

Bethesda Theatre

Original Name: Bethesda Theatre (built as Boro Theatre)

Address: 7719 Wisconsin Avenue
Bethesda, Maryland 20815

Architect(s): John Eberson

Year of Construction: 1938

Current Status: Jazz and Supper Club

Original Use: Entertainment

The Bethesda Theatre initially opened its doors as a movie theater (known as the Boro Theatre for one year) in 1938. It was designed by the firm of the world-renowned "Dean of American Theatre Architects," John Eberson. It featured a notable tower and marquee on a banded brick facade, reflecting the excitement of the industrial age and the allure of movies. Although a larger shopping complex was planned, only flanking stores were built along with a 500-car parking lot behind the 1,000-seat theater. Popular features were the high fidelity sound system, latest projection equipment, and air conditioning which was rare in the 1930's. It was also used for community events such as high school graduations.

In 1983, the theater was converted to a restaurant/movie house and re-opened as the Bethesda Cinema & Drafthouse, later known as the Bethesda Theatre Café. Tiered concrete floors were built over top of the original sloped floor and the original fixed auditorium seats were removed to accommodate small dining tables. In 2001, construction was approved to build a large apartment building above and adjacent to the theatre. ADSW advocated for a more sensitively designed project and likened the bulk of the new construction to a shark devouring its prey, but was not successful in altering the plan. The project also restored the theater structure and interior for use as a live performance venue that eventually failed and went into foreclosure.

In 2012, new owners took charge and reopened the theater as a jazz and supper club in early 2013.



Static (Fixed) Google Map:



Dynamic (Searchable and Expandable) Google Map:

<https://tinyurl.com/yxkw7f68>