

Community Planning & Economic Development
250 4th Street South, Room 300 PSC
Minneapolis, MN 55415



City of Minneapolis
*Department of Community Planning
& Economic Development - CPED*

MEMORANDUM

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission
FROM: Joe Bernard, Senior Planner, CPED Long Range Planning, (612) 673-2422
REVIEWED BY: Jack Byers, Manager, CPED Long Range Planning, (612) 673-2634
CC: Miles Mercer, Senior Project Coordinator, CPED Business Development, (612) 673-5043
DATE: October 22, 2013
RE: National Register of Historic Places Nomination – Hollywood Theater

Background

On September 16, 2013, the Minnesota Deputy State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) sent the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission a letter requesting comments on the nomination of the Hollywood Theater, located at 2815 Johnson Street Northeast, to the National Register of Historic Places. As a Certified Local government, the Commission is required by federal law to participate in the National Register nomination process as follows:

- Afford the public a reasonable opportunity to comment on the nomination;
- Prepare a report as to whether or not the subject property is eligible for National Register listing; and
- Have a chief local elected official (the Mayor) submit this report and his/her recommendation to the Minnesota State Preservation Officer within sixty days of the notice from SHPO¹

Apiary, LLC is a local development company that has exclusive development rights from the City for the Hollywood property. Apiary, LLC retained Preservation Design Works, LLC, to nominate the subject property to the National Register of Historic Places as a step in seeking financial aid for a substantial rehabilitation of this property. The City consented to the nomination. Attachment A includes a copy of the nomination, prepared by Gregory Donofrio, Ph.D., Meghan Elliott, PE, and Ryan Salmon, all of Preservation Design Works LLC, for your review and comment.

¹ More than a simple comment letter, this report provides the City with significant decision making power in the matter. If both the Commission and chief local elected official recommend that the subject property should not be nominated to the a National Register, the SHPO shall take no further action, unless within thirty days of the receipt of such recommendation by the SHPO an appeal is filed with the State. If such an appeal is filed, the State shall follow the procedures for making nomination pursuant to established procedures. Even then, the City's report and recommendations are included with the nomination submitted the State to the Keeper of the National Register.

Previous Reviews

The Hollywood Theater was designated as a local landmark by the Heritage Preservation Commission in 1990, citing the significance of the building's architecture, work of master architects Liebenberg and Kaplan, and the important social history of the property. The Heritage Preservation Commission also reviewed the *Framework for the Treatment of Character Defining Features for the Reactivation of the Hollywood Theater* in 2009, included as attachment C to this report. Several certificates of no change have been reviewed by the commission over the years, the most recent in 2012 for minor temporary exterior alterations (the construction of a fence) to secure the site while redevelopment plans are solidified.

Nomination Review

To be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, a property must be significant within a given context and retain its integrity, defined as its ability to communicate that significance. Preservation Design Works has identified that the Hollywood Theater is significant under the National Register Criteria A; the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history, and Criteria C; the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction. As stated in the nomination:

“The Hollywood Theater was constructed in 1935 at 2815 Johnson Street Northeast in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The building is a single-screen theater designed in the Streamline Moderne Style, however a 1948 update to the marquee could be described as Zig Zag Deco... The theater retains a high degree of historic integrity as compared to most other local theaters of the same style and era.”

The nomination cites several elements of the Hollywood Theater that contribute to meeting National Register Criterion A and C:

1. The theater is “a substantially intact example of a neighborhood movie theater designed by architectural firm Liebenberg and Kaplan, master of movie theater design.”
2. The theater “is a notable example of Streamline Moderne architecture...” and as the second Great Depression-era theater designed by L&K that was built entirely new, retains a high degree of historic integrity as compared to other theaters of this style and era.
3. The theater is significant due to its contributions to local the entertainment/recreation patterns, including trends and patterns of movie theater ownership and development between World War One and World War Two.

The period of significance established by the nomination identifies the years from construction (1935) to when the streetcar system in Minneapolis was dismantled (1954).

The architectural description in the nomination is thorough, highlighting the key stylistic features that remain intact from the original construction of the structure. The narrative describing alterations to the

structure is equally detailed, including renovations designed by the original architects which took place in 1948.

In terms of meeting the significance criterion C, the nomination details the work of Liebenberg and Kaplan, and in particular their role in the movie theater industry. Considering the context both temporally and design-wise, the applicant makes a strong case that the Hollywood Theater deserves recognition as a unique contribution to the era of neighborhood scale movie theaters.

Evaluation supporting the nomination under criteria A is also supplied by the nominator. The theater was constructed in not only a unique era of design preference, but represents a unique pattern of development in Minneapolis culturally and socially. Movie theaters served smaller market areas at a time when the movie industry was one of the only thriving parts of the United States economy. Market forces only supported this type and style of theater construction for a brief time in Minneapolis history. As development patters changed following World War II – in large part due to shifting transportation preferences, including the loss of the streetcar network – neighborhood movie theaters no longer were the economically wise investment to make. Drive-in and suburban theaters grew their market share shortly thereafter.

Staff Recommendation

The Nominator has prepared a nomination that indicates their full consideration of the subject property's contributions to the field of architecture and to entertainment and recreation patterns in Minneapolis. Staff recommends the Commission **adopt** this CPED report, **approve** the nomination, and **direct** staff to transmit the report and a letter summarizing the report to the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Attachments

- A. Hollywood Theater National Register of Historic Places Nomination prepared by Preservation Design Works, LLC.
- B. Photographs
- C. *Framework for the Treatment of Character Defining Features for the Reactivation of the Hollywood Theater*; March 10, 2009.