



Find your place

December 6, 2012

designel architects
931 Belvedere Road
West Palm Beach, FL 33405

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

RE: City of Ocala, Marion Theatre Project/ City Auditorium Study

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with sincere gratitude and appreciation that we present this letter of recommendation to designel architects (formerly Zeidler Partnership Inc.) for their assistance with the City of Ocala, Marion Theatre Project. The Marion Theatre (the Theatre) was built in 1941 in the Art Deco style of architecture and operated as a movie house until 1971 at which time it was converted into a children's science center and served as such until 2002. The City began working in 2003 with the Marion Film and Visual Arts Foundation, Inc. (the Foundation) to restore and operate the Theatre as a movie house and small performance center making the Theatre a focal point of the City's downtown redevelopment efforts. The City and Foundation were successful in receiving a grant from the State of Florida, Bureau of Historic Preservation to pay in part for the necessary architectural services.

The design concept developed by principals Mike Nelson and Gino DeSantis allowed for three separate venues to be created within the Theatre offering theatrical variety and simultaneous shows thereby increasing revenue potential. The design expertise provided by their team proved invaluable to the Foundation in terms of their fund raising activities and sponsorship solicitation. Not only did their design function extremely well it was extremely sensitive to the original architecture earning an Outstanding Achievement Award in the Field of Restoration/Rehabilitation from the Florida Trust for Historic Preservation. The ultimate success of the Theatre has undoubtedly been due in large part to the creative design concept and assistance provided by designel.

Their success on the Marion Theatre project as well as their vast additional credentials on performance facility design led the City of Ocala to select them to serve as architects for the Feasibility Study for Renovations to the City Auditorium and Design of a New Bandshell. Although not as directly involved personally as I was on the Marion Theatre Project I understand from City staff that the study was a great success and that Mike and Gino once again were excellent listeners and created some exciting concepts for the transformation. Based on our several experiences with designel I would highly recommend the firm without exception for any performance project under consideration especially when faced with a stringent budget and an historic venue that requires a sensitive restoration/ transformation.

If you have any questions do not hesitate to contact me at (352) 629-8310 or mmondell@ocalafl.org.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "mmondell".

Marc Mondell, Assoc. AIA, AICP
Assistant City Manager, Community Development Services