

THE HILAND THEATER

75 Years of Connection, Inspiration, and Community

For 75 years, The Hiland Theater has stood as a beacon of culture, creativity, and community in Albuquerque. From its origins as a bustling movie theater to its transformation into a thriving center for youth empowerment through arts education, the Hiland has stood as a symbol of resilience and inspiration. As we celebrate this milestone, we reflect on its storied past, celebrate its vibrant present, and look ahead to a future brimming with possibility.

A Rich History

When The Hiland Theater's marquee first lit up Route 66 in the spring of 1950, it embodied the energy and optimism of a growing Albuquerque. Built during the post-World War II boom, it quickly became a beloved gathering place where families, students, couples, and film lovers shared in the magic of the silver screen. More than a movie house, the Hiland was a cornerstone of a thriving neighborhood—weekends buzzed with anticipation as residents gathered under the glow of the marquee that symbolized a city on the rise.

By the 1990s, the Hiland had expanded beyond cinema, welcoming live performances that further enriched the community's cultural landscape. Home to the Albuquerque Light Civic Opera (later Musical Theatre Southwest), it became a place where aspiring performers honed their craft and audiences experienced the magic of musical theater and live storytelling.

But as time passed, the future of the Hiland became uncertain. The movie theater closed in 1995, and though live performances continued into the mid-2000s, the building—and the neighborhood itself—stood at a crossroads. The corridor along Route 66 saw increasing challenges and the Hiland needed new purpose.

JOIN US FOR THE HILAND THEATER'S
75TH BIRTHDAY PARTY ON JUNE 28!

Happy 75th
Birthday!





A Rebirth

In 2009, NDI New Mexico, in partnership with Bernalillo County, saw in the Hiland a rare opportunity: a chance to breathe new life into a historic space while transforming it into something even greater. With the support of generous donors, foundations, and public funding, the building underwent a remarkable renovation. When the doors reopened in 2012 the Hiland entered a new era—one where the joy of movement and music would once again fill its halls.

Today, the Hiland is home to NDI New Mexico's Albuquerque public In-School and After-School programs, providing thousands of children with a safe, inspiring, and inclusive environment to grow and thrive. With eight state-of-the-art dance

studios, a stunning 600-seat theater, and a warm and welcoming atmosphere, the Hiland has become a second home to students and their families.

The building has a renewed energy—students leaping and twirling through classes and performances, parents watching with pride, and teachers guiding the next generation. Once again, the Hiland is a thriving center of culture, inspiration, and connection.

A Future of Growth and Impact

As we look ahead, NDI New Mexico envisions The Hiland Theater as more than a home for our programs, but as a cultural heartbeat—a catalyst for neighborhood revitalization, and a space where art, history, and community converge. The Hiland's next chapter will celebrate its rich history while forging new traditions that bring people together in new and meaningful ways.

We see a gathering space alive with energy and excitement—where people of all ages come to be inspired—fostering joy, curiosity, and connection. Evenings and weekends will buzz with live performances, storytelling projects, community events, and film screenings, inviting everyone to share in power of youth development through the arts.

This vision requires collaboration, and we are committed to ensuring the voices of the community shape the future of the Hiland. Through dynamic partnerships with other arts organizations, we hope to create new opportunities for young people and families to explore, learn, and grow. Strengthening relationships with local residents, businesses, and civic leaders, we will help cultivate a safe, vibrant, and connected neighborhood—one where the Hiland stands not just as a landmark, but as a lasting symbol of hope, creativity, and belonging.



A Legacy That Shines Bright

The Hiland Theater has always been more than walls and a stage—it is a place where creativity flourishes, connections deepen, and young people discover their potential. As we look to the future, we are committed to ensuring that the Hiland remains a space where all who enter feel safe, empowered, and supported.

Today, the Hiland's future shines as brightly as its landmark marquee did when it first opened 75 years ago. Together, we will continue to honor its rich history, celebrate its present, and embark on an exciting new chapter—one where the Hiland continues to be a beacon of connection, inspiration, and transformation for the next 75 years.

