



RESULTS OF NATIONAL REGISTER PROPERTY SEARCH

Hennepin Theatre

Beaux Arts theater with ornate interior designed by Kirchhoff and Rose of Milwaukee, built in 1921 as part of Orpheum vaudeville circuit.

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County: Hennepin

Address: 910 Hennepin Ave.

City or Township: Minneapolis

Listing Date: January 19, 1996

Significance Level: Local

Criteria: A, C (see [criteria](#))

Date: 1921

Style: Beaux Arts

Architect: Kirchhoff, Roger and Thomas L. Rose

Theme: architecture, performing arts

Historic Functions: Theater

Current Functions: Theater

Foundation Material: Concrete

Roof Material: Concrete

Wall Material: Brick, Terra Cotta

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Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.
Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

RESOLUTION 96R-321
By Campbell

Amending The 1996 General Appropriation Resolution.

Resolved by The City Council of The City of Minneapolis:

That the above-entitled resolution, as amended, be further amended by increasing the appropriation for the City Attorney Agency in the Grants - Federal Fund (030-140-1410) by \$250,000 and increasing the City Attorney Agency revenue estimate in the Federal - Grants Fund (030-140-1410-Source 3210) by \$250,000.

Adopted. Yeas, 13; Nays none.

Passed October 25, 1996. J. Cherryhomes, President of Council.

Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.

Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

The **ZONING & PLANNING** Committee submitted the following reports:

Z&P - Your Committee, having under consideration certain structures/buildings for heritage preservation (local designation), pursuant to Title 2, Chapter 34 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Administration: Heritage Preservation Commission, and having held a public hearing thereon, now recommends passage of the accompanying resolution designating the following structures/buildings for heritage preservation:

- a) Hennepin Theater (Orpheum), 910 Hennepin Av (auditorium and exterior facades);
- b) Lena O. Smith House, 3905 - 5th Av S (exterior facades);
- c) Minneapolis Y.M.C.A. Central Building, 36 S 9th St (exterior facades);
- d) First National Bank/Soo Line Building, 105 S 5th St (three facades facing Marquette Av, 5th St and 2nd Av S).

Your Committee further recommends adoption of the Orpheum Theatre Design Guidelines as recommended by the Heritage Preservation Commission and agreed to by the Minneapolis Community Development Agency regarding the

interior, exterior and allowable improvements to the Orpheum, as set forth in Petn No 262158.

Adopted. Yeas, 13; Nays none.

Passed October 25, 1996.

Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.

Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

RESOLUTION 96R-322
By Scott

Designating the Hennepin (Orpheum) Theatre, Y.M.C.A. Central Building, Lena O. Smith House and First National/Soo Line Building for heritage preservation.

Whereas, the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission has recommended to the City Council that the auditorium and exterior facades of the Hennepin (Orpheum) Theatre, 910 Hennepin Avenue; the exterior facades Y.M.C.A. Central Building, 36 South Ninth Street; exterior facades of the Lena O. Smith House, 3905 Fifth Avenue South; and the three facades facing Marquette Avenue, Fifth Street and Second Avenue South of the Soo Line Building, 105 South Fifth Street, be designated for heritage preservation; and

Whereas, prior to such recommendation and in compliance with Section 34.40 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances, the Heritage Preservation Commission did refer the subject matter to the City Planning Commission for review and recommendation, such recommendation being made on September 25, 1996 approving the designation; and further did refer the subject matter to the Minnesota Historic Society for review; and

Whereas, the Zoning and Planning Committee of the City Council held a public hearing on October 15, 1996 with such due and proper notice as required by Section 34.50 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances;

Now, Therefore, Be It Resolved by The City Council of The City of Minneapolis:

That the Orpheum Theatre, 910 Hennepin Avenue; Y.M.C.A. Central Building, 36 South Ninth Street; Lena O. Smith House, 3905 Fifth Avenue South; and Soo Line Building, 105 South Fifth Street are hereby designated for heritage preservation, and that the proper City Officers and the Heritage Preservation Commission are directed to comply with provisions of Sections 34.60

through 34.90 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances.

Adopted. Yeas, 13; Nays none.

Passed October 25, 1996. J. Cherryhomes, President of Council.

Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.

Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

Z&P - Your Committee, to whom was referred an ordinance amending Title 20, Chapter 540 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Zoning Code: Business Districts, permitting tailor shops with custom dressmaking in the B2S zoning districts as a conditional use, now recommends that said ordinance be given its second reading for amendment and passage.

ORDINANCE 96-Or-113

By Mead and Scott

Intro & 1st Reading: 9/13/96

Ref to: Z&P

2nd Reading: 10/25/96

Amending Title 20, Chapter 540 of the Minneapolis Code of Ordinances relating to Zoning Code: Business Districts.

The City Council of The City of Minneapolis do ordain as follows:

Section 1. That Section 540.1070 of the above-entitled ordinance be amended by adding thereto a new subdivision (10) to read as follows:

540.1070. Conditional uses. Any use allowed as a conditional use in the B2 Districts shall be allowed in the B2S Districts (unless permitted in Section 540.1060) subject to the provisions of Sections 525, and in addition the following:

(10) TAILOR SHOPS, SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

a. GROSS FLOOR AREA SHALL BE LESS THAN ONE THOUSAND (1,000) SQUARE FEET.

b. ON-SITE STORAGE OF MERCHANDISE SHALL BE FOR ON-SITE RETAIL SALES AND REPAIR.

c. BUSINESS ACCESS TO AN ALLEY IS PROHIBITED WHERE AN ALLEY IS ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL USES.

d. HOURS OF OPERATION SHALL BE 7:00 A.M. TO 10:00 P.M. (11:00 P.M. ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY).

e. RETAIL SALES SHALL BE LIMITED TO NEW MERCHANDISE.

Adopted. Yeas, 13; Nays none.

Passed October 25, 1996. J. Cherryhomes, President of Council.

Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.

Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

Z&P - Your Committee, having under consideration the application of Superior Plating, Inc for a waiver from Interim Ordinance 96-Or-076, providing for a moratorium on the establishment or expansion of residential, commercial and industrial uses in the East Hennepin Study Area (passed 8/9/96), to permit application for expansion of a nonconforming use certificate at 315 - 1st Av NE, now recommends that said waiver be granted, in accordance with the Findings on file in the office of the City Clerk and made a part of this report by reference.

Adopted. Yeas, 7; Nays, 6 as follows:

Yeas - Schulstad, Rainville, Dziedzic, Niland, McDonald, Minn, Scott.

Nays - Herron, Thurber, Campbell, Biernat, Mead, Cherryhomes.

Passed October 25, 1996.

Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.

Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

Z&P - Your Committee, having under consideration the environmental review process for the demolition of the Washburn Crosby Elevators #2 and #3 located at 2nd St S and 10th Av S, now recommends -

a) Finding that the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) is adequate, and that development of an Environmental Impact Statement not be ordered; therefore making a negative declaration; and

b) Adoption of the "Findings of Fact and Record of Decision" report as contained in Petm No 262160.

Adopted. Yeas, 13; Nays none.

Passed October 25, 1996.

Approved October 31, 1996. S. Sayles Belton, Mayor.

Attest: M. Keefe, City Clerk.

Z&P - Your Committee recommends denying the application of Terrence Montgomery for a special permit to waive the full basement requirement at 3301 N 3rd St, notwithstanding the staff recommendation (#1996-177).

ORPHEUM THEATRE DESIGN GUIDELINES

(adopted by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, October 8, 1996)

It is agreed that the owner of the Orpheum Theatre, located at 910 Hennepin Avenue, will be allowed to operate the theater in a safe and economically feasible manner while protecting the integrity of the theater. As stated in the City of Minneapolis Ordinance Chapter 34 the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) will continue to review all changes which require a permit to the areas listed below. The theater owner and the HPC have also agreed upon the guidelines listed below.

INTERIOR: The auditorium, including decorative wall and ceiling features, will be historically designated. All other interior areas including but not limited to lobbies, the box office, backstage area, dressing rooms and basement will not be subject to the historic designation.

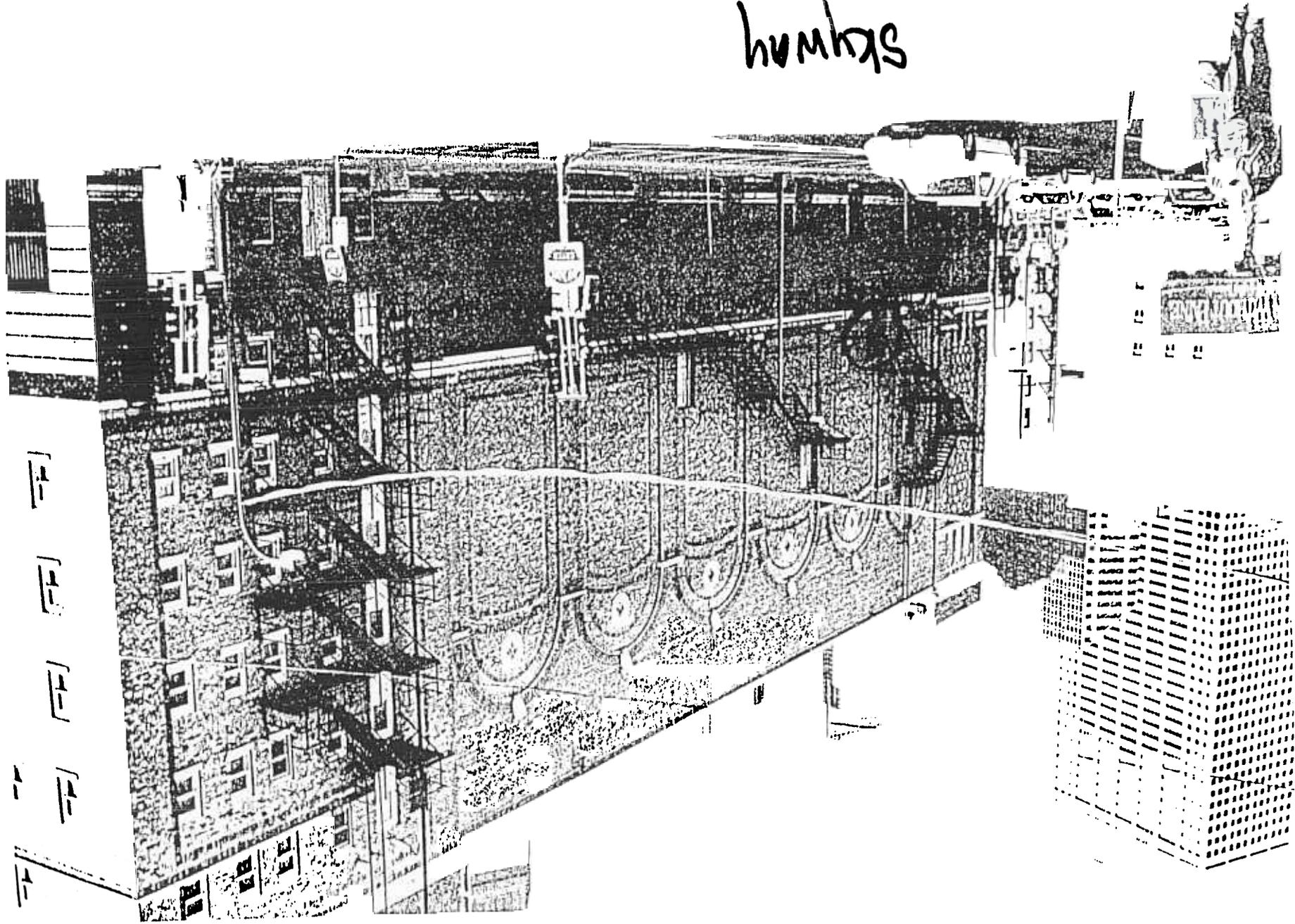
EXTERIOR: The primary facade on Hennepin Avenue and the secondary facades on Ninth Street, Hawthorne Avenue and Tenth Avenue shall be historically designated.

ALLOWABLE IMPROVEMENTS:

1. Theater owner will not be required to have HPC approval of banners announcing upcoming theater events. Such banners will continue to hang in their traditional location, on the exterior of the theater facing Hennepin Avenue.
2. Theater owner will not be required to HPC approval of a proposed roof sign (billboard) attached to the Hawthorne Avenue side of the roof and facing Highway 394.
3. Theater owner will be allowed to make the necessary repairs included as part of the on-going restoration. These repairs include terra cotta replacement and tuckpointing and will undergo staff approval with a Certificate of No Change form.
4. The theater owner and the HPC have agreed upon an acceptable skyway connection to the theater should a future development at the bus depot site occur. The acceptable skyway crosses Hawthorne Avenue and enters into an existing second floor exit doorway. The HPC will review the skyway design and more importantly, the connection into the historic fabric of the building elevation. (See attached plans.)
5. Theater owner will not be required to have HPC approval of a first or second level direct access to be constructed between the theater and the neighboring building located at 900 Hennepin Avenue which is known as the Bravo Celebration Center. The first floor access is expected to be made through a common wall near Ninth street, then lead through an existing theater closet into a lobby area of the theater. The second floor connection is expected to lead through an existing second level fire exit door into the lobby area on the mezzanine level of the theater.

Location approved by HPC 1999

skyway



City of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Registration Form

1 Name of Property

Historic Name: Hennepin Theatre

Other Name/Site Number: Hennepin Orpheum Theatre; RKO Orpheum Theatre; Orpheum Theatre

2. Location of Property

Street and Number: 910 Hennepin Avenue

located on original site not for publication ()

() moved/date:(

3. Ownership

Owner's Name: City of Minneapolis

Street and Number: 350 S. 5th Street

City: Minneapolis

State: MN

Zip: 55415

4. Classification

Ownership of property () private
 public
 () both

Category of property: building
 () site
 () district
 () structure
 () object

Number of resources within property:

Contributing	Non-contributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

Date: June 19, 1996

5. Function or Use

Historic: Recreation and culture: theater

Current: Recreation and culture: theater

6. Description

Architectural classification (style): Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Beaux Arts

Materials: foundation: Concrete

roof: Concrete

walls: Brick and Terra Cotta

other: Granite and Composition (roof)

Describe present and historic physical appearance. See continuation sheets.

7. Statement of Significance

Applicable local designation criteria: Gp-1 "Structures, lands, areas or districts considered for preservation shall exemplify the broad trends of cultural, political, economic or social history; however, they may also represent an unusual counter development to such broad trends."

Gp-3 "Structures, lands, areas or districts considered for preservation may display the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for study of a style or method of construction."

Related local context(s): "Architecture 1848-Present"

Areas of significance: Architecture and Performing Arts

Period(s) of significance: 1921-1945

Significant dates: 1921

Significant person(s): N/A

Cultural affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Kirchhoff, Roger (architect); Rose, Thomas L. (architect); Thompson-Starrett Company (builder)

8. Major Bibliographic References

See continuation sheets

9. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

PIN number: 27-029-24-21-0030

Legal Description: Lots 2-3, Auditor's Subdivision 126, City of Minneapolis, Hennepin County.

see continuation sheets

10. Form prepared by:

Name/Title: Susan Granger and Kay Grossman

Organization: Gemini Research

Street and number: 15 E. 9th Street

Telephone: (612) 589-3846

City: Morris

State: MN

Zip: 56267

11. Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Comments

Date submitted to Minneapolis HPC:

Date of Minneapolis HPC comment:

12. Description of City Council

Designation of property pursuant to:

Date of action:

MINNEAPOLIS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION
LOCAL DESIGNATION
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6. DESCRIPTION

The Hennepin Theatre is located on the block bounded by Hennepin and Hawthorne Avenues and Ninth and Tenth Streets in downtown Minneapolis. Surrounding the theater are several circa 1910 two story commercial buildings, a circa 1960 motel, a circa 1960 bus depot, and several asphalt-paved parking lots.

The Hennepin Theatre is an excellent example of the Beaux Arts style which was designed by the Milwaukee firm of Kirchhoff and Rose. It was built in 1921 by the Thompson-Starrett Company of Chicago at a cost of approximately \$1,017,500 and is largely intact. The theater's plan consists of two separate but connected structures--a narrow, two story auditorium building facing Hennepin Avenue and a much larger seven story auditorium building facing Ninth Street. This site plan was probably devised to give the theater a facade on Hennepin Avenue, Minneapolis' popular entertainment strip, while the bulk of the building was located on the western side of the block. Separate original building permits for the foundations were issued in January and February of 1921. The permit for above-grade construction, issued February 28, 1921, lists each building by its separate street address (908-910 Hennepin and 19-27 Ninth Street) and provides each building's individual dimensions and height: the lobby portion was to measure 36 feet wide by 145 feet deep, and the auditorium and stagehouse portion was to measure 110 feet wide by 182 feet deep (Nord 1995; Miller Dunwiddie 1989).

The lobby building, facing Hennepin Avenue, has a three-bay, two-story main facade which is faced in textured light-brown brick and gray glazed architectural terra cotta, with a gray granite base. The side walls of the lobby wing are constructed of cream-colored common brick. The main entrance originally consisted of five pair of wood and glass doors set into wooden frames with leaded glass transom lights. Today the entrance is comprised of new metal and glass doors with metal-enframed transom lights. The main entrance is flanked by original cast iron poster display cases. The outer edges of the second story feature smooth, paired terra cotta pilasters with simple capitals. The inner bay is flanked by two fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals with egg and dart molding. The pilasters enframe rectangular window openings with multi-paned double casement windows with multi-paned transom lights. There is a molded blind fanlight above the central window and rectangular panels above the outer windows which are decorated with bas relief urns and floral designs. The pilasters rest on the facade's first story cornice and support and entablature at the top of the facade. This entablature has medallions at the frieze and a cornice with dentils and egg and dart molding, and supports a parapet wall. The parapet wall originally had sections of open balustrade with urn-shaped balusters. Six terra cotta vases originally rested on the balustrade above the pilasters.

The theater's entrance was originally protected by a flat, cast iron canopy with a coffered metal ceiling and display lettering along its edge. The canopy was hung just below a narrow horizontal band of plate glass windows in the lobby facade. Rising above the canopy was a vertical marquee with letters reading "Hennepin." In 1933 the canopy was replaced by a larger, more ornate horizontal marquee which covered the narrow band of plate glass windows, and a larger vertical marquee which read "Orpheum." This vertical marquee was positioned higher on the building than the original marquee and projected well above the lobby building's roof line. In 1948, a new triangular, horizontal marquee was installed, topped by a vertical marquee which also read "Orpheum."

The auditorium and stagehouse portion of the theater consists of a large Period Revival style brick building with a red ceramic tile pent eave on the Ninth Street facade. It is faced with light-brown textured brick with tan-colored mortar joints, contrasting dark-brown brick trim, and gray glazed architectural terra cotta. It has a reinforced concrete foundation and a concrete and steel-supported roof.

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The massing of the auditorium and stagehouse is dominated by large square, corner brick towers which project above the roof line. The brick towers have broad surfaces with diamond-shaped brick patterning. They are topped by trios of rounded-arched windows beneath terra cotta cornices with egg and dart molding and dentils.

On the Ninth Street facade the towers flank a large, slightly projecting six-bay-wide rectangle in which brick pilasters define the bays and enframe the windows. The pilasters, which have terra cotta capitals, support an entablature with a decorated terra cotta architrave and cornice. Within the brick frieze are six square windows, three of which contain original triangular panes of glass. Above the entablature is a pent eave covered with red ceramic tiles.

Between the pilasters, six rounded-arched window openings at the second story have terra cotta jambs, keystones, and transoms. Multi-paned double casement windows and multi-paned transom lights were originally set within the openings. At the bottom of each second story window are urn-shaped balusters in an open balustrade which is supported by large paired medallions. The third story has smaller, rectangular window openings which originally had multi-paned casement sash and transom lights. A few of the window openings contain new, single pane replacement sash.

The wide rectangular terra cotta-enframed entrance opening at the center of the Ninth Street facade is filled with new, metal, paneled doors with new textured-glass transom lights. At the base of the corner towers are similar doors set into segmental arched openings with radiating voussoirs. Above the doors are terra cotta tympanums on which are affixed cast iron lamps. On the first story of the Ninth Street facade, the six-course American bonded brickwork is laid so that the stretcher courses project slightly and the header courses are recessed.

The Hawthorne Avenue facade consists of a row of six large rounded arches of brick decorated with terra cotta keystones, springing blocks, and medallions. This facade has several fire escape exits which originally led to metal stairways. Today there are new iron balustrades across these exits and the metal stairways have been removed. The brick tower at the corner of Hawthorne Avenue and Tenth Street contains many narrow rectangular window openings which have been filled with brick. These windows lit several floors of dressing rooms originally located within the tower. The Tenth Street facade of the building, which matches the Hawthorne Avenue facade, had blind rounded arches, brick corner towers, and terra cotta trim. The Hennepin Avenue side of the auditorium building is undecorated and faced with common brick.

Recent exterior renovation of the theater began in 1988-1989 when new roofs were installed on both portions of the building under the direction of Minneapolis architects Miller Dunwiddie Associates. In 1993 the theater underwent more extensive work under the direction of Minneapolis architects Hammel, Green, and Abrahamson with Knutson Construction as general contractor. The exterior renovation included cleaning, repairing, and repointing brickwork, terra cotta, and roof tiles; unboarding, repairing, and replacing windows; renovating entrances; and remodeling the horizontal and vertical marquees on the Hennepin Avenue facade. The project included expansion of the theater's technical areas to allow it to host large Broadway shows. The Tenth Street wall was moved approximately 20 feet closer to Tenth Street to expand the back of the stagehouse. A new Tenth Street facade, designed to match the original facade, was built using 7,000 bricks salvaged from the original wall and new matching terra cotta trim. A low, 5,000 square-foot dressing room addition was built onto the Hennepin Avenue side of the stagehouse, and the nearby loading dock area was expanded with a one-story entrance addition, a new concrete-paved drive, and simple iron fencing.

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The interior of the theater is ornate. The vestibule within the Hennepin Avenue entrance originally had a marble floor, a plaster coffered ceiling, terra cotta walls, and a centrally-located ticket booth (Miller Dunwiddie 1989). Today, the Tenth Street wall of the vestibule is faced with multi-colored, glazed architectural terra cotta and has three rounded arches enframed by ornate pilasters with Ionic capitals. The pilasters support a frieze which has three panels decorated with mythical animals, garlands, and urns. This wall was uncovered in 1993 and inspired the renovation of the rest of the vestibule. A set of new multi-paned double-leaf doors with multi-paned transom lights separates the vestibule from the lobby.

The outer and inner lobbies were originally separated by mahogany and glass doors but now comprise a continuous, long, wide hallway that leads toward the multi-level foyer immediately outside of the auditorium (Miller Dunwiddie 1989). The outer lobby has six ornate, elliptically-arched terra cotta panels with Pompeii-inspired bas relief griffins, garlands, and terra cotta pilasters which were rediscovered and renovated in 1993. There are ornate plaster circles in the ceiling with lights hanging from the center of each. At the top of the side walls are ornate plaster entablatures which support the ceiling's elliptical arches. The inner lobby, which originally contained the manager's office, is more reserved in design and is decorated with recessed plaster forms which are outlined with ornate molding and flanked by pilasters. At the top of the walls are entablatures with dentils. The lobbies originally had terrazzo floors, brass lighting fixtures, flocked wall paper, and leaded and etched glass. The walls, ceilings, door frames, lights, and other detailing have been renovated in a manner sensitive to the original theater's design.

The three-level foyer is a 17-foot-wide corridor which curves around the auditorium and moves patrons from the inner lobby to the auditorium doors and from the auditorium to the exit vestibules of the Ninth Street facade. The foyer has plaster-covered walls and ornate detailing. The two upper levels of the foyer are successively less ornate than the main floor (Miller Dunwiddie 1989). Stairways, restrooms, and entrances to various levels of auditorium seating are located off the foyer.

The auditorium is wide and shallow with gracefully curved seating which brings the audience close to the stage. It is known for its clear sight lines and excellent acoustics. The auditorium has a curving balcony which is steeply raked and has a number of entrances at several levels. Flanking the balcony are four boxes on either side of the stage. The auditorium has plaster-covered walls with ornamental molding which traces and embellishes elegant arches, enframes door openings, and decorates the facades of the balcony and boxes with garlands, entablatures, pilasters, and medallions. At the top of the room is a large ornate dome whose curved ceiling was covered with 30,000 4-inch-squares of aluminum leaf during the 1993 renovation. The auditorium was originally painted in shades of rose and cream and decorated with gilt.

The performance area is marked by a 54-foot-wide, 29-foot-tall, elliptically-arched proscenium. Flanking the proscenium are two arches which originally contained grilled openings for the Hennepin's Wurlitzer organ. The organ has been removed and the openings are now covered with curtains. The stage originally had a brightly-painted fireproof asbestos curtain. The stage was originally 35 feet deep, but was extended approximately 20 feet toward Tenth Street in 1993. The wings are now 20 feet and 26 feet wide, and the gridiron, from which scenery is suspended with a counterweight system, is located 65 feet above the stage floor. There was originally a large steel cage backstage in which to keep performing animals.

**MINNEAPOLIS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION
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The theater originally had several elevators and a drive-in loading ramp to accommodate touring productions. The basement originally contained property rooms, the coal-fired furnace, an electric generating plant, and an elaborate artesian well air conditioning system.

The interior of the theater has been painted and redecorated several times throughout its history. In 1988-1989 mechanical systems were repaired and replaced and portions of the interior were repaired, repainted, and recarpeted (Nord 1995). During the 1993 renovation, the auditorium seating was partly renovated and partly replaced so that the theater now accommodates 2,650 people in comparison to its original 2,928 seats. The stage curtains and rigging were replaced and the orchestra pit was expanded. A new chandelier was hung from the auditorium's dome. In the vestibule, walls and the ceiling were renovated and a new ticket office was added. A concession stand was added to the lobby. Throughout the building, terrazzo floors, hardware, lighting fixtures, and doors were repaired or replaced, some with parts salvaged from other vintage theaters. Original moldings, friezes, frescoes, and other decorative elements were uncovered behind wallpaper and paneling and were renovated. Missing plasterwork was recreated by studying original photographs and matching existing pieces. The theater's original rest rooms, dressing rooms, set-building and storage facilities, offices, mechanical systems, and other technical facilities were remodeled.

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7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hennepin Theatre is eligible for local designation under Gp-1 "Structures, lands, areas or district considered for preservation shall exemplify the broad trends of cultural, political, economic or social history; however, they may also represent an unusual counter development to such broad trends" and Gp-3 "Structures, lands, areas or districts considered for preservation may display the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for study of a style or method of construction." The theater is architecturally significant as an excellent example of its property type and as the largest and one of the most ornate theaters of its vintage surviving in the Twin Cities. It is historically significant for its associations with the history of vaudeville, the performing arts, and popular culture in Minneapolis and for its associations with the Orpheum circuit, one of the country's two leading vaudeville circuits. The property is significant within the statewide historic context entitled "Urban Centers, 1870-1940" and within the City of Minneapolis' historic context entitled "Culture, Fine, and Applied Arts, 1883-Present."

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Hennepin Theatre, built in 1921, is an excellent and basically intact example of the large, ornate vaudeville houses which were constructed in major U.S. cities between 1900 and the 1920's. With its palatial auditorium and ornate lobby, the Hennepin typifies the extravagance with which vaudeville theaters were designed and constructed. Vaudeville owners and managers believed that theatergoers would repeat their experience often if their ticket bought a visit to fantasy, beauty, and luxury, along with the show. The facades of these theaters, many of which were Beaux Arts in style, were often colorful and heavily ornamented to stand out from neighboring commercial buildings. Like stage sets themselves, the theater interiors were carefully designed theatrical showpieces with terra cotta and plaster often used in place of the more expensive marble and other stone which they were fashioned to resemble. The interiors were lavish, with large lobbies, marble stairs, carpeted corridors, pilasters and columns, statues, richly decorated boxes, sculpted wall ornaments, and ornate framed mirrors. Color schemes were often gold, cream, and pale blue (Snyder 1989, 88-89, 97-98). Vaudeville houses of the early 1920's served as models for the movie theaters built only a few years later, many of which were even more fantastic in design (Naylor 1981).

With an original capacity of 2,928 patrons, the Hennepin Theatre was advertised as the "biggest vaudeville theatre west of New York" (Minneapolis Journal 1921). During the first two decades of the 20th century, a 2,000 seat theater was considered a moderately-sized house and an optimum size to maximize profits while preserving a sensation of direct contact between the audience and the performers. The Palace Theatre in New York City, considered to be that city's finest vaudeville house when it was built in 1912-1913, had 1,736 seats (Snyder 1989, 88). Keith's Royal Theater, built in New York in 1918, had 2,070 seats. While it may have been the largest vaudeville house in the region for a time, the Hennepin's seating was surpassed the next year by Cleveland's luxurious Palace Theatre, a Keith-Albee vaudeville house which opened in 1922 with 3,680 seats and was promoted as the greatest of all vaudeville theaters.

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The Hennepin Theatre was designed by the Milwaukee partnership of Kirchhoff and Rose. The firm was established about 1896 by Charles Kirchhoff (1856-1915) and Thomas Leslie Rose (1868-1935). Roger C. Kirchhoff (1890-1976), Charles' son, joined the firm shortly after Charles Kirchhoff's death in 1915. Thomas Rose was also succeeded by his son. In 1931 Kirchhoff and Rose was the oldest architectural firm in continuous existence in Milwaukee (Gregory 1931, 501; Nord 1995).

Charles Kirchhoff had been the son of a German immigrant cabinetmaker who settled in Milwaukee prior to the Civil War. He studied architecture in Boston and New York before returning to Milwaukee in the 1880's. From approximately 1885 to 1896, Kirchhoff maintained an independent architectural practice. During this time he designed the Alhambra Theater in Milwaukee which was built in 1890. He died in 1915. Roger C. Kirchhoff studied architecture at the University of Illinois where he graduated in 1913. He practiced in New York City until joining the firm circa 1916. He worked at Kirchhoff and Rose until 1937. Thomas Rose was born in New York City, the son of English-trained sculptor James M. Rose. Rose received his professional training in the Chicago office of architect James J. Egan and attended the Chicago Art Institute. He practiced in Milwaukee beginning in 1883 with Henry Starbuck until Starbuck retired, and then joined Kirchhoff circa 1896 (Gregory 1931, 233-234, 501-502).

During their first 40 years, the firm designed a number of buildings in Milwaukee including the Marquette University Dental School, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, St. John's Episcopal Church, and several banks and commercial buildings. They specialized in the design of theaters and commercial buildings, and won several commissions from the Orpheum circuit. The firm designed the Majestic Theatre and office building (1907), the Palace Theatre (1915), the Garden Theatre (1921), and the Riverside Theatre and office building (1929)--all in Milwaukee--as well as the Palace Theatre (1913) in New York City, the Seventh Street Orpheum (1904) and the Hennepin Theatre in Minneapolis (1921), the Princess Theatre (1909) in Chicago, and the Orpheum Theatre (1910) in Winnipeg.

The Hennepin Theatre is also significant as one of only a handful of grand theater showplaces which remain in what was once Minneapolis' theater district. Many of the city's earliest halls and theaters had been clustered along Washington Avenue, close to the Mississippi River, beginning in the 1850's. These included Harrison Hall (1864) at Washington and Nicollet Avenues (razed), the Academy of Music (1872) at Hennepin and Washington Avenues (razed), the Casino Music Hall at 220 Washington Avenue (razed), and Orchestrion Hall (1889) at 210 Washington Avenue South (razed). The opening of West Hotel at Fifth Street and Hennepin Avenue in 1884 helped draw entertainment businesses southward from Washington Avenue along Hennepin until Hennepin Avenue became the city's premier entertainment strip (Millet 1992, 114).

Theaters built along Hennepin Avenue included the Hennepin Avenue Theater (legitimate) (1887), the People's Theatre (legitimate) (1887) and its replacement the Bijou Opera House (1890), the Metropolitan Opera House (legitimate) (1894), the Seventh Street Orpheum (vaudeville) (1904), the New Garrick (vaudeville) (1907), the Crystal (motion picture) (1909), the Sam S. Shubert (legitimate) (1910), the New Palace (vaudeville) (1914), the Strand (1915), the Pantages (vaudeville) (1916), the State (vaudeville) (1921), and the Hennepin Theatre (vaudeville) (1921). Of these theaters, only the Sam S. Shubert, the Pantages, the State, and the Hennepin are still standing.

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Today the Hennepin Theatre is also the largest surviving theater of its vintage in the Twin Cities. Comparable extant vaudeville and legitimate theaters in Minneapolis are the State (1921) which originally had 2,400 seats, the Sam S. Shubert (1910) which had 1,511 seats, and the Pantages (1916, later the Mann) which had 1,099 seats. Comparable extant theaters in St. Paul are the Sam S. Shubert (1910, later the World, now the Fitzgerald) which originally had 1,255 seats. Other large Twin Cities theaters which have been razed include Minneapolis' Seventh Street Orpheum (1904) with a capacity of 1,800, the New Palace (1914) which was Minneapolis' largest vaudeville house with 2,000 seats when it opened in 1914, and the Minnesota (later Radio City) Theater (1928) a vaudeville and movie house which had 4,056 seats.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF VAUDEVILLE IN MINNEAPOLIS

Vaudeville, which developed in the 1860s and 1870s in New York City, was usually comprised of music, singing, dancing, and comedic skits performed in a series of short, independent acts. It differed in focus and audience from legitimate theater, in which a single full-length drama was usually performed, and its tickets were far less expensive.

Vaudeville drew its inspiration from other forms of popular theater such as melodrama, minstrel shows, burlesque, and variety acts, but were less risqué than the infamous variety shows and burlesque. It developed as many of the sexual innuendos and coarse jokes were removed from burlesque to make it more acceptable to middle class, family-oriented audiences, and as patrons were no longer served liquor and cigars during the show (Snyder 1989, 12). Early vaudeville producers such as Keith and Albee trained audiences to quietly watch performances rather than cheering and booing, attracted women and children into the audience, and culled undesirable patrons from the theaters (Snyder 1989, 32-33). Instead of burlesque's can-can dancers, so-called respectable vaudeville featured jugglers, acrobats, buffoons, clowns, comedians, animal acts, singers, dancers, and actors in melodramatic and slapstick sketches. Vaudeville acts were chosen and retained for their maximum audience draw (Snyder 1989, 107-129). Many shows included acts of ethnic comedy which appealed to the country's immigrant population. Silent movies were added to the shows by the 1910s. Vaudeville also helped popularize ragtime, bringing it from the urban "underworld" and African American culture into mainstream popular culture in the 1890s through the 1920s (Snyder 1989, 135-136).

Vaudeville became especially popular around the turn of the century when it gained tremendous, broad popular appeal. Around 1900 many wage earners enjoyed increased disposable income and leisure time with which they explored new forms of entertainment (Steiner, 1933, 8-10). Many people attended vaudeville shows weekly. At the turn of the century the construction of vaudeville theaters to accommodate traveling road shows mushroomed nationwide. These grand and glittering showplaces were designed to attract and impress audiences with their size, dramatic architecture, and opulent furnishings (Allis and Hagen 1993, 10).

Although there was wide variation in vaudeville styles and types through the years, vaudeville houses were often distinguished as either "small-time" or "big-time" houses. Small-time houses were aimed at the working class and had less expensive tickets. Both types of theaters had several shows daily. Big-time houses, like the Hennepin Theatre, were aimed at the middle class and featured more talented and higher-paid performers. Big-time theaters often booked and promoted with great fanfare individual stars such as W.C. Fields, Jack Benny, Edgar Bergen, Jimmy Cagney, Eddie Cantor, the Marx Brothers, and dancer Ruth St. Denis. Many American actors who later

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became film and television stars began their careers in vaudeville. In 1919, near the peak of vaudeville's success, there was work for an estimated 8,000-9,000 performers nationwide (Snyder 1989, 46). Despite an image more virtuous than variety and burlesque, vaudeville still continued to push at the limits of established society. "By the teens and early twenties, vaudeville was often concerned with the culture that was replacing Victorianism: sensual, expressive, individualist, and slightly cynical" (Snyder 1989, 151).

Around the turn of the century, the vaudeville market nationwide was dominated by several large national chains or circuits including the Keith-Albee circuit and the Orpheum circuit. The Keith-Albee circuit, established in New York City in 1893, by B. F. Keith and Edward F. Albee, became a booking and production monopoly which was the largest and most influential of about 22 vaudeville circuits which were operating in the U.S. in the 1920s (Snyder 1989, 37). Keith-Albee eventually dominated the industry in the eastern United States.

Keith-Albee's major competition in the West, including Minneapolis, was the Orpheum circuit, which was established in 1899 in California by Morris Meyerfield, owner of San Francisco's Orpheum Theatre, and Martin Lehman, owner of a vaudeville house in Los Angeles. By 1905, booking out of Chicago, the Orpheum circuit controlled 17 houses between Chicago and the West Coast. Martin Beck, who was originally a house manager in one of the West Coast theaters, married Meyerfield's daughter and succeeded his father-in-law as president of the circuit in 1920. By 1923, two years after the circuit built the Hennepin Theatre in Minneapolis, the Orpheum company led by Beck was booking a circuit of more than 250 theaters in the western U.S. from offices in New York.

In addition to booking and producing shows, vaudeville circuits built their own theaters, or arranged for them to be built with local capital and then leased them. Circuits like the Orpheum linked performers with individual theater managers and owners, booking acts in a prearranged route from city to city. Because circuits could guarantee steady work for performers, they attracted major stars. For theater managers and owners, circuits guaranteed that a particular act would show up for the performance for which it was booked. Circuits like the Orpheum and Keith-Albee exercised powerful control over performers' fees, theater receipts, and wages and labor conditions, and strongly resisted the formation of actors' and stage hands' unions.

The Orpheum circuit had entered the Minneapolis market by 1904 when the 1,800 seat Seventh Street Orpheum Theatre was built at 25 Seventh Street South (razed between 1930-45). The Hennepin Theatre, built by the circuit in 1921, soon superceded the Seventh Street Orpheum and became the major theater of the Orpheum circuit in Minneapolis. In St. Paul, the Orpheum circuit opened the St. Paul Orpheum in 1906 (razed). In May of 1922 the circuit expanded in St. Paul by leasing the 2,300-seat New Palace Theater which had been completed in 1916 (extant). The Orpheum circuit's competition in Minneapolis came from leading vaudeville houses such as the Unique (1904), the New Garrick (1907, later the Century), the Gayety (1909), the Miles (1909), the Princess (pre-1910), the New Palace (1914), the Pantages (1916, later the Mann), and the ornate State Theatre (1921), and large vaudeville and movie theaters such as the Minnesota (later Radio City) theatre (1928). Most were located downtown. Of these Minneapolis theaters, only the State and the Pantages are still standing.

The Hennepin Theatre, Minneapolis' largest vaudeville house, opened on October 16, 1921, about 15 months after the Orpheum circuit commissioned Kirchhoff and Rose for its design. The theater opened with the Marx brothers, who shared the billing with Servais Leroy's celebrated mystic act, "Sawing a Woman in Half." The program was

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comprised of eight or nine acts and was accompanied by the Hennepin Theatre's own orchestra, under the direction of Albert Rudd. The best seat in the house was 47 cents, and children could see the show for 9 cents. (In contrast, tickets to the Shubert Theater, a legitimate theater located two blocks away, ranged from 50 cents to \$2.50 in 1920.) The Hennepin presented vaudeville shows at 1:30, 3:45, 6:30 and 8:45 p.m. "Feature photoplays" were shown a 12 noon, 2:45, 5:00, 7:45 and 10 p.m. daily. During its first week in business, the Hennepin played to 70,000 people. Just as the theater opened, the Orpheum circuit began to distribute written programs to its audiences, a practice which had previously been restricted to legitimate theater (The Orpheum 1979). The circuit also tried to increase the patronage of women by offering a playroom and daycare services for children at the theater (Allis and Hagen 1993, 11).

For nearly a decade, vaudeville flourished at the Hennepin. George Jessel, Jack Benny, Fanny Brice, George Burns and Gracie Allen, and many others appeared on its stage (The Orpheum 1979). In the late 1920s, however vaudeville began to decline with the arrival of sound motion pictures. Silent motion pictures had been introduced to American audiences just before the turn of the century and were popularized between 1900 and 1910. The first motion picture theaters were built around 1910. Vaudeville houses then began to combine movies with vaudeville, or were converted into houses which showed movies exclusively. By 1927 when the first talking motion picture was produced, movies were a huge success.

As the vaudeville market began to contract, the Orpheum and Keith-Albee circuits merged in 1928. About two years later the merged company combined with the Radio Corporation of America to form Radio-Keith-Orpheum. Known as RKO. RKO was one of five companies which dominated U.S. film distribution in 1930. The Hennepin Theatre was thereafter known as the Hennepin Orpheum and the RKO Orpheum, and began to show more movies.

During the Depression, RKO tried to retain audiences by lowering ticket prices and by offering free admission to children in exchange for food and used clothing to be given to the needy. The RKO Orpheum also provided ticket-sales jobs to the unemployed to help them make contacts with patrons who might offer them permanent jobs (Allis and Hagen 1993, 12).

In 1933 the RKO Orpheum was acquired by the Singer Chain, another national theater group. A new sound system was installed in 1933 for the showing of the film "Little Women" starring Katherine Hepburn. The system was said to be unexcelled in the Northwest and similar to one at Radio City in New York (Allis and Hagen 1993, 12). The movie industry, at first hit by the Depression, had begun to recover by 1934. The years 1934-1960, in fact, were marked by rapid growth and incredible profits. Hollywood drew stars away from live theater, and movies assumed the role that vaudeville had enjoyed in American popular culture. The movies' most lucrative years were 1940-1946 when newsreels brought reports of foreign battlefields to the home front during World War II. In 1946, the peak year of sales nationwide, over 4 billion movie tickets were sold (Valerio and Friedman 1982, 35).

The RKO Orpheum was a "first run" movie theater. In the 1940s and 1950s, film producers often opened their films in Minneapolis with live promotions. For example, a marching band saluted John Wayne's "Flying Leathernecks," and there was a square dancing performance in the street to promote Bob Hope's "Alias Jesse James." Film stars touring first run theaters like the RKO Orpheum made appearances at selected showings (The Orpheum 1979). During the 1940s the theater also hosted touring productions of Broadway shows. In 1949 a last

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full-scale attempt was made to bring vaudeville back to the RKO Orpheum. It was abandoned after seven months, unable to compete with movies, radio broadcasts, and the coming of television (The Orpheum 1979).

For ten years the RKO Orpheum showed films until 1959 when Ted Mann purchased the theater from RKO and the theater again hosted touring Broadway productions through 1965. Mann sold the Orpheum to General Cinema Corporation in 1970. It was purchased by singer Bob Dylan and his brother David Zimmerman in 1984, and was sold to the City of Minneapolis in 1988. Beginning in 1988 the Orpheum presented rock concerts, films, and touring shows. It reopened after its recent renovation on January 14, 1994.

In conclusion, the Hennepin Theatre is architecturally significant as an excellent example of its property type, as a rare survivor of the theaters which once comprised downtown Minneapolis' entertainment district, and as the largest theater of its vintage in the Twin Cities. It is historically significant for its associations with the role of vaudeville in the history of commercial theater and popular culture in Minneapolis, and for its associations with the Orpheum circuit, one of the leading purveyors of vaudeville in the country.

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