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Secretary Jon Barela Announces Raton's Historic Shuler Theater to Join the MainStreet Historic Theater Initiative

The Shuler Theater celebrates its 100th anniversary this week and will soon be able to show first run, digital movies as part of participation in the initiative

Raton, NM - Today, New Mexico Economic Development Secretary Jon Barela announced the Shuler Theater, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this week, will receive \$100,000 in Local Economic Development Act (LEDA) as part of the MainStreet Historic Theater Initiative. The funding will go toward digital movie conversion and to allow the theater to show high-quality, first-run movies. It will also serve as the anchor for commerce in Downtown Raton.

"The Shuler Theater is a historic treasure and was the original inspiration for what became known as our department's Historic Theater Initiative," said Secretary Barela "When I visited the Shuler Theater I realized that our historic theaters are unique assets in New Mexico's MainStreet districts and can serve as vital economic development anchors in rural communities to attract business and commerce."

Raton will also host the statewide Historic Theater Workshop and Networking Meeting on June 19 to help communities better utilize their historic theaters for economic growth and quality of life. When renovated and upgraded, historic theaters have proven to be a cornerstone of economic development for the MainStreet district and have a spillover effect into other businesses.

The Shuler Theater officially opened on April 27 1915 as a movie house. The daughter of Dr. James Jackson Shuler, whom the theater is named after, was instrumental in the major undertaking of restoration of the theater in the 1960. Three of the Shuler's original drop curtains survive and are still in use to this day. The box seats situated on both sides of the stage have been restored and are in use today. The Shuler lobby is the permanent home to eight WPA murals dating back to 1934.

The theater is now owned by the City of Raton which will facilitate the conversion. This being a city-owned cultural property allows the theater to become part of the MainStreet Initiative and for the public/private partnership to take place. The Towns of Clayton, Lovington and Silver City have also benefited from the Historic Theater Initiative. The Historic Theater Initiative was officially launched in June 2013 by Secretary Barela to increase business in MainStreet districts while preserving the state's historic theaters. The Historic Theater is an initiative of New Mexico MainStreet and the only one of its kind in the nation. For more information about New Mexico MainStreet or the Historic Theater Conference visit <http://gonm.biz/community-development/mainstreet-program/>.

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