

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about the North Garden Theater. It's my understanding that during the 45 days our community had to voice their objections to our proposed liquor license, only one party did so... John and Nance Davidson. I would like to once again, address some of their concerns and correct some of their misconceptions. I will then go on to share a bit of our plans and vision.

In their letter, they state that they "have no opposition to the serving of beer and wine, but the full bar service" to them "is problematic." Their concern that liquor in addition to beer and wine service is somehow problematic is unsubstantiated. We have found no evidence to support that hard liquor has the potential to cause any more problems than wine and/or beer. Whether or not alcohol of any kind served at our theater will become problematic... will come down to the efficient training and management of our staff alongside industry driven safety measures and protocols which we will have in place.

The Davidsons also assert in their letter that the "North Garden Theater will primarily be an event center and live music venue in order to fund the theater activities." They are also worried that we will become a nightclub or a bar. They are making incorrect assumptions about our business model based on their fear. We have been transparent from the beginning regarding our planned operations. Our website states the following... our plans are to revitalize the property into a live performance venue. The space will host the North's own unique brand of theater as well as provide a rental venue for other theater, comedy, music, dance, arts, and other community and corporate events.

The Davidsons have gone so far as to spread rumors that we plan on being a rockus music venue that will host raves. Again, this is far from the truth and shows what can happen when "fear of change" takes hold of you. The Davidsons assume the worst, ignore the truth, and have selfishly taken any opportunity to privately and publicly bash us. This is not how you build up a

neighborhood and we are disappointed that they have chosen divisiveness over community.

They object to our creation of a development district in order to get our liquor license... even though we followed the procedures suggested by the St. Paul Department of Safety and Inspections. We filled out all appropriate paperwork, got all of the required neighborhood signatures on a petition, and got the approval of the St. Paul Planning Commission.

The Davidson's letter brings up the fact that there is a church and school within 300 feet of our location and wrongly assume that we are in violation of City Ordinance 409.06(n). On June 22nd, the management of the church waived the distance restriction... because **they** understand the intrinsic value of supporting a venue that will bring more arts into our community. As a matter of fact, the church and school are partnering with us to share their nearby lot to provide parking for our patrons.

This is a perfect example of how - as a company - we are able to listen to the concerns of our neighbors and reach out to find a solution. This is how we operate. We listen and care, we open up dialogue, and we work to build-up our community.

Tina (my wife and business partner) ^{in I} bring over 30 years of theater ^{success} experience and over 10 years of retail experience to the development and operation of the North Garden Theater. We jumped at the opportunity to purchase and restore the old Garden Theater at 929 West 7th. The building had been horribly neglected and was days away from being ordered demolished by the City of St. Paul. Tina and I are actors by trade and education, entrepreneurs by spirit, and saw the incredible potential in this forgotten property. ~~Turning this shell of a building into a theater and center for community gathering will accomplish many things.~~

- It will provide a creative outlet and audience for the many artists that enrich our community.
- It will create a gathering space where individuals, families, organizations, and businesses can learn, share, congregate, and celebrate.
- And it will restore a part of St. Paul's history... turning what would have been a blight filled empty lot into a ~~beacon~~ of locally driven art, commerce, and celebration. *Center for*

Part of our business model includes operating a small concessions and bar area in the lobby that would serve light snacks and refreshments, along with soft drinks, beer, wine, and alcohol. For some, perhaps most, having a drink is a part of going out to see a show. It is also a part of many organizational fundraisers and community celebrations. To be competitive with similar theaters and venues (like the History Theater, The Mounds Theater, and others) the ability to serve a cocktail or a glass of beer or wine is important to our business model.

To accomplish this, it would require us to obtain a full on-sale liquor license. No other type of liquor license is available for our classification. We have explored all options at length with Kristina Schwinler and others at the Department of Safety and Inspections.

Mr. and Mrs. Davidson and their views of the North Garden Theater seem to stand all alone in a sea of positive support. It is not just my wife and I who want to see our dream turned into a reality. In support of our efforts to create the North Garden Theater, we have obtained over 400 petition signatures, more than half of those from St. Paul... along with personal notes urging our Councilwoman and the rest of the City Council to make the North Garden Theater a reality.

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Our direct neighbor to the west - Jeff McAllister owner of Music-Go-Round couldn't make it to today's hearing, but wanted to show his support of our liquor license by writing a letter.

The City of St. Paul believed in us enough to award us a St. Paul Neighborhood STAR grant to restore the facade of our building.

And in perhaps one of the strongest shows of support, our ward's Councilwoman - Rebecca Noecker defended the North Garden Theater against the Davidson's same objections during the vote for our Development District.

Today, I humbly ask you to consider my testimony and recommend our Liquor License be approved and adopted by the St. Paul City Council.

I would like an opportunity to play a clip from that City Council meeting. I will let Councilwoman Noecker's words close out my time here.

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