Frank's

“We’ve redone the roof over the lobby and balcony, as well as a side office, and then we did a facade restoration,” said Onezieme Mouton, president of the Allume Society’s board of directors.

“With our volunteers we did a huge amount of cleanup in the building. It had been suffering water damage in the auditorium part for several years. It was a pretty big disaster.”

Thanks to community support, the Allume Society has enough money to build a new roof over the auditorium area.

Mouton said workers are now testing parts of the area to make sure there is no asbestos, after which demolition will begin.

“We need to demolish the roof and side walls in the auditorium to reconstruct a roof and walls over that area,” Mouton said.

Long-term plans for the restoration include installing new mechanical, plumbing and electrical systems and new production equipment.

For those involved, it’s not just about renovating a building, it’s about bringing an important part of the city back to life.

“The location of the Frank’s Theatre is in the heart of Abbeville,” said the town’s mayor Mark Piazza.

“It’s adjacent to Magdalen Square where many of our events are held. All cities try to keep their downtown alive and vibrant, and I think this will help accomplish that. We don’t have a lot of empty buildings in downtown Abbeville, and we want to keep it that way.”

Mouton said he hopes the finished product can be to downtown Abbeville what the recently-expanded Acadiana Center for the Arts is becoming for downtown Lafayette.

“We’d love to turn it into a working cultural center and theater,” he said.

“We have a lot of memorabilia that we recovered in the cleanup, things like old projectors and seats that we want to restore. We want to keep that history alive while at the same time have it function as a contemporary theater in today’s market.”