

REBUILDING LIVABLE, ENDURING COMMUNITIES

Using Rehabilitation as Framework for Revitalization



Historic



Before



After

THE BEACON THEATRE

Hopewell, VA

SYNOPSIS

Built as a downtown movie house in 1928, the Beacon Theatre had served as a community gathering place and source of civic pride for the residents of Hopewell, Virginia, until its closing in 1981. All original theatre seating and most decorative finishes and details were removed after closing, leaving few remnants for replication. The challenge was to rehabilitate the building for contemporary performance uses while integrating the remaining historic framework of the building.

In addition to leading the team for the rehabilitation of the Beacon, Robert Mills also served as historic advisor to the city government for the syndication of historic investment tax credits. His role as an advocate to the community for revitalization of this key building in downtown Hopewell addressed public concerns and bolstered the city's perseverance in completing a major project so important in the life of the city.

Significant historical research and site forensic work was undertaken in an effort to replicate former finishes and detailing. The character-defining spaces were restored including the auditorium, the main lobby, the theatre lobbies, the stage and the ticket booth. Since the Beacon lacked support spaces to function as a modern performing arts center, Mills' solution was the rehabilitation of an adjacent building to provide much-needed support spaces. An adjacent state historic district's boundaries were extended in order to include the 50's style building

The theatre has been returned to its former splendor, while converting it into a contemporary performance venue. The rehabilitation of the Beacon saved one of community's most beloved buildings and serves as an economic driver for downtown Hopewell. Since reopening, the theatre has attracted sold out crowds and has served a pivotal role in the downtown's continued revitalization.

The rehabilitation of The Beacon Theatre has been completed in time for the centennial celebration of Hopewell in 2015. Creating a sense of place and renewed pride in the community, the revitalized theatre is set to play a major role in the cultural life of region.

DESIGN FIRM

COMMONWEALTH ARCHITECTS

COMPLETION DATE

2014

ROLE OF NOMINEE

Project Principal

AWARDS

2014 Virginia Society AIA – Honor Award for Historic Preservation



BEFORE



AFTER

“The renovation of the theater and the adaptive reuse of the adjacent building demonstrates comprehensive preservation – careful research, beautiful restoration and thoughtful adaptive reuse in support of new programmatic requirements and economic realities – which serve as a catalyst for continued downtown revitalization.”



Jury, VSAIA Honor Award



