

## Comments on The Senator RFP process to Mayor Rawlings-Blake

*The following comments from members of the public were among those submitted to the Mayor by over 100 members of the public, via Friends of The Senator's online letter campaign at <http://www.senatorletter.com>:*

**As a former Executive Director of the League of Historic American Theatres, I saw dozens of wonderful buildings destroyed by the unfortunate decisions made by sincere people with no experience in theater renovation.**

I urge you to make sure this doesn't happen to The Senator.

**Susan McCarter      Baltimore, MD**

This is the time to show Baltimore's true colors up front and to show to the nation that Baltimore respects and preserves its history as a moral, cultural and legal obligation.

**The preservation of a historic and exceptional site such as The Senator Theatre should follow a due process to the letter without even the slightest question to its legitimacy.**

**Claudine Davison      Baltimore Jewish Film Festival director      Baltimore, MD**

**As a former Baltimorean and former director of the Baltimore Film Forum and Baltimore International Film Festival and as a current film industry professional, I agree wholeheartedly with the letter to you concerning the Senator Theatre. I have particular expertise in film programming and have many contacts in the field of film exhibition. If I can be of service, please contact me.**

Vicky Westover  
Hanson Film Institute

**Vicky Westover                      Hanson Film Institute, University of Arizona      Tucson, AZ**

Hello,  
I am happy to add my voice to those asking for the preservation of the historic Senator Theater. History is something that is not respected enough in this country. As one of the original picture palaces, the Senator Theater stands as a memorial of a time passed, a legend in the history of film and of this country. **Please preserve it for future generations to appreciate.** Thank you.  
Richmond Arquette

**Richmond Arquette Los Angeles, CA**

I am originally from Baltimore and have a personal attachment to The Senator. **I am the author of Baltimore Deco which features The Senator in my book.** While an undergraduate student of Interior Design at MICA, I first got involved with the theater. I got archival images, the marquee was the cover photo and my inspiration for the period of design the first draft of my book covered. **I got to know and respect the previous owner and was an expert witness on his behalf for the historic designation a few years later.** The first draft of the manuscript was on behalf of a grant from the NEA, and was published by MacClay and Assoc. subsequently. While a grad student of Interior Design at Marymount University, I used The Senator as a model of study in several of my classes. I provided my findings to Tom with the hopes that these ADA and aesthetic improvements would be considered in his plans for expansion of the theater. My expertise and his knowledge were in alignment with what is appropriate for an Art Deco building of the stature of The Senator. Together, we had the original carpet re-milled and were looking forward to going forth with the rollover houses he had on the books at the time.

I have relocated to Miami but visit Baltimore 3-4 times a year. **NEVER is a visit complete without a film at The Senator. I have watched, in horror, from afar the struggle Tom has had to keep his building, or at the very least, preserve its architectural significance. It is hard for me to understand, why a City that has grown so much since I left in 1998, has no vision with regard to this building.** This theater is not only an excellent example of Art Deco architecture, but such a unique entertainment experience that is a cornerstone of the Belvedere community. I have watched Miami lose so many historic structures since I have lived here and it disheartens me to see Baltimore behaving in tandem.

I consider myself a Baltimorean, and an expert in Art Deco architecture. I offer my assistance, once again, to the efforts to save and preserve The Senator from peril or improper redevelopment. I urge your administration to take the call of right action seriously. **Once the dust settles from the physical destruction of a building settles, the real damage to the community and architectural heritage unfolds.** I am certain that you will side with preservationists and other experts in the building industry and do the right thing for The Senator and the citizens of Baltimore, my hometown! I write this not as a politician, have not used the words "BDC, RFP, etc". I speak as a Designer, with considerable professional background, education and passion for Art Deco. I currently am a full-time Faculty member at a University and teach my students to respect their community and architectural heritage- **I think the City of Baltimore needs to do their homework before it is too late for this great building.** Thanks and I look forward to visiting The Senator on my next visit home.

**Sherry Cucchiella   Miami, FL**

I may not live in the city of Baltimore any more but I have been volunteering at the Senator for more than a year now and was at one time a projectionist for the previous owner's family, Durkee Enterprises.

**I know that as the new mayor of this great city you will take the time to research what has been going on pertaining to the BDC and its handling of the RFP process that we know is flawed and take this organization in a new direction before it is too late.**

**Martin R. Kahl          Frederick, MD**

Mayor Rawlings-Blake and those concerned,

I hope that you seriously consider this very important matter with the Senator Theatre RFP selection process. It's time to get dirty politicians and corrupt business-makers out of their seats and into the fire. **Please aid the Senator Theatre in its re-development by taking the right steps to include industry experts** (those who have overseen similar projects with succession) to advise in the matter. I trust that you know the Senator Theatre is near and dear to the heart of Baltimore and its people. To see it end up in the wrong hands and into ruins would be a sad sight, indeed.

Thank you for taking the time to read this humble letter.

Sincerely,  
Kate Lawless,  
Baltimore City resident

**Kate Lawless Baltimore, MD**

My wife and I are both fond of Baltimore. Among the many reasons is the presence of the Senator Theatre. It is a cultural icon that would be helped by renewal and re-dedication to its historic purpose--preserving the past and remaining open to the innovations of the future. It would be a great loss to abandon it or turn it into just another glossy contemporary theater or multiplex.

**George Perkins          Ann Arbor, MI**

I attended the January 2010 BDC/RFP meeting at the Senator Theater. After hearing the proposals of everyone that night, I firmly believe that WTMD 89.7FM and Towson University had the best proposal to best utilize the Senator Theater as a place to support cultural arts, movies and music as well as boost the economy of the local community by promoting all of its events on its radio programming. I also believe that WTMD was the most committed bidder to preserving the

structure both inside and out, whereas the Charles Theater owners admitted that they would be doing construction to alter both the inside and outside (which is supposed to be protected by the Senator being on the National Register of Historic Places). **I hope that you will make sure the BDC makes the right decision to ensure the Senator Theater's future by endorsing WTMD 89.7FM and Towson University's bid.**

**Meg Bowen** Baltimore, MD

We still need culture in this city, in the world and in life. **True support for the arts and historic architecture needs to be a priority that we make in order to pass deeper values to the next generations.**

**Jason Baker** Ellicott City, MD

Please keep the beauty and the integrity of the wonderful Senator Theatre intact. Tom Kiefaber has tried his best for many many years to keep the flame burning. **I hope that whatever organization takes over control of this fabulous historic spot, takes gentle care of it and maintains the purpose it was created for - the enjoyment and pleasure and education of the public!**

**Barbara R Wright** Bowie, MD

**Theaters like the Senator are what make communities unique.** Please keep our treasured historic places, and keep Baltimore from looking like cookie-cutter America.

**Jenn Lopez** Baltimore, MD

Dear Mayor Rawlings-Blake,

If you care about the preservation of historic venues relevant to Baltimore's place in history you will, as mayor, **do everything in your power to protect The Senator from decision-makers gone bad.**

This beautiful building needs your attention. I hope you're listening.

Thank you.

**Mary Gardella** Baltimore, MD

Dad and Mom have taken me to the Senator from the time I was 5 year young. We had to sit in the upper section as was customary at the time for youngsters.

Over the years I visit the Senator about 5 times a year and I always bring a friend or family member with me. Please help us save the Senator for generations to come. Remember the woods they cut down across the street from you or myself? Remember how bad it felt to know the trees would never again be there for us to play on? Well this is the same thing in that **when the Senator is gone, it is gone forever! This cannot happen!** Smile and may God bless you and our Country.

**Bryan Jones Hampstead, MD**

Good Morning,

It is my understanding that many historic theaters have become fund-raising warehouses in the community for strengthening neighborhoods and other local non-profits. The Senator has helped raise millions of dollars for charities, so has this as great potential.

**As just a single-screen theater to bring in money, it will most likely fail with the new competition. As a community asset, utilizing space for community and non-profit events (which still brings in money), it has a chance.**

The historic feature also makes us (Baltimore) look great to visitors, national and international.

All the best,  
Judith Kuzmak

**Judith Kuzmak Baltimore, MD**

I grew up going to the Senator Theater almost from the time it first opened. About 18 years ago I moved back into the city from the county and chose this neighborhood partly because of its location near the Senator. **I want to see it stay a viable part of my neighborhood.**

Sincerely,  
Pat Elliott

PS I love this city!

**Patricia Elliott Baltimore, MD**

I grew up two blocks from the Senator Theatre. It was my neighborhood movie theatre, and I didn't realize what a treasure it was until I experienced other neighborhood movie theatres. It makes me so sad that the Senator may not be

preserved the way it should be. **Please provide a position for someone versed in historic preservation on the BDC committee that is deciding the fate of this local landmark.** Thank you.

**Christina L. Schoppert**      **Baltimore, MD**

**I remember the excitement when the Senator opened.** It was then, and for me always stayed the theater where going to see a movie was a real treat.

**Peg Mcallen Towson, MD**

As a retired Theater Arts Teacher and a lifelong resident of Baltimore, I am fully aware of the historic value of the Senator Theater and its legacy for Baltimore and for cultural enrichment. **Please put its future in capable hands.**

Thank you,  
Judith Nathanson

**Judith L. Nathanson Bel Air, MD**

As I was growing up in Homeland, the Senator was our neighborhood theater. **My sister and I (as pre-adolescents) walked there from Charles St. to see movies, and the circular foyer with its carousel mural is still in my head 50+ years later. Also, the circular womens' room waiting area was so luxurious, it made a little girl feel like a glamor queen.**

The theater proper had spacious seating, comfortable with flexible and well-padded seats. No center aisle was also well-planned for a movie buff. While waiting for the show to start, I remember looking up at the high ceiling and the side lighting, then the curtain over the screen would part, and the fun would begin.

The Senator survived the multiplex screen-splitting, and is one of only 2 real silver screens in the area (the other being the Charles Theater), so is still one of the best places to watch a movie. I hope you have had the pleasure to watch a movie in the best of all possible ways there. If not, please do give yourself a treat.

Best wishes for you and your administration in these difficult times. I feel confidence in your abilities to steer this city back to its once prominent position as a place to spend time in. **I hope you will help to keep the integrity of the Senator intact with the help of a theatrical preservationist on the Board of Directors.**

Sincerely,  
Joan Lobell

**Joan Lobell Baltimore, MD**

Dear Madam Mayor:

I recognize that I am signing a form letter supplied by the Friends of the Senator **but this letter does not go nearly as far as I would if I were writing personally to ask you to intervene in the process and straighten out BDC's business practices.** Ever since moving back to Baltimore **I have been appalled by BDC's secretive, unsupervised approach** to matching redevelopment opportunities like this one with organizations to carry out those projects honestly and in a way that benefits Baltimore and all its citizens. BDC has never, in my opinion, put the people first. **Its back-room deal-cutting seems designed to spend our tax dollars enriching BDC's cozy circle of development companies. The last thing BDC shows any respect for is Baltimore's civic or cultural history. As this letter indicates, its lack of historical preservation awareness and failure to involve experts who understand historic preservation makes it almost certain that the BDC will turn over The Senator to some ham-handed fast buck crony company that will ruin the theater and further impoverish our city's cultural scene. For my part, I believe that BDC is corrupt beyond redemption and should be disbanded and its functions transferred to an organization capable of thinking of Baltimore first.**

Dr. John Bosley  
Hampden

**Dr. John J. Bosley Baltimore, MD**

**My father, Bruce Crockett, was the original creator of the sidewalk blocks commemorating movie premieres and special events at the Senator Theatre,** beginning with Diner in 1982. We went together to see the unveiling of his 70th block for the premiere of the James Bond film, The World Is Not Enough in November 1999, just a month before he died of heart disease at age 64.

A graphic artist by profession, Bruce Crockett worked for the City of Baltimore for many years in the Graphic Arts Department and organized the city's first Public Works Museum. He was just as well known for his caricatures of Baltimore's politicians and sports celebrities. When he died, the Senator Theatre honored my father with a day of his favorite movies and the unveiling of a memorial block featuring his own self-caricature in the sidewalk that has become his legacy.

**So I'm looking out for the sidewalk. I sincerely hope that it will be preserved and will be there for making new memories for years to come.**

**Bonnie Crockett Baltimore, MD**

**I can see Belvedere Square struggling to survive with out a vibrant Senator;**  
please do everything possible to make it an anchor for the neighborhood.

**Lee Pierce**                      **Baltimore, MD**

I love the Senator. Its story, the passion it invokes in others who love it, the way Tom Kiefaber has tried to keep it alive for so many years. And it needs to continue serving the public in a fulfilling capacity, especially in a world, and a city, that appears not to care much about substance anymore.

**Many, many people are watching the developments concerning the Senator, which, I hope I have conveyed, concerns something greater than the sum of all these parts.**

**Do your part. Do the right thing. Keep the Senator open, viable, and unspoiled.**

Thanks for your time.

**David Kennedy**                      **Baltimore, MD**

Thanks for your efforts on behalf of the historic Senator Theatre. **Please let your legacy be that you were instrumental in saving The Senator as the historic place it is by making sure that there be active and pertinent involvement of all appropriate professionals such as those from historic theatre redevelopment and film exhibition groups. Don't let the BDC bury this monumental moment in secrecy.**

Sincerely,  
Angela Dudley

**Angela**              **Dudley**                      **Baltimore, MD**

I look forward to the Senator's "rebirth" and preservation for future generations.  
**Please make sure the process is handled in the best way!**

Thanks very much.

**Gail O'Connor**                      **Lutherville, MD**

As someone who has been to the Senator countless times over the last 40 years, I **cannot imagine that the city would not make every effort to analyze all of the options available to save it. And avail itself of any/all resources who can assist with the analysis.**

Please take action to ensure that this happens.

**Susan Taylor Timonium, MD**

**As a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, I made sure that the Senator was included on the Trust's "This Place Matters" website, and I believe that those three words say it all.** The City and BDC allowed the Stanley and other great downtown theatres to be destroyed by neglect; the Boulevard and other comparable neighborhood theatres were allowed to die. The Senator must be developed in a way that preserves and honors it, as was the magnificent Hippodrome. The Senator matters. Please safeguard it.

**Lynda Lambert                      Baltimore, MD**