

**THEATREWORKS SILICON VALLEY AND
THE CITY OF PALO ALTO
PARTNER ON PERMANENT HOME
IN CUBBERLEY COMMUNITY CENTER**

PALO ALTO, CA (28 January 2026) — **The City of Palo Alto** has invited **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley**, the nationally-acclaimed Tony Award recipient theatre founded in Palo Alto, to potentially partner on the performing arts portion of the planned development for **Cubberley Community Center**, planning to upgrade the existing theatre for continued use by a variety of local community groups while creating a second theatre as a future home for the 55-year-old nonprofit company. While the development of Cubberley is contingent on City acquisition of land from the Palo Alto Unified School District, the City and TheatreWorks are exploring a partnership to cost-share renovations to establish a two-theatre, 40,000 square foot performing arts center that would serve as a major cornerstone of the revitalized Cubberley complex and a prominent nexus for arts and culture in Silicon Valley. Initial conversations with TheatreWorks and the City include plans to adaptively reuse the existing Cubberley theatre and the pavilion, less costly and more eco-friendly methods of transforming the existing spaces into a revitalized performing arts center.

Said TheatreWorks Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli**. “At TheatreWorks, we pride ourselves in creating theatre that is nationally known and locally grown. The arts are vital to a vibrant community, bringing its citizens together in conversation, discovery, and collaboration. We are elated by the city’s investment in the future of the arts in Silicon Valley, shaping a facility that will serve its community for many years to come.”

The proposed Cubberley arts project involves refurbishments to the center’s existing theatre space, which will continue to be used by a wide range of performing arts groups after the development. Renovations would include adding restrooms, an expanded lobby, upgrading accessibility, revitalizing its technical capabilities, and other improvements. Now in its earliest planning stages, the proposed project would also create a new professional-sized theatre where

TheatreWorks can present its mainstage productions, as well as space for the company's arts education, community engagement, and new works programs. Concurrently, the City is pursuing development of a recreation and wellness center, providing new gymnasium space on another portion of the Cubberley campus.

Led by Artistic Director **Giovanna Sardelli** and Executive Director **Phil Santora**, the celebrated theatre company has captured a national reputation for artistic innovation and integrity, often presenting theatregoers with their first look at acclaimed musicals, comedies, and dramas, directed by award-winning local and nationally lauded directors, and performed by professional actors cast locally and from across the country. In recognition of its contributions, **TheatreWorks Silicon Valley** received the 2019 Regional Theatre Tony Award, the highest honor bestowed on an American theatre outside Broadway. In their joint statement, the Broadway League and American Theatre Wing presidents noted, "The work they produce celebrates the human spirit, they have helped develop hundreds of vibrant new plays and musicals that are now being performed in theaters across America, and they have pioneered education programs that inspire thousands of students each year."

TheatreWorks has presented productions at Palo Alto's Lucie Stern Theatre since the company's inception in 1970, and at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts since that space opened in 1991, attracting tens of thousands of audience members annually to the two locations. TheatreWorks will continue performing at both venues during the development of this project, should it move forward. In addition to performing in both Palo Alto and Mountain View, the company currently rents offices and rehearsal spaces in Redwood City, and its artisans build scenery for its productions across the Bay in Newark. Beyond the stage, TheatreWorks offers community responsive education programs that have reached thousands of Bay Area students each year through in-class workshops, student matinees, the Lucille Packard Children's Hospital Healing Project, and community outreach. These vital programs make the arts accessible to young people, align with core curriculum subjects, and address social issues impacting students today. Hundreds of thousands of Bay Area children have experienced live theatre for the first time through TheatreWorks' programs.

HISTORY: In 1970, during a period of social upheaval and generational divide, the City of Palo Alto invited recent Stanford graduate **Robert Kelley** to create a theatre program that would speak to the concerns of the community and engage local youth. The inaugural production, *Popcorn*, was an original musical created with and performed by local youth, addressing the tumultuous times and providing a tool for community dialogue and healing. The company continued to grow, becoming a stand-alone nonprofit in 1982, helmed by TheatreWorks Founding Artistic Director Kelley, who led the company until his retirement in 2020. When the brand-new Mountain View Center for the Arts opened its doors, TheatreWorks became a resident company there as well, christening its stage with another new musical, *Go Down Garvey*, a whirlwind production about the activist Marcus Garvey featuring a cast of 45 and full orchestra.

In the five and a half decades since its founding, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley has become one of the nation's leaders in cultivating and producing new musicals and plays, including 77 World Premieres and 176 Regional Premieres, in addition to staging distinctive reimagined productions of theatrical classics. TheatreWorks is currently presenting the World Premiere of internationally-lauded artist Hershey Felder's *Hershey Felder: The Piano and Me*, through February 8 at the Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts, and is preparing for the Regional Premiere of 2024 Pulitzer Prize for Drama winner *Primary Trust*, performing March 4-29, 2026 at Palo Alto's Lucie Stern Theatre. It will announce its 2026/27 season next Monday, February 2, 2026. The company's prestigious New Works Festival and Writers' Retreat programs attract authors and composers of national stature (including Pulitzer-finalist Rajiv Joseph, *Wicked* composer Stephen Schwartz, Academy Award nominee/playwright Colman Domingo, and Tony and Grammy Award-nominated *Come From Away* creators Irene Sankoff and David Hein, and *Addams Family* composer Andrew Lippa, among many others), providing an artistic home in which America's theatre artists can create new works. Through these programs, the company has developed scores of works which have gone on to both regional and New York productions. Stephen Schwartz (composer of *Wicked*) launched his musical *The Prince of Egypt* with a World Premiere at TheatreWorks, prior to its debut in London's West

End. Best Musical Tony Award winner *Memphis*, about the integration of Black music on national radio, was first workshopped and received its World Premiere at TheatreWorks. The company has also served as a launchpad for major performing artists, including Academy Award winner Jessica Chastain, Tony Award winner James Monroe Iglehart, Tony Award winner Francis Jue, and Emmy Award and Oscar nominee Colman Domingo.

Said TheatreWorks Founding Artistic Director **Robert Kelley**, “For 55 years, TheatreWorks has engaged our community with thrilling productions wherever space could be found: from the Baylands Nature Center to the parking garage at City Hall, and onward to churches, libraries, outdoor spaces, and a number of other intriguing, but part-time theatres. With strong community support, we’ve created one of America’s highly acclaimed, Tony Award recipient professional theatres. Looking ahead, I hope TheatreWorks will fulfill its greatest dream: a permanent home for the next half-century of incredible art.”

The City of Palo Alto’s overall development for updating Cubberley Community Center also includes plans to develop classrooms, art studios, fitness centers, and outdoor and sporting areas, which are still being considered and developed under the overall goal of continuing to serve Palo Alto’s existing communities and expanding its capacities to better serve all its residents. TheatreWorks and the City of Palo Alto are collaborating on a performing arts hub on the south end of the complex, with a health and wellness center plus other developments in the works for other areas of this 15-acre portion of the Cubberley complex. The Cubberley Community Center project includes acquiring seven acres from the Palo Alto Unified School District, to be combined with the eight acres of land on the site that the City currently owns, with plans to possibly renovate or replace the aging infrastructure. TheatreWorks will also initiate a fundraising effort to contribute funds to the capital development costs of the theatre complex.

“TheatreWorks is excited to take this first step with the City of Palo Alto,” said **Katie Blodgett**, Chair of TheatreWorks’ Board of Trustees. “We know there is a long road ahead and that years of hard work will be required to realize this goal. We will first need support from the community

enabling the city to acquire additional land from the School District. Once that critical milestone is met, we look forward to undertaking the effort to bring this dream to life.”

Palo Alto City Councilmember and Chair of the Cubberley Ad Hoc Committee **Julie Lythcott-Haims** said, “We were ecstatic to learn of TheatreWorks’ interest in investing in the city in which it was born by helping us bring our vision for Cubberley to life. This partnership will seat professional quality productions in a new facility, alongside the newly refurbished existing theater which has long been a cherished home to numerous community performance groups. All told, the TheatreWorks project will attract audiences from throughout the region and elevate the City’s cultural reputation, support local artists and offer arts education, all the while advancing our Council’s priority to foster greater wellness and belonging in our community for which the performing arts are vital tools.”

Fellow Councilmember and Cubberley Ad Hoc Committee member **Pat Burt** notes that Palo Alto has been a partner with TheatreWorks since the company’s inception. “TheatreWorks and the City of Palo Alto share commitments to innovation, embracing and sharing new ideas, reflecting the community’s multicultural character, investing in young people and future generations, and maintaining the highest professional standards. It also reinforces our commitment to the arts as a public good, essential to our community.”

City Manager **Ed Shikada** also notes the company’s history with Palo Alto: “The City of Palo Alto is fortunate to have a longstanding partnership with TheatreWorks at highest tier, where while independent of the City, both parties contribute and mutually benefit.”

For more information on the Cubberley project, the public may visit www.PaloAlto.gov/improvecubberley. Additional notes on this proposed partnership can be found at www.theatreworks.org/cubberley.

-30-

PRESS: Contact Lauren Goldfarb, Carla Befera & Co., lauren@cb-pr.com

PHOTOS: Downloadable high-res photos are available: <https://cbpr.co/press/TheatreWorks-Cubberley>