

2025 Governor's Award for Historic Preservation



Awardees: Presque Isle District Library; Mr. Neon Lighting; Karl W. and Mary Ann Heidemann; Rachel Goodstein; and Richard and Janet Vogelheim

Long-term stewardship of the Rogers Theater, Rogers City

The Rogers Theater opened in 1937, providing a new entertainment venue and a touch of Art Moderne design to this northeast Michigan town. The theater offered first-run movies on its single screen. Later, in an era when small town theaters were selling out to regional chains, stable ownership ensured the Rogers would remain locally managed.

In an effort to broaden the types of entertainment which could be offered here, a theatrical stage was added beneath the movie screen in the early 2000s. The building offered wonderful acoustics for live shows, becoming a beloved landmark for live theater beyond just screened shows. Investments in building mechanicals, exterior repairs, and a community Kickstarter campaign funding the conversion to digital projection underscored the local passion and amount of work needed to keep it going.

In 2016, the owners announced their plan to donate the theater to the Presque Isle District Library, where it would become another branch among the district's five existing libraries, exclusively focused on arts, culture, and community programming. The library received a SHPO Resilient Lakeshore Heritage Grant in 2022 to restore the theater's signature marquee. On a September 2023 evening, "Lights On" illuminated the restored marquee for a community celebration.

Today the theater offers a mix of community theater shows, first-run and classic movies, educational arts programming, and event rentals. The Rogers Theater is a blueprint which illustrates how thoughtful property owners can partner with existing community assets to grow opportunities which benefit everyone.

Rogers Theater

