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Suffolk Const. begins \$26m renovation of the Modern Theatre for Suffolk University

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Suffolk University and Suffolk Construction Co., Inc. recently celebrated the beginning of construction on the Modern Theatre residence hall project in Downtown Crossing.

Suffolk Construction will manage the \$26 million renovation and construction project, which will add a new theater to the Downtown Crossing district and create 197 suite-style units for Suffolk University students. In addition to the residence hall, the building will feature a 184-seat theater and lobby space that will also serve as a gallery. The new Suffolk University residence hall and theater is scheduled to open in fall 2010.

The Modern Theatre project is being designed and constructed to meet green building and LEED certification standards. The project team will utilize environmentally friendly materials and systems throughout the construction phase, and architect CBT has designed the building to ensure its clean and efficient operation once construction is completed and the facility is fully functional.

Suffolk Construction's renovation of the Modern Theatre will be complicated and challenging for many reasons due to the tight site and the building's location in a bustling urban neighborhood. However, the preservation of the building's historic facade will be an especially complex component of the project that will require heightened levels of attention to detail and workmanship.

The project team will carefully dismantle the cracking facade one stone at a time and will transport the stones to a restoration expert at another location. After the original stones are completely restored off site, the project team will carefully recreate the historic facade with the refurbished stones and material.

The Modern Theatre building has a storied history. The building was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 as part of the Washington St. Theatre District, and in 1995 it was designated a Boston Landmark.

The building was initially constructed as retail and warehouse space in 1876. In 1913, it was converted into the Modern, the first Boston theater designed specifically to show films. Admission was 15 cents, and musical accompaniment was provided on an organ designed specifically for use in the theater. In 1928, the Modern Theatre premiered the first Boston showing of a "talkie" – "The Jazz Singer."

The theater also introduced the double feature in an effort to compete with newer theaters showing movies and vaudeville together. By the 1980s, the building fell out of use and was considered beyond repair until Suffolk University became directly involved in the restoration of the building.

Suffolk University and Suffolk Construction have both demonstrated strong leadership in sustainable

building practices. Suffolk University has a history of working diligently to find creative solutions to environmental challenges. The prestigious institution consistently instills the values of sustainability through education and practice. Suffolk Construction has also assumed a leadership role in sustainable building practices and the management of green building construction projects. Suffolk Construction managed construction of Suffolk University's 10 West St. Residences, which recently achieved LEED Gold certification status.

Suffolk Construction is also currently managing the extensive renovation of the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse project, which is one of the largest federal historic renovation project attempting LEED Gold certification.

Suffolk Construction also recently established a LEED National Committee focused on researching effective sustainability practices and was ranked #35 on Engineering News Record's prestigious list of "Top Green Contractors" in the nation in 2008.

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