

**A THEATRE IS NOT JUST A BUILDING:
CIVIC RESPONSE AND THE PRESERVATION
OF HISTORIC MOVIE THEATRES**

by

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Abstract

The historic movie theatre represents an important era in the development of Canadian culture. Movies have helped form opinions, taste, language, dress and behavior of sixty percent of the population of the earth. A "night out at the movies" was, and is today, an societal institution and an important part of the courting ritual. The architecture of historic movie palaces has made a distinctly North American contribution to architectural history. Unfortunately, the movie may represent to many Canadian decision makers and community leaders a symbol of American cultural domination and crass, mass popular culture. The structure is often viewed as an expendable white elephant, not only by the unsympathetic layman, but the film industry itself. When the old movie palace is discerned as no longer economically viable as a movie theatre, it is often demolished to make way for a parking lot, new urban development, or renovated to create multiplex theatres.

While many of the marvelous old movie palaces have been demolished, many have been saved to serve as cultural venues for their respective communities and acknowledged as strategic anchors for inner-city rejuvenation projects. This thesis discusses the dynamics of civic response through a cross-cultural examination based on three case studies - the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia and the Pantages and the Rialto Theatres in Tacoma, Washington - which demonstrate successful historic theatre restoration and reuse projects. Through an examination of the relevant literature, private files, archives research, interviews, site visits and case study analysis, important general conclusions are made with respect to the fate of the historic movie theatre in American and Canadian communities.

Because of diverse historical developmental roots resulting in political and socioeconomic differences, Americans have more influence at the local level with respect to decision making and community development through the power to vote for bond issues that provide monies for local expenditures. Through years of expressing a desire for heritage funding and providing economic incentives for heritage restoration projects, much more has been accomplished.

Canadians delegate more power to all levels of government and believe that these governments should be held responsible for local initiative project funding. These differing socioeconomic and political climates are reflected in the case studies presented herein. A review of a variety of restoration projects illustrate examples of government and private initiatives and the general state of theatre restoration across Canada. There is little evidence of strong community effort with respect to private funding initiatives. This is due to two reasons: general reliance on government to provide funds for cultural development and federal taxation policies that do not encourage historic preservation. A review of Canadian heritage legislation illustrates how ineffectual it is in the protection of heritage resources and how important local civic action is when heritage restoration and reuse is in question.

The Province of British Columbia has a draft bill, the White Paper, that addresses new heritage legislation that awaits legislative approval. Policy recommendations based on proposed changes to heritage restoration and redevelopment areas encourage recognition of the value of the historic movie theatre to the community. Policy options for the City of Vancouver are explored with respect to the historic theatre district on Granville Mall and two historic theatres, the Stanley Theatre and the Vogue Theatre, now closed.

Abstract

This thesis argues that when the need for additional cultural facilities has been identified and acknowledged, as it has been in Vancouver, and when monies are available through cash-in-lieu for provision of off-site amenities, as in an option in the case of the Coal Harbour development, existing facilities should be examined. Renovation and reuse of vacant structures should be considered. A review of a variety of alternatives may better serve the general needs of the population with respect to location and economy.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

This thesis research topic was chosen in order to gain insight into the process by which communities choose to restore and reuse historic movie theatres once they have outlived their primary purpose, that of as venues for showing film. Successful and accessible restoration projects were selected in Tacoma, Washington, to provide points of comparison for the Canadian example - the Orpheum Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia.

It is readily accepted that the citizens of the United States is ingrained with a strong sense of nationalism that is not found to the same degree among residents of Canada. Pride in American traditions and institutions is therefore actualized in demands made for funding for all heritage causes - and the political response in answering those desires with appropriations, economic incentives and grants. The movie theatre is an American institution and therefore enjoys a high degree of sympathy among the general population.

Research illustrates that American communities have chosen to save a significant number of historic theatres. What must be stressed from the outset is that the focus of this thesis does not include comment on ways in which American citizens could better spend their tax dollars and private contributions. Nor does this thesis attempt to make value judgements with respect to how Canadian and American communities determine their individual socioeconomic priorities. The point of the exercise is to gain knowledge with respect to how historic movie theatres have been saved for community use - and to consider what is to be gained from this knowledge.

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It is obvious that, while the historic movie palace was built for the entertainment of all socioeconomic levels of North American society, or "the masses," theatre restoration projects are spear-headed by individuals who most often represent middle to upper-income groups and interests. History teaches us that the poor have little energy for the leading of movements of any type, being too occupied with basic survival. The economic recession and social problems apparent throughout North America during the late 1980s and those projected for the 1990s indicate that public funds that otherwise might be appropriated for cultural purposes within our urban areas, may be directed toward other more pressing needs within communities such as funding for low-income housing projects, education, medical services and care for the elderly.

This thesis does not propose that monies should be diverted from social service programs and services in order to restore old theatres. What is argued is that when the need for additional theatre performance space has been identified within the community in question, and acknowledged by civic administrators, planners, and City Council - funds requisitioned from developers for community amenities, such as the new theatre complex in the Coal Harbour redevelopment area, could be more strategically used. Research with respect to the American experience indicates that restoration of historic theatres for community cultural use makes economic sense - more space for less money, labour intensive employment creation, important anchor for inner-city rejuvenation projects, point of interest for cultural tourism, and generally space creation that is more pleasing to the user.

The new theatre in Coal Harbour is estimated to cost between 25 and 30 million dollars - much of this will be paid for by the public as only the site and a percentage of the construction costs will be identified as a public amenity donation from Marathon Realty to

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the City of Vancouver (Cox, 1992). The City of Vancouver has chosen to build a new theatre in an area that will cater to the upper-income residents of the new Coal Harbour area. This thesis suggests that the historic Granville Street theatre district between Robson and Nelson Streets should, under the new powers of the British Columbia White Paper on heritage legislation, be declared a special development district similar to approaches taken in Chinatown and Gastown. The City should indicate through policy direction and monetary investment, an interest in bringing this historic district back to its former function as an entertainment district that appeals to all socioeconomic levels of Vancouver society. The City should also use a portion of the public amenity funds to study the viability of the Stanley Theatre as a community cultural centre.

How are successful theatre restoration projects handled in Canada and the United States? The approaches are different due to a variety of reasons - historical, political, and socioeconomic. From knowledge comes power. The information herein aids the citizen, planner and politician in evaluating possibilities and identifying pitfalls.

Strength of life comes from continuity of tradition, something to refer back to as an orientation for the present.... Without the visible past whatever we make stands nowhere, and standing nowhere, it cannot possibly serve as a basis for the future (Sardello 1986, 71).

1.2 PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Together with the skyscraper, movie theatres are perhaps the most distinctly American contribution to architectural history (Sexton and Betts 1977, iv).

Whether we like it or not, it is the movies that mould, more than any other single force, the opinions, the taste, the language, the dress, the behaviour, and even the physical appearance of the public comprising more than 60 per cent of the population of the earth (Chambers 1986, 77).

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The purpose of this thesis is to consider the importance of the historic movie theatre to North American culture and to establish a better understanding of how the traditional movie theatre is viewed by the general public and civic decision makers and thus, in some cases, survives the wreckers ball.

There would appear to be a need for a study that adopts a slightly different approach to the analysis of the problem with respect to the restoration of the historic movie theatre. This paper is unique in that it examines the historic theatre restoration and reuse process within a Canadian and American context.

The issues considered within this thesis are ongoing and timely. Canadian movie palaces are restored and reused in very few cases and only by chance. There is little evidence of sympathy for the structure or the institution therefore movie theatres are not awarded a high priority when considered by levels of government with funding powers. Identification and examination of important elements will serve to provide the decision making community with important information that may encourage action - rather than compliant reaction - when questions regarding the future of historic theatre structures need to be addressed and subsequent decisions made.

This study has personal significance for the author of this paper. While working as Acting Heritage Planner for the City of Calgary, Alberta, the only remaining historic theatre, the Palace, had its "last picture show." This theatre is situated in the heart of the city, on Stephen Avenue Mall, which has historic significance for the City of Calgary. Famous Players Theatres closed the Palace theatre and, typically, immediately removed all of the seats and technical equipment thus rendering the building useless as an entertainment facility. There were innumerable expressions of concern throughout the community and these were addressed to the Heritage Planner. Cities seldom act in a pro-

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active manner in such cases. The "grass-roots" action that appears to be strategic to any community-based preservation movement did not materialize. What was required, at the very least, was an independent study that addressed questions regarding possible reuse of the theatre. This was not carried out. The heritage planner was simply directed to write a series of letters to Famous Players inquiring as to their plans for the building and informing them that the City of Calgary regarded the Palace as an important heritage resource.

The heritage planner who wishes to better understand the strategic elements of the theatre restoration project, when they are relatively unique in Canada, is hard-pressed for relevant information. There are Canadian sources that focus on particular areas of heritage theatre restoration and reuse - from the history of individual movie palaces and the subsequent successful restoration processes - to Canadian heritage legislation. The Orpheum theatre restoration project in Vancouver is an excellent example to consider but useful information was not readily accessible. Published information typically focuses on the architectural design, the history and the reuse of various projects of note, while the hidden dynamics of the restoration process - the social, cultural, economic and political factors inherent in any public restoration project - are not readily discernable from these publications.

Heritage legislation that appears to be sympathetic to theatre restoration and reuse requires examination. Research that focuses on the dynamics of private and public action and the restoration of selected historic movie theatres in Canada and the United States would appear to be a worthwhile endeavour. Such research and analysis may be of use to other communities with similar challenges. This thesis is dedicated to that end.

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This thesis will examine the social, economic, political and cultural conditions that appear to be necessary in order for communities to successfully identify, restore, and reuse historic movie theatres. The following aspects will be addressed:

- (a) the conditions necessary to generate local community interest in historic theatre preservation and reuse;
- (b) how might community interest encourage positive civic political responses in order to facilitate theatre restoration and reuse; and
- (c) how might the energies of the broader community and all levels of government be encouraged toward the consideration of the historic movie theatre as a valuable economic and cultural resource.

Because the impetus behind the restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres is based on complex social, cultural, political and economic dynamics the following will be considered:

- (a) the history of theatre and the importance of the movie theatre in the development of popular culture in North America;
- (b) the "Golden Age" of the movie palace in North America;
- (c) social and technological change and the decline of the movie palace;
- (d) the movie palace and contemporary culture-what fate, the ageing dowager?
- (e) the social, cultural, economic, and political dynamics involved in successful historic movie theatre restoration projects: case studies;
- (f) heritage policy overview - provincial and state levels - national legislation - United States and Canada.
- (g) the place of the historic movie theatre in

the revitalization of inner city areas such as Granville Mall.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study would appear to be the only appropriate method by which one might examine the dynamics of civic action with respect to the restoration of historic theatres for community use. Robert K. Yin states that:

...investigations of international programs have rediscovered the importance of the case study as a serious research tool. Overall, a significant trend may be toward appreciating the complexity of organizational phenomenon for which the case study may be the most appropriate research method (Yin 1989, 12).

In order to research the thesis subject area a wide selection of published and unpublished secondary sources were reviewed. There are excellent books devoted to the wild and wonderful history of the movie palace, well written and beautifully illustrated. Hall's *The Best Remaining Seats*, Naylor's *American Picture Palaces*, and *Great American Movie Theatres* and *The Picture Palace* by Dennis Sharp provide a thorough history of the development of the American movie industry from the era of the nickelodeon to movie theatre design. Valerio and Friedman's *Movie Palaces: Renaissance and Reuse* is the most useful work; a "must-read" for civic group leaders interested in historic theatre restoration. It discusses and illustrates a variety of American restoration and reuse projects up to 1981 and provides inspiration and a useful framework for action. Interesting contemporary views of the movie theatre and the movie industry are presented in Sexton and Bett's *American Theatres Today* written in 1927, and Shand's *The Architecture of Pleasure: Modern Theatres and Cinemas* published in 1930.

The best overview of the history of the movie theatre in an American and Canadian context is *Turn Out the Stars Before Leaving* written by John C. Lindsay.

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Theatre Architecture in Canada, A Study of Pre-1920 Canadian Theatres by Robert Hunter was commissioned by the Canadian Historic Sites and Monuments Board and is a useful background document. Specific Toronto restoration projects are documented in the beautifully illustrated *Pantages Theatre* by Olsheski and Russell's *Double Take: The Story of the Elgin and the Winter Garden Theatres*. McCallum's *Vancouver's Orpheum* provides a good general overview of theatre history in Vancouver and the restoration project and is well illustrated.

Periodicals and newsletters in the interest areas of theatre, culture and heritage provide relevant and current information. *Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historical Society* is an invaluable source for current information with respect to American theatre history and restoration projects. The *Information Series* produced by the National Trust for Heritage Preservation are excellent sources for information regarding many aspects of American heritage legislation, suggestions for organizing volunteers for heritage restoration projects and information about various historic preservation projects throughout the United States. *Forum* published by the American Preservation Press is another excellent source of current information. Contemporary heritage information was published in *Canadian Heritage Magazine* however Heritage Canada ceased publication of this small, glossy magazine in the Spring of 1990 due to budget constraints. Current information is distributed through the newsletter called, *Impact*. Canadian heritage legislation is clearly outlined in Ward's *Heritage Conservation: The Built Environment* and critically reviewed by Jacques Dalibard, in "Laws Are Not Enough" and "Why We Need a National Heritage Review" in *Canadian Heritage Magazine*.

Published works consulted in order to examine general readings on historic preservation issues were Williams et al. *Readings in Historic Preservation* and Thurber's

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Controversies in Historic Preservation. America's Downtowns: Growth, Politics and Preservation by Collins et al. is especially useful in that it highlights the projects that have been undertaken regarding historic preservation in a wide variety of American inner cities. McCann's *Taking Reform Seriously* is valuable for perspectives on community attitudes with respect to heritage issues. Fuller's *The Land, the City, and the Human Spirit* presents a wide variety of individual views on the built environment. Civic action in an American context is examined in Kennard's very stimulating book, *Nothing Can Be Done, Everything is Possible*.

Aspects of popular culture, the impact of moving pictures on American culture, and cultural change are explored through various relevant articles published in *The Journal of Popular Culture*. Brantlinger's *Bread & Circuses*, Ball-Kokeach and Cantor's *Media, Audience and Social Structure*, and *Stirrings of Culture* by Sardello and Thomas were especially useful for views regarding North American culture and the motion picture.

To determine the essence of the difference between American and Canadian political structures and approaches to civic action, Lipset's *Continental Divide* and Mercer and Goldberg's "Value Differences and their Meaning for Urban Development in Canada and the United States" were invaluable.

Primary research was conducted in Tacoma, Washington. Guided tours of the theatres and interviews with individuals involved in the restoration, rejuvenation and managerial aspects of Tacoma's historic theatre centre were informative. Interviews were conducted with Eli Ashley, Managing Director of the Pantages Center, City of Tacoma, and William Wood, a specialist in historic restoration, involved in the management of the Rialto project, Tacoma (April 30, 1991). . The City of Tacoma theatre archives were utilized along with the City of Tacoma Public Library archives which included extensive

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newspaper clipping files. Appropriate illustrative photos were selected from library photo archives; contemporary photos were taken on site.

Additional interviews conducted:

- a) Steve Barber, Heritage Planner, City of Victoria (January 22, 1992).
- b) Fritz Bowers, City of Vancouver, former member of council and city manager, City of Vancouver (February 1, 1991).
- c) Darryl Cariou, Heritage Planner, City of Edmonton (January 22, 1992).
- d) Rhonna Curtis, Community Arts Council, Orpheum Theatre restoration project (January 23, 1992).
- e) Marco D'Agostini, Heritage Technician, City of Vancouver (February 14, 1992).
- f) Nathan Edelson, Planner, Downtown South (May 21, 1992).
- f) William J. Huot, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture, Heritage Conservation Branch, Government of British Columbia, Victoria (January 20, March 10, 1992).
- g) Michael Kluckner, Chairman, Heritage Vancouver Committee (March 4, 1992).
- h) Jacqueline Koropatnick, Marketing and Public Relations Manager, Queen Elizabeth, Orpheum and Vancouver Playhouse (March 5, 1992).
- i) Robert Lemon, Heritage Planner, City of Vancouver Planning Department (May 20, 1992).
- j) John Cox, Coal Harbour Project, Marathon Realty (June 26, 1992).
- k) Lorenz von Fersen, Social Planner, City of Vancouver Planning Department (June 26, 1992).

Information with respect to historic movie theatres has been collected through the administration of an informal questionnaire sent to heritage planning offices in a selection of cities across Canada: Victoria, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Windsor, Ottawa and Charlottetown (See Appendix A). Subsequent information was collected through telephone interviews. Packages of relevant materials have been received and utilized as a result of this endeavour. It is evident that the ageing and neglected movie theatre haunts all who are involved in the area of heritage planning.

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Research was conducted in the City of Vancouver through a secondary materials search. Archive newspaper clipping files were utilized to a great degree together with the historic photo files at the Vancouver Central Library. Access to the private files of retired City of Vancouver Planning Department Manager, Fritz Bowers, a City Councilman and an active participant throughout the Orpheum theatre restoration project, provided invaluable information. Tours of the case study theatres provided additional primary research information. Contemporary photos were taken of all theatres discussed within this thesis.

1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As with any thesis, there are many limitations that must be addressed. This work does not profess to be the definitive work in this problem area. It is only a beginning. An in depth review of theatre restoration grass roots movements that failed to save their buildings should be undertaken in order to better understand the "essence of success." This study does not purport to identify all of the problems inherent in historic theatre restoration projects or the inadequacies of heritage legislation throughout Canada other than in general overview.

While addressing potential policies for the Granville Theatre District, only a general approach is suggested. An in-depth study of Granville Street and the many opportunities and limitations inherent in the area would constitute the topic for a separate thesis.

The author of this paper wishes to acknowledge the book, *Without Our Past: A Handbook for the Preservation of Canada's Architectural Heritage*, written by Ann Faulkner. Faulkner speaks with the fervour of the 1970s, as the "flower generation" moved into the

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newly emerging study area of urban design within the city planning profession. Ann Faulkner introduces her book with a quotation that appropriately sets the tone for the following chapters of this thesis.

The women sat among the doomed things, turning them over and looking past them and back....No, there isn't room.... How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past? (John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*).

1.5 DEFINITIONS

The following terms used within the body of this study are defined as such:

Conservation: includes an activity undertaken to protect, preserve or enhance the heritage value of heritage property (Province of British Columbia, Heritage Legislation, A Draft Bill, 1991);

Grassroots: the traditional meaning of this term relates to the rural people or common people who gave rise to political or cultural forms. For the purpose of this study, "grassroots" movement refers to those of the local urban community who gather together in order to encourage historic theatre restoration and reuse;

Heritage: encompassing the tangible and intangible aspects of our natural and cultural past from prehistory to the present (Canadian Museum Association);

Heritage Property: property that is protected under the Province of British Columbia Heritage Legislation or that has sufficient heritage value in the opinion of the government or a local government to justify its conservation (Province of British Columbia, Heritage Legislation, A Draft Bill, 1991);

Heritage Value: scientific, educational, aesthetic or cultural worth or usefulness (Province of British Columbia, Heritage Legislation, A Draft Bill, 1991);

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Historic: important or famous in history; memorable; significant (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary);

Historic Resource: any work of nature or of man that is primarily of value for its palaeontological, archaeological, prehistoric, historic, cultural, natural, scientific or aesthetic interest....(Province of Alberta, Historical Resources Act, 1987);

Movie Palace: the movie palaces seat between 1,000 and 5,000 patrons; have a stage and stagehouse with fly loft, rigging, dressing rooms, and orchestra pit; have a balcony, often supplemented with a mezzanine and additional seating levels; have a noticeable decorative personality; were by definition, designed to launch and promote new films; were constructed in the downtown areas of cities, and typically clustered in existing entertainment districts on turf already well established by vaudeville; and appeared in a variety of development contexts - as free-standing theaters, sharing walls with other commercial structures, or as components of larger, multistory office buildings between 1925 and 1930 (Valerio and Friedman, 1982);

Preservation: action taken to protect the form, integrity and fabric of heritage property and includes stabilization and maintenance (Province of British Columbia Heritage Legislation, A Draft Bill, 1991);

Rehabilitation: to restore to a capacity for useful activity (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary);

Restoration: the reconstruction or repair of something so as to restore it to its original or former state (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary).

CHAPTER II: THE CONTEXT

2.1 THE PLACE OF THEATRE IN A CONTEMPORARY URBAN CONTEXT

The historic theatre and the City of Vancouver. The City of Vancouver currently has two historic theatres that await redevelopment decisions - the Vogue theatre, situated on the Granville Mall in the downtown core, and the Stanley theatre, on Granville Street South.

There is no existing theory of planning that specifically focuses on historic cultural venues and suggests how these should be approached within the urban context. This may explain one reason for the general approach taken by the planning consultants as demonstrated within the Vancouver Downtown South Plan. The historic theatre district on Granville Mall is not awarded a high degree of concern. There may be many other underlying reasons for this lack of sympathy for the district. It is believed that the following perceptions, with respect to the historic movie theatre, are generally held by a significant proportion of the population :

The movie theatre as a white elephant. There are many reasons why the old movie palace has been treated with so little respect by a large segment of North American society. One reason suggested for this cavalier attitude is that:

The idea of preservation is anathema to our expansive character....
America is always still to be built.... We have always left things behind -
travelled light.... Not even communities we paused to create were meant to
last (Porterfield 1986, 162-63).

The single-screen movie palaces of the past are no longer considered economically viable by the two major movie distributors, Famous Players Inc., and Cineplex Odeon

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Theatres Cities across Canada have theatres which are held in a state of limbo - boarded up and rapidly deteriorating due to lack of maintenance. Some of these theatres are used as second-run, foreign or classic film houses awaiting the final curtain and the wreckers ball.

The movie theatre as a structural embarrassment. The movie palace has been criticized since its inception as representing the epitome of bad taste in architecture and interior design. "If Mies van der Rohe and other fathers of modern architecture felt that less is more, the movie palace designer believed that more is not enough" (Charyn 1989, 11). The old movie theatre is ridiculed for displaying an overblown flamboyance that is considered to be irrelevant when compared to modern functional architecture or modern society. However, it has also been described as " ...one of the richest and most imaginative and transitory schools of architecture since the discovery of the key stone" and also that, "The architecture of the movie palace was a triumph of suppressed desire" (Charyn 1989, 11).

The movie theatre as a cultural embarrassment. The movie theatre may be viewed as having the same social or antisocial significance as a pool hall. There are many subtle and not-so-subtle reasons for this attitude. Critics of modern society view the movie itself as an anathema therefore it follows that the structure that delivers this cultural affront would not view the structure with sympathy.

Westerners on the whole seem to want neither to fully live nor fully die, but to hang in limbo, semi-conscious...entertainment provides them with people who will...kill and die for them, live for them...whose lives are reflected, not in the achievements of nearest and dearest, but in stars, symbols, small conflicts and cultural sideshows, and where development is really and truly over, and only diversion is left (Burchill 1986, 144-152).

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The movie theatre as political affront. The political "left" may view the old movie theatre as a physical manifestation of economic domination, "The Lords of Kitsch, in short, exploit the cultural needs of the masses in order to make a profit and/or to maintain their class rule" (Brantlinger 1983, 200). To a particular segment of the population, the palatial ornamentation is a political affront. "I don't object to ornament itself...because I love old buildings. I just object to what it represents - a certain pompousness and ostentation. It sort of reminds me of the Reagan Era..."(Fuller 1985, 127).

The movie theatre as an example of cultural domination. The old movie theatre may represent economic and cultural domination to some Canadians. The strangle-hold that the American distributors maintain on the film industry is well known. Why should we want to invest time and money to preserve this symbol of foreign domination? This thesis will argue that there are indeed many reasons for saving our historic movie theatres - and the emphasis is on "our" theatres. They represent an important part of Canadian cultural history and an irreplaceable structural resource.

This thesis argues that the movie theatre should be viewed in the following positive manner:

The movie theatre as a cultural artifact. The historic movie palace, as an example of indigenous architecture, is an important physical expression of our culture and the old movie palace represents an important era in the development of North American culture. There are urban opinion leaders and political decision makers throughout North America who scoff at the architectural and interior design aspects of the old movie theatre. They fail to consider the historic significance of the movie industry to our culture and the importance of the physical edifice as a cultural artifact.

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The structural design of the historic movie theatre was functional in that the building and the entertainment, the form and the function, were inseparable. For this reason this thesis contends that the historic movie theatre can not be viewed quite like any other old building. The movie theatre did not merely occupy a space and provide a service, but it nurtured a special state of consciousness.

The movie theatre as a means of cultural dissemination. The theatre throughout history has provided, not only provided entertainment and diversion, but knowledge about individuals, places and events that many citizens would have had little opportunity to access otherwise. From the Shakespearean theatre, through the era of the Hollywood moguls, to our contemporary film industry, the theatre has maintained a position of dominance with respect to what we define as "popular culture."

The movie theatre and urban history. The initial statement of purpose may beg the question - what justification is there for the preservation of old structures of any type? A wide variety of arguments for heritage preservation have been presented at different times and in different places. The most often expressed argument is based on a need to preserve our cultural heritage. Buildings associated with historic events and/or of architectural significance are a valuable and irreplaceable part of a nation's cultural heritage, and an important source of prestige and pride within the community. These historic structures provide us with a basis from which we may understand where we have been, determine how far we have come, and evaluate where we are going. Another justification for heritage preservation is that the historic building is an important educational asset. Visiting the actual building will far surpass anything one may glean from books or museums.

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The movie theatre and the streetscape. Historic architecture enriches the environment from an aesthetic standpoint through offering a variety and richness to the urban texture. A historic building may add character, act as a landmark, and provide an interesting counterpoint to the modern streetscape. When many of these buildings are restored in an identifiable historic district, a valuable tourist destination is established. Cultural tourism, as opposed to tourism based on active outdoor sports or leisure activities, is attracting increased interest within the investment community. All of the above positive attributes may be directly applicable to a historic theatre district and theatre restoration and reuse project.

One {age} bracket that has increased in importance in the United States is the 50-plus traveller.... The 50-plus travellers are more likely to travel for entertainment, sightseeing, theater, historical sites, and shopping than for outdoor activities (Gunn, 1988).

A restored historic building often provides the catalyst for new businesses and services in the immediate vicinity. Property values increase, as do general municipal revenues, when successful restoration projects are encouraged.

What fate the ageing dowager?

Hundreds of old movie theatres have been demolished throughout the United States and Canada. The post-war 1950s building boom marks the beginning of the trend toward demolition which continues today. Ageing urban structures are continually replaced in growing communities as demand for land and services change over time. Historic buildings are demolished and will continue to be replaced as land values escalate and old building forms are declared obsolete. Grand old theatres throughout North America have been lost in this process, however many theatres have been saved. These structures have

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proven to be of unparalleled value as venues for a variety of cultural activities and as a pivot for urban regeneration projects within deteriorating inner city areas.

Theatre recycling as a responsible civic response. Although grass roots civic action has saved many old movie theatres, not all old movie theatres should be viewed as icons. When the economic viability of the single-screen movie palaces disappears, the structures that remain should not only be considered to be historical and cultural community assets, but the building's economic value to the community should be ascertained - the important redevelopment opportunities that may be identified when old movie house marquees go dark.

A theatre is not just a building. A theatre represents something unique to the community and provides a service unlike any other. The physical plant will require extensive and expensive replacement and upgrading. However, from the perspectives of location, size, acoustics, detail, and workmanship, the building will be, in many cases, irreplaceable.

Cynics within the community will argue that the expense and effort one puts into old buildings does not appear to make economic sense. When faced with these arguments it may be useful to quote Oscar Wilde's definition of a cynic - "a man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing" (Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, Act 111).

2.2 THE PLACE OF THE THEATRE IN WESTERN CULTURE

The development of theatre is an integral part of North American culture and is a derivative of the cultures of those immigrants who settled the North American continent. Therefore it is necessary to acknowledge the development of theatre in Britain and Europe in order to trace, not only the physical and cultural manifestations of what we consider

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"theatre," but also some interesting psychological aspects. The evolution of the motion picture as an art form in the context of North American culture is unique. The American motion picture industry is an extremely powerful medium and Canadians have had a love-hate relationship with it throughout the past century.

2.1.1 European and British Influences

If old movie theatres appear to be generally unappreciated in their "decadent" splendour, it should not be considered unusual in light of the theatres' colourful past. Theatrical performances designed to appeal to the masses have generally been frowned upon by the upper classes of society. "Polite" society has long believed that leisure time and the common man were a troublesome combination. Historically, idle hands and mischief were thought to be closely related; when the labourer was not working he was expected to be attending church services. Within the church the labourer was encouraged to appreciate his lot in life, respect his betters, and anticipate his rewards in heaven. However, man is not to be separated from his theatre. It is an integral art form identified in the most ancient of cultures as groups gathered to be entertained by story-tellers, poets, dancers, singers, jesters, magicians and musicians.

The theatre is not only representative of its own culture, but an important vehicle for the melding or blending of cultures. Culture does not exist in a static state but has been defined as a specific stage in the development of a civilization. "Culture is active, continuously being made and remade...it must be viewed relationally and historically..." (Mercer and Goldberg 1986, 381).

Lewis Mumford states that the theatre was one of the first civic institutions created by man (Mumford, 1961). It is the theatre of the Greeks, the embryonic form

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associated with fertility rites and the productivity of spring and fall seasons, that we identify with Western culture. The first theatre was a scooped-out slope of a hill which formed a semicircular amphitheatre. Thespis introduced the first actor in a theatre at Ikria in the first half of the sixth century, B.C. (Mumford 1961, 162).

If we associate the Greek theatre with the higher intellectual aspirations of man - an attempt to appeal to the noble or heroic - the Roman theatre is depicted as providing a forum in which the worst appetites of men were identified and encouraged. This aspect of entertainment designed for the masses has lingered to haunt us into the 21st century. The dying Roman Empire (AD. 53-117 BC) used the theatre to sedate and amuse the masses. The Circus in Rome provided 150,000 spectators with entertainment that featured wild chariot races and armed conflict between gladiators and slaves; men and wild animals. To further tarnish the reputation of the theatre, Ovid in his "Art of Love" stated, "Many are the opportunities that await you in the Circus" (Hibbert 1986, 52). Such socialization was not allowed in the Roman Colosseum, a vast amphitheatre four stories high. Within this complex seating was strictly segregated, with the poor and the women delegated to the top floor. Here the unemployed of Rome were treated to the bloodiest of diversions - the infamous "bread and circuses." It is in this venue that the contestants hailed the Emperor with the poignant cry - "We who are about to die, salute thee."

Unfortunately, the theatre of Constantinople (330-565), in the era of Justinian, did nothing to contribute to the unseemly reputation of the theatre. Theodora, a totally amoral actress, performed naked on the stage and was and is today, infamous and famous because of her off-stage and on-stage careers (Hibbert 1986, 65). Paris in the days of Louis XIV (1651-1715) gave rise to a dynamic voice within the theatre through the plays of Moliere and Racine (Hibbert 1986, 134-35). The theatre in England had evolved in

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medieval times, as a part of the mystery and miracle of Church pageants, however by the 1500s and 1600s theatre became a form of popular entertainment. The Globe and other theatres offered comedy, tragedy and historical drama to audiences composed of all strata of society. This was the London of Shakespeare and Marlowe. Then, as now, many of the writers and performers required patronage or support from the wealthy (Jones 1974, 96). Venice was a city abandoned to pleasure in the 18th century and the wealthy of the city attended splendid theatres, by subscription only, where tragedies were never presented. Some theatres provided gambling lounges for the patrons (Hibbert 1986, 164-65, 210). "Polite society" developed throughout Europe, due to the expansion of prosperity and the resulting leisure time. Many had aspirations to belong. Theatres, opera houses, pleasure gardens, assembly rooms, race courses, coffee houses, whole neighbourhoods, and eventually, complete towns were devoted to the pursuit of leisure activities by the 19th century (Girouard 1985, 181). European theatre was to find an important incubation environment in the Berlin of the 1920s where there were forty operating theatres and three opera houses. Many of the early Hollywood film directors and producers were trained in this stimulating and avant garde environment.

Although many might view the movie theatre, modern or historic, as a problem to be addressed, albeit reluctantly, the edifice has a distinguished past. The theatre is acknowledged to have been the first permanent physical structure designed and built for leisure activity (Girouard 1985, 184). Medieval towns used churches, courtyards and squares, but by the 16th century permanent buildings were constructed. The Elizabethan and the Jacobean theatres of London were originally built for the hard-toiling lower classes. This policy was not approved of by the rich merchant classes who ran the city. The proud tradition of public theatre, the theatre of the masses, has its roots in England.

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The Rialto Theatre, a "full house."

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2.1.2 Early Theatre in North America

Traditional theatre, or what is known as legitimate theatre in North America, is rooted in British culture. The style of theatre built and the performances presented were based on the traditions of the community. From the advent of regular steamship service between continents, travelling performers from Europe and Britain were avidly pursued by promoters as the North American audience was generally starved for cultural stimulation, especially outside of the major urban centres. The urban and urbane leisured upper classes were generally well accommodated. Elegant theatres were constructed and that which was identified or associated with "high culture" was actively pursued. Dramatic plays and readings, opera, symphony concerts and ballet served as a panacea for a governing class that was constituted of a self-conscious, "nouveau riche" isolated from European refinements.

This was not the form of entertainment that was within the economic or cultural realm of the majority of the working classes of the time. Furthermore, massive European immigration, from the mid-19th century to the beginning of World War I, populated eastern North American cities with a wide variety of working people whose roots were not British. Leisure time for the labourer increased due to the demise of the six-day work-week. The machine age made it possible for the working classes to indulge in activities not directly related to providing for the necessities of existence or religious worship. It was a perfect environment for the development of a form of theatre that would appeal to the new North American and that could be enjoyed by all.

As we are aware, before the advent of the moving picture, the British music hall or vaudeville theatre flourished as a form of popular culture throughout North America. This theatre form utilized local talent within the larger cities, imported acts from Europe and

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Britain, or travelling roadshows that gained access to the Western cities by way of the railway. This was especially important in Canada after 1885. A very high quality of entertainment travelled the circuits that were operated by contracting companies based in New York or Chicago. Theatre owners vied with one another to be associated with the best of these entertainment contractors. Beautiful theatres were built in major urban areas to comfortably accommodate both the patron and the performers and the elaborate sets that many of the best shows carried with them. Throughout the developing areas of the West, structures were built to facilitate the presentation of travelling entertainers and road shows, many of them surprisingly attractive.

2.3 THE ADVENT OF THE MOTION PICTURE

Entrepreneurs in Canada and the United States were very quick to identify and market the latest in novelty attractions with a view to capturing the attention of a public seeking diversion. It would not be long before a medium nicknamed the "flicks" would revolutionize mass culture and entertainment throughout North America and the world.

The date was December 28, 1885. The place was the basement of a cafe in Paris. The audience was the first public one to pay its way to watch movies, paying to be fascinated by moving images....The scenes were taken from ordinary life, but the experience was far from ordinary. This event was produced by the Lumiere brothers, but the technology that led to this moment had been the result of the imagination and persistence of many inventors, both in Europe and America (Inge 1989, 446).

In 1891, Thomas Edison patented his rudimentary motion picture camera, the kinetoscope (Kando 1980, 56). This marked the beginning of the development of the motion picture industry in North America and the kinetoscope quickly became a marketable commodity. The first penny arcade opened in New York in 1894 and those with a penny could watch a thirty-second peep show. In 1896 large screen motion pictures

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were introduced in New York City in a vaudeville house. Development of external motion picture projection led to the opening of the first movie theatres - the nickelodeon. The first palatial movie theatre, seating 5,000 patrons, was constructed in Paris in 1910. It was adapted from a legitimate theatre known as the Hippodrome and was renamed the Gaumont-Palace (Valerio 1982).

By 1910 there were at least thirteen thousand of these theatres across North America attended by as many as seven million people every day. In New York City alone there were 600 theatres where, "For a nickle initially, a dime or fifteen cents later on, one could now be part of an entire audience, watching multireel movies lasting as long as thirty minutes" (Kando 1980, 226-27). Thomas Lamb's Regent Theatre, New York City, was the first movie palace built in the United States (Valerio 1982). As one opening night reviewer wrote,

"[The Regent has] an environment for pleasing, so perfect in artistic detail, that it seems as if the setting were a prerequisite to the picture, that to an educated audience the two should, and must hereafter, go together" (Valerio 1982, 15).

The movies did not catch on immediately but were considered a novelty, especially by the theatre owners and managers who were totally involved with traditional theatre and vaudeville. When it did gain in popularity it was as a form of entertainment that appealed to the working classes.

Withold Rybczynski, in *Waiting for the Weekend* discusses the influence the movies had on the ruling society of New York City. By 1908 200,000 people attended nickelodeons every day. "What happened next was common in the history of leisure; When too many people had too much fun, someone eventually objected" - "In his classic study of play,

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Homo Ludens, John Huizinga observed that since play is older and more original than civilization, it is fundamentally antithetical to it" (Rybczynski 1991, 137).

In 1908 the Mayor of New York closed all 550 movie houses and nickelodeons in the city. His action reflected the outrage that many felt toward the new form of public entertainment. Respectable people considered movies an affront and a challenge to establishment sensibilities, not only because of their low brow and sometimes racy subject matter...but also because they did not accord with middle-class conceptions of leisure. Movie houses were likened to saloons, and they attracted children and single women - and flaunted Sunday closing laws. Racial prejudice in the crusade against movies was also evident because they were too popular with European immigrants...more than half of the films were foreign; French, German, and Italian - and many of the theatre owners were Jewish. High licensing fees were instituted which went from \$25 to \$500, strict building requirements and censorship were instituted (Rybczynski 1991,137).

Only later did middle and upper classes become part of the audience. This is in contrast to many other leisure activities. "...whereas the general diffusion pattern of leisure and recreation had been downward, cinema represents a notable exception" (Kando 1980, 227). As the Canadian newspaperman, Bob Edwards, quipped in 1915, 'one of the most pitiful sights in the world is a highbrow person trying to conceal his delight in the low comedy of a movie show'" (Wetherell 1990, 252).

The nickelodeons were the first wave of mass culture and mass leisure in American history. They proliferated in the tenement districts, providing cheap recreation to a rapidly industrializing society and its growing masses....the movies were the first medium of popular culture that seemed to be broadly controlled by people who did not share the ethnic and religious background of the traditional culture elites (Kando 1980, 227).

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Movies provided the working classes with an inexpensive avenue of escape from their lives of toil and in many cases, knowledge with respect to manners and mores of their new homeland. The enjoyment of silent movies was not hindered by the inability to speak English. The producers of movies were recent immigrants also and understood the needs of their audience.

Most early movies were simple and plotless but by 1903, Edwin S. Porter, a cameraman for Thomas Edison, made *The Great Train Robbery*. It was the first movie with a story, plot, violence, action characters, and other necessary ingredients found in modern film making. The creators of this film sent trains speeding and gunfighters' bullets flying toward the camera, to the shock and delight of the first movie-goers. "These were illusions that stage magicians could never hope to duplicate" (Naylor 1981, 13). In 1909 Mack Sennett went to Hollywood where he originated the *Keystone Cops*; in 1911, Jesse Lasky filmed *Squaw Man*. D.W. Griffith produced *Birth of a Nation* in 1914 which went on to earn \$18 million in profits.

The West Coast film making industry was established mainly by Jewish-European immigrants - Adolph Zukor, Louis B. Mayer, Carl Laemmle, William Fox, and the Warner Brothers" (Rybczynski 1991, 139). Hollywood, or "Tinsel Town", was born. Hollywood produced 841 feature-length films in 1918 and these were shown in over 21,000 theatres across the United States and Canada. The industry had by now captured a solid middle-class audience. The "star" system was established and North American "celluloid royalty" such as Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks would earn as much as \$30,000 weekly during the 1920s (Kando 1980, 228).

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The films of the 1920s bore titles like Money! Money! Money!, glamorizing "jazz babies" and showing champagne baths.... Contemporary social critics particularly of a Marxian persuasion frequently argue that the populace is kept enslaved by myths, pseudo-events and illusions.... Psychologists explain how Hollywood presents us with a dream world of glamour, sex, wealth, and youth into which we periodically escape to find release from a drab and harsh reality (Kando 1986, 228).

The roaring twenties have been compared to the over-indulgent 1980s - "The hedonistic, glamorous, and make-believe world dangled before the masses by the media and always at the core of American mass culture....Crass materialism, blatant sexuality, the cult of youth, the illusory pursuit of excitement and success - these were the dominant values of the 1920s (Kando 1980, 228).

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Granville Theatre District, Vancouver (1930s).

2.4 THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE MOVIE PALACE

2.4.1 An American Phenomenon

"An acre of seats in a garden of dreams"
(Lindsay 1983, 45).

Enter the dreamhouse brothers and sisters, leaving
Your debts asleep, your history at the door;
This is the home for heroes, and this loving
Darkness a fur you can afford.
(S. Day Lewis 1938, Newsreel)

Structures intended to showcase legitimate theatre were designed in a manner befitting the upper classes - elegant examples of conservative classic architectural styles, sanctioned good taste in decor, and comfort in furnishings. Traditional theatres were not overly large so that the actors could be seen and heard by the audience. Also, the patrons of the traditional theatre formed a small segment of the population. It was only after World War I that theatres built primarily to showcase silent motion pictures were opened in any great number. The American movie palace was a unique structure in that it was so large and so lavish. The popularity of the moving picture resulted in the building of unique cathedrals devoted to the activity of movie going.

Many theatre owners and operators struggled to introduce the new motion pictures into their normal theatre operations by presenting a program that offered dramatic performances, vaudeville acts and the short film strips. Vaudeville remained popular but the theatre marquees of the day showed that the "silents" were gaining equal or better billing. The orchestra that originally accompanied the vaudeville performers was replaced by an organist who played the Wurlitzer. The Wurlitzer organ was designed especially to provide a myriad of sound effects and the emotion-rendering music

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necessary to the enjoyment of the "silent" by the patron. These sounds would remain an important part of the nostalgia linked with the historic movie palaces of this period of American history.

The historic movie palace is a surviving artifact of a unique growth industry. As movie-going became an established leisure activity throughout the North American continent, those involved in the industry recognized the great monetary potential associated with masses of people and the technology that allowed many to see, hear, and be entertained. By 1915 there were 25,000 "picture theaters" (Wash. 1981, No. 16). The movie palaces were built essentially to serve a purely economic purpose; attracting moviegoers to the box office. "We sell tickets to theatres, not movies," said Marcus Loew, one of the great Hollywood movie moguls (Charyn 1989). Theatre exteriors helped fill this role, using forms and styles that made them stand out from their surroundings. A broad canopy marquee, often accompanied by a towering vertical sign, announced the building's name and purpose. Early nickelodeon theatres pioneered the use of outdoor electrical signage. The ticket booths were elaborate confections that sought to set the mood for the adventures that were to be enjoyed inside. "The show started on the street" (Margolis 1992).

Each new theatre was designed in order to outdo all others in novelty and luxury. The lobbies were large and elaborate, many displayed valuable works of art, custom-designed carpet, marble, gilt, and imported chandeliers. Some advertisements suggested that there was more to be seen in the lobby than one could possibly manage in one visit. The auditorium was often designed with a theme in mind. The movie palace was not just a theatre as we know it today in its "functional" mode.

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The "golden age" of the movie theatre provided the patron with an incredible array of facilities as each theatre chain attempted to outdo their competitors in luxurious surroundings and services. "People dressed up to go to the movies" (Rybczynski 1991, 140). The movie-goer might find a restaurant, ballroom, bowling alley, nursery for children, first-aid room, shoe-shine stand, barbershop, elegant ladies room with individual dressing tables, smoking lounge for gentlemen, tea room, reading room complete with magazines and stationery, or a dog kennel. One theatre built a miniature golf course behind the theatre when golf became popular. Because the buildings were so enormous, there was a need for a large staff to serve the public - a corps of ushers and usherettes - elegantly uniformed with changes in attire appropriate for matinee and evening performances, thoroughly trained to guide people in and out of their seats and attend to any emergencies.

The historic movie theatre represents, in many cases, examples of a totally unique building type. During the 1920s dozens of movie "palaces" were built throughout North America to accommodate the seven to ten million who went to the movies every day. By the 1920s going to the movies was the chief leisure activity of Americans. More money was spent on the movies than any other recreation. The "Big Eight" producers, who owned most of the theatres, made more than seven hundred movies a year (Rybczynski 1989). The decor of many of these theatres mirrored that of Old World palaces but the unique development and functional necessities of the film business demanded more than imitation. The architects of this new building type were faced with complex demands almost unrivaled at the time, requiring the design of a vast auditorium that could seat up to five thousand patrons while retaining excellent view lines, a vast collection of rooms under one roof, and often situated on irregular plots of land. The design had to take into

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consideration fire regulations and exits. The heating and cooling of such large buildings presented enormous challenges. Air conditioning was especially important as the summer proved to be the high season for movie going.

Unique examples of interior design are represented in the historic movie theatre structure. Basically there were two schools of thought about movie theatre design in North America - one advocated the use of Neoclassical forms and motifs and was known as the "hard-top" school; the other advocated a more experimental type of structure wherein a completely artificial environment could be created and was known as the "atmospheric" school. It had its roots in the Wintergardens of the British legitimate theatre (Lindsay 1983, 45). The "atmospherics" were designed to provide the patron with the illusion that he was sitting in a courtyard of a castle, under tropical skies or in an idyllic countryside. Twinkling stars shone over head; clouds drifted across the artificial sky and moonlight might appear to highlight turrets on a surrounding castle wall. A sign prominently displayed in the office of the Runnymede, an atmospheric in Toronto, read, "Turn out the stars and shut off the clouds before leaving" (Lindsay 1983, 45).

There were four important names in movie palace architectural design in North America. Thomas W. Lamb, a Scot, was famous for the "hard top" approach to design was influenced by the Adam-style. Marcus Priticea, educated in Scotland but based in Seattle, Washington was firmly schooled in the Beaux-Arts tradition. John Ebersson, an Austrian, inspired the more bizarre designs of the "atmospherics" and created at least a hundred of these theatres during his career. Cornelius and George Rapp, based in Chicago, dominated theatre design in that area. Other theatre architects designed according to their mood or as the promoter dictated. Art nouveau influenced theatre design at the turn of the century and was reflected in the first vaudeville house and nickelodeon. Art deco influenced new

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theatre design after 1929, and art moderne can be identified in theatres built in the late 1930s, 1940s and early 1950s (Naylor 1981).

The functions of the decoration were both traditional and novel. Decoration functioned to indicate that the building was 'important': that is, it indicated that the status of the film industry and the theatre owner (decoration was equated with wealth). It also reflected the prosperity of a Nation temporarily rich from war. Most significantly, however, it made the patron feel important because he or she was provided with an egalitarian form of entertainment in the surroundings of traditionally elitist decoration - solely for the uses and enjoyment of the masses (Safer 1982, 7).

The era of the construction of the true movie palace is considered to be from 1919-1929. The major technological advancement of the 1920s was the introduction of sound. The success of Al Jolson's *The Jazz Singer*, filmed in 1928, indicated that the "talkies" were soon to replace the silent films. "By 1929, weekly attendance jumped to an estimated 110 million - the equivalent of four fifths of the entire population going to a show once a week throughout the entire year" (Kando 1980, 229). The official death of vaudeville is considered to be 1929.

A great attraction was that one did not have to reserve a seat as one did with traditional theatre. One could just decide and do it. The movie-goer was given the opportunity to laugh, cry, and be painlessly informed - the news-of-the world, the cartoon and Greta Garbo were all provided for the price of a ticket. The movies not only entertained but encouraged the working man to believe that he too was part of the "American dream." For a small amount of money the labourer and his family were, not only entertained, but welcomed into a luxurious building that only the wealthiest citizens of Europe would be allowed to enter - other than by the servants' entrance.



The Pantages Theatre auditorium, Tacoma.

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2.4.2 Focus on Canadian Movie Palaces

For the purposes of this thesis, a very brief overview of major Canadian theatres and the history of the introduction of motion pictures are included separately in order to document the importance of the motion picture industry to Canadian culture. Canadian entrepreneurs, the Holland brothers, persuaded Thomas Edison to grant them exclusive rights to show Edison's films across Canada and in all cities and towns in the United States west of Chicago in 1897. The Holland's first Canadian showing was in a park in Ottawa; a year later they introduced Toronto to the innovation at Robertson's Musée on Yonge Street. This was considered quite adventuresome as "Toronto was so puritanical...even the word 'vaudeville' was considered vulgar and unacceptable" (Lindsay 1983, 7). Ernest Ouimet opened a theatre called the Ouimestoscope in Montreal in 1907. It was a 1000 seat picture palace complete with a seven piece orchestra and has a legitimate claim as the world's first theatre devoted only to the showing of movies. Ouimet was so innovative that he claimed to also have the first sound movie when he managed to synchronize the showing of the film with sound from his new French gramophone. He also pioneered the special-priced matinee (Lindsay 1983, 8).

Many of the theatres that we associate with the earliest days of the motion picture were either hastily constructed structures or refitted legitimate theatres that were to be found in every urban centre of any size across the nation. The City of Victoria, British Columbia has a history of theatre that is especially worth noting, linked to the British heritage of amateur theatre and mime. The historic Victoria Theatre was built in 1885 and had a seating capacity of 1000.

Pre-World War I, the majority of theatrical spaces in Canada were integrated into multi-purpose buildings such as the town hall. This made the endeavour not only more

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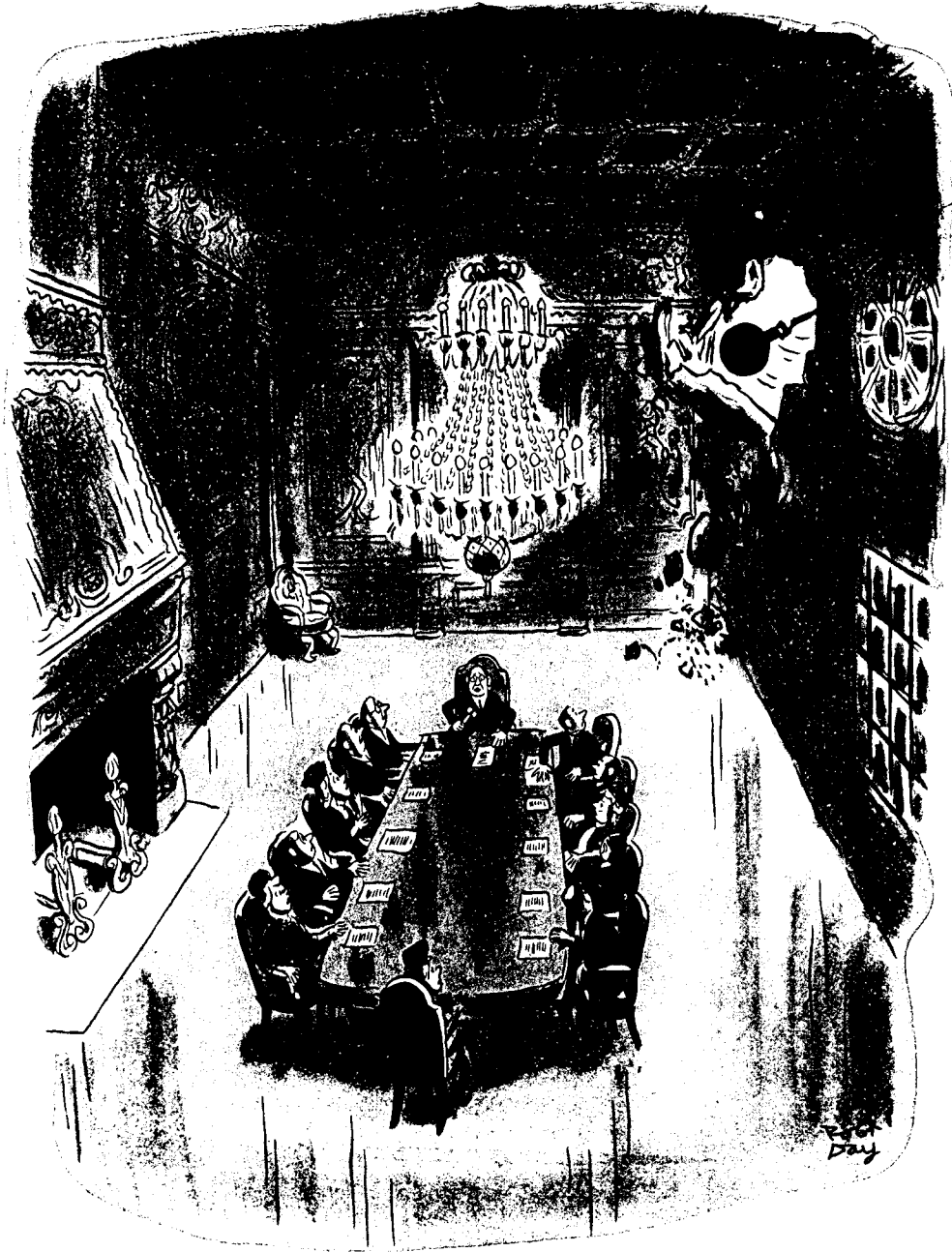
economically feasible but the structure was also more visually impressive (Hunter 1985). However, in some cases Canada set the pace or kept abreast in the area of unique theatre construction. The Royal Alexandra was built in Toronto in 1907 and is believed to be the most beautiful legitimate theatre in North America. The Shea Brothers built the Hippodrome(3,200 seats) which opened in 1914 on the site that is now occupied by Toronto's city hall. "The Hippodrome was to Toronto what the Palace was to New York or the Palladium to London. It attracted the very best vaudeville acts from all over the world" (Lindsay 1983, 30).

The introduction of the viewing of moving pictures as a leisure activity mirrors that of the United States as does basic theatre structure. The important theatre architects are American architects; the moving pictures viewed are, for the most part, made in the United States. The Canadian theatre owner who attempted to innovate with respect to motion picture technology was forced to use American technology designed by the major production companies in order to continue to receive the movie product required to stay in business. The Hollywood movie moguls and local entrepreneurs managed to put a movie house on every main street of every town in North America. In doing this, they changed our lives.

Canadians paid their nickles and dimes to attend the nickelodeons and movies for the same reasons as Americans did, for entertainment and diversion - and in order to be able to discuss this new aspect of American culture with their friends, family and associates. They enjoyed this exciting and innovative form of entertainment in theatres that were as elaborately decorated and exotic as their American counterparts although the movie palace was a fixture only in the large urban centres (Chase 1988; Holdsworth 1985).

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Julius Cahn's Official Theatre Guide of 1929 lists over 90 Canadian theatres. The majority of these theatres were constructed between 1890 and 1920 and most no longer exist. Many of them burned. Even more of them were demolished to make way for new inner-city construction projects.



"And now I guess this meeting of the Save Our National Landmarks Committee stands adjourned."

Drawing by Robt. Day; © 1965 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

2.5 THE DECLINE OF THE MOVIE PALACE

The old movie palace stands as the physical manifestation of the dynamic economic environment that is so typical of North America. When the movie theatre no longer proved profitable, the industry expended little sentimentality toward the structure - even the most grand movie palace of them all. The famous Roxy, situated a few blocks from Times Square in New York City was constructed in 1927 and was razed in 1961. It accommodated nearly six thousand patrons and was called by its owner, Samuel L. "Roxy" Rothapfel, "The Cathedral of the Motion Picture" (Naylor 1987, 249). A cartoon of the period shows a child and her mother staring into the large oval rotunda in awe. The moppet asks, "Mommy - does God live here?" (Naylor 1987, 249).

With the Roxy...the gaudy, enchanting, phony, preposterous, and lovely Golden Age of the Movie Palace reached its Klieg-lit pinnacle. Architect W.W. Ahlschlager designed the Roxy as more than just a movie theatre. He incorporated into its design a complete hospital, the largest musical library of any theatre, and a modern refrigeration and ventilation system.... The advertising literature for the Roxy boasted of a lighting plant 'sufficient to power a city of a quarter of a million' (Naylor 1981, 109-110).

Surviving in the theatre business anywhere in North America was a challenge. The theatre owner or manager who attempted to operate anywhere outside of a major centre were forced to fight for travelling performers during the era of legitimate theatre and vaudeville. No sooner was he established with a respectable structure and a contract with a major circuit management company, than the "flicks" were introduced. There were few theatres that could present all mediums well. About the time the investor decided to put his faith in the silent moving picture - built the theatre complete with screen, projection booth and Wurlitzer - sound was introduced. This innovation demanded the installation of sound equipment and other construction alterations. Many entrepreneurs were not

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prepared to adapt so readily. The large American theatre organizations bought out the independents and therefore gained control over all movie distribution. By the later 1930s four firms controlled 80 per cent of the market and by the end of the 1940s, 70 per cent of all product rental receipts.

The movie palace building boom from 1927 to 1929 resulted in an over abundance of theatres with too many seats to fill (Naylor 1987). Extravagant promotional stunts were used in order to boost attendance and the competition was fierce. Prizes, free gifts, and visits by movie celebrities were offered. Movie ticket sales dropped off during the depression, however throughout World War II attendance was very high. It has been stated that during the 1940s audiences would pay to see anything (Parker 1986). However, the best of times were over. The demise of the downtown movie palace is directly linked with over-building, the urban renewal projects of the 1960s, rapid suburban growth throughout the 1950s and 1960s and with the competition presented by the television set in every suburban living room.

The large single-screen downtown movie palace struggled through the sixties and into the seventies. As box office receipts dropped some of the old theatres became second-run and double-feature houses. Many old theatres were not maintained and deteriorated rapidly. Some were, as the Pantages in Toronto, made into multiplex theatres during the 1970s as the owners and distributors fought to show more in less space and at less cost. A night out at the movies is certainly not what it used to be. Modern theatres are more akin to fast-food restaurants, delivering a product in a small, austere, no-nonsense environment.

Many old theatres sit unused and await possible demolition or insensitive renovation and reuse that has little relevance to the structure's original significance

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within the community. Some of these grand old movie palaces have been restored and are functioning as unique cultural and arts centres within privileged communities. Robert Hunter in his study "Theatre Architecture in Canada, a Study of Pre-1920s Canadian Theatres" (Hunter 1985,) states that only eleven Canadian theatres of historic interest have been preserved (Appendix A). Lindsay's study on Canadian theatres, *Turn Out The Stars Before Leaving*, maintains that "The Orpheum is one of the bright spots in the history of Canadian theatres" (Lindsay 1983, 157).



"Face it, Charlie. Progress is fifty-per-cent destruction."

2.6 *THE RESTORATION AND REUSE OF HISTORIC MOVIE THEATRES*

...in the 1970s the tide turned again for picture palaces. Scattered cries arose in many cities to save beloved old theatres. Downtown movie houses were just waiting to be reborn as the now-ubiquitous performing arts centers. The era of preservation had arrived in America (Naylor 1987, 27).

Some Canadians are enjoying very successful movie theatre restorations especially those that reside in the larger urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver. Two exceptional Canadian renovation projects are the Pantages and the Lyric/Winter Garden theatre complex. These restoration projects occurred due to private initiative or provincial government action. Seldom has a city taken the initiative to save a theatre. The Orpheum in Vancouver is one of the few examples of this action, whereby the Council of the City of Vancouver and the citizens worked together to save a community treasure.

The Government of the Province of Ontario recognized the value of old movie theatres when it purchased the Lyric/Winter Garden Complex, on Yonge Street in Toronto and declared it to be a historic site. The theatres are now owned by the Ontario Heritage Foundation, which has formed a special unit to undertake restorations. The Winter Garden, 1,422 seats, was built over the top of Loew's Vaudeville Theatre, 2,194 seats, renamed the Lyric. It was one of the most expensive theatre projects of its era and it presented unique construction challenges. It took 100 horses to lift the main beam into place to carry the weight of the lower theatres' balcony and the Winter Garden seven stories above (Lindsay 1983). The theatres were both operating by February of 1914 and cost \$1.4 million to construct. The Winter Garden, designed by Charles W. Lamb, appears to have been the first of its kind in North America. It was built in 1914, about five years before the craze for "atmospherics" swept the United States (Lindsay 1983, 52). When sound was introduced Loew's Theatre was renamed the Elgin and was

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operated as a movie theatre by Famous Players until 1982. The Winter Garden was sealed up in 1928 and was found to be a treasure-trove of wonderful decorative work when examined in 1980. The government has recently invested millions of dollars to restore the two theatres to their original splendor. The Elgin Theatre presented the stage show "Cats", "...the first live show on the boards in almost 60 years and one that has already made box office history, earning more than \$22 million dollars" (Yates 1986, 22).

An example of private initiative and historic theatre restoration is Toronto's Pantages, 3600 seats, 22,500 square feet, built in Toronto, designed by Thomas W. Lamb. It is a beautiful "hard-top" and cost \$1 million to build. It opened in 1920 and was part of the infamous American Pantages chain. In the 1920s the Pantages Theatre Circuit opened theatres in Vancouver, Victoria, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg and Toronto (Hunter 1985, 51). The Toronto Pantages reverted to RKO and became the flagship of Famous Players Canada Ltd. Famous Players is a subsidiary of the American-based multinational Gulf and Western. Canadian Odeon Theatres was British owned until it was purchased by Canadian investors in 1985. The two companies "exercise a virtual monopoly over distribution of American films" (Belkaoui 1982, 443). Unfortunately, the Pantages had suffered the desecration involved in the modernization of so many historic movie palaces; the theatre was made into a sixplex in 1972 at a cost of \$2 million. Fortunately, Odeon Cineplex of Canada purchased a portion of the renovated theatre in 1986, the Imperial Six. An executive, Garth Drabinsky, was appalled at what had been done to the Pantages and immediately started to examine options to restore the "beautiful old monument" to its original condition (Olsheski 1989, 66-88).

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Mr. Drabinsky was concerned that far too little was being done to preserve those that remained, and he committed himself and his company to the restoration whenever feasible of any of the company's newly acquired theatres that possessed architectural or cultural merit (Olsheski 1989, 69).

Drabinsky discovered the perfect economic vehicle - the license to produce *Phantom of the Opera* - a "block-buster" that would bring in the many millions that the restoration project would cost. He was able to convince Famous Players to relinquish the rest of the original building when it was ascertained that the structure would not operate as a movie theatre. Famous Players attaches a condition that states that theatres it abandons will not be operated as movie theatres after a sale takes place. In July of 1989 The Architectural Conservancy Award of Merit was awarded to Garth Drabinsky for restoring and returning a landmark that would not have otherwise been preserved (Olsheski 1989, 110). Drabinsky also believes in the restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres as movie theatres. He lavishly restored three historic cinemas in Manhattan in the late 1980s. "Class pays...the enthusiasm of the public for these places is unbridled. They have absolutely fallen in love with these theatres" (*Sun*, 20 June 1987).

2.7 HERITAGE POLICY OVERVIEW

In light of the "wringing of hands" with respect to the loss of historic movie palaces an important question comes to the fore. What about heritage policies? Is there not in place a variety of legislation, rules and regulations, and the power to make historic designations? How are public interests protected when heritage concerns conflict with private ownership and planning and development land use policies?

Heritage legislation is defined, by international consensus, "... as the body of law which deals with the identification and protection of sites and areas of historic and/or

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architectural interest" (Ward 1986, 1). Financial aid to such sites and areas can also be a component of such legislation although it is usually not set out in the statutes.

It has been obvious for years that the fate of heritage structures cannot be left to the discretionary whims of private property ownership or public mismanagement. For this reason, various forms of legislation have been enacted. In order to better understand the death and life of the historic movie palaces in Canada and the United States, it is necessary to review the heritage protection provided by legislation in both countries at the local, state and provincial and federal levels.

2.7.1 American Heritage Policy

Concerned Americans realize that the best way to safeguard historic resources is through local control. Many communities throughout the United States have adopted historic preservation ordinances designed to protect their cultural resources and to encourage economic growth. Interested citizens and the business community vote for heritage and cultural funding through local bond issues and affect heritage policy through active lobbying at all government levels for tax incentives and matching grants for heritage projects that bring wealth into their communities.

Although federal and state laws have established some project review functions and rehabilitation incentives through the various state historic preservation offices, the local ordinance continues to serve as the most important and most comprehensive tool available today for the identification, evaluation and protection of historic properties. This systematic approach can help establish historic preservation as a significant part of a community's long-term development plan, "...ensuring that historic preservation concerns

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are considered and addressed as a normal, accepted part of the day-to-day business of the city or village" (Kitchen 1989, 1).

As in Canada, the citizen is apt to overestimate or misunderstand the significance of the inclusion of a building or site on the National Register of Historic Places, believing that the significant landmarks in their area will be well-protected as a result of appearing on the list. When they realize that most building and sites are not protected in any real way by the National Register listing, they often seek passage of a local ordinance, the establishment of a landmarks commission or design review board.

The American business community has come to recognize that local historic designation and restoration projects are important for the development of spin-off businesses and tourism as they attract and encourage people to visit, shop, and recreate in the central city. Local landmarks commissions or design review boards are used to ensure that the physical integrity of the buildings are respected and restorations are used to enhance the central business area. Economic incentives such as low interest loans, revolving funds and tax abatement programs are widely used.

Many states have approved comprehensive preservation laws affecting local communities. The constitutionality of local historic preservation ordinances and design review boards have been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court by the Penn Central Transportation Company v. New York City case, which was decided in 1978. The most common negative response individuals have to the idea of local design review is that it is illegal for a city to tell a person how to alter a building other than to ensure safe and healthy conditions for public protection. The Supreme Court of the United States upheld the concept that a city can enact land use controls which preserve the aesthetic features of a city, including the areas which have special historical, archaeological and architectural significance. Such laws do not constitute a "taking" of property because they do not change, or reduce, the ability of an owner to use his or her property, and such restrictions are closely related to promoting the general welfare of the citizenry (Kitchen 1989, 2).

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"Federal tax incentives to encourage historic rehabilitation have proven to be one of the most successful urban revitalization programs ever implemented" (Chittenden 1987, 1). The Tax Reform Act of 1986 made comprehensive changes to the Internal Revenue Code eliminating or reducing the ability of real estate developers and investors to use deductions and credits to shelter income other than that directly related to real estate investment. Investment in 1987 was down 35 per cent and one-half of that of 1986. Much of this legislation does not impact directly on the renovation and reuse of the historic movie theatre because, for the most part, these activities are engaged in by a local non-profit organization. However, it does affect the fate of the movie theatre in general because as private investors fall away from historic rehabilitation and renovation projects, the local ordinances will be that much more important. When the American public demands and gains more control over local planning decisions and the fate of heritage resources, the endangered movie theatre cannot help but profit. American legislation provides for public interest groups to raise a variety of barriers - including class action suits - against the demolition of historic buildings. "There are ten to twenty occasions in the legal process where groups can seek injunction halting demolition.... Americans basically believe in heritage preservation..." (Wood 1985, 29).

The heritage structure is not only considered to be of historic, educational and economic value, but increasingly, conservationists and preservationists are joining forces to protest the general "throw-away" attitude of the past. It is agreed that renovation of existing structures save important non-renewable resources that would be expended in the demolition and rebuilding process.

The sources of funding available to historic projects are: federal matching grants for those buildings listed in the National Register of Historic Places; National Endowment

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for the Arts grants program for non-profit organizations to cover research and planning salaries and fees; State bond bills, general appropriations, special appropriations and unmarked funds; County and City bond bills, general and special appropriations and commercial development block grants. Of major importance are the private donor, local foundations and national foundations, corporate donors and the general public. It appears that the American citizen donates more freely to causes at the local level than does the Canadian. It is suggested that this attitude stems from the American socioeconomic and political philosophy associated with the freedom to accumulate wealth and to determine where and how that money should be spent.

Of importance also is the difference in the banking system between Canada and the United States. Within the decentralized state banking system there appears to be a more sympathetic attitude toward lending money for heritage renovation at the local level. There exists the flexibility to make decisions based on individual projects rather than an adherence to the rigid policies that Canadian banks adopt with respect to collateral qualifications. There are numerous examples of local banks lending money for theatre restoration projects throughout the United States (Marquee 1983). The important aspects of American heritage policy is that there is more emphasis on private initiative and local empowerment.

2.7.2 Canadian Heritage Policy

"Comparing Canadian heritage legislation to that of the United States and Europe, the Chairman of the Board of Governors of Heritage Canada recently said, 'We have possibly the weakest heritage legislation in the Western world'" (Wood 1985, 22).

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Canadian legislation is similar to that of the United States in that it is three tiered - federal, provincial and local. Constitutional authority for the protection of heritage land and buildings within provincial boundaries belongs, for the most part, to the provinces. The main federal responsibility for heritage sites rests with the Department of the Environment (Parks Canada), through the Historic Sites and Monuments Act however it does not protect buildings (including federal buildings) against demolition because of provincial jurisdiction. The federal government can purchase property and owns over 100 sites, the majority being museums. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada may recommend that the Minister ignore a particular structure, designate the structure as a national historic site and erect a plaque, enter into a cost-sharing agreement, or acquire the property. The Minister is not bound by such recommendations. There is little the federal government can do directly, to save threatened buildings, except to buy them. There is much the federal government could do, however, through tax legislation, to save historic buildings.

If Canadian heritage experts could accomplish one thing, it would be to alter income tax laws...Property owners are allowed to write off, as a loss, the entire value of a building they choose to raze....Demolished buildings become a tax deduction which is why we find Canada's downtowns full of parking lots. Until this particular policy is reversed, all the provincial and municipal efforts toward heritage preservation will be so much tinkering (Wood 1985, 29).

Eleven of Canada's twelve provinces/territorial governments are empowered to protect heritage sites from demolition and/or unsympathetic construction. The only exception is Ontario where the province protects archaeological sites; other sites can only be protected by municipalities (Ward 1986). The Province of Quebec is the most progressive in the area of heritage preservation and through its Cultural Property Act

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protects land surrounding a designated site as well as historic districts. The Province of Quebec has 1500 of the 3000 officially designated buildings in Canada (Ward 1986).

British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick have the power to designate buildings for protection, however compensation must be paid to the owners of such property if it can be shown that the designated property has lost value because of the designation. This proof of "loss" has not been adequately tested in the Courts due to a lack of political will on the part of all levels of government. Provincial designation policy is of little practical value when the power to designate is not used by the responsible Ministry. There is also a problem with buildings that may not be judged as particularly important with respect to the evaluation criteria of significance with respect to architecture, events, persons or streetscape. The historic movie theatre would have to be deemed of importance to the citizens of the Province to be considered for designation. Because of the few existing theatres in British Columbia, the Orpheum was recognized for Provincial designation, however, it is the ownership of the theatre by the City that protects the building.

Municipalities may protect heritage through a variety of legal means. British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick, Ontario and Quebec empower municipalities to protect cultural sites to varying degrees. Much of this "protection" however, gives breathing space only. The private property owner must be compensated for "loss" or an outright purchase must take place. An individual owner seldom asks that his particular building be designated as no economic advantage is perceived. In many cases, the identification of a particular building on a list of heritage sites selected by a heritage committee may result in an immediate application for demolition by the owner, fearing possible restrictions to sale and redevelopment of the site. With respect to the City of Vancouver, "A designation

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bylaw, adopted in 1974, snared just 54 buildings before foundering on the compensation issue; it has lain dormant since 1977 awaiting the incentives scheme" (Wood 1985, 33).

The largest non-governmental organization concerned with cultural property is the Heritage Canada Foundation incorporated in 1973. It has a financial base of approximately \$18.18 million provided by the Federal Government (Ward 1986, 17). It is not a granting organization. It is involved in five program areas; Main Street demonstration projects; education and technical services; communication and membership; and public, corporate and government relations (Ward 1986, 18). "Being independent of government, it can criticize government policies and has the mandate to encourage the preservation of the built environment with a Board of Governors answerable to the membership" (Ward 1986, 19). The main vehicle of comment and information was the *Canadian Heritage* magazine, publication of which ended in the Spring of 1990 due to financial reasons. The magazine presented excellent critical editorial commentaries such as "Why We Need a National Heritage Review," by Jacques Dalibard, the Executive Director (Dalibard 1986). What has replaced it is a newsletter *Impact* that appears to focus on examples of cultural activities, environmental projects, changes in provincial heritage legislation and conferences. The editorial comments have disappeared along with any "bite" the original magazine had.

It has been suggested that the "idealism" of the 1970s that provided an impetus for heritage appreciation across Canada has waned. Heritage projects have lost their funding base and most heritage committees are reluctant to tackle the rich and politically powerful property owners who have clout through local by-laws and civic political connections and where conservative courts support the entrenched powers of property over public interest (Wood 1985). "Most Canadian governments, despite their pious words, have

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failed to provide heritage officers, with either strong legislation or adequate financing..." (Wood 1986, 24).

The Western Provinces of British Columbia and Alberta appear to be particularly insensitive with respect to heritage concerns. "People move a lot...have little sense of place, less sense of the history they daily pass by" (Wood 1985, 24). Winnipeg and Victoria have been singled out as being exceptionally successful in heritage preservation. The Province of Manitoba introduced legislation in the Spring of 1985 to offer tax incentives to those who choose to renovate heritage buildings (Wood 1985 25).

In many cases the most powerful tool a progressive and far-sighted city administration can shape for heritage conservation is the local land use by-law. By identifying the districts or buildings that are most important to the community, the bulk and height of buildings allowed to be built on that property can be limited. In Calgary sunlight requirements on Stephen Avenue Mall severely limit the height and bulk of buildings that could be planned for sites that now are occupied by old Sandstone buildings which the city wishes to preserve. Another interesting tactic which works, where others fail, is the "block-busting" approach. Various interested groups, along with the Province and the City, managed to purchase and designate just enough of the old "Sandstones" along each side of Stephen Avenue Mall to block the possibilities of any major large redevelopment scheme. In the case of the last historic movie theatre, the Palace, situated also on Stephen Avenue Mall, the City of Calgary owns the lot directly behind the theatre and without this piece of property, a large redevelopment scheme would not be viable. In this manner a city may arrange to hold some power and control over the market-driven system of real estate development when it conflicts with the protection of long term cultural resources. In many cases, the owners of the properties in question are not local

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residents and are uninterested in the history or the uniqueness of a particular urban culture. Guerrilla warfare appears to be the only alternative for a community under siege.

2.7.3 The Volunteer and the Theatre Restoration Project

The Process

Before one attempts to be a catalyst for grass-roots action, one needs to consider two things very objectively - does anyone else really give a damn, and if so, how will this emotion be actualized? Historically, the majority of volunteer work has been the jurisdiction of women of the community who were not required to work for a living. They were usually married to men of position and circumstance who were influenced by their wives to view many of the cultural and aesthetic concerns of the community with sympathy. Unfortunately, there are fewer women in this position today because of their movement into the work force. Therefore, time is allocated to only the very pressing of issues within the communities in which they reside. Historic movie theatres may not be viewed as a high-priority item.

Canadian community activists, interested in the saving and reuse of old movie theatres, may be extremely frustrated when they become aware of successful American projects. If attempts are made to recreate the scenarios according to the literature that is available on the subject, most of which is based on the American experience, failure may ensue. The analysis of the three case studies will enable the community activist to better answer these questions.

With respect to volunteering, between 1985 and 1987, "About 48 percent of the United States populations volunteered some part of their time to gift-supported

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organizations.... U.S. governments now provide more fully for many activities, including the arts, once almost totally dependent on private support.

Canadian community activists are at a disadvantage because of the differences in Canadian attitudes toward personal giving of money and time. There are also important differences to be aware of with respect to the voluntary activity that is associated with the restoration of old movie theatres and the volunteer work that we may understand in other capacities.

The volunteer who comes forward to work to save a historic movie theatre under siege is different from most other groups of volunteers and this must be recognized and appreciated (Knoke 1981). The volunteer that dedicates time, effort, and money to the restoration of an old movie theatre has no other agenda but that of the saving of an old building that he or she may value for a myriad of reasons. These volunteers are not interested in self-emulation or private gain. They are not encumbered by the "weight" of an organization. They do not set out to change the politics, values, economic well-being, or morals of a community as do many other volunteer associations. They just want to see that the project succeeds and that another historic movie theatre is saved from demolition or a commercial reuse that does nothing to replace the theatres original function - providing a cultural contribution of the community.

While it is argued that a well-organized heritage association is an important factor in the preservation of historic resources such as movie theatres, this association may not be an asset in that the association may be too organized, have its own agenda, be jealous of its "territory" and not be willing to accept the input from individuals from outside who come forth with their own particular projects - such as an old theatre. The established heritage organization may not have a broad basis of support from the community at large

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due to a membership that does not include members from all ethnic interest groups. This established organization may have been coopted by political interest groups or lobbyists who also have private agendas. Many successful community activists believe that to get the maximum effort required, the least organization that exists, the better. Flexibility, unfettered by organizational lines of command and a "pecking-order," will be much more effective. The process that surrounds the restoration of historic movie theatres more often resembles a guerrilla operation.

The Canadian volunteer may lack many of the basic philosophical strengths that the American volunteer has in that he basically believes that he has less power with respect to government decision making than his American counterpart. Public opinion polls taken in the 1960s and 1970s show that Canadians have less involvement in politics than Americans, however they do display greater trust in government decision making (Mercer 1986). The Canadian public has a "deferential" character when it comes to politics. This stands in marked contrast to the American attitude which places great stress on individualism and resists government intervention. It is not difficult to understand the timidity of the Canadian volunteer on one hand, and the attitude of the general public when approached for private contributions - let the government do it!

Both Canada and the United States suffer today from a loss of volunteers.

Volunteers and their activities have changed over the last several decades. As increasing numbers of women, traditionally the main stay of volunteer projects, began to enter the work force in the early 1970s, the pool of volunteers available during the regular work week shrank.... Organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the Junior League,... have relied heavily upon the interest of a solid corps of feminine volunteers... (Washington 1985).

Care should be taken that the originating committee not be "too esoteric or self-serving" as support is required from all sectors of the community. This is especially

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important when various ethnic groups are concerned. Most historic theatres in the United States and some in Canada had a colour policy. Blacks and Orientals were designated to particular sections of the theatres and these facts are not forgotten within these communities. Therefore, a carefully designed fund-raising committee and programme must be planned in order to systematically consider all aspects of community demographics with respect to donations and fund-raising activities.

The organization of the fund-raising effort is crucial. A professional fund-raiser with experience in the performing arts should be hired and this person must have significant power and ability to make decisions. Executive-director is the suggested designation for this individual. Fund raising activities have related costs and these must be budgeted for. A professional theatre manager must be employed at least a year before the theatre opens in order to programme the first year of productions, create public awareness and excitement (*Marquee*, 1983).

Networking - Civic Action in the 1990s

The latest approach to grass-roots activism is the establishment of citizen networks that are considered to be the most effective modern organization directed toward change. Networks are perfect in that they have the advantage of being very powerful forces due to having interchangeable anonymous leaders that cannot be coopted, and because they are an impossible target to attack. The phone, the home computer and the "fax" machine connects the individuals of the network. Byron Kennard, in *Nothing Can Be Done, Everything is Possible*, an advocate of networking, relates the following with respect to his favorite networker.

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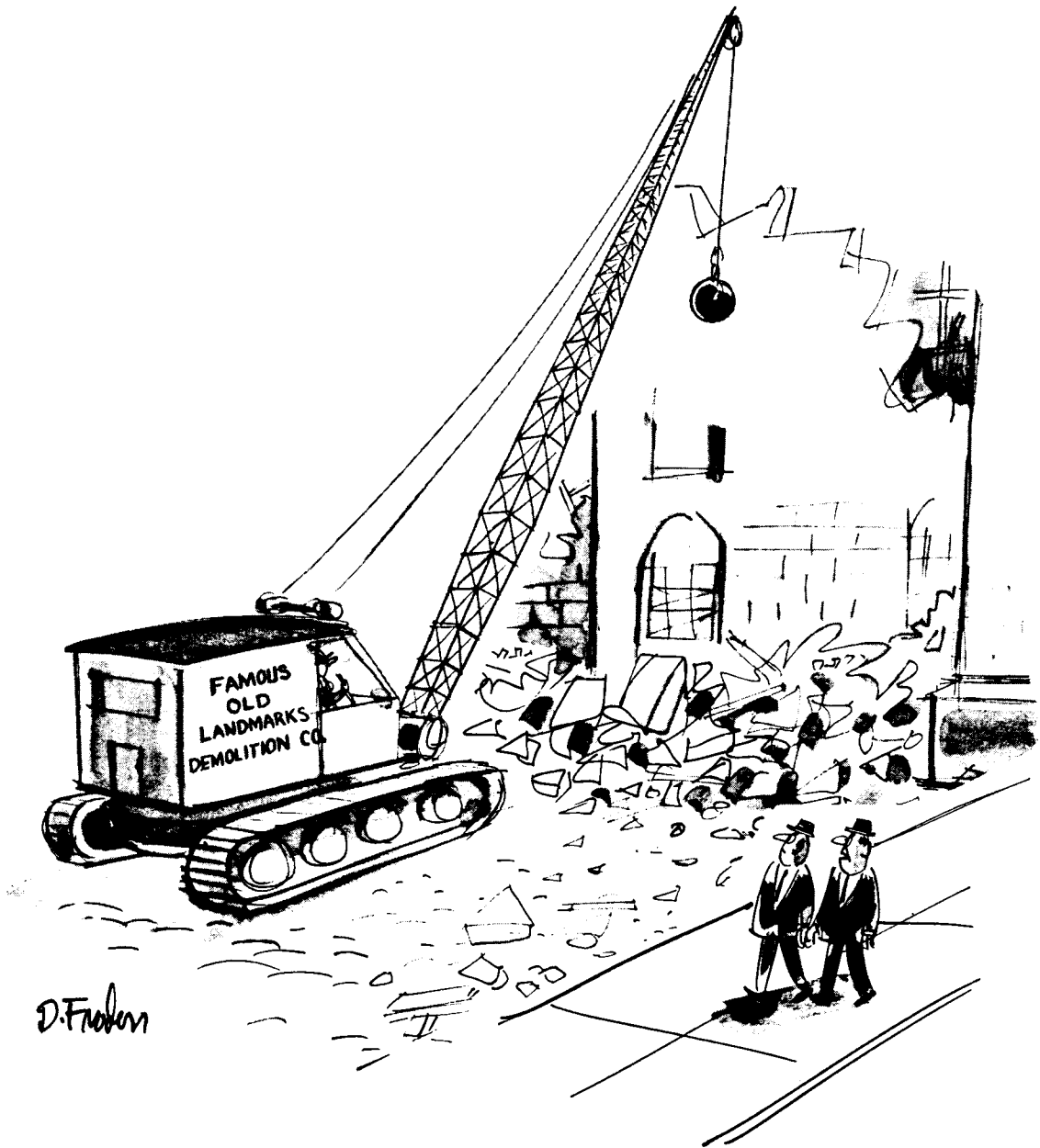
I find history full of marvelous networkers. My favorite is Talleyrand, the aristocratic French statesman and diplomat, whose conservative vision of peace and stability in Europe led him to serve and then to undermine half a dozen regimes.... It so happened that most of Talleyrand's collaborators were brilliant, high-born women of the shrewd witty type that dominated much of French history and culture. Whenever he was brewing a coup d'etat, the authorities always set spies in his household to see if they could catch him in the act and prove his treason. But the spies always reported back to their masters that Talleyrand couldn't be up to any mischief for all he did was play cards with the ladies!

The Product

Marquee: The Journal of the Theatre Historic Society, published a "Theater Preservation Issue" which provides extensive and invaluable advice to civic action groups (Marquee 1983). Various articles point out that the theatre restoration process is rife with problems especially in the area of fund raising. It is stressed that expert advice must be tapped immediately and experienced personnel in the area of application completion is necessary in order to apply for non-profit, tax-free status for the corporation that will engage in fund-raising and eventually manage the theatre.

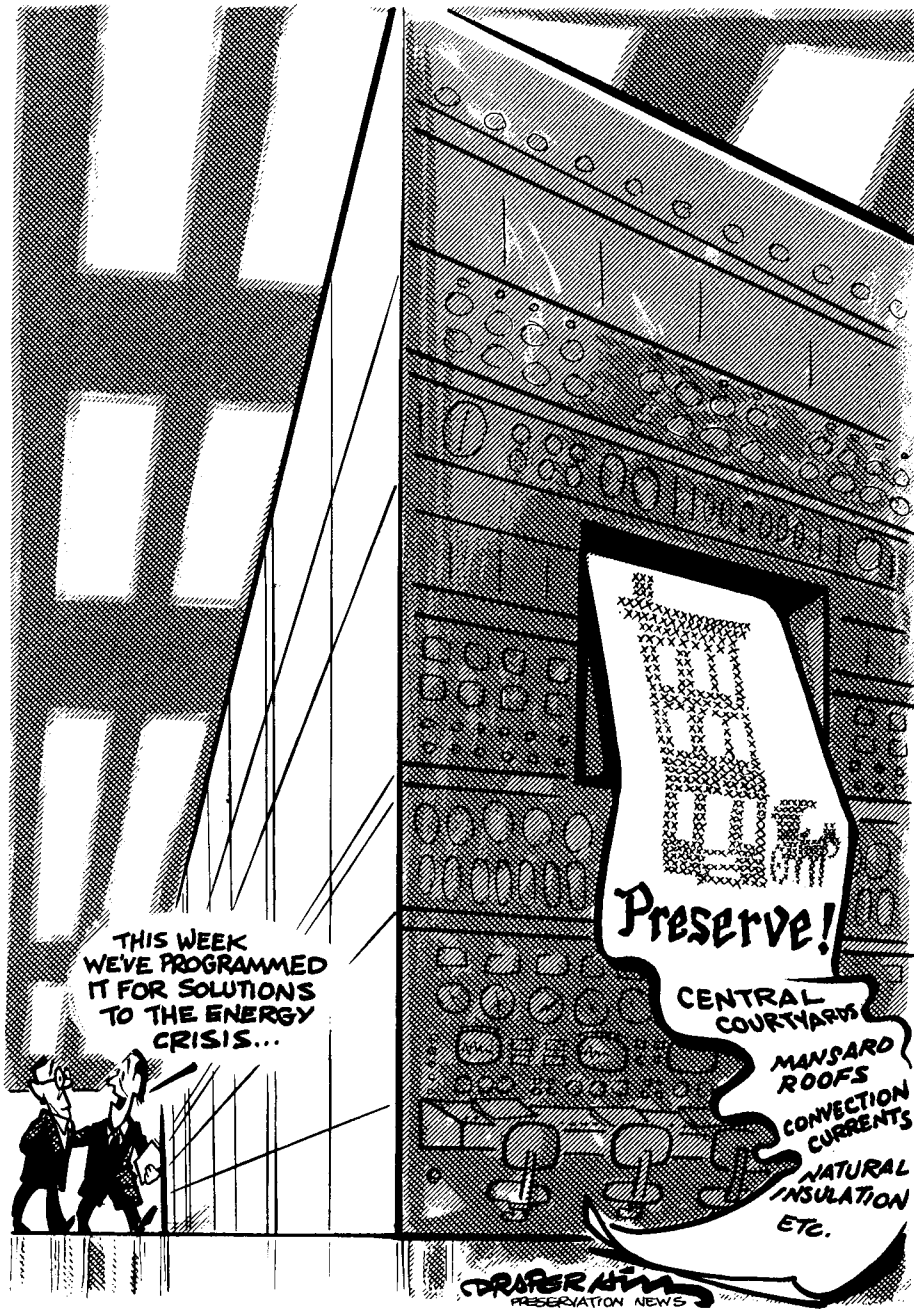
The selection of an architect with experience in the design and restoration of historic theatres is strategic. The City of Tacoma was especially fortunate in that they were able to obtain the architect, Richard McCann, an apprentice to the original architect Priteca, also worked on the rehabilitation of Seattle's Fifth Avenue Theatre. It is crucial that the architect have sympathy for the original design and the ability to successfully adapt the building to facilitate modern artistic demands while adhering to the myriad of building code specifications that must be addressed - and work within a limited budget.

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"Have they no shame?"

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Drawing by Draper Hill; Preservation News, January 1974

CHAPTER 111: CASE STUDIES

3.1 CASE STUDY: THE PANTAGES THEATER, TACOMA, WASHINGTON

The reasons for choosing the Tacoma historic theatre renovation and reuse case studies are the following:

- . Geographic, socioeconomic and historic links exist between Tacoma, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia.
- . Differences in political environment and political philosophy - a different country provides opportunities for comparisons and contrasts.
- . Opportunity to compare two projects in the same city, over time-span of ten years.
- . Case study theatres used as anchors for an area rejuvenation project provide examples for other cities to follow, ie. Vancouver and the Granville Mall.

3.1.1 The City of Tacoma, Washington

Three hundred years after Europeans discovered America, white men reached the Seattle-Tacoma area. George Vancouver arrived in May of 1792 aboard the ship *Discovery*. The Tacoma area has fine harbours, great forests, fish and wildlife, mineral resources and a temperate climate. Fortunately for the Tacoma area, many businessmen recognized the opportunities presented by the location. There was a great boom in population in 1890 when Washington achieved statehood; the new east-west rail link to Puget Sound increased the population in the area from 1,098 in 1880 to 36,000 in 1890. Considering the relative isolation of the area there were many large companies of

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national significance founded: The Puget Sound National Bank in 1890; Marcus Nalley started Nalley's Fine Foods and the Saratoga Potato Chip in 1918; Brown and Haley Chocolates, one of the oldest and largest in the United States, in 1914; the North Star Glove Company, foremost in the United States for work gloves, in 1910; Standard Paper Company in 1909; Roman Meal Bread Company in 1927; and the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company established in 1900. Weyerhaeuser purchased 900,000 acres from the Northern Pacific Railroad. The Weyerhaeuser Company is believed to be the largest land owner in the world and is the largest employer in the Tacoma area today (Morgan 1984, 145).

The City of Tacoma had a fairly small population of around 400,000 in 1983 when the Pantages Theatre restoration project was completed however it had political and financial strengths that stem from a diverse economic base. This information is significant when one considers the success of the historic theatre restoration projects in Tacoma.

Today the City of Tacoma has a population of 586,000 (1990) and suffers the fate of many North American cities with respect to urban development and change. It has become a bedroom community for Seattle as industry and businesses have moved outside of the city. The retail base has also moved from the inner city to the major shopping centres to be in closer proximity to the sprawling suburban developments that are typical of the area. The inner city movie palaces were demolished or, in a struggle to survive economically, were reduced to second and third run houses. Many downtown theatres - the Oak, the Melbourne, the Tacoma, the Hippodrome - have all been demolished.

3.1.2 The History of Theatre in Tacoma.

Tacoma's first theatre opened in January of 1890; the first movie palace was built in 1925 but was destroyed by fire in 1963. In 1918 Tacoma boasted five legitimate

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theatres and seven film houses. Alexander Pantages opened the first Pantages Theater in Seattle in 1915, a renovated church purchased by Pantages for \$320,000 (Rochester 1984). The Tacoma Pantages opened on the night of January 7, 1918 and was the 50th member of Alexander Pantages' vaudeville theatres. Of these he owned 22 and leased 28 - the Tacoma Pantages was one of the latter. William Jones, a local entrepreneur built the office building-theatre at 901-09 Broadway for \$400,000. The building was designed by B. Marcus Priteca, the Pantages' Company architect. Construction on the building started in 1916 and upon completion in 1918, the Jones Building contained 11 stores, 50 modern offices and the 1293-seat Pantages vaudeville theatre. The Jones Building was constructed of reinforced concrete with a steel frame, finished in glazed terra cotta in a Second Renaissance Revival style on the Ninth and Broadway theatre facade and a yellow buff brick Commercial style on the Jones Building facade. The theatre design was inspired by the Petit Trianon, the small opera house at the Palace of Versailles - with additional Greco-Roman details requested by Alexander Pantages in recognition of his Greek heritage (*Tacoma News Tribune*, Feb 10, 1983). After the gala opening The Pantages featured vaudeville acts for eight years before being converted into a movie theatre. The Tacoma Pantages had financial problems from the outset and a series of owners made their individual marks on the theatre. Many historic movie theatres have a history of economic problems similar to that experienced by the Pantages due to the "boom-times" of the 1910s and 1920s and the "bust" of the 1930s.

All the most prestigious entertainers visited Tacoma on their way north to Seattle and Vancouver. Tacoma was involved in movie production in 1925 when H.C. Weaver, a Hollywood producer and several wealthy Tacomans built a large barn on Titlow beach and

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shot their first film "'Hearts and Fists' - a tale of tall trees and big men" (Morgan 1984, 117). Unfortunately, the studio went broke in the crash of 1929.

Pantages suffered financial and personal disasters during 1928 and 1929. He was charged with a sexual assault on a minor - a female auditioning for work - and the forthcoming scandal and financial setbacks resulted not only in various theatres being sold, but his name was stripped from all theatres in order to mollify the public. The RKO Company leased the Tacoma Pantages from 1929 to 1931 and renamed it the RKO Theater. Vaudeville was dying and with it the RKO Vaudeville circuit. A showman, Jensen von Herberg, picked up the lease and renamed the theatre, the Roxy. He did not fare any better at keeping the theatre viable. The theatre was leased to Will J. Connor in 1935 and it managed to flourish through the 1940s and 1950s due to Connor's care and attention to detail. Connor purchased the building in the 1960s. When the community decided to consider the restoration of the theatre as a cultural centre for the community, the building was owned by N.A. Investment Advisors, Los Angeles, California (*TNT* December 22, 1974).



The Pantages Theatre (The Jones Building), Tacoma.

3.1.3 Civic Response: Pantages Restoration Project

For three decades the citizens of Tacoma were frustrated in their attempts to receive funding for a new performing arts centre. There had been grass-roots action directed toward the use of the Pantages for a number of years. The most important driving force behind the grass-roots movement was a group of women led by Virginia Shackelford, who in her youth had been a performer in the vaudeville circuit and had appeared on the Pantages stage. *The Seattle Times*, January 16, 1983, quotes Shackelford, "I swear I'm the only one who knew eight years ago that we were going to have this theater." In 1975, after the voters defeated a bond issue for a proposed civic centre and theatre complex, the Civic Arts Commission turned its full attention to the downtown Pantages Theatre. The Pantages and the Rialto Theatres are the last of the downtown movie palaces and were at the end of their functional days when their value was identified by the citizens of Tacoma.

The historic theatre restoration case studies in Tacoma, the Pantages and the Rialto projects, combine the important ingredients necessary for the success of such projects:

- . a group of old-theatre buffs and those interested in community cultural facilities come together in common cause;
- . a need is identified within the community with respect to a venue for cultural events;
- . a theatre is identified as having historical and cultural significance;
- . economic adaptation to modern needs is established and the required funding is considered feasible.

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The Tacoma citizenry had demonstrated a need for a major theatre over a period of years. The Pantages Theatre was identified as a viable option and the grass-roots group was aware of all the funding possibilities available. While all of these elements are necessary to assure the success of a historic restoration project, they are not sufficient. The restoration of theatres or similar civic projects cannot be successful without a high degree of individual and group devotion and effort, and often one person can make the difference.

A major grass-roots mobilization was required to get the Pantages built. (Virginia) Shackelford abandoned a career as a political analyst on radio to spend full time lobbying for the theater...."Honey, I would have you in tears," she said, "I could tell you for hours how for over 2 years (during the government lobbying) I ate, slept, drank and thought of this theater seven days a week and 24 hours a day. It was a full-time job" (Cohen 1983).

3.1.4 The Pantages: Funding Restoration and Reuse

The Pantages Theater restoration project was funded in the following manner:

. The Community Development Department provided \$4,000 to the Civic Arts Commission to enable them to commission a study that would determine the feasibility of adapting the old theatre to a civic arts centre for the community. Richard McCann, a Seattle architect that had been a protege of the original architect, Priteca, concluded that, at a cost of approximately \$6 million, a mere one-fourth of the estimated cost of a new arts centre, the Pantages could be successfully converted. The theatre had the necessary prerequisites: need was established and adaptation was ascertained - it had the famous Priteca acoustical accelerator installed under the lower balcony; architectural and historic significance was documented - the building represented the earliest extant example of

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Architect B. Marcus Priteca's theatre-office building designs. Excellent parking facilities existed nearby.

. In order to tap federal funding, application was made to have the building added to the National Register of Historic Places. This was accomplished in 1976.

. In June of 1976 a federally funded study of estimates for the Pantages restoration costs showed a total of approximately \$3.2 million would be required (*TNT* February 10, 1983).

. The Pantages and the adjoining derelict Illington Hotel were purchased for \$450,000 in 1978 with urban development funds provided to Tacoma by the federal government.

. A non-profit organization with a volunteer board of directors was established and the task of fund-raising for renovation costs was undertaken.

. A \$30,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts was granted to pay for the preliminary plans for the renovation.

. A State Historic Challenge Grant was also awarded to the project.

. The project would qualify for a \$1.5 million share of a proposed \$40 million state bond issue for cultural projects and historical preservation.

. A federal matching grant of \$1.5 million was to be available, however by March of 1981, due to President Reagan's austerity program and budget cuts, the Economic Development Administration (EDA) stood a chance of being dismantled.

. The Director of Intergovernmental Affairs in Olympia was asked to press for a change in legislation so that the City of Tacoma could be assured of the \$1.5 million federal matching funds needed to assure a Legislature approved bond issue for the project.

This was successfully accomplished through a great deal of political arm twisting (Cohen 1983).

. The local fund drive hoped to raise \$1.6 million. By April of 1981 Tacoma City officials warned the Board of Directors that the theatre could lose its \$1.5 million state bond grant if \$1.5 million in public funds were not met by May 1. There had been \$811,000 in donations and pledges collected, however, \$700,000 additional funds were required.

. By September of 1981 the required funds had not been collected and the fund-raising officials had asked the Tacoma City Council to promise to loan the project any money not raised by the time construction bills are presented.

3.1.5 Financial Woes and Creative Bookkeeping

The ghost of financial woes haunt most theatre restoration projects, especially when financing is dependent on the public sector. A great deal of knowledge and planning is required in the area of fund raising and the Pantages fund raising committee had much to learn. There were numerous problems with fund raising during 1981. Presidential and congressional election campaigns competed for funds. For months the EDA funding was in doubt, therefore private donations were held in abeyance. Even the name of the theatre was a problem in that many knew the theatre as the Roxy, and did not identify with the name Pantages. Tacoma is not the business centre of Pierce County and therefore had a limited number of large donors to call upon.

At the city level, things weren't much easier. While the Tacoma Dome, also under construction, had no trouble ballooning its \$27 million voter-approved budget to \$44 million with a city-council inside levy, backers of the \$6 million Pantages restoration had to fight tooth and nail for things like a \$1 million guarantee it needed so construction could begin... (Cohen 1983).

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Major contributors were - Weyerhaeuser, which allocated \$100,000, three donations of \$50,000, and 10 contributions of between \$25,000 and \$35,000. Some of these contributions were from foundations however many foundations do not donate toward capital expenses (Cohen 1981). Virginia Shackelford spearheaded the "buy-a-brick" programme whereby individual bricks are purchased for \$25, inscribed with names, and installed on the floor of Broadway Plaza in front of the theatre. More than \$50,000 was raised in this manner (Cohen 1983).

The original 30-member board directing the Pantages project was overly optimistic with respect to how much money it could raise on its own. The Board eventually had to spend \$4,000 per month for publicity, salaries and office supplies for the fund drive. These expenses had not been budgeted for. "I think some people in their enthusiasm didn't comprehend the size of the effort" (Cohen 1981).

The project was plagued by construction delays, dispute over stage size and problems with budget and some design details. The renovation project started nine months behind schedule, in December of 1981. Seats and worn carpet were replaced, new heating, plumbing and electrical services were installed, the stage was carefully extended by 10 feet to a width of 45 feet and delicate ornamental moldings were restored and replaced throughout the auditorium. During World War II the beautiful dome had been painted an institutional green in order to block out the light. The exterior was cleaned, a theatre annex was built on the Illington Hotel site to house wardrobe, workshop and rehearsal space, a freight elevator and delivery access. A new lobby, staircase, and ramp for handicapped access were added along with 10 modern dressing rooms, stars' lounge, computerized lighting boards and sound system (Sypher 1983).

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The Pantages was planned to provide a smaller, attractive alternative to the Fifth Avenue in Seattle. The Fifth Avenue theatre restoration was privately financed by a consortium of private investors involved in redeveloping a downtown shopping complex, of which the theatre was a part. The Pantages was planned to facilitate the smaller national shows and hoped to attract the Seattle audience. Stephen Rothman, the theatre consultant, predicted that the theatre would require subsidization for at least five years after opening (Jones 1980).

The City of Tacoma included the Pantages as a "line item" in the city's budget every year for around \$200,000. Very little of this funding was unrestricted but was earmarked for long term costs involved in the Jones building renovation. This money is available to the City of Tacoma through a controversial financial arrangement that was made in January of 1983.

To provide the Pantages with a regular source of operating income, the city entered into a complicated sale-lease agreement with the Municipal authority, the city's public corporation, and Urban Securities Inc., of New York. This was hurriedly put into place before opening night. Essentially, the city sold federal tax credits - which the city could not use itself - to Urban Securities. The 1982 Tax Reform Act made this arrangement favourable to investors. There was much community concern illustrated when news of the arrangement was made public and the Pantages Centre produced a newsletter in an attempt to answer questions related to the business transaction and who was to benefit.

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The governing covenants...prohibited the sale or lease of funded projects without authorization from the Secretary and then only if the City repaid the \$1.5 millions in federal Economic Development Administration funds with interest. We had to change the federal law. With considerable help from our Congressional Representative Norm Dicks and Senator Slade Gorton a law was passed and signed by President Reagan only last December 22, 1982, which specifically allowed the sale of the Pantages (Lucien 1983).

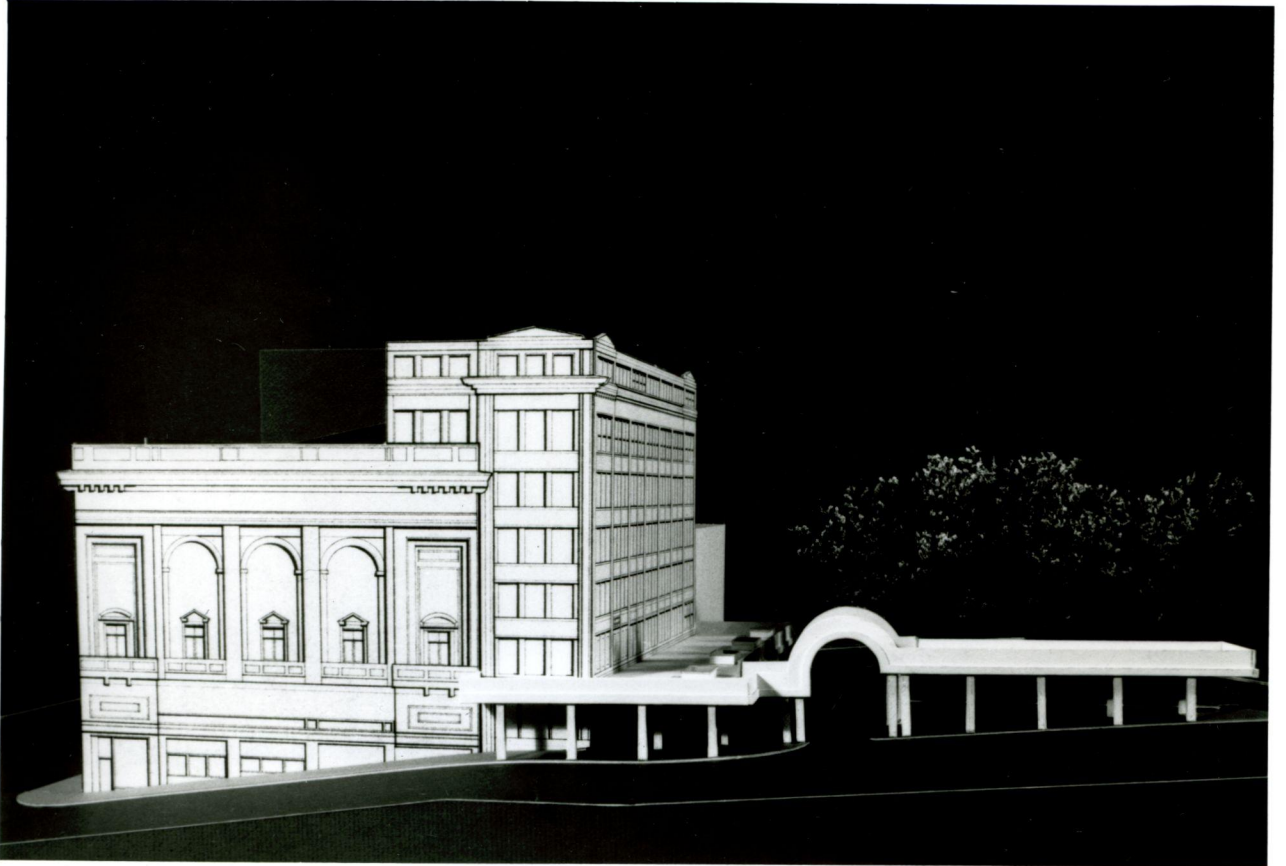
The city would receive the money in the first five years of the contract. The tax sale would generate about \$100,000 in interest yearly beginning in 1988, however the city is required to pay leasing charges of \$89,000 a year from 1990. The city retained ownership of the land (Lucien 1983). It is difficult to understand why the city would become involved in such an arrangement for relatively small yearly income. *The Seattle Times*, 16 January 1983, explained the arrangement.

Several parties benefited from the transaction. A Seattle law firm which represented the city was paid \$106,000, the consultant who arranged the deal was paid \$103,000 over six years. Urban Securities got a tax credit of more than \$1.25 million and will be able to depreciate \$6.9 million - the new appraised value of the building - over 15 years. The city's net gain from the sale - based on the 65-year term of the deal - is estimated at \$623,000. But that estimate is based on assumptions about the state of the economy 35 to 45 years into the future, when the city will have the option of buying out the lease. City officials say they tried to make sure the city got a good deal, but they also concede that the wisdom of the transaction won't be ascertainable until long after the parties to the deal have passed on.

The headline of the *Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce*, 12 February 1983, announced "Pantages Centre Opens Tonight.... The event will cap a five-year period of fund raising for the \$6 million restoration of the theater which opened in 1918."

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Break out the champagne! And Tacoma did.... dress up in finery!... Women arrived in furs and jewels and gowns. As for the men, every tux-rental shop in Tacoma must have been down to bare hangers.... Limousines pulled up to unload dignitaries. Those who contributed to the project looked for their names on plaques in the lobby or on the 4,500 name-stamped bricks outside.... It was the sort of night where Gov. John Spellman hailed the arts-funding work of his predecessor, Dixie Lee Ray....It was the sort of night where U.S. Sen. Slade Gorton paid tribute to his predecessor for getting federal funds for the project. It was the sort of night where Gorton and Congressman Norm Dicks - one a Republican and the other a Democrat - stood side by side before the assembled media and couldn't find enough kind words to say about each other. It was the sort of night many never expected to happen in Tacoma's downtown area, long a victim of neglect and decay, but now, apparently on the road to a striking comeback (Duncan 1983).



The Pantages Theatre Renovation.

It was not long before newspaper headlines informed the Tacoma readership that the Pantages was in financial trouble. Joseph Turner in *The Tacoma News Tribune*, May 26, 1985, reported,

Supporters of the Pantages Theatre, flagship of the arts in Tacoma, are taking emergency steps to steer clear of financial problems that threaten to sink it.... Operationally,..., Pantages was in financial trouble after its first season. During the second season, the theater not only failed to erase its first-season losses, but sank farther into debt. The theater lost about \$125,000 in each of its first two years of operation.

The board of directors for the theatre hired a consultant to determine reasons for the deficit and to investigate possible solutions. Among the problems cited in the report were:

- . Poor marketing and promotion.
- . Problems with staff training and management.
- . Failure of the board of directors to shift its emphasis from the fund-raising, start-up phase to continuing operations.

Also, small cultural groups found the theatre too expensive. Although the rental charges were reasonable, union rates for stage crews and ushers had to be paid whether they worked or not and costs up to as much as \$3000 for one night were the result.

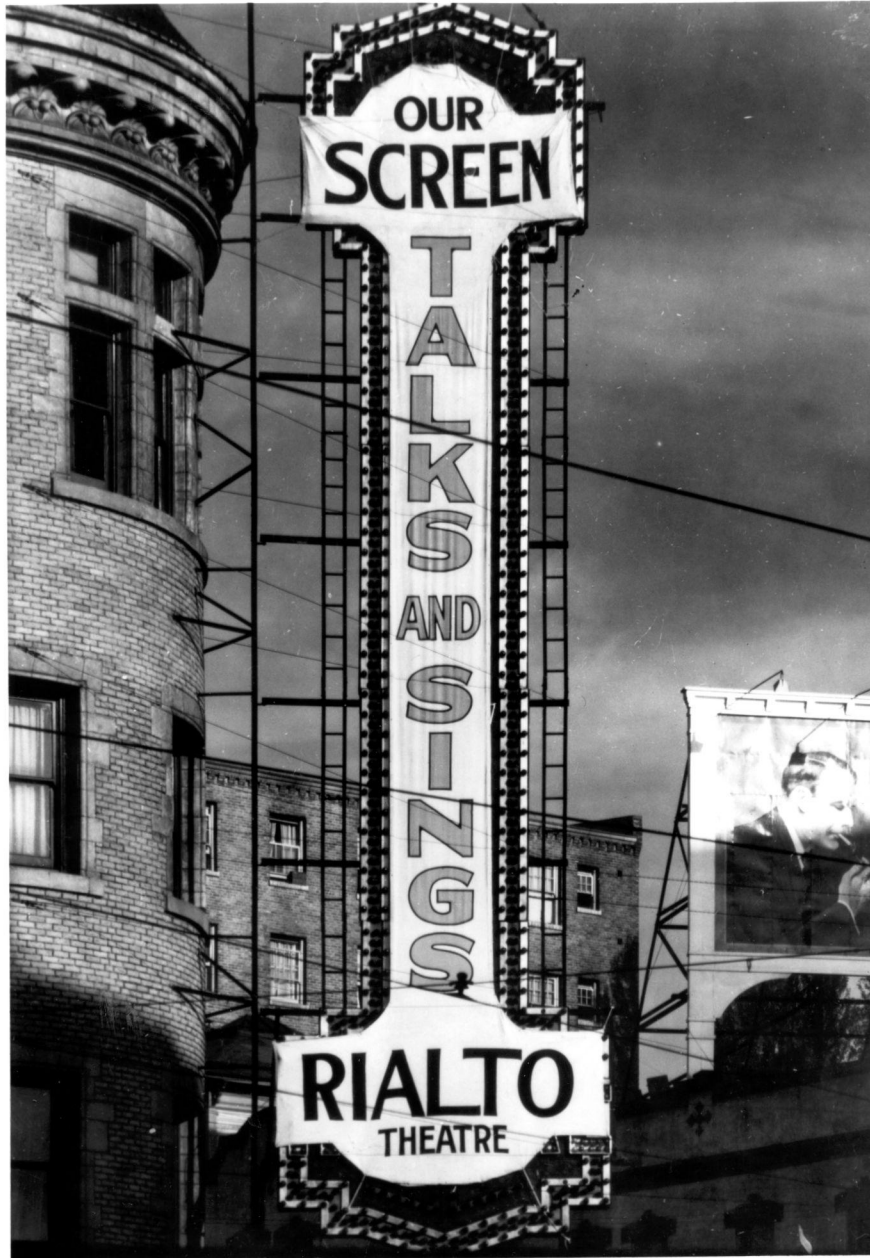
To keep the Pantages afloat through its third season, the board of directors has arranged for a \$200,000 line of credit from a consortium of local banks, and 22 of the 35 directors are personally guaranteeing half. Of its third-year budget of \$975,000, the theater board is banking on raising nearly \$354,00 from corporations, foundations, a state grant and the community. But even then, only \$67,000 of the \$250,000 deficit would be eliminated (Turner 1985).

The Tacoma News Tribune, December 29, 1985, reported news of the struggle to raise financing for the 1985-1986 season, an estimated \$354,000. A large fund-raiser, a

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Boston Pops concert at the Tacoma Dome, raised \$81,899 and the Tacoma City Council extended a loan of \$42,000 for another year. The Tacoma/Pierce County Corporate Council for the Arts awarded grants totalling \$27,000. The Pantages managed to operate "in the black" through 1985 due to an improved approach to marketing and some in-house administrative changes. A survey was taken to identify audience tastes, rather than having an artistic director decide about programming.

By 1990 the Pantages Theatre was economically stable and stood as an example of a very successful restoration and reuse project. Although it had been a struggle, the Pantages survived and was to provide a strong base for future inner-city rejuvenation projects.



The Rialto Theatre and the introduction of the "talkies."

3.2 CASE STUDY: THE RIALTO THEATRE, TACOMA

3.2.1 The Rialto Theatre

When the Rialto opened in September of 1918 it was advertised as the Northwest's most beautiful theatre by *The Tacoma Sunday Ledger*, 8 September 1918. "It was decorated in blue and gold and had a gentlemen's smoking room decorated in English oak...." while the women's restroom is advertised to be a "dream of daintiness." The theatre was also lauded as having been a boom to the construction industry - "A Theater that is a Monument to the Worth of Tacoma Labor."

The Rialto was designed to be primarily a movie theater and was unusual in that the projection room was on the main floor which provided a particularly good image. "The Rialto was the place to see movies" (Wood, 1991). Built by the Moore Amusement Company, the theatre was connected with Paramount of Artcraft Pictures - part of the Fox distribution chain. Cornelius Vanderbilt and 2,000 Tacomans attended opening night; it had the asset of having a genuine Wurlitzer organ, the second installed west of the Mississippi (*TNT*, 23 September 1990). In 1933 the Fox chain went into bankruptcy and the Rialto closed. Pacific Northwest Theaters purchased it in 1927 and a "popular price" policy was instituted. First and second-run films were shown; movies changed three times a week. In 1933 the interior was brightened and new sound equipment was added. By 1949 it was managed by Hamrick Theaters and in 1951 it was advertised as one of the Coast's finest movie theaters (*TNT*, 15 February 1951).

By 1954 theater revenues were seriously declining and theater owners were attempting to have a 5 per cent city admission tax removed as downtown and suburban admissions had declined 32 per cent from the peak year of 1949. The movie theatre

survived into the 1980s because it was managed creatively and efficiently and was not occupying property considered to be prime real estate. The Rialto was fondly remembered by Tacomans for the antics that were staged in order to draw in the movie patron, for example, a nurse placed on duty to minister to frightened patrons and electric buzzers installed under seats to assure that they were! As with the Pantages, Will J. Connor leased and eventually owned the theatre from 1951 to August of 1989 when it closed (*TNT*, 4 May 1954).

3.2.2 Civic Action and the Rialto Restoration Project

"Horace Mann said 'If there be any truer measure of a man than by what he does, it must be by what he gives'" (Tacoma, 1990-91). The City of Seattle wondered how the much smaller Tacoma managed to save the Rialto for their community when they had lost a similar opportunity a year earlier. *The Seattle Times*, March 31 1991, headline "Theater Envy" (Bargreen 1991) reported that Tacoma had once more successfully managed to save a downtown historic movie theatre, the Rialto, from the wreckers ball. The projected reopening was for October of 1991.

This time around, individuals did not have to struggle with the complex maze of paperwork involved in obtaining grants - Grantmaker Consultants was hired. The City hired architect James R. Merrit, and William Wood, a theatre consultant experienced in historic theatre design, restoration and management. Mr Wood is devoted to the challenge of the restoration process and stated, "You couldn't build half a new theater with the money, and even if you could, you wouldn't have the history" (*TNT*, 3 December 1990).

It is strategic to the cultural health of a community that smaller local groups, not only the large road shows and professional entertainers, have a place to perform. The

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historic movie theatre often is a perfect vehicle. The City of Tacoma recognized the problems inherent in a community facility, such as the Pantages, that is both too large and too expensive for smaller cultural groups. The remedy for this deficiency is the provision of a smaller venue, provided there is documented need. The community of Tacoma decided to restore and reuse the smaller Rialto theatre and also to build a new 300 seat repertory theatre, the Broadway Theater, on top of the Pierce Transit Turnabout facility which is attached to the Pantages.

The theatre was in fairly good repair and the Terra cotta exterior is a perfect match to that of the Pantages. Acoustics checks proved positive. The renovation programme includes the restoration of the original detail on the existing integrated storefronts, cleaning of the American eagles over the exits, restoration of a second-floor rotunda for guests, rebuilding of the original seats, shop and storage space, along with the upgrading of all heating, electrical and plumbing and fire safety standards. With sensitive restoration of interior detail and original colour, a new 37-foot stage, raised roof and balconies, earthquake safety measures installed, new dressing rooms, separate washrooms for the handicapped, expanded and restored lobby more comfortable seating arrangements and view lines, the City of Tacoma will have an exceptional facility that will accommodate movies, chamber music, comedy, children programs as well as the Tacoma Youth Symphony Orchestra. The original Rialto had 1500 seats; the restored theatre will be more spacious with 750 on the main floor and 150 in the balcony, perfect for the needs of the smaller production (Wood 1991).

3.2.3 Broadway Theatre District Funding

The City of Tacoma, decided to make a concerted effort to upgrade the downtown and, with the Pantages as an anchor, establish the Broadway Theater District. Recommendations for economic revitalization contained in the 1988 adopted American Cities Plan encouraged business and government leaders to begin development (Tacoma, 1990-91). The Rialto theatre, one block away, on the corner of 9th and Market and Broadway, was viewed as a strategic part of the overall plan. Additional facilities planned to integrate the pieces into the complete concept are - a transit turnabout, an urban plaza, an expansion of Antique Row, and Broadway and Commercial Street improvements. Additional patron safety was addressed as part of the planning process.

The Broadway Theater District Campaign is a well-designed, city driven project directed by a broad sector of the community well represented either on the Capital Campaign Committee, the Broadway Theater District Steering Committee or the Broadway Theater Task Force. With William T. Weyerhaeuser as Capital Campaign Chairman, the committee established important goals for Tacoma's Broadway District in the city centre. These were:

- a) to provide a cultural center for the community second to none;
- b) to strengthen the performing arts organizations by providing them with appropriate facilities;
- c) to add life to the urban center, to draw new customers and businesses, cultural institutions and entertainment facilities.

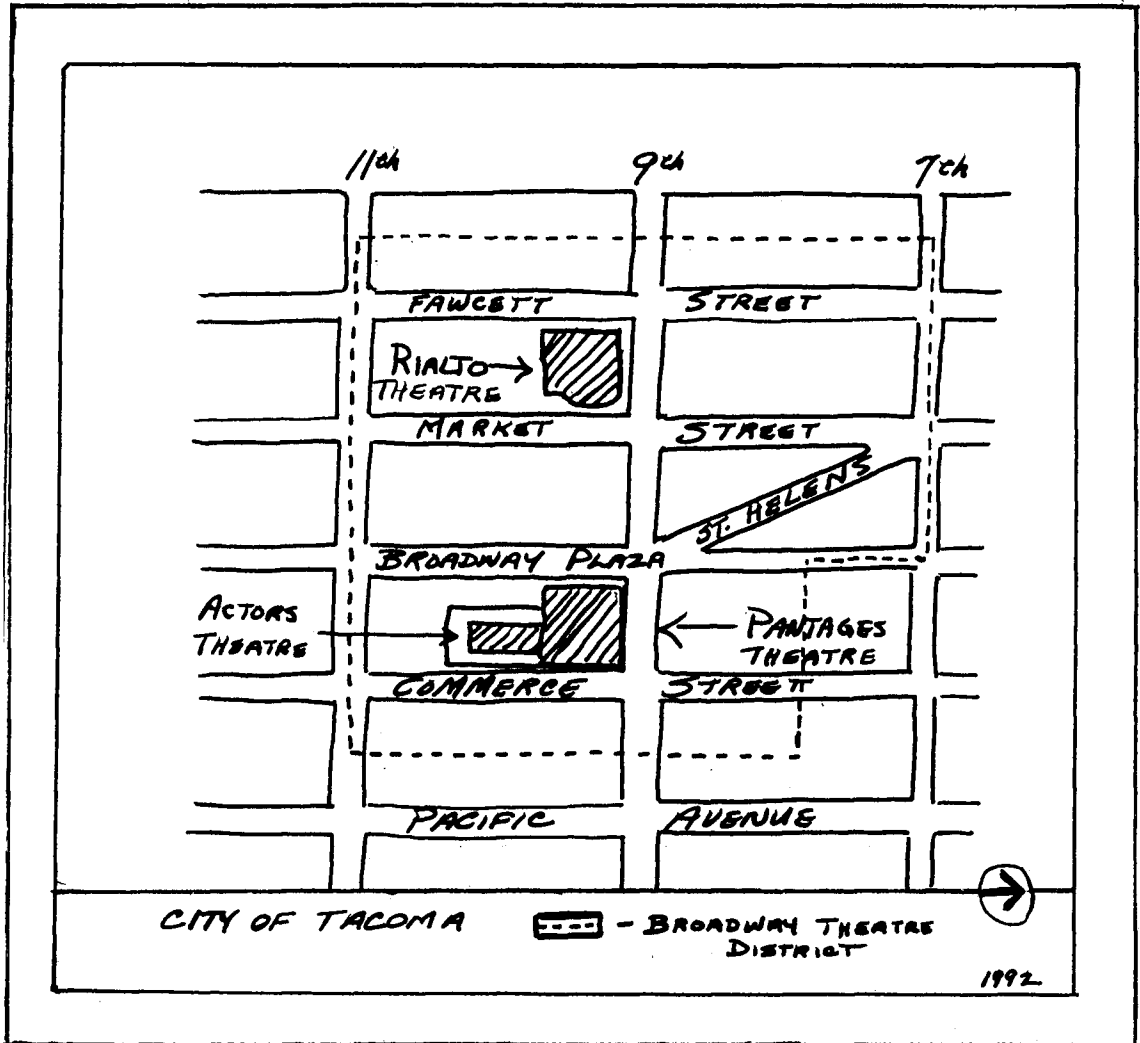
The budget requirements totalled \$8,398,000. This included the new 299 seat Broadway theater (\$5,780,000), the Rialto Theater (\$1,710,000), transition fund for the

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three theatre users (\$240,000), Gallery space in Pantages (\$240,000), office renovations in Jones building (\$250,000), campaign budget (\$20,000) and the urban design/plaza interface (\$198,000).

The funding of the Rialto restoration project and the Broadway Theater, which would complete the Broadway Theater District facility requirements, would be provided as follows:

- . The strategic ingredient was the existence of an anonymous donor who had made a fortune in the community and wanted to give something back. This one donation was \$1.5 million which was enough to purchase and restore the Rialto theatre property.
- . The Rialto was placed on Tacoma's historic register in September of 1990, which qualified it for a \$500,000 face-lift utilizing city and state funds. The city designation, provided more protection than a place on the national register would as all changes to the building would have to be approved by the city administration.
- . There was a state grant of \$238,000 provided for historic preservation.
- . The City of Tacoma matched the state grant with an additional \$238,000.
- . A National Endowment for the Arts Grant of \$420,000.
- . Local sponsors of the Arts, corporations and foundations provided an additional \$3 million.
- . Donors who contribute at least \$900 for either theater, will warrant a theatre seat name plaque.
- . The State would be contributing an additional \$2.3 million to the project. The Broadway Theater district Capital Campaign expected that costs would be shared equally between public and private sectors. Each sector would contribute \$4.2 million, for a total of \$8.4 million.



Tacoma Broadway Theatre District.

3.2.4 Lessons to be Learned

Valuable lessons may be learned from the Tacoma case studies. Tacoma appears to have learned much due to time and experience. The Pantages project was a trial-by-fire exercise, amateurishly handled and troubled by mismanagement and economic problems. However, it was a start and it did survive due to the determination of the citizenry who took personal responsibility for its survival, even to the point of personally underwriting loans.

What is apparent from the historical evidence is that the city administration was not as committed to the Pantages restoration project as it might have been. The citizenry had repeatedly voted against a bond issue that would have provided cultural facilities. This may have indicated to the administration that cultural facilities were was not a high priority to their constituency. The Tacoma Dome was.

By the late 1980s inner-city rejuvenation was being discussed across North America. The City of Tacoma was finally ready to totally endorse the theatre district development as the key to bringing Tacoma residents downtown in the evening and on week-ends, and as an attraction for the whole population of Puget Sound/Pierce County. A comprehensive plan that entails public transport facilities, public safety considerations, and pedestrian plaza development is given top priority. The encouragement of an "Antique Row" provides a use for many of the district's historic buildings and offers an alternative activity for theatre goers and tourists. Restaurants are actively encouraged to relocate in the theatre district as fine dining and theatre-going are viewed as an integrated package.

One must not underestimate the enormous economic, and therefore political, clout that is inherent in the Theater District Steering Committee composed of a Weyerhaeuser

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family member - George H. Weyerhaeuser, CEO representing the Weyerhaeuser Company and Trustee of the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation; William Honeysett of the News Tribune Publishing Company, and William Philip, Chairman and CEO of Puget Sound Bancorp who states in the "Broadway Theater District Campaign" informational brochure:

We on the Executive Council have committed ourselves to bringing a new level of energy, focus and coordination to downtown. We care deeply about Tacoma, and are pledged to a long-term task of making a great city. With all of you, we plan to be in the audience on Opening Night, when curtains go up simultaneously in the Pantages, the Rialto and the new Broadway Theater. It will truly be the beginning of a sparkling new era for Tacoma and Pierce County.

Ownership of the new theatre facilities is varied. The City of Tacoma is the designated owner of the new Broadway Theater. The Rialto Theater is currently held in a private operating foundation for the public benefit. The Pantages Centre, a private, non-profit corporation, will manage the three theaters through lease arrangements (Tacoma 1990-91). The projected opening date for the new projects is Fall of 1993.



The Granville Street Theatre District (1930s), Vancouver,
B. C.

3.3 CASE STUDY: THE ORPHEUM THEATRE, VANCOUVER, B.C.

3.3.1 The City of Vancouver, British Columbia

The City of Vancouver is situated on the Burrard Inlet of the Fraser River and within the third largest metropolitan area in Canada, known as the Pacific Fraser Region. It encompasses 5250 square kilometres, and represents one half of the total population of the province. The City of Vancouver has a population of approximately 460,000 and is recognized as the cultural centre of the urbanized region of 1.7 million (McDonald 1981).

Vancouver was named for Captain George Vancouver who charted Burrard Inlet in 1792 for the Royal Navy. "Gassy" Jack Deighton's saloon was the first business establishment at what is now Water and Carrall Streets and in 1867 the original townsite of Vancouver was established in that area, now known as Gastown. A new townsite was surveyed in 1870 and named Granville after the British Colonial Secretary, Earl Granville. With the extension of the Canadian Pacific Railway to Granville, the townsite was assured and incorporated in April of 1886.

Due to the influx of people during 1886 and 1892 the population grew from 5,000 to 15,000. Vancouver was a shipping and distribution centre for the region. After the mid-1890s Vancouver changed from being an outward looking maritime community connected by the Pacific Ocean to California, Great Britain and various points on the Pacific Rim, into an inward looking continental community as entrepreneurs extended investments into the province. The community suffered a severe depression in 1892, but this ended in 1898 with the Klondike gold rush. The boom continued until the first world war but between 1908 and 1913 most of the commercial growth was in the Eastern Business District (Kalman 1974).

3.3.2 The History of Theatre in Vancouver

The City of Vancouver has historically been the entertainment centre for a large region and a diverse population. In light of the "wild and woolly" citizenry and the rather tawdry reputation of the vaudeville theatre that attracted them, the first Opera House was established on the western edge of Chinatown around Carrall Street, along with the red light district and the opium factories (Kalman 1974). The Opera House no longer exists, nor do many other historic movie theatres that once entertained thousands of Vancouverites. The City of Vancouver does not have a history of sensitivity toward heritage preservation and shares the rather unsavory reputation of the "wild west," populated by transients and overly enthusiastic entrepreneurs who are not interested in "roots." Vancouver has demolished many buildings, and along with these, many historic theatres.

Gone is the luxurious Strand Theatre on West Georgia..., The Cinema-International on Granville (the historic old Lyric and the original Orpheum vaudeville house); the magnificent old Odeon-Hastings (formerly the Beacon and the original plush Pantages) reduced to rubble, to wind up ignobly as a parking lot... The Colonial Theatre on Granville met the same sad fate, as did the Studio and the Dominion on Granville, and the old ornate Rex on Hastings Street (Meyers 1992).

During the 1920s Vancouver experienced a building boom. It was a dynamic economy indicating a bright future and Alexander Pantages was optimistic about investing in Vancouver. Vancouver's "New" Orpheum Theatre opened November 7, 1927. The Orpheum was the 4th and last theatre of that name built in Vancouver and the only one built specifically for the showing of movies and also able to produce stage shows.

...because the constant increase of patronage which the Orpheum Circuit is enjoying in this city makes the additional seating capacity not only necessary, but will enable the Orpheum Circuit to greatly improve the quality of the programmes which will signalize the opening of this splendid new theatre (McCallum 1984, 4).

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The Orpheum Theatre was part of the Orpheum vaudeville chain owned by "Alexander Pantages - Seattle's Gift to Vaudeville" (Rochester 1984). Pantages, a Greek sailor, jumped ship in Puget Sound in 1885, worked in Seattle and San Francisco as a waiter and made his way to the Yukon during the gold rush. His first business partner was Klondike Kate. They owned an Opera House and bar in Dawson City in 1899. With profits from the Yukon Pantages he opened the first Pantages Theatre in Seattle in 1915 and he proved to be an enormously successful vaudeville promoter, movie "mogul," and businessman throughout the "roaring twenties."

Alexander Pantages did not finance the construction of the Orpheum, however. The Vancouver entrepreneur Joseph Francis Langer, who made a fortune in the construction business in England, financed and constructed the theatre as part of his chain of theatres. Langer invested approximately \$1 million to build the theatre and the Orpheum Circuit signed a 25 year lease (McCallum 1984).

The architect for the building was B. Marcus Priteca of Seattle who designed 60 major theatres and 160 minor theatres throughout his career. In 1917 Priteca designed the Vancouver Pantages in the French Renaissance design. Priteca adapted what has been described as a "Spanish Renaissance Style" for Vancouver's New Orpheum Theatre but it is a hodge-podge of design elements, as were all of the movie and vaudeville palaces (McCallum 1984, 11).



The Orpheum Theatre Billboard (1930s), Vancouver.

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The Vancouver Orpheum was one of the last great movie palaces built and it was constructed with economy in mind. A narrow entrance on expensive Granville Street property led into the lobby that was designed in order to guide patrons over the alley that separated Granville and Seymour Streets to the theatre auditorium which was built on less expensive property on Seymour. The elaborate interiors were moulded on a nearby vacant lot and constructed like a big jigsaw puzzle - a plaster egg shell hung in a concrete and steel box. At double the regular wage, 800 men worked for 10 months around the clock to complete the theatre. The major extravagance was \$100,000 worth of gold leaf decoration and silk wall panels (McCallum 1984, 13).

The Vancouver Orpheum was built at the end of the golden era of theatre. Vaudeville was dying due to the popularity of film and the introduction of the "talkies." The stock market crash of 1929, the economic depression of the 1930s, and the increasing popularity of "free" radio entertainment now featuring many of the popular vaudeville stars, greatly affected the box office receipts. Large crowds in attendance every day were required in order to operate the massive, expensive, multi-staffed movie palace. Langer lost the majority of his fortune in 1929 and moved back to England.

The Orpheum lost \$95,000 in each of its first two years of operation and by 1930 it was losing \$116,000. When the Orpheum Circuit collapsed the Keith-Orpheum circuit took over the lease but they too were out of business by 1931. The next owner, Famous Players, closed the Vancouver Strand, their important first-run house, and transferred the orchestra to the Orpheum, where they were showing double and triple features by 1933 to pay the bills (McCallum 1984, 24).



The Orpheum Theatre, the Granville Street Entrance.

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Ivan Ackery was named manager in 1935 and remained in that position for 35 years. He was the consummate showman and pulled the theatre into the black.

Ackery clearly loved the Orpheum....seldom as anyone kept a theatre open and full so much of the time, or accessible to so many classes and interests. As a result, the Orpheum came to mean all things to all people....'There was always something going on down at the Orpheum. You wanted to go down there just to see what was happening' (McCallum 1984, 27).

The Orpheum Theatre entertained millions of Vancouver movie-goers over the years. Generations of Vancouverites worked or performed there; the theatre hosted visiting royalty, politicians and stars of stage, screen and radio. Movies, musical productions, drama, ballet, symphony, and opera were all associated with the grand old Orpheum. During wartime it was used for the war effort. Ackery kept the Orpheum open through the depression and through an era that experienced the introduction of television. Ackery is credited with making the Orpheum the centre of arts in Vancouver until the 1970s so that when the time came to save the Orpheum, it was a "personal" matter to many Vancouver citizens (McCallum 1984, 4).



The Orpheum Theatre, Seymour Street entrance.

3.3.3 Civic Action: Orpheum Restoration Project

The one bright spot in a rather dismal litany of lost heritage resources is the civic action that resulted in the restoration and reuse of Vancouver's last movie palace, the Orpheum Theatre on Granville Mall in the 1970s. The Orpheum saga begins in a manner similar to many other successful theatre restoration projects - one woman activist "seizes the moment." Rhonna (Flemming) Curtis was one of four women who formed the Heritage Committee of the Vancouver Community Arts Council. Because the City of Vancouver had not documented the heritage buildings in the inner city, the women decided to survey the downtown and create a heritage buildings inventory in 1973. When Rhonna Curtis approached the management of the Orpheum, she was informed that within six weeks Famous Players would begin to divide the theatre into seven small theatres. The renovation permit was in process. Rhonna immediately contacted Councilman Fritz Bowers and an emergency meeting was called. Members from the planning department, two council members, a representative from the Vancouver Symphony, a representative from the management of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre, and Community Arts Council representatives attended the meeting. Of major importance was that Mayor Art Phillips was sympathetic to the idea of saving the theatre for public use if it appeared to make "sense." What was particularly crucial at the outset of this theatre restoration project was the "political will" demonstrated by the majority of Council and Mayor Art Phillips, who were associated with a progressive political group known as TEAM (The Electors' Action Movement). To ascertain if the proposal did make sense a comprehensive study needed to be made, Council had to approve, and Famous Players had to agree to cooperate, as time was required in order to carry out the necessary research (Curtis 1992).



The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, 1921.

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The important elements in the restoration argument are - the establishment of a need for the building within the community and a careful examination of the adaptability of the existing building to the modern requirements of the cultural activities that will use the space. The Vancouver Symphony had played in the Orpheum Theatre but moved to the new Queen Elizabeth Theatre in 1959. The acoustics in the Queen Elizabeth proved to be inappropriate and it was determined that the Symphony needed a new home.

When the future of the Orpheum Theatre was discussed at a Council meeting, the Arts Community attended in full force. The Famous Players organization agreed to give the City time to consider a purchase offer. The Council agreed to finance the required feasibility study . The City hired acoustics specialists from Massachusetts as primary acoustics consultants. When acoustics tests proved to be positive, the Vancouver Symphony Society and the Community Arts Council officially took up the cause. Rhonna (Fleming) Curtis found it difficult to access Queen Elizabeth booking statistics as certain vested interests were holding out for a new structure, but she "found a way to work around the road blocks" (Curtis 1992). It was shown that there was a need for a second venue for a variety of cultural performances.

The Orpheum required extensive structural evaluations with respect to restoration and adaptation costs.

...in September of 1973 a report containing a list of recommendations was presented to City Council. In essence, the report showed that Vancouver was in need of a second theatre and called for the City to negotiate the purchase of the Orpheum from Famous Players Theatres. The recommendation was that the Orpheum be converted to a concert hall for the Symphony and other groups not requiring theatrical staging (Vancouver, 1977).

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From the outset of the Orpheum Theatre restoration process community concern received a sympathetic hearing from the Mayor and a majority of Council. On December 11, 1973 Mayor Phillips, on behalf of the Orpheum Theatre Committee, submitted a report to Council. The report stated that Famous Players Ltd. was entitled to gut the theatre under existing bylaws, however because of sentimental attachment, historic importance and the ability of the theatre to function as a venue for live performances, "the Orpheum Theatre could be saved." The report also stated that there was a need for the facility, the acoustics were "...significantly better than those of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre. There is no question that the theatrical feeling in the Orpheum is outstanding. An event in the Orpheum Theatre is really an event" (Phillips 1973).

The report also outlined the purchase option that Famous Players had offered which included a free option to buy open until February 15, 1974. The total cost was \$3.9 million, payable over three years with no interest. The City would take possession in July of 1975 and until then the Orpheum would operate as a movie theatre. The Community Arts Council reported that a complete renovation would cost approximately \$2 million, bringing the total cost to \$5.9 million payable over three calendar years. The land value of the Orpheum Theatre was estimated to be approximately \$2.2 million. Council hoped to finance the project in the following manner:

- . \$1 million from the Province
- . \$1 million from the Federal government
- . \$1 million from the City of Vancouver
- . \$1 million from private donations (*Province*, 3 January 1974).

The report stressed that the Queen Elizabeth Theatre cost \$5 million in 1958 and would cost \$15 million to replace. Mayor Phillips had been in touch with Premier Barrett, Prime Minister Trudeau and Urban Affairs Minister Basford. While they appeared

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receptive, no commitments had been made. The recommendation was that the City accept the offer and immediately begin to canvass both levels of government as well as the public to ascertain public support. The Committee was to report back in early February of 1974 for a decision with respect to the offer to purchase. Alderman Fritz Bowers moved to accept the recommendation of the Special Committee and this was carried by a majority of Council (Vancouver, 11 December 1973).

An informal meeting of the Citizen's Committee to Save the Orpheum was held in the Mayor's Office, 20 December, 1973. Mayor Phillips was made the "Honorary Chairman" because of the stature of the Mayor's Office. A letter-writing lobby was to be initiated. Arrangements for income-tax deductions for donations was made. In January 1974 a Chairman of the "Save The Orpheum Committee" and a publicity agent were selected. The time before the February deadline was to be devoted to organizing for major corporate fund-raising and a report would be made "...with assurances from experts on what sums can be expected within what periods, and the organization of a schedule of public events, with organizers for them, and estimates on what funds they might raise" (Bowers 1974, 7 January). The challenge was to raise \$1 million in capital funds from the community.

By early February a deal had been struck with Famous Players Ltd. Famous Players agreed to develop a multiplex theatre on the old Capitol Theatre site instead of the Orpheum site. Famous Players was insistent that the City should tie in the date of acquiring the Orpheum to the date of their receiving the development permit and, with respect to the restrictive covenant prohibiting the showing of motion pictures in the Orpheum, it was agreed that this would not apply to benefit performances and "that movies could be shown if in the opinion of (the local representative) of Famous Players,

they were not of a competing nature" Mr. Bowers, Councilman and Chairman of City Council's ad hoc Orpheum Committee, went on to state in his letter to David Mooney of Famous Players Ltd.:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Famous Players for the helpful spirit in which our negotiations were conducted...We have the powers of expropriation, and I am sure would have used them for this purpose, since the citizens of Vancouver have been almost unanimous in their desire to preserve this link with their past. In such an expropriation, we would have had to pay you virtually the same amount in damages as out agreed-upon purchase price. On behalf of City Council, I would therefore like to thank you for sparing us the hassle, the delays and the legal costs involved in expropriation (Bowers, 7 February 1974).

In an attempt to determine the public acceptance of the City of Vancouver's proposal to purchase the Orpheum Theatre for use as a concert hall and to determine the most favourable method for raising fund to purchase the theatre, a telephone survey was conducted on Saturday 16 February 1974. The survey findings indicated that a majority of people were in favour of the proposal to purchase the Orpheum and the respondents favoured a public lottery and private donations as a means of fund raising (Osbourne 1974).

The Special Committee Report to Council of 18 February 1974 concerning the Orpheum Theatre found that there was a need for the Orpheum as the Queen Elizabeth was booked to capacity. The Orpheum proved to be suitable except for the lobby space and slightly less spaciousness with respect to seating. Vancouverites had indicated their desire for retention - by 15 February, over 8,000 individual letters had been received by the City Clerk or the Mayor's office in support of project. "A noteworthy thread throughout many letters was a desire to retain the atmosphere and ornate decor of the interior and not

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engage in extensive alterations that would destroy these." It was also recommended that the Queen Elizabeth and the Orpheum be placed under one management.

Fund raising was to take the form of - aid from the Federal and Provincial Governments, city revenues, a lottery sanctioned by the Attorney-General, private fund-raising drive that would approach foundations, corporate donors, individuals, benefit concerts and other special events. The cost of the Orpheum would be paid to Famous Players over three years: In July, 1974 - 1.0 million, July of 1975 - 1.5 million and in January of 1976 - 1.4 million. "The sum of \$900,000 was to be placed in the 1974 Supplemental Capital Budget towards the cost of purchase; that the following funds be designated as back-up for the remaining \$3,000,000 - 1973 Operating Budget Surplus - \$2,000,000 and Surplus Property Sales Reserve - \$1,000,000 - such funds to be reimbursed by donations, grants from Senior Governments and future Supplemental Capital budgets (Vancouver, 18 February 1974). The recommendations were accepted by a resolution of Council on 19 February 1974.

Throughout March Mayor Phillips, Aldermen Bowers, Harcourt and Massey met with M.L.A.'s, the Attorney-General, the Deputy to the Secretary of State, the Minister of the Environment, Jack Davis, and Hugh Faulkner, the Secretary of State, in Ottawa on March 8. There were countless phone calls made to Federal and Provincial politicians. The Federal Government announced on March 15 a grant of \$1 million towards the purchase of the theatre on condition that it be used as a home for the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. In addition, they agreed to contribute \$1 million towards the renovation costs over two to three years. The Provincial Government was not able to make a firm commitment. Individually virtually all members of the Cabinet and the Vancouver M.L.A.'s expressed

sympathy towards the project, and the Committee expected substantial contribution from the Provincial Government (Vancouver, 15 March 1974).

3.3.4 Panic at the Orpheum

Vancouverites reading the local press were well aware of the theatre restoration process and the apparent well-organized approach adopted by the Administration. However, one would have to be on the inside to be cognizant of the chaos and complexity inherent in any restoration project. The Vancouver Orpheum Theatre restoration project was not unusual in this respect. In a confidential memo to Mayor Art Phillips Re: PANIC AT THE ORPHEUM, Fritz Bowers outlines a serious problem with ticket sales for the benefit concert featuring Jack Benny to be held on April 6, 1974. Only 600 tickets were sold out of a possible 2,794. The publicity and public relations so necessary to the success of fund-raising efforts had numerous problems - not enough newspaper coverage, lack of enthusiasm in the media, ads too expensive and uninformative, the direct mail invitation campaign materials poorly designed. The Committee was considering a massive ticket give-away - tickets paid for with donation money - in order to fill the theatre. Bowers closes with a P.S. "Next time, we'll just raise the mill rate: much less fuss" (Bowers, 28 March 1974). Only \$4,000 in donations were received in private donations (*Vancouver Sun*, 11 February 1974).

There were numerous concerns regarding financial procedures, authority and controls. An organizational chart was established in April of 1974 to facilitate a better understanding of the administrative process. Consideration of the needs of the potential users of the restored space must be considered to be a top priority. The administrators of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra were very concerned about the renovation

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programme as they were the key to the success of the Orpheum project. A list of items was drawn up with respect to acoustical and sound prerequisites, stage requirements, dressing rooms, rehearsal space, and audience amenities that they believed to be absolutely necessary. One of the main concerns was the inadequacy of lobby space and revenue generating refreshment areas within the theatre. The document was copied to all levels with respect to the granting authority.

We have more subscriptions than any other symphony in North America....There must be recognition by all concerned that it is not enough to "Save the Orpheum." It must be re-animated, infused with a new life, and re-created as a fully adequate and suitable home for the most successful and high-momentum musical organization in Canada (Nelson, 18 June 1974).

The costs of renovation were consolidated by December of 1974 through comprehensive inspections of the building for necessary service upgrades; the consultants and architect brought together final costs adjusted for inflation to 1976. Total renovation costs were estimated to be \$3.2 million in 1976. Grants from the Federal and Provincial governments together with \$1 million from the Vancouver Foundation and the lottery profits of \$325,000 equaled the estimated renovation costs. Private donations were not of a significant amount to warrant individual itemization although Council initially hoped to raise \$1 million from public contributions (Leckie, 2 January 1975). It is apparent that when individual generosity was not forthcoming, the Vancouver Foundation was approached. The Vancouver Foundation is the fifth largest in North America and has an capital endowment fund of \$284 million. The foundation contributes, by way of advisory committees, to child welfare, education, youth, arts and culture, health and welfare, environment, and medical research (Vancouver Foundation, 1990).

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The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra administration was unhappy with the progress with respect to adequate lobby space and pressed the City to purchase the adjoining lot on Smithe Street in order to expand the theatre lobby. The City agreed to this. The Federal government was reluctant to forward grant monies without legal guarantees that the City would not dispose of the property, legal guarantees that the City would take possession of the property and that the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra would have preferential treatment with respect to bookings and rehearsal time (Rayner, 18 September 1975).

The City took possession of the theatre 27 November 1975 and the theatre was closed for renovations. The opening date was tentatively set for January 1, 1977.

Renovations included:

- . the installation of an acoustical shell with a floor above for rehearsal and storage purposes;
- . the extension of the stage;
- . importation of Italian-trained craftsmen to create new molds from existing pillars and other elements in order to recopy them;
- . repainted walls and ceilings , gold foil used to replace gold leaf;
- . re-upholstering of 2,794 seats and 3,000 yards of new carpet;
- . painting of a mural for the dome by the original decorator, Tony Heinsbergen; and
- . restoration of the original Wurlitzer by volunteers from the American Theatre Organ Society.

The Orpheum was officially opened on April 2, 1977 with a production by the Vancouver Symphony. The restoration of historic movie theatres is an on-going process

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and vigilance is constantly required if there is not a recognized heritage designation in place. The City acquired the adjoining lot and enlarged the Smithe Street lobby from 10,000 sq. ft. to 15,000 sq. ft. with the aid of money donated by the Westcoast Transmission Company. The lobby addition opened in the summer of 1983. Also, at this time the Orpheum Theatre was named a National Historic Site protecting the structure at the Federal level should an insensitive local government prevail sometime in the future (McCallum 1984, 39). There was controversy concerning the Orpheum sign which was in disrepair and would have been auctioned off in 1982 had not Bill Pattison, a local businessman, stepped in to save it.

The civic administration and the citizens of Vancouver proved that it is possible to save historic buildings if the will is there - but it is not easy. The Vancouver Orpheum Theatre case study is an example of a very successful restoration project. From an economic standpoint, an initial investment of \$7 million provided the citizenry with a facility that would cost three times that amount to replicate. The theatre provides a lovely venue and home for the Vancouver Symphony and many other productions throughout the year. The theatre requires no subsidies from the City and in the 1991 calendar year was used 200 days and entertained 344,860 people. From the point of view of the marketing and public relations manager, the theatre is very successful (Koropatnick 1992). The City of Vancouver has retained an important part of its past for the enjoyment of future residents and visitors to the City. The Orpheum retains the important continuity of being a "civic theatre" where all of the citizens come together. Recently a silent film series was presented at the Orpheum accompanied by the Vancouver Symphony and the historic Wurlitzer. The Wurlitzer was played by an internationally known organist who plays for silent film retrospectives mounted in many of the restored historic theatres throughout the

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world. It is fascinating to be taken back in time, to discover the true character of the historic movie theatre as it was meant to be enjoyed. It was packed with people of all ages, all "experiencing" an event as close to the "real thing" as is possible. It was a magic evening. One is inspired to hold immense gratitude and respect for the individuals or groups who choose to help propel a movement that saves a building so significant to our urban culture.



The Orpheum, stage and proscenium arch.



The Vogue Theatre, Granville Mall

3.4 THE VOGUE THEATRE

The tattered sign on Granville Mall marking the Vogue Theatre is a sad reminder of the glamour and glitter of the Granville Theatre district during the 1930s and 1940s. The sign is crowned by the figure of Diana, goddess of chastity, fertility and the hunt. "Theatre row with all the neon lights after the war was like a great wedding, and the Vogue was the most beautiful of all with its goddess" (*Province*, 11 Oct 1981). Vancouver businessman Harry Reifel built the theatre in 1937 to accommodate live performances. The theatre missed the great days of vaudeville and also had design problems in that the wings and stage were too shallow. The Vogue was leased by the Odeon chain in 1941 and was made their flagship movie theatre. The Vogue was given a "perfect 36" award in 1941, presented by the *Annual Theatre Catalogue* in recognition of the 36 most modern theatres operating in the United States and Canada. It is thought to be the only Canadian theatre so recognized. The grand opening, attended by Hollywood celebrities, was on April 14, 1941. The "last picture show" was in June of 1987 although the lease on the building ran until 1991.

The "Save the Vogue" committee sought funds to fight to save the Vogue (*Vancouver Sun*, September 1, 1987). The Vogue was owned by Sterling Estates and the sale price was \$1.65 million. The *Vancouver Sun*, 5 December 1987, headline read "Everyone has a plan to save the Vogue Theatre." The Vogue Committee asked City Council to purchase the building and lease it back to them as a 1,000 seat concert hall. It was argued that the rent for the Orpheum Theatre was \$4500 a night, and that the theatre was too large and too expensive for many productions.

Several private companies and two non-profit societies were interested in the Vogue. Gordon Campbell advised groups to investigate the possibilities of acquiring

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financial help from surrounding municipalities (*Vancouver Sun*, November 25, 1987). This is the approach that is taken in Victoria with respect to the theatres managed by the McPherson Foundation. The McPherson Playhouse (the old Pantages) and the Royal Theatre restorations and operating costs are financed by the City of Victoria and the Municipalities of Oak Bay, Esquimalt and Saanich.

For five years the Vogue Theatre has sat derelict on Granville Mall. Many options have been considered by private investors and public arts groups over the years. The Vancouver Musical Alliance, a professional association of the city's major music organizations, wanted to convert the building into a 1200 seat concert hall. There was a need and still is a need for a medium sized theatre for community cultural use in the City of Vancouver. The Orpheum and the Queen Elizabeth Theatres have 2800 seats, the Vancouver Playhouse has 746 seats. Surveys showed that there were 21 organizations interested in a medium sized facility. The City of Vancouver's social planning department was considering a proposal for arts and entertainment related developments on Granville Mall which included a proposed conversion of the Vogue. There was a study commissioned. Refurbishing of the Vogue was estimated to be \$400,000 in 1987 with an additional \$700,000 required for the up-grading of the lobby, washrooms and seating. Acoustical tests indicated the hall was suitable for live music. "Everything's there - including floodlights." (*Vancouver Sun*, April 26, 1986).

In 1988, Randy Bachman, a local musician planned to purchase the Vogue and turn it into the "world's only live-concert rock-video studio." However, it was reported that the City's social planning department still appeared to advocate community use of the Vogue as the focus of a variety of entertainment facilities that could be established in the southern part of Granville Mall (*Vancouver Sun*, 14 April 1988). The local arts groups

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were surprised by the Bachman purchase and Alderman Jonathan Baker stated "I feel it's much healthier for the theatre to remain in the private sector." It appeared that the City would only purchase the building as a last resort. The Bachman sale did not go through (*Vancouver Sun*, 16 April 1988). The Vogue was resold at \$1.25 million to off-shore investors (*Vancouver Sun*, 22 March 1989). The building is available for lease at \$11,000 per month which includes property taxes (*Vancouver Sun*, 29 June 1990).



The Stanley Theatre, Granville Street South

3.5 THE STANLEY THEATRE

The Stanley Theatre, 2750 Granville Street South, opened in 1931. It was built by Frederick Guest and designed by Vancouver Architect, Henry Holdsky Simmonds. "It is of 'faintly Moorish' exterior, capped by the bold and friendly 1940s era neon sign that has welcomed three generations of patrons. Inside, an 'escapist interior - an auditorium domed in the Italianate style'" (Ward, 1991). Famous Players purchased the theatre in 1941 for \$268,000. The Stanley is a true motion picture palace and until it closed on September 25, 1991, was one of the few in North America still in operation. The theatre is thoroughly modern with a large screen, upgraded seating, 70mm projectors and a state-of-the-art THX Dolby six-track sound system, one of only two theatres so equipped in British Columbia.

The Stanley has an "A" status on the city's heritage inventory and many believe that the City has a duty to save the Stanley. "If the Stanley Theatre goes, almost none of the places that make Vancouver a unique and beautiful city can be considered safe, no matter how treasured" (V.A.C., 1991). It is offered for sale for \$4.5 million in 1992 and carries with it the restrictive covenant attached to the sales agreement that forbids eventual purchasers from using the building as a movie theatre.

Famous Players argued that attendance did not justify the continued operation from an economic point of view, however it was noted by many theatre-goers that grade B movies were consistently shown in the last months of the theatres existence thus creating a self-fulfilling prophesy (Kluckner, 1992). When the theatre manager, Gordon McLeod, was interviewed for a feature in the *Vancouver Province*, May 20, 1990, he said, "People come from all over the Lower Mainland to see a movie here.... Parking is a headache and they have to line up outside in the rain, yet they come here." However, when Gillian

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Howard, Famous Players representative in Toronto was interviewed with respect to the closure of the Stanley Theatre, she stated "...there's nothing special about this old theatre...dozens of them across the country have been closed." She also admitted that she had never been to Vancouver (*Vancouver Sun*, 28 September 1991).

Before the closing date the S.O.S. or Save Our Stanley committee organized a variety of citizen action events. Brochures were printed that included addressed cards to be signed and mailed to Mayor Gordon Campbell, Ron Emilio of Famous Players Toronto, and Martin Davis of Paramount Communications New York, the parent company. Thousands of names were placed on petitions to Mayor Campbell. Media attention was gained through rallies held outside the theatre; flyers were handed out throughout the city; banners were distributed; a special T-shirt was made and sold to raise funds; a boycott of Famous Players was considered; the British Columbia Government Employees Union urged Famous Players to keep the Stanley in operation or to remove the restrictive covenant; a special presentation was made to Council by Dirk Beck and Michael Kluckner, Chairman of the Community Arts Council's Heritage Committee. Beck and Kluckner tried to persuade Council that the Stanley could make economic sense as a movie house if Famous Players could sell the unused development potential from the site and transfer this unused density value to another site. The "Save Our Stanley" grass-roots community group wished to see the Stanley retained for community use and used for movies and small live performance groups. Vancouver City Council made a commitment to save the exterior of the building. Mayor Campbell stated that "There is nothing in law that allows council to preserve a building's use.... Heritage preservation is about buildings, it's not about what happens inside the buildings" (*Vancouver Sun*, 20 September 1991).

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In a letter to the editor of *The Georgia Strait*, March 8, 1991, Dirk Beck, a member of the Heritage Vancouver Committee, stated:

The imminent sale and proposed plans for the Stanley are typical of the "bottom line" development going on in this town. Vendor and purchasers alike display little regard for what value buildings and their contents may have aside from their ability to generate profit. To these carpet-baggers, it never occurs that what may be nothing more than a commodity to them as much more precious for what it contributes to the life of the community.... "Fine", they say, "we'll keep the facade." Behind this propped-up, ironic concern they proceed to throw together yet another glossary arcade of "prime retail and office spaces"... What about being able to walk into a building and get something out of it besides a pair of Gucci shoes?

An announcement was made regarding a conditional sale to a Vancouver developer who wished to turn the Stanley Theatre into retail and office space. Ted Townsend, a reporter for the *West Ender*, stated "Those communities that have adopted successful heritage programs have succeeded because of one simple factor: determination.... As long as City Council pays lip service to heritage protection and puts its faith in milquetoast resolutions and bylaws, important heritage buildings will continue to fall" (*The West Ender*, 21 March 1991). When a developer offered a face-saving measure (literally) they jumped for it.... The survival of the Stanley is not the real issue... The issue is that city council is more committed to making life easy for the developers than it is to preserving the past. Council members routinely jump on the reasons why preservation of a heritage building might not work as excuse for doing nothing. They rarely give due consideration to the reasons why a building should be saved (*West Ender*, 21 March 1991).

The *Vancouver Sun*, April 19, 1991 reported that Council Members unanimously agreed the city should try to persuade Famous Players to ensure the Stanley remains a movie theatre. *The Sun* stated that "The function of the building as a theatre is as important to its heritage value as the architectural component. Councilman Harry Rankin

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expressed the opinions of many when he said that it was a meaningless gesture to save the facade and that the City should view the theatre... "either as a theatre or not at all" (*Vancouver Sun*, 19 April 1991). City Council was criticized for accepting Famous Players arguments at face value and were apparently unprepared to explore the issue further with respect to alternative economic solutions.

The potential purchase agreement was withdrawn in May of 1991. The Stanley Theatre, the oldest operating movie theatre in Vancouver, closed on September 25, 1991, one day earlier than previously announced. Theatre management feared the actions of disgruntled theatre advocates due to the actions by the "Save Our Stanley" committee and the not-so-subtle suggestions made by Dr. Tom Perry, Member for Vancouver Point Grey. Dr. Perry was quoted in the *Vancouver Sun*, September 20, 1991:

Supposing people were to show up for the last show and then decide...they didn't want to leave, and they were having such a good time that they invited the management to stay as well and they unrolled sleeping bags.... Eventually they would be thrown out...but in the meantime they'd be in a very good position to ask the media to visit them, and they could certainly ask the city aldermen and the Little Mountain candidates to come and listen to their concerns. If I were called, I would go.

When Council voted on the decision with respect to allowing further consideration of alternate uses for the Stanley or encouraging private development and "facadism," the political split was apparent. The Mayor and like-minded council members would not agree to a further study of the issue. On June 4, 1991 City Council voted to endorse retail use of the building. Negotiations took place with Famous Players but the public was not privy to the discussions. The original purchaser stated that there was still interest providing the city would cooperate however there were deadlines. City Council set out the following options:

- . City Council would allow the developer to transfer

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some density from the Stanley site. The developer would allow designations which would save the building.

- . City staff would help the developer resolve bylaw requirements for parking and seismic upgrading.
- . Council would endorse re-use of the Stanley as retail space - on the basis that the Stanley will be preserved (*Vancouver Sun*, 1 June 1991).

The sale of the Stanley Theatre did not take place, perhaps due to the economic downturn. Tom Perry had been actively involved in the "Save the Stanley" crusade and had asked City Council to assure that no irreversible work threaten the interior until after the Provincial election. Perry stated that he would try to save the Stanley if a New Democratic Party government was elected (*Vancouver Sun*, 20 September 1991). Before the election Tom Perry stated:

We don't have any hesitation about pouring public funds into sporting stadiums like B.C. Place, which has been a desperate money-loser for the tax payers. Why should we shrink so absolutely from investing public funds in a cultural facility if we can guarantee that there's a public return from it?

A New Democratic government has been elected. The Stanley is boarded up and awaits some form of policy action. The citizens of Vancouver who are interested in the cultural well-being of the community await important political decisions with respect to the two historic theatres that remain within their community. The community has demonstrated a strong interest in the fate of the theatres; the time has come for elected community representatives to respond by pressing the Provincial Government to adopt the *White Paper on Heritage Legislation*, initiate and adopt progressive, rather than reactionary, policies that reflect community sympathies and community needs.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS

4.0 CROSS-CULTURAL CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

4.1 Comparative Civic Response: Canadian and American

In order to analyze the dynamics of civic action and the restoration and reuse of historic theatres it is necessary to establish the cultural context or framework that forms the basis of the civic action associated with the selected case studies. Canadian and American socioeconomic and political environments are examined, relevant cross-cultural comparisons are discussed, dependent and independent variables are identified. Theoretically significant explanations are formulated in order to better understand the dynamics of civic action in general, and the restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres in particular.

The case studies herein not only provide an opportunity to analyze differences with respect to the civic action that propels restoration processes from the perspectives of time and circumstance, but between two different political and planning environments. The public nature of Canadian urban life is a manifestation of a greater collective orientation, while the privatism of urban America is a manifestation of individualism, highly possessive and materialistic (Mercer 1986, 381). Planning in Canada is a product of the British and American experience. "We have developed in Canada a hybrid of government intervention as accepted practice in land use regulation combined with a healthy respect for the 'prerogatives of private ownership' as guaranteed in American constitutional doctrine" (Lazear, 1981).

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On one level, there is much to be learned from the American examples, especially with respect to the organizational aspects of the acquisition, restoration and reuse process. On another level, the most important element of a successful project will not be found in American case studies or journal articles. Often Canadian planners are frustrated when they are presented with examples of successful heritage restoration projects that are documented in American planning texts and journals, or highlighted at American planning conferences. The educated planner is usually fully cognizant of the differences in the planning and development environments in the United States, aware of the historical evolution that contributed to the development of different socioeconomic and political philosophies. The successful planner understands the Canadian political and socioeconomic environment and thus is able to work within the system to facilitate change. The "old theatre buff" may not be as knowledgeable or worldly.

Those that would become knowledgeable, and thereby effective community activists, not only must be able to identify the differences between the American and Canadian psyche in order to use the available information to the best advantage, but understand the rapid changes that are taking place within Canadian urban culture and populations. Grass-roots civic action will become considerably more complex on both sides of the border due to the proportion of the citizenry that is now composed of different ethnic groups. New Canadians represent other cultures and may have quite different ideas with respect to what may or may not be identified as important cultural resources worthy of political and financial support. How will the historic movie theatre be viewed from these perspectives? This situation is attracting concern throughout heritage oriented groups in the United States at present, and suggests an important research subject in and of itself.

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Many authors researching the differences between American and Canadian attitudes refer back to the historical development of each country (Lipset 1989; Mercer 1986). The Constitution of the United States is based on an expectation of, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." The British North America Act, establishing the Dominion of Canada, states as primary, "Peace, Order and Good Government." We may share a continent and an ever-increasing economic union, however, politics, like religion, will remain one of the last cultural outposts. While a very strong case for the restoration and reuse of the historic movie theatre may be made, we are not operating in the realm of what would appear to be rational decision making. The name of the game is "politics."

In order to fully understand the dynamics of the historic movie theatre restoration process illustrated in the previously outlined case studies, it is necessary to appreciate the differences that exist between Canada and the United States in the nature of "giving" - both of private funds and of self. This is important within the context of this thesis in that Canadian governments do not have an established funding policy for heritage resources. Our initial reaction is to hope for private initiatives when in practice these are not forthcoming. American governments, through taxation incentives and others funding sources, have monies allocated for the preservation of heritage buildings having the required qualifications. Volunteers also have a belief that they may, through local initiatives, affect decision making at the highest levels, in Washington, D.C.

Canadians have often found it easier to explain who they are by declaring who they are not - and that is - Americans. However, Seymour Lipset points out that because the two nations vary in ecology, demography and economy these differences have had an important influence on the development of national values and attitudes. Lipset states that the immense size of Canada, along with a small population, have resulted in

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government involvement in the economy and a dependence on government to provide various services. The political philosophy on which the United States was founded is "anti-statist."

"Corporate giving in the United States as a percentage of pre-tax income has been roughly double the level in Canada over the past decade and is now close to three times the current level in Canada" (Lipset 1989, 143). Lipset argues that the tradition of private support for worthy endeavours is far more deeply imbedded in the American psyche than in the Canadian.

We Canadians appear to rely more on government than on voluntary efforts to finance such causes.... In Canada in 1980, individual giving was 7 times total corporate giving. In the United States the same year, individuals gave approximately 15 times as much as charitable causes as corporations (Lipset 1989, 143).

Lipset presents additional statistics to illustrate the differences in private philanthropy between the two nations. Surveys of Americans in 1985 and of Canadians in 1987 "Found that Canadians give less per capita than Americans. The Canadians figure for non-religious causes is C\$122, compared to US\$180 south of the border" (Lipset 1989, 144). Lipset suggests that the tradition of private philanthropy has a long history in the United States and it is based on the Protestant work ethic and the liberal emphasis on individuals and achievement.

The amount Americans contributed to philanthropic endeavours in 1987 was approximately \$94 billion, more than two and a half times as large as a decade earlier, while Canadians conversely, are giving thirty percent less to charity than they did twenty years ago (Lipset 1989).

What is the lesson to be learned from this? In a Canadian context, civic action focused on the acquisition, restoration and reuse of a heritage resource such as a old movie

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theatre will be for the most part dependent on government intervention and funding. As author Jamieson points out in *Creating Historic Districts: New Challenges for Historic Preservation in Western Canada*, the examples of Bath, England and Savannah, Georgia, perfectly define the important differences in the American and the British approach.

Bath's historic district is a creature of government and is administered and fostered by government.... In order to preserve the physical characteristics of Bath...the council adopted a somewhat Draconian set of strategies: a ban on certain retail uses...a complete ban on redevelopment unless it can be shown that an existing building cannot be reused...policies that restrict residential-to-commercial conversions...a green belt that restricts growth and forces people to reuse buildings in the historic area. Thus the architectural quality of Bath has been retained and enhanced through strong government action (Jamieson, 224).

Savannah's historic district is one of the oldest in the United States. "The level of restoration work in Savannah has been of the highest quality, with most of it carried out by individual building owners" (Jamieson, 224). The Historic Savannah Foundation was formed privately and the revolving fund that it established has enabled buildings to be purchased, renovated and resold with restrictions placed on design and use. The Foundation is a private entity supported by paid as well as volunteer staff. While there has been some government intervention, the initiative and energy has been from the private/volunteer sector (Jamieson, 1990).

4.2 Case Study Analysis

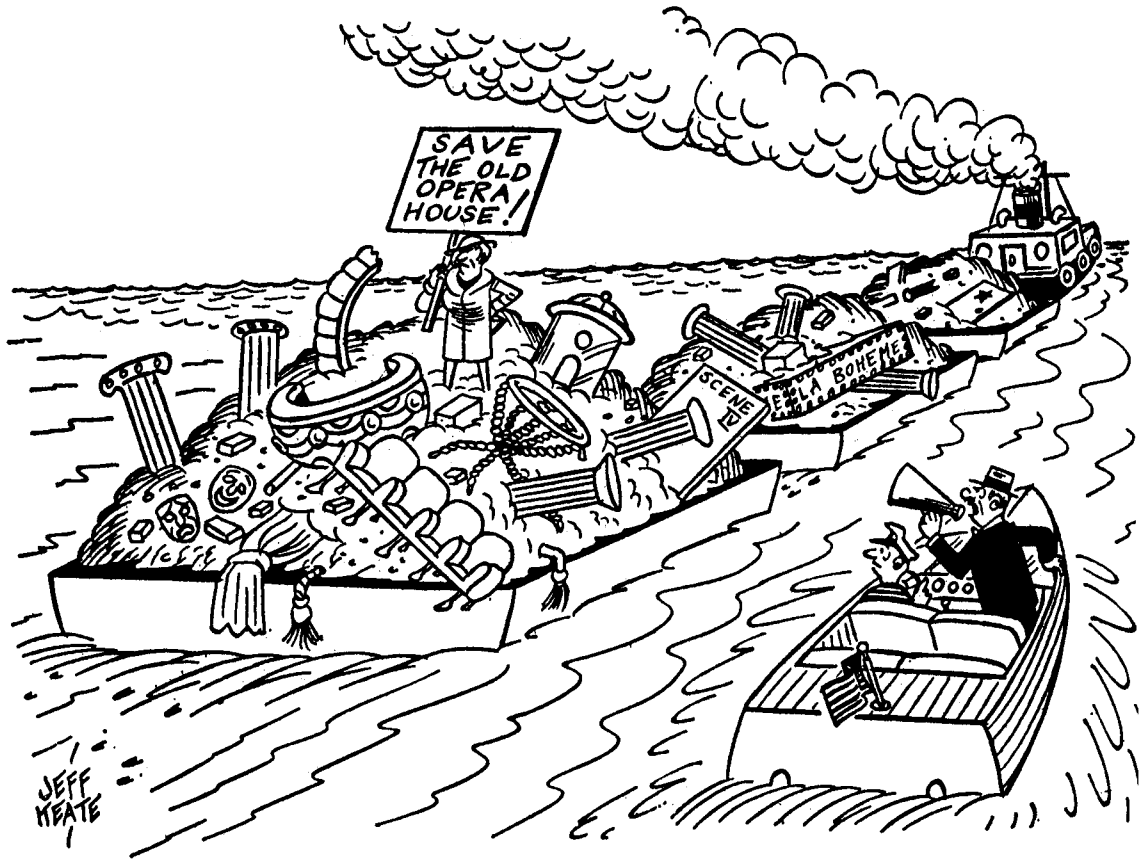
Case study research is unable to provide what may be considered necessary to qualify as scientific research - scientific generalizations that may be applied to populations or the universe. The case study does not represent a "sample." The goal of the investigator who uses the case study is to expand and generalize theories - not to enumerate frequencies. Decisions are the major focus of case study research. "It tries to illuminate a

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decision or set of decisions; why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result" (Yin 1989, 21). Case studies will provide us with answers to the very important "how" and "why" questions.

The analysis of the Tacoma, Washington and the Vancouver, British Columbia historic theatre restoration and reuse case studies will develop theoretical explanations for the different approaches to problem solving and the successes that ensued. Critical insights will assist others who may wish to engage in the theatre restoration process and those who wish to research the subject area further. Within the conclusions, recommendations for future actions will be made. The case studies will be examined within the context of cross-cultural differences previously discussed, and according to the following framework:

- 1) Inner-city urban development
- 2) Initial grass-roots response
- 3) Community response
- 4) Government response and economic support.



"For heaven's sake, Martha, admit you're licked!"

4.2.1 Inner-city Development

The public nature of Canadian urban life is a manifestation of a greater collective orientation, while the privatism of urban America is a manifestation of individualism, highly possessive and materialistic (Mercer, 381).

The fate of the historic movie theatre has been very much at the mercy of the attitudes that exist with respect to the development of the inner city. The theatre districts flourished in both the United States and Canada when the inner city was viewed as a viable and economically advantageous place to do business. The different political cultures of the two countries have resulted in quite different views with respect to continued interest in the inner cities. American cities, loosely managed, were generally abandoned by the development industry while the emphasis was placed on suburban development and out migration. Inner cities were left to ethnic minorities and the poor. Very low real estate values were the result. Because of this, many of the grand old movie palaces were closed, but they were not demolished. Although Canada did not have the very large inventory of historic theatres that was to be found in the United States, on a proportional basis fewer of them survive because of the way Canadian planning jurisdictions adopt local control over development and urban sprawl thus retain inner city property values. What we neglected to place value on, however, were our historic structures within the inner city. Canadian cities, more governed and managed, retained the inner city as a vital economic resource. Thus, real estate values were retained and many of the old movie theatres were demolished, rapidly in many cases, as soon as they lost their economic viability and as property values escalated.

Tacoma, Washington fits the scenario in that much of the cities commercial growth has moved outside of the inner city. There are no retail shops downtown to speak of, and

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after the working force returns home to the suburbs, the inner city is abandoned to the poorer elements of society. The old theatres survived mainly because business and real estate values had departed. When the Pantages was recognized as a viable option for the cultural community, the cost of the large Jones building was not prohibitive - \$450,000 in 1975 compared to the Orpheum, at \$3.2 million in 1974. The Orpheum has, however, twice the seating capacity. The Rialto Theatre was also intact, waiting to be discovered, and is now, along with the Pantages Theatre, an important part of Tacoma's downtown theatre district development.

In the case of the Orpheum in Vancouver, clever marketing kept the theatre operating. However, the Granville Mall is not identified as a particularly attractive redevelopment area and investors favoured land nearer to the harbour and away from Granville Street, a rather unsightly transportation artery. When the Orpheum was targeted by a citizens group, Famous Players Ltd., had another reasonable property close by that could be developed. The sluggish real estate values along Granville Mall contribute to the retention of old historic theatres, such as the Vogue Theatre.

4.2.2 Initial Grass-roots Response

The Pantages Theatre restoration project and the Orpheum Theatre restoration project have some similarities in that a great deal of "passion" was expended in the processes. Both of these theatres were blessed by female advocates who knew how to work with people and within the system to make things happen. The Orpheum Theatre project had a perfect "birth" as it was threatened with a renovation that would have destroyed the initial interior. There is nothing more effective than an impending disaster to bring out the troops. The grass-roots response was dramatic, with hundreds of letters and phone calls

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directed to the Mayor's office. The Pantages was not threatened by demolition, but there were many citizens and cultural and arts groups who desired a cultural centre and identified the Pantages as their last hope. With the Orpheum, the need was established after the move to save the building; with the Pantages, the need had already been established within the community. The building filled the need.

Grass-roots response is not significant in the decision to restore and reuse the Rialto Theatre in 1991. It would appear to be an astute planning and business decision taken on behalf of the community, although the citizens of Tacoma have a great deal of affection for the theatre, and it is being lovingly restored.

4.2.3 Community Response

Those who initially promoted the restoration and reuse of the Pantages and the Orpheum theatres were overly optimistic about the monetary aid that would be forthcoming from the local citizenry. Tacoma, however, did much better than the City of Vancouver which had approximately the same population. The Tacoma response, however, was not quick enough for various reasons. Contributions and pledges very often were designated to be given over time, which made it necessary to acquire renovation monies through loans from the City. The Pantages restoration took eight years to complete due to many setbacks. This may account for the amount of private funds that were eventually collected. As pointed out in the case study overview, there were numerous places to apply for funding at all levels of government. Much of this funding relies on the voter with respect to bond issues, the political party in power at the time, along with the general state of the economy and other funding priorities.

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Local individual donations in Vancouver were so insignificant as to be negligible. Vancouverites, demonstrating typical Canadian political behavior, believed that the letters and phone calls to government officials were sufficient evidence of support. Canadians are "...less inclined to contribute to...fund appeals" (Lipset 1989, 142-43). Then it was up to the government to act. The citizens of Vancouver were not interested in purchasing tickets to the major benefit concert and the audience had to be "padded" in order not to embarrass the City. The City of Tacoma managed to raise approximately \$800,000. When financial problems developed after opening of the Pantages, the Board of Directors of the theatre provided personal guarantees at the local banks. There was evidence of personal responsibility that went beyond lip-service.

There is clearly a sense of public life in American cities, and the evidence to date suggests that Americans are significantly more likely to be involved in community affairs than Canadians. We interpret this as being consistent with a stronger sense of localism and municipal autonomy, which is an expression of a highly privatized society (Mercer 1986, 381).

In the case of the Rialto Theatre, the restoration and reuse project is driven by the business community, headed by an impressive corps of leaders of the arts and local business and industry. The Tacoma Theatre District programme is so well-funded and organized that the community response is accepted as a "given." Everyone wants to be associated with this activity as it is viewed as a project that will make Tacoma an important cultural centre for the Puget Sound area. One could not identify this project with a grass-roots movement for these reasons.

4.2.4 Municipal, State/Provincial, Federal Support

The City of Tacoma was drawn somewhat reluctantly into the Pantages restoration project. The voting constituency had not indicated a burning desire for a cultural arts

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centre, it was an election year, and the Tacoma Dome was under construction and running over budget. Local Government did agree to purchase the building with urban development funds provided by the federal government. Money was found to provide loans to the Pantages Committee in order to pay on-going renovation bills before major funding was in place. The theatre required municipal financial subsidization for a period of years after the opening and this led to the questionable financial arrangements previously outlined. The City of Tacoma appeared to be reluctant to assume an on-going subsidization situation. The Pantages today is in use approximately 200 days a year, similar to the Orpheum, however the Orpheum is twice as large.

The community was not happy with the sell/lease-back arrangement. It would appear that there are reasons for closely monitoring various government sponsored heritage conservation incentive programmes that create situations that led to the convoluted financial deal that the City of Tacoma was party to. It should be noted that the Rialto Theatre is duly protected from short-sighted local administrative decisions through private purchase and the trust that has been established to protect this gift to the community.

The State of Washington provided funds from a bond issue earmarked for cultural projects and heritage preservation and the federal government provided a matching grant equal to the community contribution. The federal funds were greatly dependent on the government in office at the time. It should be noted that much of the initiative for urban policy in the United States comes from the federal government. It is more usual in the United States for local governments to ignore State government and look directly to Washington (Mercer 1986, 381). This is evident in the Pantages restoration project and the American Cities Plan, instituted by the United States government, that stimulated the

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move to the restoration of the Rialto Theatre and the Broadway Theater District programme.

When the citizens of Vancouver indicated support for the restoration and reuse of the historic Orpheum, a majority of Council, headed by Mayor Art Phillips, actively supported the project from the outset. The Provincial and Federal Governments were immediately and directly approached for funds through personal contact with decision makers. The present Council has, in the case of the Stanley, expended a great deal of energy putting forth a variety of reasons why the reuse project is untenable in the "free-market" economic environment and that the Council can not control what happens within a privately owned building.

American heritage restoration projects may access a myriad of funding programmes through the completion of reams of paperwork that are so complicated that it is suggested that special consultants be hired to assure accurate completion. Because no particular heritage funding system is in place in Canada, nothing may be possible - but then again, anything may be possible! The flexibility is there. Government intervention is accepted and expected. "Canadian cities are more governed and managed. The State intervenes in both direct and indirect manners in the urban economy: as employer, as regulator, as investor" (Mercer 1986).

Government response at all levels is strategic to any heritage resource restoration project and the historic movie theatre is particularly vulnerable. The American political situation in the late 1970s was tenuous for heritage, as sympathetic policies of the Democratic Administration under Carter in 1977 were changed by the Republican Administration under Reagan from 1981 on. The Pantages was struggling for money from 1975 to completion in 1983 and beyond.

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It was the best of political times for those that would save the Orpheum. Not only was there a sympathetic municipal government in power, but there was a New Democratic Government at the provincial level and a Liberal government at the federal level. A \$6.4 million project was completed in less than three years, from 1974 to 1977.

The Rialto Theatre and Broadway Theatre District Campaign required funding of \$8.4 million. What is strategic information with respect to this economic scenario is that \$3 million of this budget is expected to come from local sponsors of the Arts, corporations and foundations and in the final analysis, \$4.2 million would come from the private sector. Canadian urban communities could not expect this generous civic response. The Reagan Republican Administration has put more money into the pockets of the upper-income earners and corporations; the Mulroney Conservative Administration has responded in a like manner. Statistics quoted earlier indicate that while American contributions have risen steadily, Canadian contributions have fallen during the same time period. If we are to save our heritage resources, our historic theatres, sensitive and sympathetic response must come from local elected officials. Funding is always available for high priority items; we just have to have our priorities in order and make them known to political decision makers. Canadian community heritage advocates must understand the realities of project funding. Vancouver Councilman, Fritz Bowers was being realistic when he suggested that next time they should just "increase the mill rate, as it was a lot simpler."

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5.0 CONTEMPORARY PROBLEMS/CONTEMPORARY SOLUTIONS

5.1 Overview

In many...western cities...several factors have blunted the heritage movement. Idealism is waning. People with kids and mortgages don't lie in front of bulldozers. So, the task of saving heritage structures has been left to underfunded, often volunteer-run heritage committees, usually working at the municipal level. But, too often, these committees are unwilling to tackle the rich and politically powerful... they find themselves in a situation where the entrenched powers of property owners and developers, usually supported by Canada's very conservative courts, carry more clout...through local bylaws and civic connections (Wood, 1985).

Considering the heritage buildings that have been lost throughout North America, each historic movie theatre that has been saved for community use stands as an example of a rather unique event. The importance of theatre, film, and the historic movie palace to North American culture has been argued within the text of this thesis. It has been stressed that a theatre is not just a building: the structure and the function are a unified whole. The movie palace had and continues to have an important function within the community and that is to provide a place for the community to come together to enjoy cultural events. Although the response to the loss of our heritage structures or historic movie theatres may be due to emotions based on nostalgia, it is apparent from the research herein, that the choice to restore and reuse historic buildings may prove to be the most responsible socioeconomic, cultural and environmental decisions a community can make.

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This value has been and continues to be identified in many communities. Three case studies have been selected to review and analyze in order that we may come to understand the dynamics of the restoration process from a cross-cultural, international perspective.

This thesis has argued four important points:

- 1) The historic movie theatre, despite some "bad press," has contributed greatly to the development of Canadian culture and community life.
- 2) The historic movie theatre and the moving pictures that flickered upon its screen formed a functional unit that fulfilled a community need, that of entertainment that appealed to all socioeconomic levels. The theatre is not just another building!
- 3) The historic movie theatre has earned the right to be treated seriously by political decision makers. To that end, policies must be formulated at the local level that recognize the economic and cultural value of these historic structures and that facilitate the restoration and reuse of theatres for community cultural activities.
- 4) The policies thus drawn must be based on the Canadian experience. Grass-roots activists must be cognizant of the dynamics of our society and of how the average citizen views local action, decision making and "power" in general.

The information herein will contribute to the understanding of cross-cultural and cross-national differences in approaches to historic theatre restoration and reuse policy. Community activists will be better equipped to evaluate approaches to political reaction and action; project initiation and project management. The desired result will be a move toward the establishment of heritage policies at the local level. The ideal result would be a scenario that would include a recognition by the City of Vancouver of the enormous opportunities that exist in the form of under-utilized theatres and a willingness to give

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direction, financial aid, and encouragement to interested public groups and the private investment community through effective policy direction.

The attitudes at City Council level must reflect a respect for the restoration and reuse of existing structures and the relationship between the planner and the preservationist is another crucial aspect of planning that must be recognized. "Historic preservation as a distinct kind of urban planning is relatively recent in origin.... The American Planning Association did not admit heritage preservationists as members until 1980" (Birch, 37). Traditionally, "Planners had reformist, rationalist origins, the preservationists had patriotic, romantic roots" (Birch, 38). Growing cooperation has hinged on changes in the two agendas - planners have narrowed their focus to include neighbourhood preservation and conservation while preservationists have broadened their agendas to include more practical arguments for conservation.

Additional concluding remarks will be directed to substantive questions and answers with respect to the City of Vancouver and the future of two historic movie theatres, the Stanley Theatre and the Vogue Theatre, that have elicited community response, and that await important political and planning decisions.



Good Bye Cruel World

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5.2 Planning and the Historic Movie Theatre

"Planning is no longer a process of accommodating the inevitable" (Goodman, 348). Planning should be concerned with process and goal formulation. "Goals and objectives are the cornerstones of the planning process, for, in theory, they form the framework for public and private decision making" (Goodman, 327). Although it should not be necessary to point this out, there is a great need for the City of Vancouver to become involved in normative planning - the activity by which rational and reasonable ends are established and policy decisions that concern the scope and content of action are made. Of primary importance - planning decisions must be based on an established value system.

Elected officials are responsible for decisions that exemplify normative planning. Community goals are established through public input and are the result of compromise. Planning, for the most part and unfortunately, is too often a political response due to public pressure. Short-term goal achievement is the result. The restoration of the Orpheum Theatre is a perfect example of this approach to heritage planning. One successful restoration project does not guarantee other successful heritage projects because of the vagaries of time and circumstance, the ebb and flow of influence and interest at all levels of power and decision making.

5.3 Planners and Heritage Resource Preservation

While one may look to heritage planners for direction when faced with problems of historic theatre or historic district restoration, heritage planners have a limited mandate. They are to maintain the heritage inventories, be aware of the city's historic resources

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and policies, together with policies of the provincial and the federal governments, and act as liaison persons between the City and various interest groups, local citizenry and all levels of government. Heritage planners are in the forefront of all attempts to respond to new provincial legislation as well as the formulation of new municipal policies and approaches to heritage issues. "An important aspect of their role is educating the public and private sector with respect to the opportunities of heritage preservation in general and informing them of specific programs which could help realize those opportunities" (Lazear, 3). If politicians are to be influenced it is obvious that the citizenry must be encouraged to value historic structures and areas that represent the cultural base of their communities. Strategic to the development of policies that will affect the appreciation, restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres as well as other unique physical resources, is an active public information and education programme that should start within the school curriculum.

What must not be forgotten is the importance of the individual in the grand scheme of things. "The origin of social change usually starts from the act or insight of an individual, an artist, a saint, a tinkerer, an angry housewife, a radical student" (Kennard, 92). Then the inevitable will happen. "To demonstrate just how good they are at leading, politicians will jump in front of whatever crowd is marching and proceed to lead it" (Kennard, 94).

On a less emotional plane it has been argued that the citizens of North American communities must recognize the economic realities of the 21st Century.

American cities will never get their factories back. They must change their *raison d'être* from manufacturing to management and culture.... Ideally, there is a director of cultural affairs on the same bureaucratic level as the director of highways or sanitation (Von Eckardt, 95).

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Because Canadians have mandated governments to ensure common interests are protected, the time has come for heritage planners, and all planners, to recognize the responsibilities they have to heritage resource identification, restoration and reuse and appropriate incentive mechanisms (Appendix B). Recommendations and the resulting implementation policies must be reviewed and adopted by Council in order to provide direction and support to those who wish to invest in the area under review. When City Council provides policy direction with respect to development expectations and assurances of municipal cooperation, private investment is stimulated, property values increase, and the area becomes of interest to locals and tourists.

5.4 Policies Planning and the Historic Theatre

Policies planning, with respect to the remaining historic theatres, would include a set of general statements that define the direction and character of actions necessary to achieve desired outcomes - the restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres. The most essential aspect of policy planning is that the public is involved in the formulation of the goals. A set of policy statements set forth principles or precepts that act as a guide for those who wish to make development proposals. "Adoption of the 'policies plan'...does commit the city to take actions, whatever they may be, that are consistent with the policy guidelines" (Goodman, 331). Planning, therefore, becomes more action oriented. "The policies planning process enables elected officials to specify, in principle, what they as representatives of the community want.... Council can evaluate specific proposals in light of its previously adopted statements of policy" (Goodman, 333).

5.5 Policy Options and the Historic Theatre

The Heritage Conservation Act (1977) is the principal legislation directly related to the protection of heritage buildings within the Province of British Columbia. In order to create heritage legislation that would be more effective, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Recreation and Culture for the Province of British Columbia produced *A White Paper for Public Review* regarding heritage legislation in March of 1991. This study was promised in the 1990 Throne Speech.

Proposed amendments to the Municipal Act will enable local governments (including regional districts) to use a variety of tools for the conservation of community heritage resources in British Columbia. Amendments applying to Vancouver will be incorporated in the Vancouver Charter (British Columbia, 1991).

A variety of incentive policies with respect to heritage resource restoration and reuse have been adopted by various municipal governments across Canada (Lazear, 1981) (See Appendix C). There is little a municipality may do in terms of the protection of heritage resources without a clear legislated mandate from the Provincial government. Until that mandate exists a city cannot:

- . prohibit, refuse or unduly delay demolition on the basis of heritage considerations;
- . designate, and by that designation, protect the cities stock of heritage resources; or
- . impose substantial penalties for the demolition or alteration of heritage buildings.

The Municipal Act of the Province of British Columbia (1990) RS Chapter 290, 570, gives Council the power to expropriate property within the municipality for municipal purposes. Vancouver City Council was willing to do this in the case of the Orpheum Theatre. Section 945 allows the municipality the power to designate areas in

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order to protect heritage sites, or facilitate the revitalization of areas where commercial uses are permitted. This power was used in the Gastown revitalization project and in Chinatown. Section 976 gives Council the power over development permit approvals in these special areas. Communities are strongly encouraged to develop a long-term management plan for heritage conservation. The proposed changes to legislation will provide local governments with new opportunities for heritage planning. The document, *Heritage Legislation, A Guide to Community Heritage Conservation*, states that the community will be able to identify long term vision for the management of their heritage resources, and integrate this vision into community policy documents such as the Official Community Plan. It will have the necessary tools such as development permits and heritage revitalization agreements with which to realize their heritage management goals (B.C. 1991, 2). *The White Paper* encourages municipalities to develop a strong *Official Community Plan* that includes heritage conservation goals and objectives, policies and standards for selecting and assessing resources, and heritage development permit sites and areas. The proposed legislation broadens possible activities of the municipality to allow them to:

- . implement programs
- . raise funds
- . prepare applications and reports
- . actively promote projects
- . increase public awareness.

5.6 White Paper Heritage Policy Draft Proposals

Policy options that relate to the restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres on Granville Mall are set out below according to the changes contained in the Heritage Policy White Paper as developed by the former Social Credit government and presently under consideration by the current New Democratic Party government in Victoria. The City of Vancouver legal department is at present preparing Vancouver Charter amendments that will accommodate the White Paper amendments when these are finally approved.

- 1) The establishment of heritage conservation goals and objectives within the Official Community Plan are stressed.
- 2) The identification and establishment of special heritage conservation development permit areas with design guidelines within the Community Plan are encouraged.
- 3) The establishment of local improvement or business areas to facilitate conservation and rehabilitation of heritage resources are encouraged. Establishment of L.I.A. makes it possible to levy funds that are then used to conserve public heritage property.
- 4) Direct local government financial assistance to private property owners is allowed to encourage historic conservation.
- 5) Tax exemptions for up to a 10-year period for restoration projects within heritage development permit areas; designated sites; buildings holding a conservation covenant; or those having a revitalization agreement.
- 6) The creation of a development permit area is not contingent on the heritage designation of any properties in the area and applies to all types of uses.
- 7) Local government heritage designation may apply to buildings, land, landscape, features, and

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building exteriors and interiors.

- 8) Heritage revitalization agreements allow for variances to local government regulations including siting, use and density.
- 9) The municipal government may negotiate directly with property owners.
- 10) Heritage impact assessment with respect to proposed new developments and property that is designated, in a special development permit area, or protected under the Heritage Conservation Act.

Other local government support included in the "White Paper" is the ability to coordinate programmes; funding of non-profit community heritage societies; government staff assistance to heritage societies; research and information aid; design assessment; graphics; signage and interpretation; event sponsorship; marketing and promotion. Previous legislation did not allow the municipal government to become involved in the "business of heritage."

Proposed legislation also allows local government to utilize the injunction process to protect heritage property, establish a system of penalties and fines, set maintenance standards and enforce those standards. With respect to acquisition and expropriation, proposed legislation would allow the municipality to identify heritage conservation as a "public purpose" thereby enabling expropriation to be used. Local government is also encouraged to directly conserve heritage property through acquisition. Now is the time for the administration of the City of Vancouver to actively press the New Democratic Party to make the *White Paper on Heritage Legislation* a priority item, to encourage a rapid passing of the legislation necessary in order to give municipal governments additional power and encouragement to deal with heritage resources. New heritage legislation is

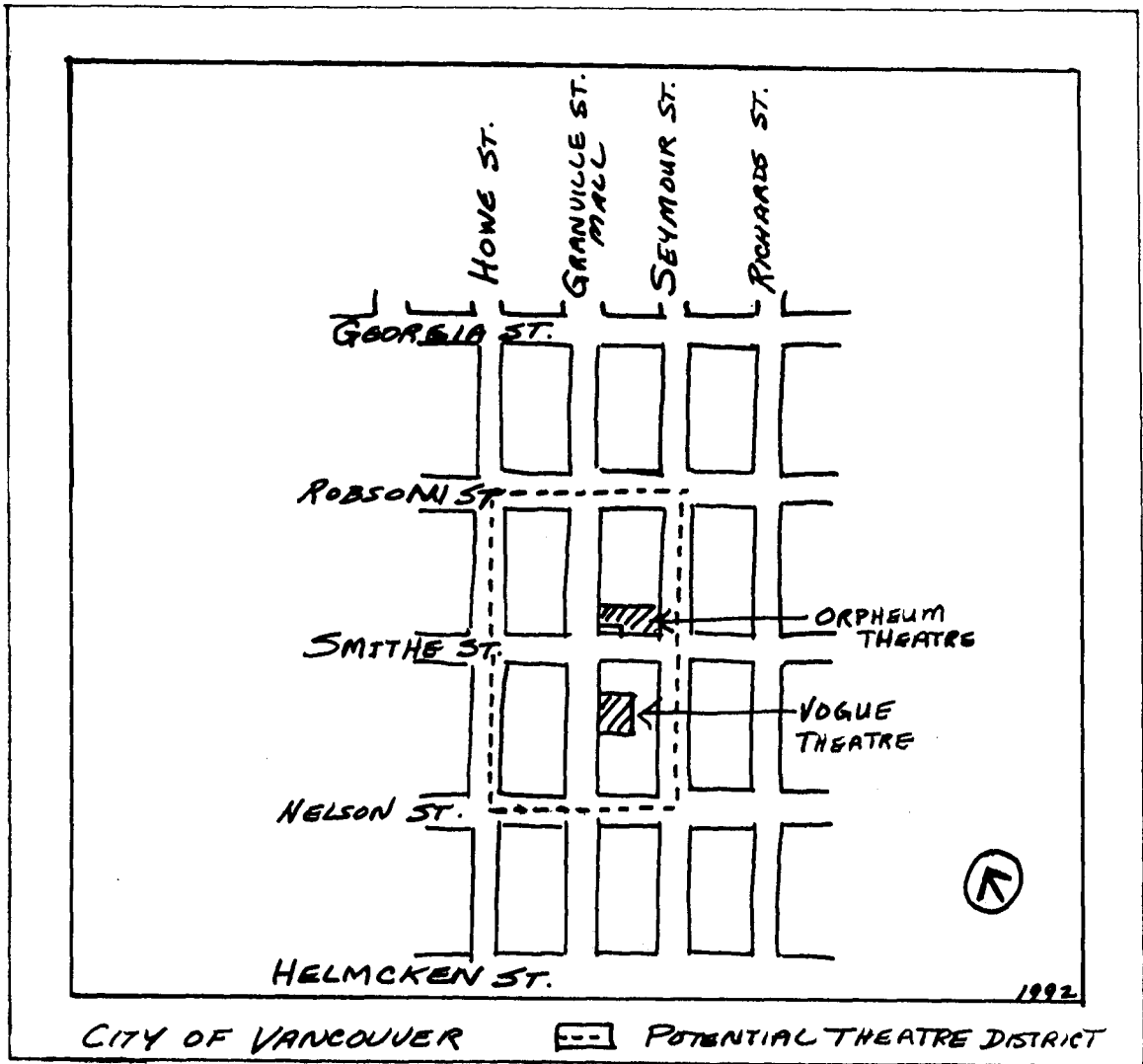
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required to facilitate change, however, as Jacques Dalibard, Executive Director of *Canadian Heritage*, states:

Laws are not enough.... The quick fix preservation laws of the 1970s were clearly not enough to rechannel the forces of development.... It needs behind it an equally complex system. The development of provincial and municipal organizations; the founding of heritage groups; the commitment of sensitive developers and contractors; the offering of preservation training courses; the availability of proper building material; the involvement of planners; the backing of municipal politicians; the development of financial incentives; and, more important than any law, a wholesale change of public attitude (Dalibard, 1986).



Granville Mall, view toward Robson Street.



Granville Mall Historic Theatre District.

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5.7 Redevelopment Area Policies Plan for Granville Mall

The Granville Mall between Robson and Nelson Streets presents ongoing planning problems to the City of Vancouver. This is the area that was once the "great white way" of entertainment in the City of Vancouver. It has evolved into an area of marginal businesses, dreary store fronts, loiterers, drug dealers, panhandlers, street people, movie theatres, and dark theatre marquees. The Orpheum Theatre's historic entrance has the misfortune of opening onto this motley environment. The City of Vancouver has devoted an inordinate amount of time, effort, and money in an attempt to address the problems of this area. The establishment of a special entertainment district in this two block area, using the Orpheum and the restored Vogue as anchor theatres as has been done in Tacoma and is being done throughout North America, would appear strategic. However, there is little evidence of the political will that is required in order for the development of policy that would effectively make positive changes to this historic theatre district. Many studies have been commissioned by the City of Vancouver, *The Granville Street Built-Form Study*, *The Downtown South Urban Study* and *the Granville Street Study*. Unfortunately these reports reflect a common vision. The fact that the area herein under review - the blocks between Robson and Nelson - is an historic entertainment district is only of passing interest and is viewed, for the most part, as a nuisance to be contained rather than a area of opportunity.

This study has stressed the importance of the historic movie theatre from an historical, and somewhat "romantic" stance. An attempt has also been made to examine the problems of the restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres for community use from a practical point of view. What has been emphasized is that we must discover our

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own solutions to the problems of heritage restoration and reuse because we do have a unique culture, a derivative of British and American socioeconomic and political influences.

Notwithstanding the influence our cultural roots have on our communal psyche, the 1990s may be remembered as a decade when the questions of conservation and recycling of non-renewable resources finally had to be dealt with due to the demands of concerned citizens. Recycling of buildings is part of this process. Although the idealism of the late 1960s and 1970s has waned due to time and circumstance - economic greed followed by economic recession - the conservation consciousness of the 1990s may serve to save our few remaining important historic theatres. The restoration and reuse of historic theatres makes economic sense.

Case Studies presented at the National Trust for Historic Preservation conference on the "Economic Benefits of Preserving Old Buildings" demonstrated that the cost of rehabilitating old structures generally runs 25 to 33 per cent less than comparable new construction. In those cases where the costs are equivalent, the preservation project provided greater amenities - time saved in construction, more space in either height or volume, or the right location.... The cost of rehabilitating the Pioneer Building in Seattle was less than \$19 per square feet compared to more than \$30 for new construction of similar quality (Williams, 80).

The City of Vancouver planning department is at present writing a report with respect to Downtown South that will be presented to Council in the Summer of 1992.

Options formulated will include the following choices:

- 1) Leave Granville Mall as is
- 2) Eliminate the housing component
- 3) Eliminate the entertainment component
- 4) Divide the area into two appropriate parts.

Unfortunately, the prevailing attitudes that flourish within the City of Vancouver appear not to bode well for the future of the remaining historic theatres.

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The City of Vancouver has made two questionable planning decisions. The first unfortunate decision has to do with the fate of Granville Mall between Robson and Nelson Streets. The second has to do with the provision of a medium sized theatre within the City of Vancouver. When faced with the problems of Granville Street Mall, basically still an entertainment area containing the Commodore Ballroom, The Orpheum Theatre, 15 movie screens and clubs such as the Roxy, an inordinate amount of energy has been devoted to the study of middle and low-income housing development and retail up-grading.

Granville Street has historical significance as a key entrance to downtown Vancouver. An expanding entertainment district and Theatre row is established in several blocks near Robson where low-scale redevelopment is occurring. As Downtown South is transformed into a high-density residential area with people living on surrounding streets, portions of Granville Street will become the focus for retail activity for residents and nearby workers (Vancouver, Chandler, 1990).

Little recognition is made of the positive social and economic influences that would occur through the adoption of policies that encourage the development of the entertainment and theatre components of Granville Mall - the accompanying demands of theatre goers and tourists that would increasingly frequent the area. Over time the vacuum that now attracts undesirable elements would no longer exist. *The Chandler Report* appears to be unaware of the dynamics of the area as it states:

The major component that is lacking around Granville Street is a large number of potential customers with a significant amount of disposable income... The most likely source for these new customers is the local market which is based on the re-development of Downtown South (Chandler, 12).

This move toward residential development illustrates a typical but ill-conceived approach to problem solving in depressed urban areas. Real estate values are fairly low, therefore low-income housing is considered to be the most viable option. Residential development and entertainment districts do not coexist well as compatible uses. This fact

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is fully appreciated by the City of Vancouver planning department. *Downtown South: Towards a New Neighbourhood*, a briefing paper, poses the question "Will the existing night-life and social environment hamper development of a new neighbourhood?" *The Province*, June 4, 1992, reports:

City Council has slapped a temporary moratorium on applications or amendments to increase seating or change operating hours for cabarets...in the downtown-south area...there are problems with noisy club patrons.... The downtown south is destined to be a far more residential area than it is now.

One is, unfortunately, led to believe that the historic theatre district will continue to be overlooked as an important historic and economic resource to the City of Vancouver. Problems will escalate in the Granville Mall area because of decisions to make short-term social and political gains.

The fate of the historic theatre district on Granville Mall will depend on the ability of Council to recognize the importance of historic theatres as development anchors, rather than as "after-thoughts" in the redevelopment plan.

The citizens of the City of Vancouver will have the medium-sized theatre complex that is needed however it will not be situated in the entertainment area that forms part of the Granville Street Mall. The City Administration chose to negotiate with the developer of Coal Harbour, Marathon Realty Company, to provide a \$25-30 million theatre in this new development area as part of a public amenities package. Rather than deciding to use the monies to capitalize on opportunities presented by the existing vacant theatre buildings on Granville Mall, a choice was made to decentralize entertainment facilities. City planners are apparently unaware that the new, isolated, "shopping centre" approach to cultural facilities has fallen out of favour where they have been built.

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A better approach...the creative adaptation of nice old buildings, especially old vaudeville and movie palaces, and the creation of an around-the-clock, with multi-purpose urban ambience, rather than monolithic architecture, seems to serve the arts and the city much better (Von Eckardt, 95).

Playhouse Square (Cleveland) is one of the nation's finest theatre restorations, with 7000 seats and facilities for opera, ballet and dramatic productions. The restoration began with a public-school official wandered into three magnificent 1920s movie palaces that were scheduled for demolition. Soon volunteers were refurbishing their ornate interiors. When completed in 1985, Playhouse Square will draw more than a million people annually (Methvin, 69).

On July 30, 1991, City Council amended the Downtown District Official Development Plan, and rezoned the area known as Downtown South, bounded by Robson Street, Pacific Boulevard, Burrard Street and Beatty Street is approximately 88 net acres (35.6 ha) in area. The new zoning regulations will help transform the area into a high-density residential and mixed-use community (Vancouver Update 1991).

In place of the prevailing approach to the redevelopment of Granville Street Mall and in consultation with the building owners and business owners within the historic theatre district, the following policy planning process is suggested.

1. First level policy decisions would reflect the determination of the community of Vancouver in that it wished to encourage the restoration of historic theatres for community use. Council would recognize that there is a need for redevelopment approaches and policies in the vicinity of two historic theatres on Granville Mall. At present, the Orpheum has been abandoned with respect to the Granville streetscape. The City has done little to improve the general environment and make it conducive to an enjoyable night out at the theatre for a majority of the population. A vacuum has been created on Granville Street; naturally the undesirable elements of urban society drift into the space.

Council could take the initiative with respect to the future of the Vogue theatre, in recognizing the value to the community in both cultural and economic terms. "Historic

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preservation activity in urban historic districts has contributed significantly to the revitalization of those districts...and in addition, has contributed economically, socially, physically, and aesthetically..." (Williams, 75).

The City of Vancouver City Council should explore the possibilities of involving adjoining municipalities in the rejuvenation of existing structures for cultural use in the Granville Street theatre district. The excellent transit system connects all of the Lower Main Land to the Granville Street area. As in the example demonstrated by the City of Victoria, other municipalities may agree to contribute to the costs of theatre space restoration and reuse.

2. Second level policy decisions would result from a discussion of possible objectives such as the need to:

- . Create a more attractive area
- . Encourage a variety of appropriate uses
- . Attract a more desirable clientele
- . Consider economic advantages of tourism to the area.

3. Third level policy decisions would be based on information gained from decisions to:

- . Establish a special entertainment area between Robson and Nelson on Granville Street
- . Establish an amenities fund through development levies that would aid in the redevelopment and restoration of the Vogue Theatre and other heritage buildings in the special entertainment area - Coal Harbour public amenities fund and additional public funds required for Coal Harbour theatre complex construction project
- . Establish property tax incentives and other "carrots" for property owners in the special

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theatre district between Robson and Nelson
(Appendix B)

- . Develop design guidelines based on the Historic Theatre District theme - special signage by-laws, sidewalk surface and street furniture
- . Establish significant "point of entry and exit" sign-posts, ie. Chinatown in San Francisco and Victoria
- . Identify the Orpheum as an anchor for further development opportunities in the area - restaurant and shops oriented to theatre motif
- . Examine the viability of the Vogue Theatre as a potential mid-sized cultural facility (purchase of building, if viable)
- . Examine opportunities on Granville Mall South - Vacant heritage space could be used as galleries, artists lofts, performance rehearsal spaces (excess development FRS transferred to other sites)
- . Encourage businesses that are sympathetic to entertainment activities - such as restaurants. Re-evaluate liquor licensing policies that inhibit the establishment of some businesses.

These policy decisions would result in a vibrant and unique area that would reflect a much needed measure of creativity with respect to years of problems and questions of revitalization of the Granville Mall area. Action, rather than reaction, is required at the planning level regarding options development. At the Council level policies that reflect vision and respect for Vancouver existing historic districts and structures must be considered and adopted.

While the rationale for the preservation, restoration and reuse of historic movie theatres is best based on practicalities, there are other reasons for projects such as the Stanley, the Vogue and the Orpheum. "There is more important reason for

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preserving...one too easily taken for granted. The Orpheum is, quite simply, beautiful, and needs no other justification" (McCallum 1984, 30).

John Kenneth Galbraith in *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980s* states that:

The preservation movement has one great curiosity. There is never any retrospective controversy or regret. Preservationists are the only people in the world who are invariably confirmed in their wisdom after the fact.... Preservationists must never be beguiled by the notion that we can rely on natural economic forces or that we can rely on the market....the market works against social economic interest as well as the larger interest in the artistic and educational rewards of conservation. It is a simple fact that the market will always favor the short-run solution. Preservationists must never doubt that they are engaged in a public and philanthropic and social enterprise and should never...be in the slightest apologetic (Galbraith, 1980).

There is need for creativity and sensitivity within municipal planning departments and within city council chambers if heritage buildings and historic areas are to be recognized, rejuvenated and reused. It is hoped that this study will provide useful information and encouragement to those who would engage in the profession of planning and urban design in the future.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

A CANADIAN HISTORIC (PRE-1930S) MOVIE THEATRE SURVEY,
NOVEMBER, 1991

VICTORIA

Theatres restored - THE PLAYHOUSE (THE PANTAGES - 1913)
and THE ROYAL (1913) for community cultural activities.
Theatres demolished - THE CAPITOL (facade preserved)

Pantages deeded to City of Victoria by Owner - T.S.
McPherson (1960s) Non-profit McPherson Foundation
operates former Pantages and Royal. Funded by City of
Victoria, Municipalities of Oak Bay, Esquimalt and
Saanich, and corporations and individuals.

VANCOUVER

Theatres restored - THE ORPHEUM
Theatres closed - THE STANLEY (1931), THE VOGUE (1941)
Theatres demolished - THE STRAND (1919), THE LYRIC
(1906), THE PANTAGES.

The Orpheum Theatre is a designated historic site and
is owned and operated by the City of Vancouver - Home
of the Vancouver Symphony.

CALGARY

Theatres restored - None
Theatres closed - THE PALACE (1921)
Theatres demolished - THE CAPITOL (1921), THE BIJOU
(1912), THE STRAND (1913)
Theatre renovated into retail - THE TIVOLI (1930S)

EDMONTON

Theatres restored - None
Theatres in operation as theatres - THE GARNEAU
(1912), THE GEM (STAR-1913)
Theatres demolished - THE DREAMLAND (1940S), THE
PANTAGES (STRAND-1913), THE NEW EMPIRE (1920)

SASKATOON

Theatres restored - THE CAPITOL

WINNIPEG

Theatres restored - THE METROPOLITAN
Theatres closed or threatened - THE CAPITOL, THE EPIC,
THE ODEON

Metropolitan restored by three levels of government,
for cultural activities, city owned and operated.

TORONTO

Theatres restored - THE PANTAGES (1920), THE ELGIN/
WINTER GARDEN (1914)
Theatres operating - THE RUNNYMEDE (1920S)
Theatres demolished - THE UNIVERSITY (1930S), SHEA'S
HIPPODROME (1914)

The Pantages (private investment) and the Elgin/
Winter Garden (public investment) are beautiful
historic theatres restored for cultural
activities in Toronto.

WINDSOR

Theatres under review - THE CAPITOL (1920)
Theatres demolished - THE PALACE (among others)

The Capitol - split into 3 theatres in 1975 by Famous
Players. Windsor leased in 1991 for Community Arts
Centre. They hope to purchase and restore. Initiated
by public citizens group but little municipal support
Hope to gain support from all three levels of
government. Heritage value not of primary interest -
public use is.

OTTAWA

Theatres restored - THE IMPERIAL
Theatres demolished - THE CAPITOL (among others)

Imperial Theatre under renovation for live
entertainment.

CHARLOTTETOWN

Theatres restored - THE MACKENZIE
Theatre lost through fire - THE EMPRESS (1922)

The McKenzie Theatre is part of the Confederation
Centre for the Arts - Charlottetown Festival. The
City of Charlottetown has recently received \$1.5
million from the Federal Government to restore the
Empress Theatre. They will also be receiving matching
grants from the municipal and provincial governments.

APPENDIX B

INCENTIVE MECHANISMS FOR HERITAGE RESOURCE RESTORATION AND REUSE

1. Persuasion or Moral Suasion - municipal bureaucracy
2. Public Awareness - plaques, awards, publicity
3. Demonstration Projects - municipal - area initiatives
4. Public Works - amenities in heritage areas
5. Design Guidelines - encourage and direct private sector
6. Government Leasing of Heritage Buildings
7. Green Door Policy - speed up development processes
8. Facade Easements - in lieu of municipal taxes
9. Building Code Flexibility
10. Zoning Incentives
11. Transfer of Development Rights
12. Tax Freeze on Rehabilitated Heritage Property
13. Reduced Property Assessment
14. Tax Increment Financing
15. Revolving Funds - non-profit association
16. Value Capture - recycled back into other heritage projects
17. Loans, Grants or Mortgage Guarantees
18. Purchase of Property

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19. Purchase of Facade Easements
20. Purchase/Expropriation of Property and Resale with Restrictive Covenants
21. Restrictive Covenants
22. Redevelopment Levy - municipal heritage fund

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