

Avenal Theater Restoration Project

Award of Achievement Historic Preservation 2010 Blueprint Awards

Projects Summary and Photos



In the mid 1930's Avenal was a booming oil town with several oil wells under construction and people moving to the City. Standard Oil built much of the City including the downtown and the Avenal Theater. The original theater sat 500 viewers and was designed in the classic "Art Deco" theme. The Theater was topped by a beautiful marquee and was the center of attraction for the downtown if not the entire City.

While the oil lasted the town thrived as did the theater. However, beginning in the mid 1960's the wells became less productive and oil workers began to move away. The City went into a recession and the downtown lost a lot of its appeal. In 2000 the Theater was purchased by the City of Avenal which still operates it today. The City felt it needed the "base" of the Theater for the downtown even though it operated at a loss.

In November of 2003 an electrical problem caused a fire that burned down the Theater and tore at the heart of the City. The building was a total loss except for the original walls. Several surrounding businesses were destroyed or damaged also. However, the citizens of Avenal did not despair and began to raise funds to rebuild the theater. Negotiations with insurance companies began and the surrounding businesses were rebuilt.

Reconstruction of the Theater lagged as lawyers debated the project but the Citizens, Elected Officials and City Staff proceeded as if the project was going to happen. Architects were hired and plans were developed. The new concept for the Theater was a two screen design with a ballroom and a small conference area.

Finally, in May of this year the grand opening of the new theater took place. The final product tried to keep as many of the original art deco themes as possible from the old theater. The lobby, concession area, carpet, lighting and paintings on the walls and ceilings are as near as possible to the original Theater. The new ballroom and conference rooms are as ornate as they can be. The attached pictures attest to the professional workmanship put into the building. The final cost of the restoration was \$5.4 million with the insurance paying approximately two thirds of the project and the City's Redevelopment Agency paying the rest.

Since its opening, the Theater has enjoyed success as many have attended a movie there. The world premier of a movie took place in June of a film that was partially filmed in Avenal. Various functions have been held in the ballroom. The Avenal City Council has begun to hold their city council meetings there. So once again, the Theater is the main attraction to the downtown area.

Restoration of the Theater was key to maintaining and revitalizing the downtown area. It was also just one piece of the revitalization project that the City is pursuing. The City will now undertake a new streetscape project including landscaping and decorative cross walks. The City has also purchased an empty lot across the street from the Theater to develop a small park and provide more parking in the downtown area. As will be shown in the Criteria Section of the application, the restoration of the Avenal Theater makes it a good candidate for a Blueprint award.

Photos

Theater Fire Newspaper Article [1]	Theater Outside [2]
Restoration 1 [3]	Restoration 2 [4]
Theater Ceiling 1 [5]	Theater Ceiling 2 [7]
Snack Bar [8]	

Primary links



Avenal Theater Restoration Project

Published on Valley Blueprint (<http://valleyblueprint.org>)

A joint initiative of San Joaquin Valley Councils of Governments representing each of the region's eight counties, the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District and the Great Valley Center

© 2009—2010 Valley Blueprint. All Rights Reserved.

[XHTML](#) | [CSS](#) | [508](#) | [Login](#)

Source URL: <http://valleyblueprint.org/avenal-theater-restoration-project.html>

Links:

- [1] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_037.jpg
- [2] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_006.jpg
- [3] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_010.jpg
- [4] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_016.jpg
- [5] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_021.jpg
- [6] <http://www.fresnocog.org/files/Blueprint/2010Awards/Avenal/Theater%20Restoration%20031.JPG>
- [7] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_031.jpg
- [8] http://valleyblueprint.org/files/images/Theater_Restoration_032.jpg

Primary links

[Home](#)