

**From:** [Charlene Woodcock](#)  
**To:** [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [All Council](#); [deanofstudents@berkeley.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@berkeley.edu); [jcaner@downtownberkeley.com](mailto:jcaner@downtownberkeley.com)  
**Subject:** 2113-2115 Kittredge Street—California Theatre  
**Date:** Monday, October 02, 2023 4:53:18 PM

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**WARNING:** This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

TO: Members of the Landmark Protection Commission

I write to urge that you fulfill your responsibility and protect and preserve the great California Theatre, which has long served the residents of Berkeley by bringing us movies on the big screen, some broadly entertaining, others works of art, and the best of them both.

Those with limited interest in film have concluded that the simultaneous advent of the covid pandemic and film streaming corporations has ended the viability of movie theaters as a venue to see films. But the art of film requires public venues with large screens. Great films cannot be appreciated on home screens, and the vitality of the medium thrives on public gatherings to enjoy and discuss its works. Any city that values culture and the arts has and will continue to have movie theaters for the benefit of its residents and visitors to the city. A city with a great university has cause to ensure that students can access the art of film and be able to see movies seen as they were made to be seen on a big screen. Film can benefit the emotional and social well-being of young people, if they can leave their dorm or apartment rooms to go see an enlightening or emotionally involving film.

Movie theaters have been the economic engine of our downtown economy. Many cafes and restaurants and other businesses benefitted from the customers attracted to the movie theaters. In the 2015-19 effort to save the Shattuck Cinemas from demolition, some 5000 or more signatures in support of the theater were gathered at its entrance, with 60% of the signatures from beyond Berkeley. That is to say, movie attendees were bringing their money into Berkeley to see a movie and enjoy a meal. They kept the streets enlivened and safe at night. Some 350,000 people bought tickets at the Shattuck Cinemas in 2015, according to records provided by the manager at the time.

The demolition of the California Theatre as a movie theater is not acceptable. If the demolition of the Shattuck Cinemas had not been approved, Berkeley would still be well served by that excellent 10-screen theater replete with 1920s movie palace decor and hand-painted murals, an admirable example of spatial repurposing from department store to multi-screen movie theater.

Berkeley has numerous performing arts spaces, from the UC Theatre, once a great venue for world cinema, to the several on Berkeley Way for plays and musical performances. Replacing a great movie theater with a much smaller empty performance space will not compensate for the shameful loss of all of our downtown movie theaters.

Sincerely,  
Charlene M. Woodcock  
2355 Virginia Street  
Berkeley 94709

**From:** [Micky Duxbury](#)  
**To:** [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)  
**Subject:** No theater in Berkeley??  
**Date:** Monday, October 02, 2023 8:39:08 PM

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**WARNING:** This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

I am appalled that the city has not taken any steps to try to save at least one theater downtown. The ramifications will be huge: all the small businesses downtown will be affected by significantly less traffic of people going to the movies. As a patron of Berkeley Landmark theaters for 35 years, it is horrible to see that the city has not taken steps to keep our downtown a vital center of entertainment that includes a movie theater. I don't want to go to Emeryville to see a movie!

The city seems to have supported thousands of very high-end expensive apartments and condos downtown with no view to those of us who already live here. You seem to be more in alignment with real estate developers and investors than with regular folks who have been going to Landmark theaters for years.

What kind of Berkeley are you envisioning for the future? Why weren't steps taken before the closure of so many theaters? I am sure that most people in Berkeley will be in support of trying to save a theater downtown.

Micky Duxbury

**From:** [Summer Brenner](#)  
**To:** [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [Kate Harrison](#); [Berkeley Mayor's Office](#); [Chris Linville](#)  
**Subject:** SAVE THE CALIFORNIA THEATER/BRING MOVIES BACK TO BERKELEY  
**Date:** Monday, October 02, 2023 8:23:34 PM

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**WARNING:** This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Commissioners,

For years Berkeley was the movie mecca of the East Bay, especially for independent films, which have proliferated in recent decades.

For me and my family it has been an unparalleled joy to go to downtown Berkeley: see a movie, have dinner, walk around, enjoy our town. These movie theaters were part of what made our town a real town, not a bedroom community where residents had to drive or BART elsewhere for entertainment.

PLEASE! There are many things that are needed, but do not ignore that local entertainment venues are one of them.

HELP BRING MOVIES BACK TO BERKELEY!

Thank you.

Summer Brenner

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**From:** [Tova Halpern](#)  
**To:** [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)  
**Subject:** Save UA Berkeley  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 20, 2023 10:33:49 AM

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WARNING: This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

I wanted to do my part to preserve this iconic, historic theater. I was born in Berkeley and went with my friends and family to see our first films there . They want their grandchildren to have the same opportunity. There are also groups of local actors and artists who need a stage and auditorium to perform. The beauty of this theater is its location and accessibility. U.C. Berkeley students from all over the world become acquainted with American culture there . Let's not deny the general public their due .

Sent from my iPhone

**From:** [Allen Michaan](#)  
**To:** [Landmarks Preservation Commission](#)  
**Cc:** [allen Michaan](#)  
**Subject:** The importance of the United Artists Theater building  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 13, 2023 8:11:21 PM

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**WARNING:** This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear members of the Landmark Preservation Commission,

below please find my letter to the Berkeley City Council:

I thank you for any consideration that you can extend to the preservation and restoration of the glorious art deco movie palace that still exists in the United Artists Theater building.

Sincerely  
Allen Michaan

Hello,  
my name is Allen Michaan and I have been operating theaters continuously for the last 51 years since I built and operated my first theater, the Rialto, in a West Berkeley warehouse on Gilman Street. I have a long history in your city having designed and developed the Shattuck Cinemas as well as being the operator of the Sunset Theater, Fine Arts Cinema, the Northside Theater and the Oaks Theater on Solano Ave. Changing industry conditions and the stranglehold of huge theater chains monopolizing the available movie titles eventually forced out independent operators such as my company Renaissance Rialto, Inc.

Over the years I have restored and operated several dozen movie houses in San Francisco, Menlo Park, Palo Alto, Orinda, Benicia, Walnut Creek and Lafayette.

As well I have consulted for and contributed to the restoration and rebirth of several theaters in other parts of the country.

Today I proudly continue my tradition of theatrical exhibition at my Grand Lake Theater in Oakland which I originally leased in 1980 and eventually purchased the property 5 years ago. The Grand Lake is considered to be one of the finest theaters in the nation.

As the leaders of Berkeley you have a unique opportunity to bestow a gift on your constituents as well as to the citizens of the

greater Bay Area and to future generations by actively ensuring the preservation of the Historic

United Artists theater on Shattuck Avenue.

Constructed in 1932 as one of a handful of theaters developed by the association of Charlie Chaplin,

Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks it was a major art deco destination for movie and performance alike.

It boasted a full stage, dressing rooms and 1800 seats all in a spectacular setting.

A full history of the theater can be found at: [www.savetheuaberkeley.org](http://www.savetheuaberkeley.org)

I remember seeing movies there in the early 1970s and was always overwhelmed by it's magnificence.

When the process of dividing the space into multiple auditoriums began around 1973 the owners were required to carve out the new spaces without causing any major destruction to the original fabric of the theater.

We have actual eyewitness testimony from a theater maintenance specialist who has explored the areas above and behind the later modifications that the original decor is largely intact and ready for restoration.

The citizen group that is actively calling for this theater to be saved has requested of the developer

that we be allowed to inspect all areas of the theater, however we have been denied ANY access for "safety concerns".

This building, which was deemed eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic places has the

potential to be what the Paramount Theater is to the City of Oakland.

Once lost, entertainment palaces such as the United Artist Theater will never be replaced.

Berkeley has lost almost all of it's theaters, this one deserves to be saved for the community.

PLEASE, do not make the same mistake that San Francisco made in 1963 when it allowed the Fox Theater to

be demolished only to be replaced by an ugly office building.

The preservation community mourns that loss to this day.

I urge that any actions to allow the destruction of this architectural treasure be placed on hold until a full study

takes place to determine the actual condition of the auditorium. Preserving the lobby is not enough.

Our group acknowledges the importance of more housing but surely there must be some other city owned

property that can be traded to the developers for their construction goals.

This is a special opportunity for you to prevent an act of cultural vandalism and instead turn it into a gift

for Berkeley's citizens, now and for the future.

Respectfully yours,  
Allen Michaan  
Owner, Grand Lake Theater