

The Regent Two years in the life of an endangered icon

REGENT THEATRE TIMELINE:

The following is a timeline with key events and quotes following the sale of the Regent by The Mayne Trust to Industry Superannuation Property Trust (ISPT) in 2007 with Brookfield Multiplex the developers of the project.

(7 February 2008) Development application lodged with Brisbane City Council for new 38-storey office tower and car park on Regent Theatre site. Plans lodged include two small function rooms and a larger 231-seat function room accessed from heritage listed marble staircase.

(February 2008) Regent becomes a local Government election issue:

Lord Mayor Campbell Newman was "vehemently opposed" to the development and refers to it as "Shingle Inn revisited". The Lord Mayor also mentioned: "Brisbane had lost too much of its heritage in recent years" (City News).

The Lord Mayor said he had requested records of conversations between developers and Council to "find out how it got this far"(Brisbane Times).

"Save the Regent" group formed to create public awareness about the loss of the Regent Theatre and to fight against its destruction. The Save the Regent website was established to gain community support and keep people up to date with the latest Regent news and developments.

E-petition set up on parliamentary website to Save the Regent Theatre. Over 1 000 signatures collected.

(24 February 2008) Premier Anna Bligh stated: "Brisbane has already lost many of its icons including the Belle Vue Hotel in the city and Cloudland at Bowen Hills. I think the cultural history of our city is important and we have lost a lot of ours and we need to be careful before we lose another one. This really is one of the last pieces of the cultural history of early life in our city" (Courier-Mail 24-2-08).

"It seems to me that just protecting the façade is not enough," she said. "Part of its charm and part of what the Regent is, is that it is a working theatre and unless you have got people going in and buying tickets and getting popcorn it really will lose something of its significance" (Courier-Mail 24-2-08).

(29 February 2008) The State Government issues a ministerial directive protecting the whole Regent complex including the non-heritage listed Showcase areas and Elizabeth St facade.

(March 2008) Support grows for "Save the Regent". One STR FaceBook group now has 2 786 members, another has 1 285, and a third group has 220. The main group would eventually have more than 3 000 members.

Actors Geoffrey Rush and Bille Brown lend their full support for saving the Regent theatre.

Lord Mayor Campbell Newman sends a letter to one of the STR members saying: "I can assure you that I am against the development that is proposed. Brisbane has lost too much of its prized heritage in recent decades, due to previous administrations not providing leadership." (25 March 2008)

(April 2008) Entertainment entrepreneur Mike Walsh writes to Save the Regent (STR) group outlining his support for the Regent to be restored to a performance theatre venue: "I think that saving and restoring the Regent Theatre Brisbane is a great idea".

(May 2008) Petition signing and display set up in Queen Street Mall by the STR group, providing awareness to public on loss of Regent. Over 1 000 signatures gathered for Save the Regent petition.

Paper petition and e-petition with combined signatures of over 2 500 tabled in State Parliament calling on the Government to save the Regent theatre.

(June 2008) The Regent Theatre was nominated as an "Icon of Brisbane we should never lose" in a recent Courier Mail survey (June 21, 2008).

(10 September 2008) Premier Anna Bligh announces "exciting plans" for the Regent redevelopment, including two small auditoria and one slightly larger one for weekend-only movie screening.

(Sep/Oct 2008) Numerous submissions lodged with city council objecting to the Regent development.

(19 February 2009) Then Minister for Planning and Infrastructure Paul Lucas replaced the original directive that protected the whole Regent complex with a new directive paving the way for Brisbane City Council to approve the development.

(18 May 2009) Brisbane City Council fast tracks and approves the development application in a heated council meeting.

(28 May 2009) Heritage application lodged to Queensland Heritage Council for listing Showcase Cinema and bar areas of Regent Theatre complex.

(30 July 2009) An appeal was lodged in the Planning & Environment Court by STR requesting the city council approval be reviewed and if necessary dismissed under current application conditions.

(9 August 2009) Last day of the Brisbane International Film Festival in the Regent Theatre. BIFF would now have to find a new venue after being at the Regent since its inception in 1992.

(24 August 2009) Fiona Gardiner, Director, Cultural Heritage, Strategy and Policy Division, EPA, makes a recommendation to the Queensland Heritage Council (QHC) **not** to enter Regent Showcase areas, containing the last surviving elements of the Regent Theatre auditorium and mezzanine lounge, onto the State Heritage Register.

(17 November 2009) QHC decides **not** to enter Showcase areas onto the State Heritage Register.

(14 December 2009) Last of two mediation meetings between STR and the Regent developers end in a stalemate. No compromise is reached to include the Showcase areas in the new development.

(15 January 2010) A notice of discontinuance is lodged with the Planning & Environment Court by STR. Court appeal is terminated.

(15 June 2010) After 80 years as a cultural icon of Brisbane, The Regent to close.

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In the 1970s it was planned to demolish Brisbane's historic Regent Theatre. Following enormous public outcry, a compromise was reached whereby the Gothic Foyer and Entrance Lobby were retained, along with many plaster and decorative elements from The Regent's original Auditorium and Upper Mezzanine Lounge. These were to be relocated into the "Showcase Cinema" and adjoining new bar area *. Also retained was the original 1929 historic Elizabeth Street façade, which has remained virtually unaltered for over 80 years. These areas were carefully saved, restored and preserved so the Regent's ambience, allure and historic style would live on for future generations.

Approved plans for the redevelopment of the site show no intentions of saving and preserving these historic areas.

The Regent Showcase areas and the Elizabeth Street façade, which were saved from destruction in 1979, look to be destroyed now in the current development.

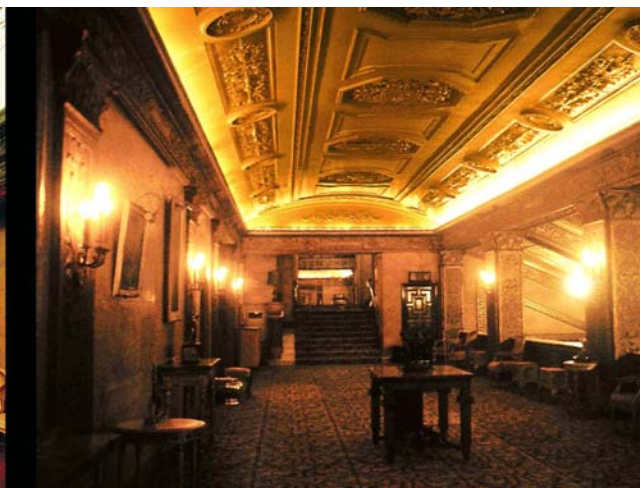
Only public support and State Government intervention can save them. Examination of the progress of this development and the conditions of its approval, along with close scrutiny of the current development plans, will encourage a more open debate in the community on this imminent loss of Brisbane's iconic Regent Theatre.

* Recent research with those who worked on the changes in the late 1970s have confirmed the originality of plasterwork and fittings carefully removed from the original auditorium and mezzanine lounge and relocated to the Showcase and bar areas in the 1979-80 Regent redevelopment.

For more information contact: 0416-257 348 or 0437-028 674

On the Web visit: www.savetheregent.com

Please take the time to look over some of the following images of the endangered areas of The Regent. These unique, historic areas will be discarded from the development, having been found "unworthy" of protection or saving.



Comparison: Current (left); pre-1978 (right)

