

Restoration architect takes a look at Delta Sig house

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The former Delta Sigma Phi fraternity house at 71 Main Street will begin its new life as the Fasano Welcome Center with an old look. Robert Corbin '56, who was not a member of Delta Sig but who often ate dinner there before going to Davis Gym for basketball practice, read about the proposed renovation of the former fraternity as a welcome center for the University, and volunteered the services of his daughter, Elizabeth Corbin Murphy, an architect with Chambers, Murphy and Burge of Akron, OH. Only Elizabeth Corbin Murphy is not just an architect, but an award-winning restoration architect whose firm is recognized for its work on such national treasures as The Octagon House in Washington, DC; Thomas Jefferson's Poplar Forest; Frank Lloyd Wright's Dana Thomas House; and Bertram Goodhue's Nebraska State Capitol. Murphy and her crew spent hours going over the first floor of the house conducting a condition assessment, looking at what's there, and what might be missing. When they removed acoustical tile in one room, for example, they found a shadow in the plaster that indicated the ornamentation that originally decorated the ceiling. "We took all kinds of photos and climbed all over," said Murphy. "It's very exciting." "We wanted the first floor of the house, where we will create meeting rooms for use by alumni and others on campus, to reflect the beauty of the house as it was originally built," said Mark Shardlow '83, executive director of operations for University Relations. The second and third floors of the house will be converted to office space for the University Relations Division, including Alumni and Community Relations. While those will be attractive spaces, Shardlow said, they will not be historic restorations. "To do so would dramatically increase the cost of the project," he noted. The cost of renovating the house, including a historically accurate restoration of the first floor and exterior, is being paid for by the brothers of Delta Sigma Phi. "They're doing this out of a sense of affection for their fraternity, for the University, and for the Fasanos," said Shardlow. The welcome center will be named in honor of Joseph Fasano '54; Elizabeth Ann Saunders Fasano, '53, and their son, the late Patrick Fasano '80. "The brothers have been very generous in their support of the project, but most of them, in the spirit of Delta Sig, don't want their names, much less the amount of their gifts, made public," Shardlow added. Work is expected to begin this summer.