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**Statement of Dan Holland
Chair, Young Preservationists Association of Pittsburgh**

**On the Historic Nomination of the New Granada Theater
To be a City of Pittsburgh Historic Landmark**

In 1992, I was the primary researcher for the first state-sponsored survey of African American historic resources. The study, called the "African American Historic Sites Survey of Allegheny County," found 300 sites related to African American history. When we completed the survey in 1992, about half of the sites remained.

Since that time, an additional number of sites have fallen to the wrecking ball, such as the Ellis Hotel on Centre Avenue and the Greater Faith Tabernacle Church of God in Christ in Homewood.

There have been some preservation success stories. In 1995, I nominated the Centre Avenue YMCA to be a city historic landmark. Today, the building stands as a testimony to the accomplishments and contributions of African Americans to the history of Pittsburgh, the region, and the nation.

But many other African American historic sites throughout Pittsburgh remain at risk of further neglect or demolition. These include the National Negro Opera Company in Homewood, the nation's first national black opera company.

Another site of national significance is the New Granada Theater, built in 1927 by a prominent local African American architect, Louis Bellinger—at a time when there were no more than 60 African American architects in the country.

These sites tell a story. They tell a story about our past, how we lived, how we played, and our values.

And, oh what a story the New Granada can tell:

The structure was originally built as the "Pythian Temple" for a local chapter of a national African-American fraternal organization of construction workers called the Knights of Pythias. In 1937, Pittsburgh architect Alfred M. Marks converted the Pythian Temple into a commercial theater, which included an auditorium called the Savoy Ballroom, first opened in 1941. Rising jazz stars began to play at the New Granada. These included Stanley Turrentine, Lena Horne, Earl "Fatha" Hines, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald, Billy Eckstine, James Brown, the O'Jays, and Peaches & Herb.

At one time, the New Granada Theatre was one of four movie theaters in the Hill. By the 1960s, only the New Granada remained. These sites also tell a story about our

values today as stewards of the past. What message are we sending to Pittsburgh and to the nation when all we have to show for our rich African American heritage—two hundred years of accomplishments—are two city historic landmarks?

The National Negro Leagues Museum is in Kansas City. The National Underground Railroad Museum is in Cincinnati. Philadelphia has an extensive black history tour. So, Pittsburgh is playing catch-up on the heritage tourism game, which is a huge generator of tax revenues and jobs.

Fortunately, today, we have a historic opportunity to make history by dedicating it. This City Council has the opportunity to add one more site to its small but growing inventory of protected African American landmarks that tell the story of Pittsburgh's past. I urge the City Council to approve the designation of the New Granada Theater to be a City of Pittsburgh Historic Landmark.