



Delmar DivINe seeks to bridge the Divide

Re-Envisioning Delmar: Project empowers nonprofits, promotes collaboration and investment in the community

BY ABBYWOJCIK

With a transformation of the empty St. Luke's Hospital, the Delmar DivINe is now open on Delmar Boulevard. This new, collaborative work and living space is dedicated to maximizing capital in St. Louis through a focus on nonprofit organizations. With amenities for both nonprofit and residential tenants in the historic building, Delmar DivINe's mission is to improve the lives of children and families in the metropolitan St. Louis area.

The community of nonprofits has free access to over 18,000 square feet of shared space that encourages collaboration, including conference rooms, meeting spaces, a podcast studio, a fitness center and an auditorium. Even if a neighborhood group isn't a tenant, it is invited to use The Node, a space that features state-of-the-art information technology and high-

speed internet, for their community meetings and office needs.

Residential apartments are at almost 100% capacity, and tenant space for nonprofit organizations is approaching 80% capacity, with additional companies using memberships to The Node. For example, Alive and Well Communities, a group focused on community healing from the trauma of discrimination, uses an active Node membership at Delmar DivINe.

Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear, is the "chief inspirator" behind the Delmar DivINe. Clark came to St. Louis in 1976 and fell in love with the city's rich history and diverse beauty. When she discovered the for sale sign at St. Luke's Hospital, she spent years speaking with the local community about what would improve, impact and inspire the area. The result is the Delmar DivINe, which opened in the fall of 2021.

"We're building a community, not just this building. We're building a neighborhood for the tenants in our building and also the apartment tenants," Clark said.

Seed St. Louis had been housed at Delmar DivINe since January 2022 and has thrived by taking advantage of the amenities and opportunities. The agency's purpose is to provide the tools and education needed to support community or school-led gardens and urban orchards in the St. Louis region.

With Seed St. Louis' original office space being downtown and its only demonstration garden in Grand Center, agency leaders were looking for a place to bring everything together, said Chief Executive Officer Matt Schindler.

"Once we heard about [the Delmar DivINe], it made sense because this shared space is wonderful," Schindler said. "We're the only green nonprofit here, so there are all these other new ideas and other



Built in the former St. Luke's Hospital, the Delmar DivINe is now an innovation hub serving nonprofits, with residential and company tenants.

new possible partnerships."

Seed St. Louis is in the conceptual stages of planning a new demonstration garden in a narrow strip of land they purchased from the Delmar DivINe located at the north corner of the property across from the William L. Clay Sr. Sculpture Park.

"We own the land, but we're definitely going to brand it as being part of the Delmar DivINe," Schindler said.

This project provides several exciting perks for the Delmar

DivINe, the local community and Seed St. Louis. Agency participants envision beautiful walking paths with smaller gardens coming off the main path, as well as classrooms, a chicken coop, restrooms and an operation room for construction. They hope that Delmar DivINe tenants will eventually use the same process they'd use for a conference room reservation to reserve an outdoor garden space, bringing nature into the work everyone is doing.

With the William L. Clay Sr. Sculpture Park right across the street, while lacking any real park amenities and sculptures of any kind, Seed St. Louis announces plans to clean it up and maintain it.

"We're going to ask the community for input this fall," Schindler said. "And as long as it's not too extravagant, we're willing to invest money, get it cleaned up, bring in a sculpture, bring in some pieces that you actually want to have in a public space and just make it nice. That's good for the community, but we're also self-serving because right behind it is one of our community gardens."

One of Seed St. Louis' existing



The interior entrance to the Delmar DivINe office.

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partnerships for 20 years is also in close proximity, meaning that in addition to their office space at the Delmar DivINE, they will have a new demonstration garden, a beautiful sculpture park for the community and a community partner all within walking distance. Seed St. Louis hired an architect in August to draw up plans, with the aspiration of the garden being one of the greenest sights in St. Louis.

Schindler hopes to begin construction as soon as possible.

The Delmar DivINE is bringing innovation and collaboration to the CWE and greater St. Louis region in so many inspiring ways. By reenvisioning the abandoned St. Luke's Hospital as a social innovation hub serving nonprofits in health, education, human services and community development, the participants' devotion to social change and cultural legacy is clear.

"I think you're seeing changes

already and more interest in the neighborhood, therefore having a whole complex of people here both for residents and for businesses, it's changing it and bringing more activity to the area," Schindler said. "And a big part of it is that Maxine Clark is a huge cheerleader for all of us. She's so well connected out there, doing all kinds of speeches and involved in all kinds of projects, and she's always cheerleading us, which is wonderful too."



Seed St. Louis has been a tenant since January 2022, and has thrived, taking advantage of the amenities and opportunities.



The Delmar DivINE front entrance, located on Delmar Boulevard.



The Node (or "NOrth of DELmar") is St. Louis' newest coworking space to work and connect.

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Rachel Boxdorfer
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Will Springer
314.817.6620—mobile
wspringer@bhhsall.com

Ellen Crowley
314.791.2223—mobile
ecrowley@bhhsall.com