

## “Imagine Marquee”

When one of the members of the Marquee Board (MB) described the Marquee Performing Arts Center (PAC) at 1007 Main in downtown Winfield as “*a canvas, a canvas* which the community will use in ways we could never think of,” he knew that the Marquee is what the Winfield Community has wanted and needs.

From its beginning in December 2005, when it formed Marquee, Inc., as a 501(c)(3), the MB has used the most recent ideas and methods to create the space that meets the needs of the community. Visual design choices replicate the original 1950 Modern Design whenever possible. By the time “all is said and done,” all of the interior and exterior finishes of the building—as well as all of the mechanical systems of the building—will have been updated or refurbished.

Although the building is 76 years old, its exterior looks just as it was described in the 1951 “Achievement Edition” of the *Winfield Courier*: The upper front of the theater is made of corrugated steel that was restored to the painted maroon color. Beneath the marquee, the lower front is made of rough-cut native stone. The entire front of the theater is trimmed with sawed Silverdale stone. All of the exterior stone was repaired.

When the lights underneath and on the sides of the marquee are lit, they signal that the Marquee PAC is open. These lights replicate the original colors of the neon and incandescent lights by using colored LED neon lights.

The marquee’s overhead sign boards, which span the north and south sides of the marquee, are electronic but still look like the kind that used to be changed by hand. The electronic sign boards in the three display windows show the upcoming events for the Marquee and for some of the other events in the community.

Early in the remodel, new entry doors, including a handicap-accessible door, were added. The state-of-the-art ticket booth inside the foyer is ready for events that require paid admission.

The lobby has been restored to its 1950 Modern Design, and the concession stand is equipped to serve a high volume of customers. As the Winfield Community has become accustomed to the Marquee being the central gathering place in the downtown area, the lobby is often rented for special events that don’t need a large space. The Marquee is climate controlled, which allows the facility to be used for events throughout the year.

Along the north wall of the lobby, the area with the two drinking fountains and the pay phone was preserved to emphasize the original 1950 modern design.

The handicap-accessible restrooms are on the main floor, across from the concession stand. Downstairs, the men’s and women’s restrooms were made to look mid-century but have state-of-the-art fixtures. New materials were selected to match the original tile, woodwork, and signage. A feature that awakens nostalgia for the community is the women’s lounge, with its mid-century furniture and wall hangings. In keeping with the rumors about ghosts in the theater, a “mural” of the “Lady in Blue” was painted on one wall of the lounge.

Doors to the auditorium at the bottom of the ramps keep traffic and lobby noise to a minimum when a performance is being held. Inside the auditorium, sound-absorbing acoustical panels on the walls reduce echoes and reverberation. The original can lights were restored for the house lights.

The auditorium’s two distinct areas for seating are divided by a half-wall. The upper-auditorium has carpet on the aisles of the “row seating” with appropriate lighting for safety. Located beyond the last row of seats on the north side of the upper-level is another preserved feature that emphasizes the original 1950 Modern Design: the “cry room.” Parents can still enjoy the activity on the other side of the glass wall while their babies are being comforted, and the audience isn’t disturbed by crying babies.



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The original lower-auditorium was a “raked auditorium”: The audience seating area was sloped, with its lowest part nearest the stage. With the change to tiered seating, the rows increase in height away from the stage area. Chairs and/or tables can be arranged for various events. And the entire audience gets an unobstructed view of the stage.

Safety has always been essential for the Marquee: Appropriate lighting and railing were included with the tiers, and the Marquee made sure that access to the tiers in the lower auditorium and to the stage are handicap accessible. A ramp continues up to the stage to accommodate persons who need help.

An apron stage was added when live theatre began in the auditorium in 2022. The stage is named in honor of Stuart Mossman, “who helped create a musical culture that put Winfield, Kansas, on the music-lovers’ map.” His company’s Mossman Guitars were hand-built and are still known as being of a consistently high quality.

The house curtains are a replica of the originals but can be operated electronically for theatre productions. Behind the curtains is a pull-down screen (also operated electronically) that is large enough to be used for showing movies and vintage films. The list of possible uses is endless; e.g., educational seminars, power-point presentations, live concerts, and gaming events. In addition to projection equipment, the auditorium has state-of-the art theatrical lighting and sound systems. Because visibility to both the stage and audience is critical for proper lighting and sound control, the control board is located near the half-wall that divides the upper- and lower-level portions of the auditorium.

No area in the Marquee is wasted space: The area under the apron is used to store tables and chairs that can be used for the tiered seating. The area under the original stage has been cleared of the metal used for the heating of the original theater. That space is used for storage.

The Marquee is a facility where organizations can hold lectures, meetings, and seminars. Marquee, Inc., can hold a variety of its own public events and have its own schedule, including live action theatre productions and art displays. The space can be rented for public/private events: concerts, wedding receptions, fundraising events, parties, etc.

Instead of just another thing to do, another thing to add to the list of events you have to attend, the Marquee PAC offers a refuge from your busy world. The Marquee *is* a place where the community can come together. It really *is* the “dynamic cultural hub for the arts” in our community and *gives* people in our area a place to engage with the arts of all types and with each other. The community’s aspirations, entertainment, and perhaps even healing are being met through the Marquee. It *is* the hub of downtown Winfield and *has* breathed life back into Main Street and the city as a whole.