

*Lucas*

A STUDY  
OF THE  
FUND RAISING POTENTIAL

OF

BACK ALLEY THEATRE  
VAN NUYS, CALIFORNIA

CONDUCTED BY:

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## THE PURPOSE AND METHOD OF STUDY

This planning study was conducted to determine whether \$850,000 may be raised through a capital campaign for the Back Alley Theatre, Van Nuys, California. Funds sought in the proposed campaign would be used for the relocation of the Theatre to the Sky Park Plaza, Roscoe Boulevard, Van Nuys, California (approximately five miles from the present site).

The relocation plan includes the following features: expansion from 4,500 to 13,000 square feet of space; an increase from 99 to 348 seats; and, provision of adequate space for rehearsal, dressing, production, storage of materials and administration/business offices. This expansion would change the status of the Back Alley Theatre from Equity Waiver to Equity and would establish the first mid-size theatre facility in the area.

Between October 18 and November 11, 1988, Laura Butler, Study Director, conducted forty-six (46) personal and confidential interviews among fifty-one (51) members of the Back Alley Theatre Board of Directors and donors, as well as with corporate and civic leaders and key individuals whose role in the proposed campaign was determined as decisive.

(Due to the fact that four of the interviewees felt too unaware of the Back Alley Theatre to fully respond, and, several of the interviews were done in pairs with spouses, only forty-two of the forty-six interview response sheets were scorable for this report.)

Interviewee selection was made in an attempt to obtain responses from a valid and sufficient cross-section of the potential constituency for a capital campaign for the Back Alley Theatre.

To assure candid and useful comments from each respondent, all interviews were conducted on a confidential basis. Actual interview reports are not included in this presentation and no one is quoted by name. An alphabetical list of the persons interviewed is included as Appendix "A."

Each interview was based upon a discussion of a Case Statement prepared by the Back Alley Theatre with suggestions from Ketchum, Inc.'s staff. The Case Statement is a brief summary of the theatre's accomplishments, growth, financial status, and the need for relocation and expansion. It is included in this report as Appendix "B."

A proposed Chart of Standards of Giving (Appendix "C") was developed for the study by officers of Ketchum, Inc., based on Ketchum's experience of over 70 years in managing fund-raising campaigns for nonprofit institutions. This chart projects the gift levels (Top Gift, Top Ten Gifts, Top Twenty Gifts, etc.) that must be approximated for a successful \$850,000 campaign.

The Case Statement and Chart of Standards of Giving were discussed with each interviewee prior to recording their responses in the study.

Of the forty-two (42) scored interviews, nine (9) were members of the Back Alley Theatre Board of Directors and seventeen (17) were annual donors. With some overlap as Board members, among the remaining interviewees were seven (7) representatives of corporations (including attorney groups), seven (7) foundation executives, and sixteen (16) individuals in the Top Ten to Top Twenty giving potential range.

## INGREDIENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN

This study was designed to determine the presence of eight basic and necessary prerequisites which are essential for conducting a successful capital campaign.

1. The Back Alley Theatre, by virtue of the quality of its productions in live theatre and service to the community (through cultural enhancement), must be viewed as having an image worthy of support by its potential constituency.
2. There must be a sufficient degree of understanding of the need for relocation and growth of the Back Alley Theatre to sustain a mid-size theatre audience.
3. The relocation and expansion plan, to meet the need, must be acceptable to the theatre's potential giving constituency.
4. The relocation and expansion must have a reasonably high priority for support among the potential giving constituency who must also be receptive to a fund-raising effort on behalf of the theatre.

5. Potential donorship must be revealed which would support the standards of giving developed from actual experience in similar campaigns with goals of approximately \$850,000.
  
6. A sufficient number of interested and influential leaders who will volunteer to create the campaign committee must be revealed.
  
7. The Back Alley Theatre Board of Directors must demonstrate donorship and commitment strong enough to function as the core volunteer group for the campaign committee. They must express the willingness to work to build upon the core group to create the full organization chart of volunteers needed in the campaign.
  
8. The timing for the campaign must be seen as appropriate by the potential giving constituency.

## FINDINGS

The information and opinions gathered in forty-two (42) interviews conducted on behalf of the Back Alley Theatre have been compiled and analyzed by a committee of officers of Ketchum, Inc. along with the Study Director.

In order to be most effective in getting thorough feedback from each interviewee, the Study Director first went through the survey to obtain their candid opinions. She then explored certain questions with the respondents, in order to gain more in-depth answers and insights into the responses they voiced earlier in the interview session.

In interviews with Board members, the Study Director took time to stress the importance of certain campaign prerequisites; i.e., the job description of volunteers and leadership, the validity of the Chart of Standards of Giving, timing, and the essential need for dedicated top level leadership.

As a further strategy to achieve thoroughness and accuracy, the Study Director periodically debriefed with the client (Laura Zucker) to get a perspective on early results and to be better prepared to provide answers to questions with the remaining interviewees in the study.

The findings from all interviewees' form the basis upon which this report and its recommendations have been prepared.



1. Public Image of the Back Alley Theatre

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
	(42)	(100%)	(9)	(3)	(13)
Excellent	23	55%	5	3	4
Good	16	38%	4	0	8
Average	1	2%	0	0	0
Poor	0	0%	0	0	0
Unaware	2	5%	0	0	1

In combination, ninety-three percent (93%) of all respondents commented that the image of the Back Alley Theatre, from the quality of the productions they had viewed, was good to excellent. Only five percent (5%) stated that they were unaware of the theatre's image.

However, many respondents qualified their statements by saying that they believe the Back Alley Theatre has a low public profile and that they were concerned that more marketing efforts would be essential, especially in light of the theatre's proposed threefold growth.

Representative comments:

"The general public doesn't know that the Back Alley Theatre is there."

"I don't think the public is aware of the Back Alley Theatre."

"Theatre goers know it's there."

"It's reputation is tremendous - for those who've attended."

"Among entertainers it's reputation is excellent, but I don't think the public is aware of the theatre."

## 2. Understanding of the Need

	<u>Total</u> (42)	<u>Percent</u> (100%)	<u>Board</u> (9)	<u>Top Ten</u> (3)	<u>Next Twenty</u> (13)
Understands	36	86%	9	3	13
Does Not Understands	4	9%	0	0	0
Accepts As Stated	1	2%	0	0	0
Does Not Accept	1	3%	0	0	0

In advance of each interview, the interviewee was given a copy of the Case Statement and Chart of Standards of Giving, which presented the need and plan, to determine their level of understanding of the proposed relocation and expansion project.

Thirty-six (36) respondents or eighty-six percent (86%) said that they understood the need for relocation and growth of the Back Alley Theatre to create a mid-size facility for performing arts in the area. Only nine percent (9%) (or four respondents) said that they did not understand the need as stated.

### Representative comments:

"Someone needs to form a non-conventional theatre."

"The Valley a viable location for this."

"It's a facility whose time has come - the Valley needs cultural input."

"Although I think the growth is logical my personal experience is that supporting a 350 seat theatre is tough."

"I have no idea of the theatre market in the Valley."

"With proper public relations and heightened awareness, it might work."

"A mid-size theatre is a need in the Valley that wants to be filled."

### 3. Opinion of the Plan to Meet the Need

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Right Plan	23	55%	8	3	8
Wrong Plan	3	7%	0	0	0
Accepts the Plan	5	12%	0	0	1
Does Not Know	11	26%	1	0	4

Each interviewee was asked their opinion of the proposed Theatre's relocation and expansion as being the right plan to meet what they understood to be a serious need in the Back Alley Theatre's future, and/or in providing greater cultural resources to the local area.

Only fifty-five percent (55%), or twenty-three (23) respondents, stated that they felt the proposal, presented in the Case Statement, was the right plan. In combination, thirty-three percent (33%) (14 respondents) said that it was the wrong plan or that they did not have enough information to make a judgement. Twelve percent (12%), (5 respondents), said that they were simply accepting validity of the the proposal based on their respect for Laura Zucker and Allan Miller's judgment.

Representative comments:

"I like the facility itself, but not the location."

"It's the right plan, except they should move to a more affluent area; the site is not sexy."

"I feel in moving to Roscoe Blvd., they're alienating their audience."

"If people want to see a show, you can't keep them out regardless of the location."

"I'm concerned that the location is too far away from the good part of the Valley where patronage comes from."

"I am doubtful that I would travel to that site; they will have to build a case for the location."

"Is the Board prepared to answer the question of what the Back Alley Theatre's future would be if something should happen to Laura or Allan?"

"I hope they look hard for another location, it's too close to the airport."

"The Los Angeles Theatre Center is failing. the Back Alley must do a marketing study first to see if their audience will follow them."

"350 seat audiences have had a hard time surviving."

"I'm simply going along with their expertise."

"I have two reservations; management must delegate responsibility to capable people and I'm afraid they have a lethargic Board."

"I don't have enough information, technically, to answer this question."

"The Los Angeles Theatre Center grew and has never met its projections. They will have to validate their expansion."

"I'm very concerned about a leased space."

"The size of this theatre is wrong for survival. Advertising becomes prohibitively expensive."

"I believe the Back Alley Theatre project can go, but the leased facility issue might become their biggest problem."

"They will need to do some special PR to enhance awareness and use artistic draw."

"The plan is the wrong plan from the point of view of economic feasibility and location."

The fifty-five percent (55%) response reflects a just better than average support of the belief that the proposed relocation site and threefold growth is the "right plan" for the Back Alley Theatre.

The wide variation in comments reflects the interviewee's basic concerns over the desirability of the site, perceived limitations with a leased space, the absence of hard data to support projections on audience draw, validity of the financial projections, doubts about management expertise and the need for details on the construction of the theatre. Taken in sum interviewees had difficulty in judging the plan as sound based on the information at hand.

#### 4. Priority Rating of the Project

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
High	13	31%	7	1	8
Reasonable	18	43%	2	2	5
Low	9	21%	0	0	0
Unnecessary	2	5%	0	0	0

Each interviewee was asked to rate their priority for making a gift to the Back Alley Theatre's relocation and expansion project, in light of their other philanthropic concerns.

In combination, seventy-four percent (74%) of the respondents stated that they would give reasonable to high priority to making a gift to the project. It should also be noted that 100% of the Board members interviewed and 100% of the Top Ten to Top

Twenty potential donors interviewed rated their priority of giving as reasonable to high. However, study notes reveal that among the wider interview audience there is considerable softness on the subject of "priority".

Representative comments:

"Among my charitable gift obligations, I would rate the Back Alley Theatre as third."

"I would not give to this project. I'm not interested in what they're doing."

"It's possible I would make a gift, but I'm not eager to give to a capital campaign."

"The priority of my gift depends on its visibility."

"In 1989, this project gets my top priority."

"This project does not come within the guidelines of our foundation."

"I would have to give reasonable to low priority to this project. My interests lie in social welfare and health care concerns."

"To give this project low priority. I have other commitments."

"I would give the project reasonable priority. My expectation of its success is not high."

##### 5. Appropriateness Of A Campaign

One hundred percent (100%) of all respondents stated that they felt a capital campaign was an appropriate method for raising money for the Back Alley Theatre's relocation and expansion project.

One hundred percent (100%) of the Board members and Top Ten potential donors interviewed stated that they felt campaigning was appropriate.

6. Receptiveness To The Campaign

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Receptive	16	38%	4	1	5
Unreceptive	3	7%	0	0	0
Indifferent	5	12%	2	1	1
Don't Know	18	43%	3	1	7

Interviewees were asked whether, in their opinion, the constituency to which the Back Alley Theatre could appeal for support would be receptive to a campaign to raise \$850,000 for the relocation and expansion project.

The results indicated that sixty-two percent (62%) (26 respondents), in combination, felt the potential donorship would be other than receptive to the project. (It must be noted that the greatest percentage of responses here fell under "don't know" (43% or 18 respondents).

Only forty-five percent (45%) of the Board members answered that they felt the giving constituency would be receptive and thirty-five percent (35%) of the Top Ten to Top Twenty potential donors interviewed answered, "receptive."

This doubtfulness regarding donor receptivity is based upon several key concerns:

- a. Most respondents felt that in order to succeed, both in the campaign and later, in sustaining an adequate audience, a great deal more public relations and marketing would be required.
- b. Most respondents felt that the need and plan were not well enough defined, and, the Case not well enough developed with specific details to convince potential donors of the project's scope and worthiness.
- c. Many respondents commented that they very much disliked the Sky Park Plaza location and acoustics and were deeply concerned about parameters such as support of increased staff, the impact of equity salaries on the operational budget, management expertise, donor support of a leased space, and levels of annual support that would be required to make a mid-size theatre viable in the long run.

Representative comments:

"I don't know how receptive the constituency will be, it depends on who you go to."

"I think people will be receptive, But I don't know at what giving level."

"The interest of this foundation would depend on the relatedness to the San Fernando Valley Cultural Foundation."



"I feel donors will be unreceptive to indifferent."

"They will be receptive if you get the right benefactors. I would need to know where their patronage comes from."

"None of the people who know the Back Alley Theatre are in the Los Angeles philanthropic mainstream."

"We are very concerned about the lease."

"I think donors will be indifferent to the Roscoe Blvd. site."

"Before we would be receptive to an appeal, we must look at the audience demographics and expansion, we must know the long range plans for audience expansion and donated income, and we are turning toward programs rather than capital endeavors."

"They will have to do a marketing study among their patrons."

"Donors might be receptive if the project was presented dramatically."

"You must appeal to their vanity."

"I am not familiar with giving trends in Los Angeles. I don't know."

"You must get people involved. You'll have to first showcase the project."

"I don't think people will be receptive to giving."

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7. Standards of Giving - \$850,000 Goal & Top Gift Availability

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
<u>Goal (\$850,000)</u>					
Yes	18	43%	4	1	9
Perhaps	10	24%	1	1	1
No	3	7%	1	1	0
No Response	11	26%	3	0	3

<u>Top Gift (\$200,000)</u>					
Yes	9	21%	5	1	6
Perhaps	10	24%	3	2	1
No	0	0	0	0	0
No Response	23	55%	1	0	6

<u>Top Ten Gifts (\$15,000 to \$100,000)</u>					
Yes	13	31%	4	1	7
Perhaps	10	24%	4	1	3
No	2	5%	0	1	0
No Response	17	40%	1	0	3

<u>Next Twenty Gifts (\$5,000 to \$25,000)</u>					
Yes	16	38%	4	0	0
Perhaps	8	19%	3	2	2
No	2	5%	1	1	0
No Response	16	38%	1	0	3

During each interview, a Standards of Giving Chart was reviewed with the interviewee. The Chart indicates the range and number of gifts necessary for a successful campaign. In this particular study, the goal that was tested was \$850,000; the Top Gift was \$200,000; the Top Ten gifts ranged from \$15,000 to \$100,000; and the Next Twenty gifts ranged from \$5,000 to \$15,000.

One of the most important factors in determining a campaign goal is believability in the minds of those who will ultimately be asked to make the largest gifts. For this reason, the responses of the interviewees in the Top Gift to Top Twenty Gift levels are given close attention by fund counsel.

Responses concerning the availability of goal and top gifts; first from all respondents, and then, from Board members and the Top Ten potential donors can be summarized as follows:

Concerning the attainability of an \$850,000 goal - the combined score for responses "yes" and "perhaps" was, sixty-seven percent (67%) among all respondents, fifty-five percent (55%) for Board members and sixty-seven (67%) for the Top Ten potential donors.

In contrast the combined responses of "no" and "don't know" was, thirty-three percent (33%) for all respondents, forty-four percent (44%) for Board members and thirty-three percent (33%) for the Top Ten potential donors.

Overall, respondents expressed a weak belief that the \$850,000 goal could be reached.

Concerning the availability of the **Top Gift (\$200,000)** - the combined response of "yes" and "perhaps" was forty-four percent (44%) for all respondents, eighty-nine percent (89%) of the Board members, and one hundred percent (100%) of the Top Ten potential donors.

Contrastingly, combined "no" and "don't know" answers were fifty-five percent (55%) from all respondents, eleven percent (11%) from the Board members, and zero percent (0%) from the Top Ten potential donors.

The numbers reveal a moderate belief that a top gift donor could be found. This conclusion is further supported when we notice that the "yes" versus "perhaps" responses were a virtual 50-50 split.

Concerning the **Top Ten Gifts (\$15,000 to \$100,000)** - the combined "yes" and "perhaps" responses were fifty-five percent (55%) from all respondents, eighty-eight percent (88%) from Board members and sixty-seven percent (67%) from the Top Ten potential donors.

The combined "no" and "don't know" answers were forty-five percent (45%) for all respondents, eleven percent (11%) for Board members and thirty-three percent (33%) for the Top Ten potential donors.

Again, because the "yes" versus "perhaps" responses scored at an almost 50-50 split, the number suggests only a moderate belief that the Top Ten donors might be found.

Concerning the Next Twenty Gifts (\$5,000 to \$15,000) - the combined "yes" and "perhaps" responses tallied fifty-seven percent (57%) for all respondents, seventy-seven percent (77%) from the Board members, and sixty-seven percent from the Top Ten potential donors.

In contrast, "no" and "don't know" answers tallied forty-three percent (43%) from among all respondents, twenty-two percent (22%) from the Board members and thirty-three (33%) from the Top Ten potential donors.

When the "yes" versus "perhaps" responses are compared, only a weak to moderate belief was expressed that the Top Twenty donors could be found.

In summary, interviewees expressed a marginal belief that the campaign goal could be reached, and, a weak to moderate belief that donors for the Top Gift and for the Top Ten to Twenty Gift categories could be found.

Representative comments:

"We might reach the goal if a lead gift was given first."

"The size of my gift will depend on the visibility of the commemorative."

"With a different site, I believe the goal is attainable."

"I feel an \$850,000 goal is doubtful."

"I don't know if these gift levels are available; I doubt it."

"I think reaching the goal is unlikely; they don't have the people on the Board to get the gifts."

"I don't know where there patronage comes from."

"The gifts are attainable with the right leadership."

"My gift would not be on the Chart of Standards."

"Whether any of these gifts are available depends on who they go to."

"I have no ideal what their gift sources will be, they'll have to go to people in the industry."

"In regard to the gift levels, I don't who they're going to get to be involved."

8. Willingness to Work As A Campaign Volunteer

*big job*

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Yes	15	36%	6	1	7
Perhaps	6	14%	2	2	0
No	21	50%	1	0	6

In planning for a major capital campaign, the availability of qualified, dedicated volunteers is essential to success. Each interviewee was asked if they would consider working in a volunteer capacity and was given a brief job description of the commitment. Sufficient positive responses would give an early indication as to whether an adequate pool of volunteers would be available in conducting a campaign.

We see from the data that only thirty-six percent (36%) of all respondents, and, most importantly, sixty-seven percent (67%) of the Board members, thirty-three percent (33%) of the Top

Ten potential donors and fifty-four percent (54%) of the Next Twenty donors interviewed said that they would take on a volunteer role in the campaign.

Representative comments:

- "I can't work for the campaign because of my position in the community."
- "It's impossible for me to volunteer. I'm involved in too many other charitable programs."
- "I would do a few solicitations and would help with prospect reviews."
- "I will support their fund-raising events, but I will not solicit."
- "We would give consideration to volunteering, but we would have to see what our schedule is like at the time."
- "Yes, I would be willing to volunteer and to lead."
- "I don't solicit."
- "I might volunteer, but my time is limited."

9. Willingness to Accept A Leadership Role in the Campaign

*not  
recommen-  
ded*

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Yes	7	18%	5	0	6
Perhaps	2	5%	1	1	0
No	33	77%	3	2	7

Leadership is the single most important factor in the success of a campaign. Through the work of dedicated leaders, the urgency of the Case can be presented, the necessary pace-setting gifts can be made, and the essential manpower (caliber, and number of volunteers) can be enlisted to conduct a successful campaign.

Each interviewee was asked if they would consider taking on a leadership role in the campaign and was given a brief job description of that commitment.

Only eighteen percent (18%) of all respondents said that they would consider a leadership role while seventy-seven percent (77%) said they would not. Fifty-six percent (56%) of the Board members agreed to a leadership role while thirty-three percent declined. None of the Top Ten potential donors interviewed said that they would consider a leadership role and only forty-six (46%) of the Top Twenty potential donors agreed to assume a leadership role while fifty-four percent (54%) declined.

Representative comments:

"I don't have the time and I'm not interested in what they're doing."

"I do not have the time to take on a leadership role."

"Yes, I would consider taking on a leadership role in the campaign."

"I would give a leadership role consideration, but it's less likely if the theatre is in the Van Nuys area."

"I have no time for leadership."

"The best I could do is a few solicitations. I'm involved in other charitable programs."

"I would not expect to be successful in a leadership role."

10. Willingness to Make a Personal Gift

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Yes	31	74%	9	3	9
Perhaps	1	2%	0	0	0
No	9	22%	0	0	4
No Response	1	2%	0	0	0



Seventy-four percent (74%) of all respondents stated that they would be willing to make a personal gift to the campaign. One hundred percent (100%) of the Board members and one hundred percent of the Top Ten potential donors interviewed said that they would be willing to make a gift.

These numbers contrast with the response to Question #6, where a low level of receptivity to giving was expressed, as well as Question #7, which suggested only a weak to moderate expectation that donors would be found who would give Chart of Standards level gifts.

It should be noted that fifteen of interviewees stated that they would be willing to make gifts in the Top Twenty category but that this suggested giving totaled only approximately \$135,000.

It should also be noted that few names were given for the Top Gift or Top Ten donorship categories (where the donor suggestions had a strong linkage to the Back Alley Theatre). Only three interviewees mentioned donor potential in the Top gift category and, they were, for the most part, unwilling to reveal the names of the prospects they had in mind.

## 11. The Availability of Corporate/Foundation Gifts

From among all forty-two (42) interviewees, eleven (11) or twenty-six percent (26%) responded that they were in a position to make or help affect an appeal for a corporate or foundation based gift.

From among the eleven (11) corporate/foundation respondents, ten (10) said that the decision for a grant award would be made locally.

None of the respondents said that they felt it would be appropriate to ask the corporations to do in-house solicitation among their employees for gifts toward this campaign.

12. Community Economic Outlook

*in Vashon  
General*

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Excellent	20	48%	5	2	5
Good	16	38%	3	0	8
Fair	1	2%	0	0	0
Don't Know	5	12%	1	1	0

Economic factors in a particular community must be taken into consideration when planning a capital campaign. Since the business based constituency will be in part local, whether they perceive their economics as improving or declining can indicate their willingness to support nonprofit institutions.

Eighty-six percent (86%) (36 respondents) said that they thought the area's economic status was good to excellent. None of the respondents rated the economic outlook for the area as poor.

While many respondents commented that there was great wealth in the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley areas, a good number questioned whether there would be corporate and business based interest in making gifts to the Back Alley Theatre's relocation and expansion project.

These doubtful comments parallel those previously made for low receptivity to making a gift to the campaign and low expectation that Chart of Standards donors could be found.

Representative comments:

"Those aligned with the entertainment industry have great wealth, but I don't believe that they are interested in the support of the Back Alley Theatre."

"There's great wealth out here, but I don't know how you're going to get it."

"I'm drawing blanks because the people I know with clout and wealth are committed, 'up to here,' with other projects."

"For the kind of money we're going after, the location has to have more charm and draw. It's not glamorous to the big donor."

"The big firms in town give on a "quid pro quo" basis."

"The people I know who would give are not interested in a Valley project."

"This project won't appeal to donors' vanity."

13. Fund-Raising Strength of the Board of Directors

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Excellent	1	2%	0	0	0 *
Good	4	9%	2	1	1
Average	8	20%	6	2	5
Weak	4	10%	1	0	2
Don't Know	25	59%	0	0	5

The forty-two interviewees were asked to express their opinion of the theatre's Board of Directors fund-raising strength (donor capability in combination with their ability to solicit significant gifts from others).

Experience shows that those closest to the institution - its Board, staff, patrons, and friends - must lead the way in providing leadership, pace-setting investments, and overall support of the campaign in order to inspire and enlist the commitment of others.

In response to the question of the strength of the Back Alley Theatre Board of Directors as fund-raisers, only eleven percent (11%) of the respondents rated them as having good to excellent fund-raising strength. Twenty percent (20%) of the respondents rated them as average, and sixty-nine percent (69%) of the respondents said that they thought that the Directors would be weak or they did not know how effective they would be.

Representative comments:

"We have very few hard-hitters on the Board."

"Their Board members are lack-luster."

"They have almost no people from the entertainment industry on their Board."

"The Back Alley Theatre lacks sophistication in their fund-raising. They need a significant person to lead the effort."

"I'm unfamiliar with most of the people on their Board, so I don't know."

"They've got to access the great wealth in the area and I'm incapable of doing that."

14. Proposed Timing for the Campaign

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Board</u>	<u>Top Ten</u>	<u>Next Twenty</u>
Good	15	36%	6	2	8
Good As Any	24	57%	3	1	5
Poor	0	0	0	0	0
Don't Know	3	7%	0	0	0

The interviewees were asked for their opinion of the timing of the proposed capital campaign. The timing suggested to them was as soon as possible (qualified as beginning within the next few months).

Thirty-nine (39) respondents, or ninety-three percent (93%), said that to begin the fund-raising effort as soon as possible was good, or, as good any timing.

One hundred percent (100%) of the Directors as well as one hundred percent (100%) of the Top Ten potential donors interviewed stated that the timing was good or as good as any.

Although the San Fernando Valley Cultural Foundation's campaign was frequently discussed, not it for any other campaign mentioned by the respondents was seen as conflicting with the success of the Back Alley Theatre's effort.

## OBSERVATIONS

Prior to making recommendations to the Back Alley Theatre Board of Directors, it is prudent to summarize the data and to note special observations which will put the findings of this planning study into perspective.

### 1. Image Worthy of Support

Although 93% of those interviewed stated that the Theatre produces good to excellent productions, many respondents qualified their statements by saying that they believed the Theatre to have a limited public awareness profile.

### 2. Understanding of the Need

Although 86% of the respondents stated that they understood in the Back Alley Theatre's Case Statement, (regarding a serious space need and the desire to grow into a mid-size theatre), there was great concern voiced over the Sky Park Plaza site, the fact that the theatre was leasing rather than purchasing its space, its closeness to the airport, audience draw at 350 seats, equity and additional staff salaries, and the theatres' long term management capability/ (both artistic and financial).

### 3. Opinion of the Plan to Meet the Need

A just better than average (55%) response was made by all respondents concerning the "rightness" of the proposed relocation and expansion plan. Thirty-three

percent (33%) said "wrong plan" or "did not know". It is important to note the Board members and Top Ten potential donors interviewed scored high on the "right plan" for they will be decisive players in a successful campaign.

However, the qualifying concerns that were voiced about the need were also associated with the plan. So, while interviewees seem to believe in the Back Alley Theatre's past performance record and the dedication of Laura Zucker and Allan Miller, they posed many and varied questions about the potential for success with threefold growth and the chosen relocation site.

#### 4. Priority Rating of the Project

Seventy-four percent of all the respondents, seventy-eight percent of the Board members, and thirty-three of the Top Ten potential donors interviewed stated they would give high priority to making a gift to the Back Alley Theatre. However, the gift levels that they suggested fell dramatically short of pacesetting or Chart of Standards requirements.

#### 5. Appropriateness of a Campaign

One hundred percent (100%) of all respondents stated that they felt waging a capital campaign in support of the Back Alley Theatre would be appropriate. In fact, there were many comments that they did not know how else they would find the money.

6. Receptiveness to the Campaign

Sixty-two percent of all respondents felt that donors would be less than receptive to contributing to the project. Most importantly, only 45% of the Board of Directors and 33% of the Top Ten potential donors interviewed felt that the constituency would be receptive to the campaign.

Their concerns centered around the following points: lack of public awareness, lack of an identified donor and leadership constituency, lack of enough specific detail in the financial projections and relocation plan, and doubts as to whether the leased Sky Park Plaza site would be viewed as an attractive enough location to inspire major philanthropic support.

7. Standards of Giving - \$850,000 Goal and Top Gifts Availability

The question posed to interviewees concerning the goal was, "Do you believe that \$850,000 can be raised over a 3 to 5 year pledge period towards a relocation and expansion project for the Back Alley Theatre?"

Less than 50% of all the respondents in all categories suggested that the goal might be available. This does not indicate strong conviction that the goal in a capital campaign could be reached.