



The Milbridge Theatre and Community Arts Center- Project Fact Sheet A Regional Community Development Effort by Gateway Milbridge

What is Gateway Milbridge?

Gateway Milbridge is a non-profit 5013c designated organization formed to help with a downtown revitalization effort for Milbridge. Our members are local volunteers, and a priority is to "Bring Back the Milbridge Theatre."

What is the "Bring Back the Milbridge Theatre" project? It's more than just a movie theatre!

Gateway Milbridge is organizing an effort to reopen the Milbridge Theatre as a **full service theatre and community arts center** serving Milbridge and the surrounding communities. The new, combined theatre and community arts center will provide us with a flexible venue and community gathering space for movies and expanded options/events including educational programming, live music, lectures, and stage performances.

Why is the Milbridge Theatre so important to Milbridge?

The theatre has been a community icon since it was built in 1937. Area residents have relied on the theatre for entertainment and gathering because such opportunities here are few and often a great distance away.

The theatre was one of the few facilities Milbridge had for entertainment and for creating a strong sense of community and belonging for our residents of all ages. Generations of our region's youth spent countless weekends of their lives at this theatre engaging in much-needed social and cultural experiences. The theatre's closure leaves a void in the center of our town and leaves us with few entertainment, live performance, and educational programming options for area residents.

Small towns and regions like ours face many difficult headwinds these days, and redevelopment projects, such as bringing back the Milbridge Theatre, are critical to the region's economy and our residents' quality of life. The new theatre and community arts center will not only provide our region with a venue for movies, community gathering space, educational programming, and live performances, but it can create jobs, engage volunteers, attract visitors to the area, and fill a critical commercial anchor in the center of our town.

Why will the theatre be torn down – can't we restore the existing building?

Professional architects and engineers serve on our board and have worked on options for renovation and reconstruction. The building has deteriorated significantly, and the most economical approach is to remove and rebuild it. We are committed to restoring as many historic and emotional items of the original theatre as possible, such as the candy and ticket counters and other items. Proposed plans

include a new building with a street-front appearance replicating the historic appearance of the existing building, while providing handicap accessibility, new bathrooms, a larger stage, year-round heating and possibly air conditioning.

Is there a plan for the new theatre's long term operation and sustainability – how will it succeed?

Yes. We have been awarded a grant from the Maine Community Foundation. The grant funds a feasibility study and long term business plan which is necessary for the sustainability and successful design, programming and operation of the theatre. The plan is being developed by a Portland group that focuses on business plans for non-profit organizations like ours. The plan should be finalized in the coming months.

How much will it cost to build a new theatre and how long will it take?

This is a large undertaking and trying to do it all at once would be very difficult. That's why we are breaking it down into more easily achievable phases while still keeping the overall project in mind. Each phase is designed to provide immediate, tangible benefits: acquiring the land and building, preserving historic items, removing the dilapidated building, creating a park-like green space for everyone to enjoy, and opening a new theatre and community arts center. Each of these are a positive step forward with a solid accomplishment we can be proud of, and each will be fully funded and completed before we move deeply into the next phase.

- Phases 1 and 2 (Jan-December 2016) - Raise the initial funds necessary to purchase the existing theatre building and land and cover the cost of insurance, taxes and legal work. Complete development of a professional long term business plan, initiate building design options and continue fundraising. Estimated Cost- \$72,000
- Phase 3 (January-December 2017) - Remove the existing building, store historic items for preservation, stabilize the site by creating a simple, park-like green space, and build an outdoor stage that can be used and enjoyed immediately by the community for outdoor movies and outdoor entertainment while we continue raising money for the new building. Estimated Cost- \$21,000
- Phase 4 (2018-2019) - Plan and construct a new facility that can be enhanced and expanded over time. Includes rebuilding and equipping the structure for use as a movie theatre and community arts center for live performances. New technology requires movie theatres to update to digital projection, which can be extremely expensive. However, leasing options are available and our current cost estimates are based on available leasing options. Estimated Cost- \$480,000

How will this project be paid for– will it draw on local tax dollars?

Funding is coming from a variety of sources, including private donations, business donations, foundation grants, public grants for community development, and significant volunteer efforts. No funding is being sought or provided from the town government or local tax dollars. Although the theatre will likely be operated as a non-profit organization, it is planned for it to remain on the Town tax rolls.

Funding for phases 1 through 3 (approximately \$95,000) is being sought primarily through local donations from individuals and businesses in the immediate region along with small grants from within the state. By receiving the funding for these three phases from a broad base of local donors, it allows us to demonstrate local and regional project support which positions us to receive the larger corporate donations and larger matching grants necessary to fully fund phase 4, the construction and equipping of the new building.

What has been accomplished so far?

- May 2015- A 14 member Board was created consisting of diverse membership from across our community; a Facebook group page was created to disseminate information and gather support.
- August 2015 - A comprehensive website (GatewayMilbridge.org) was created to share information about the theater and other group projects.
- September 2015- A strong and active Facebook public page was created for the project; Over 20 volunteers participated in a clean-up day to make the existing theatre grounds more attractive.
- November and December 2015- An initial community survey was made available to area residents with nearly 130 residents sending in their responses!
- December 2015- Preliminary drawings were completed for ideas of how the new theatre and arts center could look.
- January 2015- A comprehensive public website was created at MilbridgeTheatre.org.
- March 2016- Brochures and posters about the project were printed and distributed.
- April/May 2016- An initial funding effort through GoFundMe.com has now evolved into a larger fund raising effort through our dedicated websites at MilbridgeTheatre.org and GatewayMilbridge.org.
- May 2016- Members from Gateway Milbridge attended the Milbridge Selectmen's meeting to provide a detailed overview of the theatre project and planning.
- May 2016- Gateway Milbridge was awarded a \$10,000 grant by the Maine Community Foundation to fund the completion of a long term business plan for the theatre project to prepare us for sustainable and successful design and programming of the theatre that fits the needs and capacity of our region.
- June 2016- Volunteers held a second clean-up day of the theater grounds and installed 20 permanent flower planters in the community
- July 2016- A full and well received presentation of the project was offered at the Milbridge Historical Society meeting.

- July 2016- For Milbridge Days, we held a successful information and fundraising event in front of the theatre where we distributed information, answered questions, and sold Milbridge Theatre tee-shirts.
- August 2016- We hosted a successful fundraiser that included an auction of local artwork and a show with Maine humorist, Tim Sample, netting over \$12,000 toward the project. Local fundraising events will continue to be held for the theatre project.
- September 2016- Purchase of the theatre building and land are announced.
- October 2016- Historic items are removed from the theatre and stored for preservation and reuse in the new theatre.
- November 2016- Year-end fundraising campaign was initiated and a matching grant of \$5,000 was offered (and achieved) by an anonymous donor through the Maine Community Foundation.
- December 2016- Gateway Milbridge and the Milbridge Theatre board members hold the first annual Christmas on Main Street Celebration and Community Christmas tree lighting at the theatre to build community spirit.
- February 2017- Plans are introduced and approved to remove the most deteriorated portions of the existing theatre building, preserve/restore the newer front piece of the structure and reopen it as the "Marquee Shoppe"
- March 2017- Our Facebook page surpasses 1,000 followers
- April 2017- Volunteers complete the tasks of removing, preserving, and storing sentimental and historic items from the theatre for use in the new building.
- April 2017- Plans for the new outdoor stage and green space are approved for the back section of the land.
- May 2017- Payment is completed for the theatre building and land.
- June 2017- Removal is initiated for the most deteriorated and structurally unsound sections of the theatre building.
- June 2017- Work is begun to renovate the Marquee Shoppe section of the theatre.
- Ongoing- Several local, public information-gathering sessions have been successfully conducted to gather a wide range of community members to gauge public interest in the project. These meetings were advertised in local papers and through social media. Additional sessions will continue to be held.

How can I learn more?

Complete information about the Milbridge Theatre project and how to contact us is available online at MilbridgeTheatre.org. Area residents sit on the Board of Directors, and are always willing to talk about this beloved project as well as our other projects for revitalizing downtown Milbridge.

How can I help?

Your support is critical to this project. Please help us by spreading the word about our efforts. Give your friends and family a copy of this document, sign up on our website for updates, and "like" us on our Facebook page. Contact us with your ideas, comments, questions, or concerns at any time. Join us as a volunteer, help us raise the money we need by hosting a fundraising event, or attend an event near you. If you don't live nearby but want to help, you are invited to share ideas and information, serve on our Advisory Committee, provide pro-bono services (such as marketing, accounting or law), or help connect us with your own networks of folks who might like to help. Of course, you are always welcome to donate online or in person!

How can people or businesses make a donation?

Gateway Milbridge is a 501c3 designated nonprofit organization. Donations are tax-deductible and receipts are given for donations.

You can make a tax-deductible donation [on our website](#) by credit card or you may donate by check.

Check donations may be made payable and sent to:

Gateway Milbridge
PO Box 62
Milbridge, ME 04658