

February 27, 2026

Letter to the Community from the Historic Centralia Fox Theatre Board:

At the February 24 meeting of the Centralia City Council, representatives of the Historic Centralia Fox Theatre Board, a volunteer run nonprofit organization, provided an update on the current status of construction, funding, and next steps for the restoration of the Fox Theatre, which is owned by the City of Centralia.

We want to share that information directly with the community.

Construction Update

Since 2022, the selected contractor, Construct, Inc., under the leadership of Andrew Christensen, has implemented a comprehensive and methodical construction plan. Construct, Inc's earlier phases of work addressed critical structural needs and stabilized the building to ensure its long-term viability.

Major improvements in the most recent construction phases include:

- Structural stabilization and exterior repair
- Retrofit and weatherproofing of the previously leaking south wall
- Installation of historically accurate masonry
- Connection of city utilities, including the fire sprinkler system
- Footing improvements and sidewalk demolition to support new seismic upgrades
- Installation of fire suppression and fire alarm systems
- Completion of comprehensive electrical design for theatrical rigging, lighting, and sound
- Rough-in of the below-ground ADA restroom and green room
- Construction of the elevator pit for ADA complaint elevator
- Completion of concrete floors and plumbing
- Replacement of historic windows on the east side
- Mechanical heating and cooling systems approximately 90% complete
- Wet pipe compression and riser installation completed

We understand that community members may wonder where funds have gone. The answer is straightforward: into structural reinforcement, life-safety systems, accessibility improvements, mechanical systems, and preservation work required

to bring this historic building back safely and responsibly. It is, quite literally, not the same building it once was.

The building is now weather-secure and significantly less vulnerable to deterioration. It has been transformed from an unreinforced masonry building into reinforced concrete structure brought up to modern life-safety standards and building code. The sloped theatre floor has been rebuilt to provide full ADA accessibility. While some of the most important work is not immediately visible, it has fundamentally changed the safety, integrity, and future of the building.

As discussed at the Council meeting, construction pacing is directly tied to funding availability. At present, the project faces a funding gap.

Future Construction and Funding Needs

To achieve a Certificate of Occupancy (COP) which would allow us to lease theater equipment and host events, we estimate approximately \$1.8 million is needed in additional funds, based on current construction and material costs. Reaching that milestone is critical. The Fox Board has sourced approximately 50% of these funds with Historic Tax Credits. Sourcing the additional 50% needed to match what's earmarked could get us to that COP *and* it would create the ability to pursue and leverage additional funds up to \$2.5 million in additional Historic Tax Credits, operational funding grants, future New Markets Tax Credits, as well as hold events as a revenue earning, operational theatre.

While many generous individuals have stepped forward with donations over the years, and we are deeply grateful for that support, local grants, regional funding opportunities, and similar sources have not materialized at the level needed, despite our best efforts. As a result, the gap funding required to leverage historic tax credits and other financing tools has not yet been secured, leaving those larger funding sources just out of reach for now.

To date, nearly \$3.9 million has been invested in the Fox Theatre, placing the project approximately halfway to total completion (including the lighting, sound, rigging, and theater equipment). For context, restoration projects of this scale typically take 10–15 years and cost between \$15–20 million.

The community's excitement about the Fox Theatre is real, and so is its potential impact. Live performances and events would bring visitors to Centralia who dine in local restaurants, shop in local stores, and stay in local lodgings. This activity generates sales tax, lodging tax, and supports jobs across hospitality, retail, and the arts sector. This effort would preserve a historic landmark, owned by the City

of Centralia, which holds deep memories for many in our community. By restoring it, we would create a valuable asset for the City of Centralia, while also safeguarding our cultural heritage and creating opportunities for future generations to build memories of their own.

The next several months are key. The funds available now are contingent on sourcing matching dollars. Without that match, the earmarked funds will expire. The Board, which is all volunteer run, continues to pursue funding opportunities and explore every viable path forward. We welcome collaboration, ideas, and partnership from the Centralia City Council, regional foundations, and grant-making entities, and from the broader community.

The Fox Theatre has stood as a gathering place for generations. With continued effort and support, it could do so again.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors
Historic Centralia Fox Theatre
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