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August 20, 2007

Michael Stern

Chairman

City of Pittsburgh Historic Review Commission

200 Ross Street

Pittsburgh, PA 15219

Dear Chairman Stern:

I am writing to support the nomination of the Garden Theater to be a City Historic Landmark. Although this theater has had a quite unsavory reputation for the past 30 years, its history is quite fascinating. Built in 1915 by David E. Park, a steel-industry scion and banker who lived a few blocks east at the current site of Allegheny General Hospital, it showed movies exclusively.

As Timothy McNulty describes in a recent *Post-Gazette* article, "In the Garden, the city has a rare relic of the silent movie era, one listed in the Historical American Buildings Survey with the Library of Congress, and which remarkably has its original layout, seating, lighting and Art Nouveau fixtures. . . . The theater's 1954 film projectors are also still in place, as the previous owners simply left them untouched when the adult film industry switched to video. The original ticket booth is gone but in safe keeping at the Frick Art & Historical Center in Point Breeze." (May 20, 2007)

It is not only important to save the building, but to save the wonderful neon signs, marquee and historic terra-cotta front. It is believed that this theater may predate the Kelly-Strayhorn East Liberty, making the Garden the oldest remaining theater in Pittsburgh. Even more amazing is that it is all intact as a movie house today, after 92 years of service.

The Garden stands as one of those unique icons that help urban neighborhoods like the Mexican War Streets attract young people to its ranks. The Garden Theater is one of Pittsburgh's unparalleled treasures and a tremendous competitive advantage in the quest for talented young people, and people of all ages, seeking an authentic place to live, work, and play.

Sincerely,

Dan Holland

Chair

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