



UTE THEATER

A Colorado Brownfields Case Study

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Ute Theater in Rifle, Colorado is a historic Downtown icon that was built in 1947. The theater was a thriving community hub for decades, but eventually began to deteriorate and struggle as a business. After almost 60 years of business, the owners were no longer able to operate the theater successfully and put the building on the market in 2006, where it received very little interest worthy of its location just one block from the main business district. Concerned with the loss of an economic asset, the City of Rifle purchased the building for \$317,000 and leased it back to the previous owners to continue serving the Rifle community. Unfortunately, the building and business still struggled in its deteriorated condition.

In 2009, the New Ute Theater Society was established as a community non-profit that would work with the City to renovate the iconic asset. Knowing that the old building could present environmental challenges, CBP was engaged to help identify obstacles and access the State's resources. CBP assisted the City in conducting a hazardous materials assessment that identified extensive asbestos contamination that would need to be abated before the interior renovation could commence. After getting abatement quotes and construction plans created, the City issued a challenge grant to NUTS that offered \$100,000 from the capital reserve fund if an additional \$100,000 could be raised elsewhere. The lodging tax/visitor improvement fund also dedicated \$60,000 to the effort but ultimately, an additional \$2 Million in funding would be needed for the project to become a reality, and no fundraising efforts could begin until the asbestos abatement was completed.

To solve this issue, CBP provided critical technical assistance to apply for Brownfield Cleanup Funds from the CDPHE. The City requested and was awarded \$60,738 from CDPHE for the asbestos abatement to be matched with \$20,000 from the City for a total clean-up cost of \$80,738. The funding allowed for a comprehensive remediation of the site, but perhaps most importantly, the State's participation illustrated to other potential funding partners that the project was important to the community and essential to the efforts to reinvigorate the downtown with new community space.

In total, renovations of the New Ute Theater cost roughly \$2.5 Million and would not have been possible without the support of major donors. The New Ute Theater and Events Center opened to the public in May 2014, providing an important economic, arts and entertainment asset to area. Today, the theater remains owned and operated by the City of Rifle, and offers concerts, performances, films, community celebrations, wedding receptions, birthday parties, and more to the community.

QUICK FACTS

Location: Rifle, CO

Project Type: Clean-up and restoration of historic theater in Downtown core

Former Use: Deteriorated movie theater

Renovated Use: Event center for community

Environmental Issues:

- Asbestos
- Pests
- Severe dilapidation

Reuse Partners:

- Colorado Department of Public Health and Safety (CDPHE)
- Colorado Brownfields Partnership (CBP)
- City of Rifle Capital Fund, Federal Mineral Lease Direct Distribution and Visitor Improvement Fund
- Rifle Downtown Development Authority
- New Ute Theater Society (NUTS)
- Department of Local Affairs Energy and Mineral Impact Assistance Fund (EIAF)
- Gates Family Foundation
- Clough Family Foundation
- Adolph Coors Foundation
- Boettcher Foundation
- Union Pacific Railroad
- The American Shale Oil, Inc





FINANCING AND DEAL STRUCTURE

The total cost of the restoration project was estimated to be \$2.5 Million and began with the City's recognition of the historic building's potential as an economic asset and catalytic redevelopment project. After purchasing the property, multiple entities partnered together to address the financial needs of the redevelopment by creating partnerships, garnering state support, fundraising, and collecting grant money. The City and other public entities were able to build critical momentum by issuing challenge grants, providing match funding and identifying capital funds that could contribute to the efforts while also encouraging additional community-based fundraising.

By working with CBP, the project was able to identify potential environmental obstacles, conduct a hazardous materials assessment and become a verified brownfields property, ultimately leading to \$60,678 of Brownfields Cleanup Funds from CDPHE. The technical assistance from CBP and additional City support helped solidify critical State-level participation that ultimately led the project meeting its total fundraising goals.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

The New Ute Theater is an inspiring example of what a dilapidated and environmentally distressed building can become when a community recognizes its potential, forms creative partnerships and leverages State resources. Although the theater offers a host of events, the main offering is concerts and other performances that draw attendees to the downtown area and help support the local economy. The events consistently result in increased spending at local restaurants, bars, hotels, gas stations, etc. It is estimated that for every dollar spent by the theater on a yearly basis, \$12 is spent in the local economy. With a budget of \$611,000 for the year in 2022, the New Ute Theater will indirectly create an additional \$7.3 million of spending for the local economy. Although the asset is tax exempt, the project increased the theater's property value from \$357,530 prior to the renovation, to over \$2 million. Additionally, The Ute Theater created several local jobs with one full-time director and up to 15 part time employees.



Get help for your project

Whether you are unsure of what a brownfield is, or you are well-versed in state and EPA brownfields programs, the Colorado Brownfields Partnership (CBP) will help you learn about leveraging brownfields assistance for your community. The CBP provides outreach and technical assistance to communities interested in redevelopment renovation, and adaptive reuse of property. Please contact info@cobrownfieldspartnership.org or call 970-340-2959 for more information

Project Metrics			
One-Time Impact of New Investment		Property Value-Added	\$1,642,470
Property Acquisition	\$317,000	Induced Spending in Local Economy	\$7,332,000
Asbestos Abatement	\$80,678		
Building Restoration	\$2,102,322	Jobs Created	
		Full Time	1
Total project cost	\$2,500,000	Part Time	15



COLORADO
Department of Public Health & Environment

