

COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

	Number:	20-288	Meeting:	June 22, 2020
	Agenda Item:	80	Roll Call:	20-1077
	Submitted by:	Chris Johansen, Community Development Director		

AGENDA HEADING:

Hearing on the designation of the Varsity Theatre at 1207 25th Street as a local landmark.

SYNOPSIS:

Denise Mahon (owner) is seeking landmark status for the Varsity Theatre in accordance with Chapter 58 of the City Code. The applicant intends to renovate the subject building for theatre and office use in the future. The Landmark Review Board and the Plan and Zoning Commission recommend approval of the nomination. Staff recommends approval of designating the subject building as a local landmark.

FISCAL IMPACT: NONE

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- The subject property is located on the east side of 25th Street, north of the University Avenue intersection and west of the Drake University campus. It contains the Varsity Theatre building, which is a 2-story, commercial building constructed in 1917.
- The Varsity Theatre is eligible for designation as it “is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.”
- It was the longest-serving single-screen independently-owned Des Moines suburban movie house. The single-screen qualifier typified its property type as this was the standard defining characteristic of its property type. The independent ownership is in fact its stronger claim to significance since almost every theater ended up in chain ownership. As for longest serving, save for the semi-occasional closing for remodeling or repair, it outlasted every competing metro movie house.
- Its context is suburban because architecturally its counterparts all emerged in suburban settings at the same point in time, using the same style, and having the form of a building built for the sole purpose of showing movies.
- It is also significant for its World War 1 role as a mess hall and canteen for Drake University's Student Army Training Corps in late 1918.

- If the site is designated as a local landmark, any alteration, new construction, or demolition would be subject to review by the Landmark Review Board and require approval by the City Council.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL ACTION(S):

Date: June 8, 2020

Roll Call Number: [20-0907](#)

Action: [On](#) request from Denise Mahon (Owner) for the designation of the Varsity Theatre at 1207 25th Street as a local landmark, (6-22-20). Moved by Gatto to adopt. Motion Carried 7-0.

BOARD/COMMISSION ACTION(S):

Board: Plan and Zoning Commission

Date: May 21, 2020

Resolution Number: 20-2020-4.01

Action: Recommend approval of designating the Varsity Theatre a local landmark.

Board: Landmark Review Board

Date: June 5, 2020

Resolution Number: 20-2020-4.01

Action: Recommend approval of designating the Varsity Theatre a local landmark.

ANTICIPATED ACTIONS AND FUTURE COMMITMENTS: NONE

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