

NORMAN DEPOT



Located in the heart of Norman, the historic red brick depot was built by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway (ATSF) in 1909. It exhibits a mix of Spanish Colonial Revival and Craftsman design, as evident in its red tile roof, large arches and windows with decorative, multi-light upper sashes.

REVITALIZATION EFFORTS

Following the end of intercity passenger rail service to Oklahoma in 1979, the railroad closed the Norman Depot. As a result of local advocacy, the ATSF gifted the property to the city in 1986 with the stipulation that it be made available for public functions. The Santa Fe Depot Preservation Committee formed that same year and eventually reopened the building as a multipurpose community facility that housed the Norman Arts Council and the Norman Convention and Visitors Bureau. When the *Heartland Flyer* began service in June 1999, the building was reconverted for use as an active rail station. A renovation completed in 2003 included installation of new baggage doors, lighting and a heating and air conditioning system; landscaping; and other improvements. The \$480,000 project was largely funded through federal and state sources.

CREATING A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

In 2003, under the direction of then-Mayor Ron Henderson, the city put out a request for proposals for

a non-profit organization to permanently locate in the depot. Out of this effort, the Performing Arts Studio, Inc. (PAS) was born with a mission “to create and present excellent and innovative fine arts programs for the enrichment and education of our community.” The PAS application was approved and arts programming began at the depot that December.

Under the terms of the lease agreement, PAS occupies the depot rent-free, and the city oversees building maintenance. In exchange, PAS opens the depot to

“Norman has truly enjoyed the historic Santa Fe Depot from every angle. It hosts community meetings, music events, and still operates as a lively node on the *Heartland Flyer*. The gift of the depot to the city will be forever appreciated!”

– Greg Jungman, Norman City Council

rail passengers for an hour in the morning for the southbound train, and allows volunteers to open the waiting room in the evening for the northbound train. As part of the original ATSF-city agreement, PAS must make the space available for rent by the public. PAS retains the rental income—approximately \$30,000 in fiscal year 2013—to cover expenses related to administration, operations and programming. The rental income often counts as PAS's largest annual source of fundraising.

STATION AS A DESTINATION

Today, PAS uses the bulk of the depot, including the waiting room, as gallery space to showcase the work of regional artists. The depot is also home to poetry readings, musical concerts and educational workshops. Persons waiting for the *Heartland Flyer* have access to most of the building, where they can admire the art on display—a fine impression for first-time visitors to Norman. Several thousand people visit the depot each year as a result of all this activity.

Due to its history and central location, the depot is a popular spot for weddings, conferences and other events and can accommodate more than 100 people. The rental space also includes a covered outdoor waiting area and the lawn north of the building, which displays sculptures in wood and bronze by Oklahoma artists.



Photos courtesy of Mark Williams.

PAS participates in a variety of city-wide events that bring attention to the depot, its programming and the Downtown Arts District. These include the Second Friday Circuit of Art, Downtown Arts Market and Norman Music Festival. The depot is also conveniently located on Norman's Legacy Trail, which charts the story of the town's development through artwork.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

- City clearly defined its role and that of the non-profit occupant.
- Depot open weekdays during standard business hours and for special events.
- Variety of programming keeps depot busy all year and contributes to the vibrancy of downtown Norman.
- Depot acts as a keystone for larger downtown events.

INSIDE THE STATION

STATION SERVICE (FY14)

- 13,978 Riders
- \$341,039 in Revenue
- *Heartland Flyer*

DEVELOPMENT

- City clearly defined the role of a non-profit occupant that would utilize the depot

KEY FEATURES

- City maintains building while rental income is used to support community arts programming
- Depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places

PROJECT FUNDING

- Federal Surface Transportation funds
- Oklahoma DOT matching funds
- City funds for maintenance