

*Janis A. Barlow & Associates*

Research, Planning and Management Consultants  
Specializing in Theatre since 1981

# STEP BY STEP: 10 STEPS IN HISTORIC THEATRE PROJECT PLANNING

Presented by Janis Barlow & Dulcie Gilmore  
Cleveland, Ohio, 2009

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PROJECT PLANNING**



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## Preface and Acknowledgements

- The following presentation was originally developed by Dulcie Gilmore and Janis Barlow for the League of Historic American Theatres.
- It is based on an article available on [barlowandassociates.com](http://barlowandassociates.com) entitled: *Steps in Theatre Project Planning* (© 1990 by Janis Barlow)

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## Agenda

- Introductions, Assumptions
- 10 Steps in Historic Theatre Planning
  - Section 1 - Assessing Project Potential
  - Section 2 - Developing the Project Plan
  - Section 3 - Implementing the Project Plan
- Questions

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## Introductions

- **Dulcie Gilmore,**  
Presenter/Promoter/Consultant
- Projects Managed: Paramount, Aurora, IL Auditorium, Oriental and Arie Crown Theatres, Chicago, IL
- **Janis Barlow,**  
General Manager/Project Manager/Consultant
- Projects and Companies Managed: Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres, Toronto Artscape, Factory Theatre, Theatre Plus, Toronto, ON and 150 theatre clients

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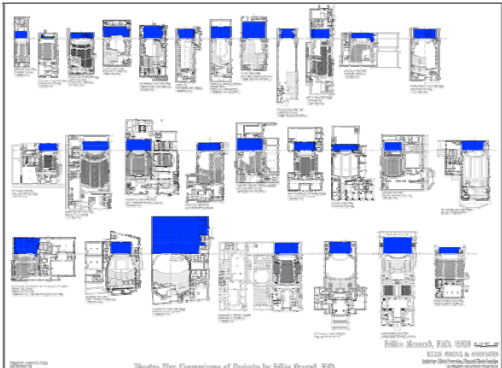
## Assumptions

For the most part, you:

- are not-for-profit organizations
- are emerging theatre project (your building is not currently open)
- may not currently be historic theatre proprietors - you may have to attract or initiate a business to operate the theatre
- have a theatre project that is unique, special and non-linear, and these steps are general and linear

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***Theatres come in many shapes and sizes:***



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## Assumptions

Our seminar represents:

- a comprehensive (but not definitive) approach - we assume you will choose a level of detail appropriate to your project
- generalized recommendations based on the premise that what you spend in planning will be more than saved in execution
- a practical approach - every plan and study identified is required by granting agencies

## Caveat

*Over 70% of League members who shepherd a project to opening night have a common regret:*

***If they could do it over again, they would have invested more time and money in planning.***

***A failure to plan is a plan for failure.***

## The 10 Steps Summarized

1. Research and Goal Setting
2. Community Consultations
3. Financial Planning
4. Site Stabilization
5. **Project Planning and Feasibility Studies**
6. Implementation
7. Consultant Selection
8. **Architectural Services**
9. Business Start Up
10. Project Communications

## Summary of Project Plans

A successfully rehabilitated historic theatre is the result of a succession of increasingly specific and detailed planning documents:

- Preliminary Assessments of Viability
- Feasibility Studies
- Business and Project Management Plans
- Architectural Planning Studies

## SECTION 1

*SHOULD WE, OR SHOULDN'T WE?*

## ASSESSING PROJECT POTENTIAL

## 1. Research and Goal Setting

- Assemble relevant community, program, historical and site documentation.
- Study theatre business and design principles to become an informed client (not a d.i.y.).
- Take advantage of League and other local professional resources for planning guidance.
- Ask yourself several key positioning questions and include the answers in your preliminary project description or briefing notes:

## 1. Goal Setting - Key Questions:

- **What is driving the demand for the theatre?**
  - A user or resident co. in search of a space?
  - A space in search of a use? (Nostalgia?)
  - A response to an infrastructure gap?
- **What is the proposed business plan?**
  - Recitals, pop concerts, plays, cinema?
  - Presenting, producing, exhibiting, “rentals”?
  - Are its goals cultural, economic, social?
- **If your historic theatre didn't exist, would you be building a comparable theatre?**

## 2. Community Consultations

- Obtain a preliminary assessment of viability and interview key stakeholders. Evaluate:
  - perceived community needs
  - proposed mission and programs
  - market conditions
  - facility suitability - condition, size, type, etc.
- Consider using a League Colleague and/or some combination of objective experts.

## 2. Benefits of Consultation

- Establishes a preliminary understanding of potential viability, justifying further planning
- Begins to cultivate and engage potential VIP stakeholders and donors, seeding development of organizational and financial capacity
- Gathers information critical to program, development (fund raising) and marketing plans, and formulation of project messages (party line)

## 3. Site Stabilization and Security

If the facility has not been acquired:

- Establish your capacity for risk (funds available)
- Evaluate the risks of early acquisition (or not)
- Secure first right of refusal
- Ensure that the property is safe and secure

Regardless of the state of acquisition:

- Obtain advice of a preservation architect with regard to interim stabilization.

## Caveat

Unless it is a good investment *regardless of the ultimate findings of a feasibility study*, postpone the acquisition of the facility as long as reasonably possible, but try to negotiate access, site security, stabilization and first right of refusal to purchase.

## 4. Financial Planning

- *How much is it going to cost?* . . . is one of the first questions asked and the last to be answered accurately, (can't estimate without a design, can't design without a program)
- Have an experienced consultant ballpark the potential scale of your project but don't publicize it
- Extrapolate a planning budget (likely to be 3-10% of the project cost)
- Identify possible sources of seed funding for project planning

#### 4. Eg. Costs of Feasibility Studies

Below is the typical range of consulting fees. (Day rates range between \$1,000 and \$2,500). Expenses add 5-20%. These numbers do not include the costs of project administration or historic research.

Business	- \$25,000 to \$40,000
Architectural	- \$35,000 to \$85,000
Funding Raising	- \$35,000 to \$75,000
Transition Plan	- <u>\$25,000 to \$75,000</u>
	<b>\$120,000 - \$275,000</b>

#### 4. Financial Planning

Sources of Capital Planning, Technical Assistance, Organizational Capacity Building, Feasibility Study Funding In the Cultural, Economic and Historic Realms:

- Historic Preservation Agencies - SHPOs
- Arts Councils - Local, State, NEA
- Economic and Regional Development Funds
- Community Foundations
- Private Sector (usually levered by public sector)

#### *Decision Point*

- You now should have enough research to describe your proposed project and prepare planning grant applications.
- Is there enough evidence of potential viability to proceed with more extensive project evaluation and planning?
- Are there sufficient resources to sustain a project planning process?

#### SECTION 2 - *GETTING SERIOUS ABOUT PLANNING*

#### DEVELOPING THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT PLAN

#### 5. The Project Management Plan

- Responds to these questions:
  - What are the goals of the project?
  - How do they respond to community need and program/business goals?
  - How are they to be implemented?
- Methodically study, re-plan and document the project management process.

#### *5a. Establish Project Leadership*

- Establish a Steering Committee comprised of committed, knowledgeable and credible stakeholders (your potential board).
- Identify a project manager responsible for management, coordination and liaison.
- Initiate an Advisory or Building Committee of lead and major donors to the project.
- Identify a project spokesperson.

## 5b. Undertake Strategic Planning

- Engage the project leadership in a professionally facilitated, consensus-building, strategic planning process.\*
- Articulate theatre and project missions.
- Articulate a vision (ultimate achievements) and values (guiding principles) for the theatre.
- Articulate goals and benefits or outcomes.

\* *Can be done as part of the feasibility study*

## 5c. Commission Feasibility Studies

- Strike a Selection Committee and prepare terms of reference for a business or business/architectural feasibility study.

The next 12 slides are *all* about feasibility studies.

- Identify theatre management consultants who do feasibility studies, (check LHAT).
- Issue a call for proposals and contract a theatre management specialist or theatre project manager to lead a study team.

## The Feasibility Research Sequence

- Business Feasibility (Function)
- Architectural Feasibility (Form)
- Funding Raising Feasibility (Financing)
- Transition Plans (Action Plans)
- Often, the first two studies are combined and a team of consulting professionals is needed.

See? Form follows function.

## Caveats

- *Beware the architect who wants to be your theatre management/business planner.*
- *Beware the theatre management/business planner who wants to design your theatre.*
- *Theatres are extremely complex buildings. Rehabilitation planning requires numerous qualified specialists.*

## Key Components of the Business Feasibility Study

1. **Project Background** (The Context or Story)
2. **Market, Needs Analysis** (Where are we?)
3. **Program Analysis** (Where do we want to go?)
4. **Design Analysis** (How will we get there?)
5. **Resource Analysis** (How much will it cost?)
6. **Implementation** (Who will do what, when?)

## Business Feasibility Phase I: Project Background

1. Acknowledgements
2. Purpose of the Study, Community Context
3. Project History
4. Proposed Goals, Program Assumptions
5. Preliminary Condition Assessment
6. Statement of Historical Significance

## Business Feasibility Phase II: Market and Needs Assessment

1. Project History - Preliminary Evaluation
2. Demographics of Market Area
3. Local Activity/Arts Audience Data
4. Site Options (to establish cost/benefit)
5. Supply Data (inventory of facilities)
6. Prospective User Groups
7. Demand Analysis
8. Summary of Market and Needs Assessment

## Business Feasibility Phase III: Program Analysis

1. Vision, Mission and Goals Review
2. Ownership/Governance/Mgt Structure
3. Use Program and Policies
4. Proposed Event Calendar
5. Design Criteria and Conditions
6. Outline Building Program

## Business Feasibility Phase IV: Design Analysis

1. Basic Condition Assessment
2. Functional Evaluation
3. Design Implications
4. Design Concept
5. Design Review
6. Estimates of Probable Capital Cost

## Business Feasibility Phase V: Resource Analysis

1. Estimate of Probable Project Costs
2. Proposed Sources of Funding
3. Staffing and Operations Plan
4. Annual Budgets, Selectivity Analyses
5. Project Cash Flow
6. Optional Economic Impact Analysis

## Business Feasibility Phase VI: Synthesis Phase

1. Action Plan (who does what next?)
2. Schedule or Critical Path
3. Final Assessment of Project Feasibility

## Key Components of the Architectural Feasibility Study

1. **Project Background** (Context, Mission, etc.)
2. **Condition Assessment** (Facility Analysis, Site Analysis, Design, Preservation Criteria)
3. **Program Analysis** (Building Program, Planning Concepts)
4. **Resource Analysis** (Capital Cost Estimates)
5. **Implementation** (Action Plan, Schedule)

## Key Components of the Fund Raising Feasibility Study

1. **Project Background** (Context, Mission, etc.)
2. **Community Context** (Funding History)
3. **Program Description** (Case Statement)
4. **Resource Analysis** (Donors, Net Income)
5. **Implementation** (Campaign Structure, Cost, Timing)

*The fund raising study is the final test of feasibility. The next steps take planning beyond feasibility testing, provided there is seed financing in place to proceed.*

## Key Components of the Transition Plan

This is the "what do we do now?" plan.

It is important to update, integrate and synthesize the findings of the business, architectural and fund raising feasibility studies into a **transition plan** for financing, program **and** project development.

The plan outlines milestones and strategies and how you will accomplish each. Ideally, an **Executive Director and Project Manager** will translate the feasibility studies into transition plans and business plans.

## 5d. Prepare the Business Plan

The Executive Director develops:

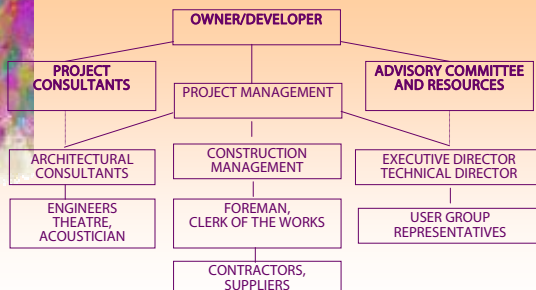
- Mission statement and company profile
- Community needs/industry analyses
- Programming plan
- Marketing plan
- Operating policies
- Human resources
- Financial plan

## 5e. Ratify the Project Structure

The Project Manager (and Ex. Director):

- Update project goals, conditions, design criteria and proposed organizational structure to align with the findings of the feasibility studies, transition plan and the business plan.
- Prepare job descriptions, action plans and cash flow projections based on plans to date.

## Eg. Project Organization Chart



## 5f. Prepare Job Descriptions

The Project Manager:

- Prepares clearly defined terms of reference for all project personnel - a well organized, well briefed and well qualified team will be more efficient in offering options and creative solutions to address project goals.
- Prepares job descriptions for facility staff and contractors, including project development responsibilities.

### 5g. Draft Project Action Plan

The Project Manager:

- Prepares a step by step, Gantt or bar chart of construction progress, then with the Executive Director's help:
  - Integrates concurrent project activities such as marketing and fund raising
  - Integrates concurrent business development activities such as booking, special event planning, personnel recruitment, equipment and inventory orders and other milestones

### 5h. Prepare the Cash Flow

The Executive Director:

- Evaluates job descriptions to determine salary and fee estimates
- Prepares projections of revenues and expenses over the duration of the project for business start up

The Project Manager:

- Prepares projections of construction and project administration costs

### Summary of Project Plan

- Mission Statements and Programs Goals
- Project Goals and Design Criteria
- Conditions (Deadlines, Budgets, Policies)
- Marketing and Development Strategies
- Operating Structure
- Project Team and Job Descriptions
- Action Plan and Critical Path
- Financial Plan and Cash Flow Projections
- Tendering and Construction Oversight

### Decision Point

- You now should be in a position to evaluate the risk in proceeding with architectural design development studies and project financing efforts.
- Design Development Studies should provide sufficient research, investigation and analysis to ensure that design choices meet standards for best practices and are appropriate for the project.

## SECTION 3 - COUNT-DOWN TO OPENING NIGHT

### IMPLEMENTING THE PROJECT PLAN

### 6. Implementation

- Confirm financing to guarantee fees, salaries and initial project costs
- Confirm and/or recruit Board Chairperson, Capital Campaign Chair, Executive Director, Technical Director, Project Manager, Design Team and Construction Manager
- Launch the "Quiet Phase" of the capital campaign

## 7. Contract Project Consultants

- The architectural design principal should have specific training and experience in theatre design and restoration
- A local project architect may be required
- Engineering consultants, technical theatre consultants, restoration consultants and construction management should be coordinated by the architectural principal and can be selected with owner input

## 8. Architectural Services

Architectural Services includes such preservation architectural services as:

- *Site research, investigation and analysis*
- *Design development*
- *Construction documents*
- *Bidding, negotiations, construction contracts*
- *Construction and contract administration*

The next 7 slides provide more information about architectural services

## Site Research, Investigation, and Analysis- Historic Structures Report

- Preliminary survey
- Archival and literature search
- Statement of significance
- As found documentation
- Condition survey
- Conservation analysis
- Fabric analysis
- Archeological research
- Building chronology
- Landscape analysis
- Engineering investigation
- Code profile
- Envisioned programs
- Interpretive programs
- Alternative treatments
- Preservation plan
- Cost estimates

## Site Research, Investigation, and Analysis - Master Plan

- Background, brief history
- Condition survey
- As found documentation
- Preservation philosophy
- Engineering investigation
- Code profile
- User needs analysis
- Envisioned programs
- Concept (floor plans)
- Cost Estimates

## Schematic Design

- Architectural design drawings
  - plans
  - sections
  - elevations
- Engineering reports and calculations
- Description of materials
- Statement of probable cost

## Design Development

- Final architectural design drawings
  - plans, sections, elevations, major details
- Engineering design document
- Outline specifications
- Statement of probable cost
- Preliminary approvals from code authorities

## Construction Documents

- Working drawings
- Final engineering documents
- Detailed specifications
- Final, updated statement of probable costs

## Bidding, Negotiation, Contracting

- The tendering process is supervised by the architect.
- Financing should be in place before tenders are invited.
- The seating and demolition contracts are typically pre-bid.
- Business development - programming, audience and community relations, resource management and the capital campaign - should all be proceeding simultaneously.

## Architectural Supervision - Construction and Contract Administration

- **Construction observation** - analyze emerging conditions, supervise field tests, prepare punch lists, conduct final inspection and issue certificate of completion
- **Contract administration** - review shop drawings, samples, special work, prepare certificates of payment and change orders
- **Commissioning** - prepare construction record drawings, equipment manuals, preservation maintenance plans and a final report

## Architectural, Engineering, Specialty Consultant Fees

Depending upon the number of team members and size of the project, the total fees can range from 11-18% of the project's hard costs. The allocation is usually:

- Research, investigation and analysis - negotiated
- Schematic drawings - 12 - 15%
- Design development - 12 - 20%
- Construction documents, bids, contracts - 45 - 50%
- Construction and contract administration - 20 - 25%

## 9. Business Start-Up

In advance of opening:

- Program bookings (12-18 months in advance)
- Marketing, fund raising, sponsor solicitation
- Special event planning for opening week
- Facility staff recruitment and training
- Furniture, fixtures, equipment, inventory order
- Licenses, concession and hospitality contracts
- Signage and donor recognition plaques

## 10. Project Communications

Pre-opening marketing activity strives to:

- Inform and engage a large constituency
- Establish distinctive positioning
- Address goals with integrity and consistency
- Develop "house trust"
- Reflect the current and future programs
- Set the tone of the theatre, reflect its values
- Build audiences, membership, donors

## Project Pitfalls

- ### National Cultural Facilities Study, 1994 Findings:
- Facilities are central to the arts. Facility risk is program risk. Program \$ support facilities.
  - Most facilities investment is made **without adequate planning**.
  - Resources are mistimed and mismatched to facilities development.
  - Facility activity is both continual and cyclical – there are no start and end dates.
  - Arts organizations and their managers often choose a difficult path.

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- ### National Cultural Facilities Study, 1994 *Inadequate* Planning Means:
- Lack of broad-based planning
    - Failure to study mission, capacity & market
    - Narrow focus on site & real estate
    - Advisors limited to architects, capital campaign planners and board members
  - Underestimates time & sophistication required
  - Mismatch of project to organizational capacity
  - Committing too early to spur fund raising
  - No use of planning & project mgt. services

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- ### Common Project Failures
- Goals and objectives are not well defined
  - The building and the architecture drive the project instead of the program and the arts
  - Decision-makers lack specific experience in theatre and a singular focus on the project
  - A "field of dreams" approach pervades the project – if we build it, they will come
  - A qualified staff team are not hired to manage the business and the project from the outset.

"As long as we have an Executive Director by opening night, we'll be just fine . . . ." (!?)

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## Project Scale and Scope

The average historic theatre project costs between \$4 and \$30 million, opens in 5 to 10 years from inception and requires dozens of consultants.

## Last Word:

*"No matter how much wisdom may go into planning, . . . the measure of its success always will be in the spirit and mettle of the individuals engaged in its execution.*

*No matter how much treasure may support a project, or how elaborate its organization, or how detailed and farsighted its operational scheme, the human element is always the central one."*

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