The largest of Chicago’s storied movie palaces, dating to 1925, Uptown Theatre is on its way to receiving a complete renovation nearly 40 years after shuttering. The multi-year $75 million project entails restoring the ultra-ornate lobbies and theatre, adding new utility systems, refurbishing the terra cotta exterior, and expanding capacity to 6,000 for live concert and event bookings. The theatre has retained its architectural integrity thanks to the efforts of volunteer caretaker-preservationists who have watched over the building all these years.

$49 million in public subsidy is expected with $13 million coming from the local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district, the City’s controversial funding mechanism created to combat neighborhood blight but often used instead to incentivize downtown development.

The Uptown’s rebirth is happening in the context of a rapidly evolving neighborhood, with new residential and commercial development and investments in transit. All eyes are on this transformation and the City’s intent to use the theater to anchor a new Uptown Entertainment District.

Further reading:
Uptown Theatre’s $75 million restoration will begin next summer. Chris Jones, Chicago Tribune, November 13, 2018.