



***The Council of Neighborhood Associations of South Pinellas County
P.O. Box 13693 St. Petersburg, Florida 33733***

December 27, 2009

St. Petersburg City Council
St Petersburg, Florida

Re: Detroit Hotel and Landmarking

Dear City Council Members:

What do the Florida Theater, the Soreno Hotel and the La Playa Theater have in common? They were landmarks in our wonderful city that are no longer here. Little by little our history is slipping away piece by piece. We have made mistakes. We understand we can no longer do that without consequences.

Our own Mayor Rick Baker in his book on the history of St. Petersburg stated "historic buildings add to the character of the city. It lends to the uniqueness of the city." Think how much has already been lost just in our downtown area alone. Looking at a photo or a postcard is not the same as walking through an historic hotel or home and imagining what it was like to live there a century ago.

The Detroit Hotel is our city's most historic building dating from 1888. We all agree that it should have been designated a landmark long, long ago. Built by city co-founder Peter Demens, it was the second building constructed in the city and was its major edifice for many years. The hotel was named after city co-founder John C. Williams' home city of Detroit. The hotel served as an important social and cultural center serving such guests as Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan, Babe Ruth, Will Rogers, Clarence Darrow, Eleanor Roosevelt, John F. Kennedy, the St. Louis Cardinals and Ringo Starr.

The Detroit Hotel met Community Preservation Commission's criteria for Landmarking status. The Council of Neighborhood Associations from the very start of this process has unanimously supported this effort. I have spoken at every meeting and have submitted letters of support.

Now it is time for you, City Council members, to finalize this process and approve this landmark request. CONA thanks everyone who has worked so hard to preserve and landmark the single most important structure now in our city. Thank you, City Council Members for your time and for your vote to approve the Landmarking of the Detroit Hotel.

Barbara Heck
CONA President