



Perris News

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Perris Brings D St. Theater Back to Life

Renovations have begun on the art deco Perris Theatre on historic D Street and the City is seeking interested volunteers to work on a committee to develop long-term uses for the building when upgrades are completed.

The 400-seat theatre was built in the 1930s as an open-air venue and was covered during World War II. The City recently purchased the building from a Perris church with the idea of restoring it to its original look.

The initial renovations included ripping off stucco from the building façade and removing old neon lighting. Exterior renovations are expected to be completed in about 60 days at a cost of \$75,000.

To learn more or to serve on the committee, please pick up an application at City Hall or send an email to Redevelopment Project Coordinator Veronica Arana. Return the completed application **no later than April 14 to:** City of Perris, Perris Theatre Planning Committee
135 North D Street,
Perris, CA 92570.

You may also call Arana at 951-443-1768 or send her an email at varana@cityofperris.org

"If you have the historic structures in your city, you have to save them. You need preserve them," said Michael McDermott, Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager. "Our City Council is extremely supportive of the efforts to preserve our history. They have never said no to one of our renovation proposals."

McDermott said the renovation project already has uncovered a hidden gem. A round window, covered over when the theatre underwent earlier construction changes, was uncovered. Decades-old photographs reveal another round window covered, which hopefully will once again see the light of day when the project is completed.

Plans call for the theatre, which now is a sort of dull yellow in color, to receive a fresh paint scheme.

New plans call for the sign to be painted mainly Mermaid Song (somewhat of a teal color) with Pale Daffodil Yellow highlights and trim. The building will be Honey Butter (gold/beige) with areas of Cotton Tail (very light tan). Various trim will be Mermaid Song and/or Daffodil.

The lighting will be spectacular at night with both White Neon and Teal Neon lighting as originally designed along with restored up-lighting at the entrance.

"It's going to look very good," McDermott said.

The theatre has been a fixture in Downtown Perris for 75 years. Many people believe it's called "The Chief" but that name came about when a movie was filmed in the City decades ago. The original name is the Perris Theatre. Passersby can still read the original lettering under the new logo.

City officials hailed the latest Redevelopment Project ticketed for D Street and throughout Downtown. Already, several businesses sport new exterior facades thanks to a project begun last year. More business on both side of D Street north of Fourth Street are slated to renovate their facades. The century-old Bank of Perris Building will soon open to the public as a repository of historical records.

The City also refurbished and reopened the 1892 Train Depot in 2009. Plans this year call for building a Rio Ranch Market on the site of the old Stater Bros. Market on Fourth Street. Work on a new freeway interchange at Interstate 215 and Fourth Street also will begin in the next few months.

"We are on a roll," said Councilman Mark Yarbrough. "We are doing the right things. The theatre is the very heart of the Downtown Area. We look forward to saving and restoring our historical facilities."

Yarbrough said he used to attend matinees at the theatre as a kid. He thinks the building will enjoy a second life when renovations finish.

"It will be functional, it will be wonderful," Yarbrough said.

City Councilman Al Landers sits on the committee charged with helping find new uses for the old theatre. He believes the building could be used to host concerts, poetry readings or as a comedy club.

"We have a lot of very talented people in Perris and I want to see them get the chance to perform in a family-friendly environment," Landers said. "Our City continues to look ahead even while it looks back as it preserves the culture of our forefathers."



Michael McDermott stands in a vacant field next to the theatre the City plans to turn into a parking area.



The art deco Perris Theatre was built in the 1930s as an open-air venue.



Michael McDermott, the City's Redevelopment and Economic Development Manager, inspects the door at the Perris Theatre. New doors will be installed as part of exterior renovations.



Craig Skrede removes stucco during the opening phase of exterior renovations.