

April 25, 2006

Ms. Susan Pranger
Boston Landmarks Commission
One City Hall Square
Room 805
Boston, MA 02201

RE: Paramount Theater interior restoration

Dear Ms. Pranger:

The Boston Preservation Alliance has advocated for the renovation and restoration of the Paramount Theater for over twenty years. Recently, the Alliance has communicated with Emerson College and staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission regarding Emerson's current proposal for redevelopment of the theater and adjacent property.

Both the interior and the exterior of the Paramount Theater were designated as Boston Landmarks in 1984. The Paramount was considered by the Landmarks Commission to be Boston's first, finest, and only remaining Art Deco theater. The interior was found to be to be the city's most comprehensive example of Art Deco interior design.

The Alliance has reviewed the Certificate of Exemption to remove interior finishes from the Paramount that was granted in September 1985 and the decision by the Landmarks Commission on the Application for a Certificate of Design Approval for the property that was made in October 1988. The Alliance supports the decisions made by the Landmarks Commission in 1985 and 1988 and respectfully requests that they be upheld. Specifically, we support the 1988 decision, which required recreation of the Art Deco interior finishes that were removed in part for asbestos abatement, in a manner that is "consistent with the standards and criteria for the theater, which encourage restoration of these elements to the greatest extent possible."

We recognize that in 1988 the Commission also allowed for the partitioning of the interior of the theater to create smaller performance and rehearsal spaces to be appropriate. Partitions were found not to violate the historic integrity of the theater because they represented a reversible change to the building's interior.

The Alliance firmly believes that past commitments made by the Boston Landmarks Commission should be honored. We feel this is especially important in cases where historic fabric is removed from landmarked structures with the expectation that it will be recreated in keeping with the original design. For this reason, we ask the Commission to uphold the 1988 decision—to require the restoration of the original detailing of the interior finishes of the Paramount Theater "to the greatest extent possible." With innovation, we believe such restoration can be achieved while allowing for a

redistribution of the theater's volume that can accommodate Emerson's vision for this historic theater's reuse and revival.

Sincerely,

Susan Park
President

Sarah D. Kelly
Executive Director