



**The Sherman Theater Complex**  
*Culture and Commerce Enriching Community*



## The Sherman Theater – a Community Treasure

**Entertainment, news, respite from daily cares – and a gathering place for friends and family.** When the Sherman Theater opened its doors on Christmas day 1935, these were the gifts it offered a community struggling through the Great Depression.

Children and adults alike flocked to the theater, attracted by the affordable entertainment it offered within walking distance of their homes.



*“Milwaukee movie palaces and neighborhood theaters... are a link to an age of romance, of innovation, and of community....” Silver Screens*

**Milwaukee entrepreneurs made theaters like the Sherman possible.** They financed structures that reflected the architectural advances of their era and embraced the latest technology.

**The creators of the Sherman Theater took this entrepreneurial spirit one step further.** They created a commercial complex surrounding the Theater that took advantage of the foot traffic generated by movie-goers.

**For more than 40 years** the Sherman Theater prospered -- and acted as a magnet for local businesses. One of the last neighborhood theaters built in Milwaukee, it was also one of the last to close its doors.

Unique features of the Sherman Theater:

- One of the few surviving examples of Streamline Art Moderne theater architecture
- One of the first theaters in the nation built for recorded entertainment, it seated 932 people
- The center of a commercial complex with seven storefronts and 5,000 square feet of office space

## The Problem... is the Opportunity

**When the Sherman theater closed in 2001**, residents lost more than entertainment and a community gathering place – they also lost a vital commercial anchor.

**Vacant buildings are more than eyesores.** They pose a threat to neighborhood stability by becoming places where crime can take hold. They drive down local property values and jeopardize the health and safety of the communities they once supported.



*Several businesses occupy the offices and retail space of the Sherman Theater complex – but the theater at its heart stands empty, waiting to have life breathed back into it.*

**But the Sherman Theater also presents the possibility of revitalization.** An underutilized resource, it can advance the renewal of the neighborhood instead of contributing to its decline. Our research indicates that a rehabilitated Sherman theater can be a catalyst for economic development on the Burleigh Street commercial corridor.

*“Vacant properties drag down local economies, impede population growth, depress property values, increase crime, and impose heavy cost burdens on local governments.” HUD*

Vacant properties have resulted in:

- 3.2 Times as many drug calls to police, 1.8 times as many theft calls (Austin Texas)
- \$100 Per household (\$15.5m total) spent on demolition in five years (St. Louis)
- \$7,627 Net loss in property values within 150 feet of a vacant building (Philadelphia)
- 12,000 Arson fires annually (United States)

## What if...

**We turned this historic theater into a thriving cultural and commercial center where... the arts flourish, businesses prosper, and people of all ages are welcomed?**

**We can do it.**

Ever since its closure, residents of the Sherman Park neighborhood have nurtured a dream to restore the Sherman Theater – and revitalize the surrounding storefronts.



*Theaters are again taking their place as significant and integral members of the downtown business community.... Redevelopment of a theater can be a successful component of its revitalization.”*

Michigan University

### **From Movie Theater to Community Arts Center**

Based on input from the community and civic leaders, the Burleigh Street Community Development Corporation (BSCDC) has stepped forward with a plan to restore the theater complex. The building will receive a 21st century makeover – retaining its historical function as a movie theater – while embracing new features to become a multi-use center for arts and cultural organizations, as well as business enterprises.

### **Features of the renovated Sherman Theater Complex:**

- Rehearsal and performance spaces
- Exhibition and studio spaces
- Meeting, conference and classroom areas
- Updated storefronts, offices, and restaurant areas

### **New partners to use the facilities and draw customers:**

- Local arts and education groups
- Individual artists, musicians, and performers
- Touring, dance, music, and theater groups
- Area businesses



## A Sound Investment with an Outsized Impact...

**The restoration of the Sherman Theater is part of a national trend** to revive historic theaters and revitalize neighborhoods. Arts organizations across the nation are serving as anchors of local business districts.

Renovation of the theater was included in Milwaukee's 2009 Comprehensive Plan for the West Side Area.

**As one of the few neighborhood-based cultural centers in Milwaukee,** the Sherman Theater Complex will tap into the city's thriving arts community -- which accounted for nearly 11,000 local jobs and \$232 million in household income in 2010.

**As the only public performance and meeting space in the Sherman Park neighborhood,** it will be a valuable resource for arts and community groups. Businesses will benefit too, with access to a wider customer base.

Neighborhood youth and families will benefit. Culture-rich communities experience lower poverty rates and increased levels of commerce. Arts centers provide safe places where people of all ages can learn new skills and build connections to their community.



*"In addition to the cultural enrichment they provide us, arts & culture nonprofits create jobs, support economic growth, and contribute to community revitalization."* Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

Results from a Socio-Economic Impact Analysis indicate:

*"The rehabilitation of the Sherman Theater would have a **positive and sizable impact** on the economic and social well-being of the Sherman Park neighborhood. It... will impact the entire commercial corridor and contiguous area of economic activity for the neighborhood, from Sherman Boulevard to 60th Street."* UW-M Center for Economic Development

29	New jobs from construction and operations
\$4.6M	Economic impact on surrounding area
\$378,300	Rental income for first three years of operation



**With your help** we can restore the Sherman Theater Complex and revitalize the community that surrounds it.

The Burleigh Street Community Development Corporation (BSCDC) is launching the “quiet phase” of its campaign. With support from generous donors like you, we will raise **\$500,000 to purchase the building and begin the first stage of our campaign.**

**The BSCDC knows what it takes to achieve success** with a project like this. In 2003, we worked with corporate leaders and nonprofit agencies to transform the site of a run-down bowling alley into the Burleigh Street Enterprise Center – an award winning retail center that houses several local businesses. The potential impact of the Sherman Theater project is even greater.

Whether you make a one-time gift or a multi-year pledge, **your gift is an investment in the future of a vital part of our city and the people who live and work there.** By connecting the arts and business, we really can enrich our community.

Please accept our sincere expression of appreciation for your support -- thank you for caring about the future of our community.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J Hiller', written in a cursive style.

James Hiller  
Executive Director



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