



To The Honorable Mayor Rawlings-Blake,

As a founder of the Friends of The Senator (FOTS) and its president, I've been informed by Laura Perkins, our representative to the BDC's Senator RFP Advisory Panel that the future of The Senator Theatre remains in jeopardy due to the curiously stubborn and misguided actions of Baltimore Development Corporation officials. If I may briefly have your attention to consider the following:

The iconic Senator is an internationally recognized Baltimore landmark, and the last of its kind in the state. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, in its illustrious 70 year history it has hosted scores of high-profile premieres, served as critical economic engine and cultural amenity in the heart of the Belvedere Square business and residential communities and produced hundreds of fundraising events that have supported a wide variety of not-for-profit, charitable organizations.

If the BDC is to make an honest and optimal recommendation to your office for a plan that envisions the best possible future for The Senator, the recommended plan must be scrutinized (and when awarded, carefully overseen) to ensure that its business and programming model will not only afford it sustainability, but ensure as well that the theatre's many unique historic features and attributes are protected and preserved to guarantee that the irreplaceable essence of Baltimore's classic 1939 art deco jewel will endure for another 70 years and beyond!

This is not to say that The Senator Theatre should be 'set in amber' as there are many needed updates to the facility to enhance its multipurpose functions. But, these evolutionary changes must be carefully thought out and complimentary to a full restoration effort before being implemented. What good is an internationally recognized historic landmark if we allow it to be altered in untoward ways that historic theatre redevelopment experts would consider foolish?

In the hearts and minds of 1,400 members of the international FOTS community intently following The Senator situation, we had high hopes that BDC officials would understand the legacy, the future possibilities and the significance the theatre holds in our rich history and in our North Baltimore businesses and residential communities. The repeated refusal of the BDC to allow professional historic theatre and film exhibition industry experts to participate in the process must be seen for what it is, an obvious and potentially fatal flaw. One we will all sorely regret if it is not corrected!

Just as any right-minded fine jeweler would not entrust the hiring of a diamond cutter to someone without expert understanding (if not first-hand experience) of diamond-cutting, Baltimore should not award private new ownership or operation of Baltimore's historic landmark theatre without the invaluable guidance of those with significant experience and expertise in the realm of historic theatre redevelopment. These experts exist and examples of their successes are serving

communities like ours nationwide. This is not an opportunity to be wasted, especially when Baltimore City has already invested a significant amount in this situation!

We were honored to be asked to have a representative serve on the RFP Advisory Panel, however, until these glaring flaws in the process are rectified the Friends of The Senator organization can no longer, in good conscience, continue to contribute to the process or give credence to its validity or outcome.

We do not make these statements lightly, nor do we wish for the process to be rendered invalid, so we beg that you give this situation the attention it deserves.

The Senator is an experience. One you can especially see reflected in the faces of those visiting for the first time and those of children. As a volunteer weekend staffer (for nearly a year now) I've taken note of this. Let's do this right. At the end, how great would it be to have demonstrated to the world that Baltimore City not only respects its history, but cares enough to bring the appropriate expertise aboard to ensure that this wonderful, unique treasure has been given an optimal chance of survival for the enjoyment of countless generations to come?!

Thank you for your valuable time and thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Respectfully,

Tom Harris  
Friends of The Senator

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