

With 3 new major building gifts, theater aims for \$2.25M more

Three six-figure donations in January 2012 provided a major boost to Near West Theatre's effort to raise more than \$6 million to build a new theater in the Gordon Square Arts District.

Executive Director Stephanie Morrison-Hrbek announced at the theater's Annual Benefit Jan. 28 that longtime supporters Tom and Sandy Sullivan had added a major gift of \$750,000 to generous contributions they had made earlier in the campaign, and that an anonymous donor had given \$600,000. Later that Benefit evening another longtime supporter, R. Eric Kennedy, promised to add \$500,000 to an earlier campaign gift.

Together with contributions already made – including \$1 million from the Char and Chuck Fowler Family Foundation and \$500,000 from the Gund Foundation (both conditional on the campaign's completion), \$500,000 from the Kulas and John P. Murphy foundations, \$225,000 from the Sullivans, \$100,000 from the Kent H. Smith Foundation, products from Tremco worth an estimated \$200,000, and more – the January gifts bring the "raised or pledged" total to \$4.56 million.

Near West Theatre's building effort is part of the wider Gordon Square Arts District capital campaign, which since 2006 has been raising \$30 million to renovate the Capitol Theatre (movies) and nearby Cleveland Public Theatre, build streetscapes and parking lots, and construct a performance venue for NWT at West 67th Street and Detroit Avenue.

The anonymous January gift is earmarked to help Near West achieve a super-energy-efficient design it has been exploring since 2011, known by the German word *Passivhaus*. This European method creates a nearly air-tight seal around the building and uses a mechanical technology known as "heat exchange" to circulate fresh air – warm in winter, cool in summer. It is the same method used at the PNC Smart Home that was on display at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History in 2011. Building to this standard would bring an estimated 80-percent drop in energy costs, which, besides salaries, would be the single largest budget item in a new building.

The \$600,000 January gift will cover added construction costs to reach that standard. Because the gift has the effect of increasing the wider capital campaign goal, it awaits – by agreement – a Feb. 15 vote by the Gordon Square Arts District Board of Directors on whether to approve that increase and an equal one for Cleveland Public Theatre's portion of the campaign. If approved, the total cost of Near West's portion of the project will be \$6.82 million, leaving about \$2.25 million yet to be raised.

"Sustainability is our vision for this building," Morrison-Hrbek said. "Affordable energy costs will help sustain us as a nonprofit arts organization. *Passivhaus* construction helps sustain the environment, and this special new building will contribute to the impact the Gordon Square Arts District is already having on the livability and economy of a Cleveland neighborhood."

The theater continues to seek lead gifts. Persons, foundations or companies willing to consider a restricted or designated gift to the Gordon Square Arts District Campaign, of which Near West Theatre is a part, are encouraged to contact Stephanie Morrison-Hrbek (216-961-9750) or Joy Roller (216-961-4242). Naming opportunities are available.

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