

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION

FILE NAME #14-GRANDVIEW AND HIGHLAND THEATERS STAR FUNDING

DATE NOVEMBER 6, 2014

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code declares as a matter of public policy that the preservation, protection, perpetuation and use of areas, places, buildings, structures and other objects having a special historical, community or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 also establishes the purposes of heritage preservation, including to “safeguard the heritage of the City of Saint Paul by preserving sites and structures which reflect elements of the city’s cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history” and to “promote the use and preservation of historic sites...” and

WHEREAS, Section 73.04 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code states that the Heritage Preservation Commission serves as an advisory body to the mayor and city council on municipal heritage preservation matters, recommends sites for local designation which the Commission has reason to believe are eligible for designation as heritage preservation sites, and conducts design review in order to preserve the historical and architectural character of the site; and

WHEREAS, in 1980 both the Grandview and Highland Theaters (Theaters) at 1830 Grand Avenue and 760 Cleveland Avenue respectively, were surveyed and determined to meet criteria to be eligible for listing both as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site and on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). This was part of the Saint Paul and Ramsey County historic sites survey; and

WHEREAS, both Theaters, the Grandview in 1933 and the Highland in 1939, were designed by architect Myrtus A. Wright in the Art Deco style; and

WHEREAS, a draft National Register nomination form was completed in 1980 for the Grandview Theater and City planning staff completed the local nomination form for the Grandview in 1993. The HPC held a public hearing and received the support of the owner, Mr. Marvin Mann, and recommended designation to the City Council. The public hearing was scheduled but the building was not designated. City staff initiated the designation process again in 1997 but cuts in staffing for the HPC resulted in the process not moving forward. In 2002, both the Highland District and the Macalester-Groveland Community Councils adopted resolutions requesting the HPC nominate the Theaters and while staff updated nomination forms the designation process was not commenced; and

WHEREAS, in 2003 both Theaters were awarded forgivable loan funding of \$75,000 through the Cultural STAR Program and \$213,270 from the Ward 3 Neighborhood Investment Initiative STAR Program. In the STAR agreement was a provision that the loan be forgiven if the Theaters operated in their current use for nine (9) years OR the interior of the Theaters were designated by the City Council under Chapter 73. The Theaters operated for nine years and the loan was forgiven. The total funding of \$288,270 mostly went towards HVAC and roof repairs for both the Highland and Grandview Theaters; and

WHEREAS, on July 9, 2014 the Saint Paul City Council approved Neighborhood STAR Program funding of a \$83,750 pay-back loan and a \$83,750 grant via Resolution #PH 14-175, for new seats, plumbing and carpeting for both the Highland and Grandview Theaters; and

WHEREAS, on September 10, 2014, the Neighborhood STAR Board reviewed an application from the Highland Grandview Limited Partnership seeking \$166,250 in grant assistance through the Ward 2 and Ward 3 Year-Round Neighborhood STAR Program for new seats, counters, drapes, roof and plumbing repairs for both theaters. Although the Neighborhood STAR Board was unable to recommend funding due to the request not following STAR Guidelines, they did recommend that if funding was approved by the Mayor and City Council, a minimum 10-year commitment to remain open and operating as movie theaters be included in the agreement; and

WHEREAS, the \$166,250 through in Ward 2 and Ward 3 Neighborhood STAR Year Round Program has been restructured as a forgivable loan and, due to the City's business subsidy requirements, has been scheduled for a November 19, 2014 public hearing via City Council Resolution #PH 14-318; and

WHEREAS, after the STAR Board review and recommendation for funding, separate orders were issued on July 25, 2014 for the Grandview Theater's facade as part of a routine fire Certificate of Occupancy inspection. The order was issued by the Department of Safety and Inspections which ordered repair of broken window glass and tiles and that all exterior walls be maintained free from holes and deterioration; and

WHEREAS, the HPC was notified of the deficiencies and plans to cover the exterior Vitrolite tiles and glassblock with sheet metal from a concerned citizen. Covering over historic materials will alter the facade and may result in accelerated deterioration of the historic Vitrolite tiles that are to be covered by trapping moisture against the historic materials; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Preservation Chapter of the Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan recommends the following strategies for considering public funding and appropriate repairs to the Grandview and Highland Theaters:

1. Give equal consideration to historic preservation factors when City action, involvement, or funding is requested or required (HP 1.10),
2. To protect undesignated historic resources (HP 4.3) that are eligible for local and federal designation from destruction or substantial loss of historic character,
3. To realize the full economic potential of key historic resources (HP 5.3), and
4. To actively promote the use of Federal historic preservation tax credits for income-producing properties that are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (HP 5.9);

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Heritage Preservation Commission recommends the City Council adopt a resolution approving the 2014 STAR request with the following changes/requirements:

1. Require that a portion of the STAR funding be used to complete an Historic Structure Assessment for both Theaters. This would identify important elements and features worthy of preservation, outline appropriate repairs and treatments for the properties, and even provide a rehabilitation plan with general cost estimates. This should be completed by a qualified preservation architect or consultant and prior to any work being carried out.
2. Require the proposal for all exterior and interior repairs and updates, including the facade repair ordered by the Department of Safety and Inspections, are reviewed by the City's Historic Preservation Specialist. This review is to

ensure the proposed repairs and updates will not negatively impact the historic and architectural character and significance of the Theaters which could harm both building's eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and therefore, limit future financial incentives and funding.

3. Require that the loan will be forgiven if both the Theaters remain open for a certain period of time AND local designation is sought for the property as City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Sites. When a property is considered for designation the HPC reviews changes over time to the exterior of a property. If it is determined that there are significant historic elements in the interior, then the HPC may also recommend portions of the interior be designated too. But this can only happen with more study and careful evaluation by a qualified preservation consultant or staff.
4. Encourage the owners to explore listing the Theaters on the National Register of Historic Places which would provide access to both the state and federal historic tax credits and Legacy Amendment grant funds.

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, both the Highland and Grandview Theaters are valued neighborhood assets and their architectural and historical character greatly contribute to that value and their economic viability. Making appropriate updates and repairs are key to maintaining the Theaters in their original use. City funding should promote the protection of important architectural elements, specifically to protect the Theaters future eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places and as a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site. The City should do all it can to promote the preservation and use of the last two historic movie theaters in Saint Paul.

MOVED BY	Commissioner Bezat
SECONDED BY	Commissioner Reihle

IN FAVOR	10
AGAINST	0
ABSTAIN	0