

Save the El Rey Announces \$1 M Fundraising Campaign to Purchase and Transform the Historic Chico Landmark

Campaign aims to turn the El Rey Theater into a non profit for community benefit, continuing its legacy as a cultural cornerstone of Chico, CA

CHICO, CA, US, August 26, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Save the El Rey, a community-driven initiative dedicated to preserving the historic El Rey Theater, today announced the launch of its first fundraising campaign. Following the historic theater going up for sale in March 2024, a dedicated group of local activists united to explore how to purchase and transform it into a community-owned and operated venue. The campaign seeks to raise \$1 million to secure ownership of the iconic venue, repair its roof, and fund operations for one year. This vital effort will ensure that the El Rey Theater, a historic and cultural landmark in Chico, continues to serve future generations.

Having a thriving theater in the heart of downtown Chico will result in economic benefits for the entire community. "Downtown Chico has been and will continue to rebuild itself after years of economic downturn. Ensuring the health and vitality of this theater will cement the importance of our downtown and our arts community into the minds of all Chicanos," says Mahina Gannet, downtown business owner and Board Member of Save the El Rey. "The ripple effects of this theater being a thriving business is paramount for downtown and all of Chico's economy." "The urgency is real and only a community-driven effort will save the El Rey," says historian and Board Member, Anna Alexander. "Water damage from the leaky roof has started to wash away the treasured fairy murals, and high temperature and humidity levels from the lack of HVAC has started to make the plaster crack and crumble." To limit further irreparable damage to the structure and murals, Save the El Rey campaign hopes to reach its fundraising goal by the end of 2024.

A Historic Icon Since 1906

Originally opened as the Majestic Theater in 1906, the El Rey has been a central cultural venue in Chico. Hosting vaudeville performances, films, and even renowned acts like Al Jolson and Harry Lauder, the theater has remained a fixture in the community. After a devastating fire in 1946, the theater was rebuilt and reopened in 1948 as the El Rey, featuring stunning murals by Martin Ravenstein and updated architecture. Its long history reflects both the resilience of the building and the unwavering support from the Chico community.

Next Steps for Save the El Rey

Once purchased, Save the El Rey plans to carry out essential roof repairs and operational upgrades to make the venue a thriving center for entertainment and events. The funds will also cover operational expenses for a full-time position, two part-time staff, and event personnel to manage the venue's revitalization.

"The El Rey Theater has stood as a symbol of culture, history, and togetherness in Chico for over a century," said Dustin Vaught, Board Member of Save the El Rey. "This campaign is not just about saving a building, but about preserving the shared memories and the spirit that this theater has fostered within our community. Our vision is to restore the El Rey to its former glory and ensure that it remains a pillar of our city's heritage."

"Chico has always come together to protect this theater whenever it's at risk," said Vaught. "We are calling on the community once more to help us meet this goal, which will ultimately benefit everyone who loves the El Rey and what it represents."

About Save the El Rey

Save the El Rey is an organization working with North Valley Community Foundation to preserve the historic El Rey Theater in Chico, California. The group is committed to securing ownership of the theater, restoring its iconic architecture, and ensuring it remains an active and vibrant venue for local arts, culture, and events. Through community efforts and fundraising campaigns, Save the El Rey aims to safeguard the theater's future for generations to come.

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