

Theater project snags



STANDARD-TIMES PHOTO BY CYNTHIA ESPARZA

During the summer of 2007, workers cleared out seating and modified the electrical system in the old Texas Theatre on West Twohig Avenue. After investing \$200,000, investor Cal Collins has taken a hiatus in renovating the historic building.

Historic building's renovations on hold as investor takes hiatus

It's been a plot slow to develop, but the end might be in sight for the Texas Theatre saga.

The only question is who will direct the finale.

"It's not a challenge to restore the theater," co-owner Lee Pfluger said last week. "The challenge is to have a viable use for the building once it's restored. That is the key."

So the search goes on for someone to buy the historic downtown San Angelo moviehouse and renovate it for a modern use, likely as a live-theater venue.

Cal Collins, the San Antonio car salesman and stage producer/director who poured \$200,000 of his own money into breaking down and removing decades of detritus, is out — at least for now — the property having been reclaimed in October by Pfluger and Kenneth Gunter, who in tandem have rescued and restored numerous downtown structures, including

most of East Concho Avenue and the Hotel Cactus.

Collins ran into financial trouble when he tried to work on the Texas and on another historic theater in his hometown of San Antonio.

"It got real expensive there for a while," Collins said, "and we slowed down a little bit."

Collins portrayed the break as merely temporary, saying he is taking a one-year hiatus from restoring the Texas.

That isn't quite how the theater's owners described it; Gunter and Pfluger said they plan to talk with possible buyers by spring, but that they would welcome a Collins return to San Angelo.



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"It was a lot of work, a lot of effort, to get it where it is today," Pfluger said. "I'd love to have Cal here."

The Texas, built in 1929, closed for good in 1985 after several incarnations that left it ever more dilapidated. Pfluger and Gunter bought the theater in 1997, mothballing it until a buyer with concrete plans for a viable post-renovation use could be found.

Collins seemed to be exactly who they were looking for.

He gutted old storage space, expanded the orchestra pit, refurbished the stage, reupholstered many of the seats and removed additions to the facade made in recent decades that detracted from the theater's historic appearance.

More than \$200,000 later, Collins told Pfluger and Gunter he could not afford to continue.

"His available resources could not handle both projects," Pfluger said. "He pulled off the project."

Completing the renovation could take as little as six months, he said — but that's after they find a buyer, whether Collins again or someone else with the business sense and connections to turn the Texas into a successful home for live theater.

Democratic Club to meet Monday

The Tom Green County Democratic Club will hold its monthly meeting Monday at Chilango's City restaurant, 1911 S. Bryant Blvd.

Texas Railroad Commission candidate Art Hall will speak at the meeting, which will begin at 6 p.m.

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