

Holyoke Victory Theatre restoration gets \$100,000 boost from legislators Mike Knapik, Aaron Vega

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HOLYOKE -- Legislators gave the organization that is restoring the **Victory Theatre** a \$100,000 grant Friday to help with the revival.

"It's fantastic. It absolutely is just a wonderful vote of confidence in the project," said Donald T. Sanders, executive artistic director of the **Massachusetts International Festival of the Arts (MIFA)**, the nonprofit group that owns the theater.

State Sen. **Michael R. Knapik**, R-Westfield, and state Rep. **Aaron M. Vega**, D-Holyoke, made the presentation in front of the theater at 81-89 Suffolk St. Mayor Alex B. Morse also made remarks.

A \$28 million restoration is envisioned for the old vaudeville house that played host to the likes of the Marx Brothers but has been closed since 1979. It opened in 1919.

Signs of beauty such as marble floors, art deco flourishes, mahogany walls and murals remain evident despite the water-damaged, plaster-covered interior.

The **cost is steep**, but Sanders has said MIFA has commitments for about \$20 million. That consists of \$10 million in state and federal historical tax credits, \$8 million in new market tax credits and the rest in cash donations, he said.



Don Treeger, The Republican

The grant will be used to commission a marketing analysis and then establish a business plan to propel the restoration, Sanders said.

The latest goal is for construction to begin in June and for the theater to reopen in late 2015 or early 2016, he said.

"As you know, I've given projections before, because I'm optimistic, but think it's good to be optimistic," Sanders said.



Here's what it could look like: This is a rendering of Holyoke's Victory Theatre created by Durkee Brown Viveiros Werenfels Architects, of Providence, R.I.

Tax credits generate funding like this: In return for providing money for projects in distressed, low-income areas, investors get tax credits based on a percentage of their investment over a period of years.

The city sold the theater to MIFA in 2009 for \$1,500.

The grant was included in a supplemental budget the Legislature approved Tuesday by overriding the veto of Gov. Deval L Patrick, Vega aide Rory Casey said.