



NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contacts:

David Milliron, City Administrator, City of North Bend
541-756-8536, dmilliron@northbendcity.org
northbendoregon.us or facebook.com/NorthBendOregon

Jeanne Woods, Restoration Chairperson, Liberty Theatre, *home of Little Theatre on the Bay*
541-297-3525, vicepresident@thelibertytheatre.org
thelibertytheatre.org or facebook.com/thelibertytheatrenorthbend

Kuri Gill, Grants and Outreach Coordinator, Oregon Heritage
503-383-6787, Kuri.Gill@opr.org
oregonheritage.org or facebook.com/OregonHeritage

North Bend Secures Main Street Grant for Little Theatre on the Bay Neon Blade Sign, Renovations

NORTH BEND, Oregon (May 26, 2022) – Oregon Heritage, a division of Oregon Parks and Recreation, awarded funding to the North Bend Main Street program to replace the 24-foot neon blade sign at the Liberty Theatre, home of the Little Theatre on the Bay. North Bend is among 28 Oregon Main Street Network organizations to receive matching grants for building projects that encourage economic revitalization in central downtown business districts across the state.

“Theater has the power to bring people together, influence the way we think and feel, encourage personal reflection, and foster creativity and expression – all while making our lives better,” said North Bend Mayor Jessica Engelke. “The Liberty Theatre, home of the Little Theatre on the Bay, is integral to the fabric of North Bend. It is only right that we support our community theatre that adds so much value and culture to our community and region.”

Oregon Parks and Recreation awarded the North Bend Main Street program a matching grant worth \$174,805, including a 30 percent match from the Little Theatre on the Bay. The grant will pay for the neon blade sign, replacement of the auditorium interior main stage flame-resistant curtain, and repairs to the exterior concrete entryway. Oregon funded applications worth \$5 million that best conveyed the ability to stimulate private investment and local economic development and best fit within the community’s long-range plan for downtown vitality and community need.

“Our historic theatre consultant George Kramer likes to say, ‘the show starts at the sidewalk,’” said Liberty Theatre Restoration Committee Chairperson Jeanne Woods. “And we agree. The return of the majestic neon blade sign on the outside of the Liberty Theatre will remind everyone that downtown North Bend is a hub for the performing arts.”

Designed as a movie palace in the Moorish style by Portland architect John Tourtellotte, the Liberty Theatre held its grand opening on Easter Sunday, 1924. A small oval sign that said “Liberty” had been brought over from the previous theatre down the street and was used until 1931 when a neon blade sign was installed. This sign was removed decades later when the theatre was no longer open for movies.

The intent is to replicate the historic neon blade sign with modern lighting techniques to save energy. Fabrication will be of aluminum and 24 feet in height, attaching to the original spot on the northeast corner of the building. The word “Liberty” will be spelled out vertically down the length of the sign. “This new signage will make our community proud as it lights up North Bend’s central downtown business district,” said Little Theatre on the Bay President Aymée Pedder. We are thankful for our incredible donors and patrons.”

The grant program was created during the 2015 legislative session and placed with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. The legislation established a permanent fund for the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant and provided an initial infusion of funds from the sale of lottery bonds. The legislature included the Oregon Main Street Revitalization Grant in the lottery bond package approved in 2021. An additional grant round will occur in 2023. The funds must be used to award grants to participating Oregon Main Street Network organizations to acquire, rehabilitate or construct buildings to facilitate community revitalization. The program also requires at least 50 percent of the funds to go to rural communities, as defined in the bill.

“Accessibility has been a goal of the Liberty restoration,” Woods said. “The sidewalk repair will help all our patrons and community members to attend the theatre safely. Thanks to the North Bend Main Street program and CCD Business Development Corporation for teaming up to make Phase VIII of our capital campaign a reality. Our goal is to have the project completed by 2024 – our 100th birthday!”

About the Little Theatre on the Bay

Little Theatre on the Bay is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to cultivate the arts in Coos County.” The roots of the LTOB were formed in 1947 when a group of actors joined together to produce live radio plays in the greater North Bend/Coos Bay area. The popularity of these programs led this grassroots group to coalesce into a formal organization one year later. LTOB moved into the Liberty Theatre in 1959 and purchased the building in 1975.

The membership enjoys the distinction of being the state’s second-longest continuously-operating theatrical arts group. Over the past 71 years, LTOB has enjoyed numerous sold-out shows, entertained countless audience members, and nurtured the talents of actors, directors, and technicians of all ages.

Operating as an all-volunteer organization, LTOB always encourages our community to come and have fun at the Liberty: be an actor, director, musician, concessions, set design customer, or lighting tech! There’s a place for everyone. Call the box office or email a board member on the website.

LTOB is in the process of finishing a multi-year/multi-phase capital campaign that started in 2015 to enhance and expand North Bend’s historic Liberty Theatre. This 98-year-old treasure serves as the premier community theatre and performing arts venue in the North Bend/Coos Bay area. The goal is to finish the restoration by Liberty’s 100th birthday in 2024. LTOB’s current focus has been on enhancing youth programming and building Phase VII: a second-story Youth Theatre/Program center above the new addition. To help fund this project, please consider buying a seat in the auditorium or a tile in the front entry with your family or business name.

Upcoming Shows at the Liberty, *home of Little Theatre on the Bay*

- Free USO-style show *Tribute to Veterans*: Memorial Day Weekend, May 27-29, 2022
- *William Shakespeare’s Lebowski, Prince of Ninepins*: June 9-18, 2022
- *Little Ole Opry on the Bay* runs weekends in July beginning July 9, 2022