

city of saint paul
planning commission resolution
file number 10-68
date August 13, 2010

VICTORIA THEATER HERITAGE PRESERVATION SITE DESIGNATION

WHEREAS, under Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, one of the Heritage Preservation Commission's tasks is to identify potential historic sites; and

WHEREAS, the Victoria Theater, located in the Frogtown neighborhood at 825 University Avenue, is an intact, two-story building sheathed with brick and terra cotta. It was designed in the Beaux Arts style by Saint Paul architect Franklin Ellerbe of the firm Ellerbe Architects. Built in 1915 to show silent movies, the theater was later named the Victoria Café and used as a dance hall for cabaret-style shows; and

WHEREAS, the Victoria Theater was first surveyed as part of the *Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County* in 1983. An inventory form was filed and the building was listed as a site of "Major Significance." Being located along the future Central Corridor Light Rail line, the property was surveyed again in 1995 as part of the cultural resources study for the project. It was determined that the property was not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The HPC asked to have the property re-evaluated in 2005 and the same determination was made; and

WHEREAS, in the fall of 2009, the Frogtown District Council submitted a final *Individual Property Designation Form* to the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and requested they consider recommending the property for listing as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site. The request was discussed at the December 17, 2009 HPC Meeting and the Commission voted to accept the designation study and commence the designation process; and

moved by Wencil
seconded by _____
in favor Unanimous
against _____

WHEREAS, as required by Legislative Code 73.05 (b), the Heritage Preservation Commission has requested that the Planning Commission review the proposed designation and comment on the following: 1) the relationship of the proposed designation to the Comprehensive Plan; 2) the effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding neighborhood; and 3) any other planning considerations, along with a recommendation for approval, rejection, or modification of the proposed designation; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Planning Commission finds the following regarding the proposed Victoria Theater designation:

- 1. Relationship of the proposed designation to the Comprehensive Plan.**
The proposed designation of the Victoria Theater is generally consistent with the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the Historic Preservation and Transportation Chapters recognize that heritage preservation has been used effectively in Saint Paul as a tool for community development and revitalization (Strategies HP 3.11 and 3.12 and T 2.12 and 2.13e).
- 2. Effect of the proposed designation on the surrounding neighborhood.**
Designation will have a positive effect on the surrounding properties, both residential and commercial, and act as an anchor for redevelopment in the Victoria Station Area.
- 3. Other planning considerations and recommendation for approval, rejection, or modification.** There are no further considerations or modifications recommended.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Saint Paul Planning Commission supports the designation of the Victoria Theater as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site and the accompanying Preservation Program.



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor

*25 West Fourth Street
Saint Paul, MN 55102*

*Telephone: 651-266-6565
Facsimile: 651-228-3261*

DATE: August 4, 2010
TO: Planning Commission
FROM: Neighborhood Planning Committee
SUBJECT: Proposed designation of the *Victoria Theater* at 825 University Avenue as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site

SITE DESCRIPTION

The Victoria Theater, located in the Frogtown neighborhood at 825 University Avenue, is an intact, two-story building sheathed with brick and terra cotta. It was designed in the Beaux Arts style by Saint Paul architect Franklin Ellerbe of the firm Ellerbe Architects. Built in 1915 to show silent movies, the theater was later named the Victoria Café and used as a dance hall for cabaret-style shows. In 1927, as part of the first commercial label recording sessions held in the Upper Midwest, the Victoria Café's house orchestra recorded "Moonshiner's Dance" for Gennett Records. The jazz/polka instrumental record was included on a 1952 recording, *The Anthology of American Folk Music*. According to the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the *Anthology* played a significant role in the development of American folk arts and the Victoria Café was important for its association with the political history of Prohibition in Saint Paul.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2009, the Frogtown District Council submitted a final *Individual Property Designation Form* to the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) and requested they consider recommending the property for listing as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site. The request was discussed at the December 17, 2009 HPC Meeting and the Commission voted to accept the designation study and commence the designation process. A *Designation Activities Checklist* is attached indicating the steps for local designation.

The Victoria Theater was first surveyed as part of the *Historic Sites Survey of St. Paul and Ramsey County* in 1983. An inventory form was filed and the building was listed as a site of "Major Significance." Being located along the future Central Corridor Light Rail line, the property was surveyed again in 1995 as part of the cultural resources study for the project. It was determined that the property was not eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The HPC asked to have the property re-evaluated in 2005 and the same determination was made. However, the nearby Raths, Mills & Bell Film

required to provide parking. New off-street parking should be further reduced and restricted in close proximity to transit lines and in Downtown to support transit ridership.

2.13.e. As a part of redevelopment or reinvestment, discourage the demolition of housing units or historic resources for new surface parking lots.

RELATIONSHIP TO NEIGHBORHOOD PLANS

Two of the objectives of the *Thomas-Dale (District 7) Plan* (adopted by the district council in 2005) are to “preserve the character of the neighborhood and ensure its future success” and to “promote the rehabilitation and preservation of older buildings.” (Note: The plan summary, adopted by the City in 2007, does not include this specific language.) The designation of the Victoria Theater as a local heritage preservation site would serve to meet the goals of this plan.

Victoria Station Area Plan (Draft, May 2010) identifies “several notable historic structures within the station area” with one of them being “the Victoria Theater which currently sits vacant along the north side of University Avenue.” The designation of the Victoria Theater can be a catalyst for rehabilitation and new/infill development in the station area as well strengthen the historic character of the commercial node.

EFFECT ON SURROUNDING NEIGHBORHOOD

Designation could have a positive effect on the surrounding properties, both residential and commercial, and act as an anchor for redevelopment in the Victoria Station Area.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Neighborhood Planning Committee recommends that the Planning Commission support the designation of the Victoria Theater as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site and determine that the designation is in conformance with the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. The committee’s recommended resolution is attached. Please call Amy Spong, Heritage Preservation staff, if you have any questions prior to the meeting (651-266-6714).

Attachments:

1. Resolution
2. Victoria Theater Designation Study

**Saint Paul Planning Commission
City Hall Conference Center
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

Minutes August 13, 2010 (excerpt only)

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, August 13, 2010 at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners Present: Mmes. Donnelly-Cohen, Halverson, Merrigan, Smitten, Wang, Wencl, and Young; and
Messrs. Alton, Commers, Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Spaulding, and Ward.

Commissioners Absent: Mmes. *Porter, *Thao, and Messrs. *Schertler, and *Wickiser
*Excused

Also Present: Lucy Thompson, Patricia James, Amy Spong, Christina Boulware, Josh Williams, Ryan Kelley, Joey Larson, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

I. Approval of minutes July 30, 2010.

MOTION: *Commissioner Commers moved approval of the minutes of July 30, 2010. Commissioner Alton seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

II. Chair's Announcements (not included)

III. Planning Director's Announcements (not included)

IV. Zoning Committee (not included)

NEW BUSINESS (not included)

V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Chair Commers had no report.

VI. Neighborhood and Planning Committee

Designation of Victoria Theater at 825 University Avenue as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site – Approve resolution finding designation in conformance with the Comprehensive Plan.
(Amy Spong, 651/266-6714)

MOTION: *Commissioner Wencl moved the Neighborhood Planning Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote*

VII. 2010 Saint Paul Survey Project – Informational presentation on a recently approved Legacy Grant for a historic survey of the Frogtown, Payne-Phalen, and Uppertown neighborhoods (*Amy Spong, 651/266-6714*)
(not included)

VIII. Communications Committee
Commissioner Smitten had no report.

IX. Task Force Reports (not included)

X. Old Business
None.

XI. New Business
None.

XII. Adjournment
Meeting adjourned at 8:53 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary
Planning and Economic Development Department,
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Approved _____
(Date)

Donna Drummond
Planning Director

Marilyn Porter
Secretary of the Planning Commission

Butler\planning commission\minutes\August 13, 2010