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## **Officials Launch Construction Phase of New City Arts and Entertainment District**

### ***Art and Independent Movie Theatre to Open on West Side***

**CLEVELAND (May 14, 2008)** — City, neighborhood, business and philanthropic leaders today launched the construction phase of a new Cleveland entertainment and commercial district with a ceremonial groundbreaking for a movie theatre that will specialize in art and independent films.

The year-long restoration and renovation of the Capitol Theatre, a 1920s vaudeville and silent movie house at Detroit Avenue and West 65<sup>th</sup> Street, is the lead construction project of the Gordon Square Arts District (GSAD), an emerging arts and entertainment destination in the heart of the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood and five minutes from downtown Cleveland. The Capitol will be the only art and independent movie theatre on the West Side.

"Connections between people, places and opportunities contribute to the overall quality of life in the city of Cleveland," said Mayor Frank Jackson. "The Gordon Square Arts District is an expression of our unique neighborhood and connects business and civic commitment with the arts."

Today's groundbreaking marks a milestone for three Cleveland nonprofits that joined a year ago in a unique collaboration, also called the Gordon Square Arts District, which is conducting a \$30 million effort to revitalize Cleveland's West Side.

The collaborative work of the three organizations — Cleveland Public Theatre, the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO) and Near West Theatre — is seen as a national model of how the arts can be used to stimulate economic development. GSAD's plans, along with housing construction at nearby Battery Park and elsewhere in Detroit Shoreway, have already helped attract 24 restaurants, shops, galleries, studios and other businesses to the area since the beginning of 2006. In all, the Gordon Square Arts District is helping to infuse more than \$500 million in the community.

Besides renovation of the Capitol Theatre, GSAD's core projects are:

- Renovation of Cleveland Public Theatre, including the oldest standing theatre building in Cleveland, at 6415 Detroit.

- Construction of a new performance center on West 67<sup>th</sup> Street, just north of Detroit, for Near West Theatre, a 30-year old community theatre.
- Streetscape improvements along Detroit, from West 58<sup>th</sup> to West 73<sup>rd</sup> streets. Sidewalks will be widened to encourage pedestrian traffic and outdoor café dining. Utility wires will be concealed underground, and benches, trees, public art, innovative light fixtures and a street pavement design will be installed. Groundbreaking is planned for August.
- Surface parking for residents and visitors.

“Fact is, we've had the opportunity to create a critical mass — this is not just a couple of venues trying to become an arts district,” said Lawrence N. Schultz, GSAD campaign chair and a partner at Calfee, Halter & Griswold LLP. “DSCDO, Cleveland Public Theatre and (Ward 17) Councilman (Matt) Zone have envisioned this for a long time and have worked with Near West Theatre to build a solid platform for other developments that were on the horizon and are becoming reality. The neighborhood has tremendous diversity and capacity for growth. It will be the West Side bookend for Cleveland's cultural and economic future. As we like to emphasize, it's all about the art of economic development.”

GSAD takes its name from the Gordon Square Arcade, a two-block, multi-use commercial-residential building that includes the Capitol. Gordon Square has a rich history that almost ended in demolition, had it not been for the DSCDO. It took over the building in 1979 under the leadership of Raymond L. Pianka, presently Cleveland Housing Court judge, who was the first executive director of the DSCDO; the Rev. Marino Frascati, the visionary pastor of nearby Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church; the late Pat Perry, a local developer; and the late Councilwoman Mary Zone.

As GSAD's lead project, the \$7 million Capitol Theatre renovation is expected to be completed in time for a grand reopening April 9, 2009, the 88<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the theatre's original opening. The theatre is owned by the DSCDO; Cleveland Cinemas, which owns or operates the Cedar Lee Theatre in Cleveland Heights and other theatres in Northeast Ohio and in Pittsburgh, recently signed on to manage it.

Jonathan Forman, Cleveland Cinemas president and a founder of the Cleveland International Film Festival, said the Capitol will focus on independent, foreign and documentary films, with better Hollywood movies mixed in.

Work at the theatre is already underway. The Capitol, which once boasted an elegant neoclassical interior uncommon in neighborhood theatres, suffers from water damage, neglect and substandard repairs. It has been vacant since the mid-1980s. Restoration and renovations by Marous Brothers Construction will transform it into a three-screen, all-digital theatre that will combine modern amenities with the atmosphere of an old movie palace.

The main theatre will seat 420. The balcony will be divided into two smaller theatres, each seating 100.

Among features to be restored to their original designs are the West 65<sup>th</sup> Street marquee, the vestibule, the lobby and wood and plaster columns in the lobby and main theatre. Decorative plasterwork will be repaired and retained for historic purposes, but in some areas will be covered with panels and fabric needed for today's acoustical standards, said Doug Richardson, general manager of the Design Build Division at Marous Brothers Construction. The theatre's original brass handrails and floor tile will remain, and a custom pendant fixture in the main theatre will be repaired and re-used, Richardson said.

Forman said the Capitol will be a beautiful restored theater. "People who take moviegoing seriously like to see their films in a great theatre," he said. "You can't get away with folding chairs and a bedsheet."

Patrons will be able to enjoy wine, beer and gourmet appetizers as well as more traditional movie theatre fare. Café-style seating will be available in the theatre's lobby/concession area, which will also be available for special events, rentals and premieres. Guests will also be able to relax in a sitting area on the mezzanine and on couches in the balcony. Theatre seating will offer more legroom than is typically available at the movies.

Funding for the Capitol is complete, and portions have been secured for the other GSAD projects. Financing consists of equity investments, tax credits, foundation grants, loans and private donations. A campaign is underway for further private contributions.

Along with Jackson, Schultz and Pianka, those participating in today's groundbreaking were:

- Robert E. Eckardt, senior vice president of the Cleveland Foundation, a funder.
- Jason Zone Fisher, an independent filmmaker whose great-grandparents settled in the neighborhood.
- Jeffrey M. Ramsey, DSCDO executive director, who has been working on saving the Capitol since he joined the organization in 1987.
- Joseph D. Roman, president and chief executive officer of the Greater Cleveland Partnership, which secured tax credits for the project.
- Michael J. Taylor, president of National City Community Development Corporation, which provided tax credits and the equity investment for the project.
- Councilman Zone, who helped to secure a loan from the city of Cleveland for the project and is a partner with the DSCDO in the rebirth of the neighborhood.
- Several residents who used to attend the Capitol.

Adelbert (Chip) Marous Jr., managing member of Vintage Development Group, developer of the Battery Park townhouse project, presented Ramsey with a \$100,000 check toward the project. Marous is also president of Marous Brothers Construction, the design/builders of the Capitol Theatre renovation.

Honorary chairs of the Gordon Square Arts District campaign are Richard W. and Patricia R. Pogue, Albert B. and Audrey G. Ratner and Tom C. and Sandra S. Sullivan. Richard (Dick) Pogue is senior advisor at Jones Day; Albert Ratner is co-chair of the board of Forest City Enterprises Inc.; and Tom Sullivan is chair of RPM International Inc.

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