RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve the staff report authorizing the City Manager to negotiate and execute an agreement with San José State University for the operations and maintenance of the Hammer Theatre for an initial incubation period of three years in an amount not to exceed $285,000 a year.

2. Direct the City Manager to form an advisory board with membership agreed upon and co-convened by San José State and the City, in coordination with the District Three Council Office and the Mayor’s Office. We suggest a board of seven to nine people committed to the vision of this SJSU/City partnership, and to the success of the theater. The advisory board will:
   a. Provide counsel and active working assistance on space activation, programming of professional theater, exploration of other community cultural uses, and facility sustainability.
   b. Represent interests of stakeholders San José State University, City, downtown community and the arts community.
   c. Be comprised of those that have expertise in the areas of performing arts, cultural facility operations and maintenance, audience engagement, university education, and the development of new, financially and programmatically viable organizational models. The working group will be comprised of people who do not represent organizations that anticipate being regular users of the theater, and therefore not be perceived as having a conflict of interest.
   d. Meet approximately every four to eight weeks.
   e. Actively report during the incubation period on their progress and activities on a semi-annual basis on the theatre reuse starting at the November 2015 Community and Economic Development Committee meeting.
3. Direct the City Manager to include in the agreement with San José State a provision that the university will make reasonable efforts to negotiate new agreements with San José-based art organizations that hold annual, large scale multi-day festivals and/or educational programs and had pre-existing rental agreements with the former theater operator.

BACKGROUND

We would like to thank staff for their diligent work on this over several months. Additionally, we thank the 11 members of the Hammer Theater Advisory Committee for their time and commitment to the arts in San José. Above all, we thank those leaders and benefactors that founded this wonderful cultural asset: Phil and Susan Hammer, Jim Reber, and others who offered many years of leadership, support, and commitment to professional theater in San José.

We look forward to this new enterprise with San José State University and the possibilities it presents, most importantly the opportunity to raise the profile of the City and the University as public entities committed to professional theater and high-quality arts and cultural programming, while developing an economically sustainable model for operations. We reiterate the importance and prioritization of professional theater, curated offerings from a variety of professional arts groups and use by community-based cultural organizations for the Hammer Theatre and look forward to the formation of the advisory group and their work to carry out these priorities. Finally, we emphasize the importance that longstanding users of the Hammer Theatre Center have on our community’s vitality and economy, such as San José Jazz and Cinequest. We thank San José State University for their willingness to work with these important organizations for continued use and cultural offerings at Hammer Theatre.