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HEADLINE: Romancing Stone -- Theater Backers Rallying Support for Premiere of
' JFK'

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BODY:

Oliver Stone has done a nice Hollywood makeup job on Dallas, but some community leaders hope the " JFK" movie director eventually will leave a more lasting impression.

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A movement is under way to bring the world premiere of Stone's movie about the assassination of President Kennedy to the Texas Theater -- and use proceeds of the event to restore the theater.

The 60-year-old movie house, located in the heart of Oak Cliff, is where alleged assassin Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested about an hour after the president was shot to death.

"It would be a natural," theater manager Pamela Mount said of the world premiere idea. "I would love to see the searchlights out in front that night."

Among those lobbying for the movie premiere -- or planning to get involved in the effort -- are the Texas Theater Historical Society, the Oak Cliff Chamber of Commerce, the Jefferson Area Association and the Southern Dallas Development Corporation.

A letter hand-delivered to the " JFK" set recently sought to enlist Stone's support, and a campaign to woo studio Warner Brothers Inc. is being contemplated.

A spokesman for Stone and his traveling entourage, known as Camelot Productions Inc., said it was too early in the movie-making process to
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consider possible venues for a premiere.

That decision typically follows completion of a movie, spokesman Roger Armstrong said, adding that the decision also can involve many people other than

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the director and the studio.

"It can be any number of combinations -- as many ways as you can imagine," he said.

Those working to bring the premiere to the Texas Theater say that holding the event there would be most logical, considering the theater's relevance to the subject of the movie, tentatively titled " JFK. "

Although details have been shrouded in secrecy since film crews arrived in town last month, it is widely believed that Stone plans to cast new light on theories surrounding the Kennedy assassination.

Jim Reid, president of the Southern Dallas Development Corp., dispatched one of his assistants to the " JFK" set two weeks ago with a letter seeking Stone's help in restoring the theater.

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Referring to the theater's "great historical significance," Reid wrote that the building is "badly in need of renovation."

The letter received no immediate response, and Reid is planning to join forces with the other Oak Cliff neighborhood groups to lobby executives at Warner Brothers for the premiere.

"If it makes logic to the studio, they'll do it," he said. "And I think there's a real business element here."

Located in the center of the Oak Cliff business district at 231 W. Jefferson Blvd., the Texas Theater seats more than 1,300 people.

Unlike other historical sites associated with the Kennedy assassination, however, the building has been allowed to deteriorate. Under threat of demolition, it was rescued last year by a group that evolved into the Texas Theater Historical Society.

The group purchased the theater for \$ 175,000 and now shows second-run features for \$ 2 a ticket -- with half the proceeds set aside for a planned restoration.

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Mount, vice president of the historical society, said " JFK" crews performed some limited work on the outside of the theater before filming scenes there this month. But another estimated \$ 2 million in restoration ultimately will be needed, she said.

"We bought a very, very old building that needs a lot, a lot of work" she said.

Also eager to see the theater renovated is the Jefferson Area Association, an organization of more than 100 neighboring merchants and residents along Jefferson Street.

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Laura Mulry, executive director of the association, said her group gladly will form a coalition with the others to encourage Warner Brothers to premiere "JFK" there.

Mulry said she hopes within a few weeks to begin discussion about what she called an opportunity to show other Oak Cliff business owners what can be accomplished through hard work.

"It is the key," she said of the theater. "It's the cornerstone to revitalizing Oak Cliff."

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