

## **Executive Summary**

### **Analysis of the Crump Theatre**

Jones & Phillips Associates, Inc. conducted an analysis of the current uses of the Crump Theatre and the needs of the greater Columbus area. URS conducted an engineering analysis of the Crump. The two firms then explored ways that the Crump could meet the needs of the community.

After meeting with a variety of people and groups in the community, it became obvious that many people in the community are strongly sentimental about the Crump and regard it with great nostalgia. The Crump is the last remaining of the original entertainment facilities in Columbus with an architectural style unlike any other building in the community.

Jones & Phillips Associates toured all of the performing arts spaces in the community. The two largest facilities are owned and operated by Bartholomew County Consolidated Schools and are heavily used for school events. Some local outside groups use these spaces as well but booking consecutive days during the school year is virtually impossible. The City of Columbus owns the Nugent-Custer Performance Hall in the Commons. Although this is a beautiful facility, excellent for banquets and receptions, it is not suitable for most types of performing arts. The only dedicated facility for live performance is the Harlequin Theatre which seats 120; it is privately owned and operated. Live entertainment occasionally occurs in the Yes Cinema, the Mill Race Center and a variety of churches in the area. We also reviewed the live entertainment options, both professional and volunteer, that were available in Columbus.

We then identified and reviewed the facilities and arts groups in five peer communities – Jefferson City, Missouri; Dubuque, Iowa; Cheyenne, Wyoming; Ames, Iowa and Kokomo, Indiana. The communities selected were in the upper half of the communities on the Milkin Institute Best Performing Small Cities Index. Aside from Kokomo, the peer communities had similar demographic characteristics to the Columbus area.

After comparing Columbus to the peer communities, we identified two major gaps in the inventory of performing arts spaces. Every community except Columbus has a house large enough to bring in professional touring entertainment. Every community except Columbus has a smaller dedicated facility for local needs. In terms of available entertainment options, Columbus, unlike 48 of the top 50 communities on the Milkin Index, does not have a community theatre group that puts on at least three shows every year. Columbus, unlike the peer communities, has no children's theatre. Finally, every peer community except Columbus has some professional touring entertainment. We also note that the peer communities, except for Jefferson City, have some publicly owned display/conference/exhibit space. Each of the communities also has a space where experimental, niche, and local entertainment occurs. The Crump currently fulfills that role for Columbus; if it changes purpose, then those events will need to go elsewhere.

Concurrently with the analysis of the needs of the community, URS reviewed the building structure. The Crump in its current state has some code issues that must be addressed. We cannot emphasize enough how serious these defects are and that they must either be corrected or the building demolished. We strongly recommend that the building not be used until they are corrected. The issues are:

- The stage has no over-stage smoke venting and no fire curtain.
- The Crump does not meet the current life safety code because it does not have fire sprinklers, functioning fire escapes on the west side upstairs, and does not have adequate exiting clearances for the type of seating.
- The stage floor is inadequate for current code for performance uses.
- The Crump does not meet current seismic code.

In addition to the code issues, the Crump has some structural problems in that the stage roof cannot support theatrical rigging and that the mechanical room structure is unsafe for people or equipment. Finally, the Crump does not meet the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is a federal law.

Although these defects are serious, they can be corrected through extensive changes. The design team initially identified twelve options for renovating the building. After reviewing these options with the Crump Steering Committee, they selected three options for the Crump site for further study and asked that we consider two options using the Yes Cinema site. For the Crump site, we developed detailed scenarios for renovating the Crump into a 450-550 seat proscenium theatre, a 1000 seat proscenium theatre and a 1200 seat proscenium theatre. For the Yes Cinema site, we developed scenarios as a 400 seat proscenium theatre and a 320 multi-form venue. We developed cost estimates for the construction of each option and operating cost projections for each option.

Shortly before we were to release the final report, we learned that the Sears site was going to be vacated. If this space could be used to meet some of the community needs, it dramatically changes the landscape. While the Crump can be renovated into a 450, a 1000 seat or a 1200 seat house, it is considerably more expensive than building a similar sized facility elsewhere.

If there is a commitment to build some sort of fully equipped arts facility elsewhere, then the Crump could be repurposed yet again to meet some of the other needs. If the stage on the Crump could be abandoned, then the building can be renovated at a reasonable cost. While the details would need to be more fully developed, a platform stage in the current footprint developed into a flat floor room could seat about 140 at round tables and about 300 in chairs; some of the balcony seating could remain, for a total seat count of 500 - 600. This would allow for live music events, stand-up comedy, small wedding receptions, exhibits and film. Similar rooms in other communities are used for things like “Zombie New Year”, the “Grown Up Prom”, “Battle of the DJ’s”, quilt shows, antique shows, fashion shows, avant garde hair shows and a host of other events. Theatre could occur in this space although it would likely be limited to one set shows. A space of this type could easily host a children’s theatre program. It would not be suitable for symphonic music, dance or multi-set theatrical productions. It could be rented to outside producers. We would recommend that the community defer a final decision on the Crump until the uses for the Sears site are determined.

The complete report in .pdf format can be found on the City of Columbus web page at:  
<http://www.columbus.in.gov/redevelopment>