



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

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Government Affairs and Community Engagement

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Alicia D. Hurley, Ph.D. *Vice-President*

May 15, 2008

Brad Hoylman
Chair
Community Board 2
3 Washington Square Village
New York, NY 10012

Dear Chairman Hoylman:

Thank you for your letter requesting additional information regarding New York University's proposal for 133 - 139 MacDougal St., the building that houses the Provincetown Playhouse.

I appreciate the opportunity to clarify any questions and correct misinformation about our current proposal, and provide some of our current thinking as it pertains to the site. Primarily, I want to clarify that we have no plan to demolish the Provincetown Playhouse and have determined we can retain the theater.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with additional questions as you and the Board review our proposal.

1. Could you define the location of the existing theater?

The building as it exists today is a 1940s consolidation of what was once originally four smaller rowhouse style buildings that carried the addresses 133 - 139 MacDougal. The current Provincetown Playhouse Theater exists in the first floor of 133 MacDougal, the southernmost section of the building.

2. What is the current square footage of the theater? Would the new theater exist on the same footprint?

The current square footage of the theater is 4000 square feet on the ground floor and cellar level. The theater will be retained at the same square footage and volume and on the same footprint.

3. We hope NYU makes every attempt to preserve any historic artifacts in the theater and consider them for re-use.

- *What does NYU deem historic in the existing theater, and what, if anything, is being preserved?*

While we are continuing to assess the theater, we can say that except for the volume of the theater and perhaps the wood floor and two radiators, nothing in the current theater is from the period of when the Provincetown Players were on the site. The rest of the theatre is an undistinguished black-box theater.

- *Specifically, could you please let us know when the current stage was constructed?*

The original stage, dating back circa 1918, was removed in the most recent renovation in the 1990s. The current stage was built to incorporate the installation of air conditioning ducts in the theater. Prior to this renovation the theatre was not air conditioned.

- *Are the theater seats from the period and could these be restored and reused?*

The seats appear to date to the 1920s-1940s and we intend to restore and refurbish them for the rebuilt theater.

- *Also, could you inform us how NYU came to these conclusions (e.g., were historians or architects consulted)?*

We have been actively exploring a range of opinions and ideas for this site. The stakeholders and knowledge-holders for a project like this are varied and critically important. We commissioned Elise Quasebarth to produce a study of the history of the theater. We have met with and heard from historians who are experts regarding the Provincetown Playhouse, the experimental theater that has been a part of this site for many years, and the productions that have been mounted in the theater since the Players left in 1929.

We have also engaged the community of users of this site. There are diverse activities that take place in the site some independently produced and others under the auspices of the University's Steinhardt School of Culture Education and Human Development including plays, musical performances, staged readings and educational theater that trains the next generation of creators and performers and helps to build a pipeline of young people interested in the arts. These stakeholders have expressed the need to respect the significant culture and heritage of the site as well as to build a theater that can serve the needs of its users for the decades to come a point of view with which NYU agrees.

4. *Are there any current issues with the theater that prevent NYU from considering a minor renovation rather than a rebuilding?*

There are problems with the current structure that can be addressed during a renovation AND rebuilding of the theater. We have been informed by theater professionals that the stage is too high for the current rake of seating resulting in poor sightlines. In addition, the stage is too close to the overhead lighting grid, which creates limited lighting design options. The renovation in the 1990s required the theater to become ADA compliant. However, improvements could be made to provide better access and the possibility of additional seating. Finally, the overhead duct work impedes the hanging of curtains and props for productions.

5. *Is NYU considering different scenarios for the façade restoration, and if so, what are these scenarios based upon?*

We plan to isolate the existing 1940s entryway/façade to the Provincetown Playhouse Theater (the section that exists at 133 MacDougal) during the construction. We plan to restore that piece to its original 1940s appearance, including restoring the glass occulli windows, installing wooden framed doors, restoring similar original lettering that will reference this as the Provincetown Playhouse, and restoring the detail that surrounds the doorway.

6. *What is the current and future programming for the theater?*

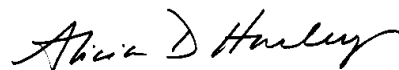
NYU's Steinhardt School of Culture, Education and Human Development uses the theater space as a training facility that celebrates the experimental theater legacy long associated with spirit of the site. The site hosts plays, readings, musical performances and outreach programs that bring together NYU students, local community residents and school-aged children. The theater is also used for important performances such as the annual Eugene O'Neill Festival.

7. *Are there other steps NYU is considering to ensure that the history of the Provincetown Playhouse is honored?*

Yes, we have heard from various stakeholders about measures we might take to ensure that the legacy and cultural heritage of the past is brought to bear on the future plans for the theater. These measures may include honoring the Provincetown Players and others who have played a role in the history of the site through plaques, time-lines, displays, and the programming of the theater.

Once again, I am grateful for the opportunity to clarify some misunderstandings. Additionally, this inquiry and the conversations we have had about this project have helped to guide our thinking. I appreciate your time and commitment to the Village community and I am grateful for your guidance.

Sincerely,



Alicia Hurley
Vice President
Government Affairs and
Community Engagement

cc: City Council Speaker Christine Quinn
Congressman Jerrold Nadler
Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer
State Senator Tom Duane
Assemblymember Deborah Glick
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