

For Immediate Release

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Silent Film Studio One Step Closer to a Comeback

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. - Nearly a century after its cameras began rolling, the nation's only surviving silent film studio complex is preparing for its second stint in the spotlight. The Norman Studios Silent Film Museum Board of Directors today unveiled architectural renderings, designed by Jacksonville's Kenneth Smith Architects, illustrating proposed renovations to the 1916 complex where Richard Norman made history.

Along with Oscar Micheaux and the Lincoln Motion Picture Company, Norman was among the first to produce films starring African-American actors in positive roles. Between 1920 and 1928, Norman's company produced six feature films as part of a movement to establish an independent black cinema at a time when blacks were stereotyped and demeaned in mainstream movies.

Today, Norman's complex stands in decades-long disrepair. But that soon will change. In 2002, the city of Jacksonville bought property holding four of Norman's five buildings. With just over \$650,000 in grant funding, the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum, a new nonprofit organization, aims to restore the property, developing a museum and community center. Plans call for a silent film museum and community center offering various programs, including a summer camp designed to teach economically disadvantaged children about careers in the film industry.

The unveiling of the renderings took place at the Historic Klutho Building in Springfield, once a temporary home to silent film actors including the famous comedic duo, Laurel and Hardy. The Norman Studio complex is located at 6337 Arlington Road.

Available for interviews:

- Capt. Richard Norman, Jr., son of Richard Norman
- Ken Smith, Kenneth Smith Architects
- Todd Roobin, Chief, Jacksonville Film and Television Office
- Joel McEachin, Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission
- Devan Stuart, Chair, Norman Studios Silent Film Museum
- Carolyn Williams, Co-Chair, Norman Studios Silent Film Museum
- Rita Reagan, historic preservation activist, member, Norman Studios Silent Film Museum

A JPEG image of the Norman Studios Silent Film Museum rendering is available. Contact Devan Stuart at 742-7011 or dstuart7@bellsouth.net.

Additional informational sources:

- Indiana University, Black Film Center/Archive, Richard Norman Collection, www.indiana.edu/~bfca/collection/special/norman.html
- JacksonvilleStory.com, www.jacksonvillestory.com/People from H through Z.htm
- UNCF/Richard E. Norman Scholarship for African American Cinema, www.myflorida.com, search "Richard Norman."

