



# ARTS ALLIANCE ILLINOIS

GIVE VOICE TO A  
CREATIVE STATE

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June 8, 2018

DeKalb City Council  
DeKalb Municipal Building  
200 South Fourth Street  
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

Dear DeKalb City Councilmembers,

On behalf of Arts Alliance Illinois — among the largest and longest-running arts advocacy organizations in the country — I am writing to you today in support of a request being made by the nonprofit organization Preservation of Egyptian Theatre, Inc.

The historic Egyptian Theatre, built in 1929, welcomes more than 40,000 patrons each year, from 36 Illinois counties and 23 other states, to more than 180 events and is utilized by more than 30 community organizations. Once among as many as 100 Egyptian-style venues built across North America in the early 20th century, DeKalb's Egyptian Theatre is now one of only seven remaining in the United States, the only such theater east of the Rocky Mountains, has been recognized by the American Institute of Architects, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

I understand it has been roughly seven years since discussions began regarding the Egyptian Theatre's need for an air-conditioning system. I also understand that the estimated \$2.5 million required to install an air-conditioning system, including necessary retrofitting and reinforcements to the existing structure, could be covered by TIF funds available to the City of DeKalb.

Cities large and small across the country have seen the benefits of reinvestment in their historic, unique commercial districts and landmarks. A significant portion of these benefits are surrendered, however, when these centers of activity and gravity cannot operate year-round. Already, an astounding 70 percent of the Egyptian Theatre's patrons travel from beyond the DeKalb-Sycamore metro area. Applying even the most conservative estimates of the economic impact of this cultural tourism, the Egyptian Theatre generates more than \$1 million in local spending by out-of-town visitors each year, in addition to the more than \$250,000 in spending it encourages annually by local residents.

That represents as much as \$9 million since conversations about the installation of an air-conditioning system began — despite the fact that the theater is only open nine months out of every year.

More than millions are left on the table when necessary improvements are delayed. Arts and cultural organizations like Preservation of Egyptian Theatre, Inc. bring vitality and vibrancy to their local communities, providing neighborhoods with a sense of identity and bolstering civic pride. Furthermore, with the installation of a proper air-conditioning system, operating and maintenance costs for the theater would *decrease*, thereby allowing the organization to *expand* its offerings and to achieve *more* on behalf of the City of DeKalb, year-round.

I encourage the DeKalb City Council to support its request.

Warm regards,

Claire Rice  
Executive Director  
Arts Alliance Illinois

Brooke Flanagan  
Chair

Jason Palmquist  
Vice Chair

Chris Jabin  
Secretary/ Treasurer

Claire Rice  
Executive Director