

Carytown [TALK]

Carycourt Gets A Face Lift



Maybe you noticed right off; maybe not. But with or without you, work on sprucing up the Carycourt Shopping Center got underway late this past January. You can't miss it now. Construction workers, machinery, piles of brick and a missing façade mark the high level of activity that is moving the face lift to completion by early fall.

Jerry Hunley, project superintendent with Beers Skanska, Inc. says the plan behind the work is to restore the shopping center to its original 1930's style, make needed repairs, and generally clean everything up.

Commonwealth Architects, which specializes in urban revitalization, designed

the shopping center's renovation project. Robert Mills, principle and architect, says once it's complete, you'll notice the care that has been taken to keep the look true to its 1930's roots. "People will be able to see elements from the original building that have not been seen in 30 years. We found the original drawings dating back to 1938 when the shopping center was first built, from the early 40's when the side with Pink was built, and the 1950's when the side with the old Tiffany's store was built. So we knew what it looked like and designed the renovations to return it to its art deco splendor of the past." The tin ceilings, limestone and granite will remain and in some cases be enhanced. Improvements and additions will include a new granite sign, additional lighting for safety and ambiance, a repaved parking lot, patios

on both corners, and a metal picket fence and landscaping along the street side. According to Mills, the Sauers, who own the center, were motivated to get Carycourt designated as an historic district. To that end, the history of the center was researched and filed with the Department of Historic Resources and, in fact, the shopping center is now a historic district plopped right down in the middle of Carytown. The designation means that historic guidelines for the renovation have to be followed. Mills says the plans are "close to the original look of the center with a little spice."

Of course, renovating a busy shopping center can be tricky for both the shoppers and the merchants. But in this case, everyone seems pleased to see the work underway. "The center was getting a little

run down," says Mills. "The merchants have been anticipating the renovation for a while. And we were working back and forth to keep true to the original design and waiting for the historic sign-off on the plans. That takes a while. Plus, with the project scheduled to take about eight months to complete, we had to plan the work to happen in non-holiday shopping times, which means we had to begin at the first of the year or wait another year."

Now that work is underway, the merchants are excited to see the beginnings of the transformation. Hunley says he is working hard to keep the work from intruding on any of the store's business. "We are making every effort to keep the center's stores open and accessible during the renovation and, through monthly meetings, to keep them aware of what will be occurring next.