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ILLUMINATIONS

A quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

Lion Gates Renovation



Borrelli at work

Following up on the inspection performed by the Historical Society, University City has undertaken repair of the Lion Gates. André Borrelli was chosen to do the work. He visited the Nov. 11 meeting of the Society's Board to describe his progress on the job. He found that the worst problem with the lion sculptures was severe cracking in the lower legs, which support the weight of the sculptures and rest on a somewhat insecure base. He added supports to the ankles to make them more stable. He repaired the cracks in the legs and elsewhere by chamfering the edges with a diamond drill and filling the cracks with sealant to keep moisture out. Weathering has worn the protective coating from the statues and eroded some detail. He has finished the lioness (on the north side of Delmar), bringing out detail such as the teeth, and

"encapsulated" the whole statue with a water-resistant, polymer-based skin. He invited U. Citizens to inspect it. "I gave her a face lift," he joked. "She's ready for Hollywood."

He has now started work on the lion, but with the onset of cold weather, probably will not be able to finish until spring. The pylons on which the sculptures stand are structurally sound, Borrelli said, but require tuck pointing and caulking. Further authorization from the city will be needed to complete the job. He is fully documenting his work with photographs and providing them to Andrea Riganti, director of community development at City Hall. Boardmembers provided Borrelli with information on previous repairs of the lions and asked him to make an inspection schedule for the future.

A Message from the President by Eleanor Mullin

Once again, we've had an interesting year! Our best news is that the repair of the Gates of Opportunity began in October, as you may read in this newsletter. On the downside, again as you may read in my article, it looks very likely that the Delmar and Harvard buildings will be torn down. We've had successful programs--our Board Member David Linzee's presentation on the history of Parkview Gardens, the informative State of the City meeting by Mayor Shelley Welsch and City Manager Lehman Walker and Joe Edwards' fascinating presentation about the origin of the St. Louis Walk of Fame. Century Plaques keep going

up, and we more than doubled the number of City Hall tours we gave.

On behalf of our Board, our best wishes for a wonderful holiday season, and a healthy and happy 2015. If we had one wish granted, it would be to greatly increase our membership. Please consider asking one neighbor, friend or past U. City resident you are in touch with to join us as we continue to champion the history of our unique city.

Edwards at Annual Dinner



Joe Edwards was the speaker at the Society's annual dinner meeting Oct. 14 at Pasta House. He explained that the Delmar Walk of Fame was born when he noticed how often the phrase "born in St. Louis" recurred when he read about some great American. "I thought we should promote ourselves better," he said. His first idea was a museum, but then he thought that Hollywood Boulevard-style stars on the pavement, open 24/7, would be better. He decided to go Hollywood one better by adding capsule bios below the stars. Another difference is that honorees pay for their stars in Hollywood. They don't in U. City. "I wanted a more pure process," Edwards commented. City Hall liked the idea, but wouldn't give him any money. In fact, the sidewalks belonged to St. Louis County. They gave him permission, then reneged at the last moment. He

had to persuade U. City to take over the sidewalks and allow him to install the stars.

The first year, 1988, there were 10 honorees. Now there are three picks each year. Anyone can make a nomination anytime. Just check the criteria on the website (stlouiswalkoffame.org) and send your candidate's name to Edwards. A committee of 120 local worthies, chosen from area universities, historical societies and media outlets, makes the decisions. It's a diverse committee; he wanted to make sure there were plenty of minorities and women, to make up for a historical bias toward white men. Each star costs \$4000. They've never been vandalized; if you see a square of pavement missing, Edwards himself has taken it up for repair. Today the Loop Special Business District pays to keep the Walk of Fame in business. After the talk, Edwards and daughter Hope signed copies of the new edition of their book, *St. Louis Walk of Fame*. He had donated a copy to every high school in the area, for kids in search of role models. "The media have underestimated St. Louis," he said. "We've contributed a lot."

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Condos on Delmar Harvard Site?

by
Eleanor Mullin

The November 2 Women in the Neighborhood meeting, hosted by Ellen Bern, featured Henry Warshaw and his architect, Peter Tao, presenting their current concept for the Delmar Harvard property. Originally from New York, Warshaw came to Washington University for college in the early 1970s and stayed on in St. Louis. He is a developer, owning, among other properties, the building on Delmar that has Club Fitness. Peter Tao has worked internationally as an architect and designed United Provisions in the Loop. Almost thirty women attended, including Mayor Shelley Welsh and Jen Jensen, President of the Sutter-Meyer Association.

Both Warshaw and Tao emphasized that this project is in the concept phase. It includes not only the Delmar Harvard property but the playground area west of it--just to the north of the City Hall

complex and the old Library. The purchase of this ground has not been finalized, and they are just starting the process of requesting re-zoning. Warshaw noted that the purchase price was very high, as several out of town companies were bidding on it. Both men repeatedly remarked that they understood the project must fit into the Historic District of our Civic Plaza, and of the neighborhood, and they were happy to have so many University Heights One residents attending.

The concept is to raze both the Delmar and Harvard buildings. They are simply not suited to being renovated into apartments. Warshaw noted the buildings are not on the Historic Register. A



Delmar Harvard School

five-story U-shaped building on the site would have approximately 200 apartments. On the playground site, they plan a five-story parking garage. To mask the garage, fronting Harvard, a five-story building would have approximately 60 condominium units. Warshaw explained that apartments are the most viable living spaces needed today, and he hopes the plan for condominium units will appeal to people who are downsizing but wish to live in U. City

There were many questions about the garage and traffic patterns. It is not financially feasible to build the 300-car garage underground--the cost would be approximately five million dollars more than an above-ground garage. The plan proposes that there will be spaces available during the day for parking for city employees, or perhaps the public. The only egress to Delmar is Sgt. Mike King Blvd. Traffic studies are being done; preliminary studies showed this would not be a problem. Many residents were concerned that their view to the east would be blocked by these buildings. Warshaw explained that the five-story height is 57 feet, but City hall is over 130 feet high, and on a rise, so it would remain a visible landmark for them.

Warshaw is requesting tax abatement and quite rightly pointed out that the Vanguard project at Delmar and I-170 got this, as have other U. City projects, so his project should be treated in the same way. Once started, Warshaw said the project would take 18 months to build. He is hoping to get financing and all re-zoning and design approvals in the next six months.

Jen Jensen asked about the murals on the outside of the Delmar building, and Warshaw indicated that he would preserve them; it was unclear whether they would be worked into the exterior design of the new building or, perhaps, given to the city or the Historical Society for preservation or display elsewhere. The Historic Preservation Committee voted against this plan, but that committee has

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only an advisory capacity. Tao stated that mixed use of these buildings-- retail and/or office space on the ground floor, for example--did not make sense.

Now my opinion. It would be my wish to preserve at least one of the buildings, perhaps with retail or offices on the ground floor. I recognize that not every old building needs to be saved, and modern housing, bringing more residents, would be a boon to our city and local businesses. But we must make every effort to balance progress with history. The look of our Civic Plaza is unique, and so many buildings besides City Hall make this area so charming, so visually beautiful and interesting. Can the exterior design of these new structures meld into the area, and not look so modern as to seem jarring and out of place? I also have a concern that next in line would be tearing down the old Library and City Hall Annex. I was very impressed with the concern expressed by both Warshaw and Tao to maintain 'artistic integrity' in that

regard. We must also trust that our officials will take every step necessary to insure that the Civic Plaza of the future respects the Civic Plaza of the past.

HSUC Website Upgraded

New webmaster Chad Snider has finished overhauling the Society website. Visit ucityhistory.org to see a slideshow of historic photos and read about our news and upcoming events, as well as the Century House plaque program. Coming soon will be an archive of past issues of *Illuminations*. You can also order our publications, DVDs and gift items, and explore links to the library and photo archives, other U. City websites and the Missouri History Museum.