



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 09/03/2026

REQUESTER: Karla Sitton, Administrative Tech IV

PRESENTER: Jennifer Heavner Baker, Executive Director, Sooner Theatre

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF THE ANNUAL REPORT FROM SOONER THEATRE

DISCUSSION:

The Sooner Theatre opened its doors for the first time in 1929 as the region's first movie theatre built to show talking pictures. Local architect Harold Gimeno spared no expense in building the Spanish Gothic-style building, spending over \$200,000. For nearly 50 years, The Sooner Theatre served as the most popular movie theatre in the area until the mid-1970s, when multiplexes gained popularity and the single-screen Sooner could no longer keep up with demand. In 1975, the Sooner Theatre closed and remained dark – nearly lost to the wrecking ball – until 1979, when a dedicated group of citizens refused to let the theater be lost and appealed to the City of Norman under the aegis of the non-profit organization The Sooner Theatre of Norman, Inc.

The City agreed to purchase the theatre and lease it to the organization. After the first phase of restoration, the Sooner Theatre reopened its doors in 1982 as a community performing arts center.

The Sooner Theatre has become a beacon of light in the community's historic downtown Walker Arts District, impacting the lives of audiences and children each year.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends submitting the Sooner Theatre annual report to the City Council once the Board of Park Commissioners has accepted it.