

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION
PERMITS IN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICTS
AUGUST 2, 2023
CONGRESS AVENUE NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
STATE THEATER, 719 CONGRESS AVENUE

PROPOSAL

Exterior modifications and complete interior renovation of the State Theatre. Exterior modifications consist of construction of a new rooftop lounge, stucco repair, repainting of the existing façade, and storefront modifications.

PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS

Level 1: The north and south halves of the west elevation have been renovated several times. The street-level storefront will be replaced with prefinished metal divided-lite doors and windows similar in proportion to original 1935 design, per historic photo. The storefront in the southern half will shift west approximately 4'-0", set back from the exterior façade to accommodate a box office window and interior egress stair. The 3 upper rows of divided-lite glazing at the southern storefront elevation will be made of obscured reeded glass.

Level 2: A new to-match-existing prefinished metal divided-lite window will be installed adjacent to the balcony. A new prefinished metal door and sidelite will be installed on the southern half of the building, to match other proposed window and door systems. A new painted steel plate metal awning is proposed above the door.

Level 3 – Rooftop: New building additions are proposed to accommodate a code-required egress stair, expanded program requirements, and increased seating capacity. The building additions are broken down into 3 masses: 2 in the southern half and 1 in the northern half. The additions are set back from the original street façade at 10'-6" and 21'-6" at the southern half and 27'-6" at the northern half. The egress stair mass is set back 0'-7" from the existing Level 2 façade to delineate between existing and proposed construction. A rooftop bar is proposed on the northern edge of the building with a removable fabric roof canopy set back approximately 6'-2" from the existing façade. A new painted metal guardrail, required per code, is inspired by the art deco style. A new fixed prefinished metal divided lite window is proposed in the northern addition.

ARCHITECTURE

The State Theater is a ca. 1935 concrete and stucco theater building, constructed specifically for showing films. It was renovated extensively in 1998.

RESEARCH

The State Theater was the first theater in Austin built specifically to show movies in 1935. Theater architect W. Scott Dunne designed the it in the Art Deco style popular at the time. At the time of its construction, a retail space separated the State and Paramount, but the State expanded in the 1940s to include retail space.¹

DESIGN STANDARDS

The City of Austin's [Historic Design Standards](#) (March 2021) are based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and are used to evaluate projects in National Register districts. The following standards apply to the proposed project:

Repair and alterations

1. General standards

The proposed alterations remove minimal historic fabric from the building exterior. Replacement materials appear mostly appropriate.

4. Exterior walls and trim

The proposed alterations repair the existing stucco or replace it in-kind where extensively deteriorated.

5. Windows, doors, and screens

Proposed window replacements appear to affect only windows that have been previously replaced.

11. Commercial storefronts

The existing storefront does not appear to retain historic elements. The proposal includes the addition of openings with divided light windows at the west elevation. The proposed storefront replacement appears mostly compatible with the scale

¹ <https://www.historictheatrephotos.com/Theatre/State-Austin.aspx> crediting "Historic Movie Houses of Austin", 2016, by Susan B. Ritterer, Michael C. Miller, and the Austin History Center.

and style of building. The proposed storefront is constructed of clear glass. The proposed new canopy at the third floor appears mostly compatible with the style, scale, materials, and proportions of the building. It does not appear to obscure or damage architectural features and is appropriately differentiated from.

Commercial additions

1. Location

The proposed additions are set back from the original street façade at 10'-6" and 21'-6" at the southern half and 27'-6" at the northern half. The egress stair mass is set back 0'-7" from the existing second floor façade.

2. Scale, massing, and height

The proposed additions appear mostly subordinate to the historic building, in line with the existing third-floor addition.

3. Design and style

The proportions, patterns, bay divisions, and fenestration appear compatible and appropriately differentiated from the existing historic building.

5. Materials

Proposed materials are compatible with the existing building.

7. Rooftop patios

The proposed rooftop patio is mostly subordinate to the historic building and appears to be constructed with compatible materials. It is not set back from the third floor. The patio elements appear to be removable without damage to the historic building.

Summary

The project mostly meets the applicable standards.

PROPERTY EVALUATION

The property contributes to the Congress Avenue National Register district.

Designation Criteria—Historic Landmark

- 1) The building is more than 50 years old.
- 2) The building appears to retain high to moderate integrity.
- 3) Properties must meet two criteria for landmark designation (LDC §25-2-352). Staff has evaluated the property and determined that it may meet two criteria:
 - a. Architecture. The building is an intact example of a purpose-built movie theater with Art Deco influences.
 - b. Historical association. The property is associated with Louis Novy, operator of Austin's Interstate Theater group including the State, Paramount, Queen, and Capitol Theaters.
 - c. Archaeology. The property was not evaluated for its potential to yield significant data concerning the human history or prehistory of the region.
 - d. Community value. The property contributes to the character, image, and cultural identity of the city.
 - e. Landscape feature. The property does not appear to have a significant natural or designed landscape with artistic, aesthetic, cultural, or historical value to the city.

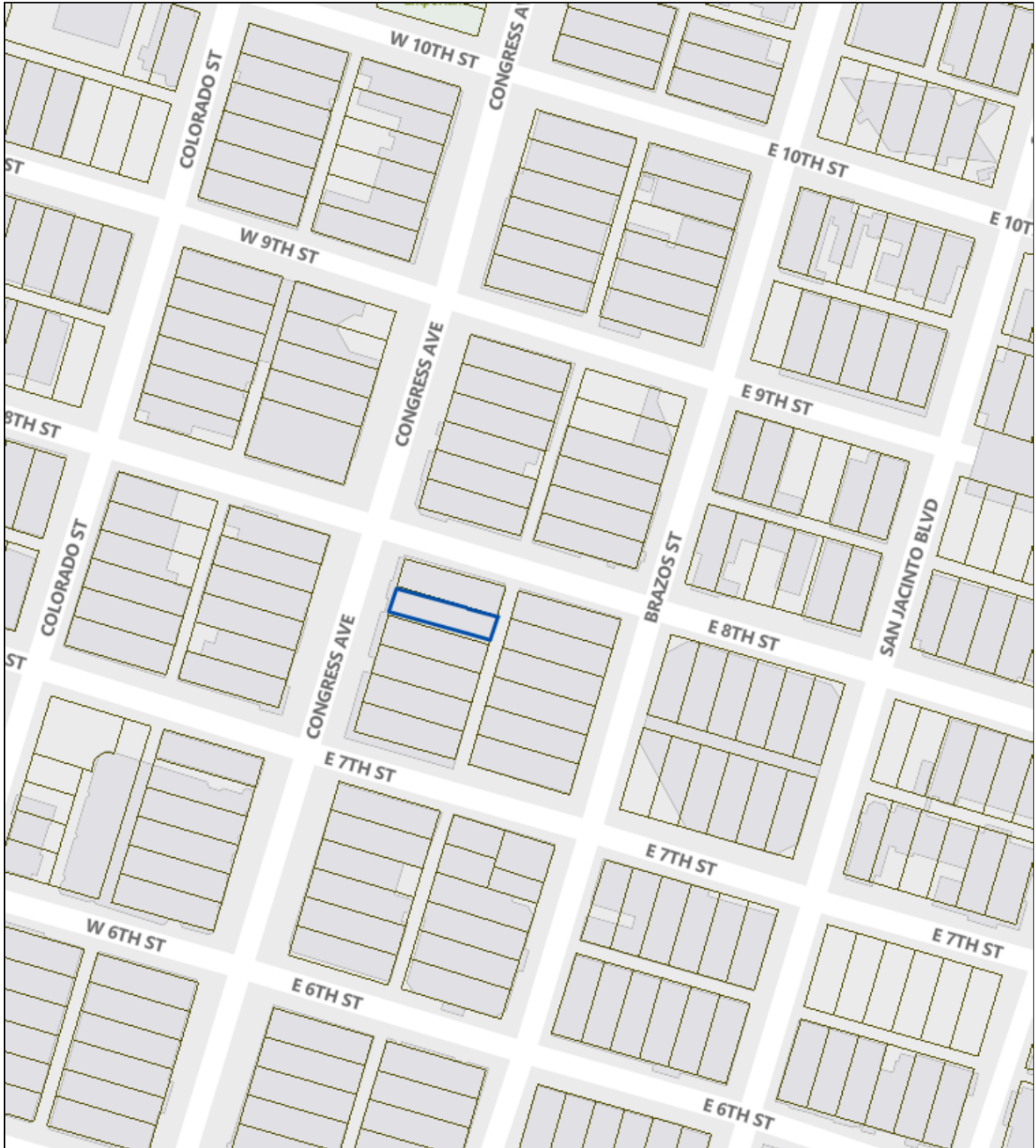
COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Lighten guardrail construction, encourage 15' setback for 3rd floor, use full-width glass construction for transparency at 3rd floor or consider more differentiated materiality, consider retractable guardrail, reconsider storefront alignment and include more views of storefront proposed.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Comment on plans.

LOCATION MAP



1: 2400

Lot Lines

Lot Line



HR 23-087176

719 CONGRESS AVENUE



7/18/2023

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