

Historic Clay Theater Unveils Reactivation Plans

Long-Shuttered Cinema to Return as a World-Class Hub for Film, Art, and the Upper Fillmore Neighborhood

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, UNITED STATES, June 10, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Plans were unveiled today for the full rehabilitation and reopening of Fillmore Street's Clay Theater. The return of this beloved but long-dormant San Francisco venue will breathe new life into the historic space—bringing it back better than ever.

“At its best, cinema transports us—across borders, disciplines, and perspectives—and I look forward to curating experiences at The Clay that reflect that expansive potential”
Ted Gerike, Director and Chief Creative Officer

The 112-year-old theater, vacant since January 2020, requires extensive rehabilitation and modernization, but will maintain its landmark features and historic character.

Project plans will be submitted to the City later this year. Once complete, the nearly 5,000-square-foot space is expected to include approximately 200 seats and will host more than 500 film screenings annually.

Ted Gerike has been appointed Director and Chief Creative Officer to lead the reactivation. Gerike is the founder of the acclaimed Los Angeles cinema-bookstore hybrid, Now Instant, and previously led digital content for New York's Metrograph cinema. Gerike will oversee a dynamic slate of programming at the historic theater, including first-run premieres, repertory classics, filmmaker talks, and cinema-focused events.

“At its best, cinema transports us—across borders, disciplines, and perspectives—and I look forward to curating experiences at The Clay that reflect that expansive potential,” said Gerike. “I envision The Clay as both a home for local voices and a bridge connecting San Francisco to the wider world of cinema and ideas.”

The rehabilitation will preserve the theater's architectural heritage while outfitting it for 21st-century audiences. Planned upgrades include 4K digital projection, 35mm film capabilities, state-of-the-art acoustics, and comprehensive ADA and fire safety improvements.

“The Clay Theater is a beloved cultural resource and community gathering place,” said San

Francisco D2 Supervisor Stephen Sherrill. "I'm ecstatic that this cherished landmark will remain a theater and cinematic centerpiece. I look forward to its reopening and lively programming for the community to enjoy."

The Fillmore Merchants Association issued the following statement in support of the project:

"The return of the Clay Theater is more than the reopening of a beloved movie house—it's the revival of a cultural cornerstone that has shaped the soul of Pacific Heights for generations. Since its closure in 2020, our community has deeply felt its absence. The Clay was where stories were shared, art was celebrated, and neighbors came together. Its return signals not just a nod to our past, but an investment in the vibrant, connected future of our neighborhood."

The Clay Theater is part of the Upper Fillmore Revitalization Project, directed by Cody Allen.

"Ted Gerike is exactly the type of operator we are eager to see thrive on Fillmore Street in the years to come," said Allen. "Our approach to this storied theater is emblematic of our broader vision: we aim to support unique and experiential small business entrepreneurs who will bring something new and special to the neighborhood we live in and love."

To guide the Clay's rehabilitation and reopening, Gerike and the UFRP have assembled a team of top-tier specialists. The historic preservation work will be led by the renowned architectural firm Page & Turnbull. Award-winning design studio Perron-Roettinger will oversee interior design, with San Francisco-based Min Design serving as the architect-of-record. Global engineering and design firm Arup will serve as the acoustic, audiovisual, and theater consultant.

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