The Cultural Arts Landscape in Salina, Kansas

A Report to the Salina City Commission

Monday, October 26, 2026



by Joe and Terry Malesky, the 2022 SculptureTour Salina People's Choice,
placed at 4th and South Street near the Oakdale Park bridge in 2026.

Prepared by Brad Anderson, Executive Director, Salina Arts & Humanities

Executive Summary: State of the Arts in Salina, Kansas

October 2025–October 2026

Salina's arts, culture, heritage, and creative-economy sector demonstrated strong civic value over the past twelve months. Local organizations delivered high-quality programming across visual and performing arts, local history, wildlife conservation, education, and downtown placemaking—while also strengthening partnerships, accessibility, volunteer engagement, and regional visitation. The year's defining achievement was the successful 50th Smoky Hill River Festival, held amid significant weather-related disruption and supported by an extraordinary community response.

Community-wide accomplishments

- Salina's cultural ecosystem continued to serve as both a quality-of-life asset and an economic-development resource, generating reasons for residents and visitors to gather downtown, engage with local businesses, and participate in shared civic experiences.
- The City initiated a new cultural assessment and strategic-planning process, creating an opportunity to align future public investment, facilities, programming, equity, workforce development, and visitor attraction, around community priorities. A public survey, in-person and virtual focus group meetings, and coordinated discussions with local cultural arts directors helped ensure that the upcoming results reflect the greatest needs and opportunities identified by the community.
- Cross-sector collaboration remained a defining local strength. Organizations connected exhibitions, performances, youth education, historic interpretation, environmental stewardship, public art, and entrepreneurship rather than operating

in isolation. A good example of this was “Collective: Our Stories of Cancer,” a multi-media performance by the Owen/Cox Dance Group at Theatre Salina. This privately funded arts and healing program was a collaboration of The Tammy Walker Cancer Center/Salina Regional Health Foundation, Greater Salina Community Foundation, private citizens, Theatre Salina, and Salina Arts & Humanities.

The Salina Arts & Humanities staff have hosted numerous guests for public art and arts administration tours over the last year. Guests from Topeka, Manhattan, Wichita, and Lawrence have come to learn more about the thriving environment that Salina creates through its public and private resources.

The following pages contain organizational profiles from city-funded and private organizations that receive funding through a variety of sources, including sales tax, transient guest tax, and in-kind services. This is followed by an impact summary of citizens and guests served, visitor overnight stays, and the overall financial impact these agencies and their audiences make in Salina.

SALINA ARTS & HUMANITIES

Salina Arts & Humanities marked its 60th year as a city department in 2026 and continued to operate as Salina’s principal public-sector arts and culture resource partner. Its work spanned public art, Arts Infusion educational programming, community engagement, grantmaking, administrative support to the Smoky Hill Museum, and the management and production of the Smoky Hill River Festival.

The department also facilitated the cultural planning process and increased support for artists and organizations through the privately funded Horizons Grants and Enrichment Grants programs. In 2026, the Salina Arts & Humanities Foundation approved more than $30,000 in Horizons Grants and authorized an additional $7,000 for Enrichment Grants.

In 2026, the department helped coordinate a city-wide music ecosystem evaluation in partnership with and funded by the Kansas Arts Commission and six other Kansas communities. The final results of the study conducted by Sound Music Cities of Austin, TX, will be shared with the community in November. The preliminary results of the study align well with the cultural plan, and it should provide important pathways for all those involved with music in the Salina area to prosper.

The department continues to support multiple community needs by serving as a resource partner for community-led arts, culture, and heritage programs.

The 50th Smoky Hill River Festival was the year's signature accomplishment. Despite a major storm less than 72 hours before opening, which damaged tents and left Oakdale Park with downed trees and debris, the Festival opened on schedule through coordinated public and private support and extraordinary volunteer effort. More than 150 volunteers helped restore the grounds before the gates opened. The June 2026 Festival drew more than 54,000 attendees, produced an estimated $3 million economic impact, and generated preliminary food sales exceeding $415,000, up 5 percent from 2025.



Friday night's Diamond Rio performance drew more than 14,000 people, while free Sunday attendance exceeded 9,500. The Arts & Humanities Foundation provided more than $40,000 of additional funding to support Diamond Rio and other anniversary year programming. The Festival's ability to proceed became a visible demonstration of community resilience, shared ownership, and the valuable role the arts can play as a catalyst for civic recovery.

The event reported a smaller-than-normal profit due to multiple factors, due to the loss of a large in-kind hotel sponsor, technical expenses for generator rentals, and revenue loss from waived admission fees on Sunday. Between 2024 and 2026, income from the Smoky Hill River Festival exceeded expenses by more than $50,000. (This does not include the cost of SAH staff salaries and benefits provided by the City of Salina.) A total budget summary is included later in this report.

The River Festival's 50-year legacy in the community helped inspired a feature-length film, "4 Days in June," that premiered at the Stiefel Theatre on July 8, followed by a week-long run at the Art Center Cinema. The five-year film project was funded, directed, and produced by FILI Creative of Salina. A tagline, "finding common ground is a walk in the park," served as an important reminder that wonderful things can be accomplished when we set aside our differences and work for the common good. The film recently won "Best of Fest" at the Salt City Film Festival and is being entered in other festivals across the United States.

The Smoky Hill Museum continued to fulfill its role as a free, nationally accredited regional-history museum and an important downtown cultural anchor. Its impact reporting identifies 17,900 program participants, 854,152 virtual (online) visits, 1,199 volunteer hours, and $72,252 raised during the reporting period. The Museum sustained broad community access through free admission, educational programming, exhibits, tours, and public events. Its annual Street Fair remained a major family-oriented heritage event, combining a parade, historic demonstrations, crafts, entertainment, and community traditions in downtown Salina.





The Museum's First Thursday talks continue to be popular, attracting in-person and online participants. Seating capacity for the talks is severely limited. The staff is in the early stages of implementing a new strategic plan designed to increase visibility and community awareness, accessible high-impact programming, improve facilities, and increase private donor funding. Their support group, Smoky Hill Museum Friends, continues to raise funds for a needed museum expansion, equipment, and programming support.



Rolling Hills Zoo continued to contribute significantly to Salina's visitor economy and educational landscape through wildlife experiences, conservation, school and family programs, camps, museum exhibits, and sensory-inclusive amenities. The organization reported 73,645 admissions visitors through September 30, 2026 and an additional 3301 served off-site, with 61 percent of in-person visitors residing outside Saline County—a clear indicator of its regional draw.



The Zoo also announced a new eagle exhibit and Tiger Falls, a new state-of-the-art tiger habitat designed to house up to seven tigers and enhance both animal care and guest experience. Its Kulture City sensory-inclusion certification and free sensory bags reinforced a commitment to accessible family participation.





SALINA art center



The Salina Art Center sustained a strong profile as a contemporary-art institution serving north-central Kansas through exhibitions, film, education, artist development, and public dialogue. Over the year, its exhibitions included *ReVision*, a Native-led contemporary Indigenous art exhibition; *Tell Me What You Think of Me* by Ann Resnick; and the fifth Mountain Plains Contemporary Art Biennial, which featured artists from across the Mountain-Plains region and offered juror-selected awards totaling up to $5,000. The Art Center also provided artist workshops, family programming, Cinema events, and local artist exhibition opportunities in their sales gallery. Its fall 2026 programming expanded public engagement around land, place, and community through *Land in Alliance: Shared Ground* | *Shared Future*.



The Art Center Warehouse continues to be an important place for local and regional artists to take classes or work on their own in a well-equipped maker's space that includes drawing, painting, leather, ceramics, weaving, and other mixed media. Additionally, the Art Center Cinema has increased in activity since the loss of the AMC Theatres. It is continuing to schedule documentary and art films, but is now booking new releases with select distributors, giving residents a chance to see popular new releases locally.

THE GARAGE



The Garage Automotive Museum further strengthened its role as a distinctive downtown cultural and visitor-economy destination through a robust schedule of rotating, story-driven exhibitions and community partnerships. Recent programming included *Restomod Rodeo*, exploring the evolution of automotive craftsmanship; *The Decade That Dared to Be Different*, a 1970s-themed exhibition combining vehicles, motorcycles, popular culture, and Smoky Hill River Festival memorabilia; *The Tin Lizzie*, featuring Model T vehicles and artifacts; and *Rival Rides: The Pony Car Era*. The Museum also participated in Salina's multi-site *Moments That Made US* exhibition commemorating the nation's 250th anniversary.

They also recently completed a $2 million facility expansion, increasing its footprint by 5000 sq. ft. The growth includes the restoration of a historic gas station into a B&B apartment and workshop, an EV charging station, and new classroom space. In addition to programming and displays, the Garage also offers driver's education courses and shares its space for a variety of community and car enthusiast events.



Salina symphony



The Salina Symphony advanced into its 70th Anniversary Season, “Infinite Horizons,” reinforcing the organization’s longstanding role in presenting professional orchestral music in Salina. The Symphony’s programming continued to connect classical repertoire, popular music, education, and community partnerships. Trying to reach new and larger audiences, the Symphony has been doing outreach concerts in north-central Kansas communities. Youth education continues to be an important component of the symphony. They have multiple children and youth ensembles and a vocal music choir for 5th-8th grade.

Collaboration with the Salina Art Center—including programming that paired films and pre-performance discussion with Symphony leadership—demonstrated how Salina institutions are expanding audience pathways and creating more accessible entry points into live orchestral music. The Symphony practices in a rehearsal space on S. 5th St., and their performances are held at the Stiefel Theatre.



THEATRE SALINA



Theatre Salina celebrated its 65th Anniversary Season in 2025–26 with a substantial slate of mainstage productions in its Kephart and Sunflower Financial theatres. The season included the locally significant staging of *Come From Away* and the stage debut of *Listen*, developed through the American Association of Community Theatres New Play Festival. These productions underscore Theatre Salina's capacity to combine established musical theatre, new-play development, volunteer participation, youth engagement, and high-quality regional production values.

In the coming year, Theatre Salina will embark on a $4 million+ facility expansion that will improve dance and vocal music education facilities for the Center for Theatre Arts. Education programming engages young children through adults with classes in acting, dance, and vocal music. Many youth programs are offered each year in addition to the mainstage performances. The capital project will also expand technical capacity for set storage and construction, and make improvements to the Kephart Theatre with new state-of-the-art digital arrays.



THE TEMPLE

SALINA INNOVATION FOUNDATION



The Temple continued to serve as a distinctive downtown historic asset and flexible venue for entrepreneurship, collaboration, social gatherings, and cultural activity. Recent investment by the City of Salina to improve the parking lot and lighting has improved the southern entry to downtown. They are in the final stages of installing an ADA elevator and recently improved restroom facilities using private funds. Further development of underutilized spaces will continue as resources become available.



Operated by the Salina Innovation Foundation, the facility's event and meeting infrastructure supports the broader creative economy by providing space for programs, celebrations, business activity, entrepreneurial projects, and community connection in a landmark downtown building. There are currently 24 and more than 30 people use the co-working space annually from one day to multiple weeks. There are currently eight clients who use the newly renovated commercial kitchen on a weekly basis.

The Temple is also exploring opportunities in the months ahead to provide studio and exhibition space for local and area visual artists at affordable rates. Recent results from local surveys indicated that artists in a variety of disciplines desire affordable and accessible spaces to show and sell their work.

The Temple will celebrate 100 years in 2027.

Stiefel Theatre for the Performing Arts

The Stiefel Theatre remained Salina's premier downtown venue for touring music, live entertainment, community events, and Salina Symphony performances. Its ongoing programming provided audiences with access to nationally recognized artists while preserving the historic theatre as a central civic gathering place. The Stiefel's continued presentation of diverse live events, combined with its role as the Symphony's performance home, supports downtown vitality and strengthens Salina's regional identity as a performing-arts destination.

The Stiefel continues to host education programs through the Mike Finnegan School of Music, offering group lessons on a variety of instruments throughout the week. The Watson Room and theatre are also used for special events and community programming as available. They continue to have a strong draw, attracting ticket buyers from across Kansas and from neighboring states.



Summary

The past twelve months confirm that Salina's arts and culture sector is not ancillary—it is essential civic infrastructure. It supports downtown activity, regional visitation, educational access, volunteerism, local identity, business vitality, and community resilience. The most notable story of the year is not only the scale of individual programs, but the demonstrated ability of organizations, City departments, donors, volunteers, artists, and residents to work together when conditions were difficult.

As Salina completes its cultural assessment and strategic plan, the community is well positioned to build on this momentum: protecting core institutions, expanding participation, investing in artists and cultural workers, strengthening facilities and partnerships, and ensuring that arts, history, nature, and creative enterprise remain central to Salina's future.

The City Commission's past and continuing support is instrumental to furthering growth and strengthening the positive energy of Salina to attract visitors and engage residents.



"Common Ground", a Boom Salina! mural by Dutch street artist Leon Keer symbolizes our connections to this place despite our different points of view.

Brad Anderson, Executive Director, Salina Arts & Humanities



Organizational Profile

Mission: Touching Hearts . Igniting Passion . Saving Wildlife

Description of services: Rolling Hills Zoo (RHZ) is an Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)-accredited facility, meeting the gold standard for animal care, welfare, and management. RHZ participates in AZA's SAFE (Saving Animals From Extinction) initiatives and Species Survival Plan programs to support wildlife conservation. The Zoo features more than 90 animal species and a world-class Wildlife Museum showcasing over 500 mounts representing more than 200 species. Open seven days a week, except for four holidays annually, RHZ serves as a teaching zoo, offering year-round educational events, including camps, classes, animal encounters, and interactive programs for all ages.

Total budget: $6,174,191

Earned Revenue: $1,317,732

Charitable Contributions: $4,856,459 (donations/gifts plus the endowment distribution)

Endowment distribution: $2,791,514

In-kind contributions: $6,526 (private)

40 **Full-time staff and** 30 **part-time staff**

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2025 and 9/30/26:

73,645 served on site, and 3301 served off site. Total served: 76,946. (Actual counts.)

61% of in-person visitors reside outside of Saline County according to digital or sales tracking.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

Rolling Hills Zoo has several exciting projects on the horizon! By spring 2027, we hope to relocate the Kid's Country animals near the Nature Playground, camels, and Highland cows, along with unveiling a newly remodeled giraffe feeding station. The former Kids Country area will be remodeled for a new event space. By summer 2027, guests can look forward to a new Eagle Exhibit and Tiger Falls, an immersive Asian habitat featuring Amur tigers, snow leopards, and red pandas. Our new Education Campus will also open in 2027. Looking ahead to fall 2027, RHZ plans to collaborate with another community organization to offer a completely new experience at the Zoo, with the potential to attract 3,000 attendees.

List financial, or in-kind City funding/support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve. What would be the impact to your organization if City/public funding was lost?

Rolling Hills Zoo receives financial support from the City through the CARM Grant, which helps fund marketing efforts to promote the Zoo as a regional tourism destination. This support enables the Zoo to extend its marketing reach beyond the local community, attract visitors from outside the 100-mile radius, and contribute to the local economy through tourism-related spending. Without this annual grant funding, Rolling Hills Zoo's ability to market beyond the 100-mile radius would be limited, reducing its reach to potential visitors in surrounding regions and its ability to attract new audiences to the community.

SALINA artcenter

Organizational Profile 2026

Mission: *to create exchanges among art, artists, and audiences that reveal life*

Description of services: The Salina Art Center is a nationally accredited, non-collecting contemporary art museum, cinema, and education hub serving Salina and North Central Kansas. Through exhibitions, independent films, art classes, and free public programming, we connect people through visual art, creative practice, and film. With free museum admission and a commitment to accessibility, the Art Center serves as a vibrant downtown cultural anchor, supporting artists, inspiring creativity, and strengthening community connections.

Total budget: $622,800 **Earned Revenue:** $207,756

Charitable Contributions: $375,044

In-kind contributions: $40,000

4 **Full-time staff and** 11 **part-time staff**

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2025 and 9-30/26:

29,305 Total in-person visits: 556,894 Social media/virtual visits

17% of in-person visitors reside outside of Saline County, according to tracking data.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know: In 2026, the Salina Art Center's Mountain Plains Biennial featured 62 artists from 10 states, alongside free public programs and family artmaking opportunities. An $80,000 grant from the Andy Warhol Foundation brings

national recognition and investment to Salina's contemporary art exhibitions. The Art Center Cinema remains Salina's only movie theater, anchoring downtown with a 133% increase in ticket sales. Looking ahead, exciting museum exhibitions, films including *Heart of the Beast* over Halloween, and a full schedule of art classes for adults, children, and families continue to connect our community through visual art, creative practice, and film.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve: The City of Salina provides essential support for one of the Art Center's three downtown facilities through utility coverage, janitorial services, and maintenance assistance. City staff address routine maintenance needs and offer valuable guidance on larger projects, helping protect artwork, maintain national museum accreditation standards, and ensure a safe, welcoming environment. This partnership supports responsible stewardship of an important downtown cultural asset while ensuring year-round accessibility and comfort for visitors, artists, and program participants. City support strengthens the Art Center's ability to engage the community through contemporary art exhibitions, creative experiences, and meaningful connections.



Organizational Profile

Mission: The Salina Symphony is dedicated to enriching lives through artistic music performance and education.

Description of services: The Salina Symphony is a regional professional orchestra dedicated to enriching lives through artistic music performance and education. Each season, the Symphony presents six mainstage concerts, complemented by chamber performances, community outreach, and educational programs that bring the joy of music to audiences throughout the region. The Symphony's Youth Education Program serves students from elementary through high school. The program, which includes four ensembles and String Academy group lessons, serves approximately 140 students from more than 20 different schools in the region.

Total budget: $867,000 **Earned Revenue:** $283,000

Charitable Contributions: $584,000

In-kind contributions: $25,000

2 **Full-time staff and** 1 **part-time staff** (plus 80 contract labor)

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2025 and 9-30/26:

11,197 Total in-person visits

59% of in-person visitors who reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Symphony is in the process of exploring two new and significant concert/event collaborations for next season. More information to come when the projects can be announced!

Impact of City Funding:

- City Funding & the Ripple of Economic Impact
    - Thanks to CARM funding, our regional marketing efforts have grown significantly, which is reflected by the fact that a significant portion of our audience resides outside of Saline County.
    - Before and after concerts, our regional patrons support local restaurants, businesses and hotels. There is no busier place than downtown restaurants after one of our late afternoon concerts!
- A Local Symphony Orchestra Impacts Quality of Life
    - Enrichment – for patrons who enjoy classical music and all that it brings to a community.
    - Performance Opportunity – for musicians considering moving to Salina and the surrounding region.
    - Youth Symphony & Youth Choir – for families considering a move to Salina.
- The loss of CARM funding would have a significant impact on the Salina Symphony and the community we serve. The funding has helped us draw a larger regional audience, which helps us keep ticket prices affordable, ensuring that high-quality live orchestral music remains accessible to individuals and families throughout our region. Without this support, we would likely need to increase ticket prices, reduce programming, or seek additional private funding to offset the loss.

Organizational Profile

Mission:

The Smoky Hill Museum connects people to universally shared stories, unleashing the power of local history to engage, inspire and surprise.

Description of services: Briefly describe your organization in 100 words or less.

The Smoky Hill Museum is the official repository for Salina's history. As such, it collects and stores approximately 38,000 artifacts and documents for the benefit of the community. In addition to collecting, the Museum provides educational programs and exhibits through both face-to-face and online interactions. Key programs include group tours and activities, a First Thursday lecture series, Kansas Day programming for area third graders, Culture Crawl for Salina seventh graders, and the Street Fair. Museum staff produce various types of exhibits, including on-site exhibits, traveling exhibits, and online exhibits. Other services include answering public research inquiries, serving as consultants to regional and national professionals and institutions, and offering a Museum Store that carries area and regional books and artwork.

Total budget: $739,799 (2026 budget)

Earned Revenue: $27,401 (FY 2026 as of 9/30/2026 for traveling exhibits & Museum Store)

Charitable Contributions: $72,252 (FY 2026 as of 9/30/2026)

In-kind contributions: $7,439 (FY 2026 as of 9/30/2026), the majority of which is advertising.

6 **Full-time staff and** 4 **part-time staff**

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2025 and 9-30/26:

17,900 Total in-person visits: 854,152 Social media/virtual visits

42% of in-person visitors reside outside of Saline County according to digital tracking.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Smoky Hill Museum is celebrating its 40th anniversary on Iron Avenue. The City took over possession of the collections from Saline County and the Public Library in 1985, moving it to the basement of the Post Office building on Iron. Renovations began and the Smoky Hill Museum opened to the public on October 5, 1986. To

honor this anniversary, the Museum is opening a special exhibit about its history. The exhibit will run from October 30- March 27, 2027.

List financial or in-kind City funding or support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve:

As a division of the City of Salina, the City of Salina provides day-to-day operations, staffing and programming support to help the Museum remain an accredited, free-admission educational institution. To have the most impact on our visitors, the staff takes the mission, especially the keywords – stories, engage, inspire and surprise – to heart.

The stories and objects collected stand as witnesses to Salina's past and brings history to life. As one of only five accredited Kansas history museums, we share these objects and stories in dynamic and creative programming and exhibits to connect our past to the present and future of our community. Our focus on interactivity, education and community engagement makes the Museum a hub for learners of all ages.

Many techniques are used to reach people in fun and unique ways. Artifacts are not just props, they are used to further the story being told, and when possible, they become part of the interactivity. Information is also presented through games, scavenger hunts, technology, toys and experiments. We are excited when we get comments like this one "*Must be doing something right-7 & 9 year old grandkids live in Overland Park & ask to come here every time they stay with us.*" Or this comment from Evelyn Stroud, editor-in-chief for WichitaWeekly.org, *"While on my quest for the best pizza in Salina, I couldn't resist taking a detour to the* Smoky Hill Museum. *Let me tell you, this place is a delightful treat for anyone who appreciates a good slice of local culture—almost as good as a hot, cheesy pizza fresh out of the oven!"*

What would be the impact to your organization if City/public funding was lost?

If city/public funding was lost, that would mean the closure of the Museum, and the loss of Salina history to its citizens and visitors. While the Smoky Hill Museum Friends do provide approximately $50,000 of support annually to the Museum, this would not be enough to move and sustain the Museum.



Organizational Profile

Mission: To present a variety of performances that enrich, educate, and entertain

Description of services: Briefly describe your organization in 100 words or less.

We are the premiere concert venue in central Kansas, bringing world-class entertainment to the middle of the country. We bring people from all over the country to Salina who eat, shop, and stay in our city.

Total budget: $2.3 million

Earned Revenue: $2,046,332

Charitable Contributions: Many, many private ticket donations to local and regional fundraiser/events.

In-kind contributions: see above

4 **Full-time staff and** 25 **part-time staff**

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2025 and 9-30/26: 20,650 event tickets distributed, numerous rentals (10,000), Airbnb guests, and co-promotions

39,500 Total in-person visits: 12,330,119 Social media/virtual visits

*76% of in-person visitors reside outside of Saline County.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

We just completed our support and partnership of the celebration of Acoustic Sounds' 40th anniversary which brought people in from all over the country, taking on the financial responsibility of the larger artists performing Saturday night. This four-day event brought so much support for Salina. Restaurants were very busy, bar tabs were huge. It was truly amazing. However, at the recent IEBA conference in Nashville, the concert industry spoke about the downturn in ticket sales and increases in artist fees. It is very concerning. We will continue to book our shows as we have in the past and hope that the sales keep up. A 30% drop in ticket sales is predicted for 2027. We also helped the Smoky Hill River Festival by booking Diamond Rio this year.

List financial, or in-kind City funding/support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve. What would be the impact to your organization if City/public funding was lost?

The support we receive from the City is mostly the management of the CARM fund, that is money generated by out-of-town people staying at Salina hotels. We appreciate this support and money very much. It is approximately 10% of our $200,000+ regional marketing budget. Over 70% of our concert-goers come from outside of Salina. It was disappointing to learn recently that we lost a show to Tony's Pizza Event Center we were hoping to book. We also appreciate the work SAHC does to host and facilitate the Cultural Roundtable.

2025 /2026 Organizational Profile

Mission: Relive the Past. Drive the Future.

The Garage Automotive Museum is a world-class educational, cultural, and tourism destination in the heart of Downtown Salina's Arts, Commerce & Entertainment District. Through rotating automotive exhibits, interactive experiences, hands-on education, driver training, community events, and the preservation of automotive history and culture, The Garage connects generations while inspiring creativity, innovation, and lifelong learning. As a regional tourist attraction and community gathering place, The Garage helps draw visitors to downtown Salina while contributing to the community's growing arts, cultural, and entertainment destination.

Description of services:

The Garage Automotive Museum is a nonprofit educational museum, cultural destination, and regional tourist attraction located in Downtown Salina. The Garage preserves and celebrates automotive history through rotating exhibits, interactive experiences, community events, and educational programming for all ages. Programs include Royal Driving School, hands-on automotive and skilled-trades education, and community safety outreach as a Safe Kids Kansas partner, including car-seat installation assistance and car seats for families in need. The Garage also provides event and meeting space and works with regional car clubs, shows, and tour groups to bring visitors to Salina in partnership with local hotels, restaurants, shopping, and attractions.

Total budget: $500,000 (operational budget)

Earned Revenue: $345,275.37

Charitable Contributions: $378,763.31

In-kind contributions: $352,400

4 **Full-time staff and** 10 **part-time staff**

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2025 and 9-30/26:

23,000-**25,500** Total in-person visits:

However, this number doesn't capture total visitors because digital tracking doesn't always account for those under 18. Our Sunflower Summer program, Drivers Ed students, and Child ticket sales would indicate at least an additional 2,500 kids attended The Garage. The actual number would look more like 25,500 visitors with over

Social media/virtual visits 10,000 + followers on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and our Website www.thegaragesalina.org

42.61% of in-person visitors who reside outside of Saline County

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

In October 2026, The Garage will open a major expansion featuring The Shop and The Station. The Shop will expand hands-on automotive, welding, skilled-trades, and educational programming for youth and adults. The Station preserves and reimagines a historic Salina service station as an immersive automotive-history experience and unique overnight stay. Together, these new spaces expand The Garage's downtown footprint while creating new opportunities for education, historic preservation, tourism, and community engagement.

List financial or in-kind City funding/support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve. What would be the impact to your organization if City/public funding was lost?

Cultural Arts Regional Marketing (CARM) funding allows The Garage to market Salina and the museum to visitors living more than 60 miles away. Funding supports regional advertising through billboards, television, radio, print, digital, and social media campaigns designed to encourage travel to Salina. These efforts help position The Garage and Downtown Salina as an arts, cultural, and entertainment destination while generating economic impact throughout the community. Visitors drawn to The Garage also stay in local hotels, dine in restaurants, shop locally, and experience other Salina attractions, extending the impact of CARM funding well beyond the museum. The Garage works collaboratively with other area attractions to maximize event marketing to incorporate multiple attractions, restaurants, retail, and hotel partners.

Community Improvement District (CID) funding played an important role in developing The Garage by supporting the rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of historic 1930s warehouse buildings, along with new construction needed to create the original museum campus. This public investment helped transform underutilized downtown properties into a vibrant cultural, educational, and tourism destination. The project preserved elements of Salina's historic built environment while creating a new community asset that attracts residents and visitors, supports surrounding downtown businesses, and contributes to the continued revitalization of Downtown Salina.

Organizational Profile

Mission: To save and preserve the historic Temple building as a community resource center

Description of services:

The Salina Innovation Foundation, doing business as The Temple, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and repurposing Salina's historic 1927 Temple building as an inclusive community resource. Located in downtown Salina, Kansas, The Temple supports entrepreneurship, small business development, and creative enterprise through coworking spaces, private offices, a commercial Innovation Kitchen, and a unique event venue. By combining historic preservation with innovation, accessibility, and community engagement, The Temple creates opportunities for individuals and businesses to grow while contributing to the economic vitality and cultural life of the Salina region.

Total budget: $135,000 **Earned Revenue:** $100,000

Charitable Contributions: $45,000 **In-kind contributions:** $10,000

1 **Full-time staff and** 0 **part-time staff**

Patrons and citizens served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25:

6,430 Total in-person visits: 97,092 Social media/virtual visits

33% of in-person visitors reside outside of Saline County according to digital or sales tracking.

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know:

The Temple continues to preserve a historic landmark while creating new opportunities for the Salina community. Upcoming and ongoing projects include accessibility improvements, elevator modernization, ADA-compliant restrooms. Our Innovation Kitchen supports food entrepreneurs, local farmers, and culinary professionals. We are proud to co-host the **2028 Kansas Tourism Conference** with Homewood Suites, bringing tourism professionals to Salina. The Temple will also host **Comic Con 2027**, a two-day event expected to attract 1,000 visitors from across the region, boosting local tourism and showcasing Salina as a destination for unique events, creativity, and community engagement.

List financial, or in-kind City funding/support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve. What would be the impact to your organization if City/public funding was lost?

City Funding/Support and Its Impact:

Past assistance from the City of Salina has included funding toward roof replacement and parking lot upgrades, both of which have made a tremendous impact on The Temple's usability for the community. These improvements help protect the historic building, enhance safety and accessibility, and make the facility more welcoming for entrepreneurs, businesses, event attendees, and community organizations. This investment supports The Temple's mission to preserve a historic landmark while creating a vibrant resource for business development, cultural events, tourism, and community engagement in downtown Salina.

Impact if City/Public Funding Were Lost:

Losing City or public funding would create additional financial pressure on The Temple's ability to maintain this historic building, complete critical accessibility and infrastructure improvements, and provide spaces for entrepreneurs and community organizations. Projects could be delayed, operating costs would become more difficult to cover, and opportunities to host events that attract visitors and support local businesses could be reduced. Continued public support is an investment in historic preservation, economic development, tourism, and the long-term vitality of downtown Salina.

Organizational Profile

Mission: Creating live theatre to inspire, educate, and entertain.

Description of services: Theatre Salina and the Center for Theatre Arts provide high-quality theatre programming and education opportunities for the region. A majority of the revenue generated each year stays in Salina. Theatre Salina features 14 stage productions annually, has numerous education programs in dance, acting, and voice, and provides resources and rentals for the public.

Total budget: $1,226,920 **Earned Revenue:** $783,320

Charitable Contributions: $344,850 **In-kind contributions:** $98,750

8 **Full-time staff and** 93 **part-time staff**

Patrons served between 10/1/2024 and 9-30/25: 48,500. Total in-person visits:

35% reside outside of Saline County according to digital and/or sales tracking.

Visits YOY +7.6% YO2Y +16.5% YO3Y +30.5%

Upcoming Projects or Good Things to Know: We produce 14 originally created live theatre performances each year. We provide a full range of educational classes in the theatre arts for students aged pre-K through adults. We partner with Kansas Wesleyan University, Salina Arts and Humanities, Salina Regional Health Center, Tammy Walker Cancer Center, USD 305, and the Salina Library. We work cooperatively with Red Fern Booksellers, Familia Toys, Great Plains Manufacturing, and the YWCA Women of Achievement.

List financial, or in-kind City funding/support and its impact on your organization and the community you serve. What would be the impact to your organization if City/public funding was lost? We have a contract with the City of Salina that provides system support, utility support, and custodial work in the public areas. Without this essential investment, the Theatre would not exist as it does today. This support allows us to support two full-time staff members. Without this staff, the Theatre would have to cut programming, educational levels, and productions. This would cause a direct reduction in the direct spending in the local economy (currently $900,000 annually, more than $9M over the past decade) by 40%. It would reduce the amount of sales tax revenue by 30%. We would have to reduce our outreach to regional schools.

COMBINED IMPACT REPORT 2026* (2025 reported totals)

From cultural organizations that receive public support.

1. Total budgets: $12,565,710 ($11,209,269)

2. **Total earned income: $5,110,816** ($ 3,347,057)

3. Total private donations: $6,656,368 ($3,465,437)

4. Total FT Employees: 66 (70) **Total PT Employees: 164** (54)

5. **Total Visitors: 252,780** (263,054) **Outside Saline County: 124,960** (117,987)

6. Estimated local attendee spending in addition to the cost of admission:

$3,805,201 ($4,086,647)

7. Estimated out-of-county spending in addition to the cost of admission:

$7,568,827 ($7,146,473)

8. Total estimated spending beyond cost of admission: $11,374,028** ($11,233,120)

*The totals listed do not include the economic impact of the Smoky Hill River Festival, which is reported separately.

**The financial estimates of audience spending are from Americans for the Arts as part of their economic prosperity survey, conducted every five years. The most recent survey involved 373 towns, cities, and organizations from across the country, producing more than 240,000 individual records from audiences and organizations.



2026 Salina Smoky Hill River Festival Financial Report

Income	
Advanced Wristband Sales	$88,245
Gates Sales	$76,152
Employer Wristband Purchases	$40,020
Vendor Fees	$123,854
Grants	$32,486
SAH Foundation Support	$168,975
Miscellaneous	$20,004
Total Cash Income	**$549,737**

Expenses	
Technical Services and Equipment	$127,554
Entertainment**	$168,975
Grant Funded Expenses	$32,486
Visual Arts	$79,050
Lodging/Travel	$19,337
Printing/Advertising/Marketing	$90,555
Office/Administration	$9,768
Part-time personnel	$10,101
Miscellaneous	$10,514
Accounts Payable (Outstanding) Sales Tax	$1,029
Total Expenses	**$549,369**

Net Income (Loss)	**$367** *See note

***Note: A normal budgeted transfer of $20,000 from River Festival proceeds to the SAH Fund did not occur because of higher expenses in 2026 and the loss of in-kind contributions and technical costs.**

**Includes additional Foundation 50th Anniversary programming.

In-Kind Cost Avoidance

Hospitality-Food, Beverage, Hotel	$22,435
Media/Marketing	$75,251
Technical Services and Products	$112,175
Total In-kind cost avoidance	**$209,861**

In-kind Festival enhancements not included in annual budget

(City of Salina personnel, additional programming, technical improvements, customer service volunteers, ancillary events, transportation, technology, ATM, river clean-up, etc.)

Volunteers Shifts 1600	$111,328

Attendance and Sales

14,810 Total Wristbands Sold with 651 Festival Families First participants ($209,682)

Gate count (adjusted estimate): 54,400
Note: From digital tracking system

$416,184 in reported food sales

$421,152 in reported art show sales

1600 (est.) volunteer shifts, including more than 120 committee members.