



NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

## College of Visual and Performing Arts

June 18, 2018

Dear Mayor Smith and Members of the Council of the City of DeKalb:

This letter is in support of the Egyptian Theatre's request for TIF funds to install air conditioning in the historic theater. I am sure you are all aware of the primary justifications for this request—the economic and cultural impact on the City and region. But I want to make two additional reasons for support—the educational and political impact. I know this sounds like a tall order for something so basic as air conditioning. But in reality, it isn't the specific thing that is being funded, but the funding itself that matters. By dedicating TIF to this project, DeKalb demonstrates its commitment to establishing itself as a model for creative place-making and the integration of public-private partnerships that can sustain communities like DeKalb in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Central to the educational mission of the College of Visual and Performing Arts and Northern Illinois University is community engagement. Our students live in the world, and we encourage their art to reflect that. That's why I held our first convocation at the Egyptian Theatre—to demonstrate to all that our learning and art is connected to the larger community. That is why we have partnered with the City of DeKalb to find opportunities for creative enhancements—be they painted hydrants or storefront windows, murals on the outside walls of Gordon Hardware, the marching band and steel band playing at the upcoming 10K run, or performances on the stage of the Egyptian. These enhancements literally make a place, distinguish a neighborhood, and define a community.

It is my personal belief that what makes a town attractive is easy access to goods, services, education and culture. I have heard many DeKalb elected officials and citizens talk about making the city a place for people to visit, to stay, and to cherish. The Cornerstone project demonstrates DeKalb's commitment to commerce. Now, it is time to make a similar commitment to culture. The Egyptian Theatre is literally the cornerstone in making that a reality. It is a historical jewel and a cultural treasure—and it needs air conditioning. Then, it can be open all year round to provide the city and region and the university community a creative place that makes, distinguishes and defines the City of DeKalb now and for another 100 years.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Paul Kassel'.

Paul Kassel  
Dean