

## Art Theatre operator considers move - Boardman has looked at other downtown locations

**News-Gazette, The (Champaign-Urbana, IL)** - Thursday, April 2, 2009

**Author:** CHRISTINE DES GARENNES ; [cgarenne@news-gazette.com](mailto:cgarenne@news-gazette.com)

The operator of a downtown Champaign movie theater is apparently interested in relocating to another space.

Greg Boardman, who has run Boardman's Art Theatre at 126 W. Church St. since 2003, has toured the Orpheum Children's Science Museum at 346 N. Neil St., C, which houses a onetime movie theater, and the Russell Building, also on Church Street, which contains the old Rialto Theatre.

In March, Boardman sent an e-mail to some area residents acknowledging rumors that he was looking into other locations for his movie theater. Attempts to reach Boardman, who lives in California, were unsuccessful.

Boardman's lease at the Art Theatre expires at the end of this year, said David Kraft, who owns the building. Kraft said he would like to see the building continue to house a movie theater, but at the current rental rate, "I can barely cover my expenses," he said. Kraft has listed the building at \$1.14 million.

"One of the reasons I put it up for sale is I can't afford to rent it at \$3.92 a square foot. .. If we could agree on a market rent, I'd be happy to rent to" Greg Boardman, Kraft said

The News-Gazette reported last year that Kraft was looking for a new operator of the movie theater.

Kraft has owned the 1913 building since January 2001. Since then, he has spent "hundreds of thousands of dollars" on electrical, plumbing and painting work as well as installing an air-handling system, he said.

Bill Capel, owner with Ernie Martin of the building that houses the old Rialto, said Boardman toured the space last month.

The Russell Building, at 123 W. Church St., contains several stores in the front of the building; the old theater is located behind those stores. Capel is currently using the space as his photography studio. The theater seats have been removed.

Capel said he and Martin have not heard from Boardman since he toured the space.

"We just have to see how it plays out," Capel said. "We're open to negotiations."

The two have owned the building since the early 1990s. The building dates to 1905, and a vaudeville theater was located there around 1915.

A few blocks north of the Russell Building, the Orpheum Children's Science Museum also hosted a March visit by Boardman, confirmed Sonya Darter, executive director of the museum.

"We're unable at this point to meet his time line because of the renovations," Darter said.

The museum recently started \$500,000 worth of renovations in the theater, including dry-walling the ceiling, replacing and repairing the ornamental plaster work and painting. The work will continue through the summer. A second phase of renovations will be needed after that since the theater does not have a heating or cooling system. The seats also have been removed, Darter said.

The Orpheum, built in 1914, opened as a children's museum in 1994 after the building sat vacant for a few years.

City of Champaign planner T.J. Blakeman said he connected Boardman with some area building owners, but the city has not been involved beyond that.

**Caption:** Vanda Bidwell/The News-Gazette Last month, Greg Boardman, operator of Boardman's Art Theatre at 126 W. Church St., C, sent an e-mail to some residents confirming rumors he is looking at other sites to house his theater. (AM edition:) Greg Boardman, operator of Boardman's Art Theatre at 126 W. Church St., C, says he is interested in relocating to another space in the area and has toured several former theater sites.

**Page:** A-1

**Record Number:** 120090402152510036

*Copyright, 2009, The Champaign-Urbana News-Gazette.*