

ABOUT US

Woody Kerkeslager

former mayor of Madison,
founding board member Madison Arts & Culture Alliance

Sandy Kolakowski

former director facilities & administration
Natural Resources Defense Council

Jim Gilbert

former director Merrill Lynch, municipal finance expert,
former chair State Planning Commission

Deborah Fennelly

singer, performer, actor, musician long time area resident

Andy Breckman

screenwriter

David Hanna

author, parent, resident

Joseph Falco, Jr.

local business owner, founding and former chair
Madison Historic Preservation Commission

Cathie Coultas

Chair Madison Arts & Culture Alliance;
board member Madison Historical Society

Rob Pratt

resident, parent, moviegoer

& more than 2000 residents, friends, and neighbors
who think saving the theater is in the public interest.



SAVE MADISON THEATER



HISTORY

Building begins in 1924 to construct a \$150,000 Moving Picture Theatre for Lincoln Place. Designed along the lines of the now gone Lyons Theater in Morristown and the still operating Rialto in Westfield, both considered the latest in movie house architecture of the time period, the theater was designed to provide great acoustics for the Morton Organ being built for Madison in California. Scheduled to open in 1925 on Columbus Day, the theatre was decorated with marble and frescoes, the stage adorned with white pillars, with beautiful painted and bronze plates surrounding a circular dome in the ceiling, painted sky-blue and filled with stars.

Entertaining generations of Madisonians, including free concerts for soldiers during World War II, the theater has been a mainstay for local entertainment. Nearly lost in 1986, the community rallied and over 300 residents signed a petition to save it and turn it into a non-profit organization. Before those plans could be completed, a new buyer stepped in and reopened the theater in 1988. To the delight of the community, the movies would go on!

Thirty years later, the theater is again in great jeopardy. A real estate development company has purchased the theater with plans to demolish it and build a four story apartment building with retail stores on the first floor. The community has rallied again, with over 1700 signatures collected to save the theater and finish the work begun in 1986 --namely create a non-profit movie, culture, and performing arts center for the enjoyment of Madison residents and their surrounding towns'. When we save the theater we not only preserve an important part of our history, we invest in our community's future.

FAQs

1. Isn't it a done deal?

NO. A developer bought the building, and they're planning to replace the movie theater with a 4-story apartment building and retail space. BUT the movie theater is part of historic Madison, listed in the Federal Register of Historic Places. And there are zoning requirements that must be followed. So as of now, it isn't even clear if the structure the developer is proposing will be permitted to replace the theater.

2. Who determines that?

Since the theater is in Madison's Civic and Commercial Historic District the developer needs to present plans for public review to both the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Board. There is an entire process outlined by ordinances that the developer, the HPC, and the Planning Board must follow.

3. Is it too late to act now? Why didn't the town do something when it was up for sale?

Like many people in Madison, we were shocked that the new owners wanted to demolish the theater. If we had known of the developer's intentions, we would have galvanized earlier.

4. Can a movie theater really thrive in a small town?

Small movie theaters are thriving across the United States. Many of these theaters are non-profit and community supported. Here are a few websites of theaters in towns similar to Madison: www.penntheatre.com • www.crandelltheatre.org www.prospectorthheater.org • www.stateandbijou.org

5. What do you have against the new building? I heard they are adding a new movie theater.

The rooms they propose only have seats for 40 people in each of the two rooms. The ceilings aren't high enough which will severely limit screen size. They look like small lecture halls.

6. Isn't the developer's right to do with it what they want?

Land use in a community is something that affects the entire community. Even individuals who want to renovate their homes do not have the absolute right to build whatever they want to build.

JOIN US

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.savemadisontheater.org

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST

via the petition at:

<https://www.ipetitions.com/petition/save-our-historic-movie-theater>

or via e-mail:

info@savemadisontheater.org

ATTEND MEETINGS:

once on our email list you'll receive updates for any official Borough meetings about the theater.

SPREAD THE WORD:

Like us on Facebook:

facebook.com/savemadisontheater
send links to our email address, petition site, and Facebook page to all of your local contacts.