



A movie theater was proposed for the fenced-off area at right in the Railyard. NEW MEXICAN FILE PHOTO

MY VIEW: STEVEN ROBINSON

Cinema still a possibility for Railyard

I know that a lot of Santa Feans are eager to have a cinema on the Railyard. I can assure you that our board and staff of the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation are similarly eager, and we are working on it. This may take some time to accomplish — it requires more than the standard due diligence. We are getting expert advice and will thoroughly explore the possibilities. We believe that the right cinema project can become the vibrant centerpiece of the north Railyard, attracting people of all ages and backgrounds — days, nights and weekends.

Let's remember that a cinema was a desired use in the 1997 Railyard Community Plan, the result of an extensive community-based planning process approved by the City Council. The cinema concept was also embedded in the Railyard Master Plan approved by the City Council in 2002. At that time, the City Council approved a lease and management agreement with our nonprofit, SFRCC. So, a cinema has long been considered a desirable use, but never a requirement.

The SFRCC Board of Directors has consistently reaffirmed the desire for a cinema.

In 2005 one of our for-profit tenants, the Railyard Company LLC, leased two parcels. One became the Market Station building, with REI as the anchor tenant and the 400-car, city-owned underground garage. The other was the adjacent parcel, which the Railyard Company was unable to develop as a cinema.

In May 2012, as part of a settlement among the city, the Railyard Company and the Railyard community corporation, the Railyard Company gave up its lease on the cinema parcel, putting it back under the control of SFRCC. Since then, we have received numerous expressions of interest to develop a cinema there.

I want to clarify our relationship with Santa Fe Clay, whose parcel abuts the cinema site. In 2011, Santa Fe Clay was trying to relocate outside the Railyard. When that effort was unsuccessful, the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation and Santa Fe Clay worked out a new five-year lease at the Railyard.

This new lease includes an option for SFRCC to terminate the lease upon giving Santa Fe Clay nine months prior notice. In exchange, Santa Fe Clay's monthly rent was reduced by 73 percent. To date, nobody knows if or when it might be necessary to exercise this option.

The board of directors has developed a set of priorities we believe would most benefit the Railyard. Our priorities include approximately six to eight screens or about 1,000 seats; a mix of mainstream, independent and Spanish-language films; competitive, affordable ticket prices; state-of-the-art projection, acoustics and stadium seating; a café/restaurant facing the plaza; a meeting-space capability for schools, local businesses and community organizations; and a venue for the Santa Fe Film Festival and Santa Fe Independent Film Festival. It is intended to not compete with The Screen, CCA or the Lensic, and to be designed according to the Railyard Master Plan Architectural Design Standards.

We believe that getting the best from the cinema exhibi-

tion industry requires special expertise. We recently retained Pete Warzel, who has known Santa Fe and the Railyard project for many years. He has 30 years experience in the film industry, serving as chief operating officer of United Artists Theatres, co-founder of Magnolia Pictures and Chairman of North American Theatre Operators. He is familiar with similar cinema models in other cities and believes there will be significant interest in building an innovative cinema that can accomplish our goals. We are working closely with Pete and are excited about his outreach and commitment to our priorities. We will keep the community updated on our progress.

Steven Robinson is an architect founding member and president of the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation.

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Eager To Proceed on Cinema

By STEVEN ROBINSON

I know that a lot of Santa Feans are eager to have a cinema on the Railyard. I can assure you that our board and staff of the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation (SFRCC) are similarly eager and we are working on it. This may take some time to accomplish — it requires more than the standard due diligence. We are getting expert advice and will thoroughly explore the possibilities. We believe that the right cinema project can become the vibrant centerpiece of the North Railyard, attracting people of all ages and backgrounds — days, nights and weekends.

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Robinson is an architect, founding member and president of the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corporation.

Teacher (Adult Learner)

La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences, a public charter school, is now accepting applications for Teachers (Adult Learner) for the 2012-2013 school year. Candidates must hold a K-8 NM PED Teacher license or be able to obtain through the alternative licensure program, and be able to teach in multi-grade classroom. Interested applicants may send a cover letter and resume to montessorilatierra@gmail.com or LTMAS PO Box 1399, Espanola, NM 87532.

Teachers Assistant (Co-Learner)

La Tierra Montessori School of the Arts and Sciences, a public charter school, is now accepting applications for Teachers Assistant (Co-Learner) for the 2012-2013 school year. Candidates must hold a K-8 NM PED EA license or be able to obtain through the alternative licensure program, hold or be willing to obtain Montessori certification, and be able to co-teach in multi-grade classroom. Interested applicants may send a cover letter and resume to montessorilatierra@gmail.com or LTMAS PO Box 1399, Espanola, NM 87532.

LOCAL NEWS

Railyard ramps up search for cinema

Nonprofit hires industry specialist to secure developer

By Julie Ann Grimm
The New Mexican

It's time to bring in a professional.

Property managers of the Santa Fe Railyard say that the best chance of finding a developer to open a movie theater in a long-vacant space on city land is to give the job to someone with particular expertise in the cinema field. So, last month, the Santa Fe Railyard Community Corp. hired Pete Warzel.

Warzel, co-founder of Magnolia Pictures and former chief operating officer of United Artists Theaters and chairman of North American Theater Operators, brings about 30 years of industry experience to the task.

His assignment is to help the board identify someone with the capital and ambition to build a theater with six to eight screens that will show a mix of mainstream, independent and Spanish-language films and that can offer competitive, affordable ticket prices and provide meeting spaces for local groups.

Railyard board president Steve Robinson said the nonprofit has recently received interest in the theater parcel and some theater operators who entertained the idea in the

past might come back to the table.

"We realized that we need to do some outreach here," Robinson said. "These [proposals] are interesting, but maybe there is more out there — interest that we are not getting to."

Warzel, he said, "is completely in sync with what it is that we think would be a good cinema project for the Railyard" and will now make inquiries among businesses that might be able to deliver, including those which considered the Railyard project previously.

Robinson said he fields frequent questions about when a theater could be built. He expects the process will take time, but wants people in the city to know that the board is "focused on the project."

The idea of building a movie theater in the Railyard has been part of the plan for the 50-acre redevelopment project since the city bought the land in 1994. Since 2002, the nonprofit has been under contract with the city to oversee development, collect rents and maintain public spaces. While the project has spurred lots of new buildings on the property, the spot slated for the cinema remains vacant.

In the last decade, no fewer than four entities have said they would build or operate a theater on the Railyard. Between 2002 and 2004, the nonprofit accepted bids for a lease on the theater parcel and negotiated with

two successive contractors who dropped out: a Dallas developer working with Magnolia Pictures and a movie producer named Daniel Ostroff, whose plans also vaporized. Before that, talks had broken down between Railyard managers and Richard Brandt, who then ran the small Jean Cocteau theater on Montezuma Avenue for Trans-Lux.

Then, a group of Santa Fe developers in a firm called Railyard LLC — including Steve Duran, Allen Branch and Rick Jaramillo — said they were on track to build a theater on the spot and to bring in Maya Cinemas as the operator. They erected a retail building called Market Station that houses REI and other stores, but ran into financial problems that caused them to indefinitely postpone construction of the movie house. The developers subsequently threatened to sue the city over delays they say exacerbated the situation. A legal settlement reached in April required the group to relinquish control of the theater parcel, a step nonprofit director Richard Czoski said was critical to Railyard development.

Storyteller Cinema — which bought out Trans-Lux Theaters and has several cinemas across the West, including those open now in Española, Taos and Los Lunas — also talked about doing the project in the recent past.

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