

Thomas Wolfe Auditorium (Status & Future)
Council Worksession
September 26, 2023 | Chris Corl, Director CREF

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Key Takeaways

- TWA has significant facility needs
- Short term full capacity repairs suggested
- Long term renovation suggested focused on patron/performer experience
- Will return with more in depth information after;
  - Stakeholder input
  - Understanding debt capacities
  - Funding feasibility

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Thomas Wolfe Auditorium History/Background

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

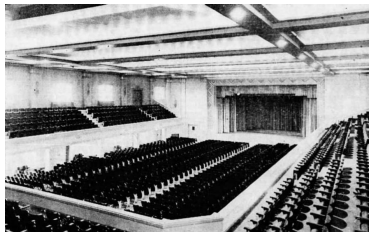
Background/History of TWA



CITY AUDITORIUM
1902 - 1903



THE MUNICIPAL AUDITORIUM
1904 - 1937





ASHEVILLE AUDITORIUM
1939 - 1974



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM
1975 - PRESENT

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

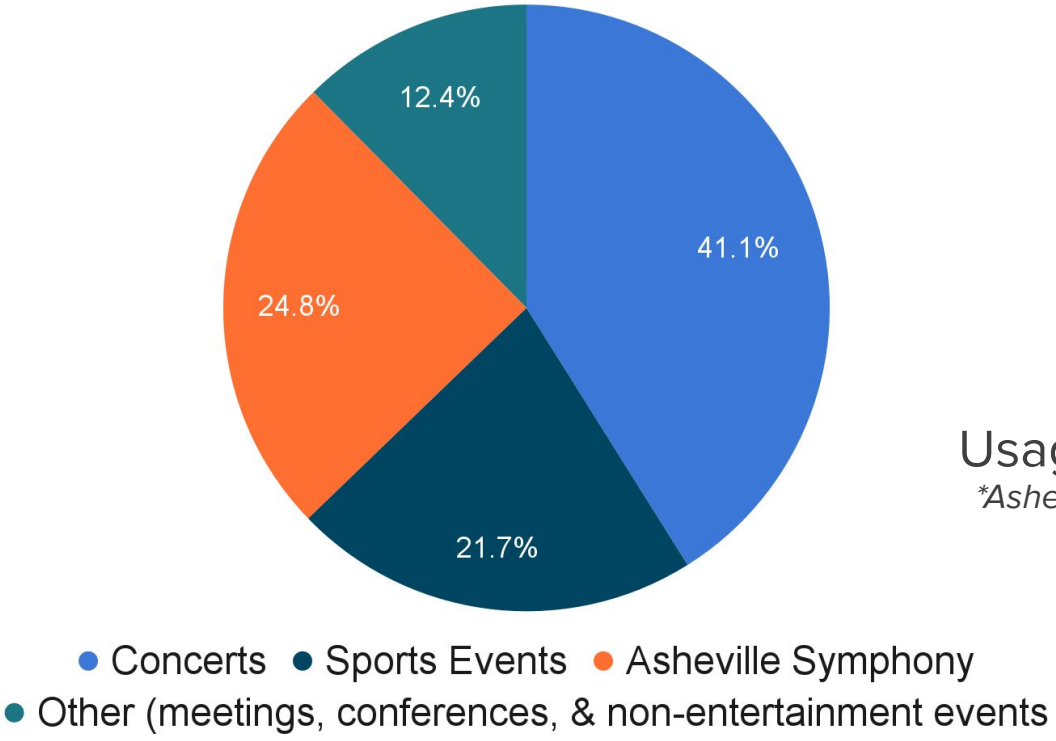


Thomas Wolfe Auditorium
Current Status

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

TWA Today



$29.5M
Economic Impact

97.5K
Guests and Attendees

129
Usage Days (35.3% of the year)
**Asheville Symphony is the main tenant of the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium*

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Past Challenges & Investments

Area of Repairs Since 2015	Cost to Repair
Roof Issues	$207K
HVAC	$1M
Rigging	$94K
Fire Escape	$52K
Lighting & Audio	$620K
Other Costs	$140K
TOTAL COSTS:	**$2.1M**
Average Annual Expense	**$262k**

Third Instance of Reduced Capacity in the last 5 years

- 2018 - Fire Escape
- 2020 - HVAC
- 2023 - HVAC

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Current Challenges & Timeline (2023)

Initial failure of "main" HVAC unit

Continued hosting events with risk mitigation plan

7/3 - Hosted sold out concert with risk mitigation plan

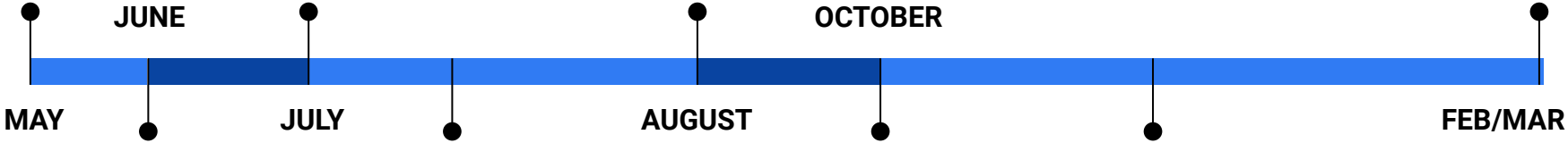
Remaining HVAC units both fail trying to compensate.

Initiate 'quick fix' repair

Goal to be open in Fall 2023 at reduced capacity

Reopen at full capacity

*Assumes City Council approval of funds from HCCA Enterprise fund balance



Remaining HVAC units begin to show significant signs of strain

Events continued to occur after evaluation

7/5 - Temporarily close TWA

Begin rescheduling or canceling applicable events

Quick Fix Completed

Anticipating reduced capacity at 1,300 guests

Request of City Council

HCCA Enterprise fund balance appropriation for approximately $1.4M for repairs to get to full capacity shows

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Costs to Repair

Quick Fix - Estimated cost is $188,000

- Unit Parts, Repair, Ductwork, Scaffolding, Labor etc

Full Capacity HVAC Repair - Estimated cost is $1.2M

- Fall arrest & catwalk installation
- Air Handler, Electrical, plumbing repairs
- Contingencies

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Thomas Wolfe Auditorium Renovation Options

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Very Well Studied & Evaluated

Studies & Evaluations over the last 20 years

- 6 - Conceptual design or feasibility studies completed
- 3 - Ancillary and operational evaluations completed

Results

- Similar recommendations
  - Infrastructure and Life Safety
  - Rigging, Loading, and back of house
  - Acoustics, Lighting, and Audio
  - Bathrooms, Seats, Patron Flow, and Food & Beverage
- Each study showed consistently increasing expense estimates

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Recent Examples

Facility	Construction Cost	Opened/Reopened	Capacity
Gogue PAC	$ 69,600,000	2019	1,200
Steinmetz Hall	$ 250,000,000	2020	1,700
Columbia County PAC	$ 34,000,000	2021	2,062
Buddy HOlly PAC	$ 158,000,000	2021	2,297
Fisher Center	$ 180,000,000	2021	1,727
Tanger Center	$ 94,000,000	2021	3,023
Prior PAC	$ 110,000,000	2022	600
David Geffen Hall	$ 550,000,000	2022	2,200
Nelson Center (High School)	$ 14,500,000	2022	700
Steelhouse Omaha	$ 104,100,000	2023	3,000
Reedley College PAC	$ 30,000,000	2025	500
Rock Hill PAC	$ 40,000,000	2026	520
Palace Theater	$ 50,000,000	2023	1,743
Average	$ 129,553,846	2022	1,636

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Funding

Facilities such as these are funded in a wide variety of methods, typically a combination of the following;

- Property/Income tax
- State Funding
- Occupancy Tax
- Philanthropic Donations
- Corporate Sponsorships
- Prepared food tax
- GO Bonds
- TIF
- Revenue Bonds
- Tuition Fees (University venues)

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Broadway/Major Renovations & Expansions

Estimated 2028 Project Cost

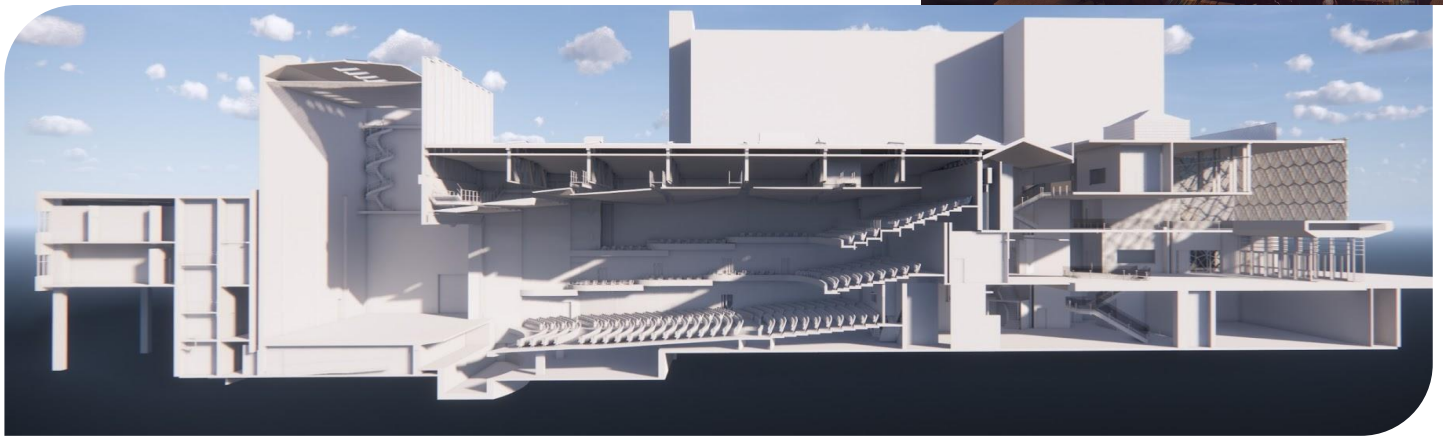
$183 - 198M

**Includes design costs of $39.6M*

Estimated Construction Debt Service

$11.5M a year / 20 years





THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Broadway/Major Renovations & Expansions

PROS

Patron Experience
Performer experience
BOH Spaces
Acoustics
Programming
FOH Spaces
Loading
Rigging
Safety & code updates
Greatest impact potential
New additional square footage
Community Space

CONS

Most Expensive

Takes Meeting Space from Arena

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Patron-Driven/Significant Renovations

Estimated 2028 Project Cost

$130 - 150M

**Includes design costs of $30M*

Estimated Construction Debt Service

$8.7M a year / 20 years



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Patron-Driven/Significant Renovations

PROS

Patron Experience
Performer experience
BOH Spaces
Acoustics
Programming
FOH Spaces
Rigging
Safety & code updates
Ideal Option for Location
Performing
Significant impact potential

CONS

High Cost

Space Flexibility

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Improved Raked Floor Arrangement

Estimated 2028 Project Cost

$105 - 125M

**Includes design costs of $25M*

Estimated Construction Debt Service

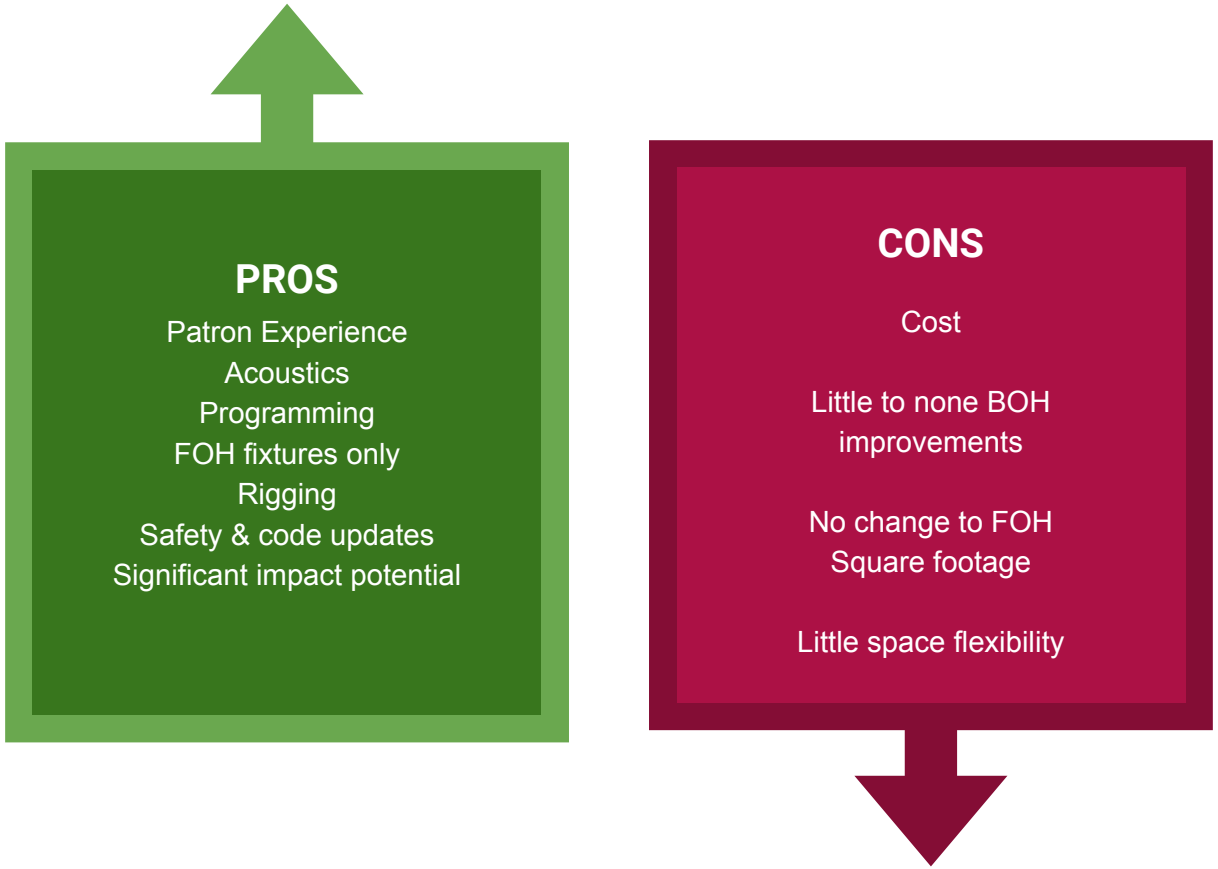
$7.3M a year / 20 years



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Improved Raked Floor Arrangement



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Multi-Purpose Flat Floor Arrangement

Estimated 2028 Project Cost

$90 - 110M

**Includes design costs of $22M*

Estimated Construction Debt Service

$6.4M a year / 20 years



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Multi-Purpose Flat Floor Arrangement

PROS

Most Flexible Room Programming
FOH fixtures only
Rigging
Significant Impact Potential
Safety & Code updates

CONS

Cost

Not ideal for acoustic performances

Results in no “theater” in the Asheville area with 600 seats or more

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Infrastructure & Code Update

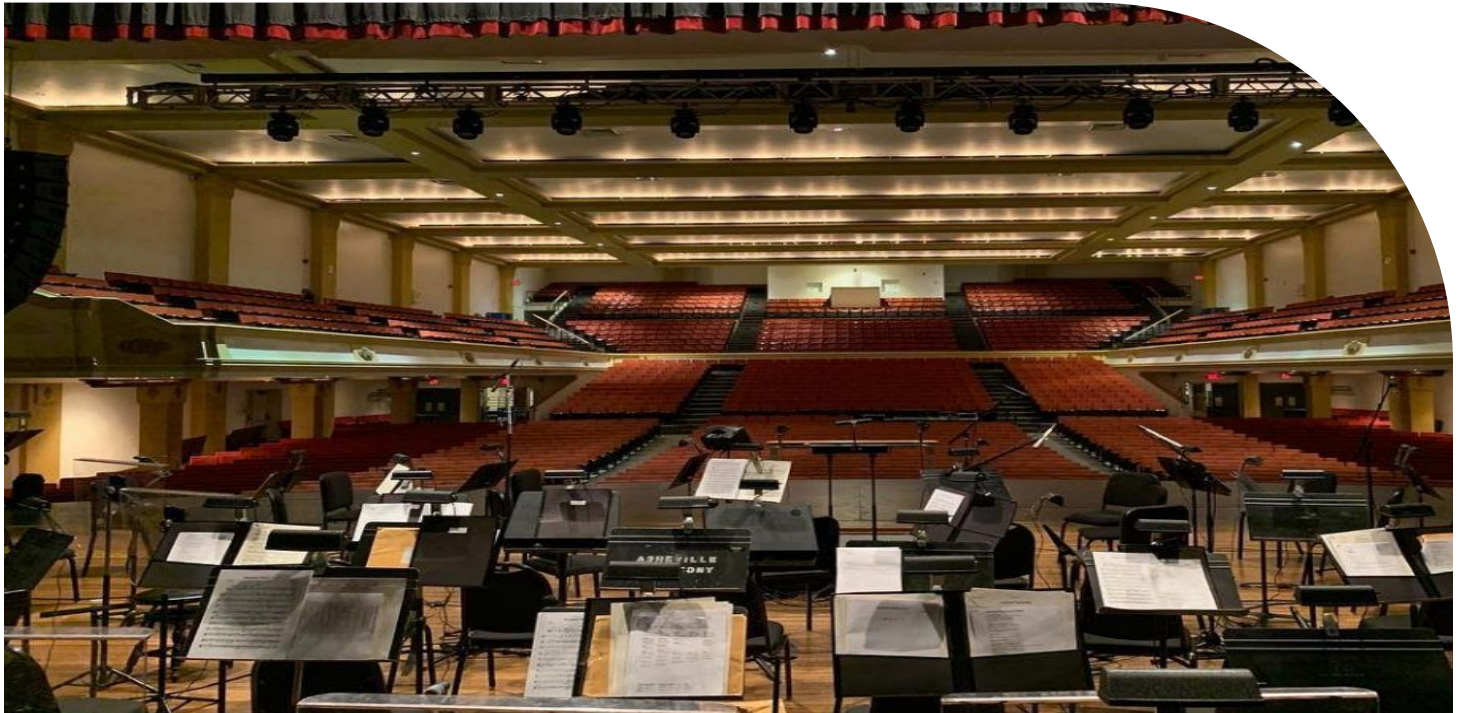
Estimated 2028 Project Cost

$42 - 52M

**Includes design costs of $10.4M*

Estimated Construction Debt Service

$3M a year / 20 years



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Infrastructure & Code Update

PROS

Same as current impact potential

Safety and code updates

CONS

“Bang” for buck

Not ideal for acoustic performances

No changes to current rigging, BOH/FOH spaces, and programming

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Do Nothing

Estimated Project Cost

$0M

Estimate Ongoing Upkeep & Repairs Cost

$262k+ / year

**based on average over past 8 years of repairs*



THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Do Nothing

PROS

Cheapest Option

Same as current impact potential

Venue reopens quickly

CONS

Continued Risk of reduced capacity or shut down

Not ideal for acoustic performances

Little flexibility on current FOH/BOH and rigging capabilities

Safety and code updates

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

	Broadway/Major Renovations & Expansion ($183 - $198M)	Patron-Driven Significant Renovations ($130 - $150M)	Improved Raked Floor Arrangement ($105 - $125M)	Multi-Purpose Flat Floor Arrangement ($90 - $110M)	Infrastructure & Code Update ($42 - $52M)	Do Nothing
Patron Experience				No enhancements		
Performer Experience			Limited Enhancements	No enhancements		
BOH Spaces			Little to no changes			
Acoustics			Limited Improvements	Not ideal for acoustic shows		
Programming Options						
FOH Spaces				Fixtures only		
Loading		No enhancements				
Rigging						
Safety and Code Updates						
Impact Potential	Highest Potential		Significant Potential		No changes	
Additional Square Footage		Minimal Increase	No increase			
Community Space		Potential Opportunity	Limited space flexibility			
Project Notes	Takes meeting space away from arena	More improvements in FOH than BOH		Results in no “theater” in Asheville with 500+ seats		Continued risk of reduced capacity and/or shutdown



Thomas Wolfe Auditorium Moving Forward

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Discussion and Path Forward

Staff suggests further investigation of the ‘Patron-Driven and Significant Renovations’ project

- And; approval to approach TDA LIFT fund process to match repairs for funding towards design

Next steps of further investigation include the following:

- Stakeholder partnerships
- Public Input
- Economic Business Plan
- Financing capabilities and feasibility

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Immediate - Next Steps

Staff suggests moving forward with the ‘full capacity’ repair process

- Will approach Council October business meeting and request ~$1.4M from HCCA Enterprise Fund Balance to cover repairs

HCCA Fund Balance	
Total Fund Balance	$ 4,225,024
16% Policy Requirement	$ (884,935)
Available Fund Balance	$ 3,340,089
Requested for Repairs	$ (1,400,000)
Future Retained Balance	$ 1,940,089

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE

Key Takeaways

- TWA has significant facility needs
- Short term full capacity repairs suggested
- Long term renovation suggested focused on patron/performer experience
- Will return with more in depth information after;
  - Stakeholder input
  - Understanding debt capacities
  - Funding feasibility

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE



Thomas Wolfe Auditorium - Discussion

THOMAS WOLFE AUDITORIUM

THE CITY OF ASHEVILLE