

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

1145

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Hollywood Theater

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 2815 Johnson Street Northeast

City or town: Minneapolis State: Minnesota County: Hennepin

Not For Publication:  N/A

Vicinity:  N/A

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

<u>Barbara Howard</u>	<u>December 13, 2013</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Barbara Mitchell Howard, Deputy SHPO, MN</u> Date	
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

*[Handwritten Signature]*  
Signature of the Keeper

*2/5/14*  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / theater

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT / Moderne

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property:

Foundation: CONCRETE

Walls: STONE/Limestone  
BRICK

Roof: SYNTHETICS/Rubber

Other: METAL/Steel



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### **Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### **Summary Paragraph**

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. Situated in a primarily residential neighborhood in Northeast Minneapolis, the building is approximately 76 feet by 126 feet in plan and roughly 30 feet tall. The theater is constructed with steel and brick above grade, and is supported on concrete foundation walls and footings. The front façade is rectilinear and clad with smooth Kasota limestone and a base of polished granite. The Zig Zag Deco marquee is offset to the north of the building and resembles an inverted terrace of triangular shapes in plan. A limestone-clad chimney projects above the north end of the front façade. Inside the building, many historically significant features remain intact and are in various conditions ranging from good to fair. Decorative shapes and surface treatments throughout interior express the Streamline Moderne Style as well as a subtle nautical theme. The first floor of the building contains a lobby, a first foyer, a second foyer, a small office, and an auditorium. In the basement there is a former lounge, restrooms, and utility rooms. The theater retains a high degree of historic integrity as compared to most other local theaters of the same style and era.

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## Narrative Description

The Hollywood Theater, located at 2815 Johnson Street Northeast, was constructed in 1935 for Rubenstein and Kaplan, a Twin Cities-based theater consortium. The building is a single-screen theater designed by the architectural firm Liebenberg and Kaplan (L&K) in the Streamline Moderne Style. Construction work was carried out by Car-Del Company, a subsidiary of L&K.<sup>1</sup> It is located on a former streetcar line, and adjacent to a neighborhood commercial node consisting of one- and two-story storefronts centered around the intersection of 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue Northeast and Johnson Street Northeast. The surrounding neighborhood consists primarily of single-family houses constructed in the early-to-mid twentieth century.

The Hollywood Theater occupies the majority of its rectangular lot, which is situated between a two-story commercial storefront to the south, a vacant lot to the north, and one-and-a-half story, wood-framed houses across a narrow vehicular alley to the east. The primary façade faces west fronting onto the sidewalk along Johnson Street Northeast (Photos #1 & #2). The auditorium is located at the rear of the building, which is accessed by the alley that extends the length of the block (Photo #3).

The ground floor of the building contains four primary public rooms: the auditorium, the first foyer, the second foyer, and the lobby. The basement contains a lounge, powder room, two restrooms, and mechanical rooms. In plan, the ground floor consists of two rectangles, one larger than the other. The larger rectangle houses the auditorium and second foyer which extend to the limits of the side and rear lot lines. The front portion of the building housing the first foyer and lobby is narrower than the auditorium to allow space for pedestrian alleyways that provide egress from the north and south exits in the second foyer. As a whole, the building is approximately 76 feet by 126 feet in plan and roughly 30 feet tall. The grade surrounding the building increases in height approximately six feet from the front of the building to the rear. Parapets obscure views of the roofs from ground level. A shallow gambrel roof conforming to the top chord of the roof trusses covers the auditorium and second foyer; a flat roof covers the lobby and first foyer.

The exterior style of the Hollywood Theater is best classified as Streamline Moderne, however a postwar update to the marquee could be described as Zig Zag Deco. The front (west) façade is rectilinear and clad with smooth Kasota limestone. The flat limestone cladding is divided by four counter-relief convex limestone bands that rise vertically from the south corner and then extend horizontally at increasing heights across the width of the building towards the north. A limestone-clad chimney set flush with the front of the building projects above the height of the parapet at the north end of the west façade. Concentric steel bands have been installed on the chimney to stabilize loose stones. The bottom three feet of the west façade is clad with brown and tan polished rainbow granite. In the two front alcoves of the building surrounding the

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<sup>1</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N36 JF), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries (NWAA), Minneapolis; Lisa D. Schrenk, "The Atmospheric and Art Deco Theaters of Jack Liebenberg" (Thesis, Macalester College, May 1, 1984): 32.

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pedestrian alleyways, the walls are faced with red brick laid in common bond, interrupted by horizontal bands of brick in a sawtooth pattern.

The current Zig-Zag Deco marquee was installed in late 1948 using a design also created by L&K (Photo #4). Letters from L&K to Minneapolis City officials in 1948 indicate the original canopy was replaced to comply with a new city ordinance requirement for “fireproof” canopies.<sup>2</sup> The original marquee of the building was constructed in the Streamline Moderne Style, and had a tall vertical blade sign attached to the chimney (Figure 7). The replacement marquee is offset to the north of the building (as was the original). In plan it resembles an inverted terrace of triangular shapes that project outward from the west façade directly below the chimney. Painted steel “Hollywood” lettering containing multiple small, incandescent light sockets is located on the two front edges of the triangular projection. A less stylized section of the marquee wraps around the north side of the building, which provides a canopy over a pedestrian alleyway. Much of the marquee is clad with unpainted stainless steel and white-painted steel. Currently, the visible steel elements of the marquee exhibit light surface rust. Bands of incandescent lights extend across the front edges, and round recessed lights are located on the underside. A backlit theater lettering sign is located below the marquee. Above the marquee, green enameled steel tiles cover the lower portion of the chimney. These tiles are clearly indicated in the 1948 plans for the marquee and were likely installed in that same year;<sup>3</sup> they served a functional purpose by enclosing the gap in the limestone façade created by removal of the original marquee. The tiles are still present on the north side of the chimney; however, the tiles on the west façade were removed in 2003 and stored inside for later reinstallation because they were falling off of the building.<sup>4</sup>

The limestone façade of the Hollywood is largely solid, pierced by few openings. Three narrow rectangular windows located in the center of the façade provide light to a second-story projection booth. Beneath the marquee are six small “porthole” lights recessed into the limestone. Also below the marquee are a ticket booth, a pair of entrance doors, and a set of six exit doors. The ticket booth and all doors are currently covered by temporary boards. Comparison of historic photographs to current conditions indicates the original doors have been

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<sup>2</sup> Minneapolis Building Permit B303380, December 2, 1948. The cost of the work is given as \$3,500. A detailed chronology of alterations and record of corresponding building permits can be found in Charlene Roise and Penny Petersen, “The Hollywood Theater: Preservation Considerations,” report prepared for Scott Tankenoff, Hillcrest Properties, July 2008. Roise and Petersen note that previous studies of the Hollywood Theater, such as a 1985 “Local Heritage Preservation Study” prepared by the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission erroneously date the marquee replacement to 1960. This National Register nomination largely concurs with the conclusions drawn by Roise and Petersen, with minor exceptions as indicated below.

<sup>3</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N36 JF), NWAA. Roise and Peterson surmise that these chimney tiles were “apparently” added in 1967 based on permit records for exterior chimney repairs. However, the installation of these tiles in 1948 seems more likely because they are included in the 1948 marquee design and they served a functional purpose, concealing a “scar” on the front of the building where the original marquee was removed, which left a gap in the limestone that was filled with brick.

<sup>4</sup> Hollywood Theater Files, Minneapolis Department of City Planning and Economic Development, Minneapolis.

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replaced with aluminum-framed units.<sup>5</sup> A metal-framed poster case is located between the front entrance and exit doors.

Pairs of exit doors located on the north and south sides of the building lead to small pedestrian alleyways open to Johnson Street. Two pairs of double metal exit doors are located at the rear of the building on the east façade, exiting to the vehicular alley behind the building. All exterior doors exit at grade.

The secondary facades on the north, east and south walls of the building are clad with buff brick in a common bond. Five protruding brick pilasters that encase structural steel columns interrupt the otherwise flat north and south facades. All of the exterior masonry is unpainted, with the exception of several patches near the ground on the secondary facades, where graffiti has been covered with white paint.

Inside the building, many historically significant features remain intact and are in various conditions ranging from good to fair. During the time the Hollywood was vacant from 1987 to the present, water damage and general lack of maintenance resulted in deterioration of interior finishes such as plaster and paint. However, recent efforts by the City of Minneapolis to stabilize the building (such as the replacement of the roof membrane in 2003) have helped to prevent further deterioration.

The first floor of the building contains a lobby (Photo #5), a first foyer (Photo #6), a second foyer (Photo #7), a small office, and an auditorium (Photos #8 & #9). Decorative shapes and surface treatments throughout the lobby and the first and second foyers express the Streamline Moderne Style as well as a subtle nautical theme. The lobby contains a ticketing counter (adjacent to the front ticket booth), and a concession area that opens to the second foyer. The floor of the lobby is surfaced with terrazzo inlaid with grey, yellow, black and pink bands and streamlined geometric shapes. On the south side of the lobby, a five-stripe terrazzo band in the floor leads through an opening to the first foyer. Crowning the lobby is a large circular light partially recessed into the ceiling; it is in poor condition due to water damage. A small office is adjacent to the lobby in the northwest corner of the building. On the east wall of the lobby there is an opening to the second foyer with a built-in concession counter. A decorative plaster crown molding once encircled the entire lobby; it is severely deteriorated in some locations and missing in others. The floor, ceiling light, and decorative plaster molding corresponds with L&K's 1935 plans for the original construction. The concession area is indicated on plans prepared by L&K in late 1948; written correspondence regarding the delivery date of the concession counter indicates it was likely installed in early 1949.<sup>6</sup> Comparison with design drawings and previous

<sup>5</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N36 JF), NWAA. Aluminum frame replacement doors are included in the 1948 renovation plans; it is possible that the doors were replaced at the same time as the marquee.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. The thesis prepared by Schenk and the report prepared by Roise and Peterson both date the probable installation of the concession counter to the 1960's. Remaining elements of the concession counter match drawings prepared in 1948 by L&K. A letter from Liebenberg and Kaplan dated December 29, 1948 states "according to our telephone conversation we are to receive the Coke Bar for the Hollywood Theatre within one and one-half weeks after January 1, 1949." We believe it is likely that the candy counter installation coincided with the marquee replacement in 1948.



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descriptions of the concession area to current conditions indicates that much of the concession area is missing, including a skewed counter between the wall opening and lobby entrance that was installed over the terrazzo floor.<sup>7</sup>

Beyond the lobby to the south is the first foyer. The striped terrazzo band extending through the lobby and first foyer terminates at the south end of the room in three, semi-circular terrazzo steps that lead up to a shallow alcove housing a fountain, which was formerly backed by a mirror. The alcove is framed by a series of setbacks with concealed lights and rounded tops, all of which is crowned with vertical plaster ribs. Opposite the fountain alcove, the opening from the first foyer to the lobby is surrounded by a stepped painted metal frame similar to the fountain. The plaster crown molding in the first foyer is decorated with low relief Art Deco Style geometric patterns. While portions of the molding remain intact, several sections are deteriorated or missing due to water damage. Three pairs of exit doors on the west side of the first foyer are currently covered in temporary boarding. Opposite the exit doors is a large opening to the second foyer. Based on historic photographs taken upon the completion of the Hollywood in 1935, the alcove, fountain, and molding date to the original construction (Figure 8). The photographs indicate the opening from the first to second foyer was originally filled with doors, which are no longer extant (Figure 9).<sup>8</sup>

The second foyer is located to the east of the lobby and first foyer, and leads to the auditorium at the north and south ends. It is a long and narrow space with vaulted ceilings. A semicircular stairwell to the basement lounge is located opposite the opening to the first foyer. The ornamental iron stairwell railing contains two groups of triple rails and incorporates a wave-like decorative motif. Three metal and glass poster cases are hung on the walls of the foyer. The cases are flanked by a decorative cast iron chevron relief. Porcelain drinking fountains partially recessed into the wall are located at the north and south ends of the second foyer. In the northwest corner of the second foyer there is an opening to a concession counter in the lobby. Vertical recessed metal and patterned glass light features are interspersed through the second foyer in the east and west walls. Gently sloped ramps at either end of the second foyer lead to the auditorium. Lead encapsulation paint applied to trim has been oversprayed on the glass of the light features. Art Deco Style plaster crown molding in the second foyer is patterned with low relief scallop and "sunburst" designs. Portions of the second foyer crown molding are missing or damaged, however the majority is intact and in fair condition. The concession counter opening appears to be built from plans and specifications dating to 1948.<sup>9</sup>

The auditorium has a stadium-type configuration, with different seating elevations for the front and rear portions of the room. To the front of the auditorium entrances, the seating gently slopes downward in a parabolic fashion. To the rear of the entrances, the floor rises steeply in a series of steps, which culminate at the projection booth. An ornamental iron railing with a motif similar to the stairwell railing in the second foyer surrounds the lower portion of the stepped

<sup>7</sup> Lisa D. Schrenk, "The Atmospheric and Art Deco Theaters of Jack Liebenberg," 48.

<sup>8</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N36 JF), NWAA.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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seating at the rear of the auditorium. Two aisles divide the seats. The seats throughout the auditorium have plywood backs, upholstered bottoms, and iron frames. Seats at the end of rows terminate with decorative cast iron end caps with a polychromatic Art Deco motif. Flanking the screen are walls that taper toward the front, each divided by five streamlined engaged columns made of plaster and metal. An unpainted wood stage is located in front of the screen. Large decorative metal light fixtures shaped like portholes remain on the walls. The projection booth is accessible via steps in the rear of the auditorium. Equipment such as a projector and house light dimmers remains in the projection booth; however, remaining equipment was installed in 1983 and is in fair to poor condition.<sup>10</sup> The seating remains partially intact (portions have been removed), although in poor to very poor condition. The plaster and metal finishes on the proscenium are in fair-to-poor condition. The walls and ceiling of the auditorium have been stripped of the original acoustical tiles and/or plaster (as a result of water damage and asbestos abatement), leaving concrete masonry unit walls and steel roof trusses exposed. Comparison with historic photographs of the theater from 1935 and L&K's plans reveal that the seating, proscenium, ornamental iron railing, and light fixtures date to the original construction (Figures 10 & 11).<sup>11</sup> Based on the construction materials and condition of the wood stage, it appears to have been installed within the past 25 years.

The basement of the theater contains a small lounge, men's and women's restrooms, a powder room, and utility spaces for heating and ventilation equipment. The basement lounge is accessible from the first floor via the semicircular stairwell connected to the second foyer. The men's restroom and a powder room serving the women's restroom are adjacent to the lounge. Originally finished spaces in the basement of the theater have been largely stripped of finished and decorative wall surfaces due to extensive water damage and subsequent cleanup and abatement efforts. The only remaining decorative element in the basement lounge is an ornamental iron railing in the stairwell from the second foyer, and a smaller ornamental iron railing in a short stairwell leading to the men's restroom (Figure 12).

The Hollywood Theater retains good integrity and all seven aspects of integrity are present. The location of the theater is unchanged from its original date of construction. The Streamline Moderne design of the theater exterior remains largely unchanged from its last major renovation in 1948. Although the Johnson Street streetcar that was a major mode of transportation for moviegoers is gone, the setting of the neighborhood commercial node and surrounding neighborhood predominantly consisting of single family houses remains largely unchanged. The majority of the theater's key exterior materials and features from the period of significance remain intact. Much of the theater's key interior materials also remain intact, however some of the interior decorative elements and finishes are no longer extant due to water damage and hazardous materials abatements. Acoustical ceiling tiles, much of the decorative plaster, and a large portion of the seating has been removed from the auditorium. As a result, the auditorium has a relatively lower material integrity compared to the theater as a whole. However, the overall

<sup>10</sup> The existing equipment was installed in 1983 according to Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission Study of the Hollywood Theater, prepared by Steve B. Murray, September 30, 1985.

<sup>11</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N36 JF), NWAA.



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volume of the auditorium space is still intact, as are key stylistic features such as the proscenium arch and ornamental iron railing. Most of the historic building materials remaining are placed as they were originally, showing evidence of the workmanship of the theater. The presence of the aspects of integrity noted above contributes to the feeling and association of the Hollywood Theater.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. 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.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

ENTERTAINMENT / RECREATION

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1935-1954

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

Building completed: 1935

Marquee replaced: 1948

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Liebenberg, Jacob J.

Kaplan, Seeman

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Hollywood Theater is significant under Criterion C for architecture as a substantially intact example of a neighborhood movie theater designed by the architectural firm Liebenberg and Kaplan (L&K), masters of movie theater design. The work of this regionally prominent and remarkably prolific firm has been widely noted in secondary literature about movie theater architecture. L&K's Hollywood Theater is a notable local example of Streamline Moderne architecture applied to a small neighborhood movie theater typology. The Hollywood was the second Great Depression-era theater designed by L&K that was built entirely new from the ground up (as opposed to the firm's many remodeling commissions), and retains a high degree of historic integrity as compared to most other local theaters of the same style and era. Lastly, the theater is locally significant under Criterion A for entertainment/recreation as an example of the patterns and trends of movie theater ownership and development in the years between World War One and World War Two. The Hollywood Theater's period of significance spans from 1935, when the building was constructed, to 1954, when the Johnson Street Streetcar line that once transported moviegoers to the theater was demolished along with the entire Twin Cities Rapid Transit streetcar network. Removal of the streetcar line dramatically reduced the economic viability of the Hollywood Theater, which faced further reductions in patronage due to competition with drive-in and suburban movie theaters that were spurred by increased adoption of the automobile, federally-financed highway construction, and growth of the suburbs in the first two decades after World War Two. The end date of this period of significance also closely follows the last major historic alteration of the theater in 1948 when the marquee was updated and a candy counter was added to the interior.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> These modifications were designed by the original architects, L&K, and the newer marquee is materially and stylistically compatible with the original Streamline Moderne design. In 1990 the Hollywood Theater was designated a local landmark by the City of Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC). To support this designation, which includes portions of the interior as well as the exterior, the nomination noted the "significance of the theater's architecture, the master architects who designed it, and its social history." Additionally, in a letter dated January 23, 2001, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office concluded that "the Hollywood Theatre meets the criteria of the National Register of Historic Places." See "Hollywood Theater, 2815 Johnson Street Northeast," City of Minneapolis CPED Planning Division Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report, 4 March 2009; Frank E. Martin and Carole Zellie of Landscape Research, "The Development of Neighborhood Movie Theaters in Minneapolis: 1910-1945," report prepared for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, August 1989; Dennis Gimmestad (MN SHPO) to Sharrin Miller-Bassi, RE: Rehabilitation, Hollywood Theatre, SHPO Number: 2001-0641, 23 January 2001.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

### **Liebenberg and Kaplan**

Between 1923 and 1941, L&K designed over 200 theaters and prepared plans for the remodeling of roughly 600 theaters. These commissions were spread over six Midwestern states; many were located in small towns. Given their astounding productivity, it is surprising that no instances can be found of the firm's work having received national publication or awards during its most prolific years between the 1930s and the 1950s. A critical reappraisal of L&K's buildings by art and architectural historians began in the 1980s, following Liebenberg's retirement. This coincided with the rise of the historic preservation movement in the United States and was further propelled by growing concern about threats of demolition or insensitive alteration of L&K's best commissions, especially as the economic viability of smaller neighborhood movie houses was being challenged by newer multiplex theaters located in the suburbs.

The majority of the theaters designed by L&K were in the Art Deco or Streamline Moderne styles.<sup>13</sup> Theaters designed by L&K are renowned for the high quality of their architecture, and their skillful designs of theaters for small sites. Art historian Herbert Scherer notes: "Architects like Jack Liebenberg adapted the sophisticated modern style of theater building, which came from Berlin and Paris and was transformed in New York, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis, into something glamorous and appealing for all America to enjoy. Liebenberg sought to attract grass roots patrons in the Upper Midwest, for whom the epitome of architecture might be the local savings bank. He did so with ingenuity, grace, and speed, importing elements of cosmopolitan culture into a frontier community that was limited and provincial in outlook."<sup>14</sup> L&K's work is well documented in the extensive collection of its drawings and files preserved at the University of Minnesota's Northwest Architectural Archives.

Jacob "Jack" Liebenberg was born in 1893 in Milwaukee of German-Jewish parents. In 1916, he was a member of the first graduating class of the University of Minnesota's School of Architecture. While attending the University of Minnesota, Liebenberg formed an architectural fraternity and was the founder and president of the University Architectural Society. Upon graduation, he received the McKim Fellowship from Harvard University where he earned his

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<sup>13</sup> Lisa D. Schrenk, "The Atmospheric and Art Deco Theaters of Jack Liebenberg," 32-36; "Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers: 1919-1969," finding aid for the Northwestern Architectural Archives, accessed February 14, 2013, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/naa036.xml>.

<sup>14</sup> Herbert Scherer, "Marquee on Main Street: Jack Liebenberg's Movie Theaters: 1928-1941," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Vol 1 (Spring, 1986), 68; Herbert Scherer, "Tickets to Fantasy: The Little Theater Around the Corner," *Hennepin County History* 46 no. 3 and 4 (Fall 1987): 13; David Wood, "He Designed Cathedrals for the Cinema," *Minnesota* (April 1982): 13-17.

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master's degree. While at Harvard, Liebenberg was awarded the prestigious Prix de Rome, however World War One prevented him from traveling to Europe to take advantage of the prize. Liebenberg served in the Army Air Corps for the war effort. Following the war, he returned to Minneapolis and worked briefly for D.C. Burnett and taught at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture. While teaching at the University of Minnesota, Liebenberg formed a brief partnership with Robert C. Martin, and shortly thereafter a much longer-lived business with his former student Seeman Kaplan. (They soon became brothers-in-law when Liebenberg married Kaplan's sister Raleigh.) From 1923 on, the partnership was known as Liebenberg and Kaplan. It became one of the most successful and prolific architectural firms based in the Twin Cities. Kaplan primarily dealt with the business aspects of the firm, as well as engineering details until his death in 1963. Liebenberg was elected national president of the Society of American Registered Architects in 1972. When Liebenberg retired in 1980, L&K had the distinction of being the oldest Minneapolis architecture firm operated by the same individual.<sup>15</sup>

L&K designed a broad variety of building types, became renowned as theater architects, and were generally sought after as architectural acousticians. Before the Great Depression, the firm mostly designed large, single-family residences in the Colonial Revival Style. One notable example is the Mervyn H. Amsden House at 2388 Lake of the Isles Parkway West, described in the *AIA Guide to Twin Cities Architecture* as otherwise typical of houses built in this area in the 1920s, except for it being the "largest example in Minneapolis."<sup>16</sup> In 1923, the firm first entered the movie theater design business by remodeling the Arion Theater in Northeast Minneapolis (no longer extant). L&K's big break came later in the decade when its design for the Temple Israel Synagogue (1928) in southeast Minneapolis caught the eyes of Twin Cities theater owners Rubenstein and Kaplan, who immediately commissioned the firm to design the Granada Theater (1928, now the Suburban World) in Minneapolis. Before construction on the Granada was completed, Finkelstein and Ruben, (a competing movie theater consortium) bought the theater from Rubenstein and Kaplan.<sup>17</sup>

The Granada was one of the first movie theaters in the Twin Cities designed and built to accommodate amplified sound. Recognizing that film acoustics was an architectural challenge, Liebenberg and Kaplan applied a new product to the theater's rear walls called Celotex, an acoustical tile composed of sugar cane waste bound with casein glue into which patterns of eighth-inch holes were drilled to enable the material to absorb sound. The treatment proved to be not only an effective sound-deadening strategy, but also a cost effective decorative wall covering, earning L&K a reputation as experts of architectural acoustics, which spurred many

<sup>15</sup> These biographical details are from David Wood, "He Designed Cathedrals for the Cinema," *Minnesota* (April 1982): 13-17.

<sup>16</sup> Larry Millet, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007): 35.

<sup>17</sup> David Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2007): 74-77.



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subsequent commissions for work on movie theaters.<sup>18</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan utilized colored bands of Celotex to finish the walls and ceilings of the Hollywood Theater's auditorium.<sup>19</sup>

L&K became the "house architects" for theater owners Finkelstein and Ruben, which were eventually bought out by the national franchise Paramount. Paramount continued to use L&K, often commissioning them to extensively remodel the theaters it owned in small towns throughout Minnesota and neighborhood states, which explains not only the firm's prodigious output but also its wide geographic reach.<sup>20</sup> (It also explains why Liebenberg received and maintained architectural licenses in sixteen states).<sup>21</sup>

L&K became movie theater design specialists at an auspicious moment in time. During the Great Depression, the film industry was one of the few sectors of the economy that thrived.<sup>22</sup> L&K designed or remodeled many other movie theaters in the Twin Cities including the Wayzata (1932), the Edina (1934), the Uptown (1937), and the Varsity (1938).<sup>23</sup> The last indoor movie theater designed by L&K was the Terrace Theater (1951) in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, the first major suburban movie theater in the Twin Cities. The firm later designed several drive-in theaters, including the first to be built in Canada. Drawing on their reputation as architectural acousticians, L&K were commissioned to design the WCCO radio studio and KSTP television station building in Minneapolis. In 1972, the firm L&K merged with another firm to form Liebenberg, Smiley and Glotter. Liebenberg retired from the firm in 1974, and continued to maintain a private practice until his death in 1985.<sup>24</sup>

Theaters designed by Liebenberg and Kaplan eventually received high praise from art and architectural historians. Among the first was David Gebhard and Tom Martinson's *Architecture of Minnesota* (1977), which, in describing the Hollywood Theater, noted: "It is amazing how many variations this firm was able to come up with while working within the Streamline Moderne Style of the 1930s. This one is more sharp and angular than most."<sup>25</sup> Additional attention was raised by a 1982 exhibition at the University of Minnesota Gallery called "Marquee on Main Street: Jack Liebenberg's Movie Theaters, 1928-1941," which featured

<sup>18</sup> Scherer, "Tickets to Fantasy," 12-13; Liebenberg may have been a local early adopter of Celotex for theater applications; for documentation of national use of the product, see: "Many Acousti-Celotex Sound Jobs for Theaters in Larger Towns, Too" *Box Office Magazine; Movie Age* 14 Dec. 1929: 18.

<sup>19</sup> Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N36 JF), NWAA.

<sup>20</sup> Scherer, "Tickets to Fantasy," 12-13.

<sup>21</sup> Wood, "He Designed Cathedrals for the Cinema," 17.

<sup>22</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 26; Wood, "He Designed Cathedrals for the Cinema," 13-17.

<sup>23</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 77, 81, 86, 88, 217-230; these theaters remain extant; dates indicate L&K design involvement, which may have involved remodeling, as opposed to initial design and construction.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> David Gebhard and Tom Martinsen, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977): 42.

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sixty-five of L&K's theater designs curated by art history professor Herbert Scherer.<sup>26</sup> The Hollywood was then one of three Minneapolis theaters highlighted in the National Trust for Historic Preservation's 1987 publication *Great American Movie Theaters* by David Naylor.<sup>27</sup> Several of L&K's theaters, including the Hollywood, are noted in Larry Millet's *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*.<sup>28</sup> Lastly, and perhaps most significant of all, Liebenberg and Kaplan's theaters are placed in a broader historical and sociocultural context by Dave Kenney in his 2007 book *Twin Cities Picture Show*. Kenney notes that the 1951 Terrace Theater in Robbinsdale, Minnesota, which he describes as one of the first "ultramodern theaters in America," was one of the firm's few projects that received national acclaim for its design during Liebenberg and Kaplan's lifetimes.<sup>29</sup> Such documented acclaim substantiates L&K's status as masters of movie theater architecture.

### Streamline Moderne

The Hollywood Theater exemplifies Streamline Moderne Style architecture. Art Historian Herbert Scherer notes "the Hollywood Theater was truly a Streamlined Deco masterpiece." He goes on to note that the Hollywood was a particularly important commission for L&K because it was a fairly large house (roughly 760 seats) compared to the firm's many small town commissions, and it was built from the ground up, as opposed to many of their previous theater remodeling jobs for Paramount. "The budget permitted a generous handling of decorative elements. These fortunate conditions provided the freedom necessary to make the Hollywood an inspired whole."<sup>30</sup>

Referred to under several analogues (Art Moderne, Streamlined Deco), Streamline Moderne emerged from the Art Deco movement, gaining popularity following the 1933 Chicago Century of Progress Exposition. It is characterized by less surface decoration and a greater emphasis on the form of the structure as compared to its predecessor.<sup>31</sup> The style provides a "streamlined" effect by incorporating rounded corners, flat roofs, banded forms, smooth wall finishes, and a general lack of ornamentation.<sup>32</sup>

Historians also find that theater owners and designers considered the Art Deco Style to be appropriate for movie theaters, with their distinctly modern function. A 1989 theater designation report written for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission notes:

<sup>26</sup> Herbert Scherer, *Marquee on Main Street: Jack Liebenberg's Movie Theaters, 1928-1941: March 22-April 25, 1982*, University Gallery, University of Minnesota.

<sup>27</sup> David Naylor, *Great American Movie Theaters* (Washington DC: Preservation Press, 1987): 152.

<sup>28</sup> Millet, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*, 107-108.

<sup>29</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 117-120.

<sup>30</sup> Scherer, "Tickets to Fantasy," 14.

<sup>31</sup> Scherer, "Marquee on Main Street," 22.

<sup>32</sup> John J. G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 1981): 79.

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As a technological derivation of the more organic Art Nouveau Style, Art Deco could well express the technology-based fantasy and modernism of the movie-going experience. Hebert Scherer traces the emergence of the Art Deco Style to a 'spirited polemic' written in 1928 by Thomas Tallmadge in the trade journal *Better Theaters*. In describing the content and timeliness of Tallmadge's article, Scherer writes that 'few American architects have taken into account the special needs of movie theaters. The theme voiced repeatedly was that motion pictures required architecture geared to the practical needs of sound technology and the comfort requirements of patrons.'<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, Art Deco designs, with their relatively simple, repetitive, geometric shapes, were less expensive to build than earlier revival styles like L&K's Granada (now Suburban World) with its fanciful and complex atmospheric interior.<sup>34</sup> Scherer asserts that "Jack Liebenberg... was in the vanguard of the national switch to Art Deco. ... [He] not only saw the practicality of the new style, but understood intuitively what it meant in symbolic terms."<sup>35</sup>

The character of the Streamline Moderne and Art Deco are expressed through many of the Hollywood's intact exterior features, such as the smooth Kasota limestone with rectilinear banding and the round "porthole" lights above the exit doors. Interior features and finishes found in the lobby, first foyer, second foyer, basement stairwell, and auditorium also exemplify the Streamline Moderne Style with Art Deco accents. Notable historic interior features with elements of the Streamline Moderne Style include: the terrazzo floor in the lobby and second foyer, and rounded terrazzo steps surrounding the fountain in the second foyer; the oversized terraced frame with a rounded crown surrounding the fountain and lobby doorway in the outer foyer; the decorative metal railing in the basement stairwell and balcony of the auditorium; vertical metal and glass light fixtures on the walls of the second foyer; the plaster crown molding in the lobby, first foyer, and second foyer; metal and glass poster cases in the second foyer; the "porthole" light fixtures in the auditorium; and the remaining decorative elements of the proscenium such as the streamlined columns.

In addition to aesthetic innovations of the Art Deco, the Hollywood Theater embodies several related design, material, and technological innovations that L&K refined as masters of movie theater architecture. One of these was the "stadium style" seating arrangement, with its gently sloping main floor and a steeply pitched back half of the auditorium, instead of a balcony. The design had multiple advantages compared to other layouts; it enabled L&K to maximize seating capacity on parcels of land too small to accommodate a balcony, like the Hollywood, which was squeezed between two residential structures. As Scherer explains:

<sup>33</sup> Frank E. Martin and Carole Zellie of Landscape Research, "The Development of Neighborhood Movie Theaters in Minneapolis: 1910-1945," report prepared for the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission, August 1989, 4; Tallmadge and Scherer are quoted from Scherer, *Marquee on Main Street: Jack Liebenberg's Movie Theaters, 1928-1941*.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Scherer, "Marquee on Main Street," 86.

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Instead of entering the auditorium through a central entrance, patrons entered and left by two side ramps. The depth of the risers in the body of the building provided enough space for the ramps and room in the lobby area for lounges and restrooms. All the noise connected with these activities was shielded by the mass of the stadium.<sup>36</sup>

Another relatively novel technology L&K incorporated into the original design of the Hollywood was “artesian cooling.” A deep well in the basement provided cold water to a series of sprinklers over which a large fan blew air, which circulated through ducts located in the ceiling of the auditorium. Theater historian Dave Kenney notes that beginning in the late 1920s, theater owners installed these cooling systems in large downtown theaters to attract patrons during warm weather. Exhibitors touted their cooled venues with stylized icicles in advertisement and marquees. Summertime box office receipts increased markedly, reportedly as a result of the air-conditioned theaters.<sup>37</sup>

Streamline Moderne and Art Deco styling was incorporated into several other Twin Cities neighborhood movie theaters built in the 1930s. However, the layout and character-defining features of the Hollywood Theater remain relatively intact from the height of its operations, including the primary façade, the lobby, first and second foyer, and layout of basement restrooms and lounge. The auditorium of the Hollywood has less decorative and material integrity than other parts of the theater; water damage and asbestos abatement led to the damage and subsequent removal of Celotex wall finishes and plaster ceiling, as well as damage and removal of much of the original seating. The volume of the original space remains intact and undivided, and important Art Moderne decorative details are extant, such as the balcony railing, large “porthole” light fixtures, and proscenium arch.

Many other local theaters built or substantially remodeled in the Streamline Moderne and Art Deco styles have since been demolished or altered such that they no longer have as much design integrity compared to the Hollywood Theater. For example, the Uptown Theater located at 2906 Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis was built as the Lagoon Theater in 1914, and remodeled in the Streamline Moderne Style by Liebenberg and Kaplan in 1938. It retains its single-screen auditorium, however, the lobby has been remodeled twice (first ca. 1980 and again in 2012) and the balcony area has been reduced in size to accommodate expansion of storefronts flanking the theater. The Zigzag Art Deco Style Edina Theater located at 3911 West 50<sup>th</sup> Street in Edina was built in 1934 from designs by Liebenberg and Kaplan. It was the first theater designed by L&K that was built new, from the ground up. The interior of the Edina has since been gutted to accommodate additional screens, and the exterior retains few of its historic elements such as the original marquee. Other Art Deco and Streamline Moderne theaters in the Twin Cities area built or remodeled using designs by Liebenberg and Kaplan have been demolished, including the Strand (remodeled in 1933, and demolished ca. 1975), the Faust

<sup>36</sup> Scherer, “Tickets to Fantasy,” 13. In an interview with Scherer, Liebenberg claimed that his use of stadium seating at the Granada was an innovation. Scherer notes that Liebenberg’s use was probably not the first; stadium seating was a standard, but relatively rare, configuration. As evidence, Scherer points to “Longitudinal Sections of Various Types of Theatres” in R. W. Sexton’s *American Theatres of Today*, Vol. 1 (New York: n.p.), 4.

<sup>37</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 55-56.



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(remodeled in 1934, and demolished ca. 1989), the Campus (remodeled in 1935, later known as the Oak Street Cinema, demolished in 2011), the Gopher (remodeled in 1938, demolished ca. 1980), and the the Rialto (remodeled in 1937, demolished ca. 1980).<sup>38</sup>

Streamline Moderne and Art Deco theaters designed by other architects have experienced various degrees of change and adaptation over time. The Avalon Theater (currently the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre) was built in 1924 on 1500 East Lake Street in Minneapolis, and underwent a Streamline Moderne remodeling and expansion in 1937 designed by architect Perry Crosier, an early associate of Jack Liebenberg.<sup>39</sup> Crosier's design for the Avalon's façade was likely influenced or inspired by Liebenberg's design of the Hollywood, duplicating the scheme of flat Kasota limestone divided by four counter-convex bands, and a base of polished rainbow granite. Physical features in the Avalon dating to the 1937 remodeling remain largely intact on the exterior and in the lobby; however, the auditorium was renovated in 1997 to accommodate stage performances.<sup>40</sup> The Parkway Theater, located at 4814 Chicago Avenue South in Minneapolis is a simple Art Deco theater designed by Crosier circa 1931 that retains its original single-screen auditorium. Other Twin Cities theaters designed by Crosier in the Streamline Moderne Style are less well-preserved or now demolished. Crosier's Boulevard Theater (1933) located at 5315 Lyndale Avenue South in Minneapolis was remodeled in 1978 to subdivide the single-screen, and entirely gutted in 1997 during a conversion to a video rental store. Crosier's West Twins Theater (1939) on 934 South Robert Street in West St. Paul and Hopkins Theater (1941) on 429 Excelsior Boulevard West in Hopkins have both been demolished.<sup>41</sup> Two Streamline Deco theaters remain in Saint Paul: the Grandview Theater (1933) located at 1830 Grand Avenue and the Highland 2 Theaters (1939, originally the Highland Theater) located at 760 Cleveland Avenue South. Both theaters were designed by Myrtus Wright in the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles, respectively. Unlike the Hollywood Theater, the single screen auditoriums have been subdivided in both the Grandview and Highland by enclosing the balcony areas into a separate screening area in the late 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>42</sup>

Although other Twin Cities architects such as Perry Crosier and Myrtus Wright designed new or remodeled theaters in the Streamline Moderne and Art Deco styles, none received as many theater design commissions as Liebenberg and Kaplan. The renovation of theaters such as the Strand and Faust and construction of new theaters such as the Edina and Hollywood propelled L&K to the forefront of Streamline Moderne and Art Deco theater design in the Twin Cities and Upper Midwest in the 1930s. By 1935, L&K had effectively become the Upper

<sup>38</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 71-72, 81, 86-88, 96, 175-176; Larry Millet, *Lost Twin Cities*, (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1992): 274-275; Colin Covert, "New Uptown ready for closeup," *Star Tribune*, September 5, 2012.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 158.

<sup>40</sup> Millet, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*, 196.

<sup>41</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 158.

<sup>42</sup> Millet, *AIA Guide to the Twin Cities*, 459, 536.

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Midwest house architects for Paramount, which spurred a remarkably prolific phase for the firm.<sup>43</sup>

## Patterns of Movie Theater Development

The Hollywood Theater is representative of the patterns and trends of movie theater ownership in the inter-war era. When the Hollywood was built in 1935, many of the theaters throughout the country were owned by national consortiums. National consortiums such as Paramount greatly expanded their control of the Twin Cities' movie theater market in the 1920s by purchasing local consortiums. Paramount purchased the Twin Cities-based consortium of Finkelstein and Ruben in the summer of 1929.<sup>44</sup> In retrospect, the major expansion of the consortiums and consolidation of the theater industry was poorly timed, because shortly thereafter they suffered from the economic effects of the Great Depression. This provided an opportunity for smaller consortiums and independent owners to regain a portion of the theater market. Beginning in the early 1930s, Paramount's regional subsidiary, the Minnesota Amusement Company (Maco), sold off its less profitable theaters in the Twin cities to smaller theater owners such as Rubenstein and Kaplan (the original owners of the Hollywood Theater).

By 1935, lower admission prices and promotional offers helped to spur an increase in ticket sales and a subsequent boom in the construction or refurbishment of movie theaters. According to architectural historian Lisa Schrenk, "the theater industry was one area of the economy that profited by the Great Depression." It was in this context of thriving ticket sales and theater construction that the Hollywood was built.<sup>45</sup> Competition between Maco and smaller operators culminated in a series of anti-trust lawsuits, including one filed in 1952 by Rubenstein and Kaplan against Maco. It charged Maco with leveraging its dominance of the local theater market to run movies at the nearby Arion Theater (no longer extant) seven days ahead of the Hollywood Theater. The courts ruled in favor of Rubenstein and Kaplan, and later upheld the ruling on appeal.<sup>46</sup>

The Hollywood Theater is also significant as a representative example of the national trends in the development of neighborhood movie theaters that emerged in the 1930s. Writing in the June 1934 issue of *Architectural Record*, architect Ben Schlanger argued that the large-scale movie palaces of the past with their historically ornate decorative flourishes were inefficient and behind the times. "Restricted construction, the coming of sound, shifting neighborhood populations, new technology, favorable acoustical shape, and minimal investment" were among

<sup>43</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 90-91.

<sup>44</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 74-75; Alan K. Lathrop, *Minnesota Architects* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010): 138-139; Scherer, "Marquee on Main Street," 82.

<sup>45</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 84.

<sup>46</sup> Columbia Pictures Corporation, Appellants, v. Charles Rubenstein Inc., Appellees, 289 F.2d 418 (8<sup>th</sup> Cir., 1961), accessed January 29, 2013, <http://openjurist.org/289/f2d/418>.



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the twenty facts he listed that were stimulating the design of smaller theaters.<sup>47</sup> The development of theaters in Minneapolis in the 1930s confirmed the prescience of this prediction.

The history of theater development in Minneapolis can be divided into three phases of development related to changing primary modes of transportation and related housing construction. The first phase is marked by theaters developed to serve pedestrian traffic, which were constructed until around 1915, largely in downtown Minneapolis. The second phase consists of theaters that were built to serve streetcar traffic, which influenced the development of neighborhood movie theaters in Minneapolis from 1915 until World War II, with the height of development in the 1930's. This too was indicative of a trend that was occurring across the country: the growing web of Minneapolis's streetcar lines and the rise of the automobile made possible a dispersion of housing and population into formerly inaccessible outlying areas. Similar to many other neighborhood movie theaters of the era, the Hollywood was built on a streetcar line. The Johnson Street Streetcar line (Figure 13) transported moviegoers to the theater until the Twin Cities Rapid Transit streetcar network was demolished in 1954. The third phase was marked by the decline of neighborhood theaters and the growth of drive-in and suburban movie theaters, which were spurred by increased adoption of the automobile and growth of the suburbs after World War Two.<sup>48</sup>

In time, the growth of suburban drive-in theaters and large, multiscreen cinemas threatened the financial viability of theaters built during the two earlier phases of development. The first drive-in theater in the Twin Cities area opened in suburban Bloomington in 1947. Nearly a dozen more were built in the following decade, including the Rose Drive-In (1948), one of the few drive-ins designed by Liebenberg and Kaplan.<sup>49</sup> In the following decades, national corporations built concentrations of theaters near shopping malls; one prominent node within the Twin Cities metropolitan area was around the Southdale Shopping Center, the first fully-enclosed, climate controlled suburban shopping mall in the world, which opened in 1956. A second major locus of suburban cinemas developed around the Brookdale Shopping Center, which opened in 1962 in Brooklyn Center. The expansion of the suburbs and the theaters built to support this automobile-oriented, middle class clientele in the years following World War Two coincided with a decline in patronage at theaters located downtown and in neighborhood commercial nodes along former streetcar lines. The growing popularity of television was also working against the motion picture industry in the post-war era. Some, like the Hollywood, tried to cater to dwindling audiences of local customers showing first run movies, until ultimately closing in 1987. Others, like the Avalon and the Rialto, showed pornographic movies for a time. Several were adapted to other uses, some more sustainable than others. Many single screen theaters were subdivided to add additional screens, such as the Grandview and Highland Theaters. The Avalon was later converted into the Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre,

<sup>47</sup> Schlanger cited in *Marquee on Main Street: Jack Liebenberg's Movie Theaters: 1928-1941*, 29.

<sup>48</sup> Schrenk, "The Atmospheric and Art Deco Theaters of Jack Liebenberg," 16-17; John W. Diers and Aaron Isaacs, *Twin Cities by Trolley* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007): 3-11, 232-235.

<sup>49</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 112-114, 126.

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and is still serving that purpose in 2013; the Suburban World was adapted for use as a dinner theater, but eventually closed in 2011 and remains shuttered.<sup>50</sup>

## Conclusion

In summary, the Hollywood Theater is a substantially intact example of a neighborhood movie theater designed by the architectural firm Liebenberg and Kaplan, whose work is now widely regarded as the product of one of the preeminent architectural practices based in the Twin Cities during the twentieth century. The theater is significant as an excellent local example of Streamline Moderne architecture designed at a time when the style was gaining national acceptance for its appropriateness for movie theater design. Lastly, the theater is significant as an example of the commercial patterns and trends of movie theater ownership and development in the years between World War One and World War Two. During this time, theaters were increasingly developed by local, and then national, theater conglomerates, and were being built outside the central business district, within commercial nodes along streetcar lines. The Hollywood retains ample architectural integrity to convey these aspects of its significance.

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<sup>50</sup> Kenney, *Twin Cities Picture Show*, 114, 120, 122-123, 144-146, 210; Matt Mckinney, "Uptown's Suburban World theater can be yours – for \$899,000," *Star Tribune*, February 8, 2012.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** HE-MPC-2065

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** 0.24

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 15 | Easting: 481360 | Northing: 4984884 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Lots 10 and 11, Richardsons Second Addition to Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The building occupies over 90% of two city lots retaining original property lines.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Gregory Donofrio, PhD, Meghan Elliott, PE, & Ryan Salmon  
organization: Preservation Design Works, LLC  
street & number: 2720 Ewing Avenue S.  
city or town: Minneapolis state: MN zip code: 55416  
e-mail: elliott@pvnworks.com  
telephone: 612-501-6832  
date: August 8, 2013

---

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Hollywood Theater  
City or Vicinity: Minneapolis  
County: Hennepin  
State: Minnesota  
Photographer: Ryan Salmon  
Date Photographed: August 18, 2012 (photos 1 & 2), January 10, 2013 (photos 3-38)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo #1 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0001)  
West façade, general view from southwest across Johnson Street NE.

Photo #2 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0002)  
West façade, general view from northwest across Johnson Street NE.

Photo #3 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0003)  
East and north façades, general view from northeast.

Photo #4 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0004)  
Marquee, looking southeast.

Photo #5 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0005)  
Lobby entrance doors, ticket counter, and rear of ticket booth, looking west.

Photo #6 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0006)  
First foyer, looking northeast towards door openings to the lobby and the second foyer.

Photo #7 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0007)  
Second foyer, looking south towards circular stairwell and south auditorium entrance.

Photo #8 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0008)  
General view of auditorium from rear, looking east.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
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Photo #9 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0009)  
General view of auditorium from stage, looking west.

Photo #10 (MN\_Hennepin County\_Hollywood Theater\_0010)  
Basement lounge, looking east towards semicircular stairwell.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State

**Photo Key**

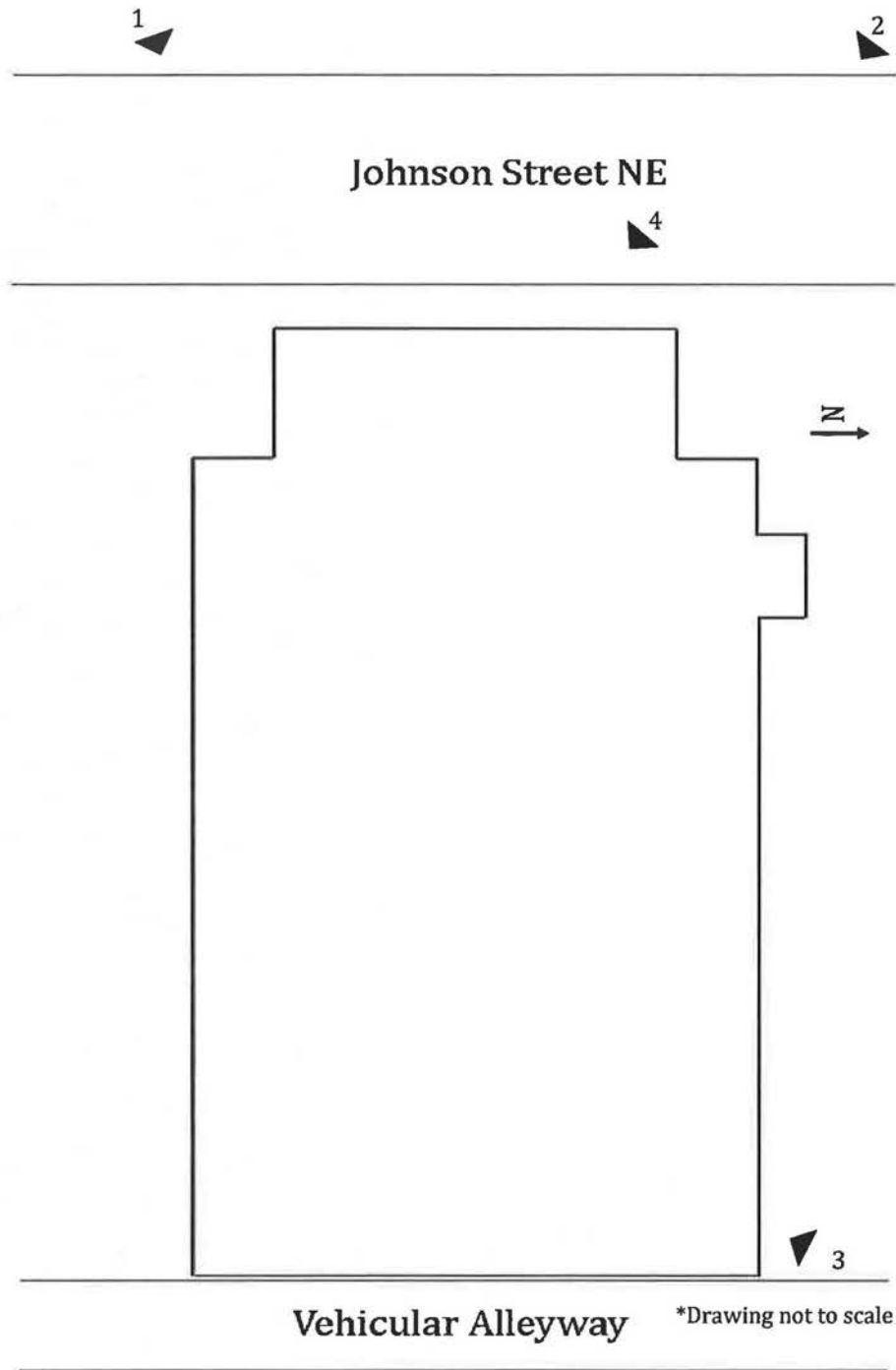


Figure 1: Site plan with exterior photographic key.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State

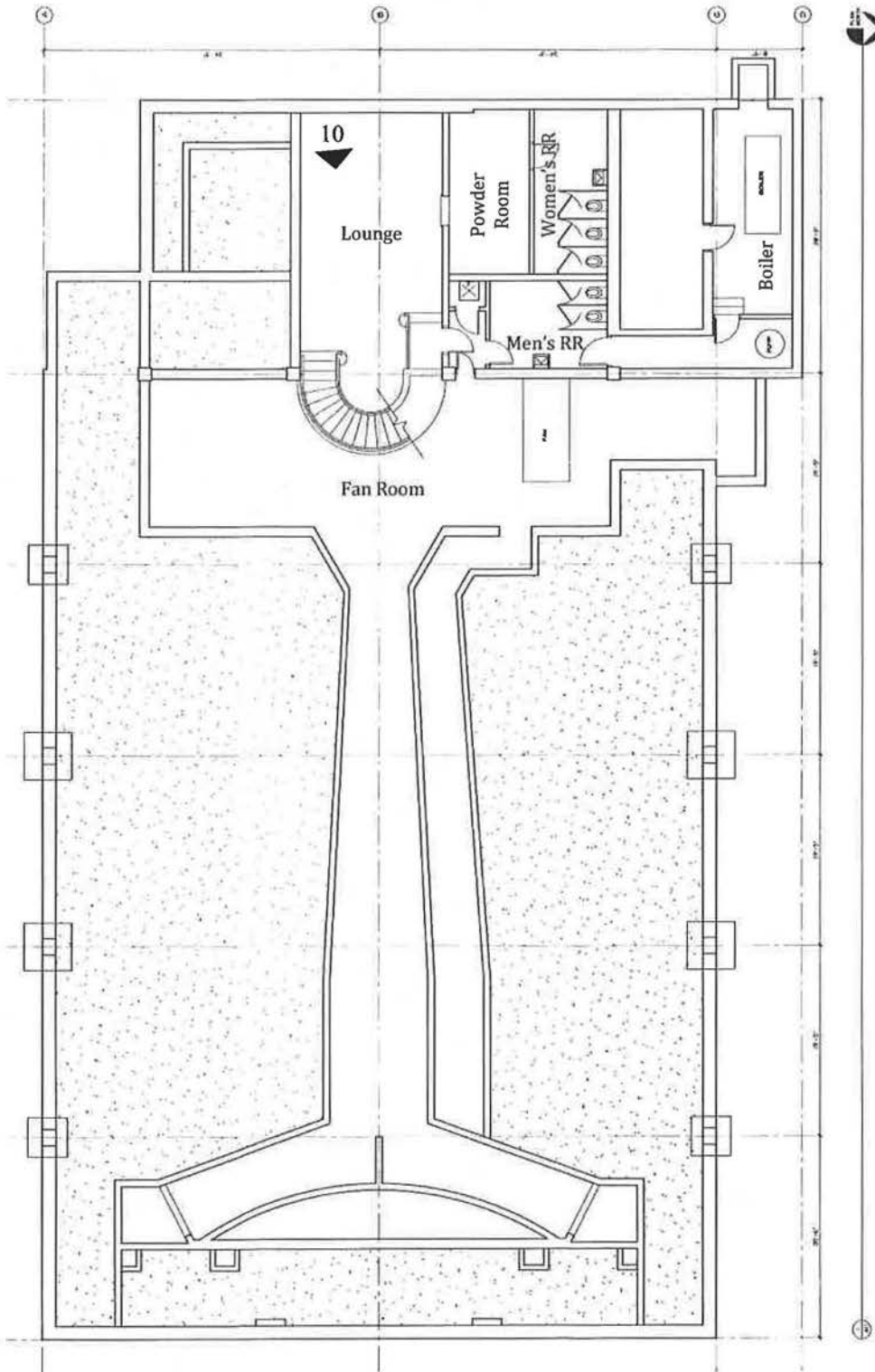


Figure 2: Basement level photographic key.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State

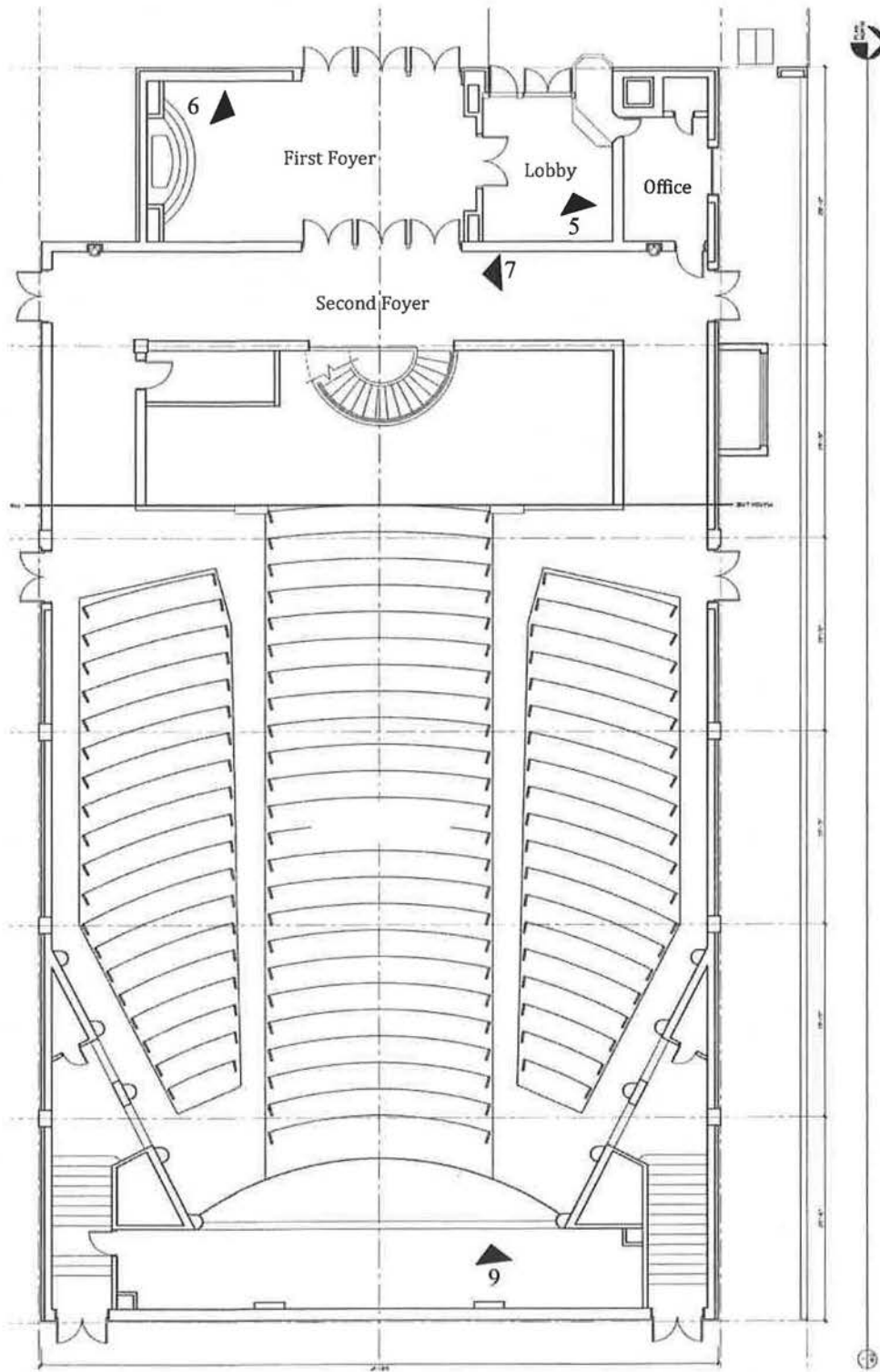


Figure 3: First floor photographic key.



Hollywood Theater  
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Hennepin, MN  
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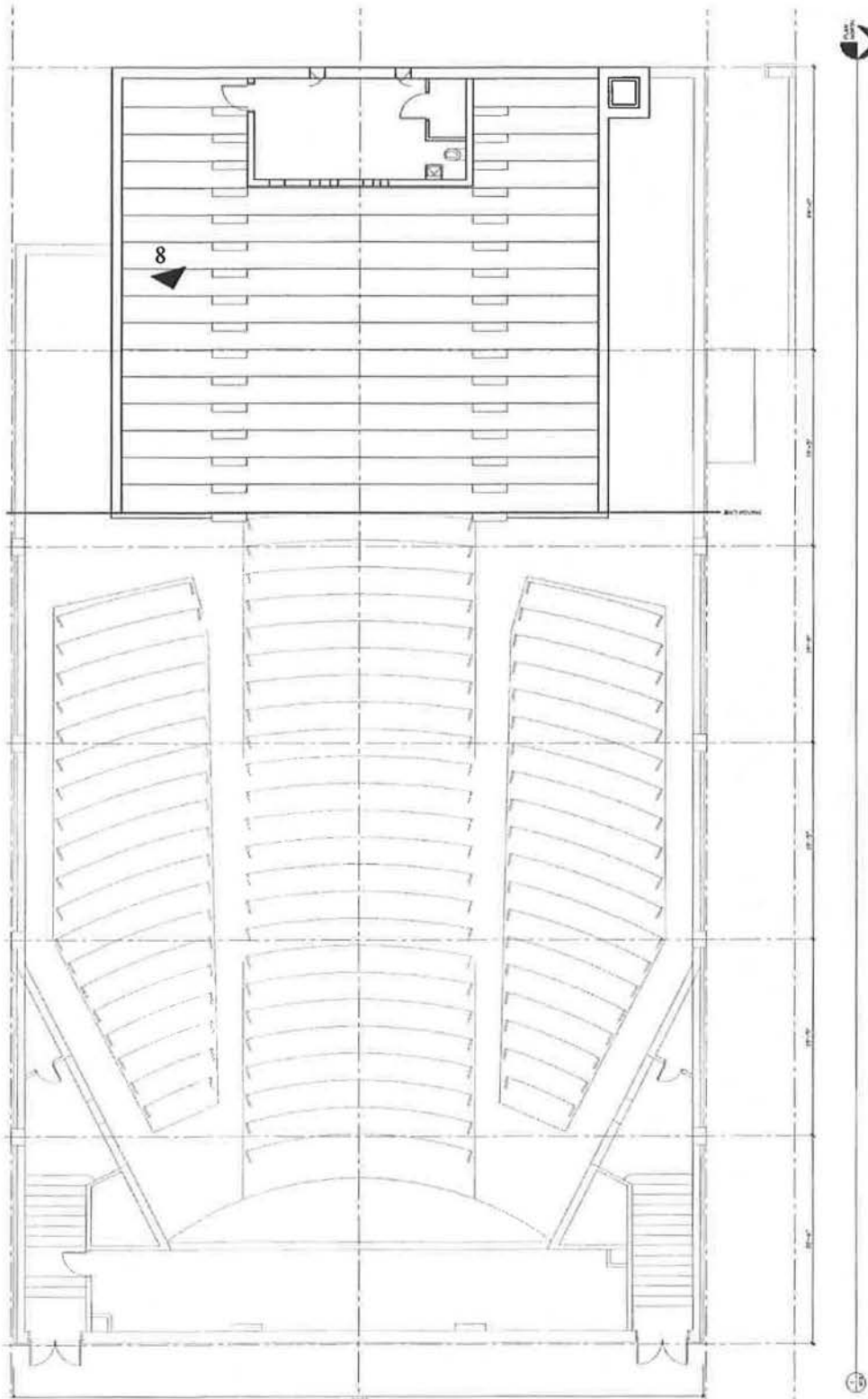


Figure 4: Upper level photographic key.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State

### Additional Documentation

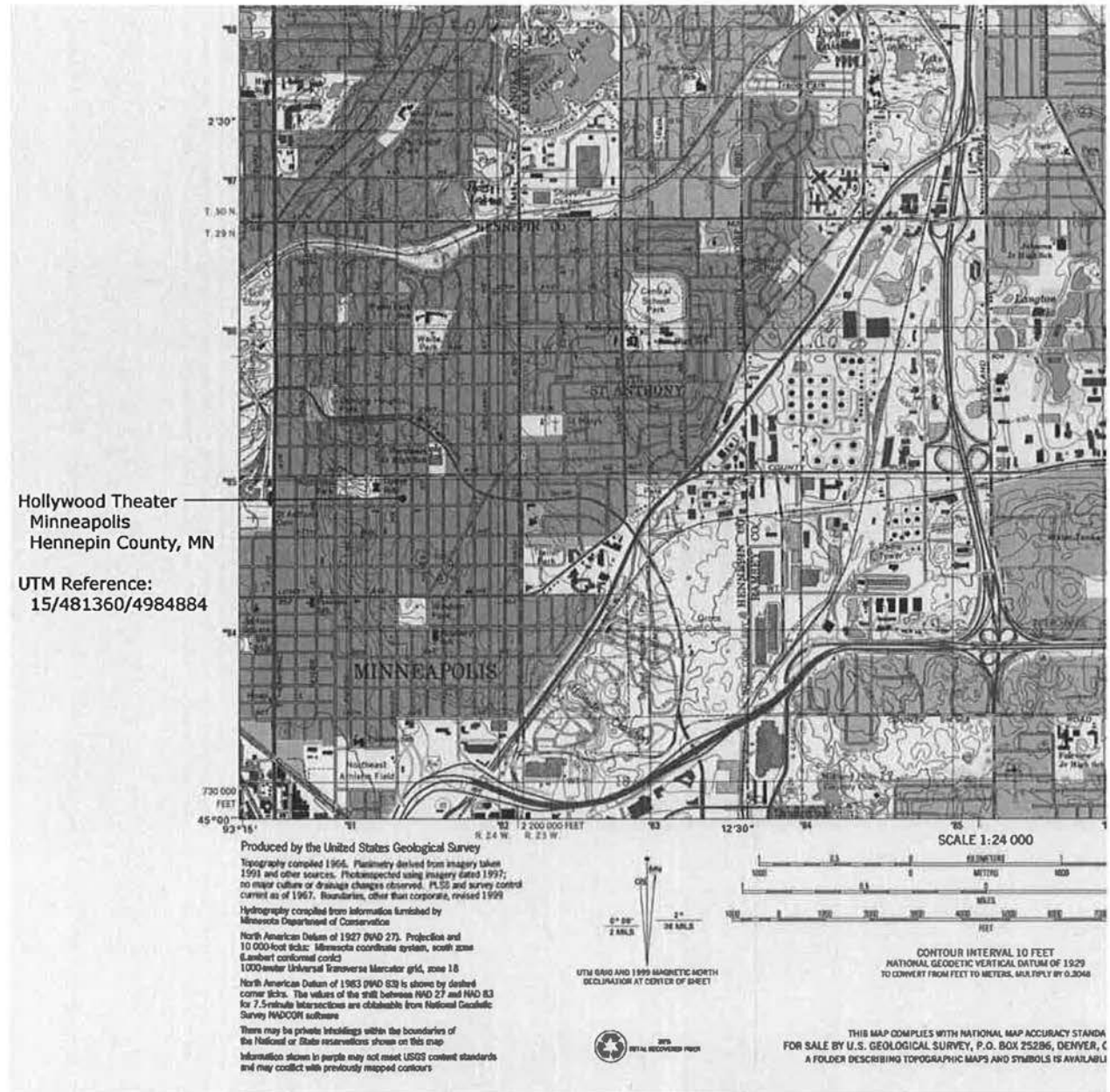


Figure 5: Geographical map. Map source: USGS, New Brighton Quadrangle, Minnesota, 7.5 minute series, 1997.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
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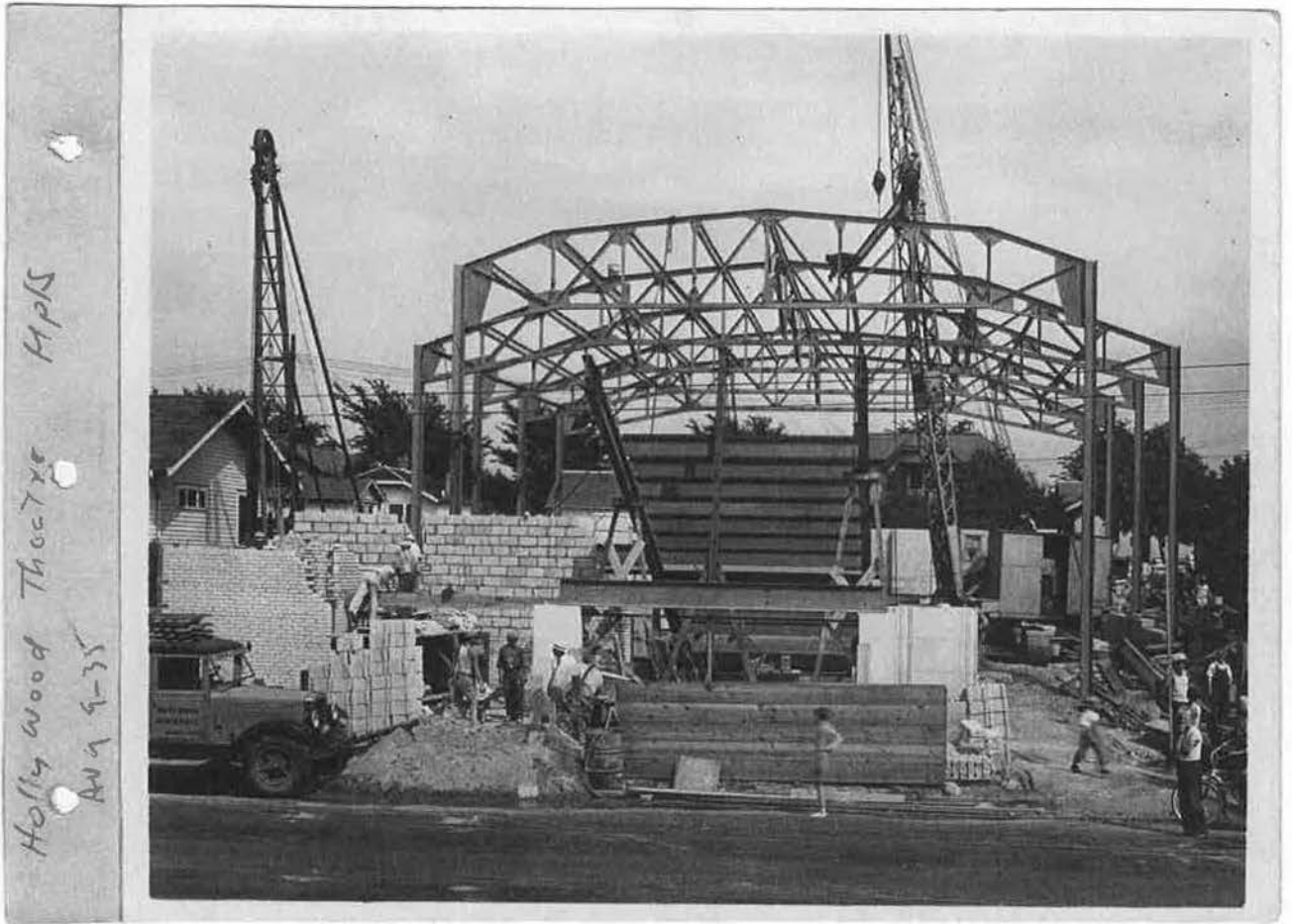


Figure 6: 1935 photograph of construction of the theater, looking east. Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State



Figure 7: 1935 photograph of the theater façade and original marquee, looking northeast. Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State



Figure 8: 1935 photograph of the first foyer, looking south at the fountain alcove. Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.



Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State



Figure 9: 1935 photograph of the second foyer, looking south. Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State



Figure 10: 1935 photograph of the auditorium, looking east towards the proscenium. Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State



Figure 11: 1935 photograph of the auditorium, looking west towards the auditorium entrances and projection booth.  
Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Hollywood Theater  
Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
County and State



Figure 12: 1935 photograph of the basement lounge. Source: Liebenberg and Kaplan Papers (N 36), Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota Libraries, Minneapolis.

Hollywood Theater  
 Name of Property

Hennepin, MN  
 County and State

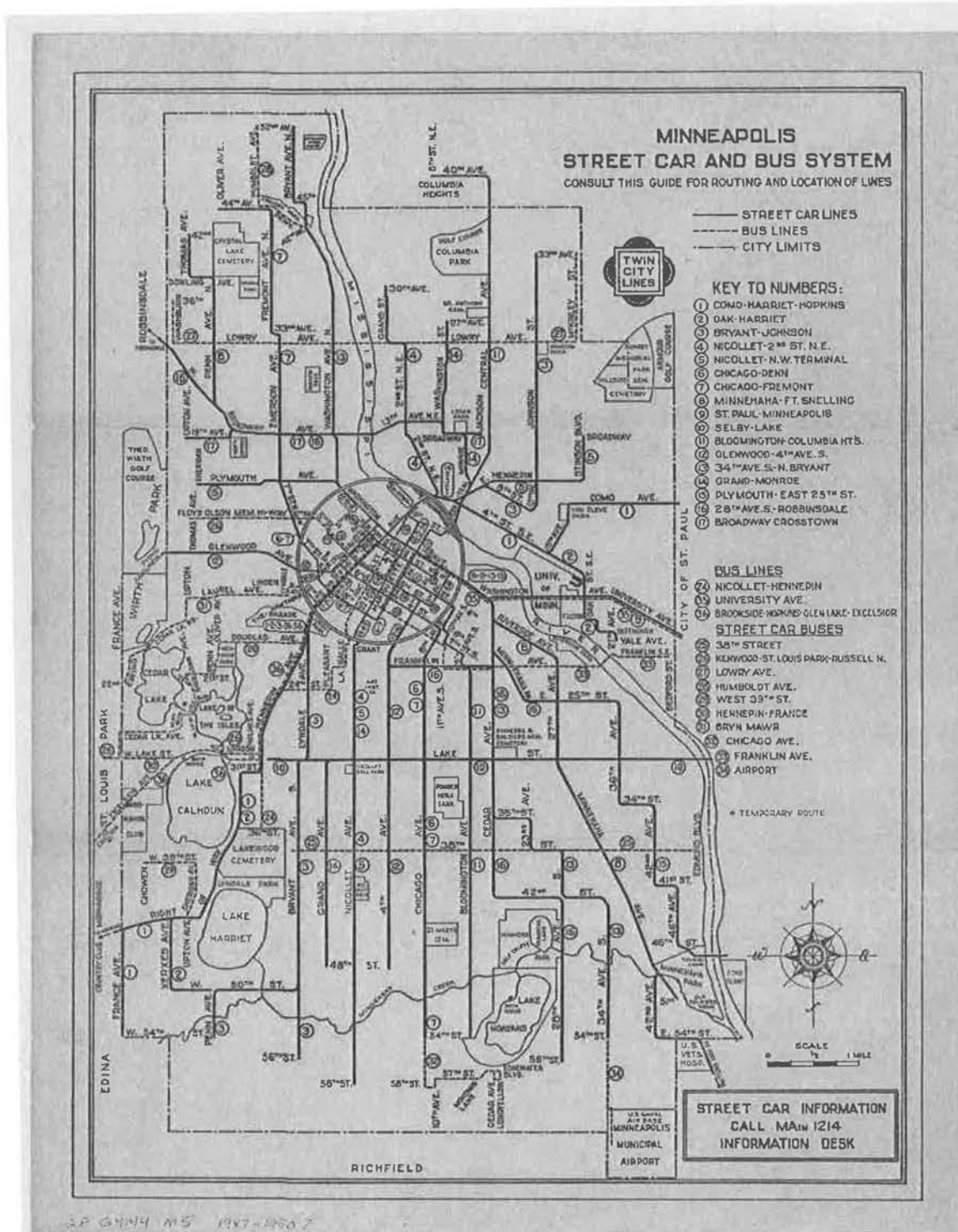
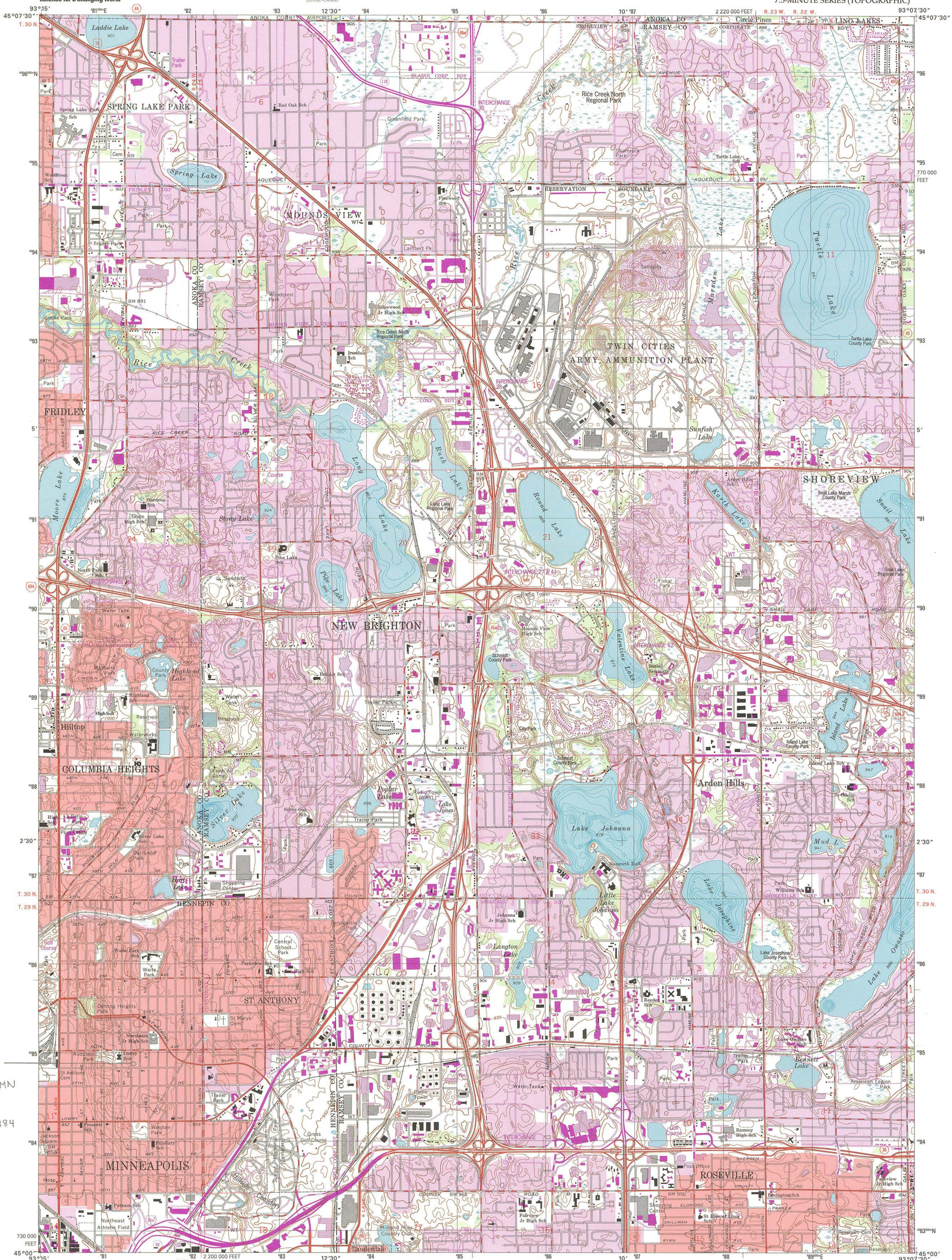


Figure 13: 1948 map of the Minneapolis streetcar and bus system. Source: Minnesota Historical Society Collections Online, ID number G4144.M5P33 1948 T87 2F.

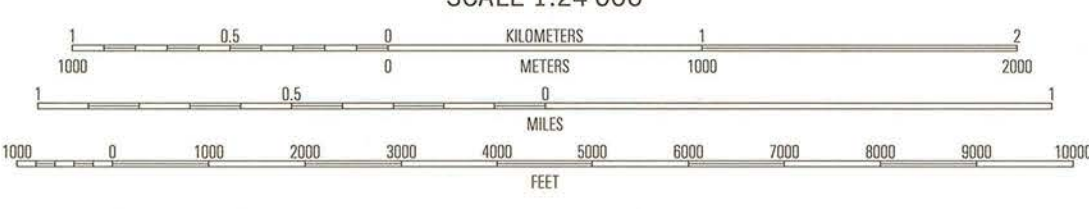
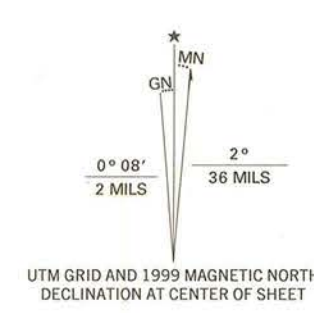




Hollywood Theater  
Minneapolis  
Hennepin County, MN

UTM Reference:  
15/481360/4984884

Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Topography compiled 1966. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1991 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery dated 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1967. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1999  
Hydrography compiled from information furnished by Minnesota Department of Conservation  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 10 000-foot ticks: Minnesota coordinate system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

1 Coon Rapids  
2 Circle Pines  
3 Centerville  
4 Minneapolis North  
5 White Bear Lake West  
6 Minneapolis South  
7 Saint Paul West  
8 Saint Paul East

NEW BRIGHTON, MN  
1997  
NIMA 7374 II SW-SERIES V872



119c





HOLLYWOOD

**FOR SALE**  
Hollywood Theater  
2815-2819 Jefferson St. NE  
Call 612-673-5043  
www.mpls-hollywood.info





HOLLYWOOD HOLLYWOOD

FOR SALE









HOLLYWOOD











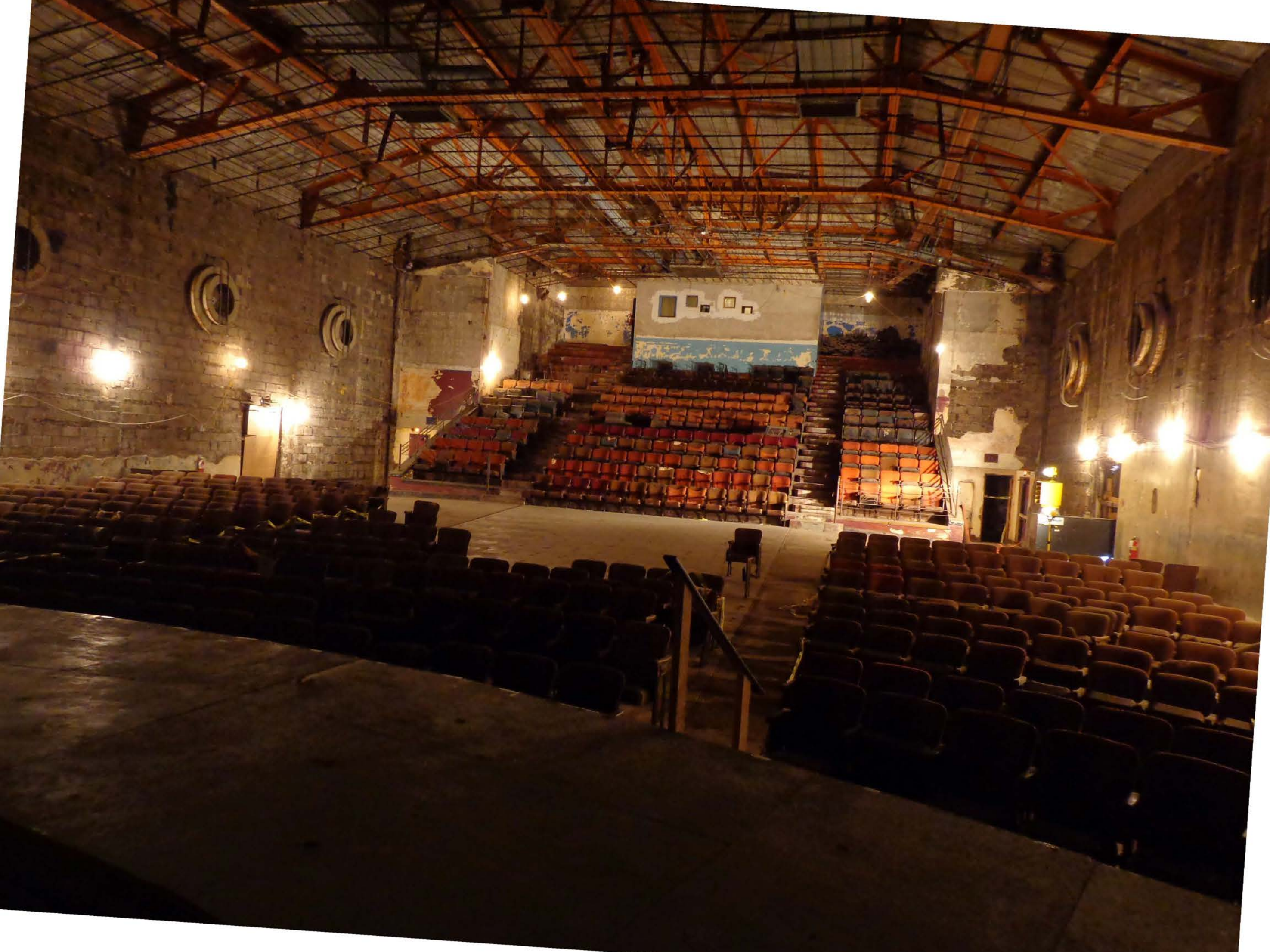
















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Hollywood Theater

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Hennepin

DATE RECEIVED: 12/20/13      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/21/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/05/14      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/05/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13001145

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA A/C

REVIEWER [Signature]

DISCIPLINE Historic

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 2/5/14

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



Minnesota Historical Society  
State Historic Preservation Office  
345 Kellogg Blvd West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102  
651/259-3451



**TO:** Carol Shull, Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places

**FROM:** Denis P. Gardner

**DATE:** December 13, 2013

**NAME OF PROPERTY:** Hollywood Theater

**COUNTY AND STATE:** Hennepin County, Minnesota

**SUBJECT:** National Register:  
 Nomination  
 Multiple Property Documentation Form  
 Request for determination of eligibility  
 Request for removal (Reference No.     )  
 Nomination resubmission  
 Boundary increase/decrease (Reference No.     )  
 Additional documentation (Reference No.     )

**DOCUMENTATION:**

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Form
  - Multiple Property Documentation Form
  - Continuation Sheets
  - Removal Documentation
  - Photographs
  - CD w/ image files
  - Original USGS Map
  - Sketch map(s)
  - Correspondence
    - Owner Objection
- The enclosed owner objections  
Do  Do not  constitute a majority of property owners

**STAFF COMMENTS:**



**Minneapolis**  
City of Lakes

**Community Planning &  
Economic Development**

**Long Range Planning  
Division**

105 5<sup>th</sup> Ave S – Room 200  
Minneapolis MN 55401

Office 612-673-2597  
Fax 612-673-2728  
TTY 612-673-5154

November 8, 2013

Barbara Howard  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
345 Kellogg Blvd. W.  
St. Paul, MN 55102

**Re: National Register of Historic Places Nomination – Hollywood  
Theater**

Dear Ms. Howard,

The Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission considered the nomination of the Hollywood Theater at 2815 Johnson Street Northeast for the National Register of Historic Places during a meeting on October 22, 2013. They voted to move forward the staff recommendation that is outlined here:

**Recommended Motion:** 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.

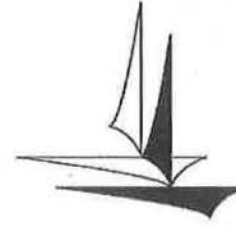
**Action:** The Heritage Preservation Commission adopted the staff findings and **approved** the nomination and directed staff to transmit the report and a letter summarizing the report to the State Historic Preservation Officer.

A copy of the staff memo presented to the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission is attached to this letter. Please contact me with any questions that you have

Sincerely,

Joe Bernard, AICP  
Senior City Planner  
105 5<sup>th</sup> Ave S - Room 200  
Minneapolis, MN 55401  
(612) 673-2422  
[joseph.bernard@minneapolismn.gov](mailto:joseph.bernard@minneapolismn.gov)

**Community Planning & Economic Development**  
250 4<sup>th</sup> 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

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**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 SHPO<sup>1</sup>

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.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 patterns 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.