

Brownfields Success Story

The Park Theatre - New England's Newest Entertainment Showplace Jaffrey, N.H.

The reinvention of the historic Park Theatre was just what the town of Jaffrey needed to boost economic development in its downtown. Located in the geographical center of New England and home to Mount Monadnock, the second most climbed mountain in the world, Jaffrey is just a 90-minute drive from Boston and has a small regional airport.

The Park Theatre, founded in 1922 as a movie and vaudeville house, was the center of community life until it closed in 1976 and became a retail store. In 2005 a grassroots campaign was launched to buy and restore the building. After it became apparent that the building would be too costly to refurbish, it was demolished in 2013 and the money was raised to clean and redevelop the site.

Priming the Property for Redevelopment

When approached by the Park Theatre's project team in 2012, the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) agreed to assess the property. The Planning Commission determined the extent of hazardous building materials and removed an underground oil storage tank. SWRPC's environmental assessment, which uncovered a need for a significant remediation effort to remove asbestos and lead paint, along with the non-profit's determination that the old theatre had structural issues and required better access for persons with disabilities, helped confirm that demolition was the only acceptable way to move forward with the redevelopment of the new theatre complex on the same footprint.

The theatre's board of trustees worked with a project development team, which included a range of experts who were integral partners to the vision and redevelopment of the Park Theatre.

Raising the more than \$6 million dollars necessary to buy and build the new theatre was one of the biggest challenges to development. Sustained support was the key to pulling together a project of this magnitude. Funding came from federal grants (including a \$2 million loan from USDA Rural Development), as well as donations from 75 businesses, 32 foundations and charitable trusts and over 3,000 individual donors from four countries, 22 states and 85 communities in New Hampshire.



The old theatre, above, was torn down in 2013 (photo credit Ransom Consulting) and replaced with a new building in 2020, below. (Photo credit Park Theater)



EPA Grant Recipient:
Southwest Region Planning Commission

Grant Types:
Brownfields Assessment - \$27,608
USDA Reconstruction Loan - \$2,000,000
NH CDFA Tax Credit - \$640,000
Private Funding (Construction) \$771,726

Current Use:
The Park Theatre Performing Art Center

Former Uses:
Silent Films & Vaudeville Theatre, Retail Store



New 333-seat auditorium in the Park Theater included a 27-foot wide screen and 17-speaker surround sound system (photo credit Park Theater)

“The new Park Theatre will be a unique venue. It’s one of the only built-from-the-ground-up, small community-based performing arts centers to be opened in our region in over 50 years. It will be a magical place for local & regional communities, the State of New Hampshire and New England.”

Steve Jackson, Steve Jackson,
CEO and Managing Director

Today

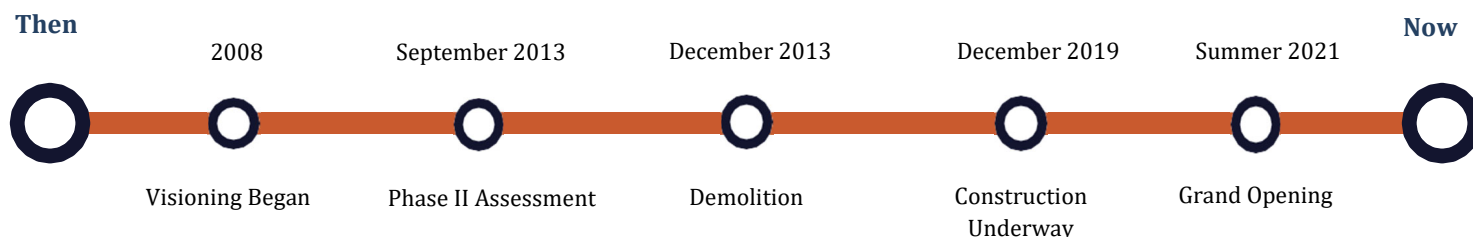
The Town of Jaffrey now has a beautiful new performing arts center in its historic downtown. The Park Theatre was completed in the spring of 2020, with the grand opening delayed due to the pandemic.

The newly designed theatre was built to LEED Gold standards, the highest design rating created by the U.S. Green Building Council to rate buildings on sustainable design, construction and operation. The building has two auditoriums, one with 333 seats and a second smaller modular-style 77-seat space designed for more intimate performances. The larger auditorium features a 27-foot wide screen with a 17 speaker surround system. Both auditoriums are equipped for live performances or movie presentations. A large lobby holds “The 5th Mountain Mosaic Mural”, a 288-panel mosaic of art work created by over 100 professional and amateur artists. A patron lounge, a green room, two dressing rooms for performers as well as concession cafés are also housed in the complex.

Live acts will include nationally known performance artists, comedians and regional performers. Additionally, entertainment will include Stage2Screen HD screenings including Royal Shakespeare, Royal Opera and Ballet. The theatre will also show recent Hollywood movies, independent movies, documentaries, and foreign and classic films. Talent nights, as well as speakers, debates and storytelling will also be presented.

The theatre will also host after-school and summer programs for adults and children in theatre crafts, filmmaking, dance, comedy, and presentations skills.

This project is the result of perseverance from public and private partners who had the vision to seek the funding and expertise to make it happen. Their efforts will give new life to the downtown by bringing the arts back to this small town in the center of New England.



For more information:

Visit the EPA Brownfields website at www.epa.gov/brownfields or contact Chris Lombard at 617 918 1305 or Lombard.Chris@epa.gov