

that you were in a historic theater because eight feet above your head was a regular commercial ceiling," O'Toole said. "You had no idea that above it was a chandelier that was 100 years old. All of that was sealed off from public access from 1959."

The chandelier was re-lit in January of this year for the first time since 1959.

O'Toole said the goal for the Liberty is to bring it back to its era of "historical significance," somewhere in the 1930-40s. The theater will include capabil-

ity for live music, theater and cinema screenings.

"When this thing was turned from a theater to a commercial space, there was a lot of demolition that took place. All the walls and bathroom and stairwells was just gone, destroyed forever," O'Toole said. "We are at a point now where we are just about done framing all of that back in. That includes the auditorium floor."

In addition to restoring the look of the classic theater, the project will install modern amenities, including an ADA

bathroom and seating, and a larger lobby.

The current timeline for completion of the Liberty depends on funding. O'Toole said costs of materials has delayed the project and they are back in fundraising mode. The goal is to raise \$250,000 by July 1 in order to have the theater partially open in time for the Eastern Oregon Film Festival this fall. For information, visit [libertyonadams.org](http://libertyonadams.org).

### THE GEM THEATRE, ATHENA

Now solidly in its renovation, the Gem Theatre in Athena has housed a saloon, restaurant, dry goods store, and, in 1909, The Dime Theater, a "moving picture house." The Gem Theatre opened under that name in 1938 with art deco seating on the main floor, an enlarged stage, and even a "cry room" for mothers and small children. The Gem Theatre operated until 1968.

In 2004, the building was donated to the city of Athena to be renovated as a regional theater and performing arts facility. Because of the building's

unusual history, the restoration on the Gem Theatre includes not only the theater spaces (including balcony, cry room, stage, and 308 seats from 1906 to 1938) but also the former Star Saloon that will serve as the foyer and concession area for the theater.

Current renovation projects including installing a historic mahogany front bar in Star Saloon and installing drywall. For information, visit [gemtheatre.org](http://gemtheatre.org).

### THE RIVOLI, PENDLETON

On Pendleton's Main Street, the Rivoli's marquee was once one of the most recognizable features in downtown Pendleton. Rivoli Coalition President Andrew Picken hopes it will be again.

The Rivoli Theater opened in 1921 and offered movies, vaudeville shows and small theater productions for most of the 20th century. Picken said the theater closed its doors in the mid-1980s after a series of unfortunate remodels and renovations and then sat vacant for the next two decades.

In 2011, the Rivoli Coalition began the long process of plan-

ning and re-creating the theater. Studies, designs, and demolition have already taken place, and the project was recently awarded \$1.5 million from the Oregon Legislature to help it move forward with the coalition's goals of creating a community space.

Unlike many of the theater projects, the Rivoli plan calls for a multi-use theater with a flat floor seating area. Picken said that arrangement allows for movable theater seating but also tables and chairs. When open, the Rivoli could be a venue for dinner theater and dances.

"If we build a perfect building but no one comes, we have utterly failed," he said. "I think it's very important for communities to have gathering places that are welcoming and sort of consistently comfortable for people across race, religion, socioeconomic status. If we can continue to develop a place like that in Pendleton that is also economically sustainable and good for the community, then I will feel like we have succeeded."

For updates, visit [rivoli-theater.com](http://rivoli-theater.com).



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