Levine's letter
Historical panel flub

The news that the Boyd Theater is being demolished to make way for a Target store is just another sign that the Philadelphia Historical Commission has allowed developers to walk all over community interests and have their schemes sail through the approval process. Philadelphia now has the dishonor of being the largest city in the nation without a classic-era movie theater.

As Inga Saffron reported, community leaders are willing to put up cash to hire an architect to come up with a less damaging solution ("Neighbors take on the cost of good design," June 19). That means Philadelphians are paying twice - in taxes to support the irresponsible Historical Commission, and in fees for an architect.

Ronald B. Levine, Philadelphia, levineresearch@aol.com

Sherman's letter published by the *Inquirer*
What really happened in the Boyd review

The city Historical Commission did not rubber-stamp the Boyd Theatre project, leaving neighbors to hire an architect to clean up the mess ("Historical panel flub," June 25). Instead, at the start of our review, the developer withdrew the tower portion of the proposal, to which the neighbors had objected, to allow for a collaborative redesign.

During the review, the developer sought decisions only on the proposed rehabilitation of the facades of the historic Boyd and Alexander buildings, and on the construction of an infill building on Chestnut Street, between the buildings. The commission approved the rehabilitation of the historic facades but rejected the infill building, insisting on a redesign to make it compatible. We will consider a revised design at an upcoming public meeting.

Sam Sherman Jr., chair, Philadelphia Historical Commission

Sherman's letter submitted to the *Inquirer*
What really happened in the Boyd review

Ronald B. Levine's letter demonstrates the danger of polemics masquerading as reporting on historic preservation ("Historical panel flub," June 25). Mr. Levine, who did not attend the June 12 public meeting at which the Philadelphia Historical Commission reviewed the latest Boyd Theater application, depended on *Inquirer* critic Inga Saffron's recounting of the review to formulate his opinions of the Commission and its decision ("Taking on the cost of good design," June 19).

In her commentary of June 19, Ms. Saffron implied that the Commission had "rubber-stamped" the Boyd project, leaving the neighbors to hire an architect to clean up the mess. The Commission did not. Instead, at the start of the Commission's review, the developer withdrew the tower portion of the proposal, to which the neighbors had objected, to allow for a collaborative redesign. During the review, the developer only sought the Commission's decisions on the proposed rehabilitation of the facades of the historic Boyd and Alexander buildings and the construction of an infill building on Chestnut Street, between the historic

buildings. The Commission approved the rehabilitation of the historic facades, but rejected the infill building, insisting on its redesign to make it compatible with the flanking historic buildings.

The Commission's design review process functions best when an informed public participates. As a commentator, Saffron is free to express her opinions, but, as a reporter, she is obligated to fully and faithfully inform her readers of the facts upon which her opinions are based. When the public is misinformed, it is deprived of the opportunity to participate constructively and, subsequently, preservation suffers. The Commission will consider a revised design at an upcoming public meeting. I hope that Mr. Levine will attend, participate, and witness the workings of the Commission for himself.

Sam Sherman Jr., chair, Philadelphia Historical Commission