

Approval May Save Paramount Theater

The future of the Paramount Theater is looking a little brighter these days.

Word from the Texas Historical Commission in Austin Monday said the Paramount Theater had been approved for the National Registry.

Buildings that qualify for the National Registry are entitled to federal grants-in-aid and matching funds for renovations and other purposes.

The Paramount, at 352 Cypress, was approved Saturday by the State Board of Review to be nominated to the National Registry as a historical site, said Joe Williams, National Registry program director for the Texas Historical Commission in Austin.

State Historical Preservation officer Truett Latimer signed the nomination form, which will now be forwarded to the Department of Interiors in Washington D.C., Williams said.

"Once state level approval is achieved, national approval usually follows without diffi-

culty," he said.

If approved, the Paramount building cannot be demolished or structurally altered without first informing the commission, which then has 90 days to discourage defacement or find another buyer, he said.

Such protection for the building would come at a time when its owners are considering plans to tear the building down to provide space for a downtown parking lot.

The theater was constructed in 1929 and opened in 1930 at a cost of \$100,000, but it would cost several million dollars to build today, said Frank Sheffield, former manager of the theater.

The Paramount closed after 50 years as a moviehouse in September 1979 and reopened January 1980 as the Paramount Opry, featuring live country-western music. When that failed it became the Paramount Country Music Hall for three months, and then closed in late July.