

November 12, 2013

To the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission

Loss of theaters at the State Theatre would be a loss for Ann Arbor

Dear Commissioners,

I am unable to attend your meeting so I'm writing this letter.

I know that I am like Don Quixote and constantly tilting at windmills, but I just want to register my dismay at the proposal to turn the two theaters in the former balcony of the State Theater into offices. I know that the HDC has no authority over use, so this is more a plea to the owners than to you. We need our cultural spaces downtown and we need to keep venues like these that are attended by students and townspeople alike.

The concession area at the State could be a wonderful art gallery. Many original features still remain here but are covered in paint. The bathrooms for both men and women are completely original and the men's room is a total gem. One of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards is to keep an original use if possible. It would be good if this were part of the general discussion of altering the building for other uses.

The State Theatre marquee is an iconic symbol of Ann Arbor and remains a symbol of everything cultural in town. At the intersection of town and gown, it deserves to retain some place in our cultural firmament. So someone, or some entity—maybe even City Council which stepped in the save the Michigan Theater—should step forward to save this for movies, dance, art shows and more. Russ Collins, Executive Director of the Michigan Theater, has offered to help with managing the theaters but realizes that money would need to be raised. It could be done if the owners are willing to form partnerships. I'm hoping that you as a body can take a position encouraging such partnerships to move forward. I'm also hoping that others will express their concern and help sway the owners with their decision on using this space

Sincerely yours,

Susan Wineberg