



A photograph of an empty theater with red seats and curtains. The theater has two levels of seating. The seats are red with gold-colored armrests. The stage is at the far end, and there are red curtains on the sides. The text "SAVE OUR SORG A SHINING STAR" is overlaid on the top half of the image in a white, glowing, sans-serif font.

SAVE OUR SORG A SHINING STAR

THE SORG OPERA HOUSE CAMPAIGN



“Here’s to a venue that’s willing to offer beautiful spaces for theatre, music and film, cafes and shops...Here’s to a venue that will be a true community center in every sense of the word, all we have to do is embrace it.”

– Sandy Reynolds-Wasco, great, great granddaughter of Paul J. Sorg
The John M. Reynolds III Family

MISE EN SCENE

SCENARIO

In its heyday, Sorg's Opera House was hailed as a regional jewel in downtown Middletown. Its period fixtures, superior acoustics, and excellent sight lines attracted renowned artists from around the country. This once active gift to the region now seeks an encore performance.

The Sorg Opera Revitalization Group (SORG) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) comprised of community visionaries, industry professionals, and non-profit entrepreneurs who are embarking on a campaign to save and restore this neglected star.

Their vision is to fill the theatre and grand ballroom with patrons, entertainers, educators, and employees driving the development of the cultural economy along Main Street.

So take your seat as we share our dream to place the Sorg at center stage for economic development in our downtown community and surrounding cities.





SETTING THE

“I just love all the history about the Sorg...
just a beautiful place.”

– Kathy Bowermaster, Middletown Antiques

Act 1, Scene 1

STAGE FOR THE NEXT 124 YEARS...

His gift to Middletown, Sorg's Opera House was built in 1891 by industrialist and former Ohio congressman, Paul J. Sorg. It was designed by Cincinnati Music Hall's architect, Samuel Hannaford, and was the crown jewel of the Middletown community.



Over the decades, it changed ownership numerous times, was soaked in the 1913 flood, survived a fire in 1935, underwent a 1947 movie theatre refit, endured deferred maintenance, withstood a sprinkler system flood in 2010, faced foreclosure, and – finally – fell victim to vandalism and the elements. The once shining star slowly and steadily had become a dilapidated building and a community eyesore.

But, our group of community and cultural-minded entrepreneurs imagined something different. We saw a historical gem poised to be a regional driver in economic, educational, and cultural growth while offering a spark to help ignite the revitalization of downtown Middletown.

In 2012, we formed a private LLC to purchase and hold the building. We also formed the SORG Opera Revitalization Group (SORG), a 501(c)(3) non-profit that, 28 months later, purchased the vacant building with a plan to restore it to a beautiful and thriving theatre. Our work will help re-define Middletown as a southeast Ohio arts and entertainment destination, and re-establish an artistic landmark unique to the communities within the Cincinnati-Dayton metroplex.

Our dream and vision quickly spread as volunteers, local businesses, the media, and the city of Middletown began to recognize how Sorg's Opera House would be the force behind downtown Middletown's re-development.

READY, SET, RESTORE

After years of planning, SORG has made several major steps towards a restoration campaign. We have garnered strong community support, and are steadily gaining momentum.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE:

- ✓ Agreement between SORG and the Middletown Community Foundation (MCF) to have them serve as fiscal agents
- ✓ First Board of Directors meeting – February 2, 2013: Adopted bylaws; nominated six new members; established priorities, goals, and objectives
- ✓ First major volunteer clean-out held – February 16, 2013
- ✓ Engaged “Glaserworks” as our architects of record – Summer, 2013
- ✓ Repaired ballroom windows damaged from windstorms – July, 2013
- ✓ First SORG grant award from Duke Energy Foundation – Fall, 2013
- ✓ Final construction cost estimates received – Fall, 2013
- ✓ Awarded IRS (501(c)(3) non-profit status – March 18, 2014
- ✓ Applied for State and Federal Historic Tax Credits – April, 2014
- ✓ Awarded Federal Historic Tax Credits – June, 2014
- ✓ Ongoing cleaning of the building with volunteer workers who have contributed a combined total of 1000 hours to date
- ✓ Repaired major roof leaks to halt ongoing water damage
- ✓ Replaced downspouts
- ✓ Began work on code compliant issues – June 2015

Act 2, Scene 1

OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS



We believe that restoring Sorg's Opera House will significantly enhance the vitality of downtown Middletown. With momentum behind us, we are poised to launch an \$8 million capital campaign to completely restore and expand the operational capabilities of the commercial building and the theatre. The project is in partnership with Middletown's public/private efforts to turn the downtown into a cultural, educational, and residential destination serving 2.2 million people in its 30-minute commute zone.

Rebuilding the Sorg is the cornerstone of this exciting revitalization. Conservative projections cite the creation of 160 construction jobs followed by 150 new jobs in and around the building that will contribute \$15.7 million to the regional economy over its first four years of full operation.

The background image shows the interior of a historic theater. In the foreground, the backs of several red upholstered seats are visible. A curved balcony with a dark wood railing and decorative balusters extends across the middle of the frame. The balcony has a white-painted underside. To the right, a stage area is visible, featuring a red curtain and ornate gold-colored architectural details. The ceiling is dark with several bright, round recessed lights. The overall atmosphere is warm and nostalgic.

“Preserving the past brings on those nostalgic feelings of a time when life was slower and entertainment was an important social event. The Sorg is a perfect example of how preservation connects us all to those core values of Middletown’s history.”

– Dan Smith, Volunteer

OUR VISION

Imagine the energizing impact of hundreds of patrons in downtown Middletown as they shop, dine, and gather to see live professional shows, view movies, watch school performances, or enjoy galas and special events in the beautiful ballroom.

OUR VISION FOR THE CAMPAIGN INCLUDES:

- ✓ Full restoration of the theatre with 950 seats for theatrical, musical, and film presentations, as well as public meetings, graduations, forums, and more
- ✓ Expansion of the entrance foyer to the performance hall
- ✓ Re-opening and restoration of the second floor “Jim Crow” balcony
- ✓ Restoration of the north side first floor for a theatre pre-function area capable of serving refreshments and light snacks
- ✓ Restoration of the south side first floor for commercial food and beverage operators to provide casual dining
- ✓ Restoration of the second and third floor to be used for office space, a business/arts incubator, or an antique and arts mall
- ✓ Restoration of the fourth floor ballroom supported by a commercial kitchen for galas and special events

A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

As we create a destination place with the theatre, shops, dining facilities, and multi-purpose areas for community and businesses, we will generate multiple streams of income from the following sources:

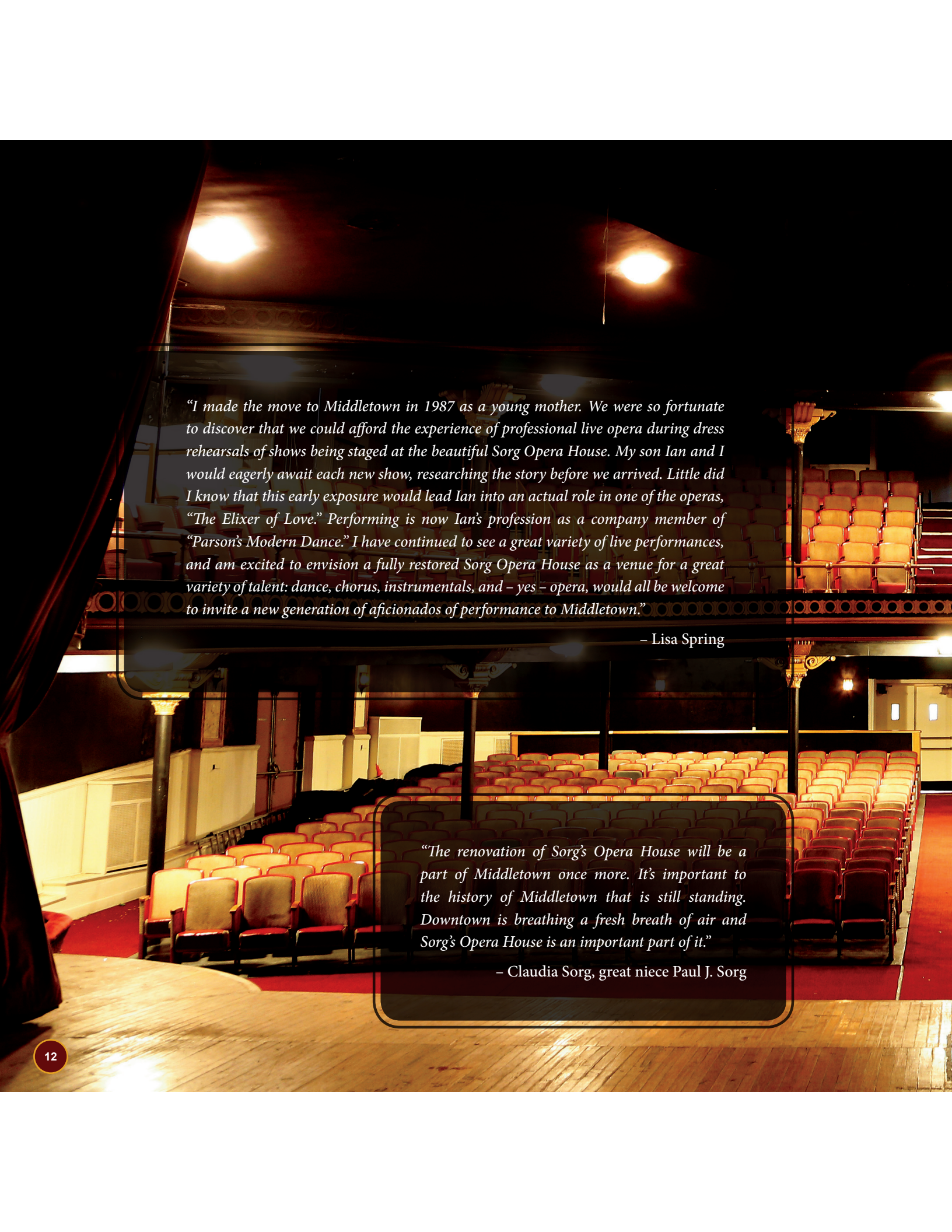
- ✓ Seasonal use of theatre during phases of restoration
- ✓ Up to 50 live professional performances a year
- ✓ Renewal of the office building for rental or lease use
- ✓ Fully opening the building's offices, restaurants, ballroom, and performing arts theatre over the next five years
- ✓ Rent the performance hall and ballroom to third party promoters and booking agents
- ✓ Utilize the ballroom for children's theatre, ballroom dance classes, banquets, weddings, intimate concerts, public/private meetings, movies, and more



A photograph of a historic hallway. The floor is covered in a black and white diamond-shaped checkered tile. The walls are a light cream color with dark wood trim. A large, ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling. On the right wall, there is a large, dark-framed mirror with a decorative gold-colored border. On the left wall, there is a display case or window showing historical documents. The hallway leads to a dark doorway at the end.

**“I love the Sorg.
I’m so glad you’re trying to save it.
It’s an important part of our history!”**

– Jane Shroyer

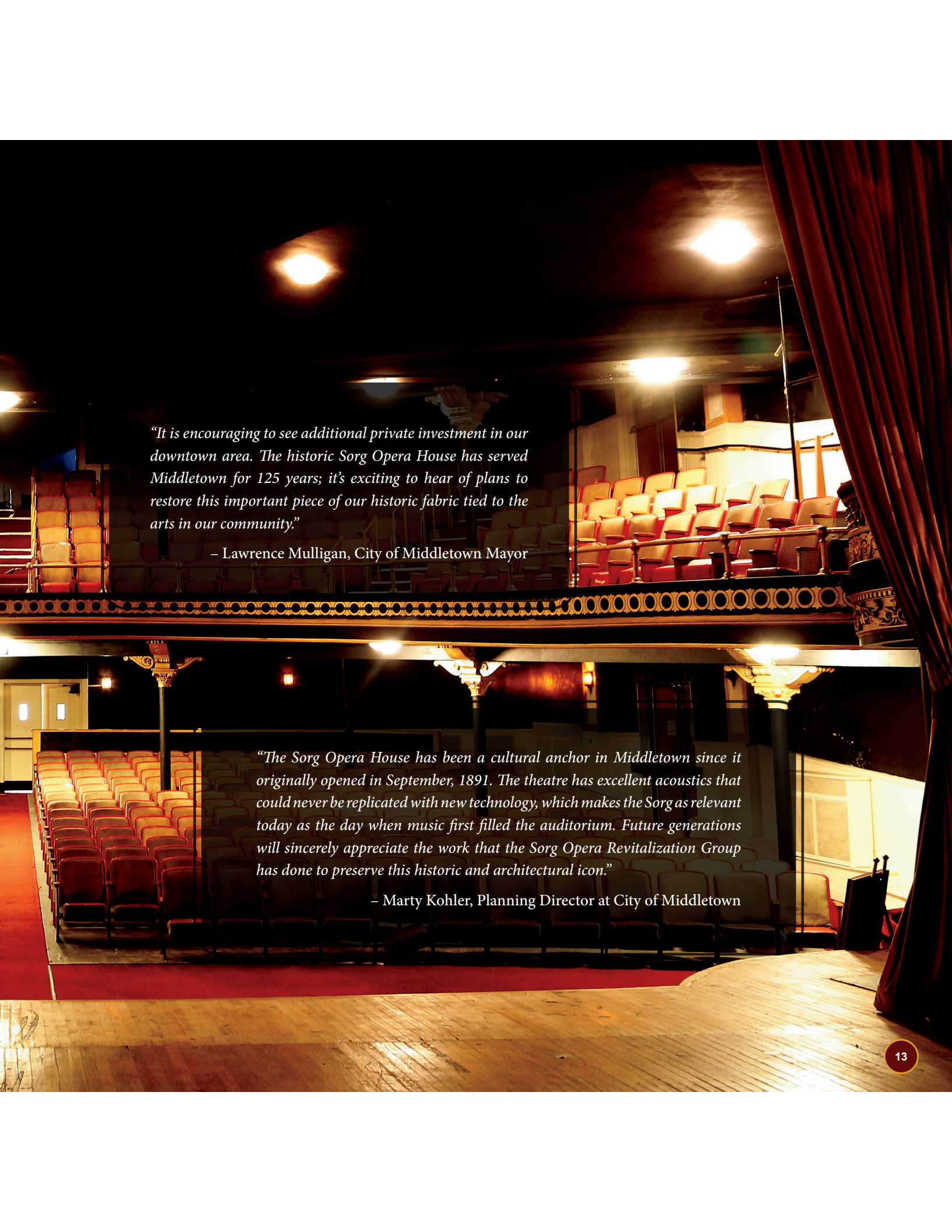


"I made the move to Middletown in 1987 as a young mother. We were so fortunate to discover that we could afford the experience of professional live opera during dress rehearsals of shows being staged at the beautiful Sorg Opera House. My son Ian and I would eagerly await each new show, researching the story before we arrived. Little did I know that this early exposure would lead Ian into an actual role in one of the operas, "The Elixir of Love." Performing is now Ian's profession as a company member of "Parson's Modern Dance." I have continued to see a great variety of live performances, and am excited to envision a fully restored Sorg Opera House as a venue for a great variety of talent: dance, chorus, instrumentals, and – yes – opera, would all be welcome to invite a new generation of aficionados of performance to Middletown."

– Lisa Spring

"The renovation of Sorg's Opera House will be a part of Middletown once more. It's important to the history of Middletown that is still standing. Downtown is breathing a fresh breath of air and Sorg's Opera House is an important part of it."

– Claudia Sorg, great niece Paul J. Sorg



"It is encouraging to see additional private investment in our downtown area. The historic Sorg Opera House has served Middletown for 125 years; it's exciting to hear of plans to restore this important piece of our historic fabric tied to the arts in our community."

– Lawrence Mulligan, City of Middletown Mayor

"The Sorg Opera House has been a cultural anchor in Middletown since it originally opened in September, 1891. The theatre has excellent acoustics that could never be replicated with new technology, which makes the Sorg as relevant today as the day when music first filled the auditorium. Future generations will sincerely appreciate the work that the Sorg Opera Revitalization Group has done to preserve this historic and architectural icon."

– Marty Kohler, Planning Director at City of Middletown

ECONOMIC IMPACT & JOB CREATION

We are in a creative economy today. Numerous economic impact studies show that the arts foster innovation and growth, promote quality of life, and revitalize communities. We agree.

Once known as an “All-American City,” Middletown has been struggling for decades from a sluggish economy, high unemployment, and other issues that have had a severe impact on its vibrancy, and have threatened its rebirth.

We are now ready to ignite hope to Middletown, and join together in making the vision for a brighter future for the city, its people, and the region into a reality.

Writing to the Dayton Development Coalition, Denise Hamet, Economic Development Director with the City of Middletown stated,

“The renovation of the Sorg Opera House is a cornerstone for revitalizing our urban downtown. The impact of its rejuvenation will be felt not just locally, but also regionally and even statewide. In addition to providing services, workforce opportunities, and educational amenities for students, this arts venue will attract artistic performers who will complement the region’s extraordinary array of arts venues and will increase Middletown and Ohio’s tourism business. With Middletown’s critical need to increase income and move residents into income-producing positions, this project becomes even more important. An operational, productive facility will provide critically needed support to the City of Middletown, a community that is currently faced with an \$800,000 operating deficit for 2014. The alternative – a dark, deteriorating historic structure, prone to vandalism and fire – is unthinkable.”

Act 3, Scene 1



"The Sorg Opera House embodies Middletown's history and is one of the cornerstones of downtown," said Vice Mayor Dan Picard. "It's what the city was all about....If you go back a few years, that building was just falling apart, it was going through foreclosure. With the work that they're doing, they're contributing to the revitalization of downtown."

– Middletown Journal, March, 2013

SORG'S IMPACT:

- ✓ Job creation: 160 construction jobs, upwards of 150 full-time jobs within and around the venue by its fourth year
- ✓ Economic impact of \$15+ million across its first four years of operations
- ✓ Offer the Cincinnati-Dayton metroplex a unique entertainment destination
- ✓ Foster community involvement
- ✓ Help others rekindle downtown pride
- ✓ Forge regional partnerships with venues and educational/cultural/historic institutions
- ✓ Increase cultural tourism by having a renewed Sorg available for viewing
- ✓ Increase real estate values of housing in the area via theatre property improvements
- ✓ Attract new business growth from various industries and entrepreneurs
- ✓ Increase lodging and sales tax revenue
- ✓ Increase educational opportunities and youth participation in the arts
- ✓ Attract a talented workforce who want to call Middletown home

Act 3, Scene 2

JOIN THE SAVE OUR SORG CAMPAIGN

Your support of the Save Our Sorg Campaign is vital to the success of Sorg's Opera House revitalization project.

Getting involved in the campaign will help to ensure a vibrant community where people want to live, work, play, and visit.

Your involvement will help shine a spotlight on Sorg's Opera House and the city of Middletown.

**We encourage you to become one of our Shining Stars,
and stand with us on stage as we take the first bow!**

"It is our dream that superior musical and theatrical presentations will once again grace the marvelous auditorium of the Sorg in the heart of Middletown. With great pride, we, the Stevens-Gleason Family, enthusiastically support the Sorg Revitalization Group in their vision to bring life again to the wonderful Sorg Opera House. Our family has so many sweet memories of the Sorg, from my grandmother's time in the late 1890s to now. It is our hope that the Sorg once again becomes an integral part of Middletown's rebirth, as a haven for the arts. Please join us in supporting the Sorg Revitalization Group in making Middletown, Ohio, the best it can be."

– Helen and Richard Stevens-Gleason





ENCORE

“Here’s to a venue that’s willing to offer beautiful spaces for theatre, music and film, cafes and shops...Here’s to a venue that will be a true community center in every sense of the word, all we have to do is embrace it.”

– Sandy Reynolds-Wasco, great, great granddaughter of Paul J. Sorg
The John M. Reynolds III Family

“Here’s to you who are willing to step in and make a difference to southeast Ohio, the Cincinnati-Dayton metroplex, Middletown, and to saving a part of American history.”

– Chuck Miller, President of SORG

..... **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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SAVE OUR SORG A SHINING STAR

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ATTN: Sorg Fund

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THE SORG OPERA HOUSE CAMPAIGN