

# Renovations Lead to Historic Belt Theatre Renaissance

## Site History

Located in the center of Belt, Montana's historic downtown, the Belt Theatre was built in 1912. The Theatre has had many names since construction, including the Masonic Hall, the Pythian Theatre, the Palace Theatre, and since 1940, the Belt Theatre. The Theatre has been used as a performing arts center, a movie theater, and a community meeting-place. The Belt Theatre has housed organizations such as the Knights of Pythias and the Masons. The Belt Theatre screened its last movie in in the 1960's and has remained largely vacant since. In recent years, portions of the building have been used by the internationally recognized Belt High School Shakespeare Club.

In 1998, the site was purchased by the Belt Theatre Company, a local non-profit dedicated to restoring the historic building. Due to the date of the building construction and subsequent renovations, the building materials were suspect for asbestos and lead-based paint. Prior to renovation activities, an inspection for hazardous building materials was required.



Belt Theatre ♦ 58 Castner Street  
Belt, Montana

## Assessment and Cleanup Funding

The Belt Theatre Company requested assistance from the Sweetgrass Development Brownfields Program in March of 2016. Using EPA Brownfields Assessment funds, Sweetgrass Development conducted a Phase II building materials assessment in June of 2016. The results showed asbestos-containing materials throughout many areas of the building. Following the Phase II assessment, the Sweetgrass Brownfields Program assisted the Belt Theatre Company with additional funds for cleanup planning to ready the building for abatement.

In December of 2016, all asbestos-containing materials were removed from the Belt Theatre. With the building clear of hazardous materials, planned renovations are scheduled to begin in 2017. The restoration of the Belt Theatre will help preserve an important piece of Belt's history, promote local arts, and assist in the revitalization of the community.



## Cleanup Project Key Points

- ♦ Prominently located in the center of the Belt Commercial Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- ♦ Costs to assess and abate asbestos and lead-based paint have prohibited redevelopment of the site.
- ♦ With the assistance of EPA Brownfields funding the Belt Theatre Company was able to perform a building materials investigation in June of 2016.
- ♦ In December of 2016, following the results of the investigation, asbestos-containing materials were abated from the Theatre.
- ♦ Future renovation plans will return the Belt Theatre to a performing arts center, a community center, and a focal point for the community.
- ♦ Renovation activities are scheduled to begin in early 2017.

SWEETGRASS DEVELOPMENT

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