

(From the New Haven Independent)

Little Theater Getting Bigger

by Thomas MacMillan | September 17, 2009 3:19 PM |



Thomas MacMillan Photo

An 85-year-old community playhouse is moving into the modern era, thanks to a cash injection from the state.

The Little Theater, located at 1 Lincoln St. in New Haven's Audubon Street arts district, is about to undergo a yearlong renovation. A team of planners and architects secured approval for a \$5.7 million overhaul on Wednesday night from the City Plan Commission.



Svigals + Partners

Architect Julia McFadden (pictured above) of Svigals + Partners described the project to commissioners as “a total renovation and addition.” The \$5.7 million job will expand the current 6,000-square-foot structure to over 10,000 square feet and modernize the entire building. Plans call for the existing theater to be gutted and renovated.

Using a scale model, McFadden showed commissioner how a 1988 addition on the east side of the theater will be removed and replaced by a larger two-story addition.



Svigals + Partners

The Little Theater (pictured) is owned by [Area Cooperative Education Services](#), which runs the nearby Education Center for the Arts. The theater is used by ECA for high school theater education. It’s also a regular venue for public music and dance performances.

The renovated building will contain seven instructional spaces and will be equipped with new electrical, mechanical, plumbing and fire protection systems. An elevator will be installed as part of new handicapped-accessible measures, and the theater will be outfitted with the latest in high-tech audio/visual equipment.

Commissioners had few questions for McFadden and her colleagues, who assured the board that the sidewalks around the building would be improved. Alderman Roland Lemar asked if Lincoln Walk — the pedestrian path that connects Lincoln and Audubon — would remain open during construction. McFadden assured him that it would.

Since it is an public educational facility, the project will need to find approval from state education officials. The next step in the process is to secure building permits.

McFadden later said that she hopes construction will begin in November of this year and be wrapped up by November 2010. She said the project is being funded almost exclusively by state money.