



Interdepartmental Memorandum

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

TO: City Council Members
FROM: Amy Spong, PED
RE: Written testimony received for Victoria Theater local designation
DATE: February 1, 2011

The following written testimony was received and recorded during the HPC Public Hearing on November 4th and 18th, 2010. An additional e-mail was received in anticipation for the City Council Hearing.

In support of:

Andrew Hine, 757 Armstrong Avenue, (via e-mail)
Mary and Tom Longfellow, (via e-mail)
Sandy Jacobs, Update Company, (via e-mail)
Lara Hanson, (via e-mail)
Angela Andrist, (via e-mail)
Emily Seru, 825 Charles Avenue, (via e-mail)
Terri Nowicki, (via e-mail)
Carol Carey, Executive Director, Historic St. Paul, (via e-mail)
Mark Vesley, 1598 Edmund Avenue, (via e-mail)
Tracie Anderson, (via e-mail)
Terri Hardy, Executive Director, Starr Gennett Foundation Inc.
Gloria Goodwin Raheja, Professor of Anthropology and Global Studies, U of MN
Genevieve Marault, (via e-mail)
Krista Hanson, 1199 Englewood Avenue, (via e-mail)

Neutral:

Keith Johnson, The New Victoria Theatre Project, (via e-mail)

Against:

None received

Amy Spong - God Save The Virgin Queen Theater!

From: Andrew Hine <ahhine2@gmail.com>
To: Amy Spong <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Christine Boulware <Christine.Boulware@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Dave Thune <Dave.Thune@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Kathy Lantry <Kathy.Lantry@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Pat Harris <Pat.Harris@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Dan Bostrom <ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Lee Helgen <Lee.Helgen@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Russ Stark <Russ.Stark@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "melvin.carter" <Melvin.Carter@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/4/2010 3:16 PM
Subject: God Save The Virgin Queen Theater!
CC: <celestialmonochord@gmail.com>, Paul Clifford Larson <historyhere@gmail.com>, Becca Hine <bhine@historicsaintpaul.org>, Carol Carey <ccarey@historicsaintpaul.org>, Tait Danielson Castillo <taitdanielson@yahoo.com>, Jane McClure <McClure50449@aol.com>, Mike Koop <michael.koop@mnhs.org>, Ellen Biales <Ellen.Biales@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Patricia Lindgren <Patricia.Lindgren@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Marcia Moermond <marcia.moermond@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, Barb Benson <Barb.Benson@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Dear Amy, Christine, Commissioners, and Councilpeople,
 There are reasons why people like to visit New York City more than they like to visit, say, Oakdale. Our physical environment affects how we feel, as does our cultural environment. The symbioses of environments can have life-altering effects on us. Walking past a building and knowing that Clapton lived there, or that Lincoln was shot there, or that Ross sewed there gets our minds churning and our hearts beating. This in turn creates a vibrant, colorful, and interesting society. Touching a granite cornerstone laid by Wington or Bassford connects us with geology, architecture, masonry, engineering, art, and community in ways that Hardipanel will never be able to.
 Most people could care less about the Victoria Theater or the Smithsonian recordings. But some people, namely Kurt Gegenhuber and his friends, recognize how very special just one day or even one hour of our American history can be. Their impassioned voices deserve to be given special attention. They understand something special when they hear it, or see it, or more likely, feel it.
 Especially in light of the forthcoming reconstruction of the University Avenue Corridor, it is important to ensure that the things that make Saint Paul special are saved for our children, if we have any. Already the Old Home Building's bas relief of Polly & Henry have gone missing, and their historic tales are lost with them. When is enough wanton destruction enough? With ownership of special places comes a special responsibility, and it is our duty to remind each other of that.
 I humbly ask that you consider elevating the status of the Victoria Theater to a Heritage Preservation Site. You will be doing University Avenue a favor, not to mention future generations of recording artists, architects, theater-goers, and commuters.
 Thank you for all you do to enhance the culture of Saint Paul.
 Andrew M. Hine
 Armstrong Avenue

--
 Andrew M. Hine
 757 Armstrong Avenue
 Saint Paul, Minnesota
 55102-3813
 USA
 home 651.292.0660
 mobile 651.253.5237

*Included
 For Public record for
 APC M+3. 11-4-10*

From: mary longfellow <marylongfellow@comcast.net>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/4/2010 10:21 AM
Subject: Heritage Preservation Site/ Victoria Theatre

Dear Heritage Preservation Commission Member,

I am writing on behalf of myself and my husband, Tom Longfellow. We respectfully request a recommendation to the St Paul City Council that the Victoria Theatre be given Heritage Preservation Site status at the November 4 hearing.

Please respond indicating anything further we could do to ensure the site is preserved.

Thank you for your time.

Warm regards,

Mary and Tom Longfellow
651-238-8811
marylongfellow@comcast.net

From: "Sandy Jacobs" <sandy@updatecompany.com>
To: "Amy Spong" <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/3/2010 4:12 PM
Subject: Victoria Theater 825 University

Amy,

As a long time business in the Midway and as a real estate developer, I am in support of designating the Victoria Theater building as historic. Many buildings up and down University Avenue are not worth preserving, but this is a little gem of a building with a unique history. Let's preserve history along the Avenue as we move ahead with LRT.

Can you please add my e-mail of support to the many people who have already sent theirs?

Sandy Jacobs
651-641-0208
Update Company LLC
sandy@updatecompany.com
Check out my blog! www.updatecompany.blogspot.com

Amy Spong - Victoria Theater

From: Lara Hanson <jarahanson@me.com>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/3/2010 8:24 PM
Subject: Victoria Theater

To the Heritage Preservation Commission:

Please recommend to the City Council that the Victoria Theater become a Heritage Preservation Site. My husband and I live in the neighborhood and would benefit directly from having a venue like the Victoria in our area. He is a musician and I am a performance artist and we know many other musicians and artists that would make use of the space. It will be a positive investment in the development of the Central Corridor and add to making Saint Paul the "Arts and Culture Capital of the Midwest".

Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Lara Hanson

Amy Spong - Preserve the Victoria Theater

From: Angela Andrist <angela.andrist@gmail.com>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 10/31/2010 7:51 PM
Subject: Preserve the Victoria Theater

Dear Amy Spong and Heritage Preservation Commission's staff:

I want the Victoria Theater to be a Heritage Preservation Site. I am a documentary filmmaker who is making a short film about the saving the Victoria Theater. I have had an opportunity to tour the space and see that it is worth preserving. The history of it as a silent film theater, a place where one of the first Midwest recordings was made, and the interesting stories about the Victoria Cafe, alone is worth preserving. The idea that folks are interested in restoring and refurbishing the space, and use it for adult education and events to benefit Frogtown and the community is even better. Let's help make it a destination location, especially with the future of light rail.

Please, please, help in preserving this historic building with historic Beaux-Arts style architecture and original murals inside. After visiting the East coast and seeing all the history preserved, I often wonder why we in the Midwest don't value our history and buildings as much? Do we really need another slab of cement to make a parking lot and destroy this building forever? Help us to honor our history.

Thanks for your consideration.

--
Angela Andrist
independent filmmaker & writer
angela.andrist@gmail.com

Amy Spong - Why the Victoria Theater should be protected

From: Emily Seru <ejseru@gmail.com>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/2/2010 10:01 PM
Subject: Why the Victoria Theater should be protected

Dear Amy,

I am a resident of Frogtown on Charles Avenue and Victoria. There are a number of reasons that I support the Victoria Theater being given a historic preservation status. I learned about the musical history of the theater and thought it was a unique and important asset and piece of history for Frogtown to be proud of and to make a highlight and destination point. We need such points of pride to highlight in our neighborhood that is often described in terms of our needs not our assets. Drawing attention to existing cultural assets in the neighborhood has been one of the most recurring themes at community meetings over the last five years, especially with the coming LRT down University Avenue. I am also excited for the opportunities for the uses of the space. It has a lot of potential for positive uses by local artists, youth, and musicians. My husband is a jazz musician and we both often lament the fact that there are not places for him to play music in our own neighborhood. Third, With all of the development and new building about to happen in the neighborhood, the chance to preserve existing historic buildings and to highlight the unique history of the area is even more important and actually capable of drawing interested buyers who could restore the space.

Thank you!

~emily seru
825 Charles Ave

Amy Spong - Victoria Theatre

From: "Nowicki, Terri" <Terri.Nowicki@IHStrategies.com>
To: "amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us" <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 10/26/2010 12:18 PM
Subject: Victoria Theatre

Hi Amy,

I'm writing to voice my opinion on the Victoria Theatre. I would prefer to have it deemed a Heritage Preservation site. So much history surrounds the Victoria Theatre. It would be a shame to see it torn down and turned into a parking lot.

Part of the cultural richness that makes St. Paul such an amazing city, is the historical diversity, the places from the past which we can visit and enjoy. My mother and I were both raised in St. Paul and she remembers her mother (also a St. Paul native) talking about the Victoria Theater and seeing performances there.

Please mark down one more humble opinion to save a small, but important, building in our good city.

Thank you!

Terri Nowicki
Operations Coordinator

INTEGRATED HEALTHCARE STRATEGIES

901 Marquette Avenue South
Suite 2100
Minneapolis, MN 55402
612-339-0919 main, ext. 21-051 VoIP
612-337-1051 direct
612-339-2804 fax
terri.nowicki@ihstrategies.com
www.IHStrategies.com

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Amy Spong - Support for the Victoria Theatre nomination

From: "Carol Carey" <ccarey@historicsaintpaul.org>
To: "Amy Spong" <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Christine Boulware" <Christine.Boulware@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "John Manning" <jmanning@mnprivatecolleges.org>, "Dave Thune" <Dave.Thune@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Kathy Lantry" <Kathy.Lantry@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Pat Harris" <Pat.Harris@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Dan Bostrom" <ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Lee Helgen" <Lee.Helgen@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Russ Stark" <Russ.Stark@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "melvin.carter" <Melvin.Carter@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/4/2010 4:38 PM
Subject: Support for the Victoria Theatre nomination
CC: <celestialmonochord@gmail.com>, "Paul Clifford Larson" <historyhere@gmail.com>, "Becca Hine" <bhine@historicsaintpaul.org>, "Tait Danielson Castillo" <taitdanielson@yahoo.com>, "Jane McClure" <McClure50449@aol.com>, "Mike Koop" <michael.koop@mnhs.org>, "Ellen Biales" <Ellen.Biales@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Patricia Lindgren" <Patricia.Lindgren@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Marcia Moermond" <marcia.moermond@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Andrew Hine" <amhine2@gmail.com>

Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and Saint Paul City Council;

Re: Local Heritage Preservation designation of the Victoria Theatre

This message is in support of the Nomination of the Victoria Theatre as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation site.

The Victoria Theater Building, at 825 University Avenue in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, was built in 1915 as a silent-movie house, is the earliest substantially intact neighborhood theater in St. Paul. Designed by Franklin Ellerbe, founder of the architectural firm Ellerbe Architects (now Ellerbe Becket), and deserves recognition and protection as one of the few surviving works of one of St. Paul's most prominent architects in his hometown.

However, as has been discovered, the structure is perhaps equally important for its role in aspects of Saint Paul's social history. Immediately adjacent to the Victoria Theatre is the former Ray-Bell Films studio, an NRHP-eligible building associated with a small film production company of the 1920's. Together, the two buildings represent a cutting-edge industry of their era and speak to the nature of street life along University Avenue in early 20th Century. The Victoria's later operation as the Victoria Café, a cabaret-style night club, achieved a level of regional and even national prominence for the venue as a result of high profile Federal Prohibition enforcement actions, and later, with the inclusion of a recording made in 1927 by the Café's house band on the 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a popular and influential collection of recordings that have had a significant and ongoing impact on American music.

Late in 2009, a since-withdrawn purchase-for-demolition attempt energized a grassroots preservation effort. The Save the Victoria Theatre effort brought together a determined and diverse group of individuals and entities long concerned with the past and future of the building and its role in the neighborhood. They organized and held multiple, well-attended community meetings to discuss the future of the building where the clear preferred option was to maintain the building and leverage its value as a renewed cultural resource for the community.

I encourage the Heritage Preservation Commission to support efforts to save this building and its history by recommending its designation as a local Heritage Preservation site. Such a vote of will protect an important structure and its story for future generations to enjoy and learn from, and demonstrate the value of heritage sites as a central element of community building and neighborhood planning.

Regards,
 Carol Carey
 Historic Saint Paul

Amy Spong - Support for the designation of the Victoria Theatre as a local heritage preservation site

From: "Carol Carey" <ccarey@historicsaintpaul.org>
To: "Carol Carey" <ccarey@historicsaintpaul.org>, "Dave Thune" <Dave.Thune@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Kathy Lantry" <Kathy.Lantry@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Pat Harris" <Pat.Harris@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Dan Bostrom" <ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Lee Helgen" <Lee.Helgen@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Russ Stark" <Russ.Stark@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "melvin.carter" <Melvin.Carter@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 1/4/2011 12:46 PM
Subject: Support for the designation of the Victoria Theatre as a local heritage preservation site
CC: <celestialmonochord@gmail.com>, "Becca Hine" <bhine@historicsaintpaul.org>, "Tait Danielson Castillo" <taitdanielson@yahoo.com>, "Jane McClure" <McClure50449@aol.com>, "Mike Koop" <michael.koop@mnhs.org>, "Ellen Biales" <Ellen.Biales@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Patricia Lindgren" <Patricia.Lindgren@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Amy Spong" <Amy.Spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "Christine Boulware" <Christine.Boulware@ci.stpaul.mn.us>, "John Manning" <jmanning@mnprivatecolleges.org>, "Andrew Hine" <amhine2@gmail.com>

To: Saint Paul City Council Members

Re: Local Heritage Preservation designation of the Victoria Theatre

This message is in support of the designation of the Victoria Theatre as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation site.

The Victoria Theater Building, at 825 University Avenue in the Frogtown neighborhood of St. Paul, was built in 1915 as a silent-movie house, is the earliest substantially intact neighborhood theater in St. Paul. Designed by Franklin Ellerbe, founder of the architectural firm Ellerbe Architects (now Ellerbe Becket), it deserves recognition and protection as one of the few surviving works of one of St. Paul's most prominent architects in his hometown.

However, as has been discovered, the structure is perhaps equally important for its role in aspects of Saint Paul's social history and the opportunities it represents for the future.

Immediately adjacent to the Victoria Theatre is the former Ray-Bell Films studio, an NRHP-eligible building associated with a small film production company of the 1920's. Together, the two buildings represent a cutting-edge industry of their era and speak to the nature of street life along University Avenue in early 20th Century. The Victoria's later operation as the Victoria Café, a cabaret-style night club, achieved a level of regional and even national prominence for the venue as a result of high profile Federal Prohibition enforcement actions, and later, with the inclusion of a recording made in 1927 by the Café's house band on the 1952 *Anthology of American Folk Music*, a popular and influential collection of recordings that have had a significant and ongoing impact on American music.

Late in 2009, a since-withdrawn purchase-for-demolition attempt energized a grassroots preservation effort. The Save the Victoria Theatre effort brought together a determined and diverse group of individuals and entities long concerned with the past and future of the building and its role in the neighborhood. They organized and held multiple, well-attended community meetings to discuss the future of the building where the clear preferred option was to maintain the building and leverage its value as a renewed cultural resource for the community. The spirit and pride that emerged from these efforts was impressive!

I encourage the Saint Paul City Council to support efforts to save this building and its history by designating it as a local Heritage Preservation site. This action will help protect an important structure and its story for future generations to enjoy and learn from, and demonstrate the value of heritage sites as a central element of community

building and neighborhood planning.

Regards,
Carol Carey
Historic Saint Paul

Amy Spong - Victoria Theater designation

From: "Mark E. Vesley" <MVesley@minncle.org>
To: "amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us" <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/17/2010 5:31 PM
Subject: Victoria Theater designation
CC: Kristine Vesley <kves@earthlink.net>

Greetings. I'm writing to urge the St. Paul Historic Preservation Commission to recommend to the City Council that the Victoria Theater be designated a Heritage Preservation Site. St. Paul has seen too many of its neighborhood movie houses demolished (like the old Hamline Theater on University Avenue just east of Snelling) or remodeled beyond recognition (like the Como Theater on that boulevard or the Oxford Theater on Selby). Aside from its place in St. Paul musical history, the building itself is elegant and charming. Plus, the Frogtown and Summit-University neighborhoods could use a space adaptable to multiple arts uses. Please recommend designation. Thank you.

Mark Vesley
1598 Edmund Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55104
(651) 645-2606
mvesley@minncle.org

Amy Spong - Victoria Theater

From: "Anderson, Tracie" <Tracie.Anderson@commonbond.org>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/17/2010 7:16 PM
Subject: Victoria Theater

Please vote for Victoria Theater to become a Heritage Preservation Site of the City of Saint Paul!
These kinds of grand old buildings will never be built again... they're worth saving!

Sincerely!

Tracie Anderson, LICSW
Skyline Tower Advantage Center
Advantage Services, CommonBond Communities
651-999-7522(office), 651-999-7521(fax)
tracie.anderson@commonbond.org

(E)



February 1, 2010

John Manning, Chair
Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission
Department of Safety and Inspections
375 Jackson Street, Suite 220
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1806

Re: Victoria Theater Building, 825 University Avenue, St. Paul, MN

Dear Commissioner Manning,

The Starr-Gennett Foundation, Inc., strongly supports the nomination of the Victoria Theater Building for official designation as a Heritage Preservation Site of the City of St. Paul.

It is gratifying that the grassroots effort to save this building is partly inspired by a recording made by the venue's house orchestra for the Gennett Record Company. As the Foundation's mission includes the preservation and promotion of the legacy of Gennett Records, we look forward to official recognition of the Victoria as a heritage preservation site.

Gennett Records conducted pioneering recording sessions in St. Paul in 1927. We're proud that those sessions resulted in historically valuable recordings of the Prohibition-era musical culture of the Twin Cities. One of these recordings, by The Victoria Café Orchestra, also became the only Gennett record, as well as the only Minnesota music, included in the landmark *Anthology of American Folk Music*. We support and note with interest the evolving recognition of these events in St. Paul.

The City of Richmond, IN, is fortunate that a number of structures related to the Starr and Gennett companies have been preserved, while other buildings related to this history unfortunately no longer exist or only partially remain as carefully preserved ruins. The extant structures are of considerable historic value and draw visitors to Richmond from around the world. Significant funds have recently gone to constructing and expanding a Walk of Fame honoring musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael and Gene Atury, whose early recordings were first documented by Gennett Records.

The Starr-Gennett Foundation's experience in Richmond therefore leads us to appreciate the role that historic structures associated with popular music heritage can play in civic pride and economic development. That experience leads us to encourage the City of St. Paul to take action to preserve the Victoria Theater.

Many thanks for considering the Victoria Theater's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Terri Hardy".

Terri Hardy
Executive Director

University of Minnesota

Twin Cities Campus

Department of Anthropology

*395 HHH Center
301 19th Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455*

raheja@umn.edu

25 May 2010

John Manning, Chair
Heritage Preservation Commission
Saint Paul Planning and Economic Development
25 Fourth Street West, Suite 1400
Saint Paul, MN 55102

RE: Designation of the Victoria Theater Building as a Heritage Preservation Site

Dear Chairman Manning:

As a long-time resident of the Mac-Groveland neighborhood of Saint Paul and as a faculty member at the University of Minnesota who teaches and writes about the significance of American vernacular music to the understanding of this country's history and culture, I am writing to urge you to support the nomination of the Victoria Theater Building as a Heritage Preservation Site of the City of St. Paul.

It is a signal distinction for the city of Saint Paul that the only example of American music originating outside the southern states and Appalachia to be included on the *Anthology of American Folk Music* was "Moonshiner's Dance, Part One," played by Frank Cloutier and the Victoria Café Orchestra and recorded in 1927 by Gennett Records in Saint Paul. The Victoria Café Orchestra was the house band for the Café, which was located in the Victoria Theater.

The *Anthology of American Folk Music* is arguably the most important document in the history of American popular music. After this compilation of late 1920s and early 1930s 78 rpm recordings was first released in LP form in 1952, it gave birth to a renaissance of folk music in Minnesota (influencing in important ways our most nationally and internationally celebrated musicians, such as Bob Dylan, Spider John Koerner, Dave Ray, and many others) and throughout the country and indeed the world, and that renaissance rippled outward to fundamentally shape so much of American popular music more generally. Countless musicians on the local and national stages have commented that they learned every song on the *Anthology*, as they explored America's roots music and brought it back to life again in their own recordings and performances. Its legacy lives on in contemporary American music, partly because the Smithsonian's Folkways Records re-released it as a six-CD box set in 1997. The *Anthology* has also been written about extensively in scholarly and popular literature, by such noted musicologists as Robert Cantwell and Greil Marcus, and by Jon Pankake, a Minneapolis writer and musician who wrote part of the Grammy Award-winning liner notes for the 1997 release.

The preservation of the building in which the only example of northern music in the *Anthology* originated would thus preserve a uniquely important element of the history of Saint Paul, of Minnesota, and of our entire country. It is fortuitous that just at this moment someone is finally doing the work that provides us with a unique perspective on the historical significance of this building, to the city of Saint Paul and to the

Anthology; I have read some of Kurt Gegenhuber's splendid writing on this, and I am very much looking forward to the publication of his book.

As important as the preservation of our musical history is the preservation of our living musical traditions. The preservation of this building and its renovation as a musical venue/exhibition space/community events center would contribute in so many ways to our city and state. When I moved to Minnesota in 1989, I had no idea how amazingly rich the local music scene here is, and I had little idea of its national significance. Since then however I have been offered teaching positions in Europe, but one of the reasons I chose to stay here in Minnesota was the vibrancy of the music community here. We have in the Twin Cities some of the very best and most influential folk musicians in the country, the top tier of contemporary American fingerstyle guitarists, and a whole host of young acoustic musicians who are making their mark not only locally but also nationally and internationally. Nearly all of them have been influenced by the *Anthology*. There is no central venue in Saint Paul where musicians like these can find an acoustically adequate performance home and a community-building center for their activities. With the coming of the LRT to the doorsteps of the Victoria Theater, Saint Paul will have the opportunity to provide such a venue and community center that is easily accessible from anywhere in the Twin Cities, and one that would provide an absolutely unique historical context for their performances.

Several years ago I instigated and curated a series of roots music/*Anthology*-inspired fingerstyle guitar concerts at the Minnesota History Center. It was a world-class event because of the world-class musicians I had to choose from here in the Twin Cities. I am envisioning a future, on University Avenue, in which such concerts would be monthly or even weekly events, possible because of the depth of talent we have to draw upon here in our community. A venue such as the Victoria Theater will make that future realizable, and it would draw interested and knowledgeable audiences from the entire metropolitan area and from around the state to the neighborhood restaurants and shops as well.

Apart from my musical interests, I am also writing as a Saint Paul resident who frequents the restaurants, shops and ethnic grocery stores on the section of University Avenue around Victoria Street. I and my family savor the food and conviviality we find there and we are very much hoping that a livable and walkable and interesting and historically significant streetscape will be preserved as the light rail facilities are built. We admire the graceful façade of the Victoria Theater Building and look forward to seeing it preserved as the area is developed.

Sincerely,

Gloria Goodwin Raheja

Gloria Goodwin Raheja
Professor of Anthropology and Global Studies

CC: Pat Harris, Ward 3 Councilmember, City of Saint Paul
310-C City Hall
15 Kellogg Blvd., West
Saint Paul, MN 55102

GENEVIÈVE MARAULT

937 Charles Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55104-2614 ♦ (651) 644-3890

VIA EMAIL

John Manning, Chair
Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission
Department of Safety & Inspections
375 Jackson Street #220
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1806

8 October 2010

Re: Historic Designation for the Victoria Theatre, 825 University Avenue

Dear Chair and Commission:

I am writing to ask your support for the Historic Designation of the Victoria Theatre.

Others can speak (with more authority) to the architectural significance of the place, and the musical history created there, and the political upheaval it witnessed. I will speak merely as a member of the community surrounding the old theatre.

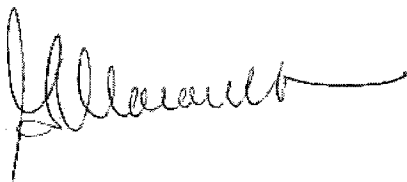
This building is four blocks from my home and built a year before my home was. I treasure Frogtown's fine old buildings and all the care and craftsmanship that went into them. I am sick at heart when one is demolished to make way for some new, soulless, environmentally-toxic place built with glaringly inferior quality. That kind of "progress" doesn't make sense to me.

When I moved into Frogtown, this theatre was home to a small business. Since that closed, I have often walked past imagining how it will look restored and useful in the community again. I picture a nice, simple, old building that feels grounded, an anchor for a low-income community in transition. I see a neighborhood theatre again where children and families can walk a few blocks (maybe pay just a couple bucks) to see an old movie (like one originally shown there nearly a century ago), a new film, an art film, a live performance of theatrical work, music, dance, comedy, class recitals, presentations. I see the lobby like a small gallery, decorated with creations from the many resident artists of Frogtown. I envision the theatre as a community center for the arts, a little jewel in our midst, a benefit and source of pride to everyone, and just a really comfortable place to spend an hour or two.

Of course, the building could be renovated for many other purposes as well. So long as its style is maintained, I'd be happy to see anyone making good use of the space.

To my mind, the first step in making any of that happen is to acknowledge that this old place, still standing up to time and careless treatment, deserves to be recognized for what it has been. Then we will have more means to save it from destruction until it is made into whatever it will be.

Sincere thanks for considering our request.



Amy Spong - Save the Victoria

From: Krista Hanson <klfhanson@yahoo.com>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 10/8/2010 3:57 PM
Subject: Save the Victoria

Hello Amy,

Please forward this email on to the HPC members! Thank you so much!

Krista Finstad Hanson

*** Please Help Save the Victoria Theater ! ****
Dear Heritage Preservation Commission members,

Please add my voice to the chorus of people who have been advocating to save the Victoria Theater on University Avenue.

I am a District 11, Ward 4 resident, and property owner in St. Paul for 13 years.

I am also an architectural historian and author of many articles and three books including *Minnesota Open House* which is a travel guide to Minnesota Historic House Museums. In addition I am a member of the Minnesota Preservation Alliance, the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, an active member and volunteer with the Ramsey County Historical Society, a member of the Minnesota Historical Society, and a founding member of the Hamline Midway History Corps.

In general I would like to see no historic buildings torn down. The 1915 Victoria Theater is no ordinary historic building. The Victoria Theater most definitely meets qualification for local, state, and national heritage preservation criteria.

I have no specific knowledge of the music history component. I am sure many other people have spoken to that aspect.

From the exterior this building is unique and worth saving. The patterned brick, the original lanterns, and the central doors still call to mind the original quality of a theater. That the Victoria was designed by a well-known and celebrated architect Franklin H. Ellerbe is another count in this building's favor.

But it my main consideration as a Midway resident and with the Central Corridor soon to be under construction is that the Victoria Theater should be saved as it is to my knowledge the **only remaining theater** along University Avenue in St. Paul.

The Faust theater was famously demolished and the Hamline Theater was lost to fire in the early 1980s. I do not know of any other original theaters along the strip but there appears to be no architectural evidence of any others remaining.

Please grant this building local heritage preservation status, as well as assist the advocates in applying for state and national heritage preservation status for this wonderful building.

Most Sincerely,

Krista Finstad Hanson
1199 Englewood Avenue
St. Pau, MN 55104
651-646-0632

Amy Spong - The Victoria Theatre

From: New Victoria Theatre <newvictoriatheatre@gmail.com>
To: <amy.spong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>
Date: 11/4/2010 4:17 PM
Subject: The Victoria Theatre

Hi Amy,

My name is Keith Johnson, and I am the founder of the New Victoria Theatre Project, which is an organization whose initial purpose was to explore the prospective re-use of the building at 825 University, formally known as The Victoria Theatre, which later became known as The Victoria Cafe'. I began my correspondence with Bee Vue, the building's owner about two years ago, and he has since allowed me ongoing access to his property, during which time I've had contractors, architects, designers, potential investors, and even a mural expert to view the building's interior. All three architects who had toured the building made statements about the building's structural soundness, one of whom commented that rehabilitative efforts on the Victoria would be considerably less than that of the Ritz Theatre, which is firmly positioned as a staple in the Northeast Minneapolis area, and has a similar story to the Victoria Theatre. The mural expert did not hesitate to state his view that the murals, located throughout the second floor, could be re-stored. A few prospective investors have commented on they how they felt that this could potentially be an investment opportunity upon the construction of the Central Corridor LRT Project, particularly since the addition of the Victoria Avenue station.

Although the rehabilitation of this vacant building as a performance or entertainment venue would be an enormous, I believe it is feasible, and it could be a very worthwhile undertaking, which makes it worth saving. I am not entirely clear about how I feel if it were to take on any other identity, but my overarching sentiment is that the building should be protected and remain standing. I do believe, however, that the discussion should soon turn to the potential re-use of the building, subsequently ridding the neighborhood of a vacant building, and adding a valuable attraction.

As of yesterday, I remain in contact with Bee Vue, and although nothing is absolutely clear, I have been in correspondence with potential investors as well.

Respectfully,

Keith Johnson, Founder

The New Victoria Theatre Project

the ability to access his property to look about the possibility of ring dnformed a relationship with the owner of the building about two years ago, at which point, he allowed me the opportunity to begin to explore the feasibility of rehabilitating the