



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Upper West Side Cinema Center Purchases Former Metro Theater With Support From Governor Hochul, Senator Hoylman-Sigal And Assemblymember Lasher

[SENATOR BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL & ASSEMBLYMEMBER MICAH LASHER](#) April 6, 2025

New non-profit will revitalize beloved Upper West Side cinema to benefit residents, Governor Hochul commits \$3.5 million to revitalize community landmark

New York – Twenty years after being shuttered and then gutted, the Metro Theater on Broadway at 99th Street has finally turned the keys over to new owners. Upper West Side Cinema Center, a newly formed nonprofit organization, has completed the \$6.9 million purchase of the building, as announced today by its President and Co-Founder, Ira Deutchman. The funds to purchase the building were a combination of grants from Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature together with contributions from private foundations and nearly four hundred individual donors.

Recognizing the importance of a new arts institution for renewal of the Broadway corridor above 96th Street, New York State supported the purchase of the building with two grants: \$3.5 million from Governor Kathy Hochul, as requested by Assemblymember Micah Lasher, and \$500,000 from the State Senate, secured by Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal. Governor Hochul's allocation of discretionary funding was initiated as the Cinema Center faced a January deadline to close on the acquisition of the property. The grant enabled the extension of the deadline and provided the Cinema Center with sufficient additional funds

to make the purchase.

“The outpouring of support for this project has been astounding, considering it was a huge leap of faith to donate to something that was so speculative. I’ve never been involved in anything that had such universal appeal,” said **Ira Deutchman**, President and Co-Founder of the Cinema Center, and also an independent film producer and founder of several film production and distribution companies.

“For far too long, the beloved Metro Theater has sat empty — waiting for leaders with the courage and conviction to bring it back to life,” said **Governor Kathy Hochul**. *“The Upper West Side community deserves another world-class venue for cinema and art, and that’s why I was proud to step in and allocate \$3.5 million to make the new Metro Theater a reality. Working with my friend Assemblymember Lasher and Senator Hoylman-Sigal, we’re going to give Upper West Siders a new cultural institution that stands the test of time.”*

Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said: *“I’m thrilled that West Siders have come together to save the iconic Metro Theater. Thanks to the Upper West Side Cinema Center, and hundreds of individual donors, this art deco masterpiece, which has been abandoned for twenty years, is now on its way to being fully restored and reopened. I was able to allocate \$500,000 from the State Senate for this project and I am incredibly grateful that Assembly Member Lasher and Governor Hochul were able to secure and dedicate additional funding from the State of New York as well. I’m looking forward to building on this partnership between community members, state government, and private funders to further support the arts and enrich the culture of our city.”*

“The Metro was the movie theater of my youth, but for twenty years it has epitomized the loss of treasured places and institutions in our neighborhood. After a decade of false starts, we are now on a path to create an extraordinary cultural destination in the heart of the Upper West Side, turning blight into brightness,” said **Assemblymember Micah Lasher**. *“I am particularly grateful to Governor Hochul, who stepped in at the critical moment to save this project because of her understanding of what it would mean for our neighborhood; to Ira Deutchman, who had a vision that seemed like fantasy until he turned it into reality; and to Senator Hoylman-Sigal, a champion for the West Side who delivered crucial early state support. We still have a long road of fundraising and renovation ahead, but now that a community-based non-profit with both expertise and vision has control of the building, I am confident we will get there. Save me a seat for the first showing — I can’t wait to be back in the Metro.”*

Other major grants came from **Kate Capshaw and Steven Spielberg's Hearthland Foundation**, the Klingenstein-Martell Foundation and the Brandt Jackson Foundation.

Sally Klingenstein Martell, the President of the Klingenstein-Martell Foundation said, *"The effort to bring a world-class art-house cinema back to the Upper West Side—especially within the historic Metro Theater, which is in dire need of revitalization—immediately captured my attention. A project like this, with the power to reinvigorate a neighborhood, is exactly the kind of initiative that inspires me to get involved and support those working to make it a reality."*

According to **The Brandt Jackson Foundation Co-President Thomas Campbell Jackson**, *"There is hardly more fertile ground for enjoying, learning from, and being inspired by the cinematic arts than here on our shared and ever-evolving Upper West Side."*

"As funding for arts and culture is under attack across the country, I am so heartened that the Upper West Side is coming together to revitalize a space in which people can experience cinema amid iconic art deco architecture", said **Congressman Jerry Nadler**. *"Under the stewardship of the Upper West Side Cinema Center, funding from our State elected officials and individual donors, the Metro Theater will be transformed from an abandoned blight in our neighborhood over the past twenty years into a welcoming haven for Upper West Siders looking to expand their world views, be entertained and enjoy a moment of escape through a theatrical experience. This is duly important, as we see the closure of other theaters across the Upper West Side, like Lincoln Plaza Cinema, that provided cinematic offerings beyond big budget blockbusters. Residents have been yearning for someone to rescue and save the Metro Theater, and I eagerly await to see its renovation."*

"I'm thrilled that this art deco jewel has finally found new stewards in the nonprofit Upper West Side Cinema Center. The Metro Theater is an icon that the community will soon be able to enjoy again after two decades of darkness and deals that fell through," said **Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine**. *"Thank you to Governor Hochul, the Hearthland, Klingenstein-Martell, and Brandt Jackson Foundations, and the hundreds who have been involved in bringing the Metro Theater back to life."*

"A true dream come true! The sale of the old Metro Theater marks the beginning of a new era. The path is now clear for us to revive a beloved landmark, bring world-class film to our doorstep, and create new opportunities right here in the neighborhood. I'm incredibly grateful to the neighbors who championed this project, and I'm committed to supporting the reopening every step of the way," said **Council Member Shaun Abreu**.

"Bringing back this beloved space is a triumph for New York City," said Council Member Gale A.

Brewer. *"There's something irreplaceable about the experience of watching a film on the big screen, so this is a win for the community and for the cinema. By preserving the iconic structure, we're honoring the rich history of the West Side. This is exactly the kind of investment that our community wants to see."*

Led by Deutchman and industry professional Adeline Monzier, UWS Cinema Center was founded with the purpose of bringing art cinema back to the Upper West Side, which has become a cinema desert since the demise of the Lincoln Plaza Cinema. The plan is to restore the former Metro theater into a yet-to-be-named vibrant five-screen art house featuring movie classics, foreign films, documentaries, and first-run independent films. The plan also includes an education center and a café/lounge open to the street.

The original announcement of the intended purchase brought immediate support not only from the neighborhood, but also from filmmakers who are fighting to keep theatrical moviegoing alive. Such notables as Martin Scorsese, Ethan Hawke, Frances McDormand, Griffin Dunne, and others signed on to be advisors to the organization. It also brought an early endorsement from a neighborhood advocacy group, New Friends of Metro Theater, which has been lobbying to make sure the theater was maintained as an arts venue.

Upper West Side Cinema Center will now embark on Phase 2 of its campaign to raise the funds necessary to build out the facility and restore the landmarked façade. The UWS Cinema Center Board of Directors Consists of:

Ira Deutchman, President

Adeline Monzier, Vice-President

Stephen Cohen, Counsel

Beth Krieger, Community Liaison/Marketing

Sally Klingenstein Martell

David Huntington

Peter Koffler

Tim Blake Nelson