

HOLLYWOOD THEATRE-GOERS WARM TO UPGRADES, RENOVATION

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The Hollywood Theatre renovation is transforming what was once considered the crown jewel of a Northeast Portland neighborhood into a revitalized hub of activity.

The 1500-seat theater was built in 1926 in what was then the edge of the city. It emerged as a grand building and defined what became known as the city's Hollywood District.

Vaudeville, talkies, Cinerama, charity events and fashion shows all added memories for those who visited the theater. For the price of a movie ticket, anyone could pass under the bright lights of the marquee and the distinctive sculpted terracotta facade, and enter the elegant atmosphere of the theatre. Inside, the soft-curved architectural lines, walls painted in elegant patterns, arched sloping walkway to the balcony, plush carpets and fine period furnishings left an impression – and more than a few people enjoyed being in a place finer than their own living rooms.

FILM ACTION OREGON STEPS IN

The theater's charm faded with the years and inattention brought the once-elegant building to its knees.

Enter Film Action Oregon. A nonprofit formerly named the Oregon Film and Video Foundation, FAO's mission is to educate emerging Oregon filmmakers, partner with independent filmmakers to produce new works and feature independent, classic and foreign films for a wide range of audiences. More than 60,000 people attend films, special programs and more than 100 community events each year thanks to FAO's efforts.

In 1997, FAO turned its attention to the Hollywood Theatre, purchasing the building and beginning urgent repairs. After three months of extensive work, theater doors reopened in November 1997, and FAO has kept them open ever since.

Ellen Bergstone Beer, FAO's executive director, is in charge of administration, fundraising and restoration of the theater. She works closely with FAO's Board of Directors and her husband Richard Beer, who serves as artistic director. Besides restoring the visual beauty of the Hollywood Theatre, more basic needs like repairing leaky roofs, falling plaster and replacing restroom fixtures often emerge as priorities.

STATE ENERGY LOAN FUNDS NEW HEATING SYSTEM

In 2005, the theater's original 1926 oil-fired boiler took center stage. An analysis, conducted by Mike Hatten of SOLARC Architecture and Engineering and funded by Better Bricks, showed the system was only operating at 60 percent efficiency. In parts of the building, there was no



PHOTO/FILM ACTION OREGON

Film Action Oregon purchased the historic Hollywood Theatre in 1997. Through grants, fundraisers and donated labor, the group is restoring and upgrading the Hollywood District's namesake, and helping revive the economic vitality of the area.

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working heat source at all.

"We literally had no heat in the downstairs lobby except from the popcorn popper," said Bergstone Beer. "A significant boiler failure would close down the entire building and take away our income stream."

FAO turned to the state's Energy Loan Program to help restructure its debt and structure a loan to cover the cost of installing an energy-efficient, natural gas-fired system.

Harder Mechanical replaced the boiler and added piping for natural gas. Riehl Industries installed the HVAC system and did the duct work. When installers found the new boiler would not pass through the narrow stairway to the basement, they used what anyone would use in an old theater – the stage's trap door. After removing plywood from the main auditorium walls, workers discovered the original large heat vents and determined they were still usable. Duct cleaning became a major task.

"We discovered a number of surprises in this old building, but we tried to honor the building by using original ducts and vents where possible," said Bergstone Beer. "I've learned a lot more than I ever wanted to know about heating systems. What matters to us is not just preserving a beautiful historic building. Keeping our patrons warm and comfortable is a significant part of keeping the programs at the Hollywood Theatre thriving."

The effects of the new heating system are already apparent. After installation was completed, ticket revenues increased 20 percent over the previous year's numbers.



PHOTO/OREGON DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

A state Energy Loan Program loan made it possible to replace the Hollywood Theatre's aging and inefficient boiler with an energy-efficient heating system.

IN-DEPTH: THE OREGON ENERGY LOAN PROGRAM

The state Energy Loan Program, often called SELP, provides low-interest, fixed-rate, long-term loans for qualified projects that promote energy conservation or renewable energy resources. Since the program's first loan in 1981, it has financed 708 projects for nearly \$347.4 million.

The program provides loans to qualified individuals, businesses, schools, cities, counties, special districts, state and federal agencies, public corporations, tribes, and non-profit organizations.

To be eligible, projects must be located in Oregon and must accomplish one or more of the following:

- Save energy
- Produce energy from renewable resources such as water, wind geothermal, solar, biomass, waste materials or waste heat
- Use recycled materials to create new products
- Use alternative fuels

Most loans are structured so that energy savings cover the loan payments. Rates can vary depending on the term of the loan, the timing of the project and the availability of funds. The program is self-supporting and uses no tax dollars. State general obligation bonds provide the funds. To fund large loans, the Department of Energy may need to issue new bonds that would set new rates.

For more information, visit the Oregon Department of Energy Web site at www.oregon.gov/energy or call 1-800-221-8035.

DONATIONS CREATE PARTNERSHIPS

As an entrepreneurial nonprofit, Film Action Oregon considers each grant and donation to be a partnership.

"We're not just here with our hands out," said Bergstone Beer. "We work hard to develop mutually beneficial partnerships that create benefits for all involved, whether they are other nonprofits or businesses."

This point is illustrated by an agreement between FAO and the Plasterers' Union.

"They offered to do the work as a learning experience for their apprentices," said Bergstone Beer. "We'll have another attractive and usable space with newly plastered walls."

Others have taken a personal interest in renovating the building. Ian Robertson Jr. of

Robertson, Hay and Wallace, Contractors is the grandson of the man who founded the firm and built the Hollywood Theatre. The company donated \$80,000 in labor and materials to design and build a new concession stand. In return, FAO donates 5 percent of concession profits to the Parkinson Center at Oregon Health & Science University in memory of Robertson's father, who died of the disease.

"We recognize the importance that the theater has for the surrounding neighborhood," said Bergstone Beer. "It's both a privilege and a responsibility. As the neighborhood's namesake, we believe our efforts here have definitely helped to continue positive economic development in the Hollywood District." ■



The Hollywood Theatre in its 1940s heyday.

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