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Paramount Center at Emerson College honored

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Emerson College's Paramount Center is the newest component of their campus relocation from Boston's Back Bay residential neighborhood to the city's Theatre District. Designed by Elkus Manfredi Architects and completed less than a year ago, the Paramount Center has already garnered four major design awards.

The jury for the Boston Society of Architects 2010 Honor Award for Design Excellence described the 180,000 s/f mixed-use project as "a remarkable feat of adaptive reuse...accomplished in a dense urban neighborhood with limited street frontage. Its exterior and interior look beautiful, and the systems upgrades are fantastic."

The American Institute of Architects New England Chapter 2010 Design Award jury wrote: "The plan to put these buildings together was ingenious. Design challenges...were huge..., the restoration was meticulous, and the interiors are striking."

Two additional design awards to date honor special aspects of the Center's design. The Boston Preservation Alliance's 2010 Preservation Achievement Award recognizes the project and team for restoration of the landmark Paramount Theatre, which reinstates it as a central character in its historic environment, while connecting it with new construction that includes living space for 262 students, a black box theater, rehearsal studios, sound stage, scene/prop production shop, and a screening room.

The 2011 Architecture Merit Award of the U.S. Institute for Theatre Technology honors Elkus Manfredi's technical sophistication in weaving new theatre technology throughout the Center's restored structures, marrying theatrical legend with the very latest in performing art equipment and expertise.

The project team included: Silverman Associates, development consultant; Bond Brothers Construction; Amann & Whitney, structural engineers; Vanderweil, MEP/FP engineers; Auerbach Pollock Friedlander, theater and SVC consultant; Acentech, acoustical consultant; Cline Bettridge Bernstein, lighting designer; EverGreene Painting Studios, decorative painting and finishes; Sussman/Prejza, graphic design; Haley & Aldrich, geotech engineer; Nitsch Engineering, civil engineer; Hughes Associates, fire protection engineer; Lerch Bates & Associates, vertical transportation consultant; Jack Fogg, specifications; and Norton Remmer, code consultant.

The Paramount Center is an extraordinary success at its primary job of supporting Emerson College's mission, which is to prepare men and women for positions of leadership in communications and the arts and to contribute to the advancement of society. Formerly three overlooked parcels on a site rich with cultural history — a vacant lot, the once-lavish-then-abandoned Art Deco Paramount cinema, and what remained of the birthplace of American vaudeville, the Bijou Theatre — have now become one vibrant place of immersion where Emerson students eat, sleep, and breathe the performing arts.

