

**REEL**  
EAST TEXAS

# Texan Yard

HISTORIC REVITALIZATION PROJECT





REEL East Texas exists to transform East Texas into a thriving center for film, where stories come alive, history endures, and future generations of filmmakers find their voice, shaping the cultural landscape for years to come.



I am pleased to write today about the REEL East Texas Texan Yard Revitalization Project, an initiative that aims to transform an underutilized space in our community into a vibrant and welcoming public space. This project is part of our ongoing efforts to foster a sense of community, promote cultural enrichment, and provide recreational opportunities for East Texans of all ages.

The REEL East Texas Texan Yard will encompass several key components, including:

- **Landscaping and Beautification:** We plan to create an inviting green space with native plants, seating areas, and pedestrian pathways.
- **Community Engagement:** We will organize events, workshops, and cultural activities to engage residents and foster a sense of belonging.
- **Public Art:** Local artists will collaborate on murals and sculptures that reflect the rich heritage and diversity of East Texas.
- **Youth Programs:** We aim to provide educational and recreational programs for children and teenagers to promote healthy development.

As part of our application, please find a detailed proposal outlining the project's objectives, budget, and anticipated outcomes. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and explore how your generous support can help us achieve our vision for a revitalized Kilgore.

Your support plays a crucial role in making East Texas a better place for all residents. Please feel free to contact me at 818-915-2713 or [director@reeleasttexas.com](mailto:director@reeleasttexas.com).

Sincerely,

Chip Hale | Director  
REEL East Texas

# Project Description

Our goal is to rejuvenate and transform the underutilized space adjacent to the historic Texan Theater into a vibrant gathering place for residents of all ages.

The Texan Yard Revitalization Project is a visionary initiative that seeks to rejuvenate the underutilized space adjacent to the historic Texan Theater in Kilgore, Texas. This ambitious project is driven by a deep understanding of the theater's historic relevance in Kilgore, dating back to its construction in 1934 during the oil boom era. The Texan Theater, designed in the iconic Art Deco architectural style of the 1920s and 1930s, played a central role in Kilgore's cultural landscape. It served as a gathering place for the community, hosting a myriad of events, including movies, live music performances, and theatrical productions. The Texan Theater is not just a structure; it is a living testament to Kilgore's rich heritage and cultural identity.

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01 Revitalize

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02 Beautify

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03 Collaborate

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04 Connect

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# Budget



## **Exterior Painting: \$62,000**

Adding to the beautification of downtown Kilgore while preserving historical integrity necessitates specific paint types, specialized techniques, or additional restoration work.

## **Playground and Construction Materials: \$30,000**

Construction materials for a dedicated playground are a core component of this project, creating a safe and imaginative space for children to play and explore in the heart of our downtown area.

## **Adult Recreational Furniture and Amenities: \$11,500**

The inclusion of comfortable furniture and amenities ensures that the space caters to diverse age groups, echoing the Texan Theater's role as a space for community gatherings.

## **Interactive Elements: \$8,500**

Interactive elements include a bocce ball court, ping pong tables, and extra large chess and checkers sets which will infuse the space with a sense of playfulness, paying homage to the Texan Theater's history of entertaining residents of all ages.

## **Total Budget: \$112,000**

Our funding strategy leverages a diverse range of sources to ensure the successful completion of the project and its long-term sustainability.

The City of Kilgore has pledged its support for the Texan Yard project, with the City Manager expressing a commitment to pursue the completion of the Texan Theater project. This support includes financial contributions, in-kind services, and assistance with obtaining necessary permits and approvals.

E4 Leadership Kilgore, a leadership development program hosted by the Kilgore Chamber of Commerce, selected the Texan Yard project after a highly competitive process as their class project, demonstrating a commitment to fundraising and implementing the project. We plan to leverage their network and resources to secure corporate sponsorships from local businesses and organizations interested in supporting the construction of the playground and other family-friendly amenities.

The Crim family, esteemed members of the Kilgore community, have pledged to participate in funding the completion of the Texan Theater project, particularly focusing on the addition of a wing that will include ADA accessible bathrooms for the community to use when participating in activities in the Yard. Their generous financial contribution, along with other private donations, will help bridge the funding gap and cover unforeseen costs beyond the current scope of the project.

In addition, we are actively pursuing external funding opportunities through grant making organization which offers financial support to small towns like Kilgore for community projects. This grant aligns perfectly with the project's focus on building community and may provide a significant portion of the funding needed to complete the Texan Yard project.

# Timeline



The Texan Yard Revitalization Project is a meticulously planned endeavor aimed at transforming an underutilized space into a vibrant community hub in the heart of Kilgore, Texas. Our project timeline reflects our commitment to efficiency, community engagement, and timely completion.

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## June 2024

We will finalize project plans and designs through extensive consultation with stakeholders and community members, ensuring that our vision aligns with the needs and desires of the local population.

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## Summer 2024

July marks the beginning of construction work on the Texan Yard project, with a focus on site preparation and installation of essential infrastructure. Throughout August, we will continue construction activities while closely monitoring weather conditions to mitigate any potential impacts on our timeline. We anticipate the completion of remaining construction work and the finalization of amenities installation in September. This phase will see the Texan Yard project taking shape, ready to fulfill its purpose as a dynamic community space.

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## October 2024

In October, we plan to celebrate the grand opening of the Texan Yard during the City of Kilgore's Oktoberfest celebration, a significant event drawing thousands of attendees annually. This marks a pivotal moment as the Texan Yard becomes an integral part of Kilgore's cultural landscape.

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## Winter 2024

November brings another opportunity for community engagement, as we host a free event coinciding with the REEL East Texas Film Festival and the annual Lighting of the Derricks, both of which take place in the Texan Yard. These events showcase the project's versatility and its potential to serve as a gathering place for various cultural celebrations and activities. We will wrap up any remaining tasks, conduct final inspections, and submit grant reports in December, documenting the project's outcomes and impact on the community. This will mark the culmination of months of hard work and collaboration, as we celebrate the successful completion of the Texan Yard project and look forward to the positive changes it brings to Kilgore and its residents.





After the 1938-built Crim Theatre was closed in 1966 the name was transferred to the Texan Theater and it was closed in 1973. (Photo Credit: [Cinema Treasures](#))



Current view of the Texan Theater. The unused space on the left is the future site of the Texan Yard. (Photo Credit: [Visit Kilgore](#))



# Impact



Nestled in Downtown Kilgore, affectionately known as the “City of Stars” due to its glittering oil derrick lights during the Christmas season, the Texan Yard holds immense potential to unite our diverse community, celebrating culture and providing a space for pure enjoyment. This revitalized area will cater to families, young adults, seniors, and visitors, fostering inclusivity and engagement for everyone.



**Community Connection:** Our community faces a significant challenge in the form of limited accessible spaces for social interaction, cultural engagement, and recreational activities. Kilgore, while rich in heritage and character, lacks a versatile communal area that can cater to the diverse needs of its residents across generations. This scarcity of gathering places impedes community bonding and the cultivation of a vibrant shared identity.

**Cultural Enrichment:** The revitalized area will serve as a vibrant canvas for cultural events, performances, and gatherings, honoring the Texan's history as a cultural beacon. We have previously collaborated with the renowned Texas Shakespeare Festival to host indoor performances and cultural events, enhancing the city's cultural and artistic offerings. The creation of an outdoor stage would allow us to expand these offerings to free, outdoor events on a community stage. A letter of support is attached.

**Youth and Education:** With a quarter of our population under 18, the Texan Yard's transformation carries special significance. It will become a vibrant hub for our youth to learn, play, and grow, nurturing their active involvement in our community from an early age. The space will become a dynamic hub for youth activities and learning, benefiting students from Kilgore College and the Kilgore Independent School District and nurturing the next generation, just as the Texan Theater has played a part in shaping Kilgore's cultural heritage.

**Senior Well-Being:** The project will provide older adults, which make up approximately 35% of our residents, with a haven for social interaction, outdoor leisure, and cultural engagement, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and quality of life, much like the Texan Theater once provided entertainment for all ages.

**Legacy and Tradition:** The Texan Theater stands as one of Kilgore's oldest structures, with significant historical and architectural value. This project plays a crucial role in preserving our town's heritage by rejuvenating a space closely associated with the theater. This project is poised to leave a lasting legacy, promoting unity, vibrancy, and shared experiences within the Kilgore community, akin to the Texan Theater's historical significance.

# Project Sustainability



The Texan Yard's sustainability beyond construction is fortified by three key pillars:

**Board of Directors:** A dedicated Board of Directors, comprising influential local community leaders, has adopted a strategic five-year fundraising plan to provide ongoing financial support to The Yard post-construction, ensuring its continued relevance in Kilgore.

**Lease Agreement:** The project enjoys the security of a long-term lease agreement between REEL and the City of Kilgore, ensuring REEL's continued management control over the space. This steadfast arrangement underscores our unwavering commitment to sustaining the project's momentum and positive impact on the Kilgore community, much like the Texan Theater's enduring presence.

**Established Partnerships:** REEL has already partnered with local construction and design firms to complete previous projects such as a new HVAC system and abatement for the Texan theater. Chavez Fabrications and Fencing and East Texas Lumber, both located in Kilgore, have provided estimates for the efficient and high-quality implementation of the outdoor stage and recreational amenities. Modo Studios volunteered their time and resources to design the Texan Yard architectural plans which are included in the project proposal document. We have plans to use Johnson & Pace, a East Texas firm, to manage this project once funding is secured.



# Site Plan



The Texan Yard Revitalization Project is an ambitious and transformative endeavor rooted in a deep appreciation for Kilgore's history and the iconic Texan Theater's historic relevance. Our comprehensive project plan outlines precise budgeting, a well-defined funding strategy, and a meticulously planned timeline. The project's potential to elevate community engagement, culture, education, and well-being is profound, and its sustainability is assured through robust planning and strategic partnerships. By breathing new life into this historically significant space, we aim to strengthen our community's bonds, honor its heritage, and create a vibrant and lasting legacy for Kilgore, Texas, inspired by the Texan Theater's enduring influence.

# Shovel Ready



As part of our "shovel ready" plan for the Texan Yard Revitalization Project, we have outlined the following:

**1. Increased Community Engagement:** The transformation of the Texan Yard into a vibrant community space will encourage residents of all ages to come together, fostering social interaction, cultural exchange, and recreational activities. This increased community engagement will lead to a stronger sense of belonging and connection among Kilgore residents.

**2. Enhanced Cultural Enrichment:** The revitalized Texan Yard will serve as a canvas for cultural celebrations, outdoor performances, and artistic expressions, showcasing the rich heritage and diversity of Kilgore. Through murals, sculptures, and interactive elements, residents and visitors alike will have the opportunity to immerse themselves in the cultural tapestry of our community.

**3. Improved Quality of Life:** By providing accessible and inclusive amenities such as playgrounds, recreational furniture, and performance spaces, the Texan Yard project will enhance the quality of life for Kilgore residents. Families, children, seniors, and individuals of all abilities will have a safe and welcoming environment to enjoy leisure activities and create lasting memories.

**4. City Approval:** REEL East Texas has also obtained the necessary permits and approvals from the City of Kilgore for construction activities, site preparation, and installation of amenities in the Texan Yard.

**5. Additional Partnerships:** We have established partnerships with local companies and businesses to fulfill various aspects of the project. Chavez Fabrications and Fencing will be responsible for the construction of the outdoor stage and installation of recreational amenities. East Texas Lumber will supply the construction materials for the playground and other infrastructure needs. Modo Studios has collaborated with us on the design and implementation of artistic elements within the Texan Yard. Johnson & Pace is set to oversee the execution of the project plan, coordinating with contractors, and ensuring timely completion of deliverables. We believe these partnerships will leverage local expertise and resources to ensure the successful implementation of the Texan Yard Revitalization Project, creating lasting benefits for the Kilgore community.





Originally established as a grassroots initiative, REEL East Texas started in 2017 with a small group of dedicated volunteers who recognized the potential of the region's creative community. The organization quickly gained traction, attracting filmmakers, artists, and enthusiasts who were eager to contribute to the growing film scene in East Texas.


The REEL East Texas Film Festival is an annual event that takes place in the city of Kilgore, Texas. The festival showcases films made by independent filmmakers from all over the world, with a focus on those from the eastern region of Texas. It is held over three days and features screenings of short and feature-length films, as well as panel discussions, workshops, and networking events.

Today, we are more than a film festival.


REEL hosts a two-week summer intensive for high school students in the East Texas area to equip students with a passion for film and storytelling with the skills and experiences necessary to pursue a successful career in creative economy. The Summer Intensive employs experienced filmmakers who provide guidance, share industry insights, and impart practical knowledge.

The Texan Theater holds a cherished place in our town's heritage. Built in 1931, it bears witness to the golden age of cinema, with autographs of renowned western movie stars etched in the sidewalks outside. Our vision is to transform The Texan into an aesthetically appealing and vibrant space that serves as a catalyst for downtown Kilgore's revitalization. By preserving its rich history and creating a thriving cultural hub, we aim to attract visitors and locals alike, breathing new life into the heart of our community.

REEL East Texas fosters a thriving film scene, safeguards historic theaters, and sparks the imaginations of future filmmakers, nurturing talent from script to screen.

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