AIA St. Louis

August 27, 2025

Don Roe
Executive Director
Planning and Urban Design Agency
City of St. Louis
1520 Market Street
Suite 2000
St. Louis, Missouri 63103

Re: Lyle House in Carondelet Park

Dear Don:

Thank you for meeting with the AIA St. Louis' Lyle House Task Force to discuss the future of the property after the devastating fire. Both AIA St. Louis and Landmarks Association believe the Lyle House should be preserved and restored, and we offer the following thoughts on the building.

Neighborhood Support

The community leadership, including the Alderpersons and Landmarks Association, have long wanted to preserve the property and find an appropriate use for it. The Friends of Carondelet Park raised $35,000 several years ago specifically for the house and have been vocal in their support to the property's preservation. That support is a critical component to the project's future success and is evidence that the community wants it to continue to be a significant park landmark.

Preservation

The building, even in its current state, is worth restoring and preserving. It is uniquely important in the history of St. Louis and is a significant asset to the community. Both the two-story and one-story structures are architecturally noteworthy and could be attractive amenities, if properly restored. The interior and exterior architectural features, such as windows, moldings and details should be secured, documented, and assessed for repair to best showcase these historic features going forward.

The heavily damaged 'connector' between those structures appears to be beyond repair and likely needs to be removed initially. However, it could be replaced with a similar structure if future programming calls for it.

In addition to the house, the nearby Old Stable building should be considered as part of the historic complex and be included in the overall preservation and utilization planning process. If a more functional and economical park maintenance building is constructed elsewhere in the park near the rail line, that building's reuse would bring additional users to the area, supporting the development of the Lyle House.

Currently, most of the available site parking is fenced for use and storage by the Parks Department. Any future development will need parking, further supporting wholistic consideration of the surrounding area.

Additional research into the property's history would be helpful to potentially support grant applications and to promote its eventual use.

Stabilization

There has been damage to the house from the fire but also from the long history of deferred maintenance. For the building to be viable, it is imperative that the site be secured and stabilized until improvements can be made and the building occupied. In addition to maintaining the recently installed perimeter fence and plywood infill, the installation of site lighting will help to prevent further damage to the structure.

We recommend that the building be repaired and restored as soon as possible, prior to soliciting potential users. Potential tenants will likely not want to delay pursuing their projects during the clean-up and may not be able to visualize the potential in the building in its current condition. They require timeline efficiency and specificity when making facility decisions. Damage left unrepaired on public buildings attracts additional damage, only increasing the costs of restoration. Also, its current state does not provide the park with an appropriately welcoming landmark at its entry. The restoration activity at house's prominent location with significant park and pass-through traffic will bring attention to the property, helping to market it to commercial users and aid in visualization of its potential.

Additional Funding & Phasing

Prior to the fire, we understand that the Board of Public Service was close to releasing the Lyle House restoration for bidding, so we feel sure there was money set aside for this project. Additionally, we understand that as Carondelet Park is a regional park, it receives yearly state funding and currently has a "few hundred thousand dollars earmarked – but not encumbered – for the Lyle House." The park receives a few hundred thousand dollars a year for capital projects, which is why the Lyle house restoration is likely a multi-year, multi-phase project that moves as capital allows.

Restoration/construction could be broken into chunks including:

- Demolition & remediation
- Exterior restoration of both structures
- Main house utilities
- Main house interior finish (historic restoration & white box)
- Small house utilities
- Small house interior finish (white box)
- Site improvements

Alternately, the funds could be borrowed to allow the entire project to be completed sooner, using yearly capital funds to repay the loan. This would provide increased efficiency and lead to a lower overall project cost.

There may be additional available grant funding, ward capital funds, and fundraising opportunities. All available funding resources should be explored.

Use Study

Parallel with securing and restoring the house, we recommend that the City of St. Louis undertake an inclusive community engagement process of the complex's useful occupation. The recommendations developed could inform the future Request for Proposals for future tenants.

As the Lyle House sits at a prominent and heavily trafficked intersection at Loughborough & Grand, steps from the Carondelet Connector to the River Des Peres Greenway and the extensive Great Rivers Greenway trail system, and within feet of the pickleball and tennis courts, its location is well-suited to development.

We are including numerous precedents of buildings within parks that have been renovated, put to good use, and provide valuable park and community amenities:

- Stupp Center in Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO
- Piper Palm House in Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO
- Cabanne House in Forest Park, St. Louis, MO
- Oakland House in Affton, MO
- Mote-Morris House in Leesburg, FL
- Stone Houses in Dix Park, Raleigh, NC
- Village Heights in Roanoke, VA
- The Gatehouse in Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO
- The Siteman Carriage House in Laumeier Sculpture Park, St. Louis County, MO
- Edgewater Village Hall in Staten Island, NY
- Burton House in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA
- Sherman-Gilbert House in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA

- Busyhead House in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA
- Christian House in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA
- Temple Beth Israel in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA
- Senlis Cottage in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA
- The Bacon Log Cabin in Ballwin, MO
- Edgar Allen Poe Cottage in the Bronx, NY
- Valentine-Varian House in the Bronx, NY
- Van Cortlandt House Museum in the Bronx, NY
- Bartow-Pell Masion Museum in the Bronx, NY
- Hendrick I. Lott House in Brooklyn, NY
- Lefferts Historic House Museum in Brooklyn, NY
- Old Stone House in Brooklyn, NY
- Dyckman Farmhouse Museum in Brooklyn, NY
- Morris Jumel Mansion in New York, NY
- Merchant's House Museum in New York, NY
- Conference House in Staten Island, NY
- Overfield Tavern in Troy, OH
- Marquette Park Rec Center in Marquette Park, St. Louis, MO
- Thomas Dunn Learning Center in Marquette Park, St. Louis, MO
- The Barn in the Thomas Sappington House Complex in Crestwood, MO
- Elewa Farm in Lake Forest, IL
- The Boathouse Restaurant in Forest Park
- The Dairy in Central Park, New York, NY
- McConaughy House in Heritage Park, San Diego, CA
- Rockwell Beer Garden in Francis Park, St. Louis, MO
- Fulton-Mock-Blackmer House in Salisbury, NC
- Stable & Park Foreman's Residence in Tower Grove Park, St. Louis, MO

We look forward to working with you and the City of St. Louis to preserve this significant piece of St. Louis history and to ensure its long-term viability.

Sincerely,

AIA St. Louis Board of Directors



Melissa Harlan
AIA St. Louis President

Landmarks Association



Andrew Weil
Executive Director