

Park Hill Theatre

Yonkers' Gateway
To Entertainment



*Submitted by Luz Tirada Communications, Inc.
Olga Luz Tirado
Sandra M. Pérez
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About the Researchers

Luz Tirada Communications, Inc.

Olga Luz Tirado, *President*

Ms. Tirado is founder and President of Luz Tirada Communications, Inc., a Public Relations, Marketing and Promotions firm established in 1992. The firm has served a variety of clients within Corporate America as well as the non-profit sector. Services range from Research and Analysis to Creative Development. Ms. Tirado is a member of the Public Relations Society of America.

Sandra M. Pérez, *Senior Associate*

Ms. Pérez is a consultant with over twelve years of experience in the non-profit sector. She has held executive positions within the arts field and has served as a program auditor, consultant and panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York State Arts Council, the New Jersey Council on the Arts and Massachusetts Cultural Council among others. Ms. Pérez is also a consultant for a variety of private sector and non-profit clients.



Park Hill Theatre: South Broadway BID Opens Gateway to Entertainment

"I go to the Cross County Mall or Central Park Avenue. There should be a theater here," said Myers, an employee at the Nepperhan Community Center.

*The Journal News,
Sunday October 17, 2004*

The question of how to respond to the growing demand for entertainment venues for Yonkers area residents was addressed in a recent issue of the Journal News. The article captured a well known but, little studied, pattern of behavior by area residents who are left to satisfy their entertainment needs outside of the immediate Yonkers area due to the shortage of high quality entertainment venues. Current efforts by the city's Industrial Development Agency have properly concentrated on live performance venues such as the historic Proctor Theatre and Philipsburg Performing Arts Center (PPAC). SBBID believes that the potential

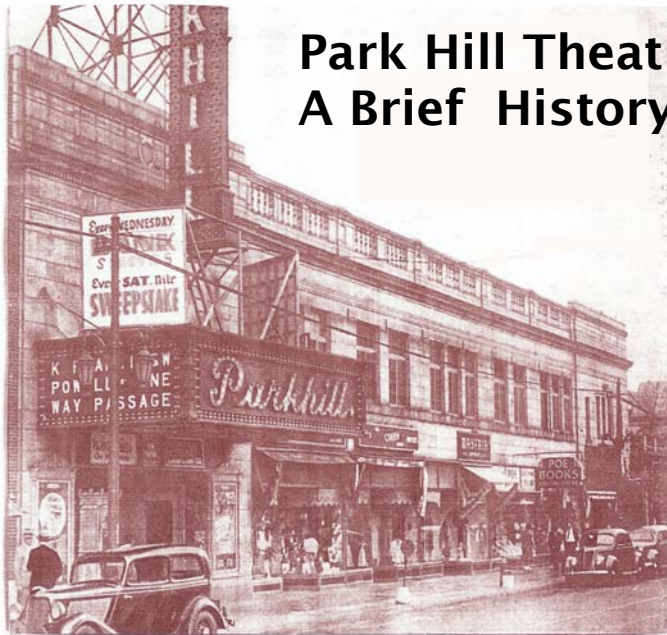
for Yonkers' burgeoning entertainment industry extends well into the South Broadway business corridor and consequently, seeks to revive the Park Hill Theatre to serve as an art-house or 'special run' movie theatre.

Quick Facts About Yonkers

Population196,086
Median Age35.8
Median Household Income \$44,663
Minutes to Grand Central by Train34-36

(Source: Westchester Magazine, October 2004)





Park Hill Theatre: A Brief History

The Park Hill Theatre first came onto the Yonkers scene on Saturday, February 27, 1926. As the modest notice in the February 26th issue of the now defunct *Yonkers Statesman* reported, "The Park Theatre, seating 500 persons . . . will be opened tomorrow afternoon with a program of motion pictures." By Monday, March 1, 1926 an article in the same paper indicated that, "many were delighted" with the theatre in the Warburton Building and

moreover, made note of the fact that, "This is the first building in town with two theatres." Within one short week however, this review gave way to a more enthusiastic, albeit restrained, banner heading in the March 8th issue of the same newspaper that proclaimed, "**Park Theatre Proves Popular.**" This small but, important article went on to describe the 'very entertaining plays of the feature class' that filled the screen, namely "Playing with Souls" and "The Awful Truth". Perhaps most telling of the Park Hill Theatre's importance and that of motion pictures as a whole was the last phrase of the article which simply stated, "The cozy Park has taken its place among the amusement centres of town, all in one week."

As the era of "talkies" took hold in 1927 with Al Jolson's "The Jazz Singer" the Park Hill Theatre led patrons from the cinema mediums infancy, straight into its Golden Age. Prior to its closure in 1982, the Park Hill Theatre saw multiple generations of Yonkers residents through a movie



history that featured film classics such as “To Kill a Mockingbird,” thrillers like Hitchcock’s “Psycho” as well as the sci-fi classic “The Blob.” Ultimately, throughout its 56 years of service to the Yonkers community, the Park Hill Theatre lived up to its promise and became a place where commerce and community intersected, coming together to the mutual benefit of all.

SBBID Park Hill Theatre Project

SBBID is committed to securing a new operator for the historic Park Hill Theatre in FY2005. The primary rationale for this decision is:

- The Park Hill Theatre is well positioned geographically; close to public transportation, major roadways, downtown Broadway and ideally suited to be known as *Yonkers’ Gateway to Entertainment*.
- The South Broadway corridor, well-populated by local area residents and patronized by middle-income consumers from neighboring markets, would greatly benefit from a venue that serves both as a focal point for area business, as well as an incentive for further exploration into downtown, Getty Square.
- South Broadway does not have any businesses catering to a movie-going public therefore; a venue such as the Park Hill Theatre would be complementary to area businesses as well as downtown Yonkers’ performance venues.
- The restaurant and food service industries of South Broadway would benefit from a venue that would draw a new consumer base with disposable income into the area.
- The middle-income area residents from surrounding Riverdale and South Yonkers have expressed an interest in arts and entertainment activities in the South Broadway area.
- The redevelopment of a currently under-utilized commercial space would spur job creation and enhance the perception of the South Broadway corridor.



Preliminary research on the South Broadway market supports SBBID's decision to move forward on its objectives for the Park Hill Theatre. For example, a recent SBBID baseline survey conducted by the Gill Wright Group brought to the fore the perceptions, preferences, and economic data of area residents and those of its neighboring communities. Among the chief observations (shared by respondents in both South Broadway and outlying neighborhoods) is the opinion that the area was not likely to be patronized due to:

- ◆ negative perceptions regarding safety;
- ◆ negative image (cleanliness, attractiveness of storefronts);
- ◆ parking facilities and regulations not conducive to shopping.

These very real impressions are currently reflected in the patronage patterns of the South Broadway corridor. Recent efforts by SBBID to address these negative perceptions have resulted in:

- ◆ improved community policing;
- ◆ concerted efforts to beautify and maintain clean streets;
- ◆ parking facilities and regulations that encourage the consumer experience.

Facts about the Park Hill Theatre:

One of the first twin theatres in Yonkers

The Park Hill was built in a former store in the Warburton Theatre Building

The Park Hill Theatre replaced a large store formerly occupied by Frank H. Steadman and Company

One of the last *original* theatres to close in Yonkers, including the RKO's Proctor and the Strand.

Served the Yonkers community for 56 years before being shuttered in the early 80s

On-going SBBID projects further these objectives and include a study of traffic patterns, façade redesign, and the placement of security cameras throughout the South Broadway business corridor. As SBBID continues to solidify its gains in these important areas, it also creates a positive climate conducive to economic growth and job creation. These goals are in keeping with SBBID's mission and, equally important speaks directly to the needs and desires expressed by current and potential patrons of SBBID merchants.



The Potential Market

Facts about moviegoers

According to Scarborough Research:

Moviegoers are 85 % more likely to pay \$35,000 or more on a vehicle and 70% more likely to lease or buy a luxury vehicle

Households are 25% more likely to have debit cards, with a 36% greater usage of online banking

Entertainment and communication technology account for a large portion of the cinema audience's spending

Frequent moviegoers are 50% more likely to spend \$150 or more on their cellular phone bill and 41% more likely to be in the market for a cell phone

(Source: Liaison: PR for the Graphics Industry "American Cinema audiences are surprisingly receptive..." May 13, 2003. <http://www.artbitron.com>)

As stated previously, the survey commissioned by SBBID crystallized many of the economic and urban realities captured by census track data as well as those observations that can be made during a tour of South Broadway, however, the survey also disclosed promising areas for exploration. Principle among these was the high level of interest expressed by 42% of respondents in support of arts and entertainment activities. By extrapolating on the desire expressed for a one-time event, SBBID reasons that there may be an as yet untapped need for a venue that addresses the entertainment needs of the market, supports pre-existing businesses and serves as the "marquee" for the *new* South Broadway.

The preliminary research indicates:

- ◆ Area residents, whose median family income is \$29,500, currently travel to Central Avenue and Cross County Mall for movie entertainment.*
- ◆ Strong support exists for arts and entertainment activities from the higher-income, geographically adjacent Riverdale and South Yonkers community.

This information tracks well with information that SBBID has obtained from the U.S. Bureau of Labor's Consumer Expenditure Survey which documents:

- ◆ The amount of disposable income American consumers dedicate to entertainment has remained firm at approximately 5.5% to annual income.

*(Source: U.S. Census 2000)



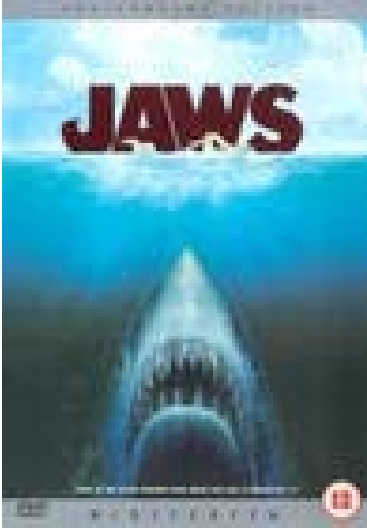
- ◆ The market for a newly revitalized Park Hill Theatre is not limited to middle-market consumers. In fact, the potential is further expanded by studies that track 'minority' consumer spending habits, a demographic that is amply reflected within the South Broadway community. A variety of studies indicate similar, if not stronger, spending patterns on entertainment for these constituents:
- ◆ “African American and Hispanic households are devoting a larger share of their discretionary income to eating out in restaurants and entertainment, in part the result of increasing buying power for the largest U.S. minority groups.”
- ◆ “With a birth rate exceeding the national average and improving employment opportunities, African Americans, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans should all experience above-average growth in buying power over the next five years.”
- ◆ “Between 1997 and 2002, African American households increased annual spending on entertainment by 28.9%, while Hispanic households boosted their yearly entertainment budgets by 23.9%.”

(Jeff Humphreys, Director of the Selig Center for Economic Growth at University of Georgia's Terry College of Business in an article entitled “Minorities Spend More Eating Out & On Entertainment” – HispanicAd.com, October 12, 2004)

Building the Case: The Landmark Theatre Model

SBBID has established the Park Hill Theatre as a target for revitalization confident that its successful rehabilitation and operation would serve as a clear, visual manifestation of the well-being of the South Broadway business corridor and its neighboring communities. This is amplified by the example of the Landmark Theatres Company, the nations largest, art-house chain, which features first-run independent and foreign films, restored classics and indie hits such as “The Blair Witch Project” and “Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon.”

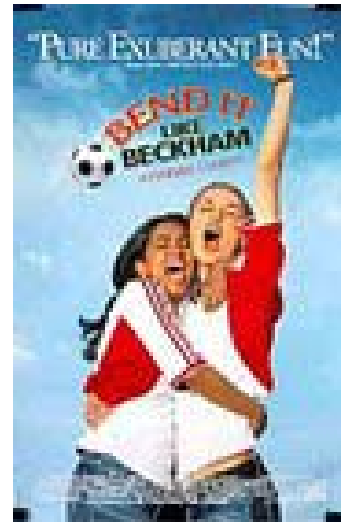




As per the Landmark Theatres website, "Landmark began its ascent in 1974 with the acquisition of West Los Angeles' historic Nuart Theatre, the circuit's venerable flagship. To make moviegoers take notice, the growing chain marketed its schedule by distributing free monthly calendars throughout each theatre's city. By the end of the '70s, Landmark had grown into the nation's largest repertory film circuit. In addition to the programming, increasingly loyal audiences were drawn to one-of-a-kind, historic venues, such as the Mediterranean-style Rialto Theatre, with its original art deco design, in Southern California's South Pasadena.

As the '80s dawned, repertory-style circuits faced increasing competition from the burgeoning home-video market, so Landmark began to exhibit high quality, independent films and first-run foreign fare. The strategy worked, and more effort was channeled into expansion. In the early '90s, Landmark began multimillion-dollar renovations of its historic buildings, and, embarking on a new era, began developing new multiplex theaters of its own for the first time.

Throughout its history, Landmark has built a reputation for fresh and innovative marketing strategies that have become its trademark today. Examples of this winning philosophy include live strippers for "The Full Monty," local actors performing the Bard's Best for "Hamlet" and cooking demos for "Eat, Drink, Man, Woman." Special events, such as Q&A's with directors like John Sayles ("Lone Star," "Sunshine State"), short film festivals, documentary, matinee and midnight series, also became part of Landmark's signature style, which has also occasionally meant offering exhibition and marketing opportunities to up-and-coming filmmakers."



(Source: <http://www.landmarktheatres.com>)



Park Hill: the Next Sunshine Theatre

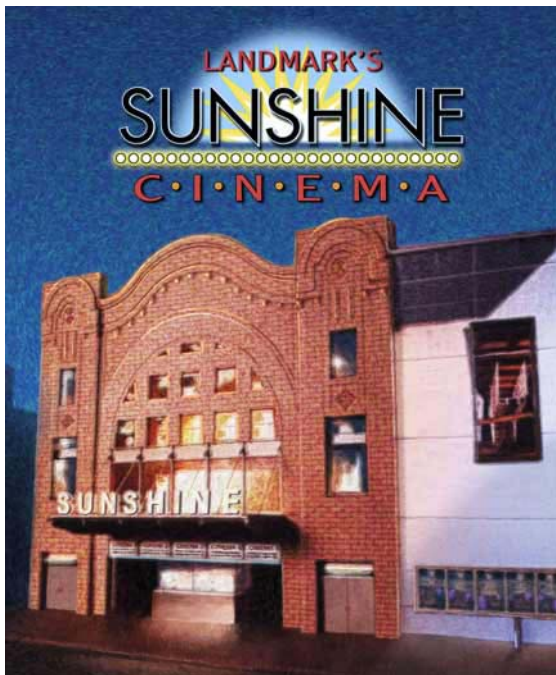
One of the more successful examples of the potential for the conversion of the Park Hill Theatre to that of an updated 'art house' movie theatre is found in the Sunshine Theatre, located in New York City's Lower Manhattan. The following reviews chronicle the defunct theatre's re-emergence as a beacon for movie goers in an area of the city once considered 'out of the way' and 'grungy':

"Gorgeous...The Sunshine Cinema brings glorious life to an old vaudeville house."

- New York Magazine

"A magnificent addition to the metropolitan landscape of movie theatres showing foreign and independent films."

- Stephen Garrett, Time Out New York



5 Screens. Opened December 21, 2001.

Built in 1898, the Sunshine Cinema building was formerly the Houston Hippodrome motion picture theatre and a Yiddish vaudeville house but for over 50 years it had been shuttered serving as a hardware warehouse. Landmark has restored the theatre back to its artistic roots and now offers the art-house film lover five brand new state-of-the-art screens dedicated to first-run independent and foreign film as well as non-traditional studio programming.

(Source: <http://www.landmarktheatres.com>)



Park Hill Theatre – Present Day



In its present state, the Park Hill Theatre remains a symbol of bygone prosperity and former community well-being. A preliminary engineering report commissioned by SBBID indicates that the 900 seat theatre structure and its interior remains mostly intact and is soundly constructed. Among the “evidence of past glory” is a chandelier that dates back to the Park Hill’s earliest days. Furthermore, the engineering study suggests that the physical repairs and design costs, while representing

a significant investment, are reasonable when balanced against the facilities’ commercial potential. In addition, the report references a number of state and federal funds that would be available to this project in the areas of weatherization grants, art grants and the like.

Next Steps for Park Hill Theatre Project

SBBID anticipates making significant inroads with the Park Hill Theatre Project in FY2005 and will, to this end, engage in efforts that will result in the securing of a new operator for the facility in the near future. Consequently, SBBID seeks support for efforts which will allow it to strengthen its case for business development in the Park Hill Theatre, these efforts will consist of:

- ◆ Monitoring patronage patterns in the South Broadway corridor through the use of focused surveys and market studies which address the entertainment interests of community patrons.
- ◆ Commissioning a detailed engineering study to analyze the actual costs involved in the Park Hill Theatre revitalization.
- ◆ Identification of potential private sector partners, as well as community organizations, government partners such as the Yonkers Film Commission.

