



# Restoration of Sag Harbor Cinema Gets Closer with Impending Purchase

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by Pat Rogers

The Sag Harbor Partnership has entered into a contract to purchase the decimated Sag Harbor Cinema from its longtime owner, Gerald Mallow, announced the organization. The Partnership now hopes to raise funds from private donors to rebuild the art movie house which burned in a fire on December 16, 2016. Click [here](#) for the story.

The group aims to form a new not-for-profit, the Sag Harbor Cinema Arts Center (SHCAC), to provide education, outreach and programming for the East End year-round for the restored art movie house. The Partnership is headed by artist [April Gornik](#), who is Vice President of the [Sag Harbor Partnership](#) and long involved in the effort to preserve the theater before it burned and was up for sale by Mallow.

To help raise funds, a benefit has been planned for July 16, 2017 on the Long Wharf in Sag Harbor. This is the second annual event for The Partnership which began raising funds last year in anticipation of purchasing the theater and transforming into a non-profit venture.

First order of business? Rebuild the façade of the Cinema to replicate the original, designed by architect [John Ebersson](#) (1875-1964), with the iconic “Sag Harbor” sign. The art deco sign was salvaged from the fire and has been stored at Twin Forks Storage. The sign has been repaired and hopes to have a temporary façade installed as soon as possible, according to the announcement.

“Most people don’t know that a group met back in 2009 to see about buying and preserving the Cinema when it was advertised then for sale,” stated Gornik in the announcement. “We were concerned that we’d lose it to some big business, and Main Street would be irrevocably changed. We reassembled again last July, with new input and members, when Gerry [Mallow] approached us about wanting to sell the Cinema to someone who’d preserve it. We were set to be in contract by the end of December when the fire threw everything into disarray, but we didn’t lose hope. We’ve been working with experts for eight months to ascertain how best to rebuild the Cinema, make it profitable, and serve the community, and we’re grateful that Gerry stuck with us.”



Sag Harbor Cinema before destroyed by fire

Sag Harbor Village Mayor Sandra Schroeder voiced her support of the group's stepping up to rebuild the theater for the community to enjoy once more. "The effort of a group of citizens to take action and turn the loss of the iconic building and landmarked sign damaged in the fire into a community arts center for the residents and citizens of the Village is both appreciated and lauded by the Board," she stated.

Film writer and curator [Giulia D'Agnolo Vallan](#) of the [Venice Film Festival](#) and producer [Andrew Fierberg](#), a member of Film Forum's finance committee and both part of the 2009 cinema group, have laid the original vision for what will become a year-round, fully functioning Cinema Arts Center.

Future programs would be built on the art house tradition, established at the theater by Mallow, and integrated with a variety of retrospective programs of international cinema. Educational initiatives tailored to local schools and the local community will be developed to tap into the wealth of artists and filmmakers in The Hamptons.

"The Cinema Arts Center will provide an opportunity to draw on the talents and experiences of an ever-expanding year-round community on the East End," offered [Susan Lacy](#), filmmaker and creator of the American Masters series on PBS. Lacy was honored at the 2012 [Hamptons Take 2 Documentary Film Festival](#) for her contributions to journalism-driven film and her documentary work.

Sag Harbor Partnership hopes to preserve the large, historic "curved scope" screen in the main theater (approximately 250 seats) and add a second with 150 seats on the same floor along with a smaller 30 seat screening room that could double as a classroom on the second floor. The design has already been developed by award-winning architect [Allen Kopelson](#) of [NK Architects](#) of NYC and New Jersey, who donated his services as has all the other volunteers from the group. Plans also call for the addition of a locally owned and sourced cafe to be open to the public and theater-goers.

The Partnership will hold its 2017 benefit on July 16, 2017 in the big tent on Long Wharf in Sag Harbor, N.Y., steps away from [Bay Street Theater](#). The benefit will honor Mallow and raise funds for the purchase and rebuilding of the Cinema. Last year's party hosted over 800 guests and raised more than \$130,000. "A Taste of Sag Harbor," libations from local vineyards and beverage purveyors, the magnificent HooDoo Loungers, and activities for children will be featured like last year.

"We expect this year's Big Tent party for the cinema to be a blockbuster," said [Nick Gazzolo](#), President of the Sag Harbor Partnership. "We are fortunate to live in a community where so many people are giving of their time, talent, and money toward restoring such a cultural treasure. Main Street won't feel whole until that famous sign is shining again. Everyone wants to see this come-back."

All contributions to the purchase and rebuilding of the Cinema will be tax-deductible. The Sag Harbor Partnership, a 501(c)3, is seeking hero-donors to step up to help actualize the dream. So far, one anonymous person has pledged the first one million dollar donation, according to the group.

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**BASIC FACTS:** The Sag Harbor Partnership is seeking donations for the restoration and future programming for the former Sag Harbor Cinema. For details and progress on the unfolding efforts by the new organization, visit [www.sagharborpartnership.org](http://www.sagharborpartnership.org).

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