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Senator Theatre supporters accuse BDC of 'mismanagement'

Baltimore Business Journal - by [Daniel J. Sernovitz](#) Staff

A group of advocates for the Senator Theatre has accused Baltimore's economic development arm of "mismanagement" in its attempt to determine the fate of the historic movie house near Belvedere Square.

The Friends of the Senator is lobbying Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake to make sure the **Baltimore Development Corp.** seeks advice from a historic preservation expert as it evaluates bids from private groups to buy and redevelop the northeast Baltimore single-screen theater.

The BDC received four bids for the historic theater and assembled an advisory panel to review those proposals. The panel already has narrowed its choice down to two potential bids, one from **Towson University's** WTMD public radio station and another from **Charles Theatre** owners James "Buzz" Cusack Jr. and Kathleen C. Cusack.

WTMD wants to use the complex as a theater for film and concerts as well as to house its programming and studios. The Cusacks would continue to use it as a single-screen theater but with the addition of two new restaurants and potentially a second screen.

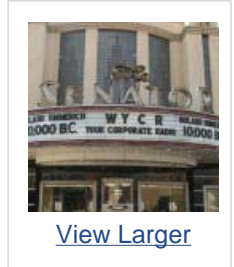
The Friends, in an e-mail sent out to Senator supporters, claims the selection process, "under the auspices of the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), has unfortunately gone awry and must be rectified."

Specifically, the group is taking issue with absence on the panel of a preservation expert familiar with historic movie theaters.

Representatives from the BDC and from Rawlings-Blake's office could not immediately be reached for comment.

The city bought the theater at 5904 York Road for \$810,000 in December after taking a series of steps to avoid a bank foreclosure of the structure.

Its former owner, Tom Kiefaber and his Senator Limited Partnership, defaulted on a \$1.2 million mortgage on the property. The city stepped in to buy the note from First Mariner Bancorp, which had initiated foreclosure proceedings and had planned to auction off the building.

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