach to this problem is almost unique in the United States where questions concerning the built environment and aging are normally the concerns of a small group of disciplinary experts, usually architects, who are focused on design matters without much attention to cultural issues. It is, however, impossible to design for the needs of this gigantic generation without understanding their cultural milieu and considering the transformative cultural changes that are bound to occur when one-third of the population is over 65. This age distribution has never happened in human history, so it is no wonder that we are somewhat uncertain as to how we should proceed with the design of whole new cities for the Boomers and their families. KU's initiative, I believe, is inventive enough to begin to analyze the full complexity of the immense task before the United States of building new cities for millions of people. Because the approach is interdisciplinary, I believe that the University of Kansas can attract significant funding for research projects in aging, culture, and built environment and build a meaningful teaching and research reputation around this topic.

The initiative at KU has been very fortunate to have the support of the Commons Development Company (CDC) which provided funds to bring in a first class group of outside experts on aging this spring and



furnish the new laboratory in Snow Hall for the project. The CDC, under the leadership of Lee Foster, has been especially broad-minded in its interest in working with the University of Kansas. Its understanding of KU's strategic initiative encourages research that reaches out to our communities and solves real problems. The CDC has plans to build 20 "*New Cities Longlife Communities*" and envisions establishing research units in each one of these communities, which would help carry on the outreach research mission of the University with KU staff situated in the communities themselves. These research laboratories would certainly have a chance to make significant contributions to our understanding of aging, culture, and the built environment. This would allow the use of data collected in a "Real Time" scenario.

The types of new developments for the Boomers will fall into various niche-market categories and I believe that the CDC is rightly interested in the university alumni market. More than 50 universities have already been involved in this kind of development that attracts alumni back to the university setting which actively engages them in the social, intellectual, and sports life of the university which they cherish now more than ever. A university alumni retirement center with good access to the university and to the city's services might also make sense at KU from a teaching, research and financial perspective. In a broader view, due to the economic crisis which continues to plague our nation I believe the Boomer Generation will have its last moment in the sun. The thousands of jobs created locally and across the country by these type developments will most certainly play a major role in getting our economy back on track.

It is with great excitement that I give my full support of this project and, in light of a book partnership with Henry Cisneros, which aims to discover and improve the structure of communities in an aging population, I am intrigued at the prospect of this most impressive initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura L. Carstensen".

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