



Gordon Wozniak  
Councilmember District No. 8

CONSENT CALENDAR  
July 16, 2013

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Councilmember Gordon Wozniak  
Subject: Recognizing the Businesspeople and Professionals Whose Volunteer Activism Restored the Elmwood Movie Theater, 2966 College Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution recognizing Burl Willes, who initiated the campaign to save the Elmwood movie theater, 2966 College Avenue, as well as the merchants and professionals who, for 20 years, have served as volunteers on the Elmwood Theater Foundation and the Elmwood Advisory Board to purchase and restore this historic neighborhood movie theater.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

BACKGROUND

On July 16, 2013, the City Council will recognize that the Elmwood business district has fully repaid the City loan that allowed the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation to purchase the closed and fire-damaged Elmwood movie theater and, through a combination of Business Improvement District (BID) financing and money borrowed from Elmwood-area residents, restore it to operation in October 1994. As described in an attached report from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the restoration of the Elmwood Theater resulted from an innovative public-private partnership that has served as a model for other business districts that seek to preserve local movie theaters threatened by demolition.

As a community effort, preservation of the Elmwood Theater resulted from the willingness of 80 or so Elmwood businesspeople to consent to, and then pay the assessment over a twenty-year period. Thirty-three neighborhood residents also lent the Foundation \$420,000 to finance the seismic retrofit, repair and improvement of the Elmwood Theater. While both groups have received a return on their investment—the former in increased foot traffic for the business district, the latter a normal return on the money they lent-- we should be grateful for their faith in what was initially a very risky venture.

However, in addition to paying the assessment themselves, a number of Elmwood businesspeople also volunteered thousands of hours of time by serving on the Board of Directors of the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation that planned the project, and the Elmwood Advisory Board that managed the assessment district. They include:

- Burl Willes, owner of Trips Out Travel, who initiated the campaign to save the theater and gathered more than a thousand signatures calling for it to be reopened;
- David Salk, owner of The Focal Point, who at different times has served as President of the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation that owns the theater, as well as Chair of the Elmwood Advisory Board that managed the Business Improvement District that helped to finance the restoration;
- Laurie Capitelli, realtor and former co-owner of Avenue Books, who negotiated the purchase of the property from United Artists and who has managed the finances of the Elmwood Theater Foundation for more than 20 years;
- Attorney Fred Harvey, who has served as Secretary and legal counsel for the Elmwood Theater Foundation for more than 20 years, and who also served an 8-year term on the Elmwood Advisory Board;
- Attorney Steven Rood, who achieved recognition of non-profit status for the Foundation with the IRS and State Franchise Tax Board; as well as serving on the Elmwood Advisory Board.
- Peggy Casey, owner of Bill's Trading Post, first and longstanding Chair of the Elmwood Advisory Board including during the period when it designed the assessment formula.
- Businesspeople Lilian Moriarty, Anne Flexer, and Allen Hibbard who served as Board members of the Elmwood Theater Foundation;
- Businesspeople Claudia Hunka (Moudry), Ann Leyhe, Jon Moriarty, Maureen O'Neil Garcia, Jeremy Kidson, Garbis Baghdassarian and others who served terms on the Elmwood Advisory Board.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Gordon Wozniak Council District 8 510-981-7180

Attachments:

1: Resolution

2: *Elmwood Theater, Berkeley California*, by Amy Cohen of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation and newspaper clippings

RESOLUTION NO. ~~##,###~~-N.S.

RECOGNIZING MERCHANT AND NEIGHBORHOOD VOLUNTEERS WHO PURCHASED  
AND RESTORED THE ELMWOOD MOVIE THEATER, 2966 COLLEGE AVENUE

WHEREAS, the Elmwood movie theater, 2966 College Avenue, is one of a diminishing number of neighborhood movie theaters as well as a local architectural and historical landmark; and

WHEREAS, since 1914 it has served as the best known feature and night-time and weekend business anchor of the Elmwood commercial district, attracting customers and creating a sense of place; and

WHEREAS, after a fire in December 1988 closed the theater and it could not be reopened without an expensive seismic upgrade as well as repair of the fire damage; and

WHEREAS, the Elmwood commercial district suffered from the loss of the foot traffic attracted by the movie theater; and

WHEREAS, its then-owner decided not to reopen it but sell the property with a deed restriction preventing it from ever being operated as a movie theater; and

WHEREAS, this situation was reversed thanks to activism by the Elmwood business community that caused the City of Berkeley to invalidate the deed restriction and helped to influence the owner to be willing to selling theater to a new owner who would restore and operate it as a movie theater; and

WHEREAS, when no commercial developer would purchase and restore the Elmwood as a movie theater, merchants and professionals in the Elmwood commercial district organized the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation to attempt to purchase it themselves; and

WHEREAS, the Elmwood Theater Foundation did purchase the Elmwood Theater and subsequently restored it to operation as a movie theater in October, 1994, thanks to both a loan from the City of Berkeley to pay for the purchase price and loans from private individuals to pay for the seismic upgrade and repair of the theater; and

WHEREAS, the Elmwood businesses' effort ensured both that the loans were paid off in twenty years and that the Elmwood Theater has been preserved and maintained during that time; and

WHEREAS, the City nevertheless recognizes that, in addition to paying the assessment themselves as merchants and property owners in the district, certain businesspeople and professionals have also volunteered thousands of hours of time as volunteers on the Board of the Elmwood Theater Foundation that planned and conducted the restoration of the theater, and on the Elmwood Advisory Board that designed and administered the special assessment that helped to finance it.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that we thank the following individuals for their service in preserving and restoring the Elmwood Theater:

- Burl Willes, then owner of Trips Out Travel and also a longtime neighborhood resident, who initiated the campaign to save the theater and gathered more than a thousand signatures calling for it to be reopened;
- David Salk, owner of The Focal Point , who has served continuously as President of the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation that owns the theater, and also has served as member and Chair of the Elmwood Advisory Board that managed the Business Improvement District that helped to finance the restoration;
- Laurie Capitelli, realtor and former co-owner of Avenue Books, who negotiated the purchase of the property from United Artists and who has managed the finances of the Elmwood Theater Foundation for more than 20 years;
- Attorney Fred Harvey, who has served as Secretary and legal counsel for the Elmwood Theater Foundation for more than 20 years, and who also served an 8-year term on the Elmwood Advisory Board;
- Attorney and neighborhood resident Steven Rood, who achieved recognition of non-profit status for the Foundation with the IRS and State Franchise Tax Board;
- Peggy Casey, owner of Bill's Trading Post, who served as Chair of the Advisory Board that designed the assessment formula for the BID;
- Businesspeople Lilian Moriarty (14 Karats), Anne Flexer (Edelweiss Jewelers), and Allen Hibbard (Star Realty) who served as Board members of the Elmwood Theater Foundation;
- And businesspeople Garbis Baghdassarian (Le Mediterranee Restaurant), Jeremy Kidson (Jeremy's Clothing), Ann Leyhe (Mrs. Dalloways Books), Maureen Garcia (O'Neil) (Treehouse Green Gifts), Jon Moriarty (14 Karats) and Claudia Hunka (Moudry) (Your Basic Bird) who have served terms on the Elmwood Advisory Board.

## Elmwood Theater Case Study

By Amy Cohen, Bay Area LISC

In many struggling commercial districts, old, abandoned theaters remain as monuments to a thriving past. The loss of a theater can mean the end of foot traffic and, subsequently, the failure of restaurants, cafés, bars, and surrounding retail establishments—not to mention the loss of neighborhood character altogether. When Berkeley's Elmwood Theater closed due to fire damage in 1988, neighbors and merchants feared the lasting impact that tragedy would have on the two-and-a-half-block commercial strip of College Avenue between Stuart and Webster. When United Artists, the owner of the theater, put the Elmwood up for sale, the neighborhood was faced with both a unique opportunity and a difficult challenge.

A special committee of the Elmwood Merchants Association came together and decided to buy the theater. The task was daunting, however, as not only would the merchants need to come up with the purchase price but also the funds to repair and seismically upgrade the theater, as well as convert it to multiple screens. They decided to approach the City of Berkeley for the purchase amount. Though they presented a compelling argument for why the Elmwood was critical to the neighborhood's vitality, the city was only willing to make a loan if the merchants could guarantee it would be repaid. Out of this dilemma, an idea for the Elmwood Theater Business Improvement Area was born.

### Elmwood's BID

In exchange for a \$215,000 loan for purchase of the theater, the merchants agreed to tax themselves, through a business improvement district (BID) model (see financing section), in order to repay the entire loan to the city at 6 percent interest over 20 years. They needed to raise approximately \$20,000 per year. So the Berkeley City Council established an advisory board composed of merchants and property owners to figure out the most equitable way to levy an assessment, taking into account the varying levels of benefit different types of property would be likely to receive from the theater's restoration.

The advisory board assigned area businesses to either a Core Benefit Zone or a Broad Benefit Zone. The boundary of the Broad Benefit Zone was drawn to include the Alta Bates Medical Center and nearby medical offices. In the first year, 1993-94, the additional property tax rate was \$.05 per square foot in the Core Zone and \$.01 in the Broad Zone. This amount would total about \$15,000 annually. For the additional \$5,000, a surcharge was added to the business license tax on businesses in the neighborhood that derived particular benefit from the theater restoration because they were open at night at least five nights a week. These

#### The Economic Value of Culture

Theaters—especially those of historical significance—play a unique role in commercial districts, and their multiplier benefits are widely recognized. The National Association of Theater Operators had shown that about half of evening moviegoers can be expected to have dinner at a restaurant located within blocks of the theater. Studies also showed that a high proportion of patrons also visit coffee houses and dessert establishments.

included restaurants and bars, other late-night stores, and financial institutions with automatic teller machines open 24 hours.

### **The Value of Theaters**

Theaters—especially those of historical significance (Elmwood is a landmark)—play a unique role in commercial districts, and their multiplier benefits are widely recognized. It was not surprising that merchants were willing to finance the purchase of the theater, given the research that has been done on the importance of theaters in commercial districts, plus their own experiences. The National Association of Theater Operators had shown that about half of evening moviegoers can be expected to have dinner at a restaurant located within blocks of the theater. Studies also showed that a high proportion of patrons also visit coffee houses and dessert establishments. Further, the volume of ATM transactions at a bank in the neighborhood surrounding the Elmwood declined by more than 1000 per month after the closing of the theater. It was evident to area businesses that it was in their self-interest to revive the theater as a main attraction in the neighborhood. Their investment is paying off.

While the Elmwood Business Improvement Area's story is inspiring, it begs the question: Can this be replicated? It is not so likely. According to state law, BIDs must support public improvements in commercial districts. These improvements can include parks, sidewalks, or street maintenance but they are not intended to support a particular private business.

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#### **A Special Case**

*In order to use the BID structure to finance the purchase of the theater, the City of Berkeley had to broaden the BID's intended use for public improvements to a more private—though, they argued, publicly beneficial—purpose. The city passed special legislation enabling this type of use of BID funds. It is not likely that other cities would be able to do the same, nor is it certain that such legislation would be able to withstand serious opposition.*

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### **Lessons from Elmwood**

However, the story of the Elmwood is worth telling for the following reasons: First, BIDs should be considered a potential resource for some kinds of commercial revitalization work. Although using BID revenues to finance a particular business may not be a replicable strategy, BID revenues could be used for marketing or improvements that aid a district and, possibly, for financing some kinds of community facilities.

Second, the BID strategy illustrates the power of local merchants to bring about neighborhood change and stabilize their own commercial district. Even without the framework of a BID, merchants in a struggling commercial district should be viewed as potential resources for revitalization efforts. While they may be more willing to dream up creative financing solutions and invest their own money for theaters than for commercial properties with less obvious impact on their own businesses, they are stakeholders with political and financial power not to be overlooked.

Finally, the Elmwood Theater Business Improvement Area is a testament to the benefits of “thinking outside the box” when considering, and in this case creating, financing options for commercial development. The spirit behind the Elmwood Theater Business Improvement Area, if not the model itself, provides an important example of how creative problem-solving can lead to more vital neighborhood commercial districts.



Photo by Dale Miller

Volunteer organizer Burl Willes calls those who helped save the theater the "angels of Elmwood."

## Curtains to rise at the Elmwood Theater

BY GWETHEN KELL

The marquee above the entrance to Berkeley's Elmwood Theater reads, "Miracle on College Avenue." It does not, however, refer to an upcoming film — it boasts of successful community effort.

The quaint 640-seat United Artists (UA) theater, built in 1914, closed in December 1968 when damaged by fire. But early next year, the Elmwood Theater spruced up and seismically retro-fitted — will reopen with great fanfare. The theater was saved by a group of concerned merchants and neighbors who, with the city's help, won a five-year struggle to prevent a developer from demolishing the theater to create office/retail space. The group even obtained the money to buy the theater and secure its future.

"Small community theaters are a treasure and deserve to be protected if at all possible," said David Salk, an Elmwood Episcopalian and president of the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation.

Shortly after the fire, a group of Elmwood merchants called together by Burl Willes, long-time resident of the neighborhood and founder of Trips Out Travel,

pledged to work with UA to ensure the theater's resurrection.

Elmwood business owners said they felt crucial foot traffic when the theater closed. It drew people to the commercial district at night and on weekends, and residents could no longer walk to a show.

"We assumed," said Willes, "that UA was going to restore the fire-damaged theater and reopen. But the news spread like wildfire that a developer was going to buy the theater," and had other plans for the property.

"The Elmwood community wanted to save the theater, so we held a news conference. The mayor came and city council representatives came," he said. "We announced we were not going to let the theater die, and we formed a committee."

The efforts of the Save the Elmwood Theater Committee, as it was then called, got more than a nod from the city. The city manager assigned two staff members, David Fogarty and Neal Mayer, to assist in re-opening the theater.

Fogarty, an associate management analyst, asked the city attorney if an ordi-

Eventually, the developer gave up on his project, said Fogarty, and UA also let go. The neighbors then saw a unique opportunity to preserve the theater.

That same year the Save the Elmwood Theater Committee became the non-profit Elmwood Theater Foundation in order to buy and rent the theater.

Since the damaged building needed seismic retro-fitting and other work, UA sold the theater to the foundation for \$190,000. The organization borrowed enough money from private lenders, at an 11 percent interest rate, to foot the bill.

The foundation recently chose Silver Screen Amusements, a Danville-based chain of about 30 theaters, to rent the theater and take responsibility for all taxes, insurance and maintenance of the building. The company will provide all sound and projection equipment.

Fogarty said Silver Screen plans to make the theater a specialty house, as it was predominantly since the late 1940s.

"It will show first-run foreign and art films," said Laurie Capirelli, vice president of the foundation. A second screen and 200 seats will be added upstairs, the main auditorium will seat 360 people.

Berkeley officials granted the foundation a low-interest loan to help pay the private loan and approved a unique special assessment district allowing Elmwood commercial property owners to pay the city loan through a small yearly tax spanning 20 years.

"This has never before been done — a commercial assessment to restore a movie theater," said Fogarty.

"The merchants are underwriting the purchase of the land through the assessment district and the neighborhood is lending money for rehabilitation," added Capirelli.

Private lenders loaned the foundation \$425,000 to help finance construction work including the building's seismic upgrading, a second movie screen on the balcony and a ground floor wheelchair-accessible bathroom.

Rental income from the theater will help pay the construction debt. When the debt is paid, said Salk, the money will promote the Elmwood district and the arts.

nance could be drafted to protect the theater. Mayer is the city's director of community development.

"The city got involved because the merchants said the theater's reopening was important to the general health of the Elmwood district as a whole," said Fogarty. "All the merchants complained that, after it closed, foot traffic declined and, in spots, business hours had to be cut back."

In 1991, the city approved an ordinance protecting theaters in the Elmwood area from being converted for other uses.

"Anyone who wanted to remove the theater would have to get a special permit to prove that it was not decreasing foot traffic in the Elmwood," said Fogarty, and "not reducing the architectural merit of the theater," which had featured an attractive art deco-style ceiling.

UNASSUMING ELEGANCE

Unassuming Elegance.

CUSTOM MADE SHOJI

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• Windows • Doors  
• Room Partitions



# OWN From rawberry nyon aste Site an?

By Ralph Jennings

In most wildfires, civic action usually starts and ends at the fire. Opposition to a looming development may burn hot at public hearings, but the flames of controversy rarely spread outside the affected neighborhood. But like some wildfires a dispute that starts small can unexpectedly become a much larger conflagration.

Over the last year, the university's plan to put a toxic waste repository in Strawberry Canyon near the Hayward Fault has ignited a storm of disapproval. Once confined to the notoriously MBYist Panoramic Hill area, the city over the possibility of chemical fires spilled over into the surrounding community, led by the strident position of Bay Area environmental groups, and prompted a unanimous vote of dissent from the Berkeley City Council. In addition to the usual diatribe speeches, press conferences, and letter-writing campaigns, a video criticizing the proposed Strawberry Canyon repository is now airing on cable TV and in meeting rooms across town.

In a fire we're talking about toxins in the air and the watershed, and a lot of it causes cancer or genetic defects," says video participant and hills dweller Fredrica Drotos. "What they're doing is irresponsible to the whole city."

Responsible or not, for months the university refused to budge on the issue. Then, last week, the university suddenly announced that it would study an alternative storage site. Even as hillside residents and their allies began attacking the two-inch-thick environmental impact report that had just been released on the canyon

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Elmwood Theater Foundation's David Salk

## The Return of the Elmwood Theater

Merchants' long fight to revive neighborhood movie house pays off—but will patrons return?

By Kelly Vance

Remember the old Elmwood Theater? Younger moviegoers may not, but they'll soon have a chance to visit a new, improved incarnation of the late lamented neighborhood cinema at College and Ashby when it formally reopens on October 22. The rebirth of the Elmwood offers tinges of both the miraculous

and the mundane, as well as a glimpse into the workings of old-fashioned small town boosterism, still alive in Berkeley in the 1990s.

Ever since a 1988 fire closed the theater, merchants and some local residents have looked at the burned-out building as an albatross around

their collective neck. And when the Elmwood's closing was followed in fairly rapid succession by the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, the 1991 hills fire, and a tenacious economic recession, the vacated movie house began to assume more than just symbolic significance. Neighborhood merchants believe they suffered a loss of business in part because evening crowds of window-browsing film fans weren't coming around any more. The folksy tree-lined district needed help. If the theater could be reopened, the thinking went, everything else would fall into place.

So that's exactly what a grassroots consortium of businesspeople and property owners set out to do. In a complicated scheme engineered by such groups as the Save the Elmwood Theater Committee and the Elmwood Theater Foundation, concerned residents borrowed money from the city of Berkeley, took the unusual step of creating a special tax assessment district to raise even more money, bought the property, and then took out a further loan to restore it in partnership with the new tenant, always with the proviso that the building must remain a movie theater, no matter what.

Now, six years and approximately \$850,000 later, the neighborhood finally has its movie house back: a modestly but tastefully refurbished triplex with a 200-seat auditorium downstairs and two smaller houses (sixty and seventy seats) upstairs. The new Elmwood will be operated by Silver Screen Amusements of San Ramon, which currently runs the funky Northside Theater, a second-run venue on Berkeley's Euclid Avenue.

Up and down College Avenue, merchants are busting their buttons with community pride. "This was an impossible project, but we did it," enthuses David Salk, local optician and leading light of the Elmwood Theater Foundation. "What made it possible is group effort. I feel exhausted, but with a great feeling of relief. There is

so much emotion attached to this."

How long that feeling of euphoria will last, though, is open to speculation as the Elmwood Theater story moves from the safe harbor of successful community organizing into the murky waters of the entertainment biz. The new Elmwood may turn out to be the answer to its backers' prayers, but there are no guarantees, especially in an area that many feel has slightly too many screens for the available moviegoing business already.

"It's going to be a tough one," says veteran East Bay exhibitor Allen Michaan of Renaissance Rialto Theaters, owner of Oakland's Grand Lake. He ought to know, given that Renaissance Rialto's newly refurbished twin-screened Oaks on Solano Avenue seems to be experiencing some difficulty getting those must-see features that can change a nice little neighborhood movie house into a major people magnet.

Can the new Elmwood, with its proposed mix of first-run commercial releases, art films, and repertory (a six-program-per-week rep schedule is planned for one of the upstairs screens), draw audiences away from the other theaters in the Berkeley-Oakland market? Or will the Miracle of College Avenue simmer down into a Berkeley version of *Cinema Paradiso*? And is the notion of the neighborhood movie theater still viable in this era of multiplexes surrounded by vast parking lots? We'll begin to find out October 22, when the theater opens with Paramount's romantic comedy *Pontiac Moon*, starring Ted Danson and Mary Steenburgen.

In the meantime, the Elmwood district is ready to kick out the jams with an arts and crafts fair and "Taste of the Elmwood" restaurant tour the weekend of October 22-23, along with a gala grand opening of the theater Saturday evening, October 22.

And they said it couldn't be done.

**CLEARANCE SALE**  
**OCTOBER 6-10!!**

Elmwood

# FEATURES

## Repertory Theater Opens



STAFF PHOTO BY ADAM BERGER

Mayor Jeffrey Letter and other Berkeley politicians christened the Elmwood Theater.

### Businesses hopeful of revitalization

By Jason Hughes

Clutching a pair of laminated tickets, Robb Lanum's anxious expression was illuminated by a soft pink glow from the blazing neon sign outside the Elmwood Theater.

Lanum and a small group of other excited patrons stood outside the theater talking and laughing — and checking their watches.

Berkeley Mayor Jeffrey Letter, along with several other city and theater representatives, cut a ribbon in front of the newly renovated building Saturday night, announcing the reopening of the theater, which has been closed since a fire ravaged it in December 1988.

The repertory theater, which shows foreign and classic films, is one of the few of its kind remaining in Berkeley.

Though Lanum lives in Oakland, the self-described movie buff said he heard about the theater's long anticipated reopening from his wife, who works in Berkeley.

"I like the older films more than the popular ones today," Lanum said. "It's good to have a theater that

of all the multiplexes."

But Lanum and the crowd of approximately 150 onlookers to the opening ceremony were not the only ones excited about the theater's reopening.

Local merchants said by drawing more foot traffic to the area, the theater could be very beneficial to their businesses. Bott's Ice Cream Store employees said they expect a 20 to 30 percent increase in business.

According to Dave Fogerty, one of the principle organizers responsible for saving the theater, merchants felt so strongly about saving the theater they founded the Elmwood Theater Foundation, taking out a \$190,000 loan from the city to buy the building from United Artists.

Fogerty added that United Artists was planning to sell the building to commercial investors who could have torn the building down.

But purchasing the building was only a small piece in the Elmwood puzzle. Fogerty said the theater was in need of serious renovations. Not only did the fire in 1988 do extensive damage, but the vacant building also needed seismic retrofitting after being devastated in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. In addition, the theater's bathrooms needed to be

wheelchair accessible.

To pay for the total facelift, the Elmwood Theater Foundation collected \$425,000, from local residents in the form of loans.

Silver Screen Productions is renting the theater and will be responsible for some of the renovations and exhibiting the films.

Former Mayor Loni Hancock was present at the ribbon cutting ceremony to see the realization of what she had been working toward during her term in office. Hancock, who said she remembers a time when her own children were patrons of the theater, appreciated the community coming together to preserve its artistic resources.

"This is really a tribute to the community and to the local businesses," she said. "These people are responsible for the first local zoning ordinances. They really care about their shopping area."

The theater's rebirth into the community was celebrated with a "Grand Opening Gala Street Faire" this weekend, as police blocked off a section of College Avenue between Ashby Avenue and Webster Street. Local residents flocked to the area for live entertainment, food and children's activities.

Saturday night, following the rib-

## East Asian Catalogs

By Phyllis Kagan

When you're looking for a book, you often turn to the shelves of the library or bookstore. But what if you're looking for a book that is both a work of art and a work of literature? The answer may be in the East Asian catalogs.

These catalogs are a treasure trove of information about the latest in East Asian literature, art, and culture. They are available in both English and Japanese.

The catalogs are published by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. They are available for purchase or borrowing at the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco.

The catalogs are a valuable resource for anyone interested in East Asian culture. They provide a comprehensive overview of the latest in Japanese literature, art, and culture.

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## Community Backs Theater

ELMWOOD FROM PAGE 5

bon cutting ceremony, people who purchased tickets in advance enjoyed a "progressive dinner" provided by local restaurants and watched "Cinema Paradiso" in the newly renovated theater.

Inside, the theater has not been finished cosmetically. The floors are bare cement and several rows of chairs are missing from the dimly lit main theater. The 220-person capacity room has beige, velvet-like chairs with two large red light fixtures.

The theater will show popular contemporary films in the main theater while the two smaller rooms upstairs will exhibit foreign films and classics.

Despite the enthusiasm of most

people showed opposition at the theater's celebration by setting off a stink bomb inside.

Several police officers stood outside of the theater, guarding against detractors' further attempts to douse the celebration.

Members of the projectionists union International Alliance of Theater Stage Employees were present at the ribbon cutting ceremony, handing out flyers protesting Silver Screen Productions' decision to hire non-union labor.

Union members denied having any ties to the stink bomb incident.

"I guess we were supposed to raise a little stink tonight," said Dean Graves, a union theater projection

