

Proposed office development of Hobart's Odeon Theatre on hold until local market improves



The proposed Odeon Theatre development.

THE developers of a proposed inner-city office tower on the site of the popular Odeon Theatre say they are waiting for the Hobart market to improve before moving forward with the project.

Melbourne development group Riverlee bought the Liverpool St building from the C3 Church after the church moved to South Hobart in 2011.

Riverlee's proposal is to demolish the rear of the theatre, retain the existing facade and redevelop the front foyer into shop space, with a 12-storey office tower behind.

"We are committed to the project and long term investors in Hobart," sales and marketing director Kristine Lee told the *Mercury*.



An interior view of the proposed development.



Two views of the proposed Odeon Theatre development: The Watchorn St side, left, and the Liverpool St side.

“It’s good to see some positive activity in the market after some years from Parliament Square, to our new Premier Will Hodgman and the Myer development. However the market still has some work to do so.

“We are anxiously waiting for the market to pick up, to underpin a project of this size and scale.”

While the Odeon is not heritage listed, the council and developer previously agreed the building does have some heritage significance.

The 1100-seat theatre had previously been home to the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra for 27 years and was once owned by the ABC.

In its hey day, the Odeon was a movie theatre.

Earlier this year, Riverlee was granted a two-year extension on its development application from the Hobart City Council.

Alderman Bill Harvey voted against the project in 2011 and said the developer should consider retaining the theatre.

“We’re knocking cinemas down just when we’re getting a bit of an arts revival with the success of Dark Mofo and bigger audiences at the Theatre Royal,” he said.

“I just think it’s a bit of a backwards step considering the cultural scene we’re trying to grow in Hobart.”

Most recently, the Odeon was the setting of several Dark Mofo events, a Queens of the Stone Age gig and also Festival of Voices performances in past years.

Riverlee also owns an adjoining property on Murray St, with plans for a three-level commercial building with ground floor retail spaces and commercial offices above.