

Small-town theater has leading role in architectural study

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Before this semester, three Tulane School of Architecture students may not have known much about Oak Grove, La., or its Fiske Theatre, but they are becoming experts on both. They are driving nearly five hours to the far northeastern corner of Louisiana for a historic research project on the Fiske, one of the state's small, mid-century theaters.



Located in Oak Grove, La., the Fiske Theatre is the subject of a research project by Tulane architecture and preservation students. (Photo from the Fiske Theatre)

The theater was established in 1928 and is owned by the [West Carroll Chamber of Commerce](#). Still an active theater, movies are shown at the Fiske on Thursdays through Sundays.

The students are researching and documenting the mid-century Streamline Moderne-era architecture of the Fiske, which was designed by the late B. W. Stevens, who also designed the now-demolished Joy-Strand Theatre on Baronne Street in New Orleans.

They will measure the existing building, complete a stylistic analysis, compile

historical documents and compare the Fiske to other regional theaters. The students also will reproduce the blueprints of the theatre, which had been lost, and prepare documentation to assist in its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, as the Fiske is now eligible.

Architect Andrew Liles, an adjunct faculty member in the Tulane [School of Architecture](#), and professor John H. Stubbs, director of the school's master of preservation studies program, are overseeing the work, having received a Dean's Fund for Excellence grant from the school.

Liles said the team is thrilled to study and participate in the rebirth “of such an outstanding piece of American architecture,” which was a cutting-edge design of its time.

On the [Fiske's Facebook page](#), the team members are asking residents of the Oak Grove area to send in their favorite memories of the theater and their thoughts about the Fiske's importance to the community. Responses are being emailed to [Gabrielle Begue](#) by April 30.