

Non-Profit Movie Theaters

Survey

Introduction

Community theaters represent an enclave for community members to meet and engage in cultural activities while participating and contributing to the local economy. These institutions can increase foot traffic to downtown districts, attract visitors with niche programming, and provide support to other local nonprofit organizations and small businesses. The following list focuses on historic movie theaters that, on the verge of being forever lost, were rescued and revitalized by community members and have been successful in executing a business model that takes into consideration the needs and wants of their specific community. The movie theaters described below are nonprofit and community driven organizations, most of which are part of small towns with a population less than 25,000. They feature diverse programming such as first-run commercial and independent films, foreign and local programming, classic films, art house cinema, and special film series. These movie theaters have also found different ways to engage with their communities by offering membership programs, partnering with local businesses, renting out their space for charitable activities, organizing movie festivals featuring local history and artists, and providing educational programs. In some cases, movie theaters have adapted their spaces to accommodate live performances, thus attracting other types of public.

This following list of theaters was created using publicly available data. It is not meant to be a comprehensive survey but rather a sample of successful nonprofit theaters that serve as examples of how a community stands to benefit by having a nonprofit, community-oriented cinema in their downtown district. Appendix A is comprised of excerpts from the movie theaters' annual reports showing financial data summaries and follow the order in which the theater appear on the survey below. The link to the full report may be found under each theater's information, when available.

This report was prepared by Cristina Fontánez Rodríguez, MLIS.

Theaters in towns with population less than 25,000

Penn Theatre

Town and Size: Plymouth, MI; population 9,132

Number of screens: 1

Seating Capacity: 405

Type of Programming: Second run commercial, family films

Description: The theater dates back to 1926 and remained open, though with ownership changes, until 2003. In 2005, community members formed a group called The Friends of the Penn and later that year the Penn Theatre Realty, LLC was formed in order to purchase the building. The theatre reopened in 2006 and is currently run by The Friends of the Penn, a non-profit organization. Their prices have also remained constant at \$3 per ticket since it reopened.

Website: <http://www.penntheatre.com/index.html>

Annual Report: Not available online

Contact: Info@friendsofthepenn.org

Phone Number: 734-453-0870

Crandell Theatre

Town and Size: Chatham, New York; population 4,128

Number of screens: 1

Seating Capacity: 534

Type of Programming: First-run commercial and independent, film festivals

Description: The theater was built in 1926 and remained open until 2010. It was then when community members rallied together to save the theater after the previous owner passed away. It is owned by the Chatham Film Club, a community nonprofit organization. The Chatham Film club also partners with the Columbia County Council on the Arts to produce the Film Columbia festival, which includes other venues in Columbia County as well. The Crandell is currently listed on the New York State and National Register of Historic Places.

Website: <http://www.crandelltheatre.org/>

Annual Report: Some data available [here](#).

Contact: Annie Brody, Executive Director, mail@crandelltheatre.org

Phone Number: 518-392-3331

Colonial Theatre

Town and Size: Phoenixville, PA; population 16,440

Number of screens: 3

Seating Capacity: 897

Type of Programming: Independent films, film festivals, concerts, and live performances

Description: The theater dates back to the beginning of the 1900s although it started operating as a movie theater in the 1950s. It was bought by the Phoenixville Area Economic Development Corporation who performed focus groups on audience film preferences,

business feasibility studies, and an architectural study. It is run as non-profit since 1999 and patrons may become members.

Website: <https://thecolonialtheatre.com>

Annual report:

[https://thecolonialtheatre.com/col/wp/images/Colonial Annual Report 2015-16.pdf](https://thecolonialtheatre.com/col/wp/images/Colonial%20Annual%20Report%202015-16.pdf)

Contact: Mary Foote, Executive Director : mary@thecolonialtheatre.com

More contacts may be found here: <https://thecolonialtheatre.com/about/board-of-directors/>

Phone Number: 610-917-1228

Hollywood Theater

Town and size: Dormont, PA; population 8,593

Number of screens: 1

Seating capacity: 285

Type of programming: Classics (including family classics), foreign, and independent films as well as pipe organ performances.

Description: The theater dates back to 1925 and has gone through many management companies and owners until 2011. In 2011 it was bought by the Friends of the Hollywood Theater, and have operated the theater since then. It has a BYOB policy, is available for rentals, and runs a membership program.

Website: <https://www.thehollywooddormont.org/>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: Joseph Morrison, Operations Manager, manager@thehollywooddormont.org

Phone number: 412-563-0368

Prospector Theater

Town and size: Ridgefield, CT; population 24,638

Number of screens: 4

Seating capacity: 165; 100; 60; 16

Type of programming: First-run commercial

Description: The theater was built in 1930 and is now running as a non-profit. It also focuses on hiring and training people with disabilities. It runs a membership as well as a sponsorship program.

Website: <http://www.prospectorthheater.org/>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: Valerie Jensen, Founder and Director, info@prospectorthheater.org

Phone number: (203) 438-0136

Jacob Burns Film Center

Town and size: Pleasantville, NY; population 7,150

Number of screens: 5

Seating capacity: 475

Type of programming: Independent, documentary, foreign.

Description: While this theater is not a historic theater, it does run as a non-profit and they consider themselves to be a community organization. Apart from showing movies, they have a visual arts educational program for students and educators.

Website: <https://burnsfilmcenter.org/>

Annual report: https://d21ehp1kf1k9m9.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/09134708/JBFC_Annual_Report_2016.pdf

Contact: Brian Ackerman, Founding Director of Programming, inquiries@burnsfilmcenter.org

Phone number: 914.773.7663

State Theater and Bijou Theater

Town and size: Traverse City, MI; population 15,479

Number of screens: 1

Seating capacity: 527

Type of programming: First-run commercial, Independent, documentary, foreign, classics, family classics

Description: The theater is run by the Traverse City Film Festival, which was founded by Michael Moore. It has been running as a non-profit since 2007 and its film selection is curated by Michael Moore. They host community events for adults and children and are funded by donations, grants, and membership programs.

Website: <https://www.stateandbijou.org/about/statetheatre>

Annual report: <http://www.anotherhundredyears.org/wp-content/uploads/AnnualReport2017Web4.pdf>

Contact: info@stateandbijou.org and info@tcff.org

Phone number: 231-929-4263

The Picture House

Town and size: Pelham, NY; population 12,396

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity: 525

Type of programming: First-run indie and commercial, art-house, and classic films

Description: The building dates back to 1921 and was acquired by the Pelham Picture House Preservation (Pelham is the original name of the theater). It has been operating as a non-profit, community organization since 2011. They have created a film education program with adult and youth classes, camp, special screenings, and residences. Community members can “buy” a seat as a way of donating and they also run a membership program.

Website: <http://www.thepicturehouse.org/>

Annual report: <http://www.thepicturehouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/The-2016-Annual-Report.pdf>

Contact: Laura Debuys, President and Executive Director, laura@thepicturehouse.org

Phone number: 914-738-3161

Rosendale Theatre

Town and size: Rosendale, NY; population 6,075

Number of screens: 1

Seating capacity: 296

Type of programming: Independent movies, children's programming, live shows.

Description: It is a former vaudeville parlor that has been functioning as a movie house since 1949. It was saved from demolition by the Rosendale Theater Collective in 2010. They also run membership and volunteer programs.

Website: <http://www.rosendaletheatre.org/>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: Ann Citron, Director, info@rosendaletheatre.org

Phone number: (845) 658-8989

Newton Theatre

Town and size: Newton, NJ; population 7,908

Number of screens: 1

Seating capacity: 605

Type of programming: Independent, foreign, first-run commercial, film festivals, live performances. They run a membership program with various tiers which include access to performances and movies.

Description: The theater was founded in 1924 and has been operating as a non-profit performing arts center and with the purchase of a digital projector, it has been showing movies as well. It is constantly fundraising and runs a membership program.

Website: <http://www.skypac.org/index.html>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: Jonathan Peirce, President and CEO, JP@TheNewtonTheatre.com

Phone number: 973-940-NEWT

Chatham Orpheum Theatre

Town and size: Chatham, MA; population 6,125

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity: 210

Type of programming: First-run commercial and independent, and classic films

Description: The theater dates back to 1916 and functioned as a pharmacy from 1987 to 2011. In 2011, community members established a non-profit organization with the goal raising funds for the purchase of the building. They were able to do so with donations as well as grants from the state. It has been open to the public as a non-profit since 2013. It's managed by paid staff and volunteers.

Website: <http://www.chathamorpheum.org>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: Kevin Maclain, Executive Director, Kevin@ChathamOrpheum.org; Mary Roberts, Theater Operations Manager, Mary@ChathamOrpheum.org

Phone number: 508.945.0874

Renew Theaters

Town and size: See information for [Hiway Theater](#), [County Theater](#), [Ambler Theater](#), and [Princeton Garden Theater](#).

Number of screens: Varies by theater. See information for [Hiway Theater](#), [County Theater](#), [Ambler Theater](#), and [Princeton Garden Theater](#).

Seating capacity: Varies by theater. See information for [Hiway Theater](#), [County Theater](#), [Ambler Theater](#), and [Princeton Garden Theater](#).

Type of programming: Focus on independent and foreign films.

Description: Non-profit company who currently manages four movie theaters (County Theater, Ambler Theater, Hiway Theater, Princeton Garden Theater) in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. They maintain each theater's individuality while sharing operating costs. Staff usually work on all theaters.

Website: <https://medium.com/renew-theaters/about-renew-theaters-f3cf9dd13d76>

Annual report: See [Hiway Theater](#), [County Theater](#), [Ambler Theater](#), and [Princeton Garden Theater](#).

Contact: John David Toner, Executive Director, jtoner@renewtheaters.org (Contact information is the same as listed for their individual theaters).

Jim Sanders, Director of Development, jsanders@renewtheaters.org
215-348-1878 x117

Phone number: 215-345-6789

Hiway Theater (Renew Theaters)

Town and size: Jenkintown, PA; population 4,422

Number of screens: 1

Seating capacity: 330

Type of programming : independent, art, kids, and foreign films. It may also be rented for special events.

Description: Non-profit and community-based movie theater, managed by Renew Theaters since 2013. As it is managed by Renew Theaters, Hiway Theater's employees move around 4 theaters managed by the same group, which provides services at cost. Community members who become members of the theaters receive special perks at other theaters managed by Renew Theaters.

Website: <http://www.hiwaytheater.org/>

Annual report: <http://www.hiwaytheater.org/annualreport17.pdf>

Contact: John Toner, Executive Director, jtoner@renewtheaters.org

Other contacts found here: <http://www.hiwaytheater.org/contact>

Phone number: 267-864-0065

County Theater (Renew Theaters)

Town and size: Doylestown, PA; population 8,280

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity: 277

Type of programming: Independent and foreign but the also run a children's matinee program.

Description: Nonprofit, community based theater that specializes in independent and foreign films. It dates back to 1938 and reopened as a nonprofit since 1993 after being purchased by a local film group in 1992. Volunteers, membership programs and grants have largely covered restoration and operational costs. It is run by Renew Theaters and community members who become members of the theaters receive special perks at other

theaters managed by Renew Theaters. It is also available for private parties and viewing events.

Website: <http://www.countytheater.org>

Annual report: <http://www.countytheater.org/annualreport17.pdf>

Contact: John David Toner, Executive Director, jtoner@renewtheaters.org.

Jim Sanders, Director of Development, jsanders@renewtheaters.org
(215-348-1878 x117)

Phone number: 215-345-6789

Ambler Theater (Renew Theaters)

Town and size: Ambler, PA; population 6,417

Number of screens: 3

Seating capacity: 540

Type of programming: Independent, art, kids, and foreign films. It may also be rented for special events.

Description: The Ambler Theater first opened in 1938 but stopped operating as a Warner Bros. theater in 1970. It was then turned into a Christian theater and operated as such until 2001 when it was sold and turned into a non-profit organization. It has been open to the public as a community non-profit organization since 2007 and is operated by Renew Theaters. The theater has a membership program, as do all Renew Theaters, and local business can sponsor the theater as well.

Website: <http://www.amblertheater.org>

Annual report: <http://www.amblertheater.org/annualreport17.pdf>

Contact: John David Toner, Executive Director, jtoner@renewtheaters.org.

Jim Sanders, Director of Development, jsanders@renewtheaters.org
(215-348-1878 x117)

Phone number: 215-345-6789

Princeton Garden Theater (Renew Theaters)

Town and size: Princeton, NJ; population 12,307

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity: 500

Type of programming: Independent, art, kids, and foreign films. It may also be rented for special events.

Description: The Princeton Garden theater opened in 1920 and operated, owned and managed by different companies and organizations, until 1992. In 1993, Princeton University purchased the theater and continued operations. It has been operated by Renew Theaters since 2014 and runs membership and business sponsorship programs.

Website: <http://www.princetongardentheatre.org/>

Annual report: <http://www.princetongardentheatre.org/annualreport17.pdf>

Contact: John David Toner, Executive Director, jtoner@renewtheaters.org.

Jim Sanders, Director of Development, jsanders@renewtheaters.org
(215-348-1878 x117)

Phone number: 215-345-6789

Theaters in towns with population greater than 25,000

Avalon Theater

Town and Size: Washington, D.C.; population 681,170 (Only non-profit cinema in D.C.)

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity : 555

Type of programming: Commercial and independent films, documentaries, special film events, private events.

Description: The Avalon theater is the oldest operating theater in the D.C. area. It closed in 2001 but reopened in 2003. In 2006, the Avalon Theater Project purchased the building and proceeded to run the theater as a non-profit organization

Website: <https://www.theavalon.org/>

Annual report: https://avalonfoundation.org/sites/default/files/Avalon-annualreport-2016_0.pdf

Contact: Bill Oberdorfer, Executive Director, Robin Weiss, Business Manager;

<https://www.theavalon.org/contact/>

Phone number: (202) 966-2149

Englert Theater

Town and size: Iowa City, IA ; population 164,000

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity: 1,000

Type of programming: Theater, dance, film (seem to show documentaries)

Description: Opened in 1912. It closed in 1999 and a group of citizens convinced the government to purchase it. It reopened in 2004 with the help of donors and volunteers. It is a community space for performing arts and film.

Website: <http://www.englert.org/>

Annual report: Not found online

Contact: Andre Perry, Executive Director, andre@englert.org; Katie Roche, Development Director, katie@englert.org

Phone number: 319-936-9119

Coolidge Corner Theatre

Town and size: Brookline, MA; population 58,732

Number of screens: 4

Seating capacity: 895

Type of programming: Art house, second-run, classics, documentary, animation

Description: Building dates back to 1906. It was converted into a cinema in 1933. It was bought by the Coolidge Art Foundation in 1989 and has operated as a non-profit since then. They have a membership program in place with various tiers.

Website: <http://www.coolidge.org>

Annual report: http://www.coolidge.org/sites/default/files/CCT_2016-AnnualReport.pdf

Contact: Katherine Tallman, Executive Director & CEO, ktallman@coolidge.org

Andrew Thompson, Theater Operations Director, andy@coolidge.org

Phone number: 617.734.2501

Circle Cinema

Town and size: Tulsa, OK; population 403,090

Number of screens: 3

Seating capacity: 801

Type of programming: Independent, foreign, documentary, classics, family classics, silent films accompanied by live organ, live music and theater performances, guest speakers, and audience discussions.

Description: First opened in 1928 and has been in possession of the Circle Cinema Foundation, who have renovated it and operate it as a non-profit. They host several types of events centered on film and rent the space for private events. The theater runs membership and volunteer programs.

Website: <http://circlecinema.com/>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: Clark Wiens, Co-Founder and President, clark@circlecinemas.com ; Stephanie LaFevers, Executive Director (Circle Cinema Foundation), stephanie@circlecinemas.com

Phone number: 918.585.FILM (3456)

A/Perture Cinema

Town and size: Winston Salem, NC; population 242,203

Number of screens: 2

Seating capacity:

Type of programming: Independent, foreign, documentary, local and festival films

Description: Not a historical theater but it is a non-profit organization. It has been open since 2010 and is currently operated by the Downtown Winston-Salem Community Cinema. They have memberships and volunteer programs as well as educational programming.

Website: <http://aperturecinema.com/>

Annual report: Not available online

Contact: info@aperturecinema.com

Phone number: 336-722-8148