

SUBDIVISION STAFF REPORT

FILE # 15-142-134

1. **FILE NAME:** Palace Theater **HEARING DATE:** October 7, 2015
2. **TYPE OF APPLICATION:** Vertical Subdivision – Registered Land Survey (RLS)
3. **LOCATION:** 27 7th Place, between St. Peter and Wabasha
4. **PIN AND LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** See RLS documents for existing and proposed legal descriptions.
5. **PLANNING DISTRICT:** 17 **PRESENT ZONING:** B4
6. **ZONING CODE REFERENCE:** §69.301; §69.406; §69.511; §69.705
7. **STAFF REPORT DATE:** September 24, 2015 **BY:** Jake Reilly
8. **DATE RECEIVED:** July 22, 2015; Sept. 23, 2015 **DEADLINE FOR ACTION:** Nov. 20, 2015
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- A. **PURPOSE:** Vertical Subdivision by Registered Land Survey to create tracts A, B, & C
- B. **PARCEL SIZE:** Approximately 44,844 square feet
- C. **EXISTING LAND USE:** Commercial (vacant)
- D. **SURROUNDING LAND USE:** The property is surrounded on all sides by a mix of commercial, residential, and public space uses in the downtown district.
- E. **ZONING CODE CITATION:** §69.705 states that Registered Land Surveys are subject to the provisions of §69.300 and following. §69.406 provides criteria for review of subdivision applications. These criteria are covered below under “Required Findings.”
- F. **HISTORY/DISCUSSION:** The New Palace Theatre and St. Francis Hotel building was constructed in 1916. It was designed by the Saint Paul architecture firm of Buechner and Orth. The 215-room St. Francis Hotel opened New Year’s Eve 1916 and the New Palace Theatre, a 2300-seat combined vaudeville and move theater, opened in 1917. In May 1922, it was leased to the Orpheum theater circuit and became known as the Palace Orpheum. In 1930 the name changed to RKO Orpheum; during this period, the theater successfully made the transition from split use to a full-time showhouse for feature-length movies. The Orpheum closed in 1977. It reopened in 1981 as a second-run movie house and the only regular motion picture theater operating in downtown Saint Paul. After providing a temporary home to the live radio show “A Prairie Home Companion” while the Shubert/World/Fitzgerald theater was being renovated in 1986, the Orpheum closed its doors for good. It is one of only two remaining grand downtown, vaudeville/movie theaters from the first decades of the twentieth century. It is among the first large scale buildings in the city designed for multiple uses, combining theater, retail, and hotel components in a single complex.
- G. **DISTRICT COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION:** District 17 had not commented at the time this staff report was prepared.
- H. **REQUIRED FINDINGS:** § 69.406 of the Zoning Code requires that all of the following findings shall be made prior to approval of a subdivision:
1. *All the applicable provisions of the Legislative Code are complied with.* City staff has reviewed the proposed RLS and have determined that all applicable provisions of city codes are met.
 2. *The proposed subdivision will not be detrimental to the present and potential surrounding land uses.* The proposed RLS is consistent with the surrounding land uses, and will not be detrimental to present and future use of surrounding land.
 3. *The area surrounding the subdivision can be planned and developed in coordination and compatibility with the proposed subdivision.* The area surrounding the proposed RLS is already developed and compatible with the proposed plat.
 4. *The subdivision is in conformance with the comprehensive plan.* The subdivision is in conformance with the Land Use chapter of the comprehensive plan, which calls for promotion of “a broad mix of uses Downtown so as to attract greater number of people to Downtown,” in LU-1.31 and “Promote and add entertainment activities, cultural activities, and visitor

accommodations to support them,” in LU-1.35. It is also in conformance with redevelopment plans for the area.

5. *The subdivision preserves and incorporates the site’s important existing natural features whenever possible.* The site is in a fully-developed part of Saint Paul with no remaining natural features.
 6. *All land intended for building sites can be used safely without endangering residents by peril from floods, erosion, continuously high water table, severe soil conditions or other menace.* The site is a flat, fully developed area with no flooding, erosion, high water table, or soil condition problems.
 7. *The subdivision can be economically served with public facilities and services.* The subdivision can be economically served with public facilities and services from surrounding streets.
- I. **PARKLAND DEDICATION:** Does not apply to vertical subdivisions of an existing building by Registered Land Survey.
- J. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Based on required findings 1 through 7, staff recommends approval of the Registered Land Survey for Palace Theater subject to the following conditions:
1. The applicant shall file a copy of the Council Resolution approving the plat with the Ramsey County Recorder’s Office.
 2. The property must be brought into Torrens system prior to approval of this RLS.

Attachments:

- Application
- Final RLS document