

## **BREWSTER - A state grant recently awarded to the Putnam County Economic Development Corporation will be used to revitalize the village's main thoroughfare and a once-popular movie theater.**

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A state grant recently awarded to the Putnam County Economic Development Corporation will be used to revitalize the village's main thoroughfare and a once-popular movie theater.

The Cameo Theater, a double-screen cinema that went dark in 1997, will receive half of the \$200,000 for renovations. The grant comes from the state's Main Street Program, a division of the New York State Housing Trust Fund Corp. The remaining \$100,000 will be used for streetscape and storefront remodeling along Main Street, said Ross Weale, president of the Putnam County Economic Development Corporation.

Specifically, \$50,000 would go toward rehabilitating 20-30 Main St., a former post office that is now mostly vacant, said Mary Donnelly, grant writer for J. Robert Folchetti & Associates, the village's engineer. Another \$25,000 is reserved for streetscape enhancements and the remaining \$25,000 for fixing the facades of at least three Main Street buildings, she said. The Eagle Eye Thrift Shop, adjacent to the Cameo, will receive one of the facelifts, Donnelly said. The grant also requires that building owners provide matching funds.

Robert Morini of Cameo Brewster LLC said discussions have already begun on whether to turn the 6,564-square-foot Cameo into a venue for live theater and musical performances or a movie house featuring specialty or artistic films, similar to Bethel Cinema, an independent theater in Bethel, Conn.

"This grant is a big push in the right direction," said Morini, a real estate agent with Houlihan Lawrence in Southeast. "We're thrilled."

Morini said he would ideally like a not-for-profit organization to run the operation. The group has had a number of meetings with interested parties, including the Putnam Arts Council, on what would be a good fit for the site, Weale said.

"We're a long way from a solution," Weale said. "But we are beginning the dialogue."

Renovations to the Cameo would cost between \$500,000 and \$2 million, depending on its use, Morini said. The project's time frame is also contingent upon the village's \$38 million sewer project. Morini said extending sewer lines along Main Street would affect parking and traffic, so he wants to talk to local leaders before moving forward with the plan.

"The renovations wouldn't be affected, but the opening would," he said. "We need to work it out so that it all dovetails together."

Morini purchased the theater in September 2000 from Southeast resident Denise Quinn for \$195,000. Quinn's parents, William and Kay Quinn, had operated the theater since 1955. The Cameo was built in 1939 in an art-deco style and served as a 525-seat single-screen cinema until it was converted into twin theaters in the 1970s.

Residents said they are eager for the prospect of either a live theater or cinema in the village. Andrea Dunham, a recent transplant to Brewster from Hoboken, N.J., said she is hoping for an independent movie house featuring artistic films. Ideally, she said, the venue would have a wine bar and serve home-baked goods.

"Everyone seems to be pushing for live theater, but I prefer something akin to the Angelika (Film Center) or Jacob Burns (Film Center)," said Dunham, referring to the art house theaters in Manhattan and Pleasantville. "That's exactly what Brewster needs □ something with a little class."

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