OMB No. 1024-0018

(Expires 5/31/2012)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service				
National Register of Historic Plac	es			

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not for publication

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zip code 20002

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register, Bulletin, How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. If any item does not apply to the property being documented enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Atlas Theater and Shops

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 1313-33 H Street, NE

city or town Washington, D.C.

Registration Form

state District of Columbia code DC county

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this <u>X</u> nomination <u>request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.</u>

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

OFFICER

statewide national X local DAVID Signature of certifying official

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

PRESERVATION

Signature of commenting official

STATE

Date

code

001

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

2010

Title

DC

Title

4. National Park Service Certification

HISTORIC

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

V entered in the National Register

_ determined not eligible for the National Register

_determined eligible for the National Register

____ removed from the National Register

____ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property Washington, D.C.

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Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property (Expires 5/31/2012)

Washington, D.C. County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Atlas Theater and Shops is a theater and shopping center complex built in 1938 and designed in the Art Deco/Art Moderne style of architecture by noted theater designer John Jacob Zink. The building is located on the south side of H Street, NE between 13th and 14th Street along a historically important commercial corridor that was economically depressed during the second half of the 20th century, but which is presently experiencing a major renaissance. The Atlas Theater and Shops, itself abandoned and in ruinous condition on the interior in the 1990s, was renovated and rehabilitated in 2004-2006 into a performing arts center, contributing profoundly to H Street, N.E.'s current revival.

The Atlas Theater and Shops building extends along the western half of the 1300 block of H Street, N.E. providing a notable 20th-century addition to the commercial corridor. The building is constructed of brick, but is faced with a distinctive smooth limestone façade. The building offers an asymmetrical layout with the taller and more prominent theater entrance at the eastern end of the building projecting above the lower one-story shops to the west. The theater entrance features a tall tiered parapet with rounded edges counterbalancing an off-set vertical pier carrying a neon sign above its projecting marquee. The abutting shop fronts, separated by molded limestone pilasters with reeding, are visually connected by a continuous horizontal band of original green and black Carrara glass panels (with some matching replacements) capped by a limestone cornice. The store at the western end of the commercial block, slightly taller and longer than the others and framed by a limestone surround with reeding on the pilasters and frieze and curved at the corners, provides a visual balance to the theater at the opposing eastern end.

Historically, the interior of the building included five shops, the theater entrance lobby and the theater auditorium. In 2004-2006, the building was rehabilitated on the exterior and fully renovated on the interior according to the *Secretary of the Interiors Standard's for Rehabilitation* as part of a Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit project. Modest additions, including enclosing a rear alley and raising the roof, were made and the interior fitted out with several theaters and dance studios, designed within the original volumes of the individual stores. The building is in excellent condition.

Narrative Description

The Atlas Theater and Shops building is located on the south side of H Street facing north, presenting its primary limestone-clad, Art Deco elevation to the street. In plan, the complex includes the theater entrance and shops facing the street, and the actual theater auditorium located behind the shops. The theater auditorium is oriented with its long axis running east-west along the interior alley called Linden Court. The theater entrance is located at the far eastern end of the complex, while the shops extend along the street to the west. The theater entrance is essentially a one-story, storefronttype building with a wide central entry surrounded by a limestone frame, all capped by a tall parapet roof also of limestone. The building is clearly articulated as a theater by its prominent Art Deco-style entrance parapet that includes a vertical, blue and white neon sign. The limestone-clad parapet rises above the entrance marguee in three successively taller tiers of molded, round-edged walls. A corner pier, rising from the ground to the height of the tallest parapet wall and similarly of limestone, buttresses the wall on its east end and holds the vertical metal and neon building sign. The sign reading "ATLAS" is of blue and white neon and curves over the top of the pier. The vertical sign and the molded and smooth parapet wall offer the characteristic Art Deco visual dichotomy of competing horizontal and vertical elements. Immediately below the parapet wall and cantilevering over the entrance bay is the theater's marguee. The round-edged marguee which served to shelter theater-goers as they approached the box office and theater entrance follows the molded lines of the parapet wall. The marguee features a metal fascia with alternating bands of blue, black and white and a central panel of glass tile, also blue and black, following a geometric zigzag pattern. The ceiling under the marguee is filled with individual light bulbs, lighting the entrance area to the theater. The entrance of the theater, recessed from the overhanging canopy, consists of two pairs of doors to either side of a central box office window. Sign boxes are located at the building's limestone end piers, to either side of the entry bay.

The single-story storefronts extend in a continuous line towards the west and are divided into three sections by reeded limestone pilasters. Between each of the pilasters, show windows project from the façade, offering direct entry into the individual stores from the street. The show windows are set upon a low black granite base and feature plate glass windows

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within a metal frame. Above the projecting show windows, dark green and black Carrara glass tiles (and matching replacement glass tile) span the transoms of the individual stores, while a continuous band of glass tile fills the spandrel wall above, creating a wide frieze board. The glass tile is arranged in three long rows, emphasizing the horizontality of the row of stores. The glass tile panels are capped by limestone cornices, with raised zigzag ornamentation in central panels.

The east side elevation of the building extends along a narrow 15'-alley to Linden Court and is generally a solid brick wall with no fenestration and an irregularly capped cornice. However, the limestone cladding of the front returns for a short distance along the alley elevation, offering an original poster box at the lower level, just above the original granite base. Towards the rear of this side wall, the building rises to two stories, corresponding with the theater auditorium proper.

The south elevation of the building consists of the long side wall of the theater auditorium, separated into bays by brick pilasters. This wall has been raised in order to accommodate a new, raised theater space. The original west wall of the auditorium building has been added onto and raised. Historically, a narrow alley intersecting with Linden Court provided access to the rear of the stores for loading and unloading of goods. During the 2004-2006 renovation, this alley was enclosed, allowing for a modest expansion of the new Atlas Performing Arts Center.

Interior:

Historically the Atlas Theater consisted of the row of stores and the theater entrance facing H Street. The stores opened directly onto H Street and offered long and narrow, open floor plans. The theater entrance opened into a lobby which led back to the auditorium. The auditorium was a tall space to accommodate the large screen, but offered only a single floor of seating. Having been abandoned for many years, the interior of the theater and the stores were in ruinous condition by the 1990s. The theater lobby, a long open space that led to the auditorium, had been stripped of its finishes. The seats in the auditorium were missing as was the movie screen and wall finishes. An ornate Art Deco-style plaster wall screen that flanked the movie screen was the only surviving detail from the building's original period of significance.

As part of the 2004-2006 Tax Credit project, the exterior of the Atlas Theater and Shops was completely rehabilitated and the interior was gutted and fully renovated into a performing arts center with two theaters, two smaller lab theaters, and several dance studios. The exterior rehabilitation involved cleaning and re-pointing the limestone; repairing the signature neon sign and marquee and metal poster boxes; repairing and replacing as necessary the Carrara glass tiles; replacing damaged and missing areas of the Art Deco signboard, and replacing the already replaced plexiglass show windows with glass.

Although the historic interior was in ruinous condition and was thus gutted, the renovated interior follows the same floor plan as the historic one. The original (and present) entrance opens into a new lobby, which leads back to the principal theater space. This theater—the Lang Theater—occupies the site of the original theater, but it is oriented differently and raised above it. The other theaters and the dance studios are located in the volumes of the former store fronts. The renovation also included enclosing the rear alley between the shops and auditorium and raising the level of the building to accommodate a raised theater space.

An interior passage providing access to the secondary theater and the lab theaters follows the layout of the enclosed alleyway. This enclosed alley thus reveals the original exterior rear walls of the former stores and part of the side wall of the auditorium. The Art Deco-style screens that had been in the original auditorium were restored as part of the Tax Credit project and have been mounted on opposite walls of this interior alleyway between the principal theater and the secondary one.

INTEGRITY

The Atlas Theater and Shops retains its integrity of location, setting, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. The Atlas Theater and Shops remains in its original location along the commercial H Street corridor, providing an important architectural contribution to the early 20th-century development of the street. The theater was one of several early 20th-century theaters along H Street, of which only two remain (the Atlas and the Plymouth Theater). The distinguishing characteristics of the Art Deco-style building are intact, including the building's original limestone theater façade with its molded, tiered parapet; projecting marquee with zigzag ornamentation; and its blue and white neon sign, all of which exhibit superior design and workmanship. Although the interiors are no longer intact, the building's exterior design and current use as a performing arts center greatly contribute to the feeling and association of H Street—historically one of the city's most vibrant commercial corridors which is presently experiencing a major revival.

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National Park Service / National I	Register of Historic Places Registration Form
NPS Form 10-900	OMB No. 1024-0018

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property

8. Statement of Significance

(Expires 5/31/2012)

Washington, D.C. County and State

Mark ">	able National Register Criteria " in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property anal Register listing.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.)			
n matic		ARCHITECTURE			
A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our	ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION			
Тв	history.	COMMERCE			
	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.				
]C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics				
]-	of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant	Period of Significance			
	and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.	1938			
D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.	Significant Dates			
		1938			
0.000	a Considerations " in all the boxes that apply.)	Significant Person			
oper	ty is:	(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)			
A	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.				
В	removed from its original location.	Cultural Affiliation			
c	a birthplace or grave.				
D	a cemetery.				
E	a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	Architect/Builder John Jacob Zink			
F	a commemorative property.				
G	less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.				

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance, 1938, corresponds to the year of that the Atlas Theater and Shops was constructed and opened.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Constructed in 1938, the Atlas Theater and Shops complex at 1313-1333 H Street, N.E. meets Criteria A and C of the National Register. The Atlas is an excellent example of an Art Deco motion picture theater that embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the mature "moderne" Art Deco style in this city. The theater is also a significant surviving example of the work of celebrated theater designer, John J. Zink. In addition to its Art Deco styling, the Atlas Theater is an important and intact example of the neighborhood motion picture theater that was constructed following a depression-era theater building hiatus in the city. The motion picture theater first appeared in Washington in 1909 with the opening of the Palace Theater at 307 9th Street, NW. By 1925, the city had 47 movie houses, of which at least 19 were considered "neighborhood" theaters. While the motion picture palaces located in the city's theater district—namely 13th and D and F Streets—were grand and lavish buildings that could accommodate thousands of people, those in the city's neighborhoods tended to be smaller, more intimate structures accommodating from 100 to 1,000 patrons. The Atlas provides an excellent representation of the moderate sized neighborhood theater that catered to its immediate neighbors as well as to a broader audience due to its location along the commercial H Street, NE corridor.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Atlas Theater and Shops is significant for its **Architecture.** The Atlas Theater and Shops is designed in an Art Deco/Art Moderne style that is characterized in particular by its bold and round-edged geometric forms, its zigzag ornamentation on the marquee and at the cornice, its vertically aligned neon sign, and its projecting steel and glass marquee. The Atlas is noted as being the only example of an asymmetrical Art Deco theater in the city and is considered by Hans Wirz and Richard Striner, authors of *Washington Deco*, as one of the finest Art Deco facades in the city.

The Atlas Theater and Shops is also significant in the Areas of **Entertainment and Recreation** and **Commerce**. At the time of the construction of the Atlas Theater, the H Street corridor was a well established transportation and commercial corridor and was already home to a number of motion picture theaters. The business section of H Street first developed in the late 19th century, but following construction of Union Station in 1907, the commercial nature of the street expanded greatly, eventually becoming one of Washington's most active commercial areas. The majority of businesses on H Street were small independently owned stores, along with professional offices (dentists, doctors) and chain stores. Construction of the Atlas Theater and Shops contributed to the commercial backbone of the street, while offering another recreation venue.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

EARLY HISTORY OF MOTION PICTURE THEATERS

At the end of the 19th century, serious theater in the United States traditionally had focused on opera, drama, and concerts. Each of these presented different architectural requirements in terms of acoustics, orchestral needs, stage size, and the relationship of audience to the performers. The opera house, developed in Europe, required elaborate stage facilities, a large hall with excellent acoustics that blended music appropriately with an orchestra pit that could accommodate large-scale productions. Playhouses needed absorbent surroundings, so that each word could be heard distinctly. Backstage facilities, such as dressing rooms and rehearsal halls, were also needed.¹

The opera house and concert hall appealed to cultured and educated elite and as such offered elaborate detailing, often borrowed from European prototypes. In smaller American towns, concert halls referred to established community structures as models in order to present an aura of respectability.^{II}

¹ Maggie Valentine, The Show Storts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theater, Starring S. Charles Lee. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 14.

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By the first decade of the 20th century, a few visionary entrepreneurs erected nickelodeons - "odeons" deriving from the Greek word for theater and nickel being the price of admission - which were modest buildings usually containing a few rows of chairs in a long, narrow hall.^{III} By 1908 between 8,000 and 10,000 nickelodeons had been established across the country.

The mechanical and acoustical needs of the motion picture theaters differed substantially from those of the playhouse because of the loud, dangerous projector and the often elaborate organs which accompanied silent films. In the 1910s, playhouses and other live performance theaters were renovated in order to add moving pictures to their live performance repertoire. The buildings that housed such performances contained rows of seats facing a stage and were referred to in the professional press as "moving picture theaters."

This booming industry soon required a building type of its own. Rather than the traditional theater whose roots were in antiquity, motion picture theater architecture in the United States drew on commercial building designs. To accommodate melodramas, traveling shows, operas, and concert halls, the modern motion picture theater looked stylistically to the exotic, selectively merging old conventions with new requirements to create a novel building type.

Once established, the motion picture theater evolved in both type and style, drawing from popular as well as elitist traditions. The appearance of feature-length films, which told an artistically edited story, coincided with the development of feature motion picture theaters. Movies in the 1910s and 1920s were silent adventures and romances, seldom very realistic and often set in an imaginary, exotic locale. Movie palaces were equally exotic and romantic in mood, seeking not to break the spell until the patron left the building. Amenities, such as lounges, ushers, and elaborate gathering spots, reinforced this ambience.

Architects of this period employed then-popular historical styles in over-abundance to create a romantic fantasy feel. Necessary features such as the box office and marquee combined elements associated with both popular and serious entertainments. Marketing and advertising techniques were borrowed from commercial traditions, as well as the circus. Rich materials and fabrics, plush seats, draperies, chandeliers, lounges, and smoking rooms echoed grand hotels, government institutions, and private clubs. For the first time, builders and managers gave serious consideration to safety, sight lines, maximum capacity, heating, lighting, and ventilation. The impact of the expanded film format prompted higher ticket prices, reserved seats, scheduled showings, and longer runs.

By the mid-1920s, the motion picture palace was a cherished part of American life. Theater openings and movie premieres drew crowds far in excess of the number who could actually attend each show. The largest concentrations of grand-scale movie theaters were in the major metropolitan areas - Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. Yet theater patrons in less populous cities such as Minneapolis, Seattle, Denver, and Washington, DC could take their pick from among ten or more palaces. Even small towns generally could boast one or two fancy movie houses, clustered along Main Street or around the town square. Traditionally, the nickelodeon owners had to purchase the two- or three-reel films, paying for the films by the foot. By the second decade of the 20th century, with the formation of the Hollywood studios and theater chains, leasing a motion picture to several theaters simultaneously became common practice. The early exhibitors quickly expanded their operations to meet the increasing demand for and availability of films.

With the introduction of the talkies in 1927, the movie palace no longer needed to supplement the mechanical equipment with live entertainment. Whereas the traditional theater and early movie palaces had been designed around the stage and live performances, the new movie theater was planned around the projection booth and speakers. Sound required renovation of existing theaters to accommodate the speakers, while in new buildings, it often eliminated the need for a stage or orchestra pit. Theater owners responded quickly to these changes because of the popularity of the talkies and the money to be saved.

The heavy rush to build ever-more elaborate theaters in the late 1920s resulted in an overabundance of picture palaces with too many seats to fill. The economic hardships of the Depression drew new theater construction to a halt, while extravagant promotional stunts were concocted in attempts to boost box office totals. Some theaters arranged for movie-stars to appear at grand premiers, while others could only offer contests sponsored by area businesses or charities.

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Despite war-time adversity, movie attendance peaked in the 1940s as the public embraced messages of patriotism and romance, and theater chains responded to the demand.

Neighborhood movie houses reflected America's new emphasis on family and their love of the automobile, by showing up in city neighborhoods and in suburban locations. As movies became films with a more serious attitude, the seemingly anachronistic ornate architecture and design disappeared from the buildings. Both product and process were stripped of their artificial decoration in favor of a more honest examination of life. In the late 1940 and 1950s, with the disbanding of studio-owned theater chains, the introduction of the television, and the emphasis on suburbanization, movie attendance declined. Eventually, customer amenities were reduced to nothing more than the refreshment stand. The vestiges of lighted signs were the only indications of a motion picture theater as the buildings evolved back into storefront spaces.

Built in profusion on valuable downtown city blocks, theaters incurred heavy losses and rising expenses. Thus, the over building of the 1930s led directly to the theatrical demolition derby of the 1960s.^{IV} Theater owners responded with creative, although somewhat destructive, solutions to their problems. Some subdivided their auditoriums, occasionally piggybacking or twinning a screening room. More than a few owners chose to revive their long dormant stage apparatus to put on rock concerts, supplementing dwindling movie revenues. By the 1970s and 1980s, the era of preservation brought restoration of downtown picture palaces, while the construction of suburban multi-cinemas commenced.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE MOTION PICTURE THEATER IN WASHINGTON, DC

The first motion picture theater in Washington, D.C., converted from a store, was the Star Theater which opened in 1906. Located at 10th and D streets, N.W., the Star was owned and operated by Thomas Armat, a local Washingtonian who made a critical contribution to the development of the film industry with his invention of the "star guide." This device helped reduce the jumpiness of the images on the screen, a problem with Edison's projector and an impediment to the creation of full-length motion pictures. With this and other advances in technology, the film industry became a large and profitable business nationally as well as in Washington, DC.

In 1909, Aaron Brylawski and A.C. Mayer, both local jewelry merchants, opened the Palace Theater, a small nickelodeon and the city's first purpose-built moving picture theater, at 307 9th Street, N.W.^V The motion picture business immediately proved promising, and the local exhibitors expanded their holdings with the purchase of several theaters, including the Bijou Theater on D Street, N.W. and the Happyland Theater on Seventh Street, N.W. Between 1909 and 1914, the movie business in the nation's capital expanded from eleven to 69 theaters. Most of these new theaters were located in the area of the Star Theater, around 9th and D streets, N.W. After 1910, with the improvements in film production and presentation, and the increasing popularity of the movies, nickelodeons were replaced by full-scale theaters specifically designed for the showing of movies. The movie industry in Washington, DC also expanded with the construction of several large-capacity movie houses. By 1918, three new theaters — the Rialto (713-717 9th Street, N.W. with 2100 seats), the Palace (1306 F Street, N.W. with 2423 seats), and the Metropolitan (932-934 F Street, N.W. with 1484 seats) - had been built. These larger theaters were located downtown, gradually expanding the theater district from 9th and D streets, N.W. While a prominent theater district was developing downtown, a counterpart theater district was being created in the center of the African-American neighborhood at U Street.

The 1924 construction of the Earle Theater (renamed the Warner Theater), which was a combination of a movie theater with a major office structure, was an important advance in development schemes. It marked the beginning of a significant trend in mixing uses, which was possible only because of improvements in structural and mechanical systems. Similarly, the Capital Theater, designed by Rapp and Rapp in 1927, was a legitimate movie palace within a large office building. A possible explanation for this strategy can be found in the financial position of the owners and the economics of the city, and the nation at large, during this time.

For the creation of these motion picture palaces within the theater districts, out-of-town architects, such as Thomas W. Lamb, C. Howard Crane, and the Rapp Brothers, were brought in by prominent theater chain owners. The smaller and

^{1y} David Naylor, American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy. (New York: Prentice Hall Editions, 1981), p. 26.

^{*} This small theater on Ninth Street, N.W. was often referred to as the "Smoking Palace" to distinguish it from the larger Palace Theater located on Twelfth Street, N.W.

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outlying theaters were traditionally designed by local architects, such as Reginald W. Geare, B. Frank Meyers, and C.C. Webb. By far the most prolific of the local men was Baltimorean John J. Zink, who designed at least thirteen of the capital's theaters.^{vi}

The typical Washington, DC motion picture theater was two stories in height and constructed of brick with a recessed central entry. The flat roofs were usually crowned with projecting eaves or ornate balustrades. Prohibited from using extravagant electric signs because of aesthetic and building regulations, narrow planar canopies were installed throughout the city. The seating capacity of the theaters ranged from 2,700 seats in the Loew's Palace at 1306 F Street, N.W., to 100 seats at the Grand Theater. With a population of 497,906 by 1926, the District of Columbia had a total of 61 motion picture theaters, all of which were open seven days a week.

The automobile typically had a major impact on the sitting and architectural detailing of neighborhood theaters. Individual elements such as the marquee and the signage were made larger in relation to the building in order to make the theater noticeable from a greater distance. These theaters were typically single-story structures adorned with bright lights, dominant marquees, vertical signage and ornately decorated box offices. Their plans were simple halls with a box office, a sloping floor and a projection booth. Neighborhood theater designers focused on comfort and efficiency rather than on fantasy and ornament, conducting in-depth studies on seating arrangements and acoustics. Maggie Valentine, in her book on the architectural history of movie theaters, states that "Although these individual [neighborhood theater] buildings no longer had to compete with large downtown commercial blocks, they nonetheless dominated their surroundings, both physically and psychologically.^{Vii}

The Motion Picture Theater and H Street

The early 1940s were part of the so-called "Golden Age of Hollywood," with higher-than-ever demand for film entertainment. The H Street corridor was already home to a number of motion picture theaters, many of which opened in the first decade of the 20th century. According to Robert Headley's Motion Picture Exhibition in Washington, D.C., 19 theaters existed along the corridor between 1909 and 1940. The first of these were small structures, such as the 1910 Dixie Theater, at 800 H Street, N.E. that seated a few hundred people. However, as their popularity increased, movie houses rapidly became larger. The Apollo at 625 H Street was built in 1913 and seated 900 persons, while the Empire Theater at 911 H Street, built the same year, could accommodate 500 people. While the Apollo Theater continued to operate as a theater until 1955, many of the other smaller H Street theaters came and went quickly, as is typical of nickelodeons of the early to mid-20th century. In 1938, H Street ushered in the "Golden Age of Hollywood" with the construction of the Atlas Theater and Shops. The impressive edifice was built by the K-B organization and designed by well-known theater architect John Zink in an Art Moderne style of architecture.

At the time of its construction, H Street, NE was an important commercial corridor offering a variety of independent and chain businesses, along with light industrial and commercial warehouse concerns. Sparsely developed prior to the Civil War, this area of the city began to emerge as a residential/commercial neighborhood with the arrival of the Columbia Railway Company streetcar in 1872. The streetcar line ran from 15th Street, NW and New York Avenue in downtown Washington, then southeast along Massachusetts Avenue to H Street, and through the "near Northeast" neighborhood to the streetcar line's terminus at 15th and H Streets, NE. By 1883, the company was running 15 cars, each making 11 trips daily.

During the 1880s and 1890s as the streetcar encouraged residential speculative development, the area grew into a sizeable community of modest-sized, two and three-story brick row houses built primarily for members of the working class. Several nearby sources of employment, including the railroad, the Government Printing Office, the brickyard, the streetcar, and even the more remote Navy Yard, made this area particularly attractive to workers and their families. From the beginning, there was a mixture of white and African American residents; churches and schools for both races were built before the turn-of-the 20th century. As the side streets became developed with residential row houses during this period, H Street itself became increasingly commercial. The number of businesses in the area jumped from 75 in 1880 to 154 in 1890 and 410 in 1910. Businesses that depended upon walk-in trade, such as dry goods stores,

^{vi} Andrew Craig Morrison. "Theater Guide of Washington, DC." (The Theater Historical Society, July, 1972), p. 2.

vil Valentine, pp. 92-95.

(Expires 5/31/2012)

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property Washington, D.C. County and State

shoe stores, tobacco stores, confectioners, tailors, hardware stores, jewelry stores and others, tended to locate along this principal corridor, while businesses that catered to the local workers, such as saloons, restaurants and pool halls, clustered on side streets and around the car barn. In addition to these storefront businesses, the area was home to light-industrial, or non-retail commercial uses, including coal yards, bread ovens, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, stone yards and beer bottlers.

During the first decade of the 20th century, the near Northeast neighborhood was transformed by the construction of Union Station. Immigrant workers attracted by the construction jobs added to the already diverse population of the area, and the number of businesses, especially along H Street, multiplied. By 1919, local businessmen had formed the Northeast Business Men's Association to promote improvements and raise business standards in the northeast section of the city. The business section continued to grow until H Street became one of Washington's most active commercial areas. The majority of businesses on H Street were small independently owned stores, along with professional offices (dentists, doctors). Larger chain stores and department stores were also present, including the Sanitary Grocery Company, People's Drug, Woolworth's 5 & 10, to name a few.

In 1919, the land upon which the Atlas Theater would later be constructed housed barber shops (1313 and 1333 H Street), a shoemaker (1315 H Street), a vacant store (1317 H Street) with apartments above, a druggist (1319 H Street), a grocer (1321 H Street) and a five and dime store (1325-1327 H Street). This stretch of H Street retained its commercial character well into the 1930s, adding to its ranks auto and electrical suppliers, furniture makers, photo suppliers, even confectioners.

On February 4, 1938, an application to raze these buildings was submitted, and three weeks later a permit to build a "Kogod-Burka Theater" at 1315-1333 H Street, NE was approved. On August 31, 1938, the Atlas Theater opened with its first movie, *Love Finds Andy Hardy*.^{viii} The Atlas offered daily evening performances along with matinees Thursday through Sunday, for whites-only. In 1939, according to the city directories, several businesses had established themselves in the shops of the Atlas Theater and Shops building. A Sanitary Grocery Store occupied the largest store space at the western end of the building, while a People's Drug Store was housed in the next largest storefront at 1319 H Street. A smaller local business, the Sun Radio Company, had its business in the store immediately next to the entrance to the Atlas. People's Drug Store and the Sanitary Grocery Company (later, Safeway) remained at that location into the 1950s and 1960s, respectively. In the mid-1940s, these "anchor" stores (Safeway and People's) were joined by two clothing stores, one for men and the other for women. Also in the 1940s, the Sun Radio Company gave way to a Super City Music store.

By the 1940s, despite the state of the national economy and the war-time materials restrictions, the K and B Amusement Company became a major player in the construction of movie theaters, particularly in the suburban neighborhoods of Washington, D.C. The K and B Amusement Company founded and owned by Fred S. Kogod and his brother-in-law, Max Burka, was responsible for the construction and operation of more than five of the movie houses in the nation's capital. In 1951, New York producer Williams Robins leased the Atlas from K-B to present stage plays; however on opening day, the first stage show was canceled because the theater did not have a certificate of occupancy from the District government. The theater did not have a sprinkler system or a fire curtain and since bringing it up to code would have cost K-B \$75,000, the company abandoned the idea of stage shows and went back to movies.^{IX}

During these post-War years, the surrounding Near Northeast neighborhood suffered a serious a socio-economic decline as residents left the city for the suburbs. The 1968 riots that followed Martin Luther King's assassination were devastating. H Street businesses were looted, burned, and vandalized, though the blocks further east were spared the extreme devastation of those closer to the Capitol. Despite the widespread devastation and extended economic malaise that followed for decades after the riots, the Atlas Theater and Shops survived, offering movies and live entertainment on the weekends until 1976 at which point the theater closed its doors. Although the stores remained in use following the riots, the nature of the businesses changed. The Safeway and the People's Drug Store moved out and were replaced by a bargain store, a beauty salon and a wig store. In 1994, only two businesses survived—the Afrikan Martial Arts Academy at 1325 H Street, and the offices of Barry Stein, lawyer at 1333 H Street. When the last tenant departed in the latter part of the 1990s, the entire Atlas Theater and Shops complex was completely abandoned and left vacant.

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property (Expires 5/31/2012)

Washington, D.C. County and State

In 2004-2006, the Atlas Theater and Shops was rehabilitated on the exterior and completely renovated on the interior, in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The Atlas Theater and Shops, now the Atlas Performing Arts Center, received a federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit for the work and has since been awarded a D.C. Historic Preservation Award in Excellence.

JOHN J. ZINK

John J. Zink (1886-1952) was a native Baltimore architect who designed numerous movie houses in the Mid-Atlantic region during the early 20th century. Zink was considered a top "moderne" architect at a time when many architects were designing in elaborate, emotional styles. Employing modest designs, Zink's attentions were directed toward technical aspects of theater architecture, such as clear views for all movie-goers, ideal lighting and acoustics. Often having his designs published in theater trade catalogues, Zink typically incorporated such amenities as nurseries, lounges, and smoking rooms in his movie house plans.

Zink began his architectural training at the Maryland Institute, practicing for a short time with Baltimore architects Wyatt and Nolting. By 1910, Zink had established an office in the Builders' Exchange Building, and was advertising in *Baltimore's Business Directory*. Prior to World War I, Zink relocated to New York to attend the Columbia School of Architecture. During this period, he worked closely with renowned theater architect Thomas W. Lamb. Returning to Baltimore in 1916, Zink worked in the office of Ewald G. Blanke, where he was involved in numerous movie house renovation projects and new design projects. After the early 1920s, Zink worked independently, winning commissions for the Takoma Theater at 6833 4th Street, NW. (1922); the Uptown Theater on Connecticut Avenue, NW (1936); and the Senator Theater on York Road in Baltimore. One of the most-celebrated of Zink's theater designs, the Senator Theater was constructed for Durkee Enterprises in 1939. Having made a name in the theater world as a prominent architect, Zink designed several theaters for K & B Amusement Company, including the Atlas Theater (1938); the Apex at 4813 Massachusetts Avenue, NW (1941demolished 1977); the Senator Theater at 3946-3956 Minnesota Avenue, NE (1941); and the Naylor Theater at 2834 Alabama Avenue, SE. (1945).

Zink's primary design vocabulary in the early 1920s consisted of classical and colonial elements. By the 1930s, however, much of his work shifted toward Art Deco, with a streamlined "modern" emphasis. While Zink enjoyed commissions for a variety of building types, his theater designs were by far his most acclaimed and sought after. Zink was accomplished at fitting the exterior of his buildings suitably to their sites and achieved in his work—both for larger movie houses and smaller neighborhood theaters such as the Atlas—a harmonious articulation of facades.

Throughout his career, John J. Zink was responsible for the design and construction of over 200 theaters in Maryland, Virginia, Delaware and Washington, D.C., as well as other parts of the United States. Within Washington, D.C., Zink designed fifteen movie theaters between the years 1924-1949. The Atlas survives as one of Zink's and one of the city's best Art Deco theaters.

(Expires 5/31/2012)

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property Washington, D.C. County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

District of Columbia Historic Preservation Landmark Application, MacArthur Theater.

Headly, Robert K., Jr. Motion Picture Exhibition in Washington, D.C.: An Illustrated History of Parlors, Palaces and Mulitplexes in the Metropolitan Area, 1894-1997. North Carolina and London: McFarland and Company, 1999.

Headley, Robert K, Jr., "A Theater Near You," Unpublished Draft, 1996.

Headley, Robert K, Jr., "The Theaters of John J. Zink," Unpublished Draft, March 17, 1997.

Morrison, Andrew Craig, "Theater Guide of Washington, DC." The Theater Historical Society, July 1972.

Naylor, David. American Picture Palaces: The Architecture of Fantasy. New York: Prentice Hall Editions, 1981.

Naylor, David. Great American Movie Theaters. Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, 1987.

Valentine, Maggie, The Show Starts on the Sidewalk: An Architectural History of the Movie Theater, Starring S. Charles Lee. New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1994.

Primary location of additional data:

Other State agency

Federal agency

University

Name of repository:

Other

Local government

State Historic Preservation Office

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- X preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .61 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	327648	43 07340	3				
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing	
2				4				
	Zone	Easting	Northing	20.00	Zone	Easting	Northing	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.) The Atlas Theater and Shops at 1313-1333 H Street, NE occupies Lots 149-153 on Square 1027 in Washington, D.C.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Atlas has been associated with these lots since its construction in 1938.

National Park Service / National Register of Historic Places Registration Form NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018	(Expires 5/31/2012)			
Atlas Theater and Shops	Washington, D.C.			
11. Form Prepared By				
name/title Kim Williams (editor)				
organization DC Historic Preservation Office	date			
street & number 1000 4 th Street, SW E650	telephone			
city or town Washington, D.C.	state	zip code		
e-mail <u>Kim.williams</u>				

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Maps: A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- Continuation Sheets
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Atlas Theater and Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Ann Belkov

Date Photographed: July 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: North elevation. View looking southwest

1 of 10.

Atlas Theater and Sh	005	Washington, D.C.					
Name of Property		County and State					
Name of Property:	Atlas Theater and Shops						
City or Vicinity: Wash	ington, D.C.						
County:	State: District of Columbia						
Photographer: Ann B	elkov						
Date Photographed:	July 2010						
Description of Photog	graph(s) and number: North elevation. View looki	ng southeast.					
2 of 10.							
Name of Property:	Atlas Theater and Shops						
City or Vicinity: Wash	ington, D.C.						
County:	State: District of Columbia						
Photographer: Ann B	elkov						
Date Photographed:	July 2010						
Description of Photog	graph(s) and number: View of theater entrance.	/iew looking south.					
3 of 10.							
Name of Property:	Atlas Theater and Shops						
City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.							
County:	State: District of Columbia						
Photographer: Ann B	elkov						
Date Photographed:	July 2010						
Description of Photog	graph(s) and number: Theater entrance marquee	and sign. View looking west.					
4 of 10.							
Name of Property:	Atlas Theater and Shops						
City or Vicinity: Wash	ington, D.C.						
County:	State: District of Columbia						
Photographer: Ann B	elkov						
Date Photographed:	July 2010						
Description of Photos	graph(s) and number: East elevation. View lookin	a west					

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(Expires 5/31/2012)

Washington, D.C. County and State

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property

Name of Property: Atlas Theater and Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Ann Belkov

Date Photographed: July 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: South elevation showing theater auditorium block. View looking northeast.

6 of 10.

Name of Property: Atlas Theater and Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Ann Belkov

Date Photographed: July 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: View looking northeast showing south elevation of former store and west elevation of theater auditorium.

7 of 10.

Name of Property: Atlas Theater and Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Ann Belkov

Date Photographed: July 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Interior view of lobby looking north to entrance

8 of 10.

Name of Property: Atlas Theater and Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Ann Belkov

Date Photographed: July 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number: Interior view of lobby looking south to theater entrance

9 of 10.

(Expires 5/31/2012)

Washington, D.C. County and State

Atlas Theater and Shops Name of Property

Name of Property: Atlas Theater and Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington, D.C.

County:

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Ann Belkov

Date Photographed: July 2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number. View looking east along interior corridor on site of original exterior alley. View shows south elevation of original stores to the left and the north elevation of the theater auditorium to the right with restored Art Deco plaster screens on either side.

10 of 10.

Property Owner:							
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)							
name Atlas Performing Arts Center							
street & number 1333 H Street, NE	telephone						
city or town Washington, D.C.	state zip code						

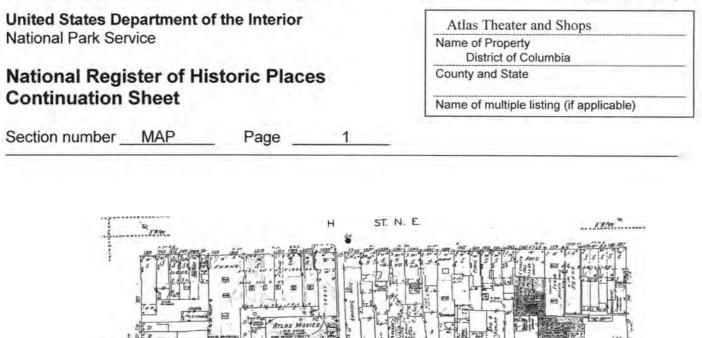
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of

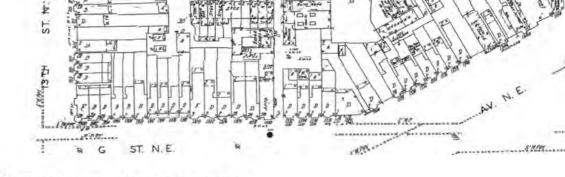
this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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SUM





INDE

The Atlas Theater and Shops 1313-1333 H Street, NE (From Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1959 updated)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Atlas Theater and Shops NAME:

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, District of Columbia

DATE RECEIVED: 10/01/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/26/10 DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/10/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/15/10 DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000909

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	N
OTHER:	N	PDIL:	Ν	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	Y	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM. / CRITERIA Accept ASC		
REVIEWER Vature Andus	DISCIPLINE_	Historian
TELEPHONE	DATE	11/10/2010

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



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DC - Altas Theater and Shops - 0001



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DC_Atlas Theater and Shops_0002



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DC Atlas Theater and Shops-0003



DC - Albes Theater and Shops - 0004



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DC_ Atlas Theater and Shops _ 0005



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DC-Altas Theater and Shops _ 0007



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DC - Aflas Treater and Shops _0008



BCK006255 92C40341 0264325 585015 +00+00+00+00 1832

DC_Atlas Treater and Shops _ 0009



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DC - Altas Theater and Shops - 0010



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



October 7, 2010

Mr. Patrick Andrus National Register of Historic Places National Park Service 1201 I Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Request for Expedited Review of the Atlas Theater and Shops Nomination

Dear Patrick:

Under the National Register regulations 36 CFR 60.13 (a), the DC SHPO is, by this letter, requesting that the Federal Register notice be waived for the National Register nomination for the Atlas Theater and Shops at 1313-1333 H Street, N.E. in Washington, D.C. The Atlas Theater and Shops was designated a D.C. Landmark in October 2002 and found eligible for listing in the National Register in 2004 as part of a Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit project. The rehabilitation project has since been completed and the historic Atlas Theater and Shops is currently operating as the Atlas Performing Arts Crenter. The request to waive the notice is in order to assist in the continued preservation of the historic property.

At its monthly meeting held on September 23, 2010, the D.C. Historic Preservation Review Board found that the Atlas met the Criteria for designation in the National Register and that the building maintains its integrity. The Board therefore recommended that the nomination for the Atlas Theater and Shops be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places for listing. All required notices for National Register listing were published as part of that review process.

The Atlas Performing Arts Center is planning an anniversary gala of its opening in early November and would like to be able to announce listing in the National Register at that time, thus the request for an expedited review. I appreciate your assistance on this matter. Please let me know if you have any questions or need any additional information.

Sincerely,

David Maloney State Historic Preservation Officer



"Williams, Kim (OP)" <kim.williams@dc.gov> 10/20/2010 03:43 PM To "Patrick_Andrus@nps.gov" <Patrick_Andrus@nps.gov>

cc bcc

Subject Atlas Expedite Letter

Hi Patrick,

I think I neglected to send you the revised letter requesting that the Federal Register notice be waived or reduced, as needed, for the Atlas Theater nomination. The Atlas Performing Arts Center will be celebrating its anniversary in two weeks and is hoping to announce the building's listing in the NR at the ceremony. Thanks, Kim

Kim Prothro Williams National Register Coordinator DC Historic Preservation Office/Office of Planning 1100 4th Street, SW Suite E650 Washington, DC 20024 202 442-8840

We've Moved! On Monday April 19, 2010, the Office of Planning moved to the above location in Southwest near the

92.0

Waterfront-SEU station on the Green line. Atlas Expedite Letter0001.pdf