

Published November 13th, 2019

Nonprofit \$2M nearer to lighting up the Park Theater

By Pippa Fisher



Photo Lamo archive

The recently-formed nonprofit Park Theater Trust has announced it has a contingent donation of \$2 million, which it says will go a long way toward its goal of protecting and renovating Lafayette's iconic Park Theater.

"This generous anchor donation is great news for The Park Theater Trust just as we begin our fundraising efforts in earnest," said TPTT Board Member Kathy Bowles in an announcement released Oct. 25.

The trust evolved from a volunteer task force, called together last year by the city of Lafayette to explore ways to protect the theater for future generations.

Even though the theater has been shuttered since 2005, saving it remains one of the top community concerns. The trust has an extensive and growing mailing list for volunteers, another indication of interest in the community. TPTT is actively seeking new members for its board of directors, especially those with backgrounds in construction, finance, and fund development.

A classic example of Art Deco's international offshoot Streamline Moderne, the 250-seat theater, built in 1941 was designed by cinema architect William B. David.

TPTT's aim is to purchase the theater, refurbish it and then lease it to an experienced, for-profit operator, reopening as an accessible and inclusive, community-centered cinema, arts and culture hub. The targeted opening date is fall 2021, coinciding with the 80th anniversary of the Park Theater's original opening in 1941.

The asking price for the property, including the fourplex residences behind the theater, is \$2.95 million. The trust estimates its fundraising goals from \$6 million to \$8 million.

TPTT Member Tracey Karsten Farrell says they anticipate fundraising through grants, activities, and private donations will start either late this year or early 2020. "Once we have met our 'hard shell' requirements, our for-profit operator will do the improvements required for its programming and lease the building from TPTT," she says.

Farrell says this is all about community. "Think about it - when the Park first opened in 1941, people were finally putting the Great Depression behind them, but there was growing concern and uncertainty about the war abroad. Having its own cinema was a real point of pride for our little burg, but also a special way to engage with each other and escape into all the fun entertainment Hollywood offered, without having to travel very far," says Farrell. And she says it can do the same again.

"It's something we can all embrace as a community and by protecting it in the Trust, also kind of pay forward," says Farrell. " 'Movies at the Park Theater' is something we would all love to do again - with each other, with our kids and grandkids - and what a wonderful community asset for all those folks to follow!"

Those interested in joining the board of directors should contact Kathy Bowles at bowleskathleen3@gmail.com

Further information on TPTT can be found at www.parktheatertrust.org

Reach the reporter at: pippa@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA