A fundraising effort to save Vernon's heritage Towne Theatre has hit one-third of its goal.

The Okanagan Screen Arts Society says money raised through a GoFundMe campaign and other individual and business donations has now reached more than $25,000 – one-third of its $75,000 goal.

"We are so excited to have passed this threshold in fundraising," says Susan Hodgson, co-chair of the society's fundraising committee. "Along with the City of Vernon grant we received, we are assured that we'll be able to open the doors and continue the amazing tradition of the Towne Cinema as a venue for Vernonites."

Meanwhile, a friendly takeover of the Towne is set to occur in June.

The non-profit society will officially take over operation of the historic 30th Avenue cinema on June 1.

Volunteer society members will run the cinema once COVID-19 health rules allow cinemas to reopen and after renovations are completed.

"Non-profit, community-owned theatres have been shown to be successful across the province in preserving these historic old Main Street movie

palaces from redevelopment. We are happy to be carrying on in their tradition," said Hodgson.

Fundraising efforts continue for a wheelchair ramp, washroom improvements, a new stage and modernized film equipment.

"We have a long way to go with fundraising to update the venue and improve the experience for our audience members, but that goal is now in sight."

  – from *Castanet Vernon News* March 1, 2021