



Gowanda Hollywood Theater Receives a 2022 Excellence in Historic Preservation Award

This award from the Preservation League of NYS recognizes the best in the field of historic preservation

Contacts:

Katy Peace, Director of Communications, Preservation League of New York State
kpeace@preservenys.org | 518.462.5658 ext. 17

Nancy Redeye, Senior Project Manager, Flynn Battaglia Architects
nredeye@flynnbattaglia.com | 716.854.2424

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Gowanda, NY, 11/7/22 — The Gowanda Hollywood Theater has been named one of this year's Excellence in Historic Preservation award winners. Since 1984, the League's annual Excellence Awards program has allowed us to shine a light on the people who are using historic preservation to make all our lives better — through exemplary restoration projects, indispensable publications, individual action, and organizational distinction.

Additional information about the 2022 Excellence Award winners, including interviews, videos, and more, can be found on our website: <https://www.preservenys.org/excellence-awards>

"Flynn Battaglia Architects has been very proud to be a part of this important community effort," said **Nancy Redeye, Senior Project Manager at Flynn Battaglia**. "A small town, cultural asset has been brought back to life after 14 years of committed efforts by Gowanda's Historic Hollywood Theater organization and the preservation design team, to provide continued use by the Southern Tier region, as its founder originally intended almost 100 years ago."

Gowanda's Hollywood Theater has been a community anchor since it was built in 1926. Originally serving as a vaudeville and live theater venue, it later served as a movie theater and remained in operation until 1992. After years of vacancy and poor maintenance, the building was bought in 1996 by the locally owned Gernatt Asphalt Products and promptly donated to the newly formed nonprofit Gowanda's Historic Hollywood Theater (GHHT).

Originally seating nearly 1,000 patrons, the restoration of the Hollywood Theater was a major undertaking. With local volunteers administering the project throughout the process, this restoration was done in many stages over many years, from plaster and paint repair to upgrading mechanical systems. In 2008, GHHT brought Flynn Battaglia Architects on board to complete an existing conditions assessment, detailing the repairs necessary for bringing the theater back to life, as closely to its original condition as possible. To that end, all the original light fixtures survived and were restored with new wiring and LED lamps. The decorative painting on the dome and plaster walls and ceiling was also restored to its original glory.

The Preservation League has been proud to support this incredible effort over the years through the Technical Assistance Grant program, a partnership between the League and the New York State Council on the Arts. GHHT was awarded Technical Assistance Grants in 2012 and 2015 to support feasibility reuse studies of the main level and balcony seating areas. While the original seats were an inadequate size, the

new, wider seats matched the original seating design and utilized restored aisle standards to maintain the historic material and character. The project team also prioritized incorporating handicapped accessible seating areas when reconfiguring the main floor layout.

The Hollywood Theater is now fully restored and actively serving its community once again. But an important thing to note is that even while the building was very much “in progress,” great efforts were made to engage the community in every step of the project. Tours, school groups, and various events utilized the theater in every stage of its restoration, ensuring that the greater Gowanda community felt connected to and invested in the success of this project.

“Restoring historic community anchors like the Hollywood Theater can have a major impact on small towns like Gowanda,” said **Preservation League President Jay DiLorenzo**. “The dedication of the community to seeing this project through, and the great work by Flynn Battaglia is truly inspiring.”

The Hollywood Theater was honored earlier this year with an Outstanding Project Award from Preservation Buffalo Niagara.

The Hollywood Theater restoration project was financed in part by NYS Environmental Protection Fund; Federal Community Development Block Grant funding through Erie County; NYS Main Street Program funding; Restore New York grant funding; Cattaraugus County; private foundations; and many individual donors.

Project team included: **Gowanda’s Historic Hollywood Theater representatives, Mark Burr, Karen Burr, Sal Diciembre & Debbie Harris** for the owner; **Flynn Battaglia Architects**, project architect; **Wendel Companies**, building systems engineer; **Syracuse Engineers**, structural engineers; **Trophy Point Construction Services**, cost estimating.

Recipients of the Excellence Award represent the very best of what the League stands for and supports in historic preservation. They exemplify best practices in the field and demonstrate how preservation is integral to building stronger neighborhoods, boosting local economies, tackling the affordable housing crisis, mitigating climate change, opening our eyes to overlooked history, and saving the places that are special to all of us. Our shared cultural heritage grounds us and unites us. The Excellence Awards celebrate those who work so hard to protect that shared heritage.

2022 Awardees:

- **Gowanda Hollywood Theater** | Gowanda, Cattaraugus County
- **Opendore Restoration** | Sherwood, Cayuga County
- **Art’s Cafe** | Springville, Erie County
- **The Pavilion at Fort Ticonderoga** | Ticonderoga, Essex County
- **The Church of St. Luke & St. Matthew Exterior Restoration** | Brooklyn, Kings County
- **Edgemere Development** | Rochester, Monroe County
- **Rehabilitation of the Little Theatre** | Rochester, Monroe County
- **Steve Jordan** | Rochester, Monroe County
- **East Harlem South / El Barrio Reconnaissance-Level Historic Resource Survey** | Manhattan, New York County
- **Cochecton Pump House** | Cochecton, Sullivan County

The 2022 Excellence in Historic Preservation Awards are sponsored in part by Mr. Robert A.M. Stern, FAIA | Robert A.M. Stern Architects, LLP.

About the Preservation League of New York State

Since its founding in 1974, the Preservation League has built a reputation for action and effectiveness. Our goal has been to preserve our historic buildings, districts, and landscapes and to build a better New

York, one community at a time. The Preservation League of New York State invests in people and projects that champion the essential role of preservation in community revitalization, sustainable economic growth and the protection of our historic buildings and landscapes. We lead advocacy, economic development, and education programs across the state.

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