

East Lawrence Neighborhood Association

P.O. Box 442393
Lawrence, KS 66044
eastlawrence@yahoo.com



February 24, 2022

BNSF Railway Company
Attn: Mark Ude
Assistant Vice-President, Corporate Real Estate Development
2500 Lou Menk Drive
Fort Worth, Texas 76131

Dear Mr. Ude,

The East Lawrence Neighborhood Association (ELNA) is a non-profit civic association representing the residents and property owners of the East Lawrence neighborhood. East Lawrence is adjacent to BNSF's tracks in Lawrence, Kansas and has longstanding historical and cultural ties to the railroad. *La Yarda* was a settlement near the tracks where railroad workers of Mexican-American heritage and their families lived until it was destroyed by flood in 1951.

ELNA enthusiastically supports celebrating *La Yarda* as a cultural heritage site and small park. We have many neighbors and friends who either grew up in *La Yarda* or consider it part of their family legacy. Children and grandchildren, even great grandchildren here in East Lawrence learn about their family origin in the tiny settlement east of 8th and Delaware St. They continue to have ties to New York Elementary and Liberty Memorial Central Middle Schools in East Lawrence; and they continue to celebrate their heritage at the St. John Mexican Fiesta each summer, where a museum-quality display informs visitors on the history of *La Yarda*.

The land where *La Yarda* is situated is owned by BNSF, and it is our understanding that the critical piece of the plan to develop a cultural site and small park is a transfer of the property to the City of Lawrence. The property currently is overgrown and unkempt, unappealing, and most likely dangerous. Transfer of the property to the city would benefit the East Lawrence neighborhood in terms of safety and cultural heritage, and it would benefit BNSF Railway in regard to liability. BNSF and the City already established a productive relationship with the transfer of the Depot. This would be a wonderful continuation of that collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barry M. Shalinsky".

Barry M. Shalinsky
President, on behalf of the ELNA Board
ELNAPrez@yahoo.com
785-330-5067 (voice and text)