

Shubert move gaining momentum as council nears Block E decision

By Linda Mack
Star Tribune Staff Writer

As decision time looms, Minneapolis City Council members are warming to the idea of saving the Shubert Theater by moving it off Block E.

"The skeptics are becoming less skeptical," said Council Member Joan Campbell, who originally thought the proposal would be too expensive. "I think there's a growing interest in moving the Shubert over next to the Hennepin Center for the Arts."

At a committee meeting today, council members will hear what it will cost to move, renovate and run the Shubert, and they'll learn what Block E developers have up their sleeves.

At the Community Development Committee meeting, Block E's new development team of Harold Brandt of Brookfield Management Services and Stanley Castleton of DDRM Entertainment will lead off with their ideas for the three blocks on Hennepin Avenue between 5th and 8th Streets. While not much detail is expected, it will give the council the first look at what uses the developers are discussing.

Of equal interest will be a report by staff members of the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (MCDA) on the feasibility and costs of moving the 1910 Shubert Theater from Block E, where it is said to hinder redevelopment, to a location on Hennepin Avenue near the Hennepin Center for the Arts. The long-discussed-but-never-revealed cost of the move is substantial, said Rebecca Yanisch, MCDA executive director.

Campbell said the "guesstimate" is between \$2 million and \$4 million. The committee will be asked to authorize bids for the move, and those will provide a more precise number.

In addition, Artspace Projects, a



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nonprofit arts developer that suggested the move, will present its studies on the costs of renovating and operating the Shubert, and on the initial reaction of the foundation community to paying for the renovation.

The future of the Mann Theater, on Hennepin Avenue near 7th Street, also will be discussed. The Historic Theatre Group has proposed renovating and operating the theater, and the City Council asked the developers to show how it could be incorporated into the three-block plan.

Owner Ted Mann has filed a lawsuit because the city denied his request for a demolition permit. At today's meeting the city attorney is expected to present an agreement with Mann for the city either to purchase the theater or allow its demolition by late summer, said Julie Idelkope, an aide to Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton.

City Council Member Lisa McDonald said she expected the council to recommend saving both the Shubert and the Mann.

Council Member Lisa Goodman agreed. "They're going to save the Shubert so I'm ready to move onto the Mann. . . . What these studies of other cities have

What's next:

- ▶ **Today:** The Minneapolis City Council's Community Development Committee meets to discuss Block E and the Shubert Theater at 5 p.m. in Room 319, Minneapolis City Hall. The public may attend the meeting, but it is not a public hearing.
- ▶ **April 27:** Hearing at 10 a.m., Room 319, Minneapolis City Hall, to take public input on moving the Shubert Theater off Block E to a site on Hennepin Avenue between 5th and 6th Streets, adjacent to the Hennepin Center for the Arts. Also under discussion is the management and ownership of the Shubert in a new location.
- ▶ **More information:** Call Irene Homo at 673-2219.

shown is that in terms of theaters, more is better."

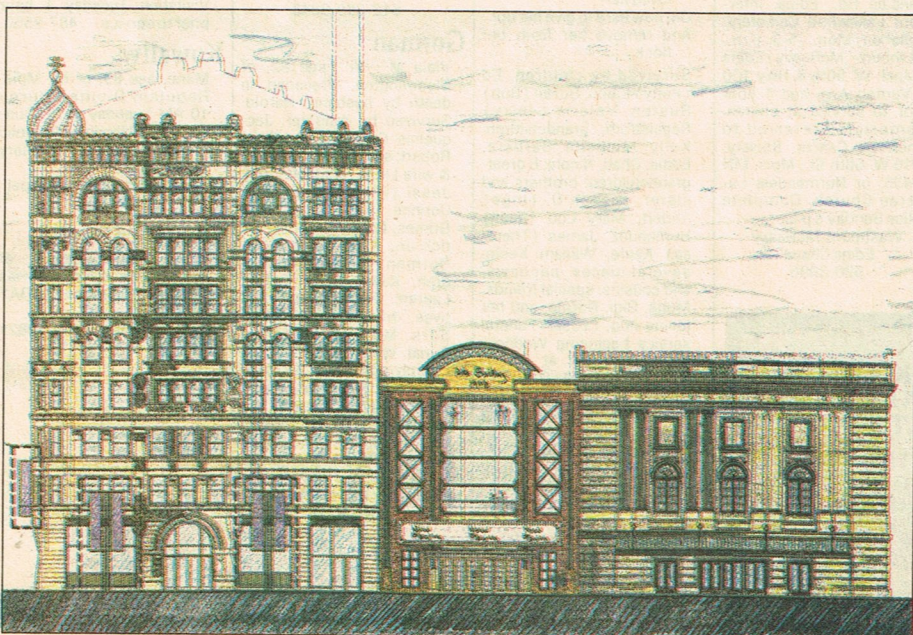
Campbell said her interest in moving the Shubert was piqued by Artspace's "synergistic" plan to couple the Shubert with the Hennepin Center. Architectural drawings show the Shubert joined to the Hennepin Center with a new glass atrium that would serve as lobby and event space for both buildings.

A community group called Save Our Shubert has urged city officials to keep the theater on Block E, and has expressed concern that a move might damage the theater's terra cotta facade.

Last week, petitions signed by 400 members of local architectural firms urging the Shubert's preservation were sent to Council President Jackie Cherryhomes.

And Guthrie Theater artistic director Joe Dowling quashed rumors that the Guthrie may be interested in using a renovated Shubert. Dowling said the theater is looking at long-term facilities needs and discussing options, "but moving is not by any means the most immediate option. We did at first look at the Shubert, but it wasn't the right size."

— Staff writer Rohan Preston contributed to this article.



Plans developed by Artspace Projects show how a relocated Shubert Theater, right, could be tied to the Hennepin Center for the Arts, left, with a new glass atrium containing lobby and event space.

Drawing provided by Miller-Dunwiddie Associates