

**RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS: HISTORIC USE VARIANCE  
SUMMIT CENTER FOR ARTS AND INNOVATION**

- 1. Concerns and opposition are expressed almost exclusively from a narrow range of residents of Summit Avenue within a few blocks of the proposed center.**

*We have enormous support from the leading performing artists and arts organizations in St. Paul and throughout the Twin Cities region. We have the approval of the Macalester Groveland District Council (Unanimous with one abstention), the Heritage Preservation Commission (unanimous with one no), and the Zoning Committee (unanimous with one no). Citizens from every corner of St. Paul support this reuse as a valuable cultural benefit to the broader community and have expressed eagerness and enthusiasm to see this magnificent historic and cultural landmark once again used for spiritual, educational, & cultural activities and a place for celebrations.*

*It is important to note that none of the letters in opposition offers a single alternative strategy for saving this magnificent building and retaining it as a community asset.*

- 2. In response to parking concerns, we have obtained permission to share parking from essentially all private lots in the immediate neighborhood to reduce on street parking demand.**

*Permission has been obtained to use the Laura Jeffery Academy adjacent to the Summit Center (20 spaces) Sherwin Williams parking lot on Snelling and Grand (20 parking spaces); the FedEx parking lot on Snelling and Grand (15 spaces); the public lot on Grand (45 spaces). Request to use the Macalester lot on Grand (20 spaces) is pending. If this is granted, and adding 12 spaces at the Summit Center, the total is 132 off street parking spaces which will greatly reduce the on-street parking need. Written confirmations of these agreements are expected by the end of September.*

*The Summit Center will support and assist in any parking study conducted after the Summit Center has begun operation if such a study is deemed necessary. The Summit Center will comply with any reasonable recommendations from the study that do not in effect prevent the Center from being used as approved by the City of Saint Paul.*

- 3. Response to claim that Summit Center will be a Night Club.**

*This claim is based on the proposed closing time of midnight. In response to these concerns we propose to close according to this schedule:*

*Performances in the Sanctuary* - Conclude by 10 PM Friday and Saturday;  
9:30 PM Sunday-Thursday

*Performances in the fenced garden outside:* Conclude by 10 PM on Friday and Saturday;  
9:30 PM Sunday through Thursday

*Doors are locked (all guests, performers, caterers, and staff must be gone) within one hour or less after conclusion of program. For Weddings/ Receptions doors are locked at midnight at the latest on Fridays and Saturdays and 11PM other days - most of these events will be completed earlier.*

*A nightclub is typically a restaurant and drinking establishment that operates into the early morning hours. Most often it is a dance venue for the patrons with a live dance band or more typically these days a DJ. This is distinctly not the type of activity the Summit Center for Arts and Innovation will be offering, and the Summit Center will not operate as a "night club" now or in the future. If the Summit Center is sold, language will be included in the sale prohibiting ANY future use as a night club.*

**4. Response to concerns that for-profit status means extra motivation to present as many events as possible.**

*This concern is based on the false assumption that nonprofit organizations are not as motivated as for-profit organizations to generate earned income. Indeed, it is increasingly essential for nonprofits to generate as much earned income as possible or they are threatened with insolvency. Contributed income from foundations and other philanthropic sources is shrinking, not increasing, and the threat of going out of existence is at least as great as the motivation to generate profit.*

**5. Response to concern that the Summit Center for Arts and Innovation will lead to "commercialization" of Summit Avenue.**

*It is important to understand that the building owner, The Summit Center for Arts and Innovation, LLC, will be reorganized by the end of the year as a Public Benefit Corporation. As such, the primary goal of the organization is to serve its stated mission for the public good. While it is a "for-profit" entity, the goal is not to maximize profits distributed to its shareholders, but to maximize its mission of offering outstanding cultural, educational, and spiritual experiences in our community. Of equal importance is the fact that the ability to generate profit is crucial to allowing the Summit Center to be able to support performing artists regardless of their ability to pay, and helps to provide a revenue base to ensure the financial security of this organization and the preservation of the building long term. It is expected that most of the offerings will be presented by non-profits which also need to balance their budgets through ticket sales & other means and are increasingly looking at the public benefit corporation as a structure.*

**6. Response to request for more specific definition of what programs and events the Summit Center intends to offer.**

*The primary uses of the Summit Center for Arts and Innovation are as follows:*

- *To offer high quality presentations by performing artists and arts institutions to the public in unique ways, with some incorporating matched food and beverage dinner offerings*
- *Music education to community members of all ages*
- *Community meetings and gatherings of various kinds*

- *Programs on arts and/or current events before or after the concerts, or as independent presentations (lectures, panel discussions, etc.)*
- *Host spiritual/church related activities, weddings & receptions, and memorial services*
- *Rehearsals and recording sessions during business hours.*