



FRIENDS OF THE Thomaston Opera House

A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO LAUNCH THE NEXT 140 YEARS

FUNDING REQUEST

As Thomaston Opera House (TOH) celebrates its 140th anniversary, several organizations have committed to its restoration and renovation, ensuring that it has a vibrant and thriving future. The organizations leading this effort include the Thomaston Opera House Commission, Landmark Community Theatre, Friends of the Thomaston Opera House, Thomaston Opera House Restoration Committee, and the Thomaston Opera House Building Committee.



The Hayseed Ball around 1900

The restoration and renovation will transform the community by creating employment opportunities, boosting tourism, enriching cultural experiences, revitalizing the downtown area, and promoting diversity and social cohesion. It aligns the power of art and culture to bring people together, tell shared stories, and strengthen the overall character of the community.

The project has three components:

1) Restoring the Opera House's original artwork, including refurbishing the spectacular Romanesque ceiling.

2) Installing a large stage-accessible elevator for mobility-challenged individuals.

3) Improving energy efficiency by upgrading windows and the heating/cooling system.

The total project cost is estimated at \$8.1 million. The first phase is listed at \$4.5 million, of which \$3.5 million has already been secured from the State of Connecticut. The renovations follow a completed roof replacement, which was funded by the Town of Thomaston at a cost of \$1.4 million.

ABOUT THE OPERA HOUSE

The Thomaston Opera House, built in 1884, serves as a cultural and recreational center for Thomaston and the surrounding communities. The theater's mission is to offer opportunities to participate in and to enjoy the performing arts. It seeks to educate all ages in performing arts and strives to preserve and to protect the Thomaston Opera House as an historic landmark, cultural asset, and community space.



As an example of Romanesque architecture, the Opera House is officially recognized among this nation’s most significant historic landmarks and is on the State and Federal Registries for Historic Treasures. It has the potential to be among this region’s most valuable cultural assets and economic engines and is a point of pride for area residents and the many people who participate in its theatrical productions.

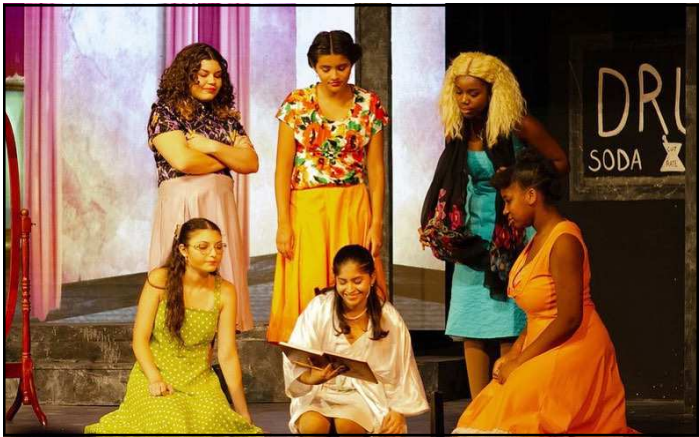
"Culture generates social capital and strengthens a community's character. Art brings people together physically — at galleries, museums, and performance spaces — and culturally, through its capacity to tell a community's shared story, inspire reflection, and form connections that transcend differences." - Alberto Ibargüen, former CEO of the Knight Foundation.

WHO WE ARE: OUR CONSTITUENTS AND COMMUNITIES

The Thomaston Opera House thrives by serving its diverse community through Landmark Community Theatre. Unlike larger venues hosting pricey national acts, Landmark showcases local artists and lesser-known performances at affordable rates. Its primary goal is providing high-quality arts access to working-class families. Landmark's yearly audience, exceeding 18,000 people, attests to its successful approach. While occasionally featuring renowned artists at higher prices, it remains committed to maintaining an accessible, affordable core offering.

Landmark focuses on nurturing the artistic growth and skills of young, diverse artists, including those

from BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and rural backgrounds. Young artists often address contemporary social issues and relevant topics through their art, which serves as a powerful medium for raising awareness and promoting critical thinking about societal challenges. By engaging these young artists and providing platforms for them to showcase their talents, Thomaston Opera House contributes to the growth of the creative economy and creates opportunities for economic development within the arts sector. Additionally, their artistic contribution enriches the cultural fabric of the community, attracts visitors, fosters tourism, and enhances overall cultural vitality.



The Thomaston Opera House serves as a beacon of inclusivity, providing a welcoming space for individuals from all walks of life, regardless of age, background, or ability, to unite and work collaboratively towards a shared vision. Landmark recognizes the critical importance of community volunteers with over 500 volunteers logging 33,000 hours yearly. When individuals volunteer in their community, they develop a deeper investment in their well-being. This increased involvement leads to greater participation in local events, initiatives, and a proactive role in shaping the community's future.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROPOSAL

The Thomaston Opera House has been recognized as a pre-eminent cultural and performing arts center since its founding in 1884. As an old building, however, it requires care and upkeep. The process of identifying and approving capital improvements was careful and methodical.



Following several years of discussions with the board of Landmark Community Theatre, the Friends of the Thomaston Opera House, town officials, and others, a consensus emerged that a comprehensive plan for renovation and historic preservation would be required to transform the Thomaston Opera House into a state-of-the-art performance space.

The renovations have three components:

1. Restoring the Opera House's original artwork, including refurbishing the spectacular Romanesque ceiling.

For over 140 years the Thomaston Opera House has served as a treasured pillar of arts and culture for Thomaston and the surrounding communities. Constructed in 1884, this architectural gem, with its ornate interior embellishments, still dazzles all who enter. However, after more than a century of use, the iconic plaster ceilings demand restoration. Strategic conservation efforts and faithful artwork replication will restore the original grandeur.

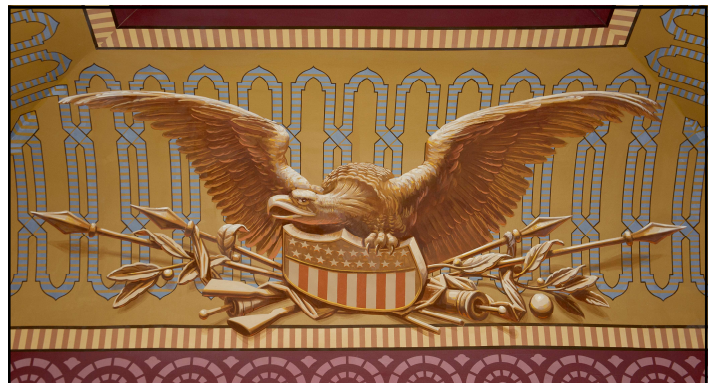
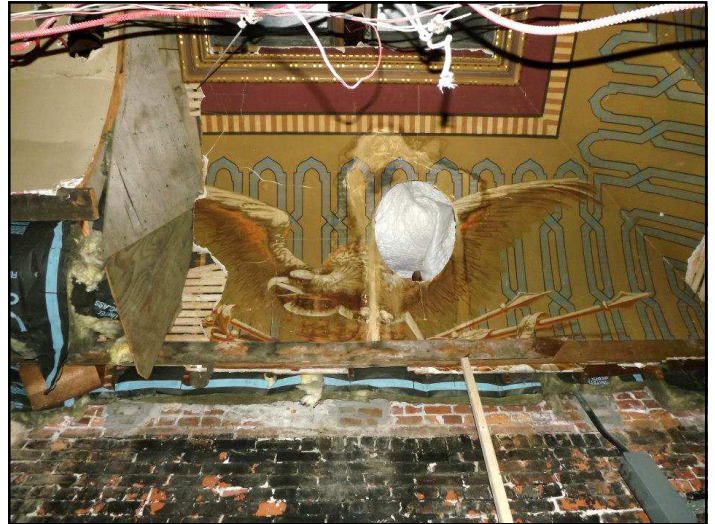


Unfortunately, water damage has caused deterioration and plaster dislodgment. Sections have collapsed entirely. The original calcimine paint is peeling and presents a complex challenge for preservation experts.

To restore the ceiling one must first stabilize and restore the existing plaster. Subsequent tasks include cleaning and filling in gaps, priming and blending repairs. The most intricate phase involves recreating the ornamental artwork on the restored plaster. The State Historic Preservation Office encourages an approach that aligns preservation with best practices.

2. Installation of a large stage-accessible elevator for mobility-challenged individuals.

Construction includes a new elevator that will run from the ground level to the stage with a stop at the dressing room. An appropriately sized and positioned elevator would enable the use of larger scenic elements in productions than currently feasible. A new corridor will connect the elevator directly to the stage.



More importantly, the elevator will serve the additional critical purpose of increasing accessibility to the stage. Currently performers face challenges accessing the stage because they use either a long, steep stairway from the dressing rooms, or a staircase that is unlit and without a railing which they access from the audience. The proposed elevator, with stops at both dressing rooms and stage level, will resolve these accessibility issues.

Historically, the Thomaston Ladies Choral Club and the Men's Liederkrantz singers utilized the

Thomaston Opera House for rehearsals and performances. Unfortunately, due to the aging of both groups and the difficulties accessing the stage, they relocated their activities elsewhere. Despite the Opera House's exceptional acoustics and community-friendly design, physical barriers have restricted its use for its intended purposes.

In addition, older actors, who are needed for our extensive community theatre productions, have migrated to other theaters with more accessible stages. The proposed elevator addresses the accessibility needs of all performers with mobility difficulties, fosters inclusivity, and promotes equity for everyone involved.

3. Improving energy efficiency by upgrading windows and the heating/cooling system.

The construction plan aims to incorporate a comprehensive array of energy-efficient components to promote substantial energy conservation. Insulating the walls, attic floor, and roof will increase thermal efficiency, minimize heat transfer, and reduce energy consumption. Additionally, installing four new double-pane, low-E Argon gas windows will reduce energy consumption.

The HVAC system's efficiency will be enhanced by including two 3-ton outside condensing units and six cabinet-mounted fan coil units, ensuring optimal

temperature regulation while minimizing energy waste. Four exhaust fans will be crucial to maintain indoor air quality and ventilation and to promote a healthy and comfortable environment.



The plan introduces 64 new LED light fixtures and advanced lighting controls to optimize energy usage. These measures will significantly reduce energy consumption associated with lighting while providing high-quality illumination. Furthermore, incorporating WaterSense® faucets, showerheads, and toilets will meet stringent Environmental Protection Agency standards. Four exhaust fans will be crucial to maintain indoor air quality and ventilation and to promote a healthy and comfortable environment.

Each component of the construction plan has been meticulously selected to address specific aspects of energy conservation, collectively creating a sustainable and efficient design. Implementing this plan will result in substantial energy savings, reduced environmental impact, and improved occupant comfort and well-being. Moreover, the proposed energy conservation measures align with the incentives provided by Connecticut's Neighborhood Assistance Act (NAA). The NAA offers tax credits equal to 100% of cash contributions made by businesses towards energy efficiency projects in municipalities and tax-exempt organizations. While the primary goal is to implement best practices in energy conservation, corporate sponsors may be able to obtain substantial tax credits through the NAA.



REHABILITATION OF A HISTORIC STRUCTURE

Thomaston Opera House is a significant landmark and has the potential to be among the region's most valuable cultural assets and economic engines. Designed and constructed in 1884 by the renowned architect Robert Wakeman Hill, the Opera House has a rich history. In 1972, the building was listed on both the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Since then, it has undergone various restoration efforts under the guidance and support of the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).



Program for the first show at The Opera House in 1884

The commitment to the preservation and protection of the Thomaston Opera House as an historic landmark and community space is unwavering. Architecture, as an art form, represents history and culture. The Thomaston Opera House stands as a testament to the community's dedication to creativity and expression. Stewards of this iconic venue are dedicated to ensuring its continued significance and accessibility to the local and regional community.

The Thomaston Opera House was originally designed to serve as a community space, a cultural center, and a venue for artistic performances. This project aims to revitalize and restore the Opera House to its original purpose, allowing it to fulfill its intended function. Preserving and rehabilitating

this historic structure not only honors its architectural significance but also ensures that it continues to serve as a vital space for the community, fostering artistic expression and cultural enrichment for future generations.

EXPANDED THEATER PRODUCTION CAPACITY

In addition to community theater, the Opera House hosts various community events. From graduation ceremonies to silent films, the Ladies Choral Club, and dance recitals, the Thomaston Opera House serves as a venue for gatherings and celebrations that bring people together. These events contribute to the community's cultural fabric and foster a sense of unity and shared experiences.



A beautifully restored Opera House equipped with state-of-the-art facilities will serve as a beacon for artists and audiences throughout Connecticut and beyond. After restoration and renovation, the Thomaston Opera House expects to host at least 78 performances annually, up from the current 54, and to attract 40% more patrons.

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

The newly released Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 (AEP6) is an economic and social impact study of the nation's nonprofit arts and culture industry. AEP6, the sixth economic impact study of its kind, is

conducted approximately every five years to gauge the economic impact - on employment, government revenue, and household income - of spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and the event-related spending by their audiences.



Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 has concluded that investment in the arts and culture strengthens local economies and builds more livable communities. By every measure, the impact of this economic activity is impressive: it supports new jobs, increases the residents' personal income, and generates additional tax revenue to local and state governments. Moreover, investment in arts and culture builds better communities where people want to live and work, where entrepreneurs flourish, tourism grows, and pride in community is strengthened.

The restoration of the Thomaston Opera House extends its positive effects beyond the immediate workforce. The increase in tourism and the expanded event calendar will create opportunities for new businesses to thrive and existing businesses to expand. When the Opera House hosts a show, local restaurants are bustling with customers. A busier schedule and a greater number of performances will undoubtedly result in increased hiring within the restaurant industry. Moreover,

other local businesses experience heightened activity when theater troupes are rehearsing. Visiting artists contribute to the local economy by patronizing nearby businesses for supplies and socializing after rehearsals. The influx of visitors will boost local businesses and tax revenues through increased spending on accommodations, dining, and retail.

In addition to the increase in local business and tax revenue, the restoration of the Thomaston Opera House will instill a sense of pride in the unique architectural heritage of Connecticut and increase tourism.

Furthermore, this community's revitalization through the arts has the potential to elevate home values and stimulate new home construction. In a



recent issue of Connecticut Magazine Thomaston was listed in an article entitled “The Hot List: 15 CT Towns Where the Real Estate Market Is on Fire.” The article cited Landmark Community Theatre at the historic Thomaston Opera House as one of several drivers creating a desirable and affordable living community.

CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The restoration and renovation plan for the Thomaston Opera House is in accordance with the municipality's Plan of Conservation and Development (PoCD). This initiative strategically preserves Thomaston's historical community spaces while fostering economic growth, attracting tourists, creating jobs, supporting existing businesses, and aligning with the town's long-term goals. Furthermore, it supports existing businesses and aligns with the town's long-term objectives.



Thomaston has already implemented a Downtown Development District to promote revitalization in the downtown area, with the Opera House occupying a central location at 158 Main Street. This plan specifically aims to identify and cater to a distinct market niche, which the Opera House fulfills effectively. The Opera House already draws patrons who contribute to the local economy by frequenting nearby businesses. The projected increase in footfall resulting from the renovated facility will further stimulate economic activity, generate employment prospects, and attract new enterprises to the community. Importantly, the plan accounts for the town's infrastructure capacity to ensure that

the proposed developments do not overburden essential services.

In addition to economic considerations, the plan emphasizes the promotion of Thomaston's cultural, recreational, and historic attractions. The Opera House, together with other notable assets such as the Railroad Museum of New England and Seth Thomas Clock Museum, can be leveraged to augment downtown foot traffic and create a vibrant mixed-use environment. By capitalizing on these cultural and historical assets, the plan supports the town's vision of preserving its heritage while fostering sustainable growth.



Overall, the restoration and renovation plan for the Thomaston Opera House demonstrates consistency with the municipality's Plan of Conservation and Development. It effectively addresses the objectives of historical preservation, economic revitalization, and utilization of cultural assets, thereby positioning Thomaston for long-term prosperity and community development.

ALIGNMENT WITH CONNECTICUT'S ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN

The restoration of the Thomaston Opera House aligns with Connecticut's Economic Action Plan by contributing to the creation of vibrant and affordable communities. By revitalizing the Opera House and transforming it into a fully functioning mid-sized performance center, the project aims to bring affordable, high-value entertainment to the

small town and its surrounding areas. This will have a profound impact on the business environment. Both new and existing businesses will recognize the new cultural centerpiece the community offers and view it as an opportunity to establish new enterprises, expand their workforce, and extend operating hours.

One way the project attracts and retains talent is by providing a unique platform for performers who may not be able to fill larger theaters. The Thomaston Opera House's intimate setting offers opportunities for both established and emerging artists to showcase their talents. This attracts talent from within and beyond the state, as performers recognize the value of having a dedicated venue that caters to a smaller audience.



Moreover, the project helps keep ticket prices affordable, making entertainment accessible to a wider range of residents. By offering community theater as its core product, the Opera House provides opportunities for young artists to showcase their skills and gain experience. Additionally, lesser-known performers, musicians, and other artists can find a welcoming home on the Thomaston Opera House stage. This not only enriches the cultural landscape of the town but also allows Connecticut residents to enjoy performances they might not have the chance to see otherwise.

Beyond the Opera House itself, Thomaston offers a variety of attractions and amenities that contribute to its vibrancy and affordability. The town features a mix of restaurants, newly renovated parks, a



pedestrian friendly Main Street, free concerts, and a developing Greenway. These elements create an inviting environment for residents and visitors alike. The project's success in attracting tourists and increasing foot traffic in the downtown area directly benefits local businesses, especially restaurants. These businesses have reported a significant uptick in business when the Opera House is open; some even expressed concerns about their viability without its presence.

The restoration of the Thomaston Opera House aligns with Connecticut's Economic Action Plan by promoting vibrant and affordable communities. Through its focus on diverse performances, affordable ticket prices, and the overall enhancement of the town's amenities, the project attracts and retains talent while supporting local businesses and contributing to the economic vitality of Thomaston.

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FRIENDS OF THE
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Opera House