

UNIVERSITY PARK  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION OVERLAY ZONE  
EST. MARCH 22 2000 BY ORDINANCE #173160

UNIVERSITY PARK H.P.O.Z. BOARD  
CHAIRPERSON, JEAN FROST / VICE-CHAIRPERSON, JANICE ROBINSON / SECRETARY, JIM CHILDS  
TREASURER, DAVID RAPOSA / ARCHITECT TOM MICHALI



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January 17, 2007

COPY

RE: 2317 SCARFF STREET FIRE (12-21-06)

Dear Mr. Reitan,

I am writing as Secretary of the University Park HPOZ and on behalf of the concerned community members who spoke last night at our public hearing. During the discussion of the fires at 2309 and 2317 Scarff Street your name was brought to our attention by community member Sergio Gutman. Since our Board has now learned that an insurance claim is pending on the 2317 property we are outreaching to you to inform you of some pertinent facts that we believe could assist you when making your determination. The University Park Board has had a long and extensive involvement with the subject property beginning in 2002 when the previous owner, Joe Hantman who was under indictment by the City Attorney's Office, flipped the property to Sonny Salazar.

I am currently collating and assembling our Public Record Report that documents the negligence and abuse which Mr. Salazar inflicted on this historic home. This Report will include all comments, as found in the official Board Minutes, made at the multiple public hearings on the subject property, photographs and as well our correspondence with various City Departments. I can make this public document available to you when completed upon your request through Matthew Glesne of the LA Department of City Planning / Community Planning Bureau (Tel. 213-978-1198 / Email: matthewglesne@lacity.org)

It is impossible for me to effectively synopsise the voluminous material that will be included in the Report but I believe you should be aware that with the single

exception of the re-boarded up of the structure for security purposes that was re-imposed by order of B&S in May of 2006 no permitted construction activity has taken place on the subject property since October of 2005. This historic structure was left abandoned with all doors and windows open or missing for over 8 months, in spite of continuing efforts by the community and our Board to have it secured.

Another critical piece of information you should know is that of the relationship between Hantman and Salazar. Joe Hantman owns the vacant lot and ½ to the south at 2323 Scarff. He has for over 20-years tried unsuccessfully to have the Wells House demolished to develop a large scale residential complex on the combined site. His efforts were futile in part because of the historic significance of the house and the fact that the 2317 property was under a City's Rent Escrow Account Program / REAP for approximately 12-years (1991-2003).

If you are not aware of it, the historic Wells House was, besides being a Contributing-Structure to the University Park HPOZ (2000), also listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a Contributor to the ST. JAMES PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT (1991). Therefore the only way for Mr. Hantman to get a City demolition permit was to complete an Environmental Impact Report as required by the California Environmental Quality Act. The EIR-CEQA process requires that findings be made to justify the loss of a historic structure and consider appropriate mitigation measures. Since the subject property is in a City HPOZ, a demolition permit was unlikely to receive approval. The only other method for demolition remaining therefore was long-term neglect or arson.

In addition to the public record that exists from our Board there is also extensive documentation created by Leslie Evans the Chair of the Public Safety Committee for ECNANDC / Empowerment Congress North Area Neighborhood Development Council. This information including photographs is readily available on their web-site. You can contact Mr. Evans at: Email: lbevans@earthlink.net / Tel: 323-734-7391 / Cell: 323-574-5586. Besides documenting the neglect of the Wells House, Mr. Evans also documents the continuing presence of the two technically homeless squatters, Gunnar Latham and Mr. Bill who were encamped on both Hantman's vacant lot and in the rear yard of the Wells House for years with the tacit approval of both owners.

It was Gunnar Latham who this last summer, just before his forceful removal by Hantman & Salazar, related a conversation between he and Salazar in which Salazar discussed his wishes that the house would burn. Mr. Latham was last heard from in an assisted health care facility in San Diego and could possibly be located through the Veteran's Administration. It is Mr. Bill who remained on the rear of the Wells House until the fire. Most of the immediate neighbors believe he had something to do with the origins of the fire. LAPD Senior Lead Officer Robin Surendranath of the Southwest Area Division has been involved in this case for a long time and I recommend that you contact him directly at Email: 30973@lapd.lacity.org / Tel. 213 847-5945.

Additionally you should be aware that on December 28, 2006 B&S site-posted "NOTICE OF INTENTION TO DEMOLISH BUILDINGS AND FENCE PROPERTY" on the rubble remains of the fire-destroyed historic Wells-House. The notice had a case No. 101552 and with a contact of Inspector David Haendle (213-252-3945) and an effective date: 01/03/2007. The notice was a standard issue and did not reference the fire but

another B&S Order issued on August 04, 2003 as cause for action and was sign by Principle Inspector David Vaccaro Citywide Nuisance Abatement Program 213-252-3931

I believe that you will also be interested in the public comments that were made by the outraged community members last night. There was a great outpouring of anger at the loss of the historic Wells House and the significant damage to the adjoining historic Burkhalter House next door which is a Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument (No.409). I am, as Board Secretary, charged with writing the Board's meeting minutes, these Minutes after they have been approved by the Board become part of the public record. Again, if you request them through Matt Glesne our Planning Staff facilitator I will be pleased to forward them to you as well. The Board meets regularly on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month at 2316 ½ South Union Avenue beginning at 6:00 pm and the subject of the fires will be an ongoing Agenda item until the issues connected with them have been resolved. If I can be of any additional assistance please feel free to contact directly.

Respectfully yours,



Jim Childs, Secretary, University Park HPOZ Board  
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University Park / LA-CA 90007

(213) 748-1656

CC/ Guadalupe Duran-Medina, Council Deputy CD#1  
Ken Bernstein, Office of Historic Resources  
Matt Glesne, LADCP  
Leslie Evans, ECNANDC  
Robin Surendranath, LAPD  
David Vaccaro, LADBS  
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Eric Bronson, WAHA  
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Jay Platt, LA Conservancy  
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