

THE HEART THEATRE



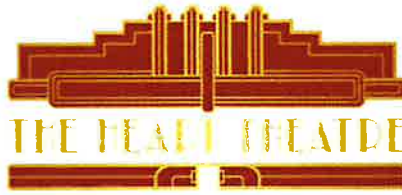
Business Plan & Community Investment Prospectus

Preserving Our Past. Investing in Our Future.

A Strategic Plan for Restoring The Heart Theatre and Advancing Community
& Economic Vitality in Downtown Effingham

August 4, 2026

info@thehearttheatre.org



Letter from the Board President

Dear Mayor Schutzbach, Members of the Effingham City Council, City Staff, Community Leaders, and Friends,

Every community has places that become part of its identity—not simply because of the buildings themselves, but because of the memories they hold.

For generations, The Heart Theatre was one of those places for Effingham.

It was where children experienced their first movie on the big screen. Where families gathered on Saturday evenings. Where lifelong friendships were formed. Where first dates became marriages and where countless residents shared experiences that have become part of the story of our community.

Today, The Heart Theatre stands at the center of downtown as one of Effingham's most recognizable landmarks. While its doors have been closed for many years, its place in the hearts of our community has never disappeared.

The purpose of this Business Plan & Community Investment Prospectus is not simply to describe the restoration of a historic building. Rather, it is to present a long-term vision for how The Heart Theatre can once again become a vibrant gathering place that strengthens downtown Effingham through arts, entertainment, education, tourism, and community engagement.

Across Illinois and throughout the Midwest, communities that have invested in restoring historic theatres have discovered that these buildings are far more than entertainment venues. They serve as catalysts for downtown revitalization, supporting local restaurants and businesses, attracting visitors, creating opportunities for artists and entrepreneurs, preserving community identity, and improving quality of life for residents of all ages.

We believe The Heart Theatre has the opportunity to become that kind of catalyst for Effingham.

Since acquiring the building, The Heart Theatre, Inc. has worked diligently to establish a strong foundation for the project's success. The building is owned free and clear of debt. More than \$230,000 in private investment, professional services, volunteer labor, planning efforts, and community programming has already been committed toward preserving and preparing this historic landmark for its next chapter. Our Board of Directors has intentionally focused on thoughtful planning, sound governance, financial sustainability, and building relationships throughout the community before embarking on a major capital campaign.



This document reflects that commitment.

Within these pages you will find our vision for restoration, a sustainable operating model, preliminary financial projections, programming concepts, governance structure, and an analysis of the potential economic and community benefits The Heart Theatre can bring to downtown Effingham. While many details will continue to evolve through architectural planning, fundraising, and community collaboration, our goal is to demonstrate that this project is being approached with careful planning, fiscal responsibility, and a long-term perspective.

Equally important, we hope this prospectus begins an ongoing conversation.

The future success of The Heart Theatre will depend upon partnerships—with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, arts organizations, civic groups, donors, volunteers, and public leaders who share a common vision for a vibrant downtown and a thriving community.

We are grateful for the encouragement and enthusiasm that so many individuals have already shown for this project, and we appreciate the opportunity to share our vision with you. We welcome your questions, your ideas, and your partnership as we continue exploring how The Heart Theatre can contribute to the cultural, economic, and civic vitality of Effingham for generations to come.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your continued commitment to making Effingham an exceptional place to live, work, visit, and raise a family.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Amy Van Bergen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Amy Van Bergen
President, Board of Directors
Founder & Project Lead



Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary	1
II. Why This Matters	8
III. The Heart Story	14
IV. Why Historic Theatres Matter	20
V. Community Need	27
VI. Economic Impact	33
VII. Sustainability	43
VIII. Five-Year Financial Model	50
IX. Managing Risk Through Good Governance	58
X. Public Return on Investment	64
XI. Case for Support	70
XII. Programming Plan	77
XIII. Community Partnerships	81
XIV. Capital Campaign	86
XV. Why the City?	99
The Opportunity Before Us	104

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Board of Directors & Professional Advisors

Appendix B – Letters of Community Support

Appendix C – Community Marketing Survey Results & Feasibility Study

Appendix D – Conceptual Architectural Renderings (*Not Final Construction Documents*)

Appendix E – Conceptual Restoration & Construction Budget

Appendix F – Operating Budget Overview

Appendix G – National Historic Register Submission, Approved 2023

Last Page – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

I. Executive Summary

Preserving Our Past. Investing in Our Future.

Every community has places that become woven into its identity—not simply because of the buildings themselves, but because of the memories created within them.

For generations, The Heart Theatre was one of those places for the people of Effingham. It was where children experienced their first movie on the big screen, where families gathered on weekends, where lifelong friendships were formed, and where countless shared experiences became part of our community's story. Long after its lights dimmed, The Heart Theatre has remained one of downtown Effingham's most recognizable and beloved landmarks.

Today, our community has an extraordinary opportunity—not simply to restore a historic building, but to create a vibrant destination that will serve residents and

visitors for generations while strengthening the economic, cultural, and civic vitality of downtown Effingham.



This Business Plan & Community Investment Prospectus presents a comprehensive vision for transforming The Heart Theatre into a professionally managed, financially sustainable nonprofit community venue that celebrates our history while helping shape our future.

Rather than focusing solely on restoring a building, this plan demonstrates how The Heart Theatre can once again become a place where people gather, businesses thrive, memories are created, and downtown Effingham continues to flourish.

A Vision for Downtown Effingham

Communities today compete not only for new businesses, but also for talented employees, entrepreneurs, visitors, families, and investment. Increasingly, people choose to live, work, and invest in communities that offer authentic downtowns, cultural experiences, gathering places, and opportunities to connect with one another.

Historic theatres have become one of the most successful tools communities use to strengthen these qualities.

Across Illinois and throughout the Midwest, restored theatres have demonstrated that historic preservation and economic development can work hand in hand. They attract visitors, support restaurants and retailers, encourage additional private investment, create opportunities for artists and entrepreneurs, and reinforce the unique character that distinguishes one community from another.

Located in the heart of downtown Effingham, The Heart Theatre is uniquely positioned to become one of these community anchors.

The restored theatre is envisioned as a flexible, year-round venue capable of hosting films, concerts, live theatre, educational programs, lectures, business meetings, nonprofit events, weddings, celebrations, and community gatherings. Rather than competing with existing venues, The Heart Theatre will complement them by filling a unique niche as an intimate, historic, multi-purpose destination that enhances the overall downtown experience.

Arts and Culture as Economic Development

The restoration of The Heart Theatre is not simply a historic preservation initiative. It is also an economic development opportunity.

National research consistently demonstrates that investments in arts, culture, and historic downtown destinations generate measurable economic returns.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, arts and cultural industries contributed **\$1.2 trillion to the United States economy in 2023**, representing **4.2 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product** while supporting approximately **5.4 million jobs**. In recent years, the arts sector has grown at more than twice the rate of the overall U.S. economy, underscoring its importance as both an economic driver and a contributor to community vitality.¹

Similarly, the **Arts & Economic Prosperity 6** study by Americans for the Arts found that nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences generated **\$151.7**

¹ National Endowment for the Arts, *Arts and Cultural Industries Grew at Twice the Rate of the U.S. Economy, Adding \$1.2 Trillion* (Washington, DC: National Endowment for the Arts, 2025), based on data from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.

billion in annual economic activity, supported **2.6 million jobs**, generated **\$29.1 billion in government tax revenue**, and produced **\$101 billion in personal income** across the nation.²

Perhaps most significant for downtown business districts is visitor spending. The study found that attendees at nonprofit arts events spend an average of **\$38.46 per person beyond the cost of admission** at nearby restaurants, retail stores, coffee shops, parking facilities, and other local businesses.³ Visitors traveling from outside the community spend substantially more, making arts destinations important drivers of tourism and local commerce.

Communities across America have demonstrated that thoughtfully restored historic theatres become more than entertainment venues—they become economic engines, gathering places, and symbols of civic pride.

Using the Americans for the Arts data, The Heart Theatre programming has the potential to generate approximately \$750,000 in annual downtown business activity through restaurant, retail and hospitality spending associated with theatre attendance. The Heart has the opportunity to become one of those catalysts for Effingham to once again be a symbol of civic pride.

Building on a Strong Foundation

The Heart Theatre restoration project is already well underway.

The nonprofit organization, The Heart Theatre, Inc., owns the historic building free and clear of debt, providing a strong financial foundation for future restoration efforts.

Since acquiring the property, approximately **\$230,000** in private investment, professional services, planning, stabilization efforts, volunteer support, fundraising infrastructure, and community programming have already been committed toward preserving this landmark and preparing it for its next chapter.

² Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences* (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2023).

³ Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 National Report*, Audience Spending Findings. Average attendee spending excludes admission costs.

Equally important, the Board of Directors has intentionally prioritized thoughtful planning before construction.

Rather than rushing into fundraising or renovation, the organization has focused on developing strong governance, engaging community partners, researching comparable theatre operations, evaluating financial sustainability, preparing preliminary operating projections, and establishing a realistic long-term strategy that emphasizes responsible stewardship of both the building and the organization's financial resources.

This deliberate approach positions The Heart Theatre for long-term success.

A Sustainable Community Asset

The restoration of The Heart Theatre is guided by a simple philosophy:

A successful restoration is not measured by the day the ribbon is cut—it is measured by whether the theatre continues serving the community 50 years later.

For that reason, this business plan emphasizes sustainability as much as restoration.

Future operations are designed around a diversified business model supported through multiple revenue streams, including admissions, live performances, facility rentals, concessions, memberships, annual giving, sponsorships, grants, educational programming, fundraising events, and philanthropic support.

This diversified approach reduces dependence upon any single revenue source while allowing the theatre to remain accessible to a broad cross-section of the community.

The organization also intends to establish operating reserves, capital replacement reserves, and long-term endowment funding to ensure responsible stewardship of the facility for generations to come.

Community Impact

The Heart Theatre will be much more than a community performance venue.

It will become a community gathering place.

Programming is expected to include classic and contemporary films, concerts, community theatre productions, children's programming, school performances, educational lectures, film festivals, business meetings, nonprofit events, weddings, holiday celebrations, cultural events, private rentals, and civic gatherings.

The theatre will provide affordable and accessible space for schools, nonprofit organizations, civic groups, businesses, and community organizations that currently have limited options for medium-sized downtown events.

Beyond its physical space, The Heart Theatre will create opportunities for volunteers, artists, educators, students, entrepreneurs, and community partners to work together in ways that strengthen the social fabric of Effingham.

Most importantly, it will once again become a place where new memories are created.

Economic Opportunity for Downtown Effingham

The Heart Theatre is expected to contribute to downtown Effingham in ways that extend far beyond its walls.

Regular programming will encourage residents and visitors to spend more time downtown, increasing activity for nearby restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, hotels, and other local businesses.

The theatre will help attract visitors from throughout the region while supporting tourism, downtown revitalization, and community events. Increased foot traffic can encourage additional private investment, strengthen surrounding property values, and reinforce downtown as the cultural and social heart of the community.

“ It should be an experience unlike anything else in Effingham. ”

An equally critical point, quality-of-life amenities like The Heart Theatre contribute to workforce attraction and retention by helping create a welcoming and vibrant community that today's families, professionals, and employers increasingly seek.

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents an investment not only in a building, but in the long-term vitality and competitiveness of downtown Effingham.

Looking Ahead

The Heart Theatre restoration will be accomplished through a carefully phased approach that balances historic preservation with responsible financial planning.

Future work will include continued architectural design, historic preservation planning, community engagement, grant applications, private fundraising, and phased restoration of both the building exterior and interior.

Throughout this process, The Heart Theatre, Inc. remains committed to transparency, collaboration, fiscal responsibility, and thoughtful stewardship. Following restoration, the Board will maintain both operating reserves and a long-term capital replacement reserve to ensure responsible stewardship of the facility.

This Business Plan & Community Investment Prospectus is intended to serve as the beginning of an ongoing conversation with community leaders, businesses, nonprofit organizations, donors, and residents about how The Heart Theatre can once again become a defining asset for Effingham.

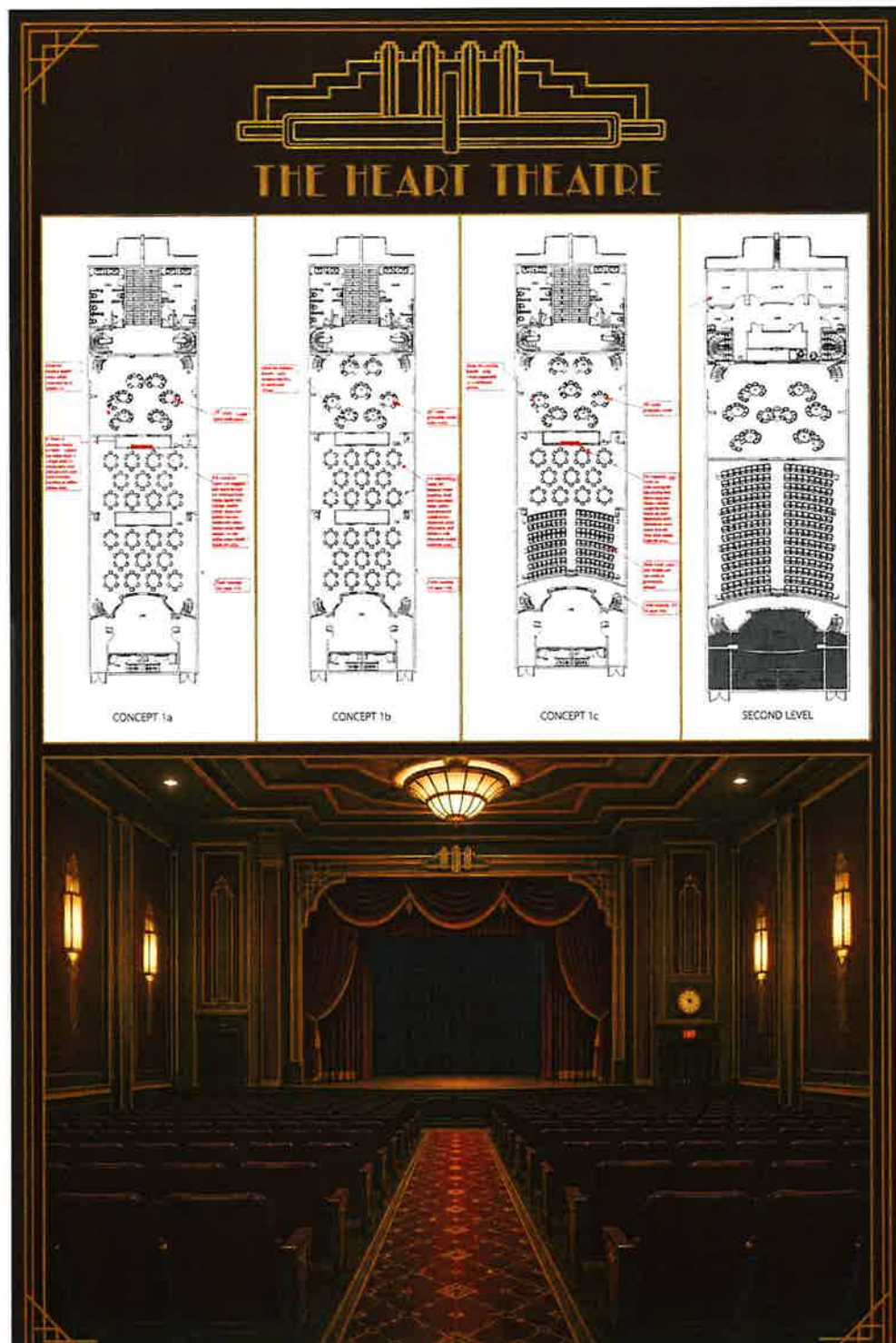
What We Are Asking of the City—an Invitation

The Heart Theatre, Inc. Board of Directors is NOT asking for an annual operating subsidy. Instead, we are inviting the City of Effingham to consider a one-time capital partnership investment during restoration. The amount and timing would be determined jointly after architectural drawings, fundraising progress and grant awards are finalized.

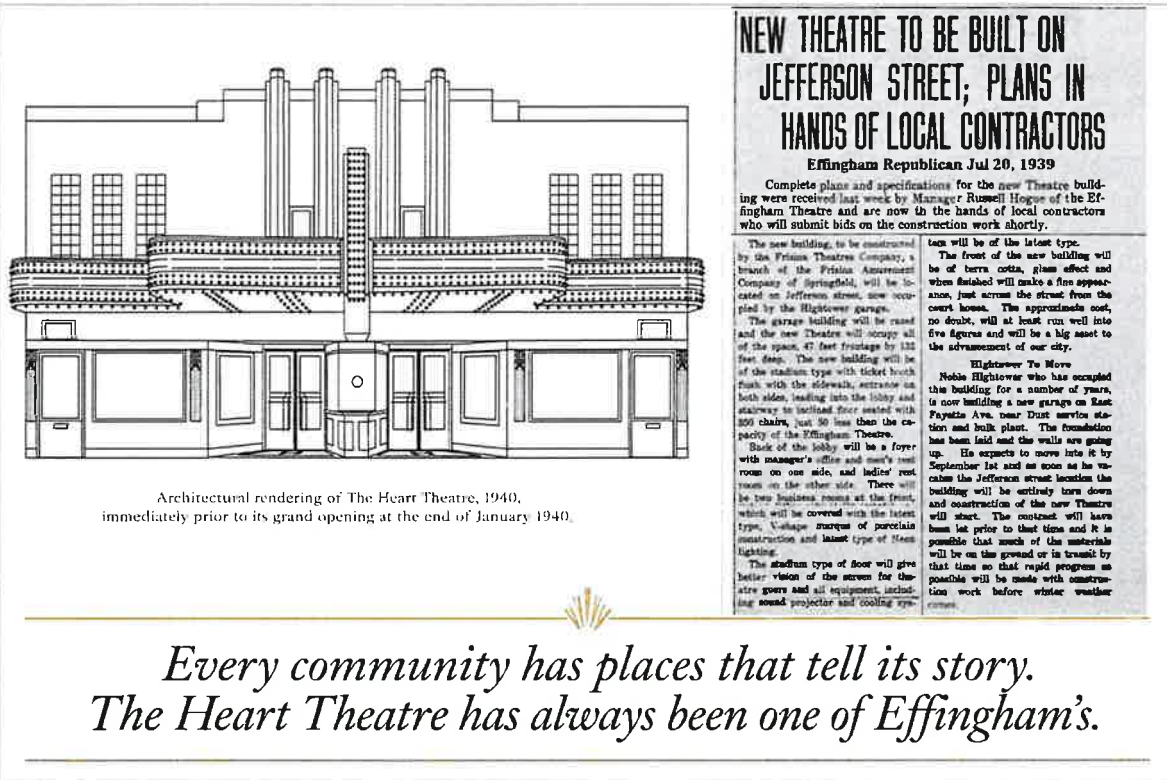
The restoration of The Heart Theatre is ultimately about more than preserving a building; it is about preserving the experiences, traditions, and sense of place that define a community while creating new opportunities for future generations.

The Board of Directors invites residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, civic leaders, philanthropic partners, and public officials to join us in exploring how The Heart Theatre can once again become the heart of downtown Effingham.

Together, we have the opportunity to honor our past, celebrate our present, and invest confidently in our future.



**"Some buildings preserve history. Others help shape the future.
The Heart Theatre has the opportunity to do both."**



II. Why This Matters

More Than a Theatre. A Community Investment.

Communities are shaped not only by their roads, schools, businesses, and public services, but also by the places where people gather, celebrate, learn, and create lasting memories.

These places become part of a community's identity.



For generations, The Heart Theatre served that role in downtown Effingham. It was a destination where families gathered for Saturday matinees, friends met before dinner, children experienced the excitement of the big screen for the first time, and neighbors shared moments that became part of the collective memory of our community.

While the building has remained quiet for many years, the memories associated with The Heart Theatre continue to resonate across generations.

Today, Effingham has an opportunity that extends far beyond restoring a historic structure.

The opportunity is to create a vibrant community asset that honors our past while contributing to the future prosperity of downtown Effingham.

Communities Are Competing Differently



Economic development has changed significantly over the past two decades.

While transportation infrastructure, utilities, and workforce remain essential, today's communities also compete on quality of life.

Businesses seeking to relocate or expand increasingly evaluate whether communities offer vibrant downtowns, attractive gathering places, cultural amenities, and experiences that help attract and retain talented employees. Likewise, families, retirees, entrepreneurs, and remote workers often choose communities that provide authentic places to gather, connect, and enjoy life outside of work.

Successful downtowns are no longer defined solely by commerce. They are defined by activity.

People are drawn to places where there is something to experience—whether attending a concert, meeting friends for dinner, enjoying a community festival, watching a classic film, participating in a nonprofit fundraiser, or celebrating a milestone with family and friends.

The Heart Theatre has the potential to become one of those destinations.

A Historic Theatre Is More Than a Historic Building

Historic preservation is often viewed as an effort to protect architecture.

While preserving historic buildings is an important objective, successful preservation projects accomplish something even more significant—they preserve community identity.

Historic theatres are particularly unique because they were originally designed as gathering places.

Unlike many historic buildings that now serve private functions, theatres were built to bring people together.

When thoughtfully restored, they continue serving that same purpose while adapting to the changing needs of modern communities.

Today, a restored theatre can simultaneously function as a:

- Performing arts venue
- Cinema
- Lecture hall
- Business meeting space
- Conference venue
- Wedding and reception venue
- Nonprofit event space
- Classroom
- Community gathering place
- Tourism destination

Few buildings possess that level of flexibility.

Revitalizing Downtown Through Activity

Healthy downtowns depend upon consistent activity.

Restaurants, retailers, coffee shops, boutiques, hotels, and other local businesses all benefit when visitors spend more time downtown.

A restored Heart Theatre has the potential to generate activity throughout the year by hosting a diverse calendar of events that attract both residents and visitors.

Rather than relying upon a handful of large annual festivals, The Heart Theatre is envisioned as a venue capable of supporting year-round programming, including films, concerts, community theatre, educational events, school performances, civic meetings, private celebrations, and nonprofit gatherings.

Each event creates an opportunity for attendees to dine locally, shop downtown, visit neighboring businesses, and experience everything downtown Effingham has to offer.

Over time, these repeated visits contribute to a stronger, more vibrant downtown economy.



Strengthening Community Connections

Perhaps the greatest value of The Heart Theatre cannot be measured in dollars.

Communities thrive when people feel connected.

The Heart Theatre is envisioned as a place where generations come together.

Where grandparents introduce grandchildren to classic films.

Where local students perform on stage.

Where nonprofit organizations celebrate milestones.

Where local musicians share their talents.

Where businesses recognize employees.

Where civic organizations gather.

Where families celebrate life's important moments such as retirement parties and graduations.

In an increasingly digital world, physical gathering places have become more valuable than ever.

The Heart Theatre can once again become one of those places.

Building on Effingham's Strengths

Effingham already enjoys many advantages that make it an ideal community for this project.

Its central location at the intersection of two major interstate highways, strong business community, thriving hospitality industry, active nonprofit sector, historic downtown, and reputation for civic collaboration provide a strong foundation for continued investment.

The Heart Theatre does not seek to replace or compete with existing community assets.

Instead, it is intended to complement them.

By providing a unique, historic, mid-sized venue with flexible capacity between 180-300, The Heart Theatre will expand the range of experiences available in downtown Effingham while supporting existing restaurants, retailers, hotels, community organizations, educational institutions, and tourism initiatives.

Success for The Heart Theatre will also mean success for neighboring businesses and community partners.

Preserving a Legacy While Creating the Next One

Historic buildings tell the story of where a community has been.

Restored historic buildings help shape where a community is going.

The Heart Theatre has stood as a recognizable landmark in downtown Effingham for generations. Its restoration offers an opportunity not simply to preserve an

important piece of local history, but to create a new chapter defined by collaboration, creativity, entrepreneurship, education, entertainment, and community pride.

The goal is not to recreate the past.

The goal is to build upon it.

Future generations deserve the opportunity to create their own memories within the walls of The Heart Theatre—just as previous generations did before them.

A Community Asset for Generations

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents a long-term investment in Effingham's future.

It is an investment in economic vitality.

An investment in quality of life.

An investment in downtown.

An investment in community identity.

Most importantly, it is an investment in people.

The Heart Theatre is not simply being restored to preserve a building.

It is being restored to serve as a welcoming place where the community can gather, celebrate, learn, create, and connect for generations to come.

“

Now we have the opportunity
to bring it back.

”

III. The Heart Story

The Heart of a Community

Before There Was a Building...

Long before there was a Heart Theatre...

Before there was a glowing marquee welcoming families on Jefferson Avenue...

Before there were Saturday matinees, first dates, school outings, holiday movies, or standing ovations...

Communities have always created places where people gather.

Places where neighbors become friends.

Where stories are shared.

Where traditions are born.

Where generations experience life's simple moments together.

These places become more than buildings.

They become part of a community's identity.

Every community has them.

For generations, Effingham's has been The Heart Theatre.

A Community Looking Toward the Future

When plans for a new theatre were announced in the summer of 1939, America was emerging from the Great Depression. Like countless communities across the nation, Effingham looked toward the future with optimism.

The *Effingham Republican* announced plans for a beautiful new theatre on Jefferson Avenue—one that would feature modern design, comfortable seating, state-of-the-art projection and sound, and an illuminated porcelain marquee unlike anything the community had seen before.⁴

⁴ "New Theatre to Be Built on Jefferson Street; Plans in Hands of Local Contractors," *Effingham Republican* (Effingham, IL), July 20, 1939.

The article described the theatre not simply as another business, but as "a fine appearance" for downtown and "a big asset to the advancement of our city."

Even before construction began, community leaders understood something that remains true today.

Great communities invest in places where people come together.

When The Heart Theatre opened in January 1940, it immediately became one of those places.

More Than Movies

The Heart Theatre was never simply about what appeared on the screen.

It was about what happened around it.

Families planned evenings downtown around the latest movie.

Children counted the days until Saturday matinees.

Teenagers nervously met beneath the marquee for first dates.

Neighbors visited before and after the show.

Downtown restaurants welcomed moviegoers before performances.

Storefront windows glowed as people lingered on Jefferson Avenue.

For many residents from within city limits and from outlying counties, an evening at The Heart Theatre became part of the rhythm of life in Effingham.

Thousands of individual memories combined to create something much larger.

They became part of the story of a community.

The Memories That Stay With Us

Ask longtime residents about The Heart Theatre and rarely do they begin by talking about architecture.

They remember experiences.

The excitement of seeing the marquee lit for the first time.

The smell of fresh popcorn.

Walking downtown with parents or grandparents.

Laughing with friends during Saturday matinees.

Seeing favorite movies on the big screen.

Holding someone's hand for the very first time.

Watching a packed audience react together to unforgettable moments.

These memories span generations.

Some belong to people now in their eighties and nineties.

Others have been passed down through family stories told around dinner tables and holiday gatherings.

That is the remarkable thing about places like The Heart Theatre.

The memories belong not to one family, but to an entire community.

Why These Places Matter

There are very few places where an entire community experiences something together.

A theatre is one of them.

It is where hundreds of people laugh at the same joke.

Hold their breath during the same scene.

Rise together in applause.

Celebrate local performers.

Watch their children perform on stage.

Honor veterans.

Attend holiday concerts.

Celebrate graduations.

Support local nonprofits.

Experience moments that become part of family history.

These shared experiences strengthen communities in ways that cannot be measured solely by attendance figures or financial reports.

They build connections.

They create traditions.

They remind us that while technology changes, the human need to gather together never does.

More Than Nostalgia

It would be easy to describe this project as an effort to save a historic theatre.

But that would miss its true purpose.

Historic buildings are not preserved simply because they are old.

They are preserved because they continue to serve an important role in the life of a community.

The Heart Theatre is not being restored to recreate 1940.

It is being restored to serve 2040.

And 2050.

And 2080.

Its greatest contribution is not what it once was.

It is what it can become.

A place where today's children attend their first movie.

Where tomorrow's performers discover their talents.

Where community organizations gather.

Where local businesses celebrate milestones.

Where families create memories that someday become stories of their own.

The next generation deserves its own Heart Theatre memories.

The Next Chapter

Every historic building reaches a moment when a community must decide what comes next.

Some buildings quietly disappear.

Others are preserved as museums.

A select few are reimagined for a new generation while honoring everything that came before.

That is the vision for The Heart Theatre.

Not to become a monument to the past.

But to become one of the most active, welcoming, and meaningful places in downtown Effingham once again.

Its restored stage will host concerts, theatre productions, educational programs, films, community celebrations, business gatherings, nonprofit events, and countless occasions that have yet to be imagined.

Every one of those events will create another story.

Another family tradition.

Another memory.

The Heart of Downtown

Communities need places that give people a reason to come together.

Places that encourage conversation.

Places that celebrate creativity.

Places that remind us that we belong to something larger than ourselves.

For generations, The Heart Theatre has been one of those places for Effingham.

Its restoration represents more than preserving a landmark.

It represents preserving a sense of place.

A sense of community.

A sense of belonging.

It represents confidence in the future of downtown Effingham and the belief that vibrant communities continue investing in the places where life happens.

Looking Forward

The story of The Heart Theatre is not finished.

The chapters written between 1940 and today tell the story of a building that helped shape generations of memories.

The chapters that follow will tell the story of a community that chose to invest in its future without forgetting its past.

One day, a child attending a performance, a family celebrating a special occasion, or a couple meeting beneath the marquee for their first date may have no idea they are participating in the continuation of a story that began nearly a century earlier.

That is exactly as it should be.

Because the greatest measure of The Heart Theatre's success will not be the restoration of a historic building.

It will be the memories still being created there decades from now.

The Heart Theatre has always reflected the spirit of Effingham.

With thoughtful stewardship and a shared vision, it will continue to do so for generations to come.

IV. Why Historic Theatres Matter

A Proven Strategy for Community Revitalization

Across America, communities are rediscovering the value of their historic theatres—not simply as architectural landmarks, but as powerful community assets that strengthen downtowns, stimulate local economies, attract visitors, and improve quality of life.

Once considered obsolete in the era of multiplex cinemas and digital entertainment, historic theatres are experiencing a remarkable resurgence. Hundreds of communities have successfully restored and reimaged these buildings as flexible, multi-purpose venues that host concerts, films, live theatre, educational programming, business meetings, nonprofit events, festivals, weddings, and civic celebrations.

The lesson has become increasingly clear:

Historic theatres succeed not because they recreate the past.

They succeed because they evolve to meet the needs of today's communities while preserving the character that makes them unique.

That philosophy lies at the heart of The Heart Theatre.

More Than Historic Preservation

Historic preservation is often viewed as protecting architecture.

In reality, it is about protecting community identity.

Every downtown has buildings.

The best downtowns have landmarks that people immediately recognize as symbols of their community.

Historic theatres frequently become those symbols.

Their distinctive architecture, illuminated marquees, and active programming create a sense of place that cannot be replicated through new construction alone.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation describes restored historic theatres as **"proven community revitalizers and economic drivers,"** noting that they not only

preserve important architectural heritage but also catalyze business development, create jobs, and improve quality of life.⁵

Similarly, the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) has long recognized that successful historic theatres contribute far beyond the arts. Through its annual Historic Theatre Economic Impact Study and restoration resources, the League documents how restored theatres strengthen downtown economies, encourage private investment, and provide long-term cultural and economic value to their communities. The Heart Theatre has been members of LHAT since 2019.

Historic theatres matter because they continue serving the purpose for which they were originally built:

They bring people together.

Historic Theatres as Economic Engines

Communities increasingly understand that quality-of-life investments are also economic development investments.

Restaurants, retailers, hotels, breweries, coffee shops, boutiques, and local businesses all benefit when downtowns become active destinations.

Historic theatres generate that activity.

Unlike many public facilities that serve limited audiences or operate only occasionally, successful historic theatres can attract visitors throughout the year by hosting a wide variety of events that appeal to diverse audiences.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, arts and cultural industries contributed **\$1.2 trillion** to the United States economy in 2023, representing **4.2 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product** and supporting approximately **5.4 million jobs**. The arts sector continues to grow at more than twice the rate of the overall U.S. economy, demonstrating that investments in arts and culture produce measurable economic returns.⁶

⁵ National Trust for Historic Preservation, "**Historic Theater Stories**," *Saving Places*, accessed July 8, 2026, <https://savingplaces.org/story-categories/historic-theaters-stories>

⁶ National Endowment for the Arts and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Arts and Cultural Industries Grew at Twice the Rate of the U.S. Economy, Adding \$1.2 Trillion (2025)*, based on the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account.

The nationally recognized **Arts & Economic Prosperity 6** study by Americans for the Arts found that nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences generated **\$151.7 billion** in annual economic activity, supported **2.6 million jobs**, generated **\$29.1 billion** in tax revenue, and produced **\$101 billion** in personal income nationwide.⁷

Equally important for downtown business districts, attendees at nonprofit arts events spend an average of **\$38.46 per person beyond the cost of admission** at nearby restaurants, coffee shops, retail stores, parking facilities, hotels, and other local businesses. Visitors traveling from outside the community spend significantly more.⁸

For communities like Effingham, these findings reinforce an important principle:

The economic impact of a theatre extends far beyond ticket sales.

Why Communities Continue Investing in Historic Theatres

Successful communities understand that restored theatres create value in multiple ways.

They preserve irreplaceable architecture and local history.

They provide flexible gathering spaces for residents.

They attract regional visitors.

They increase activity for surrounding businesses.

They encourage private investment.

They strengthen civic pride.

They improve quality of life.

They help communities recruit businesses, employees, entrepreneurs, and families seeking vibrant places to live and work.

⁷ Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences* (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2023).

⁸ Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 National Report*, Audience Spending Findings.

Perhaps most importantly, they create destinations that encourage people to spend more time downtown.

That sustained activity benefits the entire community.

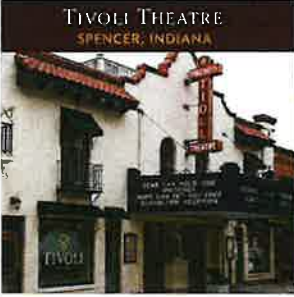
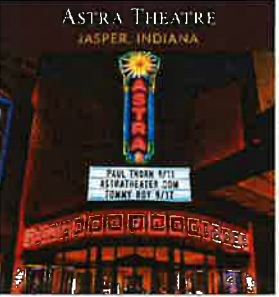
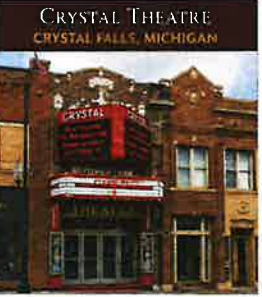
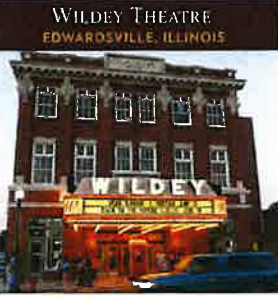
Historic Theatres Driving Downtown Revitalization



HISTORIC THEATRES. VIBRANT COMMUNITIES.



Operating historic theatres in small cities and towns across the Midwest are proving that these community treasures drive economic vitality, tourism, and civic pride.

TIVOLI THEATRE SPENCER, INDIANA	ASTRA THEATRE JASPER, INDIANA	CRYSTAL THEATRE CRYSTAL FALLS, MICHIGAN	WILDEY THEATRE EDWARDSVILLE, ILLINOIS
			
COMMUNITY POPULATION: ~2,500 CAPACITY: ~300 PROGRAMMING: First-run movies, classic films, live music, community events, festivals, rentals, educational programs ANNUAL ATTENDANCE: 40,000+ COMMUNITY IMPACT: A cornerstone of downtown Spencer, attracting visitors from across the region and supporting local restaurants and shops.	COMMUNITY POPULATION: ~16,000 CAPACITY: ~300 PROGRAMMING: First-run movies, classic films, concerts, comedy, lectures, rentals, corporate events, school and youth programs ANNUAL ATTENDANCE: 50,000+ COMMUNITY IMPACT: A vibrant regional destination that draws audiences from surrounding counties and strengthens downtown Jasper.	COMMUNITY POPULATION: ~1,400 CAPACITY: ~300 PROGRAMMING: Movies, live music, plays, community events, holiday programs, school performances, and rentals ANNUAL ATTENDANCE: 35,000+ COMMUNITY IMPACT: A cultural anchor in the heart of downtown, fostering community pride and year-round activity.	COMMUNITY POPULATION: ~25,000 CAPACITY: ~326 PROGRAMMING: Concerts, classic & indie films, comedy, lectures, business meetings, weddings, private rentals, community events ANNUAL ATTENDANCE: 85,000+ COMMUNITY IMPACT: A downtown destination that attracts visitors, supports local businesses, and strengthens community vitality.



HISTORIC THEATRES ARE MORE THAN BUILDINGS—
They are gathering places, economic engines, and lasting investments in our communities.



Historic theatres serving communities similar in size to Effingham demonstrate that restoration can succeed well beyond major metropolitan areas.

Tivoli Theatre – Spencer, Indiana

Serving a community of approximately 2,500 residents, the Tivoli Theatre has become the cultural centerpiece of downtown Spencer since its complete restoration in 2013. Its programming includes first-run and classic films, concerts, live performances, educational programming, festivals, and community events. The theatre attracts visitors from throughout the region while supporting nearby restaurants, retail businesses, and downtown activity.

When adjusted for inflation, the Tivoli Theatre’s 2013 restoration investment of approximately \$4 million would equal nearly \$5.8 million today—comparable to The Heart Theatre’s estimated restoration cost.

Astra Theatre – Jasper, Indiana

Located in Jasper, Indiana, the restored Astra Theatre demonstrates how a historic venue can successfully balance films, concerts, comedy, lectures, corporate events, school programming, and community celebrations. Today, the Astra serves as both an entertainment venue and a regional gathering place that strengthens downtown Jasper and contributes to local tourism.

Crystal Theatre – Crystal Falls, Michigan

In a community of fewer than 2,000 residents, the Crystal Theatre illustrates that even very small towns can successfully sustain historic theatres. Through concerts, plays, films, educational programming, and community events, the theatre has become a year-round cultural anchor that reinforces downtown vitality and community identity.

Wildey Theatre—Edwardsville, Illinois

Located in the heart of downtown Edwardsville, population 26,808, the restored Wildey Theatre demonstrates how a historic theatre can successfully serve as both an entertainment venue and a year-round community gathering place. Originally opened in 1909, the Wildey underwent a comprehensive restoration and reopened in 2011 as a professionally managed, city-owned venue that now hosts concerts, classic and independent films, comedy performances, lectures, business meetings, weddings, private rentals, and community celebrations. With a seating capacity of 326, the Wildey is comparable in size to the proposed Heart Theatre (in current renderings The Heart’s maximum seating capacity is 314) and illustrates how a historic venue can support a diverse programming model while strengthening downtown activity. Today, the Wildey continues to attract residents and visitors who also patronize nearby restaurants, shops, and local businesses, reinforcing its role as an important cultural and economic asset for the Edwardsville community.⁹

Each of these communities differs in size, demographics, and geography.

Yet they share several common characteristics.

⁹ City of Edwardsville, *History of the Wildey Theatre* and *The Wildey Theatre*, accessed July 2026, <https://www.cityofedwardsville.com/782/History-of-the-Wildey> and <https://www.cityofedwardsville.com/772/The-Wildey-Theatre>

They restored an important historic landmark.

They diversified programming.

They built strong nonprofit leadership.

They engaged volunteers and community partners.

They created multiple revenue streams.

They viewed their theatres not simply as entertainment venues, but as investments in their communities.

These same principles guide the vision for The Heart Theatre.

The Heart Theatre's Opportunity

Effingham possesses many of the characteristics that have contributed to the success of these communities: a vibrant downtown, strong civic leadership, an engaged business community, regional accessibility, an active nonprofit sector, and a long tradition of community collaboration. These strengths are reinforced by the comprehensive two-phase feasibility study completed for The Heart Theatre by Historic Theatre Consultants in 2022–2023 (see Appendix D), which concluded **that a restored, multipurpose Heart Theatre is both feasible and sustainable**: it has the market support, programming potential, and community foundation necessary to become a successful and sustainable cultural asset for Effingham.

The Heart Theatre is uniquely positioned to build upon these strengths.

Rather than competing with existing venues, it will complement them by providing an intimate, flexible, historic setting capable of hosting films, concerts, live performances, educational programs, business meetings, nonprofit events, private celebrations, and community gatherings throughout the year.

The goal is not simply to restore a building.

The goal is to create sustained downtown activity that benefits businesses, residents, visitors, and future generations.

Lessons for Effingham

Communities across the Midwest have demonstrated that restored historic theatres can become lasting community assets when built upon thoughtful planning and sustainable operations.

The Heart Theatre has been intentionally planned around those same proven principles:

- **Preservation with Purpose** – honoring historic character while adapting to contemporary community needs.
- **Flexible Programming** – serving diverse audiences through year-round events.
- **Financial Sustainability** – supporting operations through diversified revenue streams rather than dependence on any single source.
- **Community Partnerships** – collaborating with schools, nonprofits, businesses, arts organizations, and civic groups.
- **Economic Vitality** – increasing downtown activity and supporting local businesses.
- **Responsible Stewardship** – preserving an irreplaceable community asset for future generations.

The experience of communities throughout the Midwest demonstrates that historic theatres can once again become the heart of their downtowns.

The Heart Theatre has the opportunity to become one of those success stories.

V. Community Need

Building on Effingham's Strengths

Effingham has long been recognized as one of central Illinois' most dynamic regional communities. Strategically located at the intersection of Interstates 57 and 70, the city has earned its reputation as the "Crossroads of Opportunity," serving as a regional hub for commerce, healthcare, manufacturing, education, hospitality, and transportation. While the City of Effingham is home to approximately **12,250 residents** and Effingham County serves nearly **35,000 residents**, the community's influence extends well beyond its population. Each year, thousands of travelers, visitors, business professionals, students, and patients come to Effingham because of its strategic location and diverse mix of amenities and services.

This regional role presents a unique opportunity. Communities that already serve as destinations for business and travel often experience the greatest return from investments that encourage visitors to stay longer, explore downtown, dine locally, and experience the unique character of the community.

The Heart Theatre has the potential to become one of those destinations.

A Community Planning for the Future

The vision for The Heart Theatre is not a standalone idea. It aligns closely with priorities that the City of Effingham and its residents have identified through years of community planning.

The **Effingham 2050 Comprehensive Plan** recognizes that successful communities must balance economic growth with investments in quality of life, community character, recreation, arts and culture, historic preservation, walkability, and vibrant public spaces. The plan emphasizes strengthening downtown as the civic and cultural heart of the community while encouraging redevelopment, preserving historic resources, expanding gathering places, and enhancing the experiences that make Effingham an attractive place to live, work, visit, and invest.¹⁰

Earlier planning initiatives, including **PAVE (Plan for the Advancement of a Vibrant Effingham)**, similarly identified the importance of creating a more active,

¹⁰ <https://www.effinghamil.com/comprehensive-plan/>

connected downtown through redevelopment, public gathering spaces, expanded entertainment opportunities, walkability, and community collaboration.

The Heart Theatre directly advances these long-standing community priorities.

Rather than introducing a new destination on the edge of town, the project reinvests in one of downtown's most recognizable historic landmarks while strengthening the existing commercial district.

Downtown Matters

Every successful community has a place that reflects its identity.

For Effingham, that place has always been downtown.

Downtown is where visitors form first impressions.

It is where festivals begin.

Where local businesses welcome customers.

Where community celebrations occur.

Where history remains visible.

Where people gather to celebrate milestones, conduct business, enjoy a meal, or simply spend time together.

Healthy downtowns are not defined solely by the number of businesses they contain.

They are defined by activity.

Communities across the Midwest have discovered that one of the most effective ways to increase downtown activity is to create year-round destinations that encourage residents and visitors to return again and again.

Historic theatres have become one of the most successful examples of those destinations.

A Missing Piece of Community Infrastructure

Effingham enjoys many exceptional community assets.

Outstanding schools.

A nationally recognized healthcare system.

Thriving manufacturers.

Regional retail and hospitality.

Beautiful parks.

Successful festivals.

Strong civic organizations.

An engaged nonprofit community.

Yet despite these strengths, one important community asset has been missing for many years:

A flexible, mid-sized, year-round downtown venue where residents, businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, visitors, and community groups can gather.

Today there are relatively few venues that combine historic character, professional production capabilities, flexible seating configurations, and a downtown location capable of supporting such a broad range of community uses.



The Heart Theatre has been intentionally designed to fill that need.

Its flexible programming model will allow the venue to host films, concerts, live theatre, educational programming,

lectures, business meetings, conferences, nonprofit events, weddings, community celebrations, and cultural events throughout the year.

Rather than competing with existing facilities, the theatre is intended to complement them by serving a niche that is currently underrepresented in the community.

Serving an Entire Region

Although located in downtown Effingham, The Heart Theatre is intended to serve far more than city residents.

Effingham functions as the regional center for commerce, healthcare, education, hospitality, and tourism across south-central Illinois. Thousands of visitors already travel to the community each week for work, medical appointments, conferences, shopping, dining, and recreation.

The Heart Theatre provides an opportunity to extend those visits by creating additional reasons to experience downtown.

Whether attending a concert, a classic film, a school performance, a business conference, a community festival, or a private celebration, visitors who spend more time downtown also support nearby restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, retail stores, and other local businesses.

The economic impact of a successful theatre extends well beyond its front doors.

A Community Asset for Every Generation

One of the unique strengths of The Heart Theatre is its ability to serve residents throughout every stage of life.

Children may attend school performances, educational programs, and family films.

Students may participate in theatre productions, concerts, or leadership events.

Young professionals may enjoy live music, comedy performances, and networking events.

Families may gather for holiday celebrations and community traditions.

Businesses may host meetings, conferences, employee recognition events, and client receptions.

Older adults may attend concerts, lectures, classic films, and cultural programming.

Few community facilities provide opportunities for such a diverse cross-section of residents to gather under one roof.

The Heart Theatre is designed to do exactly that.

Independent Research Supports the Vision

The vision presented in this prospectus is supported by more than community enthusiasm.

In 2022 and 2023, **Historic Theatre Consultants**, one of the nation's leading firms specializing in historic theatre restoration and operations, completed a comprehensive two-phase feasibility study for The Heart Theatre.

The study evaluated market demand, programming opportunities, operating potential, financial sustainability, and long-term feasibility.

Its conclusions reinforced what many community members already believed:

Effingham possesses the characteristics necessary to support a professionally managed, multi-purpose historic theatre.

The consultants identified the community's regional accessibility, diversified economy, strong nonprofit sector, active business community, tourism base, and community support as significant strengths. They concluded that, with thoughtful planning, diversified programming, and responsible financial management, The Heart Theatre has the potential to become a sustainable cultural and economic asset for downtown Effingham.

This independent professional assessment provides an important foundation for the planning presented throughout this prospectus.

Supporting Existing Community Goals

The Heart Theatre is not intended to create a new vision for Effingham.

It is intended to help accomplish one that already exists.

The project directly supports many of the goals identified through community planning efforts by:

- Strengthening downtown as the cultural and civic heart of the community.
- Preserving one of Effingham's most recognizable historic landmarks.
- Expanding arts, entertainment, and cultural opportunities.
- Increasing year-round activity for downtown businesses.
- Supporting tourism and visitor spending.
- Providing flexible gathering space for residents and organizations.
- Encouraging walkability and downtown engagement.
- Enhancing quality of life for current and future residents.
- Supporting continued economic development and workforce attraction.

The Heart Theatre represents an opportunity to build upon Effingham's existing strengths while addressing a documented community need.

It is not simply an investment in a historic building.

It is an investment in the continued vitality of downtown, the strength of the local economy, and the quality of life that will shape Effingham's future for generations to come.

VI. Economic Impact

Investing in a Stronger Downtown

Communities invest in infrastructure because they understand that today's investments shape tomorrow's opportunities.

Roads improve transportation.

Utilities support growth.

Parks improve quality of life.

Libraries expand knowledge.

Historic theatres strengthen downtown economies by creating places where people gather, businesses thrive, visitors linger, and communities celebrate.

The restoration of The Heart Theatre should be viewed through that same lens.

It is not simply a historic preservation project.

It is an investment in downtown revitalization, tourism, local business development, workforce attraction, quality of life, and long-term economic competitiveness.

Across the United States, communities of every size are discovering that investments in arts, culture, and historic downtown destinations generate measurable economic returns while preserving the character that makes communities unique.

The Heart Theatre represents an opportunity to achieve both.

Downtowns Are Economic Engines

Although downtown districts often occupy only a small percentage of a community's land area, they generate a disproportionately large share of economic activity.

Research conducted by the International Downtown Association found that downtowns account for an average of:

- 16% of total property tax revenue

- 42% of hotel tax revenue
- 12% of total sales tax revenue
- 28% of total employment
- 11% of assessed property value

Despite occupying only about 3% of a city's land area, downtowns consistently function as the economic and civic centers of their communities.¹¹

These findings reinforce an important principle:

Healthy downtowns create healthy local economies.

Projects that increase year-round downtown activity benefit far more than the individual organizations that operate them.

They benefit neighboring businesses, property owners, employees, visitors, and ultimately the entire community.

The Experience Economy

Economic development has changed dramatically over the past two decades.

Communities no longer compete solely on infrastructure, tax incentives, or available land.

Increasingly, they compete on experience.

The Urban Land Institute observes that downtowns are evolving from places people must visit for work into places they choose to visit for entertainment, dining, recreation, culture, and social connection. Successful downtowns increasingly rely on destinations that create authentic experiences and encourage residents and visitors to spend more time—and more money—in the community.¹²

¹¹ International Downtown Association, *The Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities*. <https://cot-wp-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/planning/DowntownMP/ValueOfDowntownsCenterCities.pdf>

¹² Urban Land Institute, *The Future of American Downtowns*. <https://urbanland.uli.org/uli-advisory-services-the-future-of-american-downtowns>

Historic theatres are uniquely positioned to serve this role.

Unlike many public facilities that are used only occasionally, a restored historic theatre can generate activity throughout the year through films, concerts, live performances, lectures, educational programming, nonprofit events, business meetings, weddings, festivals, and community celebrations.

Each event becomes another reason for residents and visitors to experience downtown Effingham.

Creative Placemaking Creates Economic Opportunity

The Urban Land Institute's research on creative placemaking concludes that investments in arts, culture, and historic places produce benefits that extend well beyond entertainment.

Communities that intentionally invest in cultural destinations experience stronger downtown revitalization, increased private investment, enhanced tourism, improved public spaces, and greater economic resilience. Cultural facilities help transform downtowns from collections of buildings into places where people choose to gather, invest, and build community.¹³

The Heart Theatre embodies this approach.

Its restoration is intended not simply to preserve a landmark, but to strengthen downtown Effingham as a vibrant destination that complements existing businesses, supports tourism, and enhances quality of life.

The Arts Are Big Business

The arts are not simply a cultural asset.

They are a major economic sector.

According to the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, arts and cultural industries contributed:

¹³ Urban Land Institute, *Creative Placemaking*. <https://urbanland.uli.org/uli-advisory-services-the-future-of-american-downtowns>

- \$1.2 trillion to the U.S. economy in 2023
- 4.2% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product
- 5.4 million jobs

In recent years, arts and cultural industries have grown at more than twice the rate of the overall U.S. economy.¹⁴

Likewise, the national Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 study by Americans for the Arts found that nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences generate:

- \$151.7 billion in annual economic activity
- 2.6 million jobs
- \$29.1 billion in government tax revenue
- \$101 billion in personal income

Perhaps most important for communities like Effingham, attendees spend an average of \$38.46 beyond the cost of admission at nearby restaurants, retail stores, coffee shops, hotels, and other local businesses. Visitors traveling from outside the community spend substantially more.¹⁵

For downtown businesses, every theatre ticket represents more than admission.

It represents additional spending throughout the community.

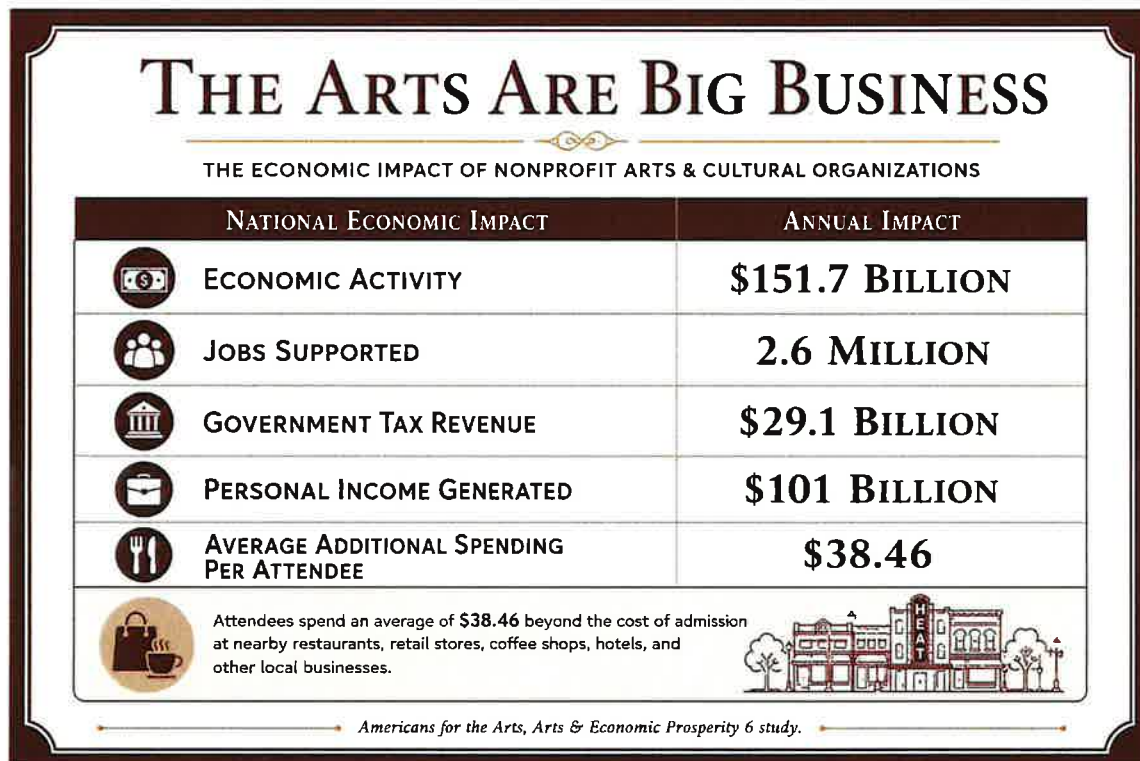
What this means specifically to Effingham:

Using the nationally recognized Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 estimate of \$38.46 in additional spending per attendee beyond the cost of admission, The Heart Theatre's projected first-year programming would generate approximately 19,500 paid annual visits. This translates into an estimated \$749,970 in additional spending at nearby restaurants, retail stores, coffee shops, hotels, convenience stores, and other local businesses during the first year of operation alone.

¹⁴ National Endowment for the Arts and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account* (2025 release).

¹⁵ Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 6* (2023).

Nearly three-quarters of a million dollars in additional local spending represents economic activity occurring outside the theatre itself—supporting existing businesses, generating sales tax revenue, and strengthening downtown Effingham.



Historic Theatres Multiply Economic Activity

The economic impact of a historic theatre extends far beyond the walls of the building.

According to the League of Historic American Theatres Historic Theatre Economic Impact Study, restored theatres generate three interconnected forms of economic impact.

The first is direct impact, including theatre operations, employment, programming, rentals, capital improvements, and visitor spending within the facility.

The second is indirect impact, as audiences support nearby restaurants, retailers, hotels, parking facilities, and local suppliers before and after events.

The third is induced impact, created as employees, business owners, contractors, and local vendors reinvest their earnings throughout the community.

Together, these impacts create an economic ripple effect that benefits sectors far beyond the theatre itself.¹⁶

Historic theatres also stimulate economic activity during restoration through construction employment, professional services, architecture, engineering, specialty trades, and material purchases—investments that continue producing returns long after construction is complete.

The League concludes that successful historic theatres become long-term community assets because they combine economic activity, historic preservation, tourism, and civic identity in a way that few other public investments can achieve.

Historic Downtowns Drive Economic Growth

Across the country, communities are rediscovering that investing in historic downtowns is one of the most effective ways to strengthen local economies.

When historic buildings are restored and activated, they attract people—not just to a single destination, but to the surrounding restaurants, retail stores, coffee shops, hotels, and small businesses that make downtown unique. These investments encourage private redevelopment, increase property values, support entrepreneurship, create jobs, and enhance a community's identity.

National research consistently demonstrates that historic preservation and economic development work hand in hand. Since 1980, downtown revitalization efforts documented by **Main Street America** have generated more than **\$124.7 billion in public and private investment**, created **over 188,000 net new businesses**, supported **more than 852,000 net new jobs**, and resulted in the rehabilitation of **356,000 historic buildings**. These outcomes demonstrate that thoughtful reinvestment in historic downtowns produces measurable economic benefits while preserving the places that define a community's character.

Effingham does not need to become a designated Main Street community to benefit from these same principles.

¹⁶ League of Historic American Theatres, *Historic Theatre Economic Impact Study* (2018).

The City has already invested in creating a vibrant downtown through streetscape improvements, public infrastructure, community events, business development, and strategic planning. The restoration of The Heart Theatre builds upon those investments by creating a year-round destination that increases downtown activity, supports existing businesses, attracts visitors, and reinforces downtown as the cultural and civic heart of the community.

Rather than competing with other downtown investments, The Heart Theatre complements them. It creates another reason for residents and visitors to dine downtown, shop locally, attend community events, and spend more time experiencing everything Effingham has to offer.

Ultimately, successful downtowns are not defined by individual buildings—they are defined by the experiences they create. The Heart Theatre has the opportunity to become one of those experiences: a catalyst for continued investment, stronger local businesses, increased tourism, and lasting community pride.

Historic downtown revitalization has produced measurable results across the nation.¹⁷

The Ripple Effect

Every event at The Heart Theatre has the potential to create economic activity that extends well beyond the theatre itself.

A family attending a movie may choose to have dinner downtown beforehand.

Concertgoers may browse local shops after the performance.

Visitors traveling from neighboring communities may stay overnight in local hotels.

Businesses may host employee recognition events or client receptions.

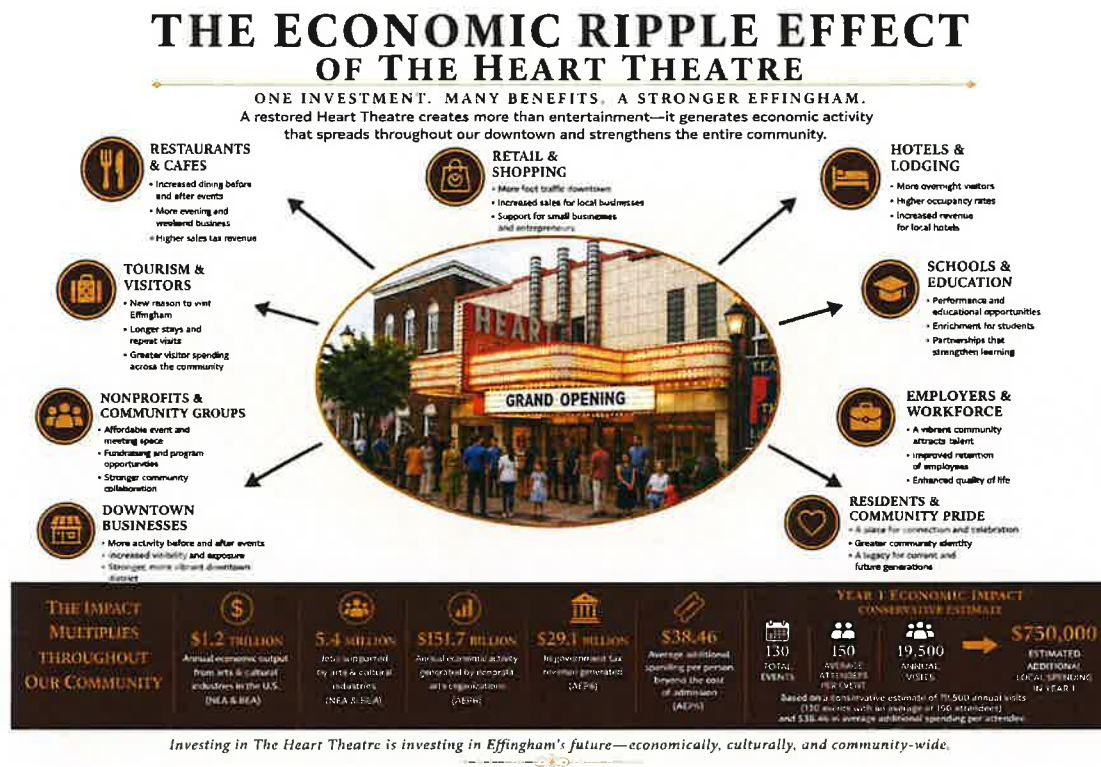
Nonprofit organizations may hold fundraising galas.

Wedding guests may book hotel rooms, dine locally, and explore downtown.

¹⁷ Main Street America, *Collective Impact Report*. <https://mainstreet.org/our-network/collective-impact>

Each of these decisions supports local businesses, creates jobs, generates tax revenue, and encourages additional private investment.

One evening at The Heart Theatre becomes an evening that benefits the entire downtown.



The Economic Opportunity for Effingham

Although no two communities are identical, the experiences of comparable historic theatres throughout the Midwest demonstrate a consistent pattern.

Restored theatres:

- Increase downtown visitation.
- Support restaurants, retailers, and hospitality businesses.
- Encourage private investment.
- Strengthen tourism.
- Improve community image.

- Preserve historic resources.
- Enhance workforce recruitment and retention.
- Expand opportunities for arts, education, and entrepreneurship.
- Create gathering places that strengthen civic life.

Effingham already possesses many of the ingredients that make these projects successful: a vibrant downtown, a regional location, strong employers, an active hospitality industry, engaged civic leadership, and a collaborative nonprofit sector.

The Heart Theatre builds upon those strengths.

Rather than creating a new destination on the edge of town, it reinforces the investments that have already been made in downtown Effingham while providing another reason for residents and visitors to spend time—and money—in the heart of the community.

An Investment That Continues Giving Back

Some investments serve a single purpose.

Others continue generating value for decades.

The Heart Theatre is envisioned as the latter.

Its restoration will preserve one of Effingham's most recognizable landmarks while creating a professionally managed, financially sustainable, multi-purpose community venue capable of serving residents and visitors for generations.

Measured in attendance alone, the theatre will be a success.

Measured in the additional meals served, hotel rooms occupied, businesses supported, jobs sustained, visitors welcomed, and memories created, its impact will be even greater.

The Heart Theatre is more than a restoration project.

It is an investment in the long-term economic vitality, cultural richness, and future prosperity of downtown Effingham.

THE HEART OF ECONOMIC IMPACT

HOW THE HEART THEATRE STRENGTHENS EFFINGHAM



Historic theatres do more than entertain—they strengthen communities by creating jobs, supporting businesses, and building a vibrant downtown.



VII. Long-Term Sustainability

Building More Than a Beautiful Building

Restoring a historic theatre is only the beginning.

The greater challenge—and the greater responsibility—is ensuring that the building remains vibrant, financially healthy, and fully utilized for generations to come.

From its earliest planning stages, The Heart Theatre has been guided by a simple principle:

A successful theatre must first be a sustainable theatre.

That philosophy has shaped every aspect of this project—from the feasibility study and architectural design to the programming model, governance structure, and long-term financial planning.

The goal has never been simply to restore a historic landmark.

The goal is to create a professionally managed, financially sustainable community asset that continues serving Effingham for decades.

Sustainability Begins Before Opening Day

Many restoration projects begin with a construction plan.

The Heart Theatre began with a business plan.

Before launching a capital campaign or seeking public investment, The Heart Theatre, Inc. commissioned a comprehensive two-phase feasibility study by **Historic Theatre Consultants**, one of the nation's leading firms specializing in historic theatre restoration and operations.

Rather than asking, "*Can the building be restored?*" the study asked the more important question:

"Can the theatre operate successfully after it is restored?"

The consultants evaluated market demand, programming opportunities, operating expenses, attendance potential, staffing requirements, and long-term financial viability.

Their recommendations became the foundation of the operating model presented in this prospectus.

A Diversified Business Model

Long-term sustainability depends upon diversification.

Rather than relying on a single revenue source, The Heart Theatre has been intentionally designed as a **multi-purpose community venue** serving a wide variety of audiences throughout the year.

Its programming will include:

- First-run and classic films
- Live concerts
- Community theatre
- Touring performances
- Educational programming
- Comedy and speakers
- School events
- Business meetings and conferences
- Private rentals

- Nonprofit fundraising events
- Weddings and celebrations
- Holiday and seasonal programming

This diversity reduces reliance on any one type of event while maximizing utilization of the facility throughout the year.

If demand shifts in one programming area, other activities continue generating revenue and community engagement.

Multiple Revenue Streams

Financial sustainability also requires diversified income.

Rather than depending primarily on donations, The Heart Theatre is designed to combine **earned revenue** with **philanthropic support**.

Major sources of earned revenue will include:

- Ticket sales
- Facility rentals
- Business events
- Private celebrations
- Concessions
- Sponsorships
- Memberships
- Merchandise
- Educational programming

These earned revenues will be complemented by:

- Individual giving
- Corporate sponsorships
- Foundation grants
- Government grants
- Annual fundraising
- Planned giving
- Endowment income

This balanced funding model reflects nationally recognized best practices for nonprofit performing arts organizations and historic theatres.

Professional Management

Successful historic theatres require professional leadership.

The Heart Theatre will be governed by an engaged volunteer Board of Directors while day-to-day operations are overseen by experienced professional staff.

This distinction is intentional.

Boards provide governance, strategic direction, fiscal oversight, and community leadership.

Professional staff provide programming, marketing, operations, partnerships, fundraising, financial management, and customer service.

Separating governance from daily operations creates accountability while allowing each group to focus on its respective responsibilities.

Long-Term Capital Stewardship

Part of professional management means preserving this landmark beyond opening day so that it benefits generations to come. The Board of Directors recognizes that responsible stewardship extends beyond construction. Every building requires ongoing investment, preventative maintenance, and thoughtful planning to protect both the facility and the community's investment.

Following restoration, The Heart Theatre will implement a comprehensive long-term capital stewardship program designed to preserve the building's condition, protect historic assets, and minimize costly emergency repairs through proactive maintenance.

The success of this project will not be measured by the day the doors reopen, but by how well The Heart Theatre is cared for 50 years from now.

Key elements of this program include:

- Annual facility assessments to identify maintenance priorities and monitor building systems
- A dedicated Capital Replacement Reserve funded through annual operating surpluses, designated fundraising, and future capital gifts. (One major donor has already made a pledge.)

- A long-range replacement schedule for major building systems, roofing, seating, theatrical lighting, sound equipment, projection technology, and other essential infrastructure.
- Preventative maintenance schedules for mechanical systems, life-safety equipment, accessibility features, and historic architectural elements.
- Periodic review and updating of capital priorities by the Board of Directors as part of the organization's annual budgeting and strategic planning process.

The organization also intends to maintain appropriate operating reserves to address unforeseen maintenance needs while protecting ongoing programming and financial stability.

By planning for the full life cycle of the facility—not simply its restoration—The Heart Theatre will ensure that today's investment continues serving the community for decades to come. Responsible stewardship of this historic landmark is not a one-time commitment, but an ongoing responsibility embraced by the Board of Directors.

Growing Responsibly

The Heart Theatre is not expected to reach full operating capacity during its first year.

Instead, programming has been intentionally

designed to grow gradually as community awareness, partnerships, volunteer capacity, and operational experience increase.

The accompanying five-year financial model reflects this measured approach.

This deliberate growth strategy allows staffing, programming, earned revenue, and community partnerships to expand together rather than placing unnecessary financial pressure on the organization during its early years.



Partnerships Multiply Success

The Heart Theatre is intended to operate as a community resource—not as an isolated organization.

Its long-term success depends upon strong partnerships with:

- Schools and higher education
- Local businesses
- Arts organizations
- Community nonprofits
- Tourism organizations
- Civic groups
- Local governments
- Regional presenters
- Corporate sponsors
- Volunteers

By serving as a shared venue for many organizations, the theatre becomes woven into the fabric of community life while increasing both utilization and financial stability.

Responsible Financial Stewardship

The Heart Theatre, Inc. recognizes that long-term stewardship extends beyond annual operations.

The organization is committed to:

- Maintaining balanced annual operating budgets.
- Building appropriate operating reserves.
- Establishing designated capital replacement reserves for major building systems and equipment.
- Conducting regular financial reporting and independent oversight.
- Following sound nonprofit governance and internal controls.
- Making thoughtful decisions that prioritize long-term sustainability over short-term growth.

This commitment reflects the Board's understanding that preserving a historic theatre requires ongoing stewardship as well as restoration.

Designed for Flexibility

One of The Heart Theatre's greatest strengths is its flexibility.

Unlike traditional performing arts venues that depend on a single programming model, The Heart Theatre has been intentionally designed to accommodate a wide variety of community uses.

The same venue may host:

- A family movie on Friday evening.
- A corporate meeting Monday morning.
- A nonprofit gala Saturday night.
- A school performance Tuesday afternoon.
- A wedding reception the following weekend.

This adaptability increases utilization while reducing financial risk and ensuring that the facility remains relevant to changing community needs.

A Legacy of Stewardship

Historic theatres have endured for generations because each generation chose to care for them.

The Heart Theatre is no different.

The Board of Directors views itself not simply as restoring a building, but as accepting stewardship of one of Effingham's most recognizable historic landmarks.

Every decision—from the capital campaign to the programming model, governance structure, and financial planning—has been guided by a single objective:

To ensure that future generations inherit a theatre that is not only beautifully restored, but financially strong, professionally managed, and deeply woven into the life of the community.

That is the true measure of sustainability.

VIII. Five-Year Financial Model

A Business Plan Built for Long-Term Success

The financial model for The Heart Theatre reflects the same philosophy that has guided every aspect of this project:

Grow deliberately. Operate responsibly. Build sustainability over time.

Rather than assuming immediate full-capacity operations, the model anticipates a measured expansion of programming, earned revenue, staffing, and community partnerships over the first five years of operation.

This approach reflects recommendations developed through the independent feasibility study completed by Historic Theatre Consultants while incorporating conservative assumptions regarding attendance, event growth, staffing, fundraising, and operating expenses.

The result is a financial model that emphasizes long-term stability rather than short-term growth.

Operating Philosophy

The financial model has been built around several guiding principles.

- Maintain balanced annual operating budgets.
- Diversify revenue sources to reduce financial risk.
- Increase earned income as programming expands.
- Build contributed revenue through annual philanthropy and sponsorships.
- Establish operating and capital reserves.
- Grow staffing only as programming and revenue justify expansion.
- Preserve flexibility to respond to changing community needs.

These principles are intended to position The Heart Theatre as a financially resilient community asset capable of adapting as opportunities evolve.

Planned Growth

The first five years are designed as a period of intentional growth rather than immediate maximum utilization.

Programming expands gradually while operational capacity, volunteer engagement, marketing, partnerships, and earned revenue mature together.

Over the first five years:

- Operating budget increases from **\$400,000 to \$500,000** (25% growth).
- Annual programming expands from **130 events to approximately 244 events** (88% growth).
- Average monthly programming increases from approximately **11 events per month** to more than **20 events per month**.

This measured approach allows the organization to increase utilization while maintaining financial discipline.

Diversified Revenue Strategy

The Heart Theatre has been intentionally designed to avoid dependence upon any single revenue source.

Instead, financial sustainability will be achieved through a balanced combination of earned income and contributed support.

Earned Revenue

Earned revenue is expected to become the largest component of annual operating income over time and will include:

- Movie admissions
- Concert and live performance ticket sales
- Theatre productions
- Facility rentals
- Business meetings

- Private celebrations
- Concessions
- Merchandise
- Sponsorship recognition
- Educational programming

The diversity of programming reduces reliance on any one event category while creating year-round activity.

Contributed Revenue

As with virtually every successful nonprofit historic theatre in the United States, philanthropic support remains an important component of the operating model.

Annual contributed revenue will include:

- Individual donations
- Annual memberships
- Corporate sponsorships
- Foundation grants
- Government grants
- Special events
- Planned giving
- Endowment distributions (as established)

This balanced approach allows philanthropy to strengthen—not replace—earned revenue.

Conservative Attendance Assumptions

The financial model intentionally uses conservative attendance projections.

Rather than assuming sold-out performances or aggressive market growth, projections are based upon realistic expectations for a community the size of Effingham while recognizing its regional draw and diverse programming.

During the first year of operation, the theatre is projected to present approximately **130 events**, attracting an average audience of **150 attendees per event**, resulting in approximately **19,500 annual visits**.

These assumptions form the basis for revenue projections while also illustrating the broader economic impact generated throughout downtown Effingham.

Using the nationally recognized **Arts & Economic Prosperity 6** estimate (previously cited) of **\$38.46** in additional spending beyond the cost of admission, these attendance projections represent approximately **\$750,000 in additional annual spending** at nearby restaurants, retail stores, hotels, coffee shops, convenience stores, and other local businesses during the theatre's first year of operation.

This spending occurs outside the theatre itself, benefiting the broader downtown economy.

Responsible Expense Management

Operating expenses have been projected using current industry standards for nonprofit performing arts venues while recognizing the unique needs of a restored historic facility.

Major expense categories include:

- Personnel
- Programming
- Facility operations
- Utilities
- Insurance
- Marketing
- Technology
- Professional services

- Maintenance
- Administrative support

As programming expands, expenses increase gradually alongside earned revenue, allowing the organization to maintain balanced operations without outpacing available resources.

Building Financial Strength

The objective of the five-year financial model is not simply to balance annual budgets.

It is to strengthen the organization each year.

Over time, the model anticipates:

- Increased earned revenue.
- Expanded community partnerships.
- Higher facility utilization.
- Greater corporate sponsorship.
- Growth in annual giving.
- Development of operating reserves.
- Creation of capital replacement reserves.
- Reduced dependence upon startup funding.

Each year builds upon the previous one, creating a stronger and more resilient organization.

Financial Oversight

Strong financial performance requires strong governance.

The Board of Directors will oversee the organization's financial health through:

- Annual operating budgets.

- Monthly financial reporting.
- Independent financial review or audit, as appropriate.
- Board Finance Committee oversight.
- Internal financial controls.
- Multi-year forecasting.
- Capital reserve planning.
- Investment and endowment oversight as assets grow.

These practices reflect nationally recognized nonprofit governance standards and reinforce the Board's commitment to transparency and accountability.

Looking Beyond Five Years

Although this prospectus presents a five-year operating model, the vision for The Heart Theatre extends far beyond that horizon.

Historic theatres are measured in generations—not fiscal years.

The five-year financial model represents the foundation upon which future growth will occur. As programming matures, partnerships deepen, earned revenue expands, and philanthropic support grows, The Heart Theatre is expected to become an increasingly important cultural, economic, and community asset for downtown Effingham.

The financial projections presented in this prospectus demonstrate that sustainability has not been left to chance.

It has been intentionally planned.

Financial Summary at a Glance (see Appendix F)*

Metric	Year 1	Year 5
Operating Budget	\$400,000	\$500,000
Annual Events	130	244
Average Events/Month	11	20+
Estimated Annual Attendance	19,500	36,600
Revenue Strategy	Diversified	Diversified & Mature
Operating Focus	Launch	Long-Term Sustainability

Why These Numbers Matter

This budget reflects a fully operational theatre—not an aspirational projection. It is intentionally conservative, assumes measured growth, and is based on recommendations from Historic Theatre Consultants, projected programming, comparable historic theatre operations, and current market conditions. The purpose of this financial model is to demonstrate that The Heart Theatre has been planned not only for restoration, but for long-term operational sustainability.

**These budgets represent a mature, professionally managed operating model following stabilization and opening. Appendix F contains the preliminary consultant operating assumptions (also included in the Appendices) that were developed several years ago during the early feasibility planning. Those assumptions have since been expanded using additional benchmarking and programming analysis by multiple historic theatre consultants and managers.*



PROPOSED YEAR ONE OPERATING BUDGET

A balanced, diversified budget designed for sustainability, responsible stewardship, and long-term impact.

PROJECTED ANNUAL REVENUE		PROJECTED ANNUAL EXPENSES	
	YEAR 1		YEAR 1
Ticket Sales	\$131,000	Payroll & Benefits	\$170,000
Facility Rentals	\$63,000	Programming & Artist Fees	\$95,000
Grants	\$42,000	Building Operations & Occupancy	\$90,000
Sponsorships	\$37,000	Marketing & Advertising	\$20,000
Fundraising Events	\$32,000	Equipment & Maintenance	\$20,000
Concessions	\$32,000	Professional Services	\$5,000
Beverage Sales	\$32,000	Travel & Meetings	\$5,000
Memberships	\$27,000	Operating Reserve	\$30,000
Individual Donations	\$29,000		
TOTAL REVENUE	\$425,000	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$425,000



40%

PAYROLL & BENEFITS

Professional staffing is the organization's largest investment, ensuring consistent programming, operations, and community engagement.



22%

PROGRAMMING

Nearly one-quarter of the operating budget is invested directly into performances, films, educational programming, and community events.



21%

FACILITY OPERATIONS

Historic buildings require responsible stewardship. This budget includes utilities, insurance, maintenance, and ongoing building operations to protect the community's investment.

WHY THESE NUMBERS MATTER

This budget reflects a fully operational theatre—not an aspirational projection. It is intentionally conservative, assumes measured growth, and is based on recommendations from Historic Theatre Consultants, projected programming, comparable historic theatre operations, and current market conditions.

The purpose of this financial model is to demonstrate that The Heart Theatre has been planned not only for restoration, but for long-term operational sustainability.



STAFFING NARRATIVE

As programming grows from approximately 130 annual events to over 240 events by Year Five, staffing is expected to grow through a combination of additional part-time staff, contracted event personnel, volunteers, and eventual full-time positions as earned revenue supports expansion.



The financial model presented in this prospectus is supported by a comprehensive operating model that includes detailed revenue assumptions, staffing plans, programming projections, and category-level expense budgets. Those schedules are available to the City upon request and may be reviewed in greater detail during future discussions.

IX. Managing Risk Through Good Governance

Planning for Success Means Planning for Challenges

Every successful long-term community investment requires thoughtful planning—not only for opportunities, but also for challenges.

The Board of Directors recognizes that restoring and operating a historic theatre involves financial, operational, organizational, and facility-related responsibilities. From the earliest stages of planning, the organization has intentionally identified potential risks and incorporated strategies to reduce them.

Rather than viewing risk as something to avoid, The Heart Theatre, Inc. views thoughtful planning, strong governance, and responsible stewardship as essential components of long-term success.

This proactive approach reflects the Board's commitment to protecting the organization's mission, financial resources, historic asset, and the confidence of donors, community partners, and future investors.

Financial Responsibility & Property Valuation

Long-term financial sustainability begins with conservative planning. Prior to the property's donation to The Heart Theatre, Inc. in December 2024, an independent commercial appraisal established a value of \$150,000. As the project advances, updated commercial appraisals will be obtained as needed to support construction planning, financing, grant applications, and major funding commitments.

The Heart Theatre's operating model has been intentionally designed to minimize financial risk through:

- Diversified revenue sources.
- Conservative attendance assumptions.
- Gradual program expansion.
- Balanced annual operating budgets.
- Multiple earned-income opportunities.
- Ongoing fundraising and sponsorship development.

- Development of operating and capital reserves.

Rather than depending on a single funding source, the organization's financial model combines earned revenue, philanthropy, grants, sponsorships, memberships, and facility rentals to create a more resilient operating structure.

Governance & Accountability

Heart Theatre, Inc. is governed by an independent volunteer Board of Directors committed to transparency, accountability, and sound nonprofit governance. In fact, The Heart nonprofit has Heart Theatre, Inc. has earned Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition awarded by the nation's leading nonprofit information organization. The designation is earned by organizations that publicly share detailed information about their governance, finances, strategic goals, and measurable results. It demonstrates the Board's commitment to accountability, responsible stewardship, and transparency with donors, grantmakers, government partners, and the community.



The Board has adopted governance practices that include:

- Regular Board meetings.
- Finance Committee oversight.
- Conflict-of-interest policies.
- Annual budget approval.
- Monthly financial reporting.
- Internal financial controls.
- Independent financial review or audit, as appropriate.
- Strategic planning and annual goal setting.

These practices help ensure that organizational decisions remain aligned with the mission while protecting the long-term interests of the community and its stakeholders.

Facility Stewardship

Historic buildings require intentional stewardship.

The Heart Theatre's long-term operating strategy includes ongoing maintenance planning, preventative maintenance schedules, and capital replacement planning for major building systems.

Rather than addressing maintenance only when problems arise, the organization intends to establish dedicated reserves for future capital needs, ensuring that today's restoration remains protected for future generations.

Operational Flexibility

Community needs evolve over time.

One of The Heart Theatre's greatest strengths is its flexibility.

Because the facility has been intentionally designed as a multi-purpose venue, programming can adapt to changing market demand without requiring significant structural changes.

Should attendance trends shift or new community opportunities emerge, programming can be adjusted by expanding or reducing specific event categories while maintaining overall financial stability.

This flexibility significantly reduces operational risk compared to facilities dependent upon a single type of programming.

Insurance & Legal Protections

Heart Theatre, Inc. will maintain appropriate insurance coverage consistent with nonprofit best practices, including protection for:

- Property and building assets.
- General liability.
- Directors and Officers (D&O) liability.
- Workers' compensation.
- Special events, as appropriate.
- Cybersecurity and data protection, as appropriate.

Legal counsel, accounting professionals, and specialized consultants will continue to support the organization as needed throughout restoration and ongoing operations.

Community Partnerships Reduce Risk

The Heart Theatre has never been envisioned as a standalone organization.

Its long-term success depends upon partnerships with local governments, businesses, schools, nonprofit organizations, tourism partners, volunteers, and community leaders.

These partnerships diversify programming, expand audiences, increase earned revenue opportunities, and strengthen community ownership of the project.

When many organizations benefit from a facility, its long-term sustainability becomes significantly stronger.

Measuring Success

Responsible stewardship also requires measuring outcomes.

The Board intends to evaluate organizational performance using measurable indicators such as:

- Annual attendance.
- Number and diversity of events.
- Earned revenue growth.
- Community partnerships.
- Volunteer engagement.
- Financial performance.
- Downtown economic impact.
- Customer satisfaction.
- Building utilization.
- Organizational reserves.

“The Heart is a landmark in Effingham...
thanks so much for the possibility of
giving it new life!”

These metrics will help guide strategic decisions while demonstrating accountability to donors, partners, and the community.

A Commitment to Transparency

As a nonprofit organization, Heart Theatre, Inc. is committed to operating with openness and accountability.

The organization will continue to provide regular financial reporting, annual budgeting, strategic planning updates, and appropriate public disclosure consistent with nonprofit governance standards.

This commitment extends to all funding partners, including private donors, grantmakers, corporate sponsors, and public entities.

Protecting a Community Investment

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents more than the preservation of a historic building.

It represents the preservation of a community landmark entrusted to future generations.

The Board of Directors accepts that responsibility with humility and purpose.

Every decision—from governance and financial planning to programming and facility management—has been guided by one central objective:

To ensure that The Heart Theatre remains financially sound, professionally managed, carefully maintained, and deeply connected to the community it serves.

That commitment to responsible stewardship is the foundation upon which the future of The Heart Theatre will be built.

The Heart Theatre is committed to being a collaborative partner with the City of Effingham. The organization will continue to seek diverse funding sources, cultivate private philanthropy, pursue grants, and operate with fiscal responsibility so that the theatre contributes to the community's vitality while remaining accountable for its long-term sustainability.

“Hope we can get this off the ground! I think it
would be an amazing space for live music,
theatre, conferences, and more!”

X. Public Return on Investment—What the City Receives

More Than a Restored Building

Communities make public investments because they believe those investments will create lasting public value.

Roads improve mobility.

Parks improve quality of life.

Libraries expand educational opportunity.

Public safety protects residents.

Similarly, investments in community cultural infrastructure strengthen local economies, preserve community identity, and create places where residents and visitors gather for generations.

The Heart Theatre represents this type of investment.

Its value extends well beyond the restored building itself.

It creates benefits that continue long after construction is complete.

A Downtown Destination

The Heart Theatre will bring people to downtown Effingham throughout the year.

Rather than serving a single purpose, the theatre will host movies, concerts, live theatre, educational programming, business meetings, nonprofit events, private celebrations, community gatherings, and seasonal events.

Each visit creates another opportunity for residents and visitors to experience downtown restaurants, shops, coffee houses, hotels, and other local businesses.

The result is increased activity not only inside The Heart Theatre, but throughout the surrounding downtown district.

Economic Growth

National research consistently demonstrates that arts and cultural destinations generate measurable economic activity.

Based upon the programming model presented in this prospectus, The Heart Theatre is projected to host approximately **130 events** during its first full year of operation, attracting an estimated **19,500 annual visits**.

Using the nationally recognized **Arts & Economic Prosperity 6** estimate of **\$38.46** in additional spending per attendee beyond admission, these visits represent approximately **\$750,000 in additional annual spending** throughout the local economy.

This spending benefits restaurants, retailers, hotels, convenience stores, and other businesses while generating additional local tax revenue and supporting employment.

As programming expands over time, these economic benefits are expected to grow accordingly.

Preservation of an Irreplaceable Landmark

The Heart Theatre is one of Effingham's most recognizable historic buildings.

Its restoration preserves an architectural landmark that has served generations of residents while ensuring that future generations inherit an important part of the community's history.

Historic preservation is not simply about protecting old buildings.

It is about protecting the stories, memories, and identity that define a community.

A Community Gathering Place

The Heart Theatre has been intentionally designed to serve the entire community.

It will provide affordable access to arts, entertainment, education, civic engagement, and community celebrations.

Potential users include:

- Families
- Students
- Older adults
- Local businesses
- Civic organizations
- Nonprofit organizations
- Schools
- Performing artists
- Visitors
- Regional organizations

Unlike many private developments, the benefits of The Heart Theatre extend broadly across the community.

Educational Opportunities

The theatre will provide opportunities for educational programming that extend beyond traditional entertainment.

Potential partnerships include:

- School performances
- Student matinees
- Film education
- Performing arts workshops
- Guest speakers
- Workforce and leadership programs
- Community lectures
- Youth theatre

- Local history programming

These activities strengthen educational experiences while creating new opportunities for lifelong learning.

Tourism & Community Image

Communities increasingly compete to attract visitors, employers, workforce talent, and investment.

Quality-of-life amenities play an important role in those decisions.

A restored Heart Theatre strengthens Effingham's identity as a vibrant regional destination by complementing existing attractions, hospitality businesses, community events, and downtown investments.

The theatre becomes another reason for visitors to choose Effingham—and another reason for residents to remain proud of the place they call home.

A Public-Private Partnership

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents a true partnership.

Private philanthropy.

Corporate sponsorships.

Foundation grants.

Volunteer leadership.

Community organizations.

Business partnerships.

Potential public investment.

Each plays a role.

The City would not be asked to restore this theatre alone.

Rather, any future public participation would leverage significant private investment while demonstrating confidence in a project designed to benefit the entire community.

An Investment That Continues Giving Back

Unlike many capital projects whose impact is realized only once, The Heart Theatre creates value repeatedly.

Every performance.

Every movie.

Every meeting.

Every wedding.

Every fundraiser.

Every school program.

Every community celebration.

Each event creates new economic activity, strengthens downtown businesses, preserves an important historic landmark, and provides opportunities for residents and visitors to gather together.

The return on investment is not measured only in dollars.

It is measured in the vitality of downtown.

The strength of local businesses.

The preservation of community history.

The experiences shared by families.

The opportunities created for future generations.

Those benefits continue long after construction has been completed.

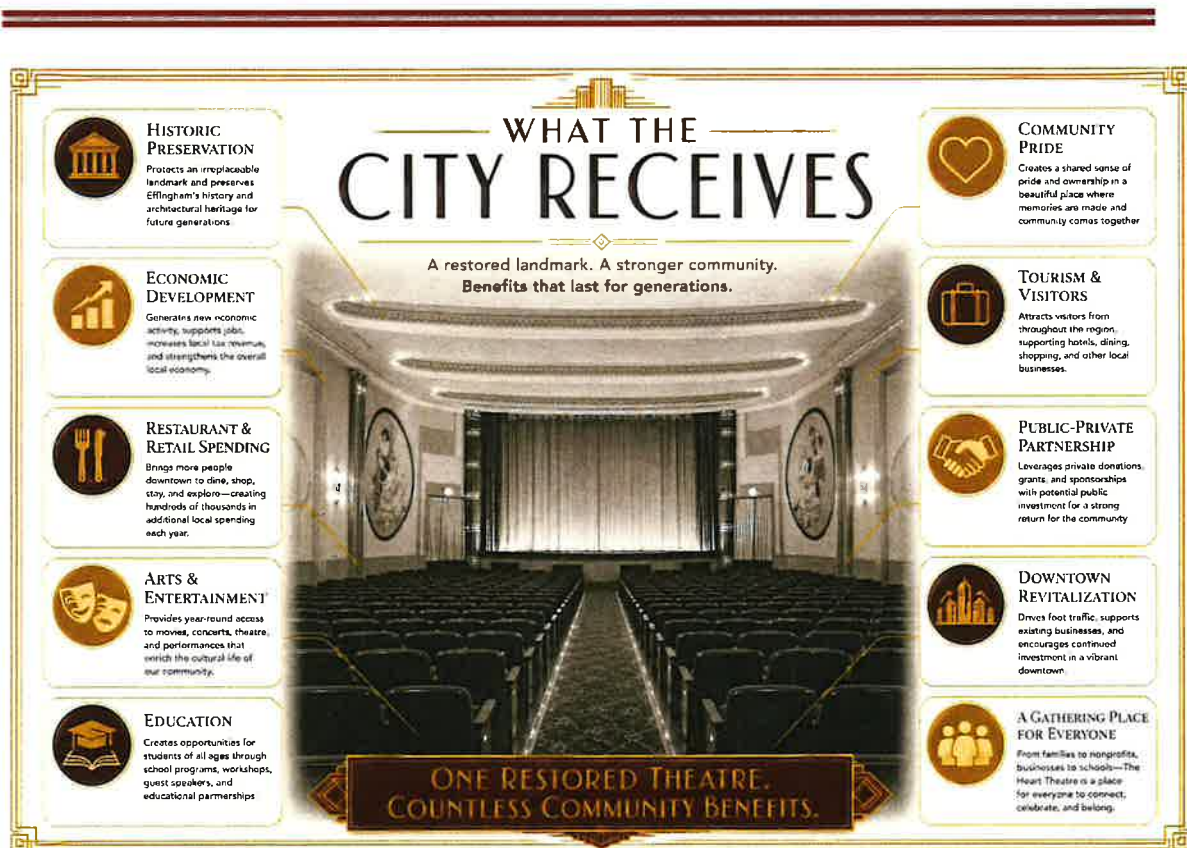
Looking Toward the Future

This prospectus is intended to begin a conversation—not conclude one.

The Heart Theatre Board of Directors appreciates the City of Effingham's willingness to learn more about the project and to consider the role this restored landmark can play in the community's future.

As planning progresses, the Board looks forward to continuing an open dialogue with City leadership, community partners, local businesses, and residents.

Together, we have the opportunity to preserve an important part of Effingham's past while creating an investment in its future.



XI. The Case for Support

Restoring More Than a Building

"There are some buildings that simply occupy space. Then there are places that occupy our hearts."

For generations, The Heart Theatre was where Effingham came together.

It was where first dates began.

Where children saw their first movie on the big screen.

Where families escaped into stories on Friday nights.

Where neighbors greeted one another beneath the glow of a neon marquee.

Where laughter echoed.

Where memories were made.

For decades, The Heart was not simply a theatre.

It was part of what made Effingham feel like home.

Today, the building still stands.

Its lights have been dark for years.

Its seats are missing and empty.

Its stage is quiet.

Yet even in silence, The Heart continues to tell a story.

Ask longtime residents about The Heart, and their faces change.

They remember the excitement of opening night.

The smell of popcorn.

The anticipation as the lights dimmed.

Walking beneath the marquee.

Seeing friends downtown.

They rarely begin by describing the building.

They begin by describing a memory.

That is because The Heart has never been merely bricks and mortar.

It has always been about people.

A Community Worth Investing In

Effingham has always been a community willing to invest in itself.

It has invested in schools.

Parks.

Public safety.

Downtown improvements.

Economic development.

Healthcare.

Recreation.

Those investments have strengthened the community for generations.

Now another opportunity stands before us.

Not simply to restore a building.

But to restore one of the community's most recognizable gathering places.

The Heart Theatre represents an investment in downtown vitality, local business, tourism, education, arts, historic preservation, and quality of life.

It is a project that reflects confidence—not only in our past—but in our future.

The Opportunity Before Us

Historic theatres across America have demonstrated what is possible.

Communities remarkably similar to Effingham have transformed vacant buildings into vibrant destinations that now host hundreds of events each year.

They have attracted visitors.

Supported downtown restaurants.

Created jobs.

Strengthened local businesses.

Inspired young artists.

Provided gathering places for civic organizations.

Preserved irreplaceable landmarks.

Most importantly, they have reminded their communities that history still has value.

Effingham now has the opportunity to write its own success story.

A Place for Everyone

When The Heart reopens, it will belong to everyone.

Families attending holiday movies.

Students taking the stage for the first time.

Community theatre productions.

Live concerts.

Business meetings.

School performances.

Film festivals.

Fundraising galas.

Dance recitals.

Comedy shows.

Private celebrations.

Community conversations.

Veterans programs.

Children's events.

Senior programs.

Inclusive arts programming and sensory-friendly events for individuals with intellectual, developmental, physical, and other disabilities and their families.

Volunteer recognition ceremonies.

Graduations.

Weddings.

The possibilities are limited only by the imagination of the community it serves.

Every generation deserves a place where memories are created.

The Heart can once again become that place.

Public Investment as a Catalyst

A City investment leverages: state grants, federal grants, foundations, and private philanthropy. It is not a replacement to private fundraising but a complementing partnership.

An Investment That Multiplies

Every dollar invested in restoring The Heart Theatre creates value that extends far beyond construction.

Construction workers restore a historic landmark.

Visitors dine in local restaurants.

Families shop downtown.

Hotels welcome overnight guests.

Businesses host meetings.

Artists perform.

Students learn.

Volunteers engage.

Nonprofits raise funds.

Property owners gain confidence.

Downtown becomes more vibrant.

One investment produces thousands of experiences.

Those experiences create memories.

Those memories become traditions.

Those traditions strengthen a community.

The Momentum Is Already Building

The vision for The Heart is no longer simply an idea.

The building has already been donated to Heart Theatre, Inc., debt free.

Professional feasibility studies have been completed.

The organization has earned Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of nonprofit transparency awarded nationally.

Historic preservation planning has begun.

Architectural concepts have been developed.

Community surveys have been completed.

Business leaders, educators, residents, nonprofit organizations, and civic leaders have expressed their support.

Letters of endorsement continue to grow.

Volunteers continue to step forward.

Momentum is no longer a question.

The opportunity is now.

Why Now?

Historic buildings rarely receive a second chance.

Every year a landmark sits vacant, restoration becomes more difficult and more expensive.

At the same time, communities throughout America are rediscovering the economic and social value of historic downtown destinations.

Effingham is uniquely positioned to join that movement.

The Heart Theatre already has the history.

It already has the location.

It already has community support.

What remains is the collective commitment to bring it back to life.

Our Invitation

Every successful community project begins with people who choose to believe that tomorrow can be better than today.

That is the opportunity before us.

Some will invest financially.

Some will volunteer.

Some will advocate.

Some will attend performances.

Some will simply bring their families downtown once the lights come back on.

Every role matters.

Every contribution strengthens the future.

Because restoring The Heart has never been about saving an old building.

It has always been about creating new memories.

The Next Chapter Begins Here

Nearly eighty-five years ago, community leaders envisioned a beautiful Art Deco theatre that would become the cultural heart of downtown Effingham.

They built it for future generations.

Today, we have the privilege—and the responsibility—to do the same.

One day, a child will walk beneath the glowing marquee for the first time.

A young performer will step onto the stage with nervous excitement.

A couple will celebrate an anniversary at a concert.

A family will laugh together during a holiday movie.

A visitor will discover downtown Effingham for the very first time.

Those moments have not happened yet.

But they can.

The story of The Heart Theatre is not ending.

It is simply waiting for its next chapter to begin.

Section XII. Year One Programming Plan

A Theatre Alive Throughout the Year

The Heart Theatre has been intentionally designed as a true community gathering place—not simply a venue for occasional performances. Its programming model emphasizes diversity, accessibility, and year-round activity, ensuring the theatre serves residents, visitors, schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and community groups throughout every season.

The Year One schedule represents a conservative operating plan designed to establish The Heart as a vibrant destination while allowing programming to grow steadily over time. With approximately 130 events planned during the first full year of operation, the theatre is expected to average more than two events each week, creating consistent opportunities for entertainment, education, civic engagement, and economic activity in downtown Effingham.

Year One Programming Overview

Programming Category	Annual Events
Paid Movies	24
Free Community Movies	12
Concerts	12
Live Theatre Productions	4
Holiday Programs & Special Events	8
Nonprofit & Community Celebrations	12
Weddings	12
Private & Business Rentals	24
School Performances & Educational Programs	10
Community Classes, Workshops & Special Programs	12
Total Annual Events	130

Programming Throughout the Year

Programming will be intentionally distributed across all four seasons to maintain steady activity, encourage repeat visitation, and support downtown businesses throughout the year.

Winter

- Holiday performances and celebrations
- Family movie series
- School performances
- Business meetings and conferences
- Community workshops

Spring

- Live concerts
- Theatre productions
- Educational matinees
- Weddings
- Community celebrations
- Chamber and civic events

Summer

- Free family movies
- Children's programming
- Concerts
- Downtown festivals
- Arts workshops
- Private rentals

Fall

- Performing arts season
- School partnerships
- Community theatre
- Halloween and harvest programming
- Business events
- Holiday kickoff celebrations

A Theatre for Everyone

Programming will reflect the interests and needs of the entire community and may include:

- First-run and classic movies
- Live music and concerts
- Community theatre productions
- Touring performers
- School performances and educational matinees
- Children's programming
- Arts classes and creative workshops
- Guest speakers and lecture series
- Business meetings and conferences
- Nonprofit fundraising events
- Weddings and private celebrations
- Holiday traditions and seasonal festivals
- Veterans and civic recognition ceremonies

- Local history programs
- Cultural celebrations
- Inclusive performances, sensory-friendly experiences, and community events welcoming individuals with intellectual, developmental, physical, and other disabilities and their families

More Than Entertainment

Each event creates value beyond the theatre itself. Families dine at local restaurants before a show. Visitors shop downtown. Businesses host meetings. Nonprofit organizations raise funds. Students discover the performing arts. Residents gather to celebrate milestones and traditions.

Programming is therefore much more than an operating strategy—it is an economic development strategy that brings consistent activity, spending, and energy to downtown Effingham.

The idea of being able to rent it out to businesses or organizations would be great because there seems to always be a need for more large venue places.

XIII. An Ecosystem of Community Partnerships

Strong Communities Are Built Through Collaboration

No single organization can create a thriving community on its own.

The most successful community development projects are built through partnerships—bringing together local government, businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, civic groups, volunteers, and residents around a shared vision for the future.

From its earliest days, Heart Theatre, Inc. has embraced this philosophy.

The restoration of The Heart Theatre has never been envisioned as a stand-alone project. Rather, it has been developed as a community resource designed to complement, strengthen, and create opportunities for existing organizations throughout Effingham.

Collaboration is not simply part of our strategy.

It is part of our organizational culture.

Working Alongside the City of Effingham

The City of Effingham has already played an important role in helping shape the future of The Heart Theatre.

During the planning process, City leadership partnered with Heart Theatre, Inc. in the completion of a comprehensive professional feasibility study conducted by Historic Theatre Consultants and funded in part by Landmarks Illinois. That work helped evaluate the market, operational model, programming opportunities, and long-term sustainability of the project while providing valuable insight into how the theatre can best serve the community. The City also hosted one of the initial events, standing-room only Town Hall meeting, as part of the information gathering and sharing stage. Board and City leadership have continued to meet on a regular basis this spring and summer.

The Heart Theatre Board greatly values the City's willingness to engage in thoughtful dialogue throughout this planning process and looks forward to continuing that collaborative relationship as the project evolves.

Creating Wide-ranging Opportunities

One of the organization's earliest formal partnerships demonstrates the type of community impact envisioned for The Heart Theatre.

Heart Theatre, Inc., **Community Support Systems (CSS)**, and the **Effingham Public Library** have jointly developed a 2026 grant proposal to establish an innovative theatre-based employment readiness program for teenagers and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities called HeartWorks.

The proposed initiative would use theatre and improvisational techniques to teach transferable job skills while providing meaningful opportunities for community participation.

The partnership reflects a shared belief that arts and culture should be accessible to everyone and that community spaces are strongest when they intentionally welcome individuals of all abilities.

Bringing the Community Together

For the past three years, Heart Theatre, Inc. has worked alongside numerous community partners to present **free Summer Outdoor Movie Nights**, bringing hundreds of residents together in downtown Effingham.

These events have been made possible through partnerships with:

- The City of Effingham
- Effingham County
- Downtown Effingham Business Group (DEBG)
- Effingham County Chamber of Commerce
- Mid America Motorworks

These evenings have demonstrated both the community's enthusiasm for shared cultural, family-friendly experiences and the value of collaborative programming that supports downtown activity while remaining accessible to all residents.

The success of these events provides a strong foundation for year-round programming once The Heart Theatre reopens.

Supporting the Downtown Business Community

A vibrant downtown depends upon organizations that work together rather than independently.

Heart Theatre, Inc. is proud to be an active member of the:

- Effingham County Chamber of Commerce
- Downtown Effingham Business Group (DEBG)
- League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT)

Participation in these organizations strengthens communication, encourages collaboration, and provides opportunities to share ideas, best practices, and resources with business leaders and theatre professionals throughout the region and across the country.

Membership in the **League of Historic American Theatres** also provides access to nationally recognized expertise in theatre operations, preservation, programming, governance, and financial sustainability. Board leadership has attended many of their workshops and conferences for multiple years.

Strengthening the Arts Community

Effingham is fortunate to be home to a variety of organizations that enrich the community through arts, entertainment, education, and cultural programming.

Heart Theatre, Inc. believes these organizations are strongest when they work together.

As The Heart Theatre moves forward, the Board remains committed to maintaining open communication with fellow arts and cultural organizations while exploring opportunities for collaboration that strengthen the overall cultural landscape of Effingham.

These opportunities may include shared programming, coordinated calendars, visiting artists, educational initiatives, community festivals, marketing partnerships, and other cooperative efforts that increase opportunities for residents while supporting the success of multiple organizations.

The goal is not duplication.

The goal is a stronger arts ecosystem that benefits the entire community.

Looking Forward

As planning continues, Heart Theatre, Inc. intends to expand partnerships with:

- Effingham Unit 40 Schools as well as Altamont, Beecher City, Dieterich, and Teutopolis
- St. Anthony High School and other parochial, private and homeschool communities
- Lake Land College
- Local businesses and employers
- Tourism organizations
- Civic and service clubs (in fact The Heart has provided presentations to business and civic groups such as the local Rotary clubs and 100+ Women Who Care of Effingham County)
- Regional arts organizations
- Community foundations
- Veterans organizations
- Youth-serving organizations
- Senior-serving organizations
- Disability service providers
- Regional presenters and performing artists

Each new partnership increases programming opportunities, expands audiences, strengthens financial sustainability, and deepens the theatre's connection to the community it serves.

A Community Resource

The Heart Theatre was originally built to serve the people of Effingham.

That purpose remains unchanged.

Its future success will not be measured solely by ticket sales or attendance, but by the strength of the relationships it builds throughout the community.

Whether hosting a school performance, a nonprofit fundraiser, a business conference, a community celebration, an inclusive arts program, or a regional concert, The Heart Theatre is intended to be a place where organizations work together for the benefit of the entire community.

Because the strongest communities are not built by individual organizations.

They are built by partnerships.

XIV. Capital Campaign

A Community Investment in the Future

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents one of the most significant community investment opportunities in downtown Effingham in generations.

The goal of the Capital Campaign is not simply to restore a historic building, but to create a financially sustainable, professionally operated community asset that will serve residents and visitors for decades to come.

The campaign has been intentionally structured to combine private philanthropy, corporate investment, foundation support, historic preservation funding, grants, and community participation into a comprehensive financing strategy.

No single funding source is expected to accomplish this vision alone.

Rather, the campaign reflects the belief that transformational community projects are most successful when they are supported by a broad coalition of individuals, businesses, foundations, government partners, and civic leaders working toward a shared goal.

Campaign Goal

The Heart Theatre Capital Campaign seeks to raise approximately **\$5 million** to complete the restoration, equip the facility, establish financial stability for long-term operations, and create reserves that will protect the investment for future generations.

The campaign is anticipated to include:

- Restoration and rehabilitation of the historic building
- Construction and interior improvements
- Theatre equipment and technology
- Accessibility improvements
- Professional fees and project management
- Opening programming and marketing

- Working capital
- Capital reserve and endowment funding

This comprehensive approach reflects the Board's commitment to planning not only for opening day, but for decades of successful operation thereafter.

Estimated Capital Investment

Project Component	Estimated Investment
Historic Restoration & Construction	\$3,000,000
Interior Improvements & Theatre Build-Out	\$750,000
Theatre Equipment & Technology	\$450,000
Accessibility, Building Systems & Infrastructure	\$300,000
Professional Services, Design & Permitting	\$200,000
Opening Programming & Launch	\$100,000
Initial Working Capital & Operating Reserve	\$100,000
Capital Reserve / Endowment	\$100,000
Total Campaign Goal	Approximately \$5,000,000

Final project costs will be refined as architectural design and construction documents are completed.

A Phased Approach

The restoration of The Heart Theatre is planned as a multi-phase project designed to manage costs responsibly while maintaining flexibility as funding is secured.

Phase One will focus primarily on exterior stabilization, preservation, life safety improvements, and protecting the historic structure.

Phase Two will complete the interior restoration, theatre systems, public spaces, accessibility improvements, and operational readiness necessary for reopening.

This phased approach allows fundraising, design, permitting, and construction to progress strategically while protecting the long-term integrity of the project.

Government Funding Strategy

The Heart Theatre Board of Directors recognizes that successful community restoration projects are typically funded through a combination of public and private investment. Public participation often serves as an important catalyst, strengthening applications for competitive grants and demonstrating broad community support.

Accordingly, the organization intends to pursue appropriate local, state, and federal funding opportunities throughout the capital campaign and restoration process.

Potential funding sources may include, but are not limited to:

- Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Illinois Historic Preservation grant programs
- USDA Rural Development
- Federal Historic Preservation Fund
- Transportation Enhancement and community development programs
- Congressionally Directed Spending opportunities, when available and appropriate

Funding opportunities continually evolve as new programs are created and existing programs change. The Board will actively monitor available opportunities and pursue grant applications and public funding partnerships that align with the project's mission and eligibility.

Public Partnerships

The restoration of The Heart Theatre is envisioned as a collaborative community effort. In addition to private philanthropy, foundations, and corporate investment, the Board intends to explore partnership opportunities with governmental and community organizations whose missions align with downtown revitalization, historic preservation, tourism, workforce development, and quality of life.

Potential public and community partners may include:

- The City of Effingham
- Effingham County
- Visit Effingham
- Regional and statewide foundations
- State and federal agencies
- Educational institutions and economic development organizations

While discussions with many organizations remain preliminary, the Board believes that successful community projects are built through collaboration and looks forward to continuing conversations as planning and fundraising progress.

Campaign Progress

The Heart Theatre capital campaign has been intentionally structured to begin with planning, due diligence, relationship building, and project development before launching a broad public fundraising effort.

Since acquiring the building, more than \$230,000 in private investment, donated professional services, planning, stabilization efforts, and organizational development has already been committed to preparing the project for restoration. During this period, the Board has assembled a diverse group of professional advisors, completed feasibility and market studies, developed conceptual architectural plans, established governance and financial systems, and cultivated relationships with prospective philanthropic partners.

The Board has also engaged community organizations, business leaders, local officials, and residents through presentations, surveys, and outreach efforts that have generated strong interest and numerous letters of support.

As architectural planning advances, the organization will begin formal cultivation and solicitation of major gifts from individuals, corporations, foundations, and public funding partners. Because significant philanthropic investments are typically secured after project scope, budgets, and architectural plans are finalized, the Board anticipates that fundraising efforts will continue to accelerate as each milestone is achieved.

The Board views the completion of this Business Plan and Community Investment Prospectus as an important step in that process, providing prospective partners with a clear vision, realistic financial framework, and long-term strategy for restoring one of Effingham's most recognizable historic landmarks.

Building Momentum

The campaign has already established a strong foundation.

Significant progress has been achieved before the public launch, including:

- Donation of the historic Heart Theatre building to Heart Theatre, Inc.
- More than **\$230,000** invested in acquisition, stabilization, planning, and project development.
- Completion of a professional market and feasibility study.
- Architectural concept development.
- Formation of an independent Board of Directors.
- Receipt of **Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency**, the highest level of nonprofit transparency recognized nationally.
- Development of a comprehensive business and operating plan.
- Community surveys and market research.
- Growing support from business leaders, elected officials, residents, and nonprofit organizations.
- Letters of support from community partners throughout Effingham.

These accomplishments demonstrate that the project has moved well beyond the conceptual stage and is positioned for the next phase of fundraising and implementation.

A Diversified Funding Strategy

As indicated above, the Capital Campaign has been designed to pursue multiple funding sources simultaneously.

Potential funding sources include:

Private Philanthropy

Major gifts from individuals, families, and community leaders who believe in preserving The Heart Theatre for future generations.

Corporate Investment

Support from local and regional businesses through sponsorships, naming opportunities, and campaign leadership gifts.

Foundation Grants

Private foundations supporting arts and culture, historic preservation, community development, accessibility, education, and economic revitalization.

Government Funding

Competitive local, state, and federal grant opportunities that support historic preservation, tourism, downtown revitalization, economic development, infrastructure, accessibility, and cultural investment.

Historic Preservation Programs

Funding specifically intended to preserve historically significant buildings and cultural landmarks.

Community Giving

Broad participation from residents through annual giving, memorial gifts, tribute gifts, and community fundraising initiatives.

Together, these funding sources create a balanced financing strategy that reduces reliance on any single contributor while building broad community ownership of the project.

Public Investment as a Catalyst

Across the nation, successful historic theatre restoration projects frequently combine private philanthropy with strategic public investment.

Public participation often serves as a catalyst—encouraging additional private donations, strengthening grant competitiveness, and demonstrating community confidence in the project.

Heart Theatre, Inc. believes that partnerships among the private, nonprofit, and public sectors create the strongest long-term outcomes for community revitalization projects.

The Board is committed to continuing these conversations thoughtfully and collaboratively as planning progresses.

Stewardship of Every Dollar

The Board of Directors recognizes that every campaign contribution represents an investment in the future of Effingham.

Accordingly, campaign funds will be managed with the same commitment to transparency, accountability, and fiscal responsibility that has guided the organization from its inception.

This commitment includes:

- Independent Board oversight.
- Competitive professional services.
- Careful project budgeting.
- Regular financial reporting.
- Responsible project management.

- Ongoing communication with funding partners.
- Long-term planning for operations and maintenance.

The goal is not simply to complete construction, but to ensure that every investment produces lasting value for the community.

A Once-in-a-Generation Opportunity

Communities rarely have the opportunity to restore a landmark as meaningful as The Heart Theatre.

Projects of this significance require vision, leadership, patience, and broad community support.

They also create lasting legacies.

The restoration of The Heart Theatre is more than a capital campaign.

It is an investment in downtown Effingham.

An investment in economic development.

An investment in arts and education.

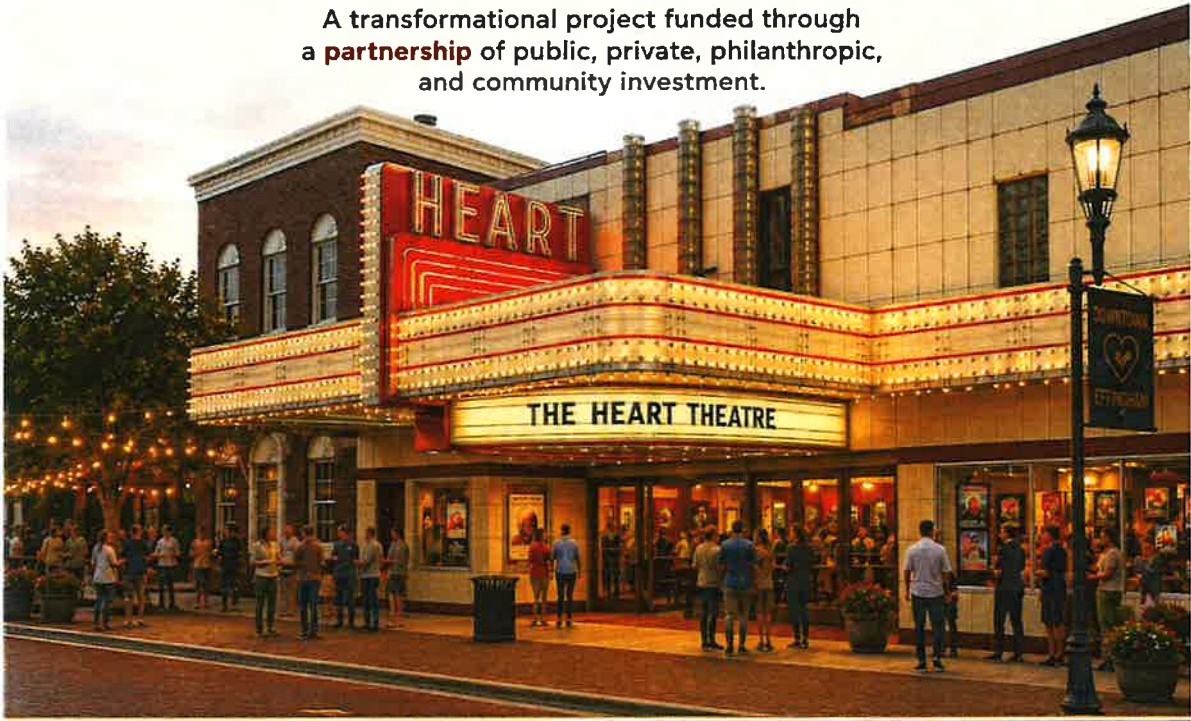
An investment in community identity.

An investment in future generations.

Together, those investments will ensure that the lights of The Heart Theatre once again shine brightly as a symbol of community pride and possibility.

BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

A transformational project funded through
a **partnership** of public, private, philanthropic,
and community investment.



PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY

Generous individuals
and families investing in
our shared future.



CORPORATE INVESTMENT

Local and regional
businesses strengthening
our community and
economy.



GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Strategic public
partnerships that
catalyze growth and
revitalization.



FOUNDATION & PRESERVATION GRANTS

Grants and preservation
funding that protect our
history and inspire our
future.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Hundreds of residents
giving, caring, and
believing in the future
of Effingham.

TOGETHER, WE WILL RESTORE A LANDMARK.
REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN. INSPIRE GENERATIONS.
THE HEART OF EFFINGHAM IS OURS TO BUILD.

Proposed Project Timeline

2026

Foundation & Quiet Phase

Summer–Fall 2026

- Complete City and community presentations
- Continue leadership gift cultivation
- Submit major grant applications
- Expand corporate and foundation outreach
- Secure additional architectural and engineering planning

Goal

Raise approximately **60% of campaign goal** through leadership gifts, grants, and major donors before any public campaign.

2027

Public Capital Campaign Launch

Spring 2027

Public Campaign Announcement

- Community kickoff event
- Naming opportunities released
- Individual donor campaign
- Business campaign
- Community fundraising events
- Continue grant applications

Goal

Reach **100% of Phase I funding commitments**

Late 2027–2028

Phase I Construction

Exterior Restoration

Priority investments include:

- ✓ Building stabilization
- ✓ Roof and envelope
- ✓ Exterior masonry
- ✓ Windows and storefront
- ✓ Marquee restoration
- ✓ Exterior lighting
- ✓ Site improvements

Result

The Heart once again becomes an active and recognizable downtown landmark while interior fundraising continues.

2028–2029

Phase II Campaign Completion

Continue raising funds for:

- Interior restoration
- Theatre seating
- Stage equipment
- Sound & lighting
- Accessibility improvements
- Furnishings

- Technology

Staff recruitment begins.

Programming partnerships finalized.

Volunteer recruitment expands.

2029–2030

Phase II Construction

Interior Restoration

Complete:

- Auditorium
 - Stage
 - Lobby
 - Dressing rooms
 - Offices
 - Restrooms
 - Mechanical systems
 - ADA improvements
 - Technology installation
 - FF&E
-

2030

Grand Opening

 Community Preview Events

 First Film Festival

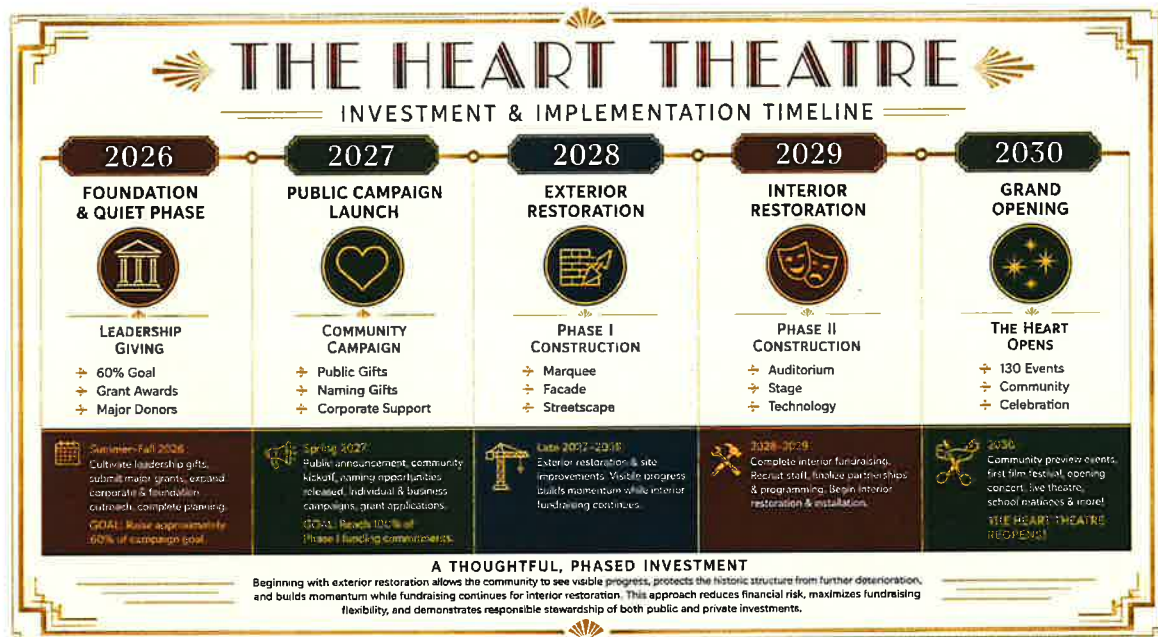
🎵 Opening Concert

🎭 First Live Theatre Production

🎓 School Matinees

❤️ Community Celebration

The Heart Theatre reopens as a year-round community performing arts center serving residents, visitors, schools, nonprofits, businesses, and regional audiences.



A Thoughtful, Phased Investment

The Heart Theatre restoration is intentionally designed as a phased project. Beginning with exterior restoration allows the community to see visible progress, protects the historic structure from further deterioration, and builds momentum while fundraising continues for interior restoration. This approach reduces financial risk, maximizes fundraising flexibility, and demonstrates responsible stewardship of both public and private investments.

XV. Why the City?

Investing in the Future of Effingham

Communities are remembered not only for the roads they build or the services they provide, but for the places that bring people together.

Those places become the backdrop for first dates and family traditions, graduations and celebrations, holiday memories and hometown pride. They attract visitors, support local businesses, inspire private investment, and help define a community's identity for generations.

The Heart Theatre has the potential to become one of those places once again.

This prospectus is not presented simply because Heart Theatre, Inc. owns a historic building. It is presented because restoring The Heart Theatre advances many of the same long-term priorities the City of Effingham has already identified for its future.

A Shared Vision

Throughout the planning process, one theme has consistently emerged.

The future of The Heart Theatre and the future of downtown Effingham are closely connected.

A restored Heart Theatre would contribute to:

- A stronger downtown economy
- Increased tourism
- Expanded arts and cultural opportunities
- Educational programming
- Family-friendly entertainment
- Business recruitment and workforce quality of life
- Historic preservation
- Community identity and pride

These are not separate goals.

They are shared community goals.

Building Upon Existing Investments

Over the past several decades, the City of Effingham has made significant investments in downtown infrastructure, streetscapes, public spaces, tourism, economic development, and community amenities.

Those investments have strengthened downtown and created an environment where additional private investment can flourish.

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents another opportunity to build upon that momentum.

Rather than replacing previous investments, it complements them—creating an anchor destination capable of increasing activity throughout the downtown district while supporting surrounding businesses, restaurants, retailers, hotels, and community organizations.

Every successful downtown includes destinations that give people a reason to visit.

The Heart Theatre can become one of those destinations.

A Public-Private Partnership

Across the country, many of the most successful historic theatre restoration projects have been accomplished through partnerships among nonprofit organizations, private donors, businesses, foundations, and local governments.

Each partner contributes according to its strengths.

Private philanthropy provides leadership gifts.

Businesses invest in economic vitality.

Foundations support community impact.

Government helps create public infrastructure that benefits everyone.

Together, those investments make projects possible that no single organization could accomplish alone.

Heart Theatre, Inc. believes this collaborative approach represents the strongest and most responsible path forward.

More Than a Theatre

The Heart Theatre should not be viewed solely as an entertainment venue.

It is community infrastructure.

Just as libraries, parks, trails, museums, sports facilities, and public gathering spaces contribute to quality of life, so too do performing arts venues.

A professionally operated community theatre creates opportunities that extend well beyond performances.

It supports education.

It creates economic activity.

It strengthens downtown.

It provides gathering space for nonprofits.

It attracts visitors.

It encourages private investment.

It becomes part of the community's identity.

Leveraging Local Investment

Perhaps one of the greatest values of local public participation is its ability to leverage significantly larger investments from other sources.

Many state and national grant programs, private foundations, and major philanthropic donors look for evidence that a project has meaningful local support before making significant investments.

When a community demonstrates confidence in its own future, others are far more likely to invest alongside it.

Local investment frequently becomes the catalyst that unlocks substantially greater private and philanthropic funding.

In this way, a public investment has the potential to generate returns that extend far beyond its original contribution.

A Lasting Return

Unlike many public investments, historic preservation creates lasting community assets that benefit generations.

A restored Heart Theatre will continue serving the community long after construction is complete.

Families will attend performances.

Students will experience educational programming.

Businesses will host events.

Nonprofits will celebrate milestones.

Visitors will discover downtown Effingham.

Restaurants will welcome additional customers.

Future generations will inherit a community landmark preserved because today's leaders chose to invest in its future.

That return cannot be measured solely in dollars.

It is measured in decades.

Why Now?

Opportunities like this rarely present themselves twice.

The building has already been preserved.

Professional feasibility studies have been completed.

A nonprofit organization has been established.

The property has been donated debt-free.

Community support continues to grow.

A comprehensive business plan has been developed.

Experienced leadership and technical advisors are in place.

The project has advanced beyond vision.

It is now positioned for implementation.

The question is no longer whether The Heart Theatre could become a catalyst for downtown Effingham.

The question is whether this generation chooses to seize that opportunity.

An Invitation

Heart Theatre, Inc. is not asking the City to restore a theatre on behalf of a nonprofit organization.

We are inviting the City to partner in a once-in-a-generation investment in Effingham's future.

One that strengthens downtown.

Supports local businesses.

Expands educational opportunities.

Enhances quality of life.

Preserves an irreplaceable landmark.

Creates economic opportunity.

And leaves a legacy that future generations will proudly inherit.

Because communities are ultimately remembered not for what they maintained—
but for what they had the vision to build.

The Opportunity Before Us

Every generation inherits places that define its community.

Some generations allow those places to quietly disappear.

Others choose to preserve them—not simply because they are historic, but because they continue to create value for generations yet to come.

The Heart Theatre represents one of those moments.

This project has never been about restoring an old building.

It is about restoring possibility.

It is about creating a place where a child sees their first movie on the big screen.

Where a local student performs before a hometown audience.

Where families gather for holiday traditions.

Where nonprofit organizations celebrate milestones.

Where entrepreneurs host events.

Where visitors discover downtown Effingham.

Where local businesses welcome new customers.

Where neighbors become friends.

Where memories are made.

Communities thrive when they invest in places that bring people together.

The Heart Theatre has done that before.

With thoughtful planning, responsible stewardship, and broad community partnership, it can do so again.

Years from now, few people will remember who cast each vote, who chaired each committee, or who attended each meeting.

But they will remember whether this generation chose to invest in its future.

One day, children who have not yet been born will walk beneath the lights of The Heart Theatre.

They will attend concerts and school performances.

They will celebrate graduations.

They will laugh during comedies.

They will sit beside grandparents who remember when the theatre first opened—or when the community chose to bring it back to life.

They will simply assume it has always been there.

And perhaps that is the greatest measure of success.

Not that we restored a building.

But that we gave future generations a place they never have to imagine living without.

The opportunity before us is not simply to preserve the past.

It is to create the future.

**"The Heart Theatre belongs to Heart Theatre, Inc.
Its future belongs to the entire community."**



**Note that this is a conceptual rendering only of the etched glass wall (located where the former concession stand sat at top of auditorium) to be used for Auditorium Naming Rights.*

Appendix A

APPENDIX A

Board of Directors & Technical Advisors

Leadership Rooted in Community. Guided by National Expertise.

The Heart Theatre, Inc. is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that combines expertise in nonprofit leadership, finance, law, education, engineering, construction, historic preservation, technology, marketing, theatre, and community engagement. Together with nationally recognized technical advisors, the Board is committed to restoring The Heart Theatre as a financially sustainable, professionally operated community asset for future generations. ([The Heart Theater](#))

Board of Directors

Amy Van Bergen, President

Amy is a lifelong nonprofit executive with more than 30 years of leadership experience in organizational development, fundraising, strategic planning, governance, and community engagement. Born in Effingham and now a Florida resident, she purchased The Heart Theatre in 2022, led the feasibility and market studies, secured its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, and donated the building to The Heart Theatre, Inc. in 2024. She now serves as Board President and campaign leader, bringing decades of experience guiding major nonprofit organizations and capital initiatives.

Brett Ward, Vice President

Brett is a technology and operations professional currently serving with **USA Roofing**. He brings extensive experience in information technology, project coordination, and organizational leadership. Brett has previously served on the boards of the Effingham Child Development Center and the EHS Band Boosters and is passionate about expanding arts opportunities while helping restore one of downtown Effingham's most recognizable landmarks.

Nicole Wear-Maloney, Secretary

Nicole has devoted more than three decades to education with Effingham Unit 40 Schools, serving students as a kindergarten teacher, interventionist, and physical education teacher. Her long-standing commitment to children, families, and community engagement provides valuable educational insight as The Heart develops future school and youth programming.

Larry Johnson, CPA, Treasurer

Larry is a Certified Public Accountant and Tax Manager with Sikich. His background includes nonprofit finance, charitable gift planning, donor stewardship, board governance, and financial oversight. He also serves as Executive Director of the Illinois National Guard and Militia Historical Society.

Board Members

The Board also includes experienced community leaders representing a wide range of professional disciplines, including:

- Chase Cooley — Patent examiner, attorney, engineer, and construction enthusiast
- Carrie Rodman — Event management, hospitality, marketing, and community leadership
- Kenneth Thies — Theatre technology specialist, digital projection, and information technology
- Laura Polarek Didier — Library outreach, literacy, programming, and community engagement
- Monique Hortenstine — Theatre producer, director, educator, and inclusive arts advocate
- Sara Ruding — Human resources and nonprofit governance
- Marlyn Koester — Marketing, branding, finance, and communications

Together, these volunteers contribute expertise in business, education, technology, theatre operations, fundraising, marketing, event management, historic preservation, finance, law, and community development.

Technical Advisors

The Heart Theatre Board has intentionally surrounded itself with experienced professionals from across the country who have successfully planned, restored, managed, and operated performing arts venues.

Herb Stratford, Historic Theatre Consultant

A nationally respected leader in historic theatre restoration and one of the principals of Historic Theatre Consultants. Herb has advised communities across North America on feasibility studies, restoration planning, operational models, capital campaigns, and sustainable theatre redevelopment.

Historic Theatre Consultants is one of North America's leading consulting firms specializing exclusively in historic theatre feasibility studies, restoration planning, operational analysis, architectural programming, and business planning. The firm's professional feasibility study for The Heart Theatre confirmed the long-term viability of restoring the theatre as a multi-purpose performing arts venue.

Norman Easterbrook, Retired Executive Director, RiverCenter for the Performing Arts (Columbus, Georgia)

Norman Easterbrook is a nationally respected performing arts executive with decades of experience leading one of the Southeast's premier regional performing arts centers. He previously operated several smaller historic venues. His expertise includes venue operations, programming, finance, community partnerships, and organizational sustainability.

Alauna Friskics, Founder, Garden Theatre (Winter Garden, Florida)

Alauna Friskics founded and led the nationally recognized restoration and revitalization of the historic Garden Theatre, transforming it into one of Florida's premier downtown

cultural destinations. Her experience demonstrates how historic theatres can serve as catalysts for economic development and community revitalization.

Richard Jorn, Executive Director, Paramount Theatre (Anderson, Indiana)

Richard Jorn has spent decades leading numerous performing arts centers in the Midwest, including one of Indiana's most successful and iconic historic theatres. His expertise includes budgeting, capital campaigns, governance, programming, operations, financial sustainability, and community engagement.

Professional Team

While The Heart Theatre is governed by a local volunteer Board of Directors, the restoration is being planned and executed with guidance from experienced professionals who collectively represent decades of expertise in historic theatre restoration, architecture, fundraising, financing, and nonprofit project development. This collaborative team helps ensure that decisions are grounded in national best practices while remaining responsive to the unique needs of Effingham and the surrounding region. Their work reflects the planning-first philosophy advocated by the League of Historic American Theatres and its restoration guidance.

Charles "Chuck" Pell, AIA, Principal Architect – CJP Architects | Springfield, Illinois

Chuck Pell is the principal architect leading planning and conceptual design for The Heart Theatre restoration. His firm specializes in thoughtful community architecture that balances historic preservation with modern functionality. Chuck has guided numerous public and nonprofit projects throughout Illinois and is helping ensure that The Heart's restoration respects its Art Moderne heritage while creating a flexible, accessible venue capable of serving the community for decades to come.

Julie Wright, Capital Campaign & Fundraising Consultant | Orlando, Florida

Julie Wright is an experienced fundraising strategist and nonprofit consultant specializing in major gifts, capital campaigns, donor stewardship, grant development, and philanthropic planning. She provides strategic counsel on campaign structure, donor engagement, and long-term fundraising sustainability to support successful completion of The Heart Theatre Capital Campaign.

Jonathan Beck, Historic Tax Credit Consultant | Wisconsin

Jonathan Beck provides expertise in the complex field of federal and state historic tax credit financing. His experience assists communities and nonprofit organizations in evaluating tax credit opportunities, project eligibility, financing structures, and preservation compliance requirements that can significantly strengthen the financial viability of historic rehabilitation projects. The Heart is not currently considering HTC's as a way to diversify the funds for restoration.

An Integrated Professional Approach

The Heart Theatre's professional team works collaboratively with the Board of Directors, engineers, contractors, preservation specialists, fundraising professionals, and public partners to ensure that every phase of the project—from planning through construction and eventual operations—is guided by recognized expertise and sound decision-making.

This multidisciplinary approach reflects nationally recognized best practices for successful historic theatre restoration, emphasizing comprehensive planning, experienced professional guidance, diversified funding strategies, and long-term operational sustainability.

Additional Advisors

As planning progresses, the Board continues to consult with architects, engineers, preservation specialists, theatrical production professionals, and faculty from Illinois colleges and universities with expertise in theatre arts, technical theatre, arts administration, and performing arts education.

These advisors provide specialized guidance in:

- Historic preservation
- Theatre operations
- Architectural restoration
- Stage technology

- Performing arts programming
 - Capital campaign strategy
 - Accessibility
 - Education partnerships
 - Financial sustainability
-

Governance & Accountability

The Heart Theatre, Inc. is recognized with **Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency**—the highest level of nonprofit transparency awarded by the nation's leading nonprofit information organization. This distinction reflects the organization's commitment to strong governance, measurable impact, financial accountability, and public trust.

Appendix B



May 28, 2026

Effingham City Council
City of Effingham
201 E. Jefferson Avenue
Effingham, IL 62401

Dear Mayor and Members of Effingham City Council:

As the President and CEO of the League of Historic American Theatres, it is my pleasure to write a letter of support for The Heart Theatre project in downtown Effingham, Illinois. For communities the size of Effingham, projects like The Heart Theatre can play an especially important role in energizing downtown activity, increasing overnight visitation, and creating a stronger sense of place for both residents and visitors. Historic theatres often become signature destinations that distinguish a community regionally while preserving important architectural and cultural heritage.

The League of Historic American Theatres is a non-profit, membership organization representing over 400 of North America's most treasured venues including all of the major Broadway houses in NYC. The League recognizes historic theatres as unique showcases for human creativity, arts and culture and envisions them as vital assets in livable communities throughout North America. Research and experience show that historic theatres are irreplaceable social, economic, historic, and cultural resources for their communities. As iconic, creative places of public assembly, they build community loyalty, reinforce community identity and heritage, stimulate downtown revitalization, promote pride of place and anchor creative economies.

As a member of the League since 2019, The Heart Theatre takes a leadership role in adopting best practices for the preservation, restoration, and ongoing operation of historic theatres. Staff from The Heart attend conferences as well as participate in industry research with peers from coast to coast. We believe The Heart Theatre has the potential to become exactly the kind of community asset for Effingham that we have seen revitalize so many other communities. The leadership behind the effort at The Heart has demonstrated vision, persistence, and a clear understanding of how historic preservation and modern community use can work together to create lasting impact.

We respectfully encourage the City of Effingham to provide meaningful economic support and partnership for The Heart Theatre project. Public investment in projects of this nature is frequently the critical ingredient that allows historic theatres to move from vision to reality, ultimately generating returns that benefit the entire community for decades to come.

I can say without hesitation that an investment in The Heart will have a lasting impact within both the historic preservation community and the arts community. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the importance of this project.

Sincerely,


Ken A. Stein
President & CEO

July 1, 2026

City of Effingham
Effingham City Council
Effingham, Illinois

RE: Letter of Support for The Heart Theatre Restoration and Revitalization Project

Dear Mayor and Members of the Effingham City Council,

It is my pleasure to offer my strong support for The Heart Theatre restoration and revitalization project and the funding request being presented by The Heart Theatre, Inc.

My name is **Herb Stratford**, and I am the founder of Historic Theatre Consultants. For more than three decades, I have worked with communities across the United States on the restoration, reuse, planning, and operational development of historic theatres. During that time, I have assisted **hundreds of historic and performing arts venues** with feasibility studies, market assessments, business planning, fundraising strategies, operational planning, and restoration projects. My work has included communities of all sizes—from rural towns to major metropolitan areas—seeking to preserve important historic assets while creating sustainable cultural and economic engines for their communities.

I have had the opportunity to work directly with The Heart Theatre through the completion of **two phases of planning and feasibility analysis**, including market research, community engagement, programming assessment, facility planning, and operational review. Through this process, I have gained a thorough understanding of both the building itself and the unique opportunities it presents for Effingham.

Based on my professional experience, I believe The Heart Theatre represents one of the most promising historic theatre redevelopment opportunities I have encountered in a community of this size. The building occupies a highly visible location in downtown Effingham, possesses significant historic character, and has the potential to become a year-round gathering place that enhances quality of life, supports local businesses, attracts visitors, and strengthens community identity.

Importantly, I believe the organization has approached this project in a thoughtful and responsible manner. Successful historic theatre projects require much more than passion for preservation—they require realistic planning, financial discipline, community engagement, and a long-term operational strategy. Throughout our work together, I have found **Amy Van Bergen** to be an experienced and capable nonprofit leader who understands these realities and is taking the appropriate steps necessary to position the project for long-term success.

Rather than rushing forward, the organization has invested in professional planning, feasibility analysis, community outreach, governance development, fundraising strategy, and operational forecasting before beginning construction. This deliberate approach significantly increases the likelihood that the restored theatre will be both financially sustainable and operationally successful.

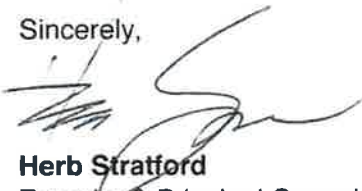
Historic theatres often serve as catalysts for downtown revitalization. Across the country, I have seen restored theatres generate increased foot traffic, support local restaurants and retailers, attract visitors, create volunteer opportunities, provide educational programming, and foster civic pride. The Heart Theatre has the potential to produce similar benefits for Effingham while preserving an important piece of the community's architectural heritage.

Public-private partnerships are frequently essential to the success of projects like this. Municipal investment often serves as the catalyst that encourages private philanthropy, grant funding, and additional community support. A commitment from the City of Effingham would demonstrate confidence in the project and help leverage significantly greater investment from other sources.

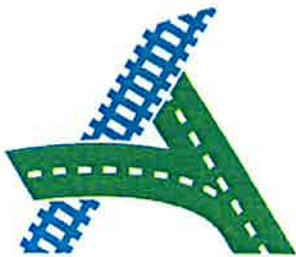
For these reasons, I strongly encourage the City of Effingham to support The Heart Theatre's restoration and revitalization efforts. I believe this project represents a meaningful investment in the cultural, economic, and historic future of your community.

Thank you for your consideration and for your commitment to preserving and enhancing the quality of life in Effingham.

Sincerely,



Herb Stratford
Founder & Principal Consultant
Historic Theatre Consultants



**Effingham Regional
Growth Alliance**
903 N. Keller Drive
Effingham, IL 62401
Office: (217) 342-4214
Fax: (217) 342-4228

cyockey@groweffinghamcountyil.com
www.groweffinghamcountyil.com

Effingham City Council
City of Effingham
201 E. Jefferson Avenue
Effingham, IL 62401

Re: Support for The Heart Theatre Project

Dear Respectable Members of the Effingham City Council,

The Effingham Regional Growth Alliance is pleased to support The Heart Theatre project in Downtown Effingham.

The restoration of The Heart Theatre will preserve an important historic downtown landmark while strengthening the vibrancy and attractiveness of our Downtown. By restoring a historic downtown property and creating a venue for entertainment, community events, educational programming, and private gatherings, the project will enhance the attractiveness of Downtown Effingham for both residents and visitors.

Restoration of The Heart Theatre will result in increased foot traffic, visitor spending, and activity for surrounding businesses. The proposed venue has the potential to strengthen Effingham's tourism, hospitality, retail, entertainment, and food & drink sectors while creating additional opportunities for community engagement and attracting visitors from across the region.

The organization behind The Heart Theatre continues to demonstrate their commitment to the community through initiatives such as an annual free downtown movie night and active participation in local events. These efforts have helped create positive experiences for residents while supporting the vibrancy of our downtown district.

Thank you for your consideration and support of The Heart Theatre project. The Alliance views this investment as an opportunity to preserve an important historic asset in our downtown while creating a destination that contributes to the long-term economic and community development goals of the City of Effingham.

Sincerely,

Courtney Yockey
President & CEO



903 N. Keller Dr. • PO Box 643 • Effingham, IL 62401

June 8, 2026

Effingham City Council
City of Effingham
201 E. Jefferson Ave.
Effingham, IL 62401

Dear Mayor and Members of the Effingham City Council,

On behalf of the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and staff, I am writing to express our support for The Heart Theatre project and the positive impact we believe it can have on our community.

The Heart Theatre has been a Chamber member since October 2022 and has consistently demonstrated a commitment to community engagement and downtown collaboration. Through its annual free downtown movie night programming, as well as its ongoing support of local organizations and Downtown Effingham Business Group events, The Heart Theatre has already shown a dedication to enhancing the quality of life in our community.

As an organization that advocates for a strong local economy and vibrant business climate, we recognize the value of projects that bring people together, attract visitors, and create activity in our downtown. Across the country, restored historic theatres have served as catalysts for revitalization by supporting nearby restaurants, retailers, lodging properties, and other local businesses while also providing valuable space for arts, entertainment, education, and community events.

The Heart Theatre represents an opportunity to preserve an important piece of Effingham's history while creating a destination that can contribute to economic development, tourism, workforce attraction, and community pride. We believe investments in projects like this help strengthen the overall vitality of our community and make Effingham an even better place to live, work, and visit.

We appreciate the vision and dedication that have gone into advancing this project and respectfully encourage the City of Effingham to continue exploring partnership opportunities and support for The Heart Theatre as a long-term investment in our community's future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katie Koester", written over a horizontal line.

Katie Koester
President & CEO
Effingham County Chamber of Commerce

Steve Miller
City of Effingham
201 E. Jefferson Ave
Effingham, IL 62401

11 June 2026

Dear Steve:

I love the Heart Theatre.

As a third generation Effingham resident, it is an institution and an icon in my life.

As a past member of the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce board, the City plan commission, the City zoning board of appeals, the Effingham County Museum Association, the Noon Rotary board... and especially as the Effingham mayor... it was consistently reinforced to me that the Heart Theatre represents the sophistication and distinction sought by every small town in the Midwest. But rarely attained.

As a banker who has had the good fortune and ability to live and work in two other Midwest towns in two very diverse states... the Heart Theatre is an ideal example of whether a community is fully civilized and possessing a progressive posture. Whether a community has the ability and means to maintain cherished icons that represented success and vibrancy to multiple generations inside and outside the community.

Finally, as an active member of the **Downtown Effingham Business Group**, I join my colleagues in expressing our strong support for The Heart Theatre project and encourage the City of Effingham to continue pursuing meaningful partnership and investment in this important downtown initiative.

We believe the restoration and activation of The Heart Theatre as a multiuse venue would provide significant long-term benefits for downtown Effingham through increased visitor activity, expanded entertainment options, enhanced tourism potential, and additional support for surrounding restaurants, retailers, and small businesses.

Historic downtown venues like The Heart Theatre often become important anchors for economic development, placemaking, and community pride. It is in this vein that we respectfully encourage the City of Effingham to continue exploring opportunities to support and partner with The Heart Theatre project as an investment in the future of downtown Effingham.

Jeff Bloemker
Market President
First National Bank of Waterloo
217-343-8779



June 1, 2026

Effingham City Council
City of Effingham
201 E. Jefferson Avenue
Effingham, IL 62401

Dear Mayor and Members of the Effingham City Council,

On behalf of Midland States Bank, I am pleased to express support for The Heart Theatre project in downtown Effingham and to encourage continued exploration of public partnership opportunities related to this initiative.

Strong communities depend on continued investment in projects that support economic vitality, quality of life, and downtown activity. Historic restoration projects that successfully combine preservation, entertainment, tourism, and community engagement often serve as important catalysts for long-term economic development and increased private-sector confidence.

The proposed restoration and activation of The Heart Theatre as a multiuse community venue has the potential to contribute positively to downtown Effingham through increased visitor traffic, expanded event activity, enhanced placemaking, and support for surrounding restaurants, retailers, hospitality businesses, and other local enterprises.

In many communities, projects like these help create stronger downtown momentum by encouraging additional investment, supporting tourism and entertainment activity, and strengthening community identity. Amenities that enhance quality of life and community engagement are also increasingly important in workforce recruitment and retention efforts for regional employers.

We also appreciate that The Heart Theatre organization has already demonstrated active community involvement through free downtown programming, participation in local events, and collaboration with downtown organizations and businesses.

As Effingham continues to grow and evolve as a regional destination and business center, investments in projects that strengthen downtown vibrancy and community connectivity can provide meaningful long-term benefit.

We respectfully encourage the City of Effingham to continue exploring ways to support and partner with The Heart Theatre project as part of the broader vision for the future vitality of downtown Effingham.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mel Stock", written over a light blue circular stamp.

Mel Stock
Market President
Midland States Bank
110 S. 5th Street
Effingham, IL 62401

EFFINGHAM COUNTY BOARD

County Building • 101 North Fourth Street, Suite 301

Effingham, IL 62401

(217) 342-4990 • Fax (217) 342-8525

06/04/2026

To the Effingham City Council, City Administrator Steve Miller, and Community Stakeholders:

I am writing in support of The Heart Theatre restoration and revitalization project and its request for partnership support from the City of Effingham.

As Chairman of the Effingham County Board, I recognize the importance of investments that strengthen our communities, enhance quality of life, and contribute to long-term economic vitality. I believe the restoration of The Heart Theatre presents an opportunity to do all three.

Historic theaters have long served as important gathering places within their communities. Beyond preserving a notable piece of local history, a restored Heart Theatre has the potential to become a destination that brings residents and visitors into downtown Effingham for entertainment, community events, and cultural experiences. Increased activity in the downtown area can benefit local businesses, restaurants, and other community assets while contributing to the continued growth and vitality of our city.

The project also aligns with broader efforts to enhance Effingham as a place where people want to live, work, visit, and invest. As tourism and recreational opportunities continue to grow throughout our area, attractions such as The Heart Theatre can help create a more vibrant and welcoming community experience for both residents and visitors.

Perhaps most importantly, The Heart Theatre has the potential to provide a place where people come together. Communities are strengthened by spaces that encourage connection, create shared experiences, and foster local pride. A revitalized theater can serve as a venue for entertainment, celebrations, educational opportunities, and community events for generations to come.

While many important projects compete for public resources and attention, I believe The Heart Theatre represents a meaningful opportunity to invest in both the cultural and economic future of our community. For that reason, I support efforts to explore a collaborative partnership that will help move this project forward.

Thank you for your consideration and your continued commitment to the future of Effingham.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joshua P. Douthit', with a large, stylized loop at the beginning.

Joshua P. Douthit
Chairman, Effingham County Board

June 2026

To the Effingham City Council and Community Leaders:

I am proud to offer my enthusiastic support for The Heart Theatre restoration project and the vision to transform this historic landmark into a vibrant center for arts, education, innovation, and community engagement.

Having spent more than three decades as an educator in Effingham Unit 40, including serving as an Instructor of Creativity and Innovation, I have witnessed firsthand the importance of providing spaces where people can learn, create, collaborate, and share ideas. Communities thrive when they invest not only in infrastructure and economic development, but also in places that inspire imagination and bring people together.

The Heart Theatre represents a unique opportunity to do exactly that.

While preserving an important piece of Effingham's history, this project also creates possibilities for the future. A restored Heart Theatre can serve as a gathering place for students, entrepreneurs, artists, educators, civic organizations, and community members. It can host performances, films, educational programs, technology-focused presentations, speaker series, student showcases, and community conversations that enrich the quality of life for residents of all ages.

Throughout my career, I have worked to help young people develop creativity, leadership, problem-solving skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset. Those same values are reflected in the vision for the Heart Theatre. The project is not simply about restoring a building—it is about creating a community asset that encourages innovation, lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and civic engagement.

As communities across the country compete to attract and retain talented individuals, families, and businesses, quality-of-life investments become increasingly important. A thriving downtown, supported by cultural and educational destinations such as the Heart Theatre, helps create the kind of environment where people want to live, work, visit, and invest.

The Heart Theatre Board has demonstrated a thoughtful and community-centered approach to this project, and I am encouraged by their commitment to preserving the building's historic significance while ensuring its long-term sustainability and public benefit.

I strongly encourage the City of Effingham and community stakeholders to support this effort. The restoration of the Heart Theatre is an investment not only in our past, but in the future creativity, vitality, and economic strength of our community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joseph Fatheree

Innovation Specialist, Oak Ridge Schools

CEO, No Barriers Project

Former Instructor of Creativity and Innovation

Effingham Community Unit School District #40



Letter of Support for The Heart Theatre Project

June 23, 2026

Effingham City Council
201 E. Jefferson Avenue
Effingham, IL 62401

Dear Mayor Mike Schutzbach and Members of the Effingham City Council,

As Director of the Effingham Public Library, I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic support for The Heart Theatre and its request for City partnership and support as it works to preserve and revitalize one of Effingham's most recognizable historic landmarks.

The Effingham Public Library has had the privilege of working alongside The Heart Theatre leadership team since 2022. During that time, we have witnessed firsthand the organization's dedication, professionalism, and commitment to creating a community-centered project that will benefit residents of all ages.

Over the past several years, the Library has been the location for numerous Heart Theatre planning meetings, community focus groups, donor discussions, and stakeholder gatherings. These meetings have allowed community members to share ideas, provide input, and help shape a vision for the future of the theatre that reflects the needs and aspirations of Effingham residents.

In addition, Library staff have worked closely with Heart Theatre volunteers and leadership in researching local history and accessing archival materials related to the theatre's past. We have been impressed by their commitment to honoring the building's historical significance while thoughtfully planning for its future use. Most recently, we were pleased to assist with research and resources supporting the well-attended public presentation on the history of the Heart Theatre held at the Effingham County Courthouse in March 2026. The strong community interest demonstrated at that event reinforced what many of us already know—that the Heart Theatre holds a special place in the story and identity of Effingham.

We are also excited about future opportunities for collaboration. The Library is a partner in the proposed **HeartWorks** initiative, a grant-funded program currently being developed for launch in Fall 2026. This innovative effort would provide educational, creative, and community-engagement opportunities while expanding access to arts and cultural programming. We believe programs such as HeartWorks represent exactly the type of collaborative investment that strengthens communities and enriches quality of life.



The Library has seen the dedication of the organization's volunteers and board members, many of whom have devoted countless hours to community outreach, planning, fundraising, historical research, and relationship-building. Their persistence and commitment demonstrate both the seriousness of the effort and the broad community support that continues to grow around the project.

I respectfully encourage the City Council to consider partnering with The Heart Theatre as it seeks to move this transformational project forward. The preservation and revitalization of historic places often requires public-private collaboration, and I believe this project represents a meaningful investment in Effingham's future while honoring its past.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this opportunity and for your continued service to our community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "A. McKay", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Amanda McKay
Director
Effingham Public Library

The opinions expressed in this letter are offered in support of The Heart Theatre project and based upon the Effingham Public Library's collaborative experiences with the organization since 2022.

Via email from riley@wheatpennybar.com

June 12, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my support for The Heart Theatre restoration project in downtown Effingham.

Over the past several years, I have been fortunate to be involved in a variety of downtown initiatives, events, and business efforts aimed at creating a more vibrant and connected community. Through those experiences, I have had the opportunity to work alongside Amy Van Bergen, Tim Maloney, Marlyn Koester, and many others who have dedicated countless hours to bringing The Heart Theatre back to life.

One experience that stands out was the 2025 outdoor movie night hosted in downtown Effingham. I had the chance to help coordinate and support the event alongside The Heart Theatre team, and it was incredible to see the community's response. Families gathered together, businesses stayed open later, volunteers stepped up, and downtown was filled with energy and excitement. It served as a reminder of how powerful shared experiences can be in bringing people together.

What has impressed me most is that The Heart Theatre is about much more than restoring a historic building. It is about creating a place where people can gather, celebrate, be entertained, and build connections. Whether through movies, live performances, community events, educational opportunities, or partnerships with local organizations, the vision extends far beyond the walls of the theatre itself.

As a downtown business owner, I have seen firsthand the positive impact that destination experiences have on surrounding businesses and the community as a whole. A restored and active Heart Theatre would help attract visitors, encourage people to spend more time downtown, support local businesses, and contribute to the continued momentum and growth we are seeing throughout Effingham.

Just as importantly, I have witnessed the collaborative spirit of the individuals leading this effort. They genuinely care about our community and have consistently demonstrated a willingness to work alongside others to create something meaningful for future generations.

I believe The Heart Theatre has the potential to become one of downtown Effingham's most important community assets, and I am excited about the impact it can have for years to come. For these reasons, I am proud to support this project and encourage others to do the same.

Sincerely,

Riley Pruemer

Co-Owner, Wheat Penny Cocktail Bar
Effingham, Illinois

June 1, 2026

Effingham City Council
201 E. Jefferson Avenue
Effingham, IL 62401

Dear Mayor and City Council Members,

I am writing in strong support of The Heart Theatre project and the efforts underway to preserve and revitalize this important downtown landmark.

As the owner of The Beanstalk Boutique in downtown Effingham and an active member of the Downtown Effingham Business Group, I have had the opportunity to work alongside Laura Didier, Amy Van Bergen, and The Heart Theatre leadership on a number of initiatives and downtown events over the past several years. Through those experiences, I have seen firsthand the professionalism, persistence, and genuine community-minded vision that this organization brings to the table.

The Heart Theatre has already become an active and positive partner in downtown Effingham long before restoration construction has even begun. From collaborating on the free outdoor movie night events on the courthouse lawn to supporting downtown seasonal activities and community engagement efforts, the organization has consistently demonstrated a desire to create experiences that bring people together and increase activity in our downtown district.

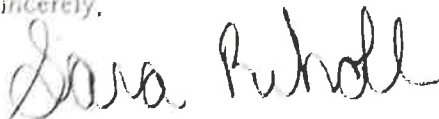
I believe the restoration of The Heart Theatre represents far more than the rehabilitation of a historic building. It is an opportunity to strengthen downtown Effingham economically, culturally, and socially for generations to come. A revitalized Heart Theatre will serve as a gathering place for movies, live performances, music, community celebrations, private events, and educational programming while also increasing visibility for surrounding small businesses.

As someone who owns and operates a small business downtown, I understand how important it is to continue investing in projects that create energy, attract visitors, and encourage people to spend more time in our downtown district. The Heart Theatre has the potential to become a major catalyst for that continued momentum.

I also appreciate that The Heart Theatre leadership has approached this effort thoughtfully and collaboratively, recognizing that a successful project of this scale will require partnerships between private donors, grants, businesses, community organizations, and public entities working together toward a shared vision for Effingham's future.

I respectfully encourage the City of Effingham to continue exploring ways to support this important project and partner with The Heart Theatre organization as plans move forward.

Sincerely,



Sara Puhall
Owner, The Beanstalk Boutique
Downtown Effingham Business Group Member

June 12, 2026

Mayor Mike Schutzbach and Members of the Effingham City Council

City of Effingham
Effingham, Illinois

Dear Mayor Schutzbach and City Council Members:

I am writing to express my strong support for The Heart Theatre restoration and revitalization project and to encourage the City of Effingham to consider a meaningful investment in this important community initiative.

Throughout my career in economic development, I have seen firsthand how transformative projects can strengthen a community's identity, attract investment, support local businesses, and enhance quality of life. The Heart Theatre has the potential to accomplish all of these goals while preserving one of downtown Effingham's most recognizable historic landmarks.

The proposed restoration is about much more than renovating a building. It is an opportunity to create a year-round destination that will bring residents and visitors downtown for entertainment, education, community gatherings, and special events. Those visitors will support nearby restaurants, retailers, hotels, and other businesses, creating economic activity that extends well beyond the theater itself.

Communities that successfully attract and retain businesses, workforce talent, and young families understand the importance of investing in quality-of-life amenities. Cultural assets and vibrant gathering spaces contribute to a strong sense of place and help distinguish a community in an increasingly competitive environment. As Effingham continues to grow, investments in placemaking and community amenities become increasingly important to employers seeking to attract and retain talented employees, making projects like The Heart Theatre an important complement to traditional economic development efforts. The Heart Theatre represents exactly the type of project that can strengthen downtown Effingham's appeal while honoring its rich history.

I am particularly impressed by the commitment already demonstrated by The Heart Theatre Board of Directors and community supporters. Significant private resources have already been invested in acquiring, stabilizing, and planning for the future of the building. This project is being led by individuals who have shown a genuine commitment to preserving an important community asset and ensuring its long-term sustainability.

As the City evaluates opportunities to invest in Effingham's future, I believe support for The Heart Theatre would serve as a powerful catalyst for additional private fundraising and community investment. Public participation would send a strong message that Effingham values both its historic character and its future growth. A city commitment could help leverage additional philanthropic, corporate, foundation, and grant funding while accelerating the realization of a project that will benefit residents for decades to come.

The Heart Theatre aligns with many of the goals communities pursue through economic development efforts: downtown revitalization, tourism, historic preservation, quality-of-life enhancement, workforce attraction, and community engagement. It is rare to find a single project capable of advancing all of these objectives simultaneously.

Effingham has long benefited from leaders willing to invest in projects that create lasting community impact. The Heart Theatre presents an opportunity to preserve a beloved landmark while creating a vibrant destination that will contribute to the economic, cultural, and social vitality of our community for generations to come.

I appreciate your consideration of this opportunity and encourage the City to partner with The Heart Theatre in bringing this vision to life. I believe the return on this investment will be measured not only in economic activity, but also in community pride, cultural enrichment, and the continued vitality of downtown Effingham.

Sincerely,



Ryan Witges | President & CEO | Agracel, Inc.

Norma J Lansing
15722 N Bluebird
Effingham, IL 62401
217-246-5844
nklansing96@yahoo.com

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to offer my enthusiastic support for The Heart Theatre restoration project and The Heart Theatre, Inc.

During my career at the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce, I had the privilege of working with countless community leaders and economic development initiatives to better Effingham and support its future growth and development. Few projects have generated the sustained level of interest, excitement, and community goodwill that have surrounded the effort to restore The Heart Theatre.

I have known Amy Van Bergen and followed her vision for The Heart Theatre since our early conversations several years ago. Long before a nonprofit was formed, Amy was seeking advice, gathering information, and exploring whether there might be community leaders willing to champion the restoration of this historic downtown landmark. What impressed me most was that her motivation was never personal recognition, but rather a sincere desire to see the building preserved and returned to the community as a vibrant gathering place.

Over the years, I have watched that vision evolve into a well-organized community effort led by a dedicated volunteer board. I have also had the opportunity to hear updates on the project through civic organizations, including Rotary, and have seen firsthand the growing enthusiasm among residents who believe The Heart Theatre can once again become an important cultural and economic asset for downtown Effingham.

The Heart Theatre represents much more than the restoration of a historic building. It represents preservation of community heritage, support for the arts, opportunities for education and entertainment, increased downtown activity, and a gathering place that can serve residents of all ages and abilities. Projects like this help define the character of a community and contribute to the quality of life that attracts residents, visitors, businesses, and future investment.

I believe The Heart Theatre Board has demonstrated both passion and persistence in advancing this project, and I am confident that the restoration of The Heart Theatre will have a lasting positive impact on Effingham and the surrounding region.

I encourage community leaders, elected officials, businesses, and potential supporters to give this project serious consideration and support. Please contact me if further information is needed.

Sincerely,

Norma J. Lansing
Retired President & CEO
Effingham County Chamber of Commerce
Community Volunteer and Civic Leader

June 11, 2026

To the Effingham City Council, City Administrator Steve Miller, and Community Stakeholders:

On behalf of the Effingham Sunrise Rotary Club, I am pleased to express our support for The Heart Theatre restoration and revitalization project and the organization's efforts to preserve and strengthen an important part of downtown Effingham.

The Sunrise Rotary Club has long believed in the importance of investing in projects and partnerships that strengthen our community, encourage civic engagement, and improve quality of life for residents of all ages. Through service projects, volunteerism, scholarships, and community initiatives, our members are committed to helping Effingham remain a vibrant and connected community.

We believe The Heart Theatre project aligns well with those goals.

Amy Van Bergen provided a Heart Theatre project update presentation to our club last summer, and our members appreciated the opportunity to learn more about the vision, progress, and long-term goals for restoring the historic theatre. It was clear from that presentation that this project is being approached thoughtfully and with a strong commitment to community engagement, historic preservation, and long-term sustainability.

We have also enjoyed seeing The Heart Theatre organization actively participate in community events and downtown activities. In fact, The Heart Theatre won 1st Place in the Sunrise Rotary-sponsored Halloween Parade in 2025, reflecting the organization's enthusiasm for community involvement and its growing connection with local residents and families.

A restored Heart Theatre has the potential to become much more than a historic building renovation. It can serve as a gathering place where residents, families, students, nonprofits, visitors, and community organizations come together for entertainment, education, celebration, and connection. Projects like this help create the shared experiences and sense of community pride that are so important to the long-term health of a town.

In addition, we recognize the potential economic and community development benefits associated with restoring a historic downtown venue. Across many communities, historic theatres have helped increase downtown activity, support local restaurants and businesses, encourage tourism, and strengthen overall downtown vitality. We believe The Heart Theatre could contribute positively to those efforts in Effingham as well.

We also appreciate the thoughtful planning, volunteer leadership, and community engagement demonstrated by The Heart Theatre Board of Directors throughout this process. It is evident that the organization is working to create a sustainable, inclusive, and community-centered vision for the future of the theatre while preserving an important part of Effingham's history.

Organizations like Rotary understand the importance of places that bring people together. Whether through community events, performances, educational programs, fundraisers, movies,

or civic gatherings, The Heart Theatre has the opportunity to become a meaningful community asset for future generations.

We appreciate the efforts of everyone involved in moving this important project forward and encourage continued collaboration among community leaders, businesses, nonprofits, and public partners to help make this vision a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W.B. Totten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "W.B." and the last name "Totten" clearly distinguishable.

William Totten
President-Elect
Effingham Sunrise Rotary Club

LAKE LAND COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

July 13, 2026

Effingham City Council

City Administrator Steve Miller and Community Stakeholders

To the Effingham City Council,

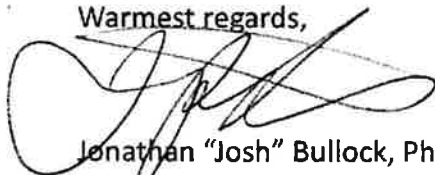
On behalf of Lake Land College, I am pleased to express support for The Heart Theater restoration and revitalization project and the organization's efforts to preserve and reimagine this important historic landmark in downtown Effingham.

As an educational institution committed to strengthening the communities we serve, Lake Land College recognizes the important role that arts, culture, historic preservation, and community gathering spaces play in enhancing quality of life supporting workforce and talent retention, and contributing to the long-term vitality of the region.

The restoration of The Heart Theater represents an exciting opportunity not only to preserve an important piece of Effingham's history, but also to create a flexible community centered venue capable of supporting a wide variety of educational, artistic, civic, and cultural programming for residents of all ages.

Lake Land College appreciates the importance of community driven projects that invest in both people and place, and we support continued collaboration and exploration of opportunities that strengthen the culture and economic vitality of downtown Effingham.

Warmest regards,



Jonathan "Josh" Bullock, Ph.D.
President

Eastern Region Center

224 South Sixth St.
Marshall, Illinois 62441
217-826-8490

Effingham Technology Center

1201 Althoff Dr.
Effingham, Illinois 62401
217-540-3555

Lake Land College

5001 Lake Land Blvd.
Mattoon, Illinois 61933
217-234-5253
lakerandcollege.edu

Western Region Center

500 East First St.
Paris, Illinois 62557
217-562-5000

June 1, 2026

Effingham City Council
City of Effingham
201 E. Jefferson Avenue
Effingham, IL 62401

Dear Mayor and Members of Effingham City Council,

We are writing to express our personal support for The Heart Theatre project and to encourage the City of Effingham to continue pursuing meaningful partnership and investment in this important downtown initiative.

Effingham has long benefited from leaders and organizations willing to invest in projects that strengthen the community not only economically, but culturally and socially as well. We believe The Heart Theatre has the potential to become one of those transformational projects.

Historic theatres hold a unique place within a community. When thoughtfully restored and operated as active multiuse venues, they become gathering places that bring people together across generations and interests. They support local businesses, encourage tourism, increase downtown activity, and contribute to the overall vibrancy and identity of a city.

The vision for The Heart Theatre goes beyond preservation alone. Its proposed use for films, live entertainment, community events, educational programming, and private rentals reflects the kind of flexible, sustainable model that has succeeded in many communities throughout the country.

We believe this project represents an opportunity for Effingham to create a lasting community asset that residents can take pride in for decades to come. Public support and partnership are often the critical catalyst that allows projects like this to move forward successfully and attract broader private investment.

We appreciate the leadership and persistence that have gone into advancing this vision and respectfully encourage the City to continue supporting efforts to bring The Heart Theatre back to life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jack Schultz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jack" being more prominent than the last name "Schultz".

Jack Schultz
Bethina Schultz

Sandra Poland-Wear & William “Bill” Wear

May 30, 2026

To Whom It May Concern,

We are writing to express our enthusiastic support for The Heart Theatre restoration project and our intention to make a meaningful contribution toward this important community endeavor.

The Heart Theatre has long been part of the fabric and history of Effingham. For generations, it served as a gathering place where people came together and it can be again.

We strongly believe this effort deserves broad community support through a combination of private philanthropy, grants, and public investment. Projects of this significance benefit the entire community and require collaboration from many sectors to ensure long-term success.

What excites us most is the vision for The Heart as a true multipurpose community space — a place where future generations can enjoy movies, live theater productions, concerts and musical events, graduation celebrations, retirement parties, weddings, and countless other community gatherings.

Effingham deserves vibrant spaces that bring people together.

Our connection to this project is also deeply personal. We have known Amy Van Bergen for almost her entire life and know her to be a person of tremendous determination, integrity, and commitment to her community. We have seen firsthand her ability to bring people together around meaningful causes and to follow through on difficult and ambitious projects with persistence and heart.

In fact, we were with Amy the very first time she walked through The Heart Theatre property with realtor Jeff Speer back in 2019. Even then, it was easy to see the possibilities hidden within the building and to recognize Amy’s vision for what it could someday become for Effingham.

We are also proud that two of our four children were involved in the founding of The Heart Theatre nonprofit organization and have supported the effort to preserve this important historic landmark for future generations.

We believe this project represents an investment not only in a historic building, but in the future cultural life and vitality of

Effingham itself. We are grateful to all who have worked so hard to move this vision forward and encourage others throughout the community to join us in supporting this worthwhile endeavor.

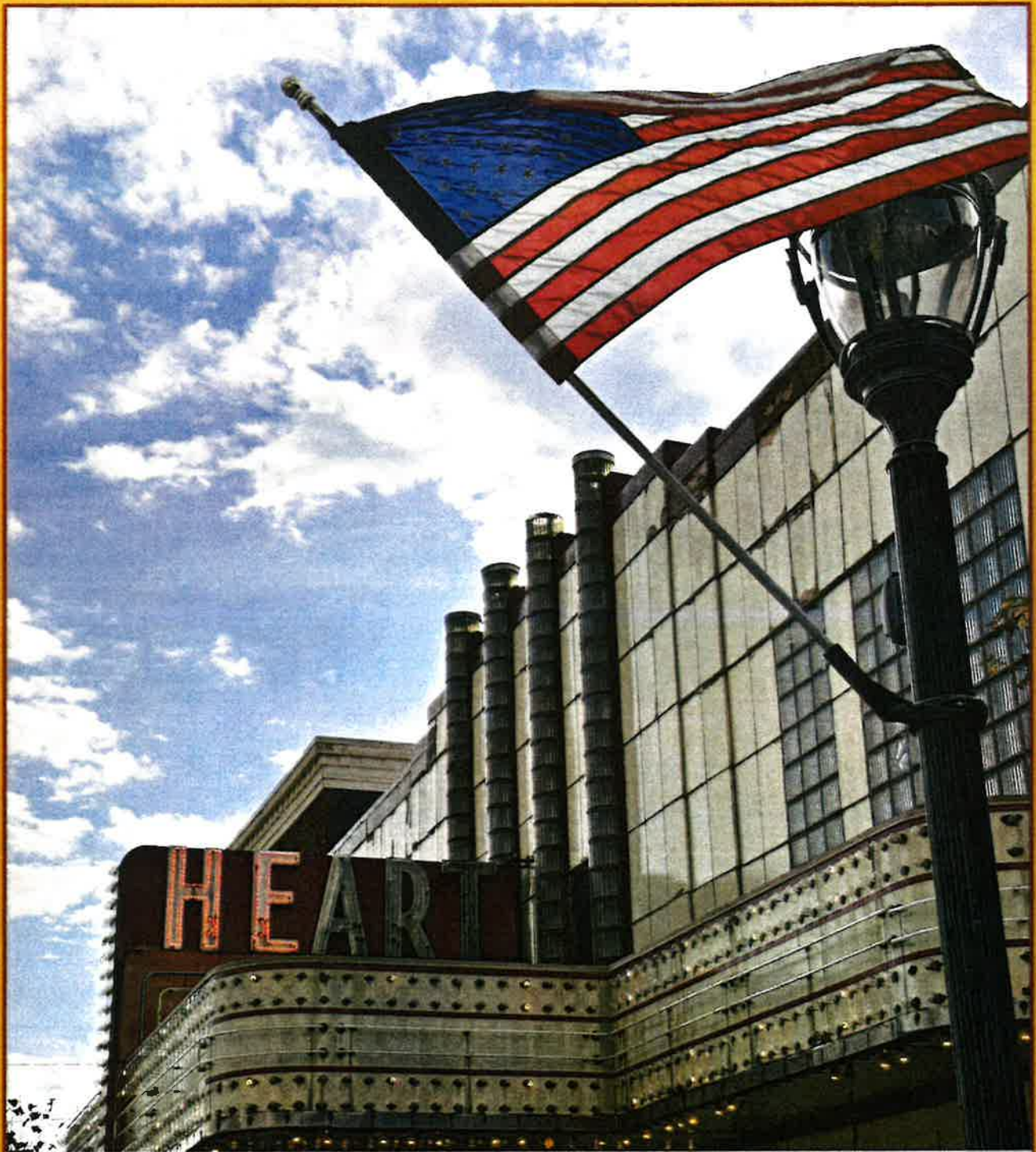
Sincerely,

Sandra & Bill Wear

Sandra and Bill Wear

1004 Pembroke Court Effingham IL 62401

Appendix C



HEART THEATRE - PHASE 2

EFFINGHAM, ILLINOIS

MAY 15, 2023

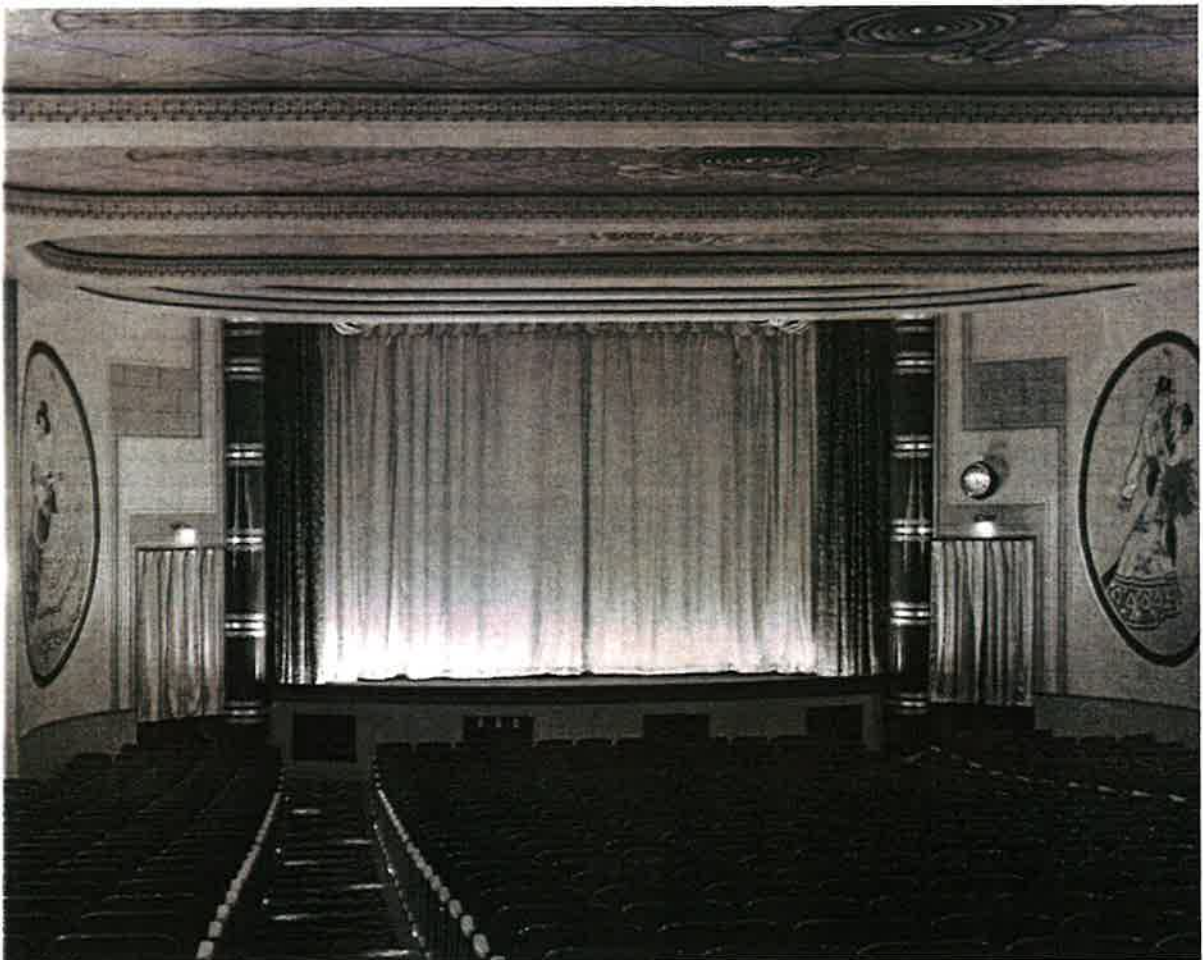
INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW



INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

It's an amazing time to be starting the Heart Theatre project. In our post-pandemic world, communities are re-appreciating the value of authentic, shared cultural experiences and where those occur. The Heart is poised to retake its place as the destination for film, performance, and gatherings and to be modified to offer those experiences in a modern, safe, and state-of-the-art facility.

This document represents the next steps (following the market study) toward a functioning entity. After the non-profit is established, further planning can occur, but this report outlines key elements for planning, such as initial staffing, budgeting, programming resources, and notes about how architectural planning should take into consideration future programming. It is important to remember that this project is a moving target, with costs changing due to supply-chain issues, and choices by management. Assumptions have been made based on current information and further research and planning is necessary to accurately map-out costs and required operational subsidies.



1940's Interior view

RESTORATION PLANNING



RESTORATION PLANNING

ARCHITECTURAL

In some senses, the Heart Theatre is a blank slate, due to the current condition of the building. While initial architectural planning has yet to begin in earnest, a few assumptions can be made, based on the estimated occupancy, existing footprint and market for events at the property upon opening. What follows is a breakdown of possible architectural solutions tied to aspects of programming. As with any project, funding and timing will be the two largest factors defining the eventual decisions.

Based on the needs of the building to serve as a multi-purpose venue, we recommend creating a terraced floor. A specific layout, which follows code, will need to be determined for ADA, and audience sightline review. This layout may also lead to storage options for tables and chairs. We are not suggesting any fixed seating in the auditorium.

Beginning with aspects of programming, there are several factors limiting the range of possible events at the Heart. Chief among these is the limited (nearly zero) performer support spaces. With no real stage door, dressing or green room or even enough space on stage for a “crossover,” any performer at the Heart will have to rely on external, temporary support space such as an RV. The small size of the stage makes larger, more elaborate stage productions also difficult, as no scenery can be constructed off-site and brought in. Having said this, there are still many, many uses for the space, including smaller singer/songwriter acts, student theatrical performances, standup comedians, lectures, private events and of course – film screenings. The biggest question in this area is if some of the second-floor space could be re-purposed as a performer support-space, but that does not allow for stage entry without going through the audience, which usually is not desirable for anyone except some comedy acts. It is understood that going under the current stage for more space is possible, but likely financially unfeasible, and that additional space in neighboring buildings is not available. But both concepts can be reviewed, at a later date, should it make sense.

Next, in looking at architectural work around the audience experience, there are several areas to consider including lobby and restroom spaces, and seating in the auditorium. Given the need, and desire to provide the best experience for differently-abled individuals, the 2nd-floor restrooms will not be sufficient in a 21st-century venue. The plan to utilize the old storefront spaces as new first-floor restrooms is likely the best bet. This solution will not alter the rest of the original footprint of the building. Additionally, the historic entryway will need to be looked at to ensure adequate light and sound-locks exist, given there is no separate lobby space, which necessitates direct passage into the auditorium. Additional architectural areas will be discussed under the preservation section of this document.



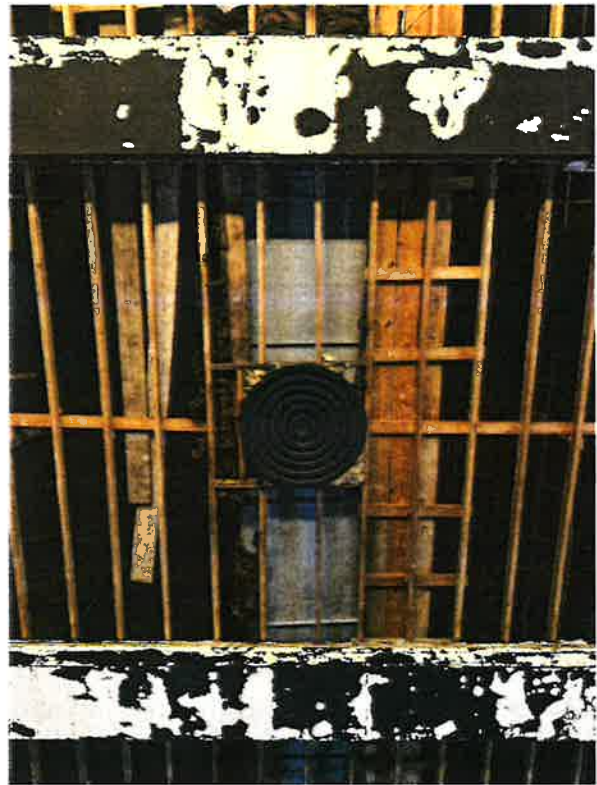
Auditorium 2023

PRESERVATION

With the building's placement on the National Register, care must be taken to preserve the "character-defining elements" of the structure. These include details such as the remaining decorative elements (façade, signage, auditorium wall sconces, decorative paint and plaster, proscenium, railings, audience chamber volume, etc.). The largest area for discussion is the ceiling treatment in the auditorium (see below, right). Due to the nearly complete absence of the original ceiling plaster, there is an opportunity to create a more friendly, multi-purpose (acoustic & amplified sound) environment. We suggest working with an acoustical engineer to design the best possible space. Other areas of preservation to note will be the floor and the possible "terracing" with a specific eye towards ADA-compliant ramps and sightlines, and interior safety lighting (exiting and stairs) as these will impact the overall look and feel of the finished space.



View into Lobby, 2023



Auditorium Ceiling (looking up), 2023

LIFE SAFETY, ADA

A brief conversation with the City of Effingham about the future use of the building yielded a few items to be aware of in architectural planning. At the top of the list is life safety for both the audience and performers. While a thorough code review is needed, it should be noted that egress needs to be addressed, as does the need to add fire sprinklers throughout the building. ADA review will mainly focus on seating percentage and restroom access. Given that ADA compliance is enforced, upon public input, by the U.S. Justice Department, we recommend that ownership/project management engages with the local disability community for their input. It is important also to remember that preservation almost always trumps ADA, so there is room to meet halfway.

THEATRE PROGRAMMING



THEATRE PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGY

When restoring a single-use building like the Heart to function as a multi-use performing arts community space, it's important to consider closely the necessary technology. It's easy to overbuild if future use is not carefully mapped-out. While it will be necessary for the theatre to include current film screening technology (DCP projector, screen, and appropriate audio system), what is specified for house audio and lighting systems is tricky. A best-case scenario for renters would involve an adequate house system for sound, and a “repertory” hang of lighting which is easily modified. A simple-to-use system is crucial to limit staff time and meet budget requirements. If the correct infrastructure is installed, the building will support any additional gear, such as lighting, speakers, or other systems that could be brought in on a show truck.

Also critical to note here is the establishment of “House Rules” around maximum db levels of sound output, banning of smoke/fog machines as they interfere with smoke detectors, and no open flames in the building.



Vintage Film Strip



View from Ticket Booth, 2023



Looking up From Under Marquee, 2023

TICKETING TECHNOLOGY

Ticketing has become a much more streamlined part of theatre operations with “print-at-home” options and cash-less transactions. While in the past, venues would have to sign up with a major vendor like Ticketmaster, there are now many smaller, third-party options offering low-cost systems. It would be best to do the research well ahead of time to determine the best fit, but expect to invest in some hardware like scanners for tickets which will help keep track of attendance numbers and software for tracking of patrons via their email addresses.

COST ESTIMATING

Given the unknown scope, and timeline for a full-restoration, it is in the best interest of ownership to look at phasing the project. This approach will allow for smaller fundraising goals, and projects that can be completed more quickly, leading to more support, as opposed to waiting until all funds are in hand to begin. We suggest a two-tier approach with *the façade being “Phase 1”* and the *interior being “Phase 2”*. A rough order of magnitude from similar projects would put a *façade project at \$350,000*, and *interior work at around \$3M*. With unknown supply chain issues, and escalating construction costs around steel and concrete, these numbers are only a preliminary guess. It is suggested that actual estimates be developed based on multiple bids from construction and FF&E vendors PRIOR to the reveal of any public announcement of costs or completion timelines. We are presenting the following list of categories to consider in budgeting for each Phase:

Phase 1 (Façade restoration)

Historic Theatre Preservation Consultant
Architectural, planning, and Historic Review
Structural
Electrical
Neon replacement and repair
Glazing
Doors and windows
Concrete

Phase 2 (Full renovation of interior)

Architect
Structural Engineer
Electrical Engineer
Mechanical Engineer
Civil Engineer
Historic Theatre Preservation Consultant
Acoustic Consultant
Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment (FF&E)
Theatrical Systems

Also of note here is planning for the security of the facility and customers. Code will dictate some of these issues but it may be worth considering bullet-resistant glass, reinforced doors, and possible metal detectors. A secure box office room with a safe is advised to avoid the need for late-night bank drops.



STAFFING / JOB DESCRIPTIONS



STAFFING

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

General Manager/Film Booker

The General Manager (GM/FB) will be the primary point of contact for the public and for renters of the Heart Theatre. They will generate rental estimates, rental contracts, and settlements for shows. They will work with distributors to book all film screenings. This individual will be the public face of the theatre and provide the Board with monthly reporting in regard to the scheduling of events, marketing, and income and expenses. They will manage all staff, including the Technical Director and Box Office and Concession Staff. They will be responsible for scheduling, hiring, firing, evaluating performance, and payroll oversight (assuming a Board member is responsible for financial and accounting duties). This individual will need to have previous experience in either performing arts venues or theatrical exhibition, as they will manage box office reporting to distributors and renters and concessions product ordering and inventory. The position will maintain a calendar of all events and track attendance, audience engagement and interest in programming content that appeals to various audience segments of the community. They will oversee marketing to help draw audiences to the theatre via social media, earned media, and paid advertising campaigns. The position will have nighttime and weekend hours and will be a 3/4 salaried position to start, with annual performance reviews by the Board of Directors.

Technical Director

The Technical Director is responsible for all aspects of events at the theatre including film screenings or live events on the Heart Theatre stage. This individual will “advance” shows (meet with users to understand their needs while in the building), be present for load-in of shows, be on-site during all events, operate all equipment (or manage over-hires as needed) during shows, and be present for load-out of users. This position also maintains all of the theatre’s technical equipment (audio, lights, projection), and works closely with the General Manager/Film Booker on event scheduling and capital improvement plans. The Technical Director is a 3/4 time position, and will include nighttime and weekend hours. The individual in this role will have an annual performance review by the General Manager.

Box Office & Concession Staff

There will be a need for several hourly positions managing ticket sales and concessions for all events at the Heart Theatre. These can be minimum-wage hires (\$13/hour) and does not require many special skills besides basic sales. Hourly staff will report to the General Manager/Film Booker (see budgets for number of staff needed in year 1 and 3 for these positions).

Volunteers

No historic theatre can operate without volunteers. The cost of labor they offset and the goodwill they generate by acting as advocates for the theatre in the community, is invaluable. But volunteers are not employees, so you must be careful what you expect from them and how you treat them. A good volunteer program will require not only a recruitment process, but also clear and concise job descriptions, training, recognition and rewards. Annual record-keeping of hours served, a recognition event and public praise are all keys to maintaining a healthy core of volunteers. As to the roles they can play in an operational venue, it is up to management. Many theatres prefer to keep volunteers away from any possible liability that can arise with ticket or concession sales (especially liquor). Also, it can be risky to have volunteers operating stage equipment from a safety or insurance standpoint. It is recommended that management determine a simple, standard uniform for volunteers, which will makes them easily identified by customers.



FILM PROGRAMMING RESOURCES



FILM PROGRAMMING RESOURCES

The following are industry resources, including contact names and email addresses, for the companies that the Film Programmer/Booker will need in order to secure films. Also included is a list of touring short film programs that could be booked on the theatre's calendar.

STUDIO/STREAMER & REPERATORY CONTACT LIST

Universal – Repertory.sales@nbcuni.com

Sony – Michael Dicerto, Michael_Dicerto@spe.sony.com

Warner Brothers – Steven Goyette, WBClassics@warnerbros.com

Swank – Dana Hillyer, dhillyer@swankmp.com

Paramount – Juliette Spinner, juliette_spinner@paramount.com

Criterion – Katherine Dintelman, Katherine.Dintelman@anuvu.com

Park Circus – Chris Chouinard, chris@parkcircus.com

Disney – Mary Tallungan, Mary.Tallungan@disney.com

A24 – Lisa Ritchie, lisa@a24films.com

Magnolia – Danielle McCarthy-Boles, dmccarthy@magpictures.com

IFC – Danielle Freiberg, Danielle.Freiberg@ifcfilms.com

AppleTV+ – Erin Lowery, e_lowrey@apple.com

National Geographic – Tim Horsbaugh, Tim.Horsburgh@natgeo.com

Neon – Claire Timmons, claire@neonrated.com

First Run Features – Marc Mauceri, marcm@firstrunfeatures.com

Kino Lorber – Maxwell Wolkin, mwolkin@kinolorber.com

Oscilloscope – Andrew Carlin, andrew@oscilloscope.net



ANNUAL TOURING FILM FESTIVALS:

MountainFilm – <https://www.mountainfilm.org>

Manhattan Short – <http://www.manhattanshort.com>

Animation Show of Shows – <https://www.animationshowofshows.com>

Found Footage Festival – <http://www.foundfootagefest.com>

Wild & Scenic Film Fest – <http://www.wildandscenicfilmfestival.org>

LISTSERV RESOURCES TO JOIN:

The following groups are good resources for finding titles as they provide a connection to other programmers who will share ideas and contact info for acts and films they have successfully sourced. Email these two groups and ask to be added.

art-house-convergence@googlegroups.com

filmprogrammers@googlegroups.com



BEST PRACTICES



BEST PRACTICES

A project like the Heart Theatre is actually two different projects; the restoration of the theatre, and the operation of the theatre. We'll address some best practices for each part of the project here.

RESTORATION PHASE

A key component of any historic theatre restoration is community engagement. It's critical to maintain the public, possible funders and the media in the project with small wins. Community engagement can include press coverage about new historical information brought to light, volunteer engagement, fundraising successes, and physical progress at the theatre. Mapping out a calendar of engagement opportunities for social media and the media is a great place to start. Make notes of significant milestones, i.e. theatre's original reopening date, big movie premieres during its heyday, current restoration milestones, etc., and plan future content. Soliciting for memories is a good engagement tactic, as is researching in newspaper archives. An annual event tied to the original opening of the theatre is a great way to raise awareness, funds, and to enlist volunteers to assist with the project when there are often not many ways to use outside help. Presence at community events like street fairs, parades, and booths or tables at other events keeps the general public abreast of the progress. Finally, an annual "open house" to show off progress, when possible, is a win-win as long as approved by city building safety officials and your insurance carrier.

"IN-OPERATION" PHASE

Once the theatre is open for business, it's harder to get unearned media (non-paid) that is usually available when restoring. During the restoration process, creating newsworthy press releases can be as simple as recognizing volunteer accomplishments, special events tied to the theatre's history, local engagement (visiting artists in the schools) and other events. It's crucial to maintain a good relationship with all media partners who will share your news.

The design of the theatre's website will automate much of the initial interface with customers and the site should be built before the theatre opens for business. A robust FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) page about ticketing, parking and show information, will be crucial for good communication to your audience. A good online ticketing portal will streamline that interface and an up-to-date calendar will allow possible renters to know what is available as well as rental requirements, occupancy levels, costs, and house rules.

PROGRAMMING MIX

In a community like Effingham, a theatre like the Heart, will need to provide a mix of programming in order to both survive and thrive. Given the other local options for event spaces, the Heart has a great niche it can fill. A key part of "growing an audience" is training residents in what to expect at the Heart. A customer-first approach starts with clear, concise and easily-accessible information on shows, tickets, and other information like parking, adjacent restaurants, and other details. Given the location of the theatre, it's likely that not all shows that are touring will be offering weekend performances, so a calendar of events is crucial to keep potential ticket buyers aware of the offerings on weeknights as well as weekends. It's also a good idea to create a consistent schedule, when possible, around special "self-presented" events like film screenings or open-mic comedy nights, so your audience will get used to the idea that Thursday night is film night at the Heart, for example. Also make sure that if the theatre is rented for a private event, like a film screening or closed party, give the general public plenty of notice ahead of time. Free or low-cost

events are also a great way thank the community and remind them that the Heart is their theatre and you want it to be available for everyone, so they need to support its success. Examples of free events can be as simple as a free movie once a year, or even an open house tied to a block party. Charging for concessions will offset the cost of the free movie. These free events build loyalty with the community, as you have given them a gift they will remember.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

When possible for the theatre schedule, nearly all collaborative endeavors with a community partner will be worth the effort. A cross-promotion with the partner's audience will benefit the Heart in exposure and future attendance. A collaboration looks appealing to possible funders who love these types of events and takes some of the pressure off the staff to be in charge of every element of an event by spreading the workload. But don't wait to be approached for these events, look at current community events to see if there are opportunities to partner, and look at what funders are supporting. For example, look for a strong program currently around "Science on Screen" where grants are available to theatres doing science-friendly films partnered with post-event talks for children explaining what they've seen. Grants usually cover the cost of the film and a guest speaker and the venue makes concessions revenue, all while providing an educational program.

GROW SLOWLY

While it may seem counter-intuitive to caution about growing too fast at a restored and reopened historic theatre, it needs to be said. The rush and excitement of opening the doors and the excitement of visitors soon can turn into burn-out all too quickly. The bottom line is to never close again, so it is important to take care of staff who could tire by taking on too much in getting the business up and running. Starting with a schedule of 3-4 events a week is totally normal, and after a run of 7-10 days straight working (between advancing shows, marketing shows, producing shows and closing out shows) the workload takes a toll. Management (Board) will need to keep an eye on the booking calendar to balance income and expenses with human labor resources, as there are a finite number of people who can, should and will work as a labor of love at a restored theatre.



BUDGET



BUDGET

XXXXXX

BUDGET NOTES

We have provided two sample years of budgets, years one and three, to demonstrate possible staffing and programming for the Heart Theatre. There are some unknowns at this point around actual utility costs and insurance costs, but these budgets demonstrate rough goals for attendance, concession sales and outside rentals.

The staffing model assumes the availability of local prospects who can slip into the jobs based on the descriptions provided in this document. We have not budgeted for benefits initially, but that might need to be addressed depending upon available funds and candidate needs. Ideally, the General Manager/Film Booker would come on to the project about 60-90 days prior to reopening. The Technical director would come in to oversee equipment installation and be trained on the operation of these systems as an hourly employee during rehabilitation, and then start about 30 days prior to reopening. Ticket and concession staff would start the weeks ahead of the opening events. There will need to be a reserve account to pay for this initial staffing as well as concession and supply startup.

Film rental costs are estimated with actual film costs dependent upon the titles programmed. Older films tend to be less expensive, and often you can get a license to screen a film but will need to provide your own copy (DVD, Bluray). These physical copies then can remain in the theatre's library to screen again with a new license (i.e. holiday films that may become traditions for the theatre and community).

Fundraising dollars can come in many forms including sponsorships, naming opportunities and program underwriting and can be sourced from local businesses, foundations and state and national grants.



Theatre Street View, 2023



2nd Floor Ceiling Light, 2023



Ticket Booth and Entrance, 2023

HEART THEATRE BUDGET – YEAR 1

EXPENSES	Monthly	Annual	Notes
Staffing			
• 3/4 Manager/Film Booker	\$ 2,666.00	\$ 32,000.00	No benefits
• 3/4 Time Technical Director/Projectionist	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 24,000.00	Assume 4 days a week x 8 hours/day to start
• P/T Labor (box office, concession sales)	\$ 1,664.00	\$ 19,968.00	Assume \$13.00/hour x 16 hours a week x 2 people
Utilities (Electric, water)	\$ TBD	\$ TBD	Need to get estimate
Insurance	\$ TBD	\$ TBD	Need to get estimate
Film Rentals/Rights	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	Assume licensing fees of \$250 per film x 4 films a month
% of Movie Admission Back to Studios	\$ 175.00	\$ 2,100.00	50% of admission over guarantee back to studios
Concession Costs	\$ 450.00	\$ 5,400.00	Approx. 50% of sales
Property Tax/Permits/Licensing	\$ -	\$ 250.00	Possible annual business license (?)
Professional Fees	\$ -	\$ -	Accounting, legal, etc. Donated by board members (?)
Maintenance	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,200.00	Estimated
Janitorial	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,000.00	Estimated
Marketing	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,000.00	Assume mostly social media outreach/ads, flyers, posters, word of mouth
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 8,555.00	\$ 102,918.00	Annual will not exactly match (monthly x 12), due to one time expenses
INCOME			
Ticket Sales - Classic Films	\$ 840.00	\$ 10,080.00	Assume \$6 tickets x 42 films x 40 people (1,680 people +/-)
Rental Income - Dance/Music/Theatre Events	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	Assume \$1,500.00 per rental with 2 per month (3,600 people +/-)
Rental Income - Mtgs. & Community Events	\$ 700.00	\$ 8,400.00	Assume 4 community events @ \$175 per month (mid week, mtgs, etc.) (2,400 people +/-)
Concession Income	\$ 900.00	\$ 10,800.00	Final TBD depending upon beer/wine license
Merchandise	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$3.00 per cap x 6,000 people
On-screen Advertising (?)	\$ 600.00	\$ 7,200.00	Limited branded merchandise - print on demand to avoid inventory cost
Subtotal	\$ 6,140.00	\$ 73,680.00	Local business - assume 5-6 entities x \$100/month
Additional Fundraising		\$ 29,238.00	Estimated underwriting required for break-even
TOTAL INCOME		\$ 102,918.00	

HEART THEATRE BUDGET – YEAR 3

EXPENSES	Monthly	Annual	Notes
Staffing			
• F/T Manager/Film Booker	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 36,000.00	No benefits
• 3/4 Time Technical Director/Projectionist	\$ 2,333.00	\$ 28,000.00	Assume 4 days a week x 8 hours/day to start
• P/T Labor (box office, concession sales)	\$ 2,496.00	\$ 29,952.00	Assume \$13.00/hour x 24 hours a week x 2 people
Utilities (Electric, water)	\$ TBD	\$ TBD	Need to get estimate
Insurance	\$ TBD	\$ TBD	Need to get estimate
Film Rentals/Rights	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	Assume licensing fees of \$250 per film x 4 films a month
% of Movie Admission Back to Studios	\$ 175.00	\$ 2,100.00	50% of admission over guarantee back to studios
Concession Costs	\$ 1,065.00	\$ 12,780.00	Approx. 50% of sales
Property Tax/Permits/Licensing	\$ -	\$ 250.00	Possible annual business license (?)
Professional Fees	\$ -	\$ -	Accounting, legal, etc. Donated by board members (?)
Maintenance	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,200.00	Estimated
Janitorial	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,000.00	Estimated
Marketing	\$ 250.00	\$ 3,000.00	Assume mostly social media outreach/ads, flyers, posters, word of mouth
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 10,764.83	\$ 129,432.00	Annual will not exactly match (monthly x 12), due to one time expenses
INCOME			
Ticket Sales - Classic Films	\$ 1,260.00	\$ 15,120.00	Assume \$6 tickets x 42 films x 60 people (2,520 people +/-)
Rental Income - Dance/Music/Theatre Events	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 72,000.00	Assume \$1,500.00 per rental with 4 per month (5,400 people +/-)
Rental Income - Mtgs. & Community Events	\$ 1,050.00	\$ 12,600.00	Assume 6 community events @ \$175 per month (mid week, mtgs, etc.) (3,600 people +/-)
Concession Income	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 25,560.00	Final TBD depending upon beer/wine license
Merchandise	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$3.00 per cap x 8,520 people
On-screen Advertising (?)	\$ 600.00	\$ 7,200.00	Limited branded merchandise - print on demand to avoid inventory cost Local business - assume 5-6 entities x \$100/month
TOTAL INCOME	\$ 11,110.00	\$ 130,680.00	
TOTAL PROFIT		\$ 1,248.00	

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS



CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

Following the approval of the new non-profit, grants should be sought to assist with further planning, architectural design, and phase one (the façade) as soon as possible. This will enable a more concise cost and timeline to completion to be completed and to further engage the community in the project. A few key takeaways and next steps:

- Complete the 501(c)(3) process ASAP
- Keep the community engaged with regular updates on the progress, even small steps
- Identify grants and fund the next steps (architectural, preservation, business planning)
- Complete a paint study and do some architectural renderings of the future look
- Collect patron memories and stories for a future project
- Finalize adjacent building interior space donation and make it legal
- Fund the Phase 1 project (Façade restoration) ASAP
- Look into sponsoring some free cinema events for the community
- Full tech specification completed for performance and film events

We remain excited and ready to continue to assist as needed in returning the Heart to full-operation. Please do not hesitate to reach out, so that we can be of assistance.



Stairs to Second Floor 2023



The Current Theatre Marquee, 2023



HISTORICTHEATRECONSULTANTS.COM
520-204-2240



The Heart Theatre Feasibility Study Work Session

November 5, 2022



1



AGENDA – Nov 5, 2022

1. Background (& Assumptions)
2. Business Plan Overview
3. Market Feasibility
4. Historic Theatre Restoration Best Practices + Success Stories
5. Findings
6. Next Steps for The Heart: *from dream to rebirth*

2



Basic Assumptions

- *Uses must be legal; consistent with zoning*
- *Selected historic features and materials must be retained and protected. EX: all public spaces (lobby and hallways) are primary spaces and must be retained*
- *Consider magnitude of cost associated with new uses/building rehab*
- *Stable, revenue generators*
- *Market demand – local community and beyond*

3

HTC's Charge

1. Assess market for theatre's long-term success and provide focus for key programming/entertainment opportunities
2. Provide high level assessment of building structure for viability and critical rehab
3. Map out key elements and best practices of Heart restoration plan best practice success factors
4. Identify issues, opportunities and next steps for moving forward

4

The Heart's Business Plan

not a linear process

5



1. Vision

2. Demand-Customer Analysis & Competitive Assessment

3. Programming & Marketing

4. Physical Restoration Plan & Fund Development

5. Operations & Budget

6. Organization & Management Structure

6



Why complete a Market Study?

- To help guide redevelopment decisions
- To provide a reality check and understanding of:
 1. Customer base, desires & purchasing power (demand drivers)
 2. Highest & best use of space, features, amenities
 3. Competitive supply of area facilities
 4. Programming that can consistently generate revenue

7



Effingham's Vitality

- ✓ *The Economy*
- ✓ *The People*
- ✓ *Vision for the Future*
- ✓ *Action Plan for Success*

8



Effingham's Vitality

PAVE Goals:

1. *Thriving economy, workforce, education system*
2. *Housing choice for a range of budgets*
3. *World-class childcare options*
4. **Family-friendly entertainment, events, festivals*
5. *Leader in parks and recreation*

9



Effingham's Vitality

< Community Theme: Positive Attitude >

*"Local residents are extremely generous
in committing time and talent to make Effingham
a great community!"*

10



Effingham – a regional hub for commerce and industry

MAJOR MANUFACTURERS & EMPLOYERS

NAME	DESCRIPTION	EMPLOYEES
St. Joseph's Hospital	Hospital	400
Heathcote Dental	Dental Practice	40
Good Graphics Effingham	Printing	30
The South	Food Processing	25
Patterson Companies, Inc.	Manufacturing	20
Stevens Industries Inc.	Manufacturing	15
Scoville-Williams Company	Manufacturing	15
Therco Z Printing	Printing	15
Radco	Manufacturing	15
South Central PS	Printing	15
Midland States Bank	Banking	15
John Boos and Company	Manufacturing	15
Waupaca	Manufacturing	15
Kingery Printing Company	Printing	15
Mid America Motorworks	Manufacturing	15
Peerless of America	Manufacturing	15
Crvin Telescopic Seating Company	Manufacturing	15
Peppi Mid America	Manufacturing	15

A Diverse & Growing Economy

2nd lowest unemployment

11

The Marketplace

Customer Assessment

12

The Marketplace

*Who are the customers? What do they want?
What programming will be supported?*

Primary Research: Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups, Public Meeting

Secondary Research: Data Analysis, Review of Prior Publications, etc

13

The Heart's Target Markets

- Primary Market Area - Effingham County: where 80% of your customers will come from. The source of most regular and repeat business.
- Greater Market Area - 45 minutes
- 2nd Homeowners
- Visitors
- Businesses

14



Effingham County

34,552 population
\$59,500 med HH \$
40.8 median age

45-min drive time

157,200 population
\$53,700 med HH \$
40.8 median age

LOCAL RESIDENTS

Your bread & butter customer base



15



Recreation Expenditures:
Effingham County residents

Expenditure Category	Spending Potential Index	Average Amount Spent
Entertainment/Rec Fees-Admissions	73	\$613
Tickets-Theatre/Concerts	75	\$69
Tickets to Movies	69	\$44
Tickets to Parks or Museums	74	\$29
Admission to Sporting Events	79	\$58
Fees for Participants Sports	73	\$96
Fees for Recreational Lessons	68	\$109
Membership Fees - Social/Rec/Civic Clubs	74	\$209

Source: ESRI Business Information Solutions

16

Top 5 Lifestyle Groups (County) – Comfortable Country Living

- 6a-Green Acres – 22.1%
- 6b-Salt of the Earth – 21%
- 6f-Heartland Communities – 11%
- 12b-Traditional Living – 10.2%
- 8f-Old and Newcomers – 8.8%
- = 73% of total population**

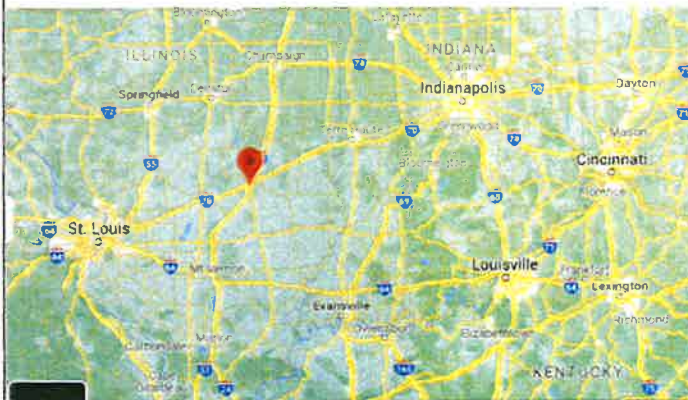


Effingham, Illinois

17

VISITORS: Significant Overnight Traffic

Effingham is at the junction of I-57 and I-70 and is a regional hub for lodging, services, attractions



16 hotels; 70+ AirBnB listings
65 restaurants

Tourism = growth industry w/YoY
growth in jobs (1,090), payroll
(\$31M), spending (\$179M), local
tax collections (\$3.6M)

(Source - Visit Effingham, Illinois Office of Tourism, 2019)

18



Effingham Visitor Profile Summary

At a high level, Buxton found the following traits to be prevalent among Effingham visitors:

• Age Range of 55+ (67%) • Professional Occupation/Retired (68%) • College Educated (48%)	• Income level of \$50K-\$200K (67%) • Married (81%) • No Child Present (61%)
---	---

Source: Buxton study for Visit Effingham, 2015

19



Effingham promotes itself to Visitors as...

- Stop over destination—tour groups on their way to Branson
- Foodie destination—(Fireside, winery, etc)
- Famous John Boos company – oldest manufacturer of butcher blocks and cutting boards
- Recreation and sporting hub
- Arts and Culture destination (EPC shows), 7 major multi-day festivals



20

Appendix C

SECOND HOMEOWNERS

Lake Sara

- 800-acre rec lake 27-mi shoreline
- 1300 – 1400 homes – close to 50% are owned by people outside area and used seasonally
- Expansive master plan



21

SECOND HOMEOWNERS

2nd homeowners tend to have higher disposable income, above average education and are eager to explore a range of entertainment options. Many part-time residents completed the survey during the are eager to help revitalize The Heart.



22



BUSINESS MARKET

*Effingham County – 1,965 businesses and
26,300 employees*

- 13% Manufacturing employees
- 23% Retail employees
- 25% Service sector employees

Diverse, stable, growing. Engaged with over 550 Chamber members

23



Insights

Locals:

- County population stable, no growth expected ('22-'27)
- Drive time population projected to decline (0.36%) over 5 years
- Incomes & entertainment spending below average

Visitors:

- Diverse mix; tend to be older; solid incomes
- Business travelers - >50% of overnight/lodging guests
- Harder to capture for events, but possible w/ strategic partnerships & cross-marketing

2nd Homeowners:

- Higher incomes; growth potential as Lake Sara develops
- Can target for seasonal audience development, expanding over time

24



Competitive Assessment

What's the existing supply of comparable space?

Size, location, price, amenities

Meetings and Business Events

Special Events – Weddings + Parties

Performance and Entertainment



16 meeting facilities promoted.

25



The Heart's Opportunity

- *Unique, historic venue*
- *Intimate, mid-size space*
- *Destination location with numerous dining options*
- *Diverse, community-based programming*

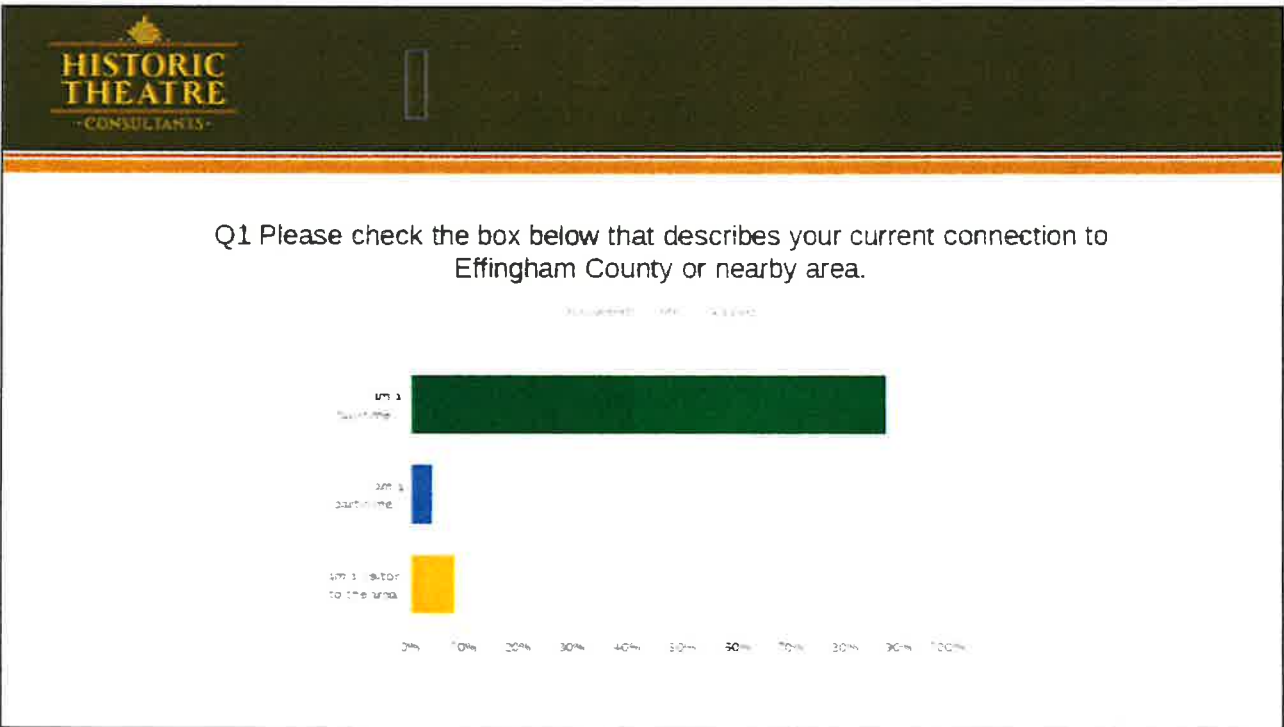


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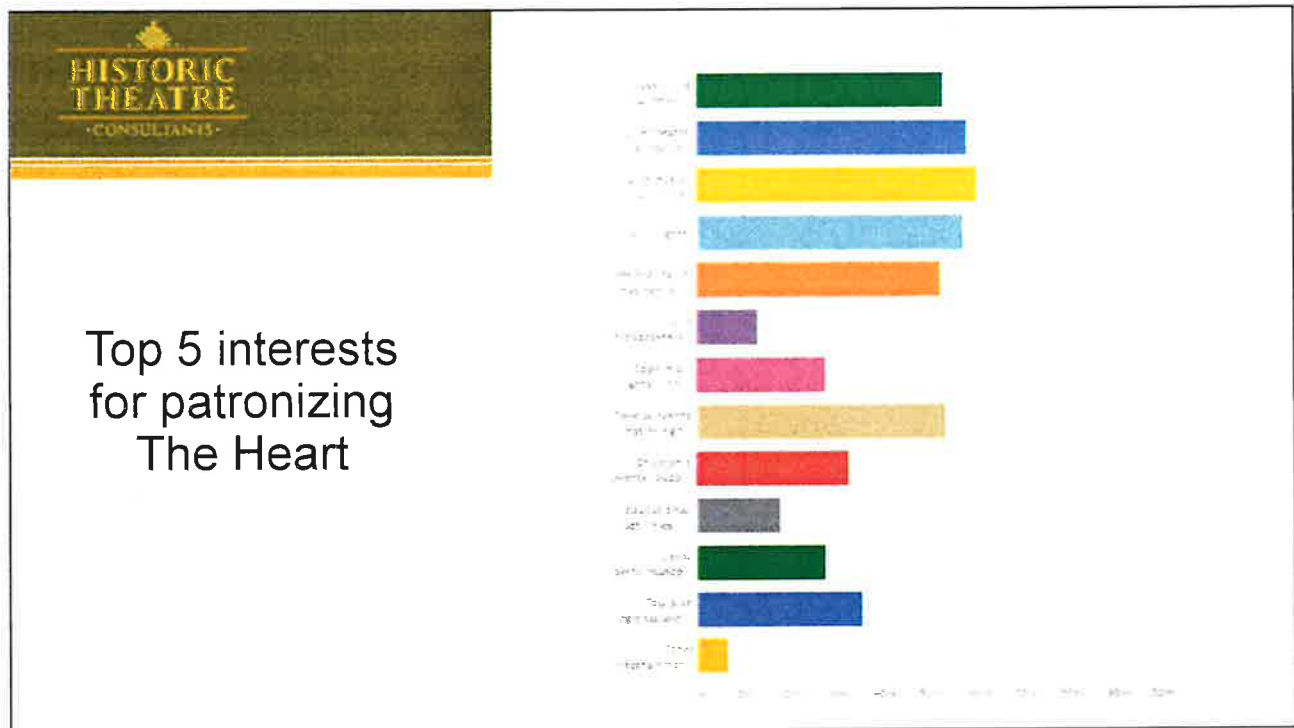
Preliminary Community Survey Responses (1,899)

What do the customers want?

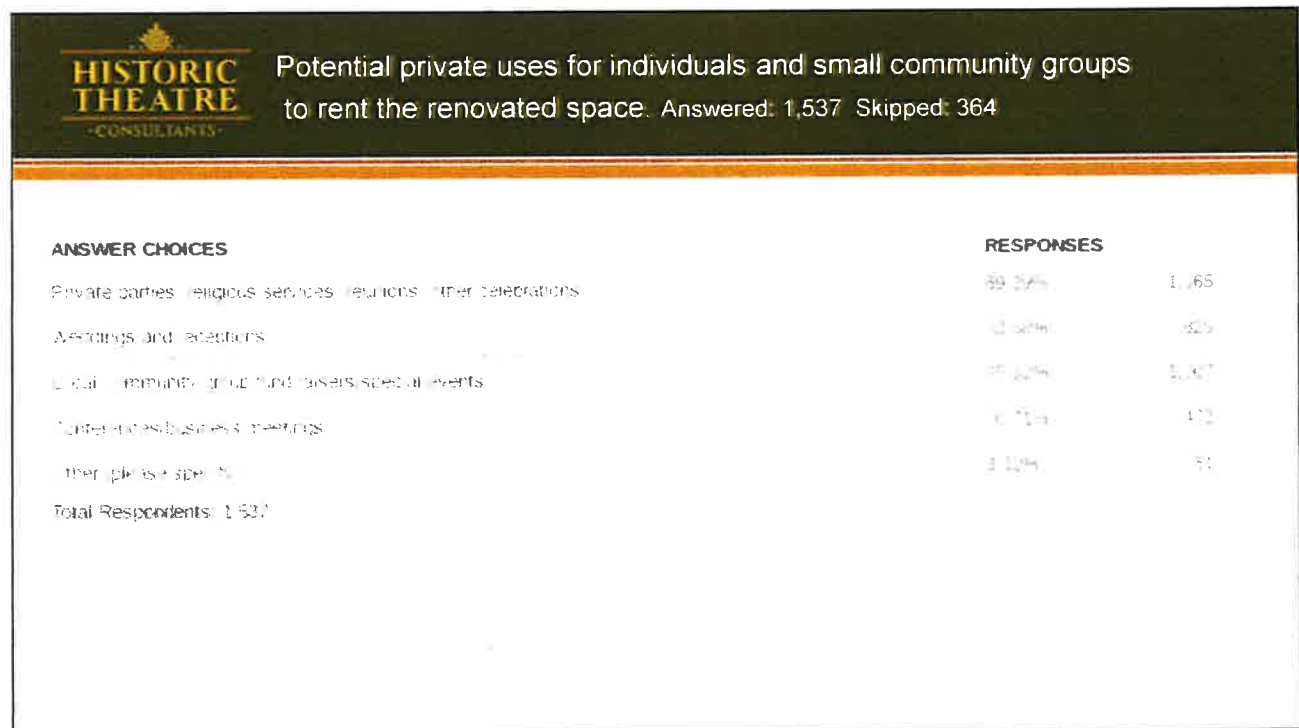
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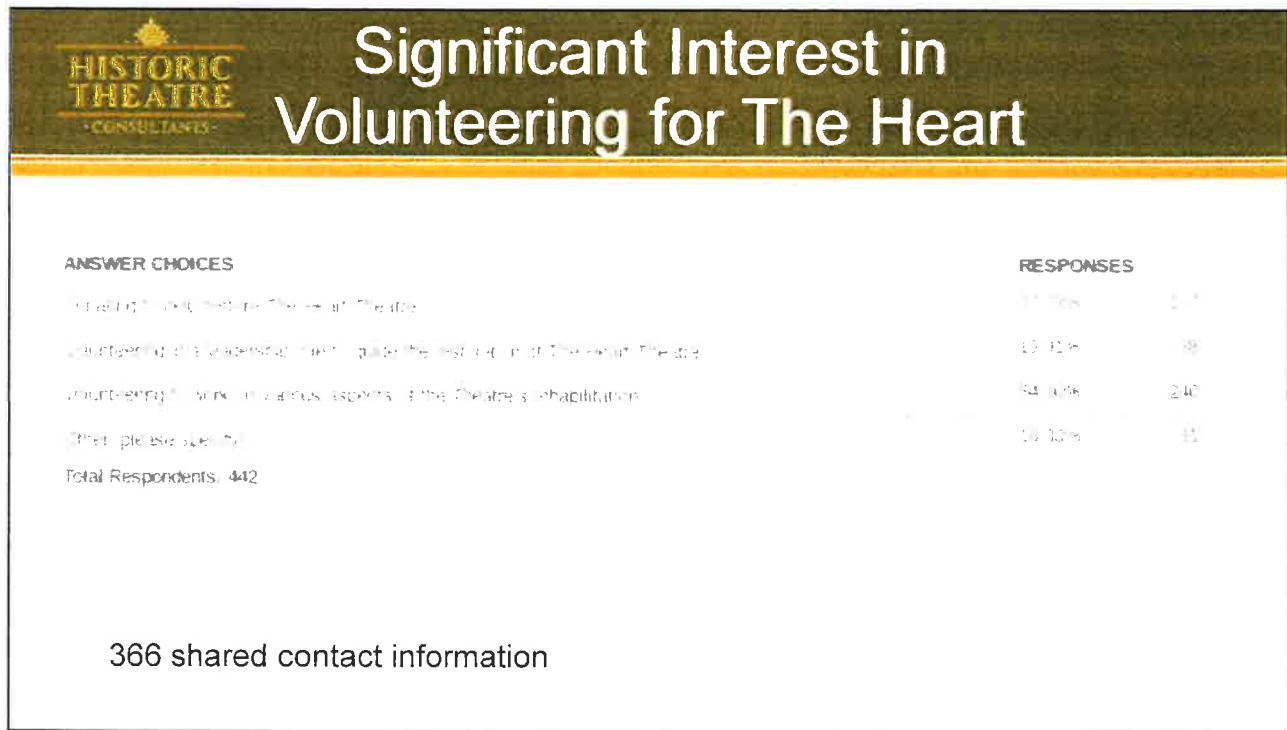
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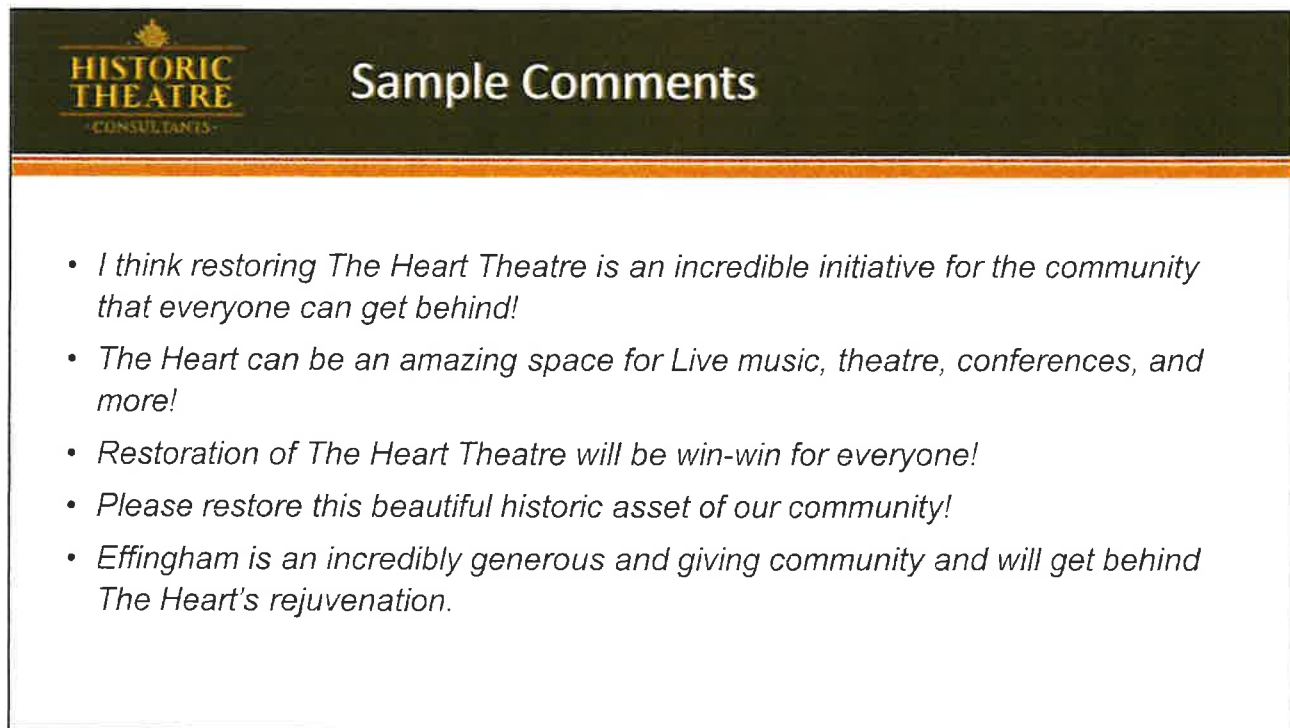
29



30



31



32



Q3. Entertainment Habits - Wherever you live or travel, how often do you go out for the activities below?

Answered: 1,650 Skipped: 251

	NEVER	WEEKLY OR MORE	ABOUT 1X A MONTH	ABOUT 1X EVERY FEW MONTHS	ABOUT 1X A YEAR	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Downtown Effingham shopping, business events	10.86% 16	40.21% 710	15.11% 673	11.06% 213	2.94% 54	1,641	3.77
Cultural events (Effingham Performance Center, Springfield, St. Louis, other venues)	4.47% 72	6.02% 107	26.31% 408	42.72% 668	20.48% 308	1,641	3.73
Movies	5.75% 93	6.02% 102	21.24% 440	42.23% 662	19.46% 298	1,641	3.61

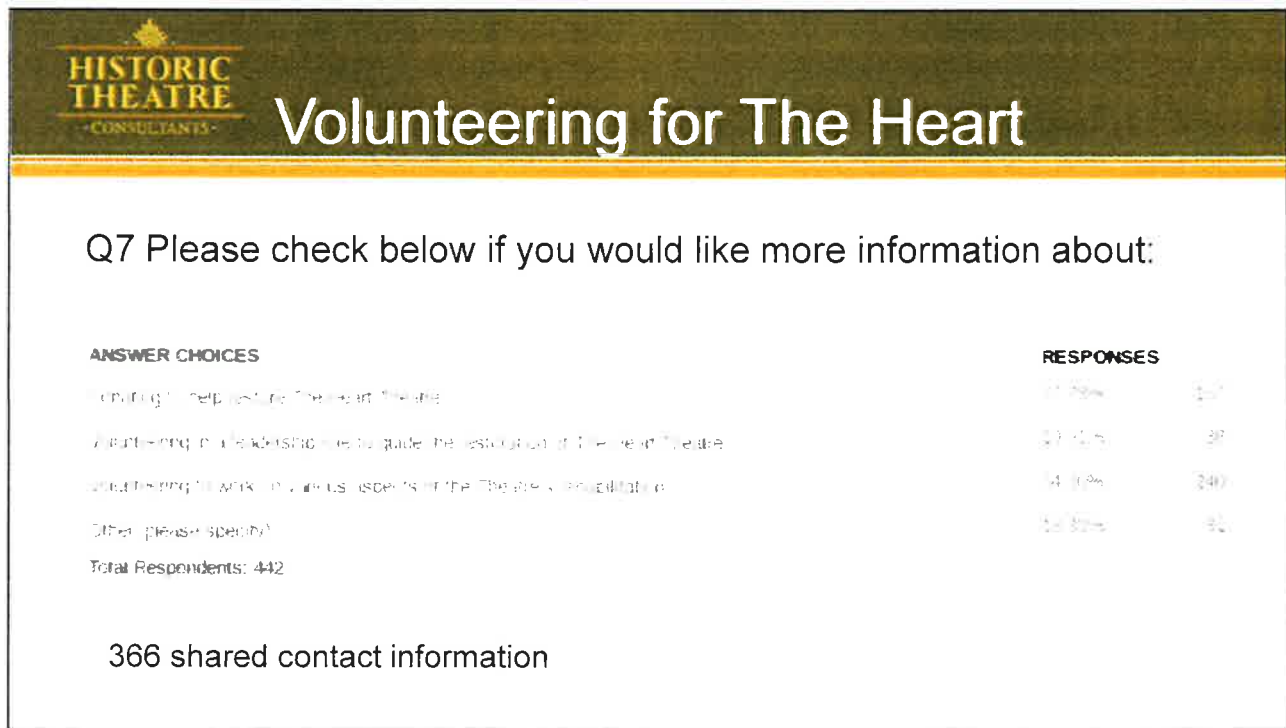
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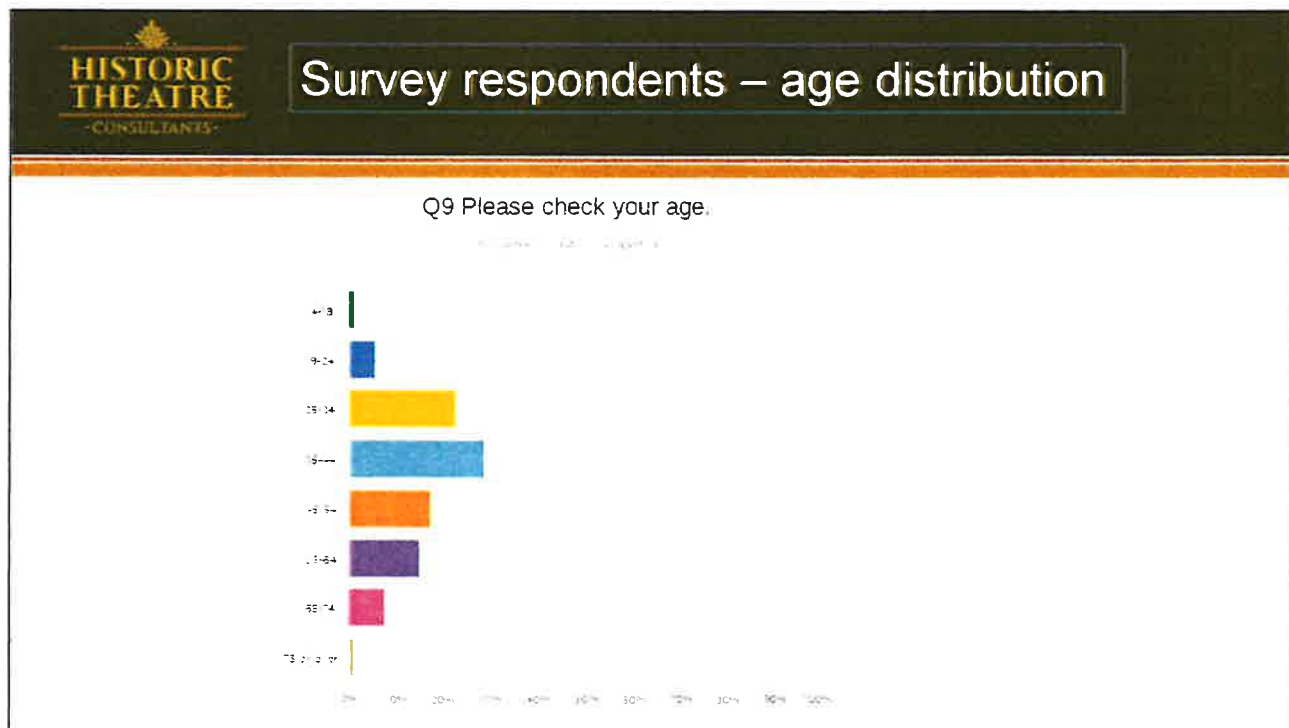
Q6 If you attend events at the future restored Heart Theatre, how likely are you to eat out at dining and drinking establishments before or after? On a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 being Very Unlikely and 5 being Very Likely, please check one. 1,641 respondents

Average number - 4.5

34



35



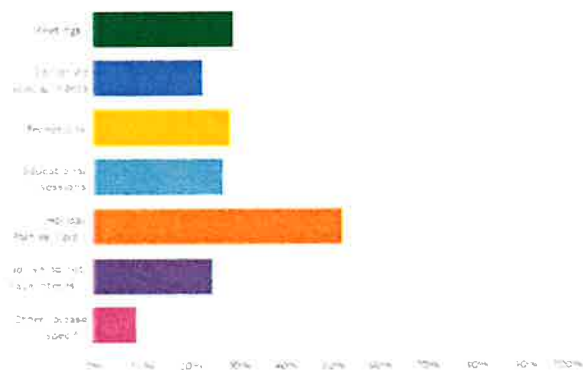
36

Business Survey Responses (141)

37



Q1. Does your company have interest in a unique historic, off-site meeting location for employees, clients, special programs or other purposes? Check all that apply. Of 141 respondents, 25% said No Interest



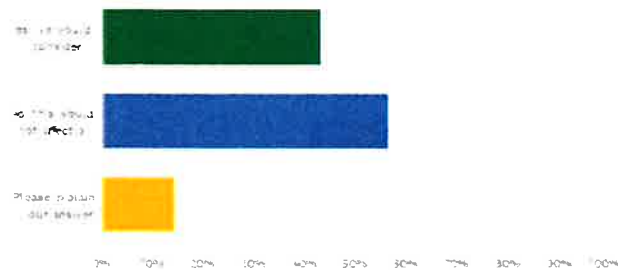
38

Q3. What capacity space are you interested in? Select those that apply and the expected frequency of need. (106 responded)

Frequency	1-2X/YEAR	3-5X/YEAR	6-10X/YEAR	MONTHLY	TOTAL
1-10 people	30 (25%) 28	10 (8%) 5	5 (4%) 3	2 (1%) 1	47
25-50 people	52 (32%) 34	9 (6%) 4	2 (1%) 1	4 (3%) 2	41
51-100 people	77 (42%) 24	9 (5%) 3	6 (4%) 2	6 (4%) 2	31
100+ people	60 (37%) 14	13 (8%) 3	4 (3%) 1	21 (14%) 5	29

39

Q4. The vision for The Heart's restoration is to create a truly beautiful one-of-a-kind venue unrivaled by other area facilities. Would this make a difference in the number of times your business might rent it and your willingness to pay a higher-than-average rental fee? (83 responded)



40



Q5. How important are the following amenities for your business functions? Please respond using the scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being Not Very Important and 5 being Very Important. (86 responded)

	VERY UNIMPORTANT	UNIMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
High-speed internet	11.50% (10)	11.50% (10)	21.00% (18)	33.70% (29)	18.30% (16)	86	3.36
High-speed Wi-Fi throughout building	12.70% (11)	12.70% (11)	20.90% (18)	33.70% (29)	19.90% (17)	86	3.17
Concierge service	8.80% (8)	12.70% (11)	14.00% (12)	33.70% (29)	30.80% (27)	86	3.25
Full bar or cocktail bar	16.20% (14)	12.70% (11)	14.00% (12)	15.10% (13)	42.00% (36)	86	3.23
Other	4.50% (4)	12.70% (11)	14.00% (12)	33.70% (29)	35.10% (30)	86	3.00

41



Q6. Please check below if you would like more information about donating, volunteering, sponsorships. (27 responded)

ANSWER CHOICES

Donating to preserve the heart Theatre

Volunteering in a leadership role to guide the heart Theatre

Volunteering to work in various aspects of the Theatre's operation

Sponsorships of important events

Total Respondents: 27

RESPONSES

15.19% 4

37.04% 10

37.04% 10

17.78% 5

42

Focus Group (25p) & Community Meeting Input (65p)

What do the customers want?

43



Insights

- The Heart's size, scale and atmosphere are exactly what is needed and will be supported!
- A multi-purpose community venue will be well supported. *'The Heart of the community.'*
- Keep the community involved!
- Make it Fun— Effingham is an event-crazy town that loves to dress up.
- Keep price-points affordable for all audiences.
- Amy's leadership and investment have ignited the community's energy and enthusiasm. *'I'm NOT STOPPING.'*
Love love love the idea of restoring this beauty and enhancing the architectural elements and beyond. Art Deco / Glam with a touch of amazing!! I can't wait!!

44

Case Studies

45



Case Study Egyptian Theatre – Coos Bay, OR

- *Built in 1925*
- *2014 reopening*
- *720 Seats*
- *Music, film, comedy*



46



Case Study – West Bend Theatre, West Bend, WI

- *Built in 1929*
- *350 seats*
- *Restored and reopened 2020*



47

Next Steps for The Heart

48



Organizational Best Practices

- 501 (c) 3 Establishment
- Board Development/Recruitment
- National Register Nomination
- Volunteer Engagement (ongoing)
- Staffing Model & Annual Budgets (Ops manual)
- Clear Roles, Expectations and Outcomes

49



Program Development

- Mix and Frequency
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- Partnerships & Co-promotions
- Niche Exploration (Gaming, Sports, etc.)

50



Design & Construction

- Building Envelope, Structural and MEP Evaluation
- Historic Elements investigation & Identification
- RFP? Scope of Work and Phasing
- Define Physical Building Changes for Programming
- Construction Budget
- Tangible Physical Progress
- Milestones
- Architect

51



Fund Development

- Target Fundraising Goal with an Endowment
- Public/Private Mix
- Naming and other Donor Recognition Opportunities
- Donation "Cycle"

52

Marketing and Communications

- Establish Durable Channels Reaching different Audiences
- Regular Schedule of Communication
- Transparency Where Appropriate
- Video & Still Images
- Media Opportunities via press releases
- Use the Heart Windows to Talk to Public

53

Volunteer Engagement

- Managed by a Specific Person
- ID Tasks and Projects w/Deadlines
- Opportunities to Recognize Service
- Solicit Input/Creates a Sense of Ownership
- Volunteers Become Community Ambassadors
- SWAG

54

Timeline

By the End of FY 2022

- Complete 501 (c)3 Process
- NR Nomination Confirmed
- Volunteer & Community Thank You
- Building Winterization
- Building Lights on Timer/Windows Painted
- Insurance?

55

Timeline

FY 2023 (January-June)

- Structural Review
- DRAFT Rehabilitation Budget
- Clear Process Established for Professional Services
- DRAFT Operational Model
- Fundraising for Façade Project
- Community Event (January 25, 1940)

56

Timeline

FY 2023 (July-December)

- Begin Façade Restoration
- Finalize Rehabilitation Professionals Team
- Begin Quiet Phase of Fundraising
- Historic Preservation Investigation (Paint)
- Planning for Heart B-day event (January 25, 2024)

57

Discussion



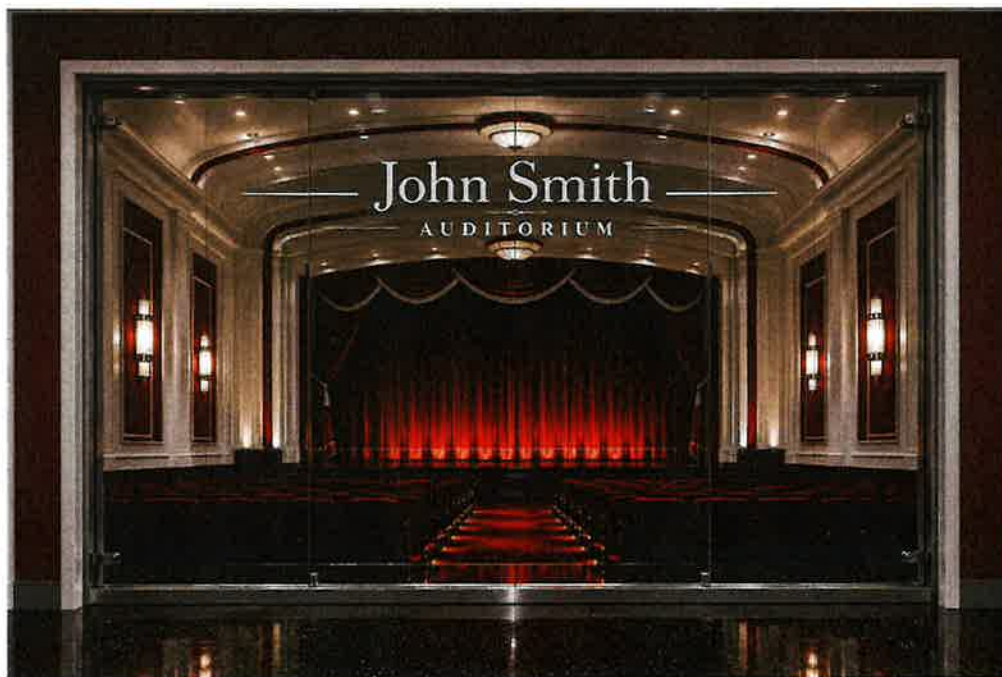
58

Appendix D

Appendix D Conceptual Renderings



Restored Exterior Conceptual Rendering

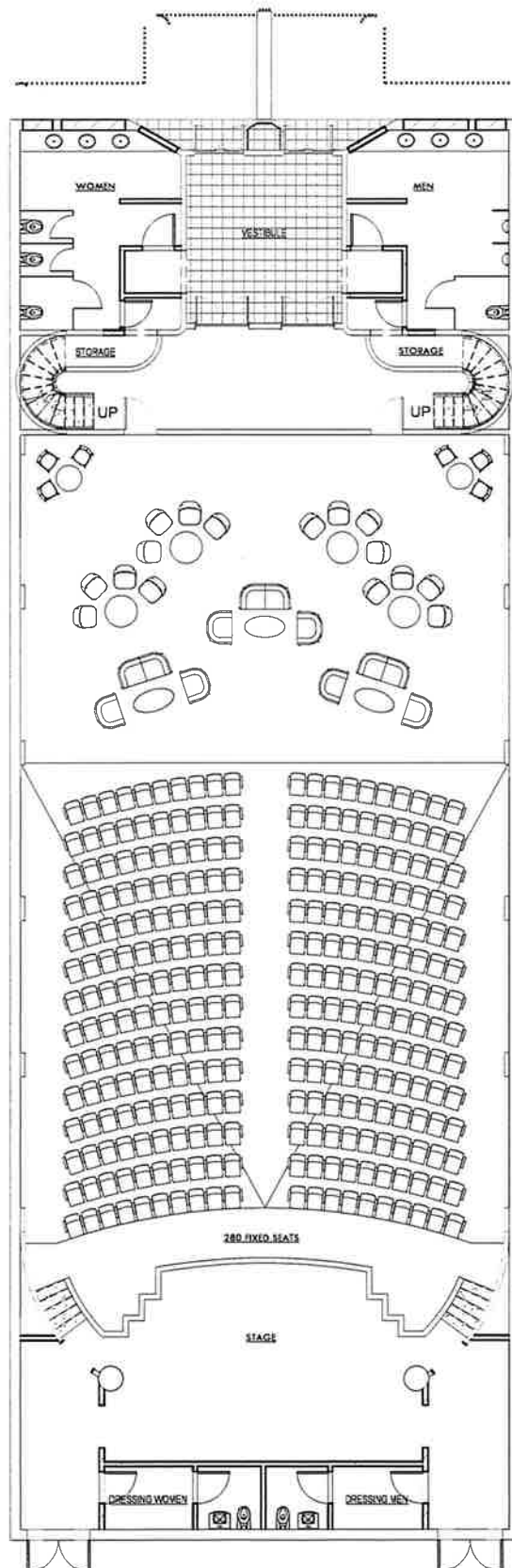


Conceptual Rendering of Interior Auditorium Naming Rights Glass Wall

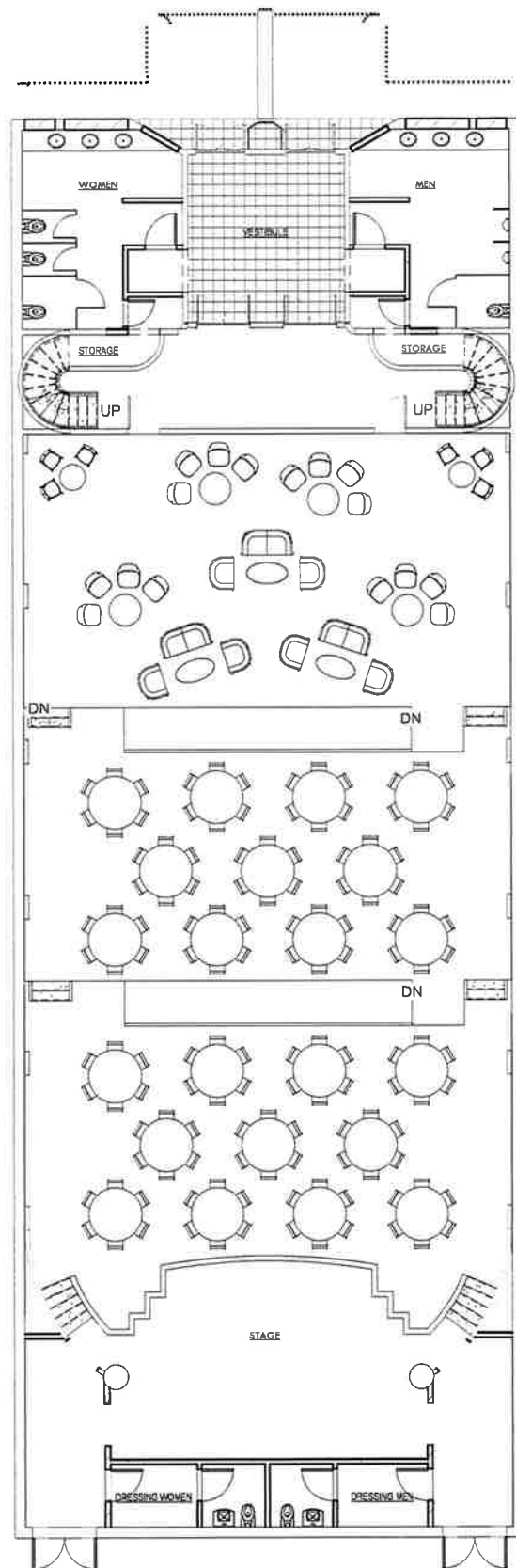


Conceptual Rendering of Interior Auditorium Set Banquet Style for Formal Event

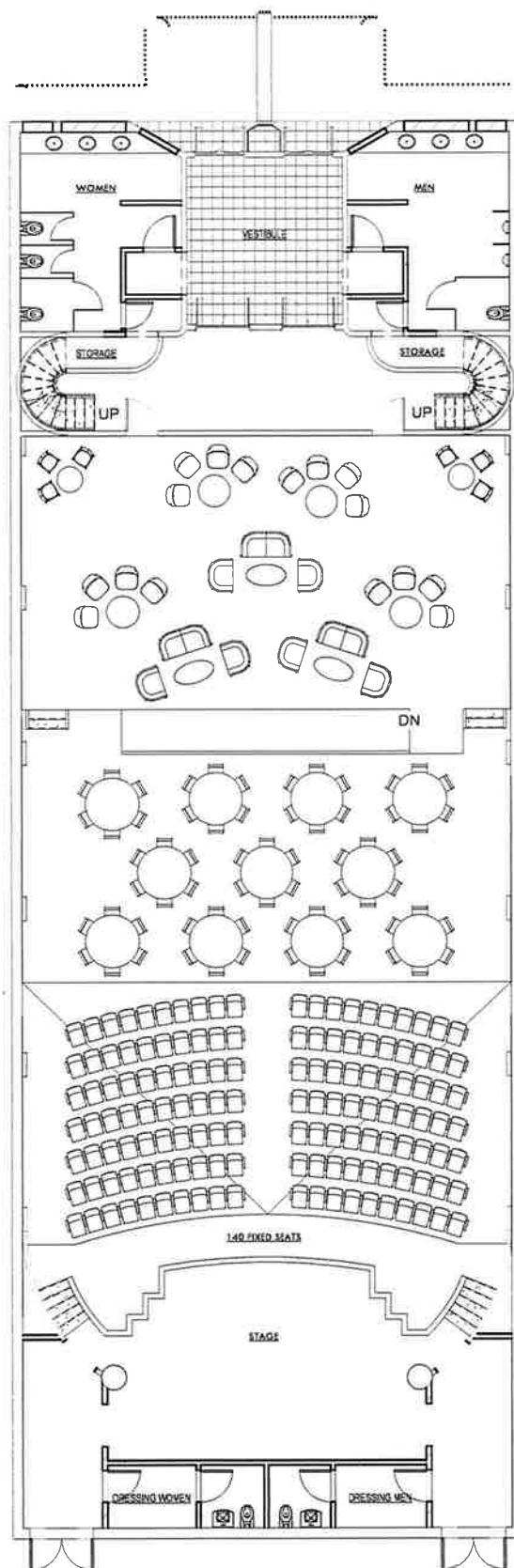
Architectural renderings follow on the next few pages which include options for two-three tiered levels in the auditorium which can be set in a variety of ways (seats that appear to be fixed but can fold down into the floor to be stored; banquet and cabaret-lounge style seating options as well.) Options 1b and 1c have been selected by the Board as well as 1d for the second level and the next set of plans will be developed after engineering and other assessments. (Preliminary assessments have already taken place.)



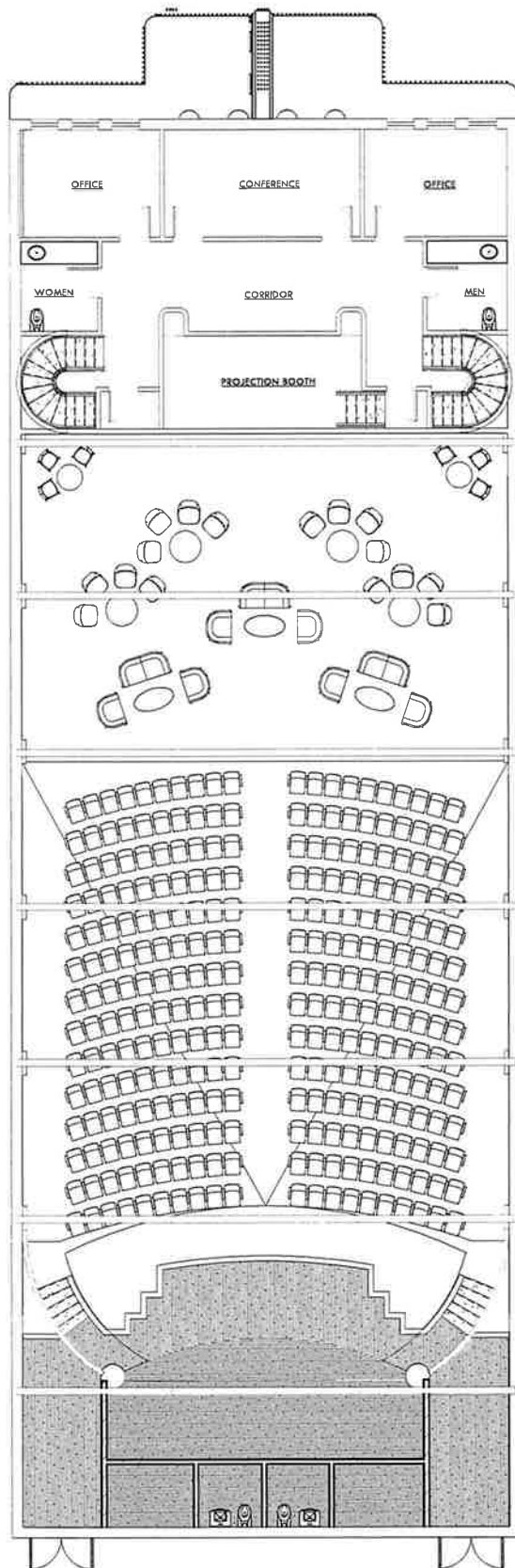
CONCEPT 1a



CONCEPT 1b



CONCEPT 1c



SECOND LEVEL

Appendix E

Appendix E Conceptual Restoration & Construction Budget Summary

Estimated Project Investment

The following budget represents the Board of Directors' current conceptual estimate for the restoration and rehabilitation of The Heart Theatre. It is based upon professional planning, preliminary design concepts, contractor input, and historic theatre restoration experience.

As the project advances through architectural design, engineering, fundraising, permitting, and bidding, individual line items may be refined. Accordingly, these figures should be viewed as planning estimates rather than final construction costs.

Project Component	Estimated Cost
Exterior Restoration & Building Envelope	\$1,000,000
Structural, Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing Systems	\$750,000
Interior Restoration & Finishes	\$875,000
Stage, Rigging, Lighting & Audio/Visual Systems	\$400,000
Seating, Furnishings & Equipment	\$300,000
Accessibility Improvements (ADA)	\$150,000
Architectural, Engineering & Professional Services	\$250,000
Permits, Contingency & Project Management	\$525,000
Total Estimated Restoration Investment	Approximately \$4,250,000

Phased Construction Strategy

To reduce financial risk and protect the historic structure, restoration is anticipated to occur in two major phases.

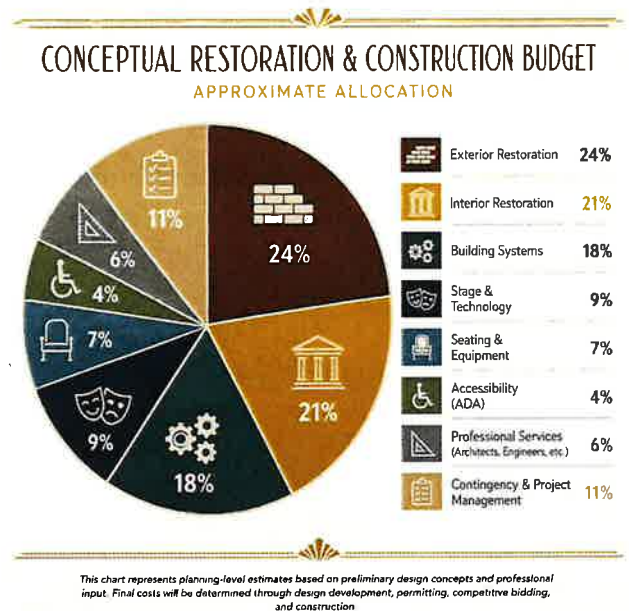
Phase I – Exterior Restoration

- Building stabilization
- Roof replacement and weatherproofing
- Masonry restoration

- Windows and storefront restoration
- Historic marquee restoration
- Exterior lighting
- Site improvements

Phase II – Interior Restoration

- Auditorium restoration
- Flexible seating systems
- Stage construction and backstage improvements
- Lobby and public spaces
- Restrooms and accessibility improvements
- Building systems
- Theatre technology
- FF&E (Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment)



Responsible Stewardship

Heart Theatre, Inc. is committed to managing all project funds with transparency and fiscal responsibility. As detailed design progresses, the Board will continue refining construction budgets, obtaining competitive bids, pursuing value engineering where appropriate, and seeking additional grant and philanthropic support to maximize every investment.

Important Planning Note

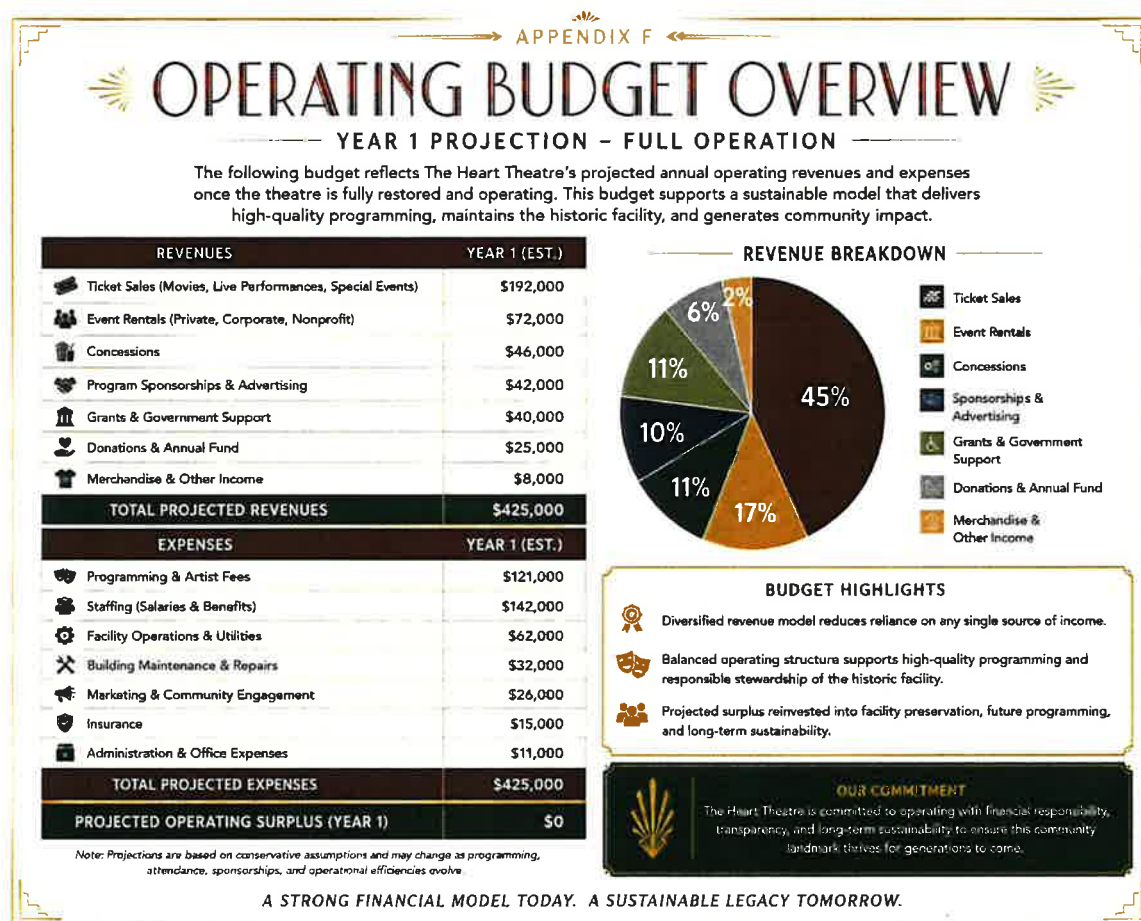
This budget is conceptual and has been prepared solely for long-range planning and fundraising purposes. It does not represent final construction documents, contractor bids, or guaranteed project costs. Final project costs will be determined following completion of architectural and engineering design, permitting, and competitive procurement.

Appendix F

Appendix F

Conceptual Operating Budget Summary: Planning for Long-Term Sustainability

Appendix C represents the preliminary operating assumptions developed during initial feasibility study. This section includes an updated financial model supersedes these estimates and reflects updated operating assumptions developed through subsequent planning and benchmarking with historic theatre professionals (listed in Appendix A.)



The Heart Theatre's operating budget has been intentionally developed to reflect a conservative, diversified, and sustainable business model. Rather than relying on a single source of revenue, the theatre is designed to generate operating support through multiple complementary income streams—including earned revenue, rentals, sponsorships, philanthropy, grants, concessions, and community partnerships.

This approach reflects best practices among successful community performing arts centers across the country and helps protect the organization from fluctuations in any one revenue source.

The Year One operating budget assumes approximately 130 events, representing nearly 19,500 annual visits to downtown Effingham. Programming includes movies, concerts, live theatre, educational performances, nonprofit events, weddings, business rentals, and community celebrations. As attendance and programming mature over the first five years, both revenues and operating capacity are projected to grow steadily while maintaining responsible financial management.

Revenue Philosophy

The operating model has been intentionally diversified so that no single funding source is expected to support the organization alone.

Revenue is projected to come from:

- Admissions and ticket sales
- Facility rentals
- Concessions and merchandise
- Corporate sponsorships and advertising
- Individual donations and annual giving
- Grants and foundation support
- Educational programming
- Special events and fundraising activities

This balanced approach reduces financial risk while allowing the theatre to remain accessible to a broad cross-section of the community.

Expense Philosophy

Operating expenses have been developed using comparable community performing arts centers and professional theatre management guidance.

The largest annual investments are expected to include:

- Professional staffing
- Programming and artist fees
- Facility operations and utilities
- Building maintenance
- Marketing and audience development
- Insurance
- Administrative support
- Technology and equipment maintenance

Because The Heart Theatre is intended to serve as a year-round community facility, the operating budget emphasizes maintaining a high-quality guest experience while protecting the historic building for future generations.

Conservative Financial Planning

The Board has intentionally adopted conservative financial assumptions throughout the five-year operating model.

Examples include:

- ✓ Conservative attendance estimates
- ✓ Gradual growth in programming
- ✓ Modest earned revenue projections
- ✓ Appropriate operating reserves
- ✓ Annual maintenance funding
- ✓ Planned capital replacement

This disciplined approach helps ensure that long-term sustainability is based on realistic expectations rather than optimistic assumptions.



Stewardship of Public and Private Investment

The restoration of The Heart Theatre represents a significant investment by private donors, foundations, businesses, and potentially public partners. The Board recognizes its responsibility to steward those investments with transparency and accountability.

Accordingly, Heart Theatre, Inc. is committed to:

- Annual independent financial reporting
- Board-approved operating budgets
- Strong internal financial controls
- Ongoing strategic planning
- Conservative fiscal management
- Performance measurement and regular reporting

The organization has also earned Candid's Platinum Seal of Transparency, the highest level of recognition awarded by the nation's leading nonprofit information organization for openness, financial accountability, and public reporting.

Looking Beyond Year One

While this appendix summarizes the first full year of operations, the accompanying five-year financial model demonstrates a measured path toward increasing attendance, expanded programming, and strengthened earned revenue.

By Year Five, annual programming is projected to grow to approximately 244 events, with a corresponding operating budget of approximately \$500,000. This gradual growth reflects a deliberate strategy of building organizational capacity over time rather than expanding too quickly.

The Board believes this phased approach positions The Heart Theatre to become one of the region's most sustainable community performing arts organizations while continuing to fulfill its mission of serving the residents of Effingham and the surrounding region.

Appendix G

140

141

142

The United States Department of the Interior approved the Illinois State Preservation Office's unanimous recommendation to list The Heart Theatre on the National Register of Historic Places, effective April 12, 2023.
United States Department of the Interior
 National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic

name Heart Theatre

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property N/A

Listing _____

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

street & 133 E. Jefferson Ave.

number _____

city or Effingham

town _____

state Illinois

county Effingham

zip code 62401

☐ not for
publication
☐ vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: ___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ___ A ___ B ___ C ___ D

Signature of certifying official/Title: Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Date _____

Illinois Department of Natural Resources - SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official _____

Date _____

Title _____

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

foundation: Masonry (brick and stone)

walls: Brick, Stone, Terra-Cotta

Wood Trusses, Asphalt Shingles

roof: + Single-Ply Membrane Roof

other: Glass Block, Glazing

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

front door, a large street-facing window, and a small bathroom in the southern portion of the space. There is a closet beside the bathroom. This is where one accesses the lighting system which lights the interior winding glass block stair risers to the second floor.

Foyer Interior:

Through the front doors, one enters the approximately 250-square-foot tiled foyer. A tile pattern covers the entire floor where the inner portion is comprised of 8" square pale-yellow tiles, inset with diamond-shaped corners of 2" square maroon tiles, and outlined to each edge of the room by 4" x 6" maroon tile. The floor is concrete. The foyer walls house two "Lobby Cards" per side showcasing "Upcoming Features." Continuing inward, there again are symmetric Art-Deco-style double doors entering/exiting the lobby which open to the main auditorium.

Lobby Interior:

The concession stand was in the lobby with a simple concrete floor. Symmetrically, on the northern walls, reside another two "Lobby Card" holders displaying yet more "Upcoming Features." The lobby ceiling houses the original recessed lights. On either side of the lobby, symmetrically, are the staircases—described below in the section about the second floor. Original back-lit Art-Deco signage for the Women's and Men's restrooms are still intact and located across from and on both sides of the concession stand, at the foot of the stairs, routing the patrons up the stairs to their respective rooms.

Movie Auditorium Interior:

Via double doors on both sides [east/west] of the concession stand, one enters the two-storied approximately 3,000-square-foot movie auditorium. The Theatre originally seated 850 then it was eventually whittled down to about 400 seats. The entrance into the Theatre is level with the street and alleyway, but the floor slopes downward by 6'9" at its very bottom, where there is a small and narrow stage. Just past the stage on both sides, east and west, are doors for emergency exit. This is where extreme slopes on both sides begin back upward toward the alleyway exits. At the lowest point, the ceiling height is 20' tall and at the street-level entrance to the auditorium it measures 13' tall. The seating configuration, which is no longer in place, was symmetrical and allowed for 10' of seating on both the east and west walls inward, each bordered by a 3' walkway and a 20' section of seating in the center. The 3' walkway heads downward on both sides and is entered from the lobby, toward the emergency exits, abutting the stage and screen area. Located behind the screen is a storage area, two closets, an electrical bank, and the old HVAC system. The ceiling has six oval ceiling recesses: five large recesses and one smaller directly in front of and above the stage. These recesses are outlined by east-west support beams combined with the curved portions of the oval.

Second Floor Interior:

The ascent to the second floor is via one of the two symmetrical curved staircases and their respective Art-Deco hand-railings, located on the east and west sides of the lobby. The stairs feature back-lit glass block risers. Two lit and recessed niches are located on both stairway walls heading up/down. The floor is concrete. At the top of the stairs are the projection room, the Ladies and Men's restrooms, three closets, an office, and a hallway. Original signage for the Ladies and Men restrooms are still intact and located above the door designating their respective gender. The signs are back-lit and feature a common Art-Deco font. The hallway has the original ceiling lighting still intact. The bathrooms' interior tile designs on the floor and walls are indicative and in keeping with the Art-Deco theme. The Ladies' restroom consists of a blue and pink-tiled color scheme,

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

There is a significant leak inside the movie auditorium toward the southeastern section about 30' north of the alleyway. The Theatre is also in need of a new roofing system.

The ceiling and original lighting fixtures in the movie auditorium were removed. At this juncture, it is unclear if the lighting fixtures are still available, onsite and/or functional if so. The auditorium needs all new electric, flooring, wall/ceiling repairs where applicable, and HVAC.

As part of the stage, the actual movie screen is still on location and shrouded by curtains, albeit both of which are deteriorated and probably unusable.

Both rear alleyway emergency-exit doors need to be replaced and the brickwork around it needs tuck-pointing.

The toll that climate and neglect has taken over the years is evident on the second floor. The ceilings in the restrooms and office on the second floor have been removed due to water damage over the years. The second floor needs all new electric, hallway flooring, plumbing, ceiling/wall repairs, and HVAC.

The north-facing walls/plaster on the second floor are subject to disintegration due to the lack of climate conditioning, tuckpointing leaks, and roof leakage over the years.

Original signage for the Ladies and Men's restrooms is still intact and located above the door designating its respective gender. The signs are back-lit and implementing Art-Deco font. One of the signs is cracked and needs replacing.

Other than typical wear and tear of bathroom usage and time, the rooms are semi-intact to the original. The actual water-closets were replaced over time, yet the mirrors, pedestal sinks, and urinal are original. Both bathrooms need new plumbing, electrical, wall work, ceilings, water-closets, a urinal, tile replacement where applicable and HVAC.

As for the exterior brick work, a portion of the southeastern exterior wall is exposed to the elements, the area where it is not abutting the adjacent building. This is an approximately 30' section. This is the point where water is entering at the foundation around the southeastern area of the building and is the primary reason interior plaster walls in that area are buckling. Guttering in the southeastern portion of the building and alleyway need replacement and are further exacerbating the tuck-pointing, leaking, & deterioration issues. All exterior brick walls and parapets need tuck-pointing.

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham ,Illinois
County and State

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Carl T. Meyer, Architect

Charles Dawson, Painter

Roy M. Kennedy, Construction

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

to being the location for date nights or family movie adventures, the Heart marquee also served as the backdrop for many a high school prom or senior photograph.

Some Effingham memories as described by Effingham historian Delaine Donaldson:

Some talk about their early childhood when the whole family went to the 'show' to enjoy an evening together in the comfort of an air-conditioned building when their homes did not have such a convenience. Other memories are part of the teenage years, when the theater was part of the dating scene.

The reasons for being in the Heart were as varied as any individual's life experiences are different from another, but there was, nonetheless, a commonality in minds of the movie-goers with a sense of excitement and anticipation when purchasing the ticket often after standing in a long line on the sidewalk in front of the very brightly-lit location.³

In a 2019 Effingham Daily News article, Jane Loy Ries shared: "I remember the free movies at Halloween and Christmas when I was a kid. If your mom was shopping or had errands to run, she could drop you off at the show. That made both mothers and children happy. 'Snow White and the Three Stooges,' 'Francis the Talking Mule' and 'Ma and Pa Kettle at Home' are some of the free movies I remember."⁴

Philanthropist Amy Van Bergen, who grew up in Effingham in the 1960's, recalls her first movie at the Heart Theatre and later her friend Nicole taking her senior prom photo atop the marquee in the 1980's.⁵

As for the Heart Theatre's opening night in January of 1940, it was the talk of the entire town.

On January 25, 1940, at 7 pm, the Heart Theatre opened its doors to the public with the pre-release of "His Girl Friday" starring Cary Grant, Rosalind Russell, and Ralph Bellamy. The crowd was large and the Theatre was the talk of the entire community.

The Heart was built upon the former site of Hightower Garage and is located in the commercial district of Effingham, IL. at 133 E. Jefferson Ave. One newspaper described it as "a boon to the business district of Effingham in that it has also provided new locations for two other businesses," Timperman's new store, the Heart Jewelry, was on the east side of the theatre's entrance while candy and sandwich

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

The Heart Theatre is an iconic example of pre-war Art-Deco architecture: "Area residents knew, of course, the name 'Heart' was the result of the slogan, 'Effingham, the Heart of the U.S.A.," a description created by Ada Kepley, an Effingham resident and major personality in America's women's history."¹¹

Architect Carl T. Meyer of Springfield was involved in several other Frisina-owned theatres in the same timeframe as the Heart. Mr. Meyer also renewed a major Springfield landmark, the South Town Theater. The original theater was built in 1915 and in 1936 a new facade was designed by Meyer. The theater building today is the home of the Walch Studio. The exterior of the theater was recently restored through grant money provided by the city of Springfield. Other theaters found with Mr. Meyer's fingerprint are the Senate Theater (1939), known previously as the Gaiety Theater, and the Pantheon Theater (1926.) Mr. Meyer was also involved in assisting the Kerosotes Theater company.¹²

The Heart Theatre is described as a valued gem in the community due to its unique exterior design features and the representative styles' dwindling inventory:

At its time of build, the new theater was among one of the most modernistic in South Central Illinois; both the interior and exterior. This was part of the Frisina family's line of theaters. Dominic Frisina, of the Frisina Amusement Company, built many area theaters. The Heart was designed by the Springfield, IL. architect Carl T. Meyers. The Frisina family was from Taylorville, IL.¹³

In 2022, the Heart Theatre, despite its closed doors, remains a valued gem of downtown Effingham and the community looks forward to restoring it to its original historic Art Deco design.

Heart Theatre

Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Pinder, K. (2022, July 6). vanbergenamy@gmail.com. Pinder is Dean of Yale Art.

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**Previous documentation on file
(NPS):**

Primary location of additional data:

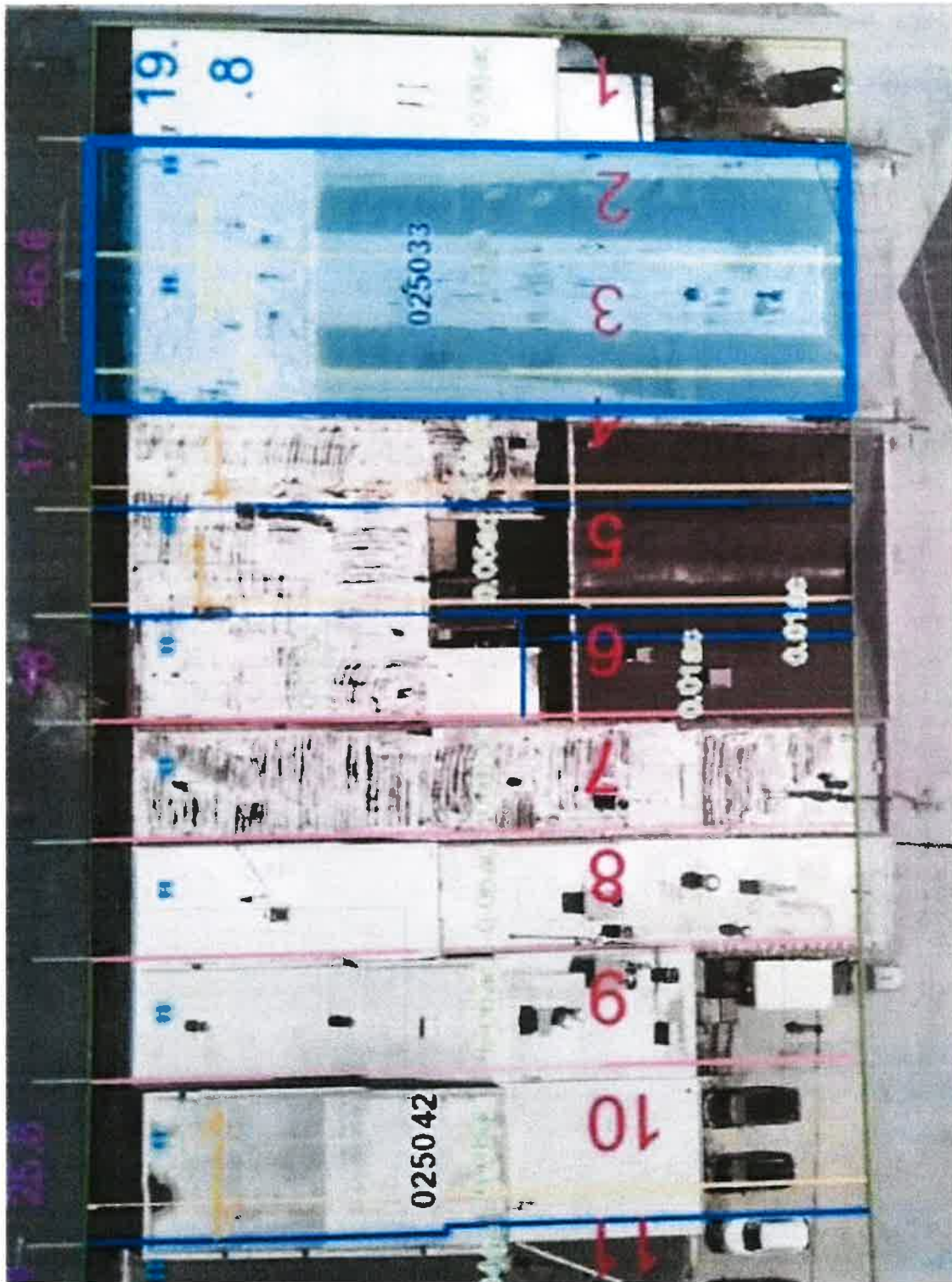
- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State



Local Location Map:

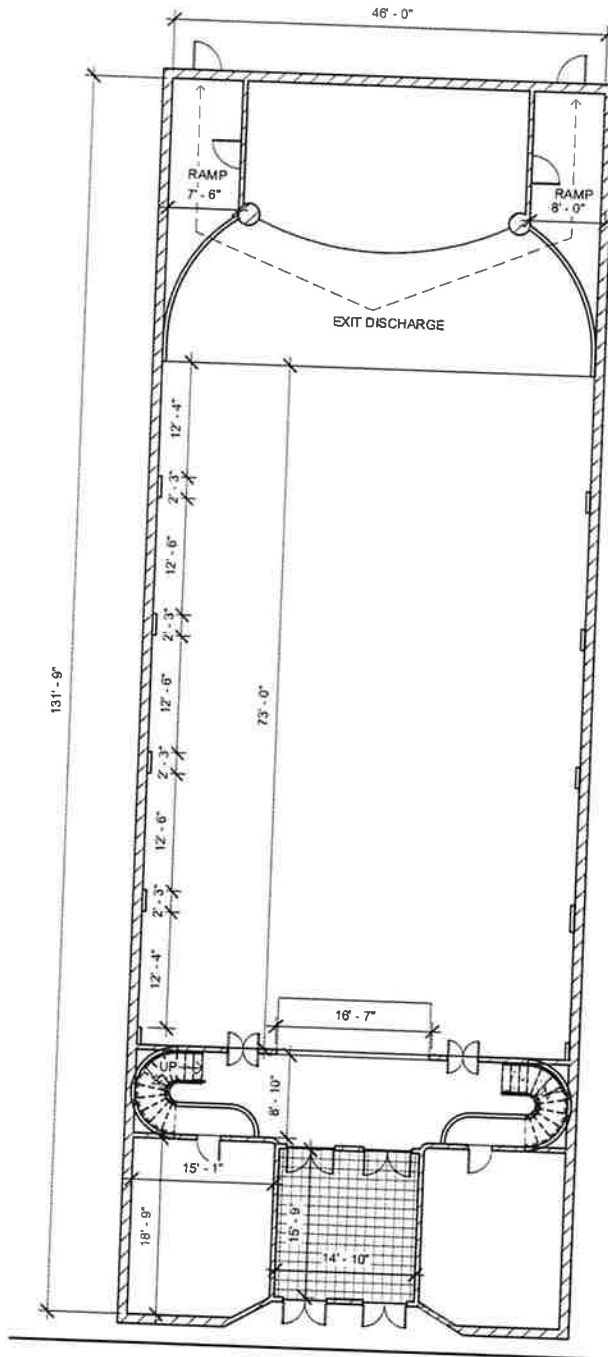
← WEST NORTH ^ SOUTH v EAST →

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

Floor Plans:

← EAST SOUTH ^ NORTH v WEST →



Heart Theatre

Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

IL Effingham County Heart Theatre 20 photos

Name of Property:

Heart Theatre

City or Vicinity:

Effingham

County:

Effingham

State: **IL**

Photographer:

Erich Kollinger

Date Photographed:

December 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

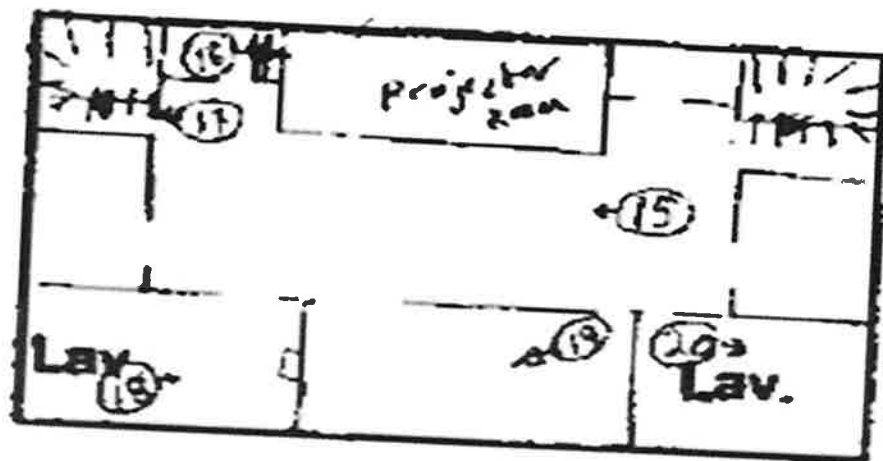
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_001 of 20: Facade, front of building, south facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_002 of 20: Front of building, west commercial space, SE facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_003 of 20: Front of building, west door entrance, south facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_004 of 20: Back of building, rear alleyway, northwest facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_005 of 20: 1st floor, inside vestibule, east side, south facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_006 of 20: 1st floor, inside vestibule, west side, south facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_007 of 20: 1st floor, stairwell up, west side, east facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_008 of 20: 1st floor, concession area, east side, west facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_009 of 20: 1st floor, movie auditorium, south facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0010 of 20: 1st floor, movie auditorium, west side, south facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0011 of 20: 1st floor, movie auditorium, southeast facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0012 of 20: 1st floor, movie auditorium, west side, north facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0013 of 20: 1st floor, movie auditorium, stage front, west facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0014 of 20: 1st floor, back-stage, east side, west facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0015 of 20: 2nd floor, hallway, west side, east facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0016 of 20: 2nd floor, projector room, east side, west facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0017 of 20: 2nd floor, stairwell down, east side
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0018 of 20: 2nd floor, men's bathroom sink, west facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0019 of 20: 2nd floor, office space, west side, east facing
- IL_Effingham County_Heart Theatre_0020 of 20: 2nd floor, ladies bathroom, west facing

Heart Theatre
Name of Property

Effingham, Illinois
County and State

2nd floor photo locations:

Second Floor



United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Put Here

Name of Property

Heart Theatre

County and State

Effingham, Effingham, IL.

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 27**List of Figures**

(Resize, compact, and paste images of maps and historic documents in this section. Place captions, with figure numbers above each image. Orient maps so that north is at the top of the page, all document should be inserted with the top toward the top of the page.)

ADDENDUM'S & NOTES:

- Heart Theatre Effingham Photos.zip = Pictures were uploaded separately in a zip file through the Illinois.gov large file transfer system: <https://filet.illinois.gov/filet/PIMupload.asp>.
- Heart Theatre GIS Location Map PDF
- Heart Theatre Local Location Map PDF
- Heart Theatre Site Plan PDF
- Heart Theatre Preliminary Approval (to the National Register, dated May 22, 2015) PDF
- Heart Theatre 1st Floor Photo Location Map JPG
- Heart Theatre 2nd Floor Photo Location Map JPG



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)



1. Is the City being asked to fund the entire project?

No. The Heart Theatre restoration is planned as a public-private partnership. Funding will come from a combination of private philanthropy, grants, historic preservation incentives, earned revenue, sponsorships, and other public funding sources. The City is one important partner—not the sole funding source.



2. How much financial support is being requested from the City?

The exact timing and amount of any City participation will depend on the overall funding strategy and project schedule. Any future request would be brought before the City through its normal public budgeting and approval processes.



3. When would City funding be needed?

The project is expected to occur over multiple phases. Any City participation would likely align with major construction milestones and only after significant private fundraising and other funding commitments have been secured.



4. How will the theatre sustain operations after restoration?

The Heart Theatre has developed a diversified operating model based on:

- Ticket sales
- Concessions
- Sponsorships
- Facility rentals
- Grants
- Annual fundraising
- Merchandise and other earned income

This balanced approach is designed to reduce reliance on any single revenue source while supporting long-term sustainability.



5. Will the theatre require annual operating subsidies from the City?

No annual operating subsidy is assumed in the projected operating budget. Like many nonprofit arts organizations, the theatre will continue fundraising and grant seeking, but the goal is for earned revenue and community support to sustain operations.



11. How will the City know funds are being managed responsibly?

The Heart Theatre is committed to transparency through:

- Independent financial oversight
- Annual budgeting
- Board governance
- Professional project management
- Competitive bidding where appropriate
- Regular communication with funding partners



13. What is the vision for success?

Success means restoring a beloved landmark into a financially sustainable, year-round community destination that enriches quality of life, strengthens downtown Effingham, supports local businesses, and serves generations to come.



6. What grants or outside funding sources are available?

Potential funding sources include:

- Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit programs
- Illinois historic preservation grants
- USDA Rural Development programs
- Tourism and economic development grants
- Foundation grants
- Corporate sponsorships
- Individual philanthropy
- Naming opportunities and capital campaign gifts

The organization will pursue every appropriate funding opportunity to maximize outside investment.



7. How does this project benefit Effingham?

The Heart Theatre will:

- Preserve one of Effingham's most recognizable historic landmarks.
- Increase downtown visitation and spending.
- Expand arts, entertainment, and educational opportunities.
- Provide affordable community gathering space.
- Support local businesses through increased foot traffic.
- Enhance tourism and community pride.



8. Why restore this building instead of constructing a new facility?

Historic theatres are proven economic development anchors. Restoring the Heart Theatre preserves an irreplaceable community asset while creating a flexible modern venue that can serve residents, businesses, schools, and visitors for decades to come.



9. Who owns the building?

The building is owned by The Heart Theatre, Inc., a nonprofit organization created specifically to preserve, restore, and operate the theatre for public benefit. The property was donated to the nonprofit organization in December 2024.



10. What happens if fundraising takes longer than expected?

The project has been intentionally designed to move forward in phases. Construction will proceed only as funding is secured, reducing financial risk while allowing fundraising to continue.



12. How can community members or businesses become involved?

Residents and businesses can support the project through donations, sponsorships, volunteer service, advocacy, in-kind contributions, attendance at events, and participation in the upcoming capital campaign.



"Our goal is simple: preserve the past, enrich the present, and invest in Effingham's future."