

Jackie Henderson

6
2-21-15

From: boydwalker2012@gmail.com
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2015 2:03 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66311: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council February 21st Docket item 815 1/2 King S

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66311.

Request Details:

- Name: Boyd Walker
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 703-732-7269
- Email: boydwalker2012@gmail.com
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: February 21st Docket item 815 1/2 King St.
- Attachment: [Opposition to conversion of Old Town Theater.docx](#)
- Expected Response Date: Thursday, February 26

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at [the *Call.Click.Connect.* staff interface](#).

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Dear Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Members of City Council,

I am writing in opposition to the proposed conversion of the Old Town Theater into a retail establishment and the indefinite deferral of the proposal, as a more positive solution is sought. It is clear from the Staff Report that what we have before us is the conversion of the Old Town theater to a retail use:

"The expansion would extend the mezzanine/balcony level to create a full second floor. It would increase the floor area from 7,210 square feet to 7,965 square feet, and the floor area ratio would increase from 1.66 to 1.84. The expansion would create a new leasable commercial space on the second floor. This construction project would also create a new leasable commercial space on the first floor, as auditorium seats and stage would be removed. The auditorium floor would also get flattened. The applicant proposes that retail stores, restaurants, or other service oriented commercial businesses would occupy the spaces."

-The addition of 755 Sq Ft. (plus the removal of the stage, concession, projection booth, and other theater related elements) will create additional sq. ft. So how many Sq Ft. in total will be added (is there an existing floor plan provided?) and how does this compare to other retail establishments on King St. Is the additional sq. ft. needed for it to be successful?

- Will two different retail uses will probably require a change of the entrance of the building?

"The proposed use is consistent with the Old Town Small Area Plan chapter of the Master Plan which designated the property for commercial use." I know not all of you were on the City Council at the time this plan was passed (although I think most were) so how does this fit in to the overall Small Area Plan, and was there no suggestion in the plan of an Arts Venue?

I wonder why this has to be passed now, with no specific retail establishment proposed? Could it not wait until such a retail establishment was proposed. Surely major retailers who are looking for long term space, such as H and M, Anthropologie, or other stores that have recently come to King St. have study periods, and then want to renovate spaces for their own needs, and so therefore have to come back to the planning process. Would, considering the loss of the Old Town Theater, it might not be wise to wait until a specific use is proposed?

"It should be noted that this proposed construction would correspond with the theater changing in use to retail or service commercial. Staff feels that it is relevant to further address the future use of the subject property, even though this is purely an application for an FAR increase. There is a variety of ground floor and upper floor uses that could occupy the space by right such as retail stores or personal service establishments. With additional SUP approval, potential uses include fitness studios or restaurants."

So, by-right, the owner could lease to a number of retail, restaurant uses, and this SUP only serves to increase the possible options, even though no potential tenant is specified. It sounds like he is not restricted presently in who he leases to.

Also, as Staff says in this report, they think it is valid to address the use, even though this is just a proposal for increased FAR. So what we are really addressing is the use.

"Due to public efforts, the applicant was able to find a tenant to maintain the theater use, but after operating for a year and a half, the applicant shuttered the theater doors to re-evaluate the business and the continuation of the use. In early August 2014, the subject property was on the market for sale or for lease. "

I believe that City Council should ask more about this, including the operation of the business. Why did the owner part ways with the first operators and what did he try when he operated the theater himself. What was done to evaluate the business, and what was done to market the building for sale or for lease?

"The applicant has expressed interest in maintaining the theater use, if a prospective tenant can present a sustainable business model. In an effort to help the potential continuation of the theater use with a new tenant, the applicant has worked with the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and the Alexandria Commission for the Arts. "

What is the lease price of the theater? Is this in line with other retail on the street? Has anyone approached SBDC or AEDP to work on a business model. Has AEDP looked at any framework for creating a model, so that someone walking in would not start out cold?

"Staff is aware that the applicant is also in discussion for a potential partnership or property sale that would result in the conversion of the theater to a different type of amusement enterprise use, possibly consisting of a museum. In such event, the change in nature of the theater use would require a separate SUP hearing before Planning Commission and City Council. That other project is tentative. While it is part of an effort to continue to keep the building as an entertainment venue, the applicant finds that it is more viable at this time to convert the structure to retail/commercial use with the proposed project."

What does viable mean to the applicant? Are either of these proposals mentioned still a possibility. Again, why should we not postpone approval till a specific use is proposed.

"Staff is aware that the loss of the 100-year old theater use is not an ideal situation, but this project, and the potential change of use, is a result of the current state of single-auditorium theaters throughout America that have great difficulty remaining viable. The loss of theaters along America's Main Streets is prevalent in towns and cities across the country resulting from changes in movie projection methods and consumer behaviors as well as the limited resources available for performing arts projects. Staff commends the previous and existing owner on their attempts to maintain the theater use, but staff is also aware that adaptive reuse of the theater may be the most viable option at this time and recommends approval."

What has staff done to research or find other possible uses for the theater? If it is converted is there any expectation, realistically that it will ever be converted back.

Lastly, I would also like to ask about the Historic Designation of the theater. I presume that being in the Old and Historic District would allow it to use Historic Preservation Tax Credits. Would the city assist a new owner, if the theater were to be sold, with this process?

I also want to point out that the theater is coming up at the same time as two other items on the Docket. The first is the Goodman house, which I hope receives Historic Designation today, and shows that with the right owner, that we can protect our historic fabric. I would think that perhaps the theater might benefit from some additional Historic or individual listing. Lastly, City council is also considering whether to extend use of an Auto Sales Lot on the 1300 block of King. I think this begs the question, of what kind of main street do we want, and how do we want King St. to look, and what does a healthy, vibrant downtown look like. I hope that it does not look like a community that gave up on its last remaining historic theater, but took a pro-active approach to finding a better solution. What is needed to find that solution is more time.

Boyd Walker

Jackie Henderson

From: wohler4@verizon.net
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2015 9:18 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66335: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Mayor Euille and Honorable Council

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66335.

Request Details:

- Name: Margaret Wohler
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 703 549 6342
- Email: wohler4@verizon.net
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Mayor Euille and Honorable Council Members,

Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

The Old Town Theater was one of the first (if not, *the first*) theater built in the US to showcase that new-fangled art form: film. All other theaters were retro-fitted vaudeville stages. This is an Alexandria City architectural treasure.

Acknowledging that the efforts of the owner to operate the building as a theater were not successful, and certainly the economic climate in which he was trying to do this was no help, it does not follow that the building could not be successfully operated as a theater in the future. Historic theaters are successfully operated in every state, including Virginia and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia. The League of Historic Theaters maintains an inventory.

Please do not allow the owner to dismantle the theater in a manner that threatens its historic character and future use as a theater. The Old Town Theater is one-of-a-kind; a beloved landmark that could contribute substantially to the surrounding businesses, drawing patrons here from throughout the metro area and beyond in a way that yet another retail business will not.

In presenting his application to the Planning Commission, the owner was allowed to amend the city's proposed conditions to require him to save these features only "if possible." I urge you to require the owner to preserve these architectural features, by capsulating them if necessary, and make only those changes that are easily reversible, so that a future owner or tenant can restore the Old Town Theater to its intended use and historic significance.

Anyone can own a building, but our heritage today and in the future is owned by the citizens of Alexandria. We call upon you, as our elected stewards to protect it. For a city that prides itself, and is indeed known the world over for preserving its historic character, we can surely do no less.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wohler
Board member, Alexandria Film Festival

- Expected Response Date: Thursday, February 26

Jackie Henderson

From: anne_lafond@jsi.com
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2015 11:33 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66343: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Alexandria City Council:

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66343.

Request Details:

- Name: Anne LaFond
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 7034015445
- Email: anne_lafond@jsi.com
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Alexandria City Council:

It has come to my attention that Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

Acknowledging that the efforts of the owner to operate the building as a theater were not successful, and certainly the economic climate in which he was trying to do this was no help, it does not follow that the building could not be successfully operated as a theater in the future. Historic theaters are successfully operated in every state, including Virginia and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia. The League of Historic Theaters maintains an inventory.

While the owner is certainly entitled to a return on his investment, he is not entitled, in my opinion, to dismantle the theater in a manner that threatens its historic character and future use as a theater. The Old Town Theater is one-of-a-kind; a beloved landmark that could contribute substantially to the surrounding businesses, drawing patrons here from throughout the metro area and beyond in a way that yet another retail business will not.

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Sincerely,

Anne LaFond
400 Cloverway
Alexandria, VA 22314

- Expected Response Date: Thursday, February 26

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at [the *Call.Click.Connect.* staff interface.](#)

Jackie Henderson

From: c_flan@verizon.net
Sent: Thursday, February 19, 2015 9:40 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66336: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Alexandria City Council:

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66336.

Request Details:

- Name: Colleen Flanagan
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 4109177273
- Email: c_flan@verizon.net
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Alexandria City Council:

It has come to my attention that Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

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Sincerely,

Colleen Rose Flanagan
113 N Patrick St, Apt 2
Alexandria, VA 22314

- Expected Response Date: Thursday, February 26

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at [the *Call.Click.Connect.* staff interface.](#)

Jackie Henderson

From: phviola@aol.com
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2015 8:44 AM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66348: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Alexandria City Council:

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66348.

Request Details:

- Name: Pamela Viola
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 7034660179
- Email: phviola@aol.com
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Alexandria City Council:

It has come to my attention that Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

Acknowledging that the efforts of the owner to operate the building as a theater were not successful, and certainly the economic climate in which he was trying to do this was no help, it does not follow that the building could not be successfully operated as a theater in the future. Historic theaters are successfully operated in every state, including Virginia and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia. The League of Historic Theaters maintains an inventory.

While the owner is certainly entitled to a return on his investment, he is not entitled, in my opinion, to dismantle the theater in a manner that threatens its historic character and future use as a theater. The Old Town Theater is one-of-a-kind; a beloved landmark that could contribute substantially to the surrounding businesses, drawing patrons here from throughout the metro area and beyond in a way that yet another retail business will not.

In presenting his application to the Planning Commission, the owner was allowed to amend the city's proposed conditions to require him to save these features only "if possible." I urge you to require the owner to preserve these architectural features, by capsulating them if necessary, and make only those changes that are easily reversible, so that a future owner or tenant can restore the Old Town Theater to its intended use and historic significance.

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Sincerely,
Pamela Viola

- Expected Response Date: Friday, February 27

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Jackie Henderson

From: alan.wile@comcast.net
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2015 9:07 AM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66351: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Alexandria City Council:

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66351.

Request Details:

- Name: Alan Wile
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 7035386526
- Email: alan.wile@comcast.net
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Alexandria City Council:

It has come to my attention that Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

Acknowledging that the efforts of the owner to operate the building as a theater were not successful, and certainly the economic climate in which he was trying to do this was no help, it does not follow that the building could not be successfully operated as a theater in the future. Historic theaters are successfully operated in every state, including Virginia and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia. The League of Historic Theaters maintains an inventory.

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In presenting his application to the Planning Commission, the owner was allowed to amend the city's proposed conditions to require him to save these features only "if possible." I urge you to require the owner to preserve these architectural features, by capsulating them if necessary, and make only those changes that are easily reversible, so that a future owner or tenant can restore the Old Town Theater to its intended use and historic significance.

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Sincerely,

Alan Wile
Alexandria Harmonizers
Alexandria Arts Forum

- Expected Response Date: Friday, February 27

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at the [Call.Click.Connect. staff interface](#).

Jackie Henderson

From: alan.wile@comcast.net
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2015 9:02 AM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66350: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council The Old Town Theater was one of the first

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66350.

Request Details:

- Name: Alan Wile
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 703-538-6526
- Email: alan.wile@comcast.net
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: The Old Town Theater was one of the first (if not THE FIRST) theater built to accommodate film. The City of Alexandria should take action to preserve this monument to this art form and cultural landmark. Please do what you can to keep it from turning into another nondescript retail space.
- Expected Response Date: Friday, February 27

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at the [Call.Click.Connect. staff interface](#).

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Jackie Henderson

From: boydwalker2012@gmail.com
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2015 1:47 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66391: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council I understand the Old Town Theater may be

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66391.

Request Details:

- Name: Boyd Walker
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 703-732-7269
- Email: boydwalker2012@gmail.com
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: I understand the Old Town Theater may be in the process of being sold to Jeff Yates, and that he intends to continue to operate it as an entertainment venue. Great news. I wrote this outline of ideas for the theater before I had that news, but it still may apply if Yates purchase doesn't go through or if he is not successful, and I still look forward to a vigorous discussion tomorrow if the item is not pulled from the docket.
- Attachment: [Old Town Theater Plan.docx](#)
- Expected Response Date: Friday, February 27

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at the [Call.Click.Connect. staff interface](#).

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A Plan for New Life for the Old Town Theater

Arts and culture not only enhance the quality of life for residents and visitors in a community - the creative economy is a vital element in building and sustaining unique and diverse communities.

-City of Alexandria, Arts and Economic Prosperity IV

The arts help to bring an identity to a community that is truly unique and meaningful to everyone who participates.

— William D. Euille, Mayor City of Alexandria

Speaking about the Torpedo Factory Art Center "We look at it as an opportunity to not only attract visitors and generate more revenue, but more importantly, to be a place for artists to display their talents." The Torpedo Factory Art Center is the No. 1 attraction in Alexandria.

-William D. Euille, Mayor of Alexandria

The same can hopefully be said about the Old Town Theater.

The Old Town Theater has been a theater for over 100 years, but it is at a turning point. Started as a Vaudeville theater before the "talkies" even came into being, it soon began showing movies. When it closed around 1970 it was briefly reopened as the National Puppet Theater. Later it was operated by the owners of the Circle Theater Chain, the Pedas brothers. They sold the theater for \$1,100,000 to Roger Fons, a mortgage broker who had no experience in the theater business, or in any other retail. Roger attempted to run the theater himself during his ownership but ran into several problems, but also tried to show first run movies. The Current owner tried once with Tom Kennedy as the operator and once with himself as the operator. Both these efforts were perhaps not given enough time to succeed, and like any other location that is repeatedly unsuccessful, it may have fallen victim to the stigma that it could not succeed, a self fulfilling prophecy.

I do not know if the city has received, reviewed or analyzed any information on the financial feasibility of the theater. Even without information from the owner, it would be possible to look at sales figures or collect other anecdotal evidence. It seems hard to say that nothing will work in this location without knowing what has been tried, and whether any particular programming worked better than others. This is important as the owner is making a financial argument that the property can not succeed as a theater.

I do not think that he has made the opposite argument that he needs approx. 800 more sq. ft. for it to succeed as retail, either. Is there no retail that would use the space as it is currently configured. I think it might make a more unique space for a restaurant or retail if it retained the feel of a theater. But as with the owners original proposal to remove all vestiges of a theater from the front of the building, he now proposes removing all vestiges of a theater from the inside of the building. He has also made no commitment to retain any features, but says that he will do so only if possible.

I think there is a need for a multi-purpose venue that can show visual arts, music or performing arts. In the last couple years we have lost venues for live music in Old Town, including Pat

Troys and Tiffany Tavern. Rock-It Grill also used to have live music, but now only has Karaoke. There is no venue that can handle more than a small group, besides either a private location like Masonic Temple or a public Auditorium like TC Williams. There are two theater's in Alexandria, Little Theater and Metro Stage, although the Metro Stage sight is likely to be redeveloped in the next 10 years, especilly as the Mirant power plant is redeveloped.

In the last three years the Old Town Theater has been used for live music, including School of Rock showcases featuring students for School off Rock in Del Ray. It has been used by the Alexandria Film Festival, but only once in the last 3 years. It was used for the GI Film Festival. It can also be used for First Night in the future, and for fundraising events, especially for communnity non-profits that have to otherwise rent locations, even if there primary funding source is the city of Alexandria.

I would think that The Old Town Theater, if it was a city owned property could be used for communnity presentations, performances, or in conjunction with other events like Parades, the Art Festival, The Firehouse Festival. Movies on Alexandria History could be shown as Matinees, like a movie about George Washington on GW's Birthday, or an annual showing and reunion players from "Remember the Titans."

Perhaps the "market" has determined that it is very difficult for the theater to be commercially and financially viable, although I would not rule out a commercial venture that would be successful as a possibility. But I strongly believe a Theater to be an economic benefit to all the other businneses on the street. Currently there are several vacant storefronts, restaurants that seem to be barely hanging on, and redevelopment opportunities, like the two former used car lots, that seem to be stalled, so the economic health of the street is not 100 percent. If the city council were to consider investing in the theater, it could be an economic engine encouraging the creative class and helping to create a more vibrant downtown. The Theater was purchased by the current owner for 2 million. It was offered for sale at 3.5 million, although it is not clear what the renovation costs of the theater were. The assessment by the city was raised aprox 500,000 thousand this year from 2 mil. to 2.5 million making the building more costly to own even without a viable business.

Therefore I am recommending that the owner, Rob Kaufman, be relieved of taxes for 6 months, while a plan or a buyer for the theater can be found. considering he has voluntarily left it vacant for aproximately 6 months already, it will reduce the financial liability for the owner, while not affecting his current income on the property. I would than suggest convening a meeting of communnity leaders in the arts and non-profits to formulate a plan and mine prospects for possible purchasers or build an argument for the city's purchase of the theater. If we live in a creative communnity we should be able to find a creative solution to the problem of how best can the Old Town Theater serve our communnity and our city.

The theater can be a great public space that not only could show the recently viewed program on PBS on Alexandrria, but other movies like the one on John Carlyle. It could showcase plays on George Washington and Robert E. Lee, or be a place for renactors to perform dialogs with an audience. It would also be a showcase for the Arts in Alexandria as a location that could participate in arts festivals, film festivals, and music revues. I truly believe there is support for this sort of venue in Old Town and that a non-profit Friends of the Old Town theater could be organized as a support group.

Background from the Arts and Prosperity IV report: (3 quotes)

Arts & Economic Prosperity IV demonstrates that America's arts industry is not only resilient in times of economic uncertainty, but is also a key component to our nation's economic recovery and future prosperity. Business and elected leaders need not feel that a choice must be made between arts funding and economic prosperity. This study proves that they can choose both. Nationally, as well as locally, the arts mean business

Arts & Economic Prosperity IV shows that arts and culture organizations leverage additional event-related spending by their audiences that pumps revenue into the local economy. When patrons attend an arts event they may pay for parking, eat dinner at a restaurant, shop in local retail stores, and have dessert on the way home.

"As all budgets—local and national, public and private—continue to reel from the effects of the economic downturn, some may perceive the arts as an unaffordable luxury reserved for only the most prosperous times. Fortunately, this rigorous report offers evidence that the nonprofit arts industry provides not just cultural benefits to our communities, but also makes significant positive economic contributions to the nation's financial well being regardless of the overall state of the economy. This certainly is something to applaud."

Jackie Henderson

From: jcantwell1@mac.com
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2015 12:31 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66386: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Alexandria City Council:

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66386.

Request Details:

- Name: Joe Cantwell
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: No Phone
- Email: jcantwell1@mac.com
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Alexandria City Council:

It has come to my attention that Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

Acknowledging that the efforts of the owner to operate the building as a theater were not successful, and certainly the economic climate in which he was trying to do this was no help, it does not follow that the building could not be successfully operated as a theater in the future. Historic theaters are successfully operated in every state, including Virginia and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia. The League of Historic Theaters maintains an inventory.

While the owner is certainly entitled to a return on his investment, he is not entitled, in my opinion, to dismantle the theater in a manner that threatens its historic character and future use as a theater. The Old Town Theater is one-of-a-kind; a beloved landmark that could contribute substantially to the surrounding businesses, drawing patrons here from throughout the metro area and beyond in a way that yet another retail business will not.

In presenting his application to the Planning Commission, the owner was allowed to amend the city's proposed conditions to require him to save these features only "if possible." I urge you to require the owner to preserve these architectural features, by capsulating them if necessary, and make only those changes that are easily reversible, so that a future owner or tenant can restore the Old Town Theater to its intended use and historic significance.

Anyone can own a building, but our heritage today and in the future is owned by the citizens of Alexandria. We call upon you, as our elected stewards to protect it. For a city that prides itself, and is indeed known the world over for preserving its historic character, we can surely do no less.

Sincerely,

Joe Cantwell
104 Queen Street
Alexandria

- Expected Response Date: Friday, February 27

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at [the *Call.Click.Connect.* staff interface.](#)

Jackie Henderson

From: mjsmet@gmail.com
Sent: Friday, February 20, 2015 2:30 PM
To: City Council; City Council Aides; Jackie Henderson; Call Click Connect; Gloria Sitton
Subject: Call.Click.Connect. #66396: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council Dear Alexandria City Council:

Dear *Call.Click.Connect.* User

A request was just created using *Call.Click.Connect.* The request ID is 66396.

Request Details:

- Name: Mary Jo Smet
- Approximate Address: No Address Specified
- Phone Number: 703-549-8339
- Email: mjsmet@gmail.com
- Service Type: Mayor, Vice Mayor, City Council
- Request Description: Dear Alexandria City Council:

It has come to my attention that Council will be considering the SUP application filed by the owner of the Old Town Theater to remove the unique architectural and aesthetic features that identify it as a historic theater and convert it to a generic retail space. I urge you to give your most critical consideration to this request.

Acknowledging that the efforts of the owner to operate the building as a theater were not successful, and certainly the economic climate in which he was trying to do this was no help, it does not follow that the building could not be successfully operated as a theater in the future. Historic theaters are successfully operated in every state, including Virginia and Maryland, as well as the District of Columbia. The League of Historic Theaters maintains an inventory.

While the owner is certainly entitled to a return on his investment, he is not entitled, in my opinion, to dismantle the theater in a manner that threatens its historic character and future use as a theater. The Old Town Theater is one-of-a-kind; a beloved landmark that could contribute substantially to the surrounding businesses, drawing patrons here from throughout the metro area and beyond in a way that yet another retail business will not.

In presenting his application to the Planning Commission, the owner was allowed to amend the city's proposed conditions to require him to save these features only "if possible." I urge you to require the owner to preserve these architectural features, by capsulating them if necessary, and make only those changes that are easily reversible, so that a future owner or tenant can restore the Old Town Theater to its intended use and historic significance.

Anyone can own a building, but our heritage today and in the future is owned by the citizens of Alexandria. We call upon you, as our elected stewards to protect it. For a city that prides itself, and is indeed known the world over for preserving its historic character, we can surely do no less. In addition I would like the council to look into converting this theater to a performing space for local arts groups. As the artistic director of a local dance company we are in dire need of adequate performing space in the city of Alexandria.

Sincerely,
Mary Jo Smet
Artistic Director
Choreographers Collaboration Project

- Expected Response Date: Friday, February 27

Please take the necessary actions in responding, handling and/or updating this request at [the *Call.Click.Connect.* staff interface.](#)

If you need assistance with handling this request, please contact CallClickConnect@alexandriava.gov or call 703.746.HELP.

This is an automated email notification of a **Call.Click.Connect.** request. Please do not reply to this email.