



Boston Landmarks Commission

City of Boston
The Environment
Department

Boston City Hall/Room 805
Boston, Massachusetts 02201
617/635-3850

Susan Pranger, Vice-Chair
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Jeffrey Pond
Ellen Lipsey, Exec. Director

March 6, 2003

Ms. Sandra Albano, Assistant to the City Council
Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02129

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CLERK
SETTS

Dear Ms Albano:

Thank you for forwarding Cambridge City Council's resolution to urge saving the Gaiety Theatre.

Mayor Menino has led city efforts to assist in the restoration of theaters of major historic significance that can be revitalized to meet today's audience demands. Full financing for restoration and operations is crucial to these endeavors. In 1995 Mayor Menino nominated the Paramount, the Keith Memorial/Opera House and the Modern Theater to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Most Endangered list. In 1996, the mayor co-sponsored a workshop to formulate a plan for these theaters.

It has taken a sustained effort. Today all three theaters have achieved Landmark status and are undergoing serious efforts for their restoration and reuse. Clear Channel has embarked upon a \$31 million restoration to reopen the Opera House in 2004. Millenium Properties has invested \$1.2 million in the exterior of the Paramount, and a consortium of the area's foremost arts groups has embarked on developing and operating a 400-800 seat theater inside at a cost upwards of \$15 million. The Boston Redevelopment Authority is in the process of acquiring the Modern Theater to save it from demolition-by-neglect and ensure its reuse.

City efforts are focused on other historic theater projects as well. We are working with Emerson College to restore the Majestic's faded interior splendor. Our partnership with the Boston Center for the Arts' has fostered restoration of the historic Cyclorama and construction of two "black box" theaters in the adjacent new mixed-use development.

The Boston Landmarks Commission has engaged a consultant to investigate, document and analyze the history of the Gaiety vis-à-vis Landmark status. Such a rigorous study process is undertaken for every potential designation. When completed, the study report will be the subject of a public hearing before the Boston Landmarks Commission. Due to the pending reviews for a development project on the site, the commission has given this study top priority. We anticipate the report will be available on the Boston Landmarks Commission website, cityofboston.gov/environment, in late February or early March. A public hearing will be held in March or April according to this schedule.

Landmark status is reserved for historic buildings of the highest significance to the city and to the commonwealth, the New England region or the nation. A two-thirds vote of the Boston Landmarks Commission is required for designation as well as approval by the Mayor and City Council.

Theaters are well represented in Boston's 78 individual Landmark designations. The Paramount, the Emerson Majestic, the Keith Memorial, the Wilbur, the Metropolitan (Wang); and the exterior of the Modern are Landmarks. Designation is pending for the Colonial and the exterior of the Bijoux.

Your letter to the mayor will be recorded as testimony in support of designation of the Gaiety Theatre. On behalf of the Boston Landmarks Commission and Mayor Menino, I thank you for writing to express your concern.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ellen J. Lipsey". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a prominent initial "E" and a long, sweeping tail on the "y".

Ellen J. Lipsey
Executive Director

S-91

Communication #9

A communication was received from Boston Landmarks Commission, transmitting thanks for the City Council's resolution urging the saving of the Gaiety Theatre.

In City Council March 17, 2003

PLACED ON FILE.