



BUILDING OUR FUTURE & PRESERVING OUR PAST



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

JANE (BOEKELHEIDE) AHLIN

MARILYN BUROW

GRANT CRABTREE

GREG GACKLE

RALPH HOLTE

TOM RUDE

PAUL SUKUT

JUSTIN MEIDINGER,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

55 MAIN STREET



P.O. BOX 334



ELLENDALE, ND 58436



ELLENDALEOPERAHOUSE.COM



O.P.E.R.A., Inc. is an equal
opportunity provider.

Justin Meidinger
Executive Director

Greg Gackle
President, O.P.E.R.A., Inc. Board of Directors

Testimony before N.D. Senate Appropriations Education and Environment Division Thursday, March 6, 2025

The goal of O.P.E.R.A., Inc. - the non-profit organization that owns and operates the Ellendale Opera House - is to fully restore the historic Main Street landmark for use by the community.

O.P.E.R.A. (Organization of People in Ellendale for Restoration of the Arts) assumed ownership of the building - now listed on the National Register of Historic Places - from the city in 1992.

Since then, the roof has been replaced, part of the north wall reconstructed, the west wall and foundation rebuilt, new electrical service added, an ADA-compliant entrance installed and one of the four street-level storefronts renovated into a Lobby & Gallery space.

The Lobby & Gallery has been used for art exhibits, community events/activities, entertainment ranging from musical groups to play productions, and community art classes involving all age groups.

The improvements have been made thanks to private contributions, a USDA Rural Development loan and grants from the North Dakota State Historical Society.

With completion of significant structural improvements in recent years, O.P.E.R.A. is now focused on renovating the remaining storefronts and repairs needed to return the 700-seat upstairs auditorium to public use.

Restoration of the two remaining storefronts and auditorium could provide significant rental income to help make future building improvements.

Once complete, the multi-purpose facility would draw visitors to the community and boost the local economy of the city and region.

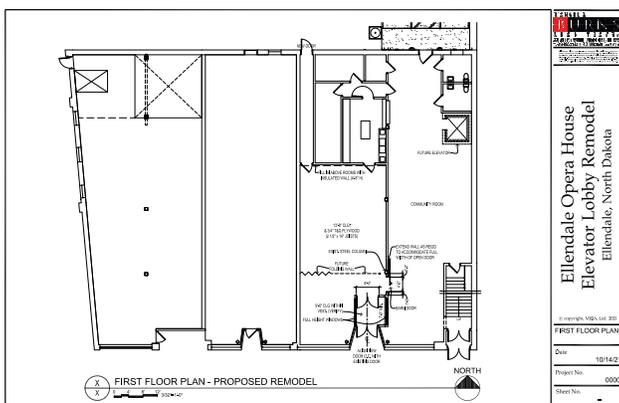
O.P.E.R.A., Inc. is a 501(c)(3)
non-profit corporation and
contributions are tax
deductible to the full extent
allowed by law. Our non-profit
Tax ID # is 45-0426945.

TTY Relay - 1-800-366-6888
Voice Relay - 1-800-366-6889

Historical note: Many combined commercial/community buildings in the early 20th century were called "opera houses" even though musical operas were not regularly performed in them. Mostly plays, vaudeville shows and musical acts (brought to town via the railroad) were booked to attract rural residents to town for shopping and entertainment. Many, like Ellendale's Opera House, had street-level storefronts for commercial businesses, upper floor offices for professional services like doctors and dentists, and a large auditorium for community events/activities, plays and musical entertainment. Local business owners raised \$40,000 in 1908 to build the opera house in Ellendale.



The opera house has four street-level storefronts. The storefront on the far right has been renovated into the Lobby & Gallery and is used regularly for community events, art exhibits, children's art classes, musical entertainment and play performances. The Annex, next to the Lobby & Gallery, is currently under renovation to provide more space for community events, activities and meetings. O.P.E.R.A. is planning to renovate the two remaining storefronts which could be rented for commercial use.



Plans have been completed and work begun to renovate the Annex, the second of four storefronts along Main Street.



The Lobby & Gallery was restored and is used for community events, activities and meetings. A small kitchen was added during renovation to provide for food service. Each Friday from April to October, O.P.E.R.A. members serve lunch to the public to raise money for the restoration work.



The opera house auditorium once seated 700 people and was used for dances and entertainment for more than 70 years. A new entrance on the northwest corner of the building, restoration of the balcony and additional life and safety code improvements need to be completed before the upstairs auditorium can be returned to public use. Eventually, an elevator is planned to serve the second floor auditorium.



Before a new roof was installed in the 1990's, water damaged and warped the auditorium balcony. The balcony originally was hung from the roof by metal rods, but new steel supports extending from the basement to the third level will need to be installed before the restoration of the balcony can be completed.



BUILDING OUR FUTURE & PRESERVING OUR PAST

Ellendale Opera House fund drive exceeds goal Leach Foundation grant, double-match boost campaign over \$100,000

For immediate release: Friday, January 10, 2025

The 2024 Ellendale Opera House fund drive exceeded its goal thanks to a \$25,000 grant from the Tom and Frances Leach Foundation of Bismarck and a double-matching incentive in the final quarter of the year.

The "***Building on Success***" campaign raised just over \$107,000, the largest amount contributed during an annual O.P.E.R.A., Inc. fund drive. This year's goal was set at \$75,000.

All donations to O.P.E.R.A., Inc. – the non-profit organization that owns and operates the opera house – will go toward restoration to bring the historic structure back to full use by the community.

Attendees at the special 115th building birthday event Sept. 27 raised more than \$15,000. A special double-match went into effect in October with anonymous supporters matching each dollar donated with an additional \$2 dollars through the end of 2024.

O.P.E.R.A. – **O**rganization of **P**eople in **E**llendale for **R**estoration of the **A**rts – was formed in 1992 to save the Main Street building from the wrecking ball. Because O.P.E.R.A. is a charitable non-profit organization, all donations are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

All donors will have their names listed on a display in the Opera House Lobby & Gallery.

The organization recently completed a major restoration of the building's west wall and Main Street frontage at a cost of more than \$500,000.

Renovation of the Annex storefront currently is under way. The Annex, adjoining the renovated Lobby & Gallery storefront, will enable O.P.E.R.A. to hold two different activities in the building at the same time, and provide additional space for larger events in the Lobby & Gallery.

Planning also has begun on improvements to return the upstairs stage and auditorium to public use. To return the auditorium to public use will require upgrades to the building entrances along with fire and safety code work.

You can make a contribution to the opera house by mailing your donation to O.P.E.R.A., Inc. at P.O. Box 334, Ellendale, ND 58436, or donate online at: www.ellendaleoperahouse.com/donate.

-more-

For additional information about naming/sponsorship opportunities, call 701-535-0347 or email: jmmeid@hotmail.com.

Visit our web site at: ellendaleoperahouse.com, or our Facebook page for restoration photos and additional building updates: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/122667311149139/>