



City of New Bedford

Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

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STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING December 4, 2017

Determination of Historic Significance for Historic Resources Funded through CPA

Historic Resource Information	
PROPERTY NAME:	Strand Theatre (also Vien's Theater & Lowes Center Theater)
PROPERTY LOCATION:	1157 Acushnet Avenue
PROPERTY AGE:	Constructed in 1910
PROPERTY TYPE:	Theatre Building

The Strand Theater is located on the southwest corner of Acushnet Avenue and Beetle Street, diagonally opposite the Waverly Hotel (NBE.507, NR listed 1990). It was completed in 1910 by E.H. Vien & Co., a real estate company owned by the Franco-American Vien family. Fuller & Delano of Worcester was the architect.

Vien's Theatre was the second theater to open in that part of New Bedford's North End north of Coggeshall Street which presented dramatic performances and vaudeville acts along with motion pictures.

The Viens also owned the Waverly Hotel across Acushnet Avenue, and seized other commercial opportunities in the neighborhood as they took advantage of the remarkable population growth then underway in New Bedford, itself triggered by the equally remarkable growth in the city's textile industry. Between 1900 and 1910, seventeen new mill corporations were founded, and the population rose from 66,442 to 96,565 people, or by nearly 55 percent. By 1900, 90 percent of all foreign-born New Bedford residents lived in the North End and the South End, and 97 percent of all New Bedford textile workers were first- or second-generation immigrants. By 1914 fourteen textile mills operated within easy walking distance of this part of Acushnet Avenue.

Few features of architectural distinction survive on the exterior. The front façade was parged over, and latest marquee was removed. Seats were removed from the interior. The building is presently undergoing renovation for use as a Cape Verdean cultural center with damaged interior walls now covered with gypsum board. The proscenium arch and balcony front have been well preserved. The original blueprints depicting the Classical Revival brick façade and interior exist and will serve as the guiding documents in the rehabilitation of the building.

The building has a demonstrated association with the cultural, economic, political and social history related to the city's textile industry and immigrant population, and although the building currently lacks integrity, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation allows for the replacement of missing features if they are substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence. Staff recommends that the NBHC find the Strand Theatre to be a Significant Historic Resource.



Strand Theatre



Original Blueprint

CPA HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION FORM

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YES	NO	Buildings and Structures
Cultural or Historic Association:		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource is associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic, industrial, political or social history of the City of New Bedford.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource is associated with one or more important persons or events.
Architectural/Design Quality:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Resource possesses distinctive design or physical characteristics in terms of period, style, or method of building construction.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource is associated with a famous architect or builder.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Resource possesses high artistic values.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Resource has architectural significance, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.
Integrity:		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Resource retains integrity.

YES	NO	Vessels, Real Property, Documents, and Artifacts
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource is a complete set of materials or records.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource illustrates the site of an important historic event.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource identifies a person or group of persons who have impacted the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource exemplifies the cultural, economic, industrial, social, or political heritage of the City.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource represents the work of a master craftsman, artist, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource possesses high artistic values.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource can be used to inform an area of scholarship.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resource retains integrity.

YES	NO	NBHC Determination of Significance
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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