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Empress Theatre

Frequently Asked Questions

Who owns and operates the Empress Theatre?

- The Empress is owned by Empress Theatre Associates LLC, the wholly-owned subsidiary created by Triad Communities to renovate the Empress Theatre
- As a direct result of the New Market Tax Credits program which will help cover some of the costs of renovating the theatre, Empress Theatre Associates is required to maintain ownership of the Empress for seven years. However, an agreement with the City of Vallejo and the Vallejo Community Arts Foundation specifies that Triad will transfer ownership to the City immediately after the required holding period
- Both before and after the ownership transition, the theatre will be operated by the Vallejo Community Arts Foundation

Why was the Empress Theatre restored?

- The restored Empress will fill the growing need for a performing arts venue in Vallejo for the benefit and use of Vallejo's citizenry and visitors from near and far
- Regarded as an anchor and integral element of downtown Vallejo's revitalization, the restored Empress Theatre will support a thriving arts community and help to grow the creative and cultural energy of Vallejo
- The theatre will provide a potential home for the Vallejo Symphony Orchestra, and ideally attract other talented performers
- The theatre will be complemented and energized by Triad's planned downtown mixed use projects which will infuse the area with new residents and businesses, helping to rejuvenate the downtown into a social, cultural, recreational and entertainment hub for the region

Who restored the theatre?

- This renovation project was funded by a unique public/private partnership among the City of Vallejo, Empress Theatre Associates LLC (the entity created by Triad Communities to renovate the Empress Theatre), and the Vallejo Community Arts Foundation (VCAF)
- Triad provided management and construction oversight throughout the project and paid out of its own pocket for significant added (and unforeseen) costs

How much did the renovation cost and how was it financed?

- The theater renovation was originally budgeted at about \$4.7 million, but has subsequently grown to approximately \$6.7 million
- At the time construction commenced in January 2006, Triad had committed to contribute about \$1 million out of its own pocket, with the remainder of the cost coming from community contributions (VCAF), and loans from the City of Vallejo. Upgrades requested by the City and VCAF and other unforeseen building rehabilitation costs continued to drive up the project's price tag, but approval for

federal New Market Tax Credits will allow Triad to be reimbursed for about \$1 million of its almost \$2 million investment. The credits together with the changes in the agreement between the parties will leave the City and VCAF in better financial positions.

What did the restoration entail?

- Thorough and extensive architectural research to insure that the restoration would be accurate and consistent
- An intricate and costly Seismic retrofit process geared toward preserving the unique historic architectural features of the theatre, while bringing the building into the 21st century
- Recreating the 1950's era marquee using local fabricators
- Rehabilitating the original neon lighting within the theatre using a local, experienced artisan
- Electrical system upgrades
- Replacing all the seats
- Replastering and repainting to restore the theatre's historic character
- Bringing the HVAC, lighting, and sound systems up to date

What new technology is now in place?

- State-of-the-art lighting, sound systems, and controls
- An upgraded power supply
- Modern smoke detection and monitoring systems
- Upgraded restroom facilities
- New heating and air conditioning systems

How long did it take to complete the work?

- The preparation and demolition phase was a four-month process
- The improvement and renovation phase lasted 18 months

Was the community involved in the restoration process?

All of the following groups played key roles in the restoration:

- Vallejo Community Arts Foundation
- Local community interest and fundraising
- Strong support by the City
- Local restaurants ready to support theatre goers

How will the Empress be used?

- The theatre will serve as a performance venue supporting live music and theatre, lecture events, film and other arts programs
- The sprung stage will accommodate live dance performances, musicals, symphony concerts, music events, and children's programs
- The theatre will be an intimate and inspirational venue for local performing companies as well as regionally and nationally prominent performers
- The Empress is at the heart of the rebirth of Vallejo's downtown, and a focal point of its creative and cultural energy

When will the theatre be open to the public?

- Fall of 2007

Are there any photos of the restored theatre available?

- Quite a few are available on this site. Look under "Photos" on the "News About the Empress" page