Base Theater Design Standards
Endorsement

ACC Quality

"A leadership commitment to an operating style which creates a working climate that promotes trust, teamwork and continuous improvement in all that we do."

ACC Mission

"Air Combat Command professionals providing the world's best combat Air Forces delivering rapid decisive air power anytime, anywhere."

ACC Vision

"Air Force people building the world's most respected air and space force...global power and reach for America."

Our Style

"...creating a working climate that inspires trust, teamwork, quality and pride."

"Give everyone a stake in the mission and its outcome."

"...delegate responsibility and authority -- accept accountability."

"Set goals. Measure progress. Reward performance."

"Deliver quality products to all our customers. Strive for a culture of continuous improvement -- make it better."

Base theaters present a unique opportunity for us as a place for public forums, training, and entertainment. These Base Theater Design Standards set the standard for making our theaters world class operations. Continuous improvement and the fullest utilization of our existing resources are vital aspects of our quality program. This guide should be used with its companion document: Management and Marketing Guide for Base Theaters, to stimulate innovative design and renovation strategies with the intent of making base theaters an integral part of our community environment. Meeting these standards will enable us to improve facilities, and to expand and improve customer service. I ask commanders to give base theaters their active attention and support, in order to foster a culture of quality within Air Combat Command.

John M. Loh, General, USAF
Commander
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Purpose and Background

Viability and Role in Base Community

Base theaters have always played an important role in the base community. They serve as gathering places for airmen and their families, and accommodate a wide range of mission-related and off-duty recreational activities. Mission-related activities include such functions as Commander’s Calls and Professional Military Education lectures. Community recreational programs include the presentation of current motion pictures, plays, concerts, and town meetings. In general, activities can be put into four major groups: lecture/meeting hall, movie theater, stage productions, and musical performances. Although they overlap in terms of their architectural or spatial requirements, each group has its own unique requirements.

Historically, base theaters have played the movie theater role because of limited mobility and limited off-base entertainment options for airmen. Now, however, airmen and their families have much more mobility. Many base locations that were once rural or remote have become urbanized and afford the base community a wider range of options for spending their leisure time and extra money. The result is a decline in the use of base theaters as movie theaters since patrons go off base for their recreational needs. Nevertheless, the base theater remains a necessary gathering place to accommodate other community activities as well as motion picture viewing.

This document does not propose that cosmetic modifications alone can boost movie ticket and concession sales. However, architectural, aesthetic, and acoustical modifications in conjunction with other marketing efforts can augment use of the base theater across the entire spectrum of activities.

Purpose
To provide both architectural programming and interior design guidance for improvement projects in base theaters.

Intent
To provide a standard basis for improvement efforts in base theaters.

Use
To facilitate awareness of the major issues with respect to base theater improvements.

References

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Functional Diversity

Movies

The most user-intensive function accommodated in base theaters is the showing of motion pictures. When accommodating this role, the base auditorium functions like any other movie theater. The marketing/design issues of attracting and capturing markets and facility appeal, as well as the activity sequence of ticket sales, waiting, snack-bar sales, and theater-space entry and exit require the same attention as they do in movie theaters in the civilian community.

Lectures/Conferences

These include Professional Military Education (PME) and in-processing briefings, continuing education lectures, and other administratively oriented briefings/lectures. Theaters also serve as assembly halls for Commander’s Calls, civilian and military award ceremonies, retirement ceremonies, and Town Meetings for the Military Family Housing community. Official conferences and seminars that rely heavily on audio-visual media are also accommodated.

Stage Performances

Less often, base auditoriums accommodate plays and cabaret shows as part of morale, welfare, and recreation programs. Consequently, the facility must also accommodate traditional backstage spaces such as dressing rooms, toilet facilities, and storage space.

Musical Presentations

Base theaters also host musical performances as the focus of events for groups such as the Air Force Band during holidays and special events. Musical performances are also a part of theater productions such as *Tops in Blue*, as well as numerous official ceremonies.
The Site

Diagrammatic Site Plan

Public Scale
The base auditorium is a public place and a significant focus of activity; it must accommodate a variety of functions.

The character of the site should:
- convey a public image.
- provide an outdoor gathering space or "public plaza" with exterior seating as an outdoor extension of the building lobby.

The building design should:
- include partial coverage to this outside area to shelter users in inclement weather.
- accommodate a building entrance of public scale, easily identifiable from the street and the parking lot.
- allow the passerby and potential patron to look into the lobby through a transparent exterior facade.

Parking
The parking lot is the first impression the patron has when visiting the facility.

The parking lot should have:
- parking aisles oriented so auditorium users do not have to traverse driving lanes.
- landscaping covering 10% of the gross area of the lot.
- sufficient landscaping to screen parking from the street, but does not obscure site lines to the marquee, the building facade or the parking lot entrance from the street.

Accessibility
Accommodations for the handicapped must be an integral part of the design solution.

Facilities must be designed to:
- conform to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Federal Standard 795.
- provide an ADA accessible route from parking areas to the auditorium stage. These attributes are important for all of the functions that this facility accommodates.
- ensure the disabled can access the stage.
**The Marquee**

The marquee is the base theater's primary means of communication to the community. It should contribute to the theatrical nature of the facility and serve as an orientation point within the base community.

- Locate a free-standing marquee near the main entry to the facility.
- Design the marquee so that it is distinguishable from at least 500 feet away.
- Use ACC sign standards as a basis for the design format. However, the theater marquee should reflect the theatrical and recreational nature of the facility.
- Pick up stylistic elements of the base or local architectural vernacular and reflect them in the marquee.
- Use materials that match or complement materials on the theater building. For example, metal finishes on the marquee should match exterior metal finishes on the facility.

**Materials**

The proposed exterior materials of the theater must complement the existing color and material palette used on the installation in general and adjacent facilities in particular. Integration into the base context is the goal.

- Use brick or masonry as the dominant facing.
- Develop an architectural statement signifying both the professional and theatrical character of the facility.
- Use a glass curtain-wall facade to visually open the lobby to the base community and serve as a point of attraction and orientation on base. Move the ticket sales and "coming attractions" displays inside so that the building expresses a professional face by day and takes on its theatrical face with activity, color, and light by night.
- Eliminate flat roofs. Incorporate a standing seam, metal roofing system with a 3 in 12 minimum slope on any additions to the facility.
The Lobby

The lobby serves as a place for circulation, display of information, purchase of refreshments and preparation to enter the auditorium. The lobby plan must be kept simple so that different functions can be easily located by patrons. The lobby also serves as an intermission and break area. Visual display of upcoming events is an important element. Ensure that the lobby addition, if required, satisfies local codes in terms of size and egress requirements.

Accessibility/Life Safety

The lobby is the main entry and exit point for the facility. Therefore, this space is an integral part of the emergency egress system.

- Verify the lobby exit provisions with current building and life safety codes.
- Ensure that at least 50% of the auditorium capacity is able to exit through the lobby.

Interior Character

The lobby should exhibit two characters, one by day and one by night.

- Design the lobby to present a professional character by day and a theatrical character in the evening.
- Use lighting to help establish this character. Use recessed, ceiling-mounted down-lights with fluorescent tubes for ordinary daily uses such as lectures or assemblies. For a theatrical mood use neon lighting, incandescent wall sconces, and track lighting with color tinted diffusers to accent colors and textures on walls which would ordinarily be muted in daylight or under daytime lighting conditions.

- The lobby walls can be a hard finish in a medium dark color for good public-space serviceability and easy cleaning. Sprayed-on, color-flecked systems such as Polymix or Zolotone, or vinyl wall covering would work well on these walls.
- The ceilings in the lobby must be very sound absorbent as a means of eliminating unwanted sound before it reaches the theater. Standard "acoustical ceiling tile" is not adequate for this purpose. A lay-in fiberglass tile 1.5" thick is available. A more decorative and effective solution is a wood strip acoustical system, which could also be used in the auditorium as a wall treatment.
- Carpeting provides the most sound absorbing floor finish. Use an easy to clean nylon, level loop carpet of at least 28 oz. face weight. Ensure good soil hiding characteristics.

Ticket Sales Area

Due to the multipurpose nature of the lobby, a ticket sales clerk and cash register substitute for the conventional ticket sales booth (reference lobby diagrams in 500 and 1000 Person Facility section).

- Locate this area within the lobby so that patrons enter the building to purchase tickets or to check in for conferences.
The Lobby

- Provide sight lines that allow an unobstructed view of all entry doors.
- Accommodate multiple functions such as movie and theater ticket sales and conference registration.
- Provide enough room for patrons to stand in line without inhibiting movement of people throughout the lobby.
- Display information relevant to functions going on in the auditorium.

- Rest room size and fixture counts should be sufficient to avoid long lines during brief intermissions.
- Comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. Accommodate a 60-inch diameter wheelchair turning space. Provide one water closet and lavatory that conforms to accessibility standards. Reference the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standard 795.

Manager’s Office

The manager’s office must be convenient to all facility operations, yet inconspicuous to the patrons.

- Provide a 100 square feet (minimum) office for the theater manager.
- Locate the manager’s office so that it is accessible from the lobby but not perceived as part of the lobby.
- Locate the office so that it has access to the projection room and the concession sales area.
- Provide a floor or wall safe for event and concession proceeds.

Rest Rooms

The rest rooms are an obvious necessity which must be easily found but not occupy a dominant location.

- Locate rest rooms so that they are easily identified, but away from concession sales areas. Provide a means to block sight lines into the restroom.
- Reference the locally accepted building codes for numbers of fixtures required. In no case should the number of plumbing fixtures be less than the following for each gender (also reference 500 and 1000 person facility drawings):

500 Person Facility
- Water Closets/Urinals: 2*
- Lavatories: 2
  * One urinal may be substituted for one water closet

1000 Person Facility
- Water Closets/Urinals: 4*
- Lavatories: 3
  * Two urinals may be substituted for two water closets.
The Lobby

- Include a supply closet for storage of marquee letters and other display items.

Concessions

Concessions are a primary element of the lobby. For design guidance, AAFES has developed the prototypical concessions area layout shown below. Planners should contact AAFES for current policy regarding concessions design.

- Use the AAFES layout as a guide in planning the concessions area. Adjust the AAFES configuration to suit the actual lobby space.
- Use ceramic tile for wall and floor finishes.
- Design the plastic laminate serving counter to accommodate candy and other snack displays as well as preparation of hot foods such as hot dogs and popcorn.
- Use decorative neon lighting and chrome railings for a crowd control maze where appropriate for local conditions.

Typical Concessions Area
The Auditorium

The auditorium is the facility's most complex interior space. Acoustics, circulation, lighting, and seating for different uses such as movies, lectures and conferences, stage performances, and musical presentations must be considered when designing this space.

- The auditorium design should allow every member of the audience to see and hear clearly.

Circulation

Emphasis should be on user friendliness. The plan should be clear enough so that directional signage is not necessary or minimal.

- Provide direct access to and from the lobby to facilitate efficient movement of patrons and also safe, rapid egress in case of emergency.
- Comply with NFPA's requirement to provide a main entry/exit "of sufficient width to accommodate one-half of the total occupant load...."
- Reevaluate catchment areas to ensure that existing exits can handle exiting requirements. Provide the proper number of exits and accessible routes from the facility required by code.

Seating

The type of seat has a direct bearing on the comfort and enjoyment level of the patron.

- Provide 3/4 folding, self-raising seats with a minimum of 33 inches from seat-back to seatback in their fully open position. Also provide a minimum of 12 inches between seat backs and the most forward projection of seats immediately behind.
- Select seating with a contoured steel frame construction that provides lower back support.
- Select cloth, fully upholstered seats. Heavy use and soil hiding characteristics are primary considerations.
- Verify seating capacities for the disabled.
- Provide "swing-away" seating for the disabled.

Verify Catchment Areas

Seat Spacing

Exit Requirements
The Auditorium

Ceiling Configuration

Stage Section

Sight Lines

Stage Panels

Sight Lines
- Use the conventional "American" seating system with two center aisles. The center seat should be no more than six seats from each aisle. Continental seating is not acceptable.
- Provide staggered seating to maximize the view of the stage or screen.
- Where a new sloped auditorium floor is being considered, design the new floor to provide a clear line of sight to the focal point on stage. Maintain 5 inches between a viewer's line of sight and the top of the person's head sitting in front of the viewer.

Acoustics
The importance of acoustics is paramount. Each base theater must be acoustically tested and specific solutions derived for the characteristics of that specific space.
- Acoustically isolate the auditorium wherever possible.

Use sound absorbing material in all adjoining rooms surrounding the auditorium.
- Use solid core auditorium doors with gasketed jambs and silent door hardware.
- The mechanical system must be as close to inaudible as possible. Sound measurements taken while the system is running cannot exceed a background noise level of 34 dBA or noise criterion NC-25.
- Design the auditorium acoustics to accommodate the various auditorium functions. This requires a compromise between speaking and musical productions.
- Design side and rear walls for high sound absorption.
- Provide a combination of reflective and sound absorptive ceiling finishes based on the results of acoustical testing.

Curtains
- Provide curtains that are both retractable...
and easily removable when they are not needed for a specific event.

**The Stage**

Although replacement of the stage area is not part of the scope of work for theater renovation, use the following as a basis for evaluation of the existing stage:

- Use the existing proscenium stage where one exists. Stage depths should be one and one half times their width.
- Provide a movie screen system that can be moved mechanically to the front of the stage for movie viewing and then retracted.
- Design the stage floor to be flat with a smooth resilient surface.
- Acoustically deaden the stage floor.
- Provide portable risers for choral productions.
- Provide a portable, acoustically reflective shell for small musical groups.

- Provide a steel pipe *gridiron* over the stage area to accommodate lighting, scenery, curtains and acoustical devices.
- Suspend all overhead lighting fixtures from the gridiron.
- All stage lighting specified must be adjustable and movable.
- Provide outlets in the stage floor for lighted music stands or instrument amplification.
- Provide duplicate lighting controls at the rear of the auditorium for performances and on stage for rehearsals.
- Provide stands and equipment support for a range of audio-visual needs such as viewgraphs and 35 mm slide presentations. This should be provided for both long focal length equipment within the seating area and viewgraphs near or on the front of the stage according to speaker needs.
- Verify structural loading of any new lighting grids, screen, or curtains with the existing roof structure.
Backstage and Performance Support Space

Changing Rooms

Diversity of uses should be the guiding principle in backstage area design (also reference the 500 and 1000 Person Facility sections).

- Productions that require dressing rooms occur relatively infrequently. Similar multipurpose facilities in the commercial sector use multipurpose changing rooms rather than dressing rooms which require more specialized design.
- Provide a multipurpose room that can accommodate male and female changing areas or warm-up and rehearsal space. This space can also augment lecture and educational functions.
- Provide a folding wall partition to accommodate male and female changing areas in the multipurpose room.
- As a planning guide, provide 16 square feet per person for changing rooms.

- Provide at least 20 lineal feet of full-length mirrors in both male and female changing areas.

Toilet Rooms and Makeup Areas

Toilet rooms and makeup areas need to support activities prior to and during performances.

- Provide one ADA-compliant toilet room for each sex. Provide two toilets, a minimum of two vanity sinks and 6 to 10 lineal feet of mirrors with theatrical makeup lighting in each toilet room. A urinal may be substituted for one toilet in the men’s room. Verify substitution guidelines with local building codes.
- Locate toilets so that they are easily accessible from changing rooms and the crossover space (space behind stage backdrop or movie screen).
- Provide a makeup area in each toilet room with at least 10 lineal feet of counter space and mirrors for both male and female toilet rooms and makeup area.
Backstage and Performance Support Space

General Storage, Production Preparation and Receiving Area

All three of these areas are dependent upon each other for a successful theater operation.

- As a rule of thumb, provide an additional 30-35 percent of storage space as a proportion of the existing stage area.
- Although these areas are primarily for theater production storage, they can also accommodate scene, paint and electrical shop activities.
- Provide a 12 foot wide and 45-55 inch high loading dock and receiving area. Also allow 50-100 feet of level adjacent space to accommodate a full-size tractor trailer.
- Ensure that the storage areas are directly accessible to both the receiving and backstage areas. Provide overhead door access to the backstage area.
- Ensure there are no level changes between the loading dock, receiving areas, and stage.
500 Person Facility

The floor plan below depicts an existing typical 500 person theater constructed in the continental U.S. by AAFES during the 1960s and 1970s. Bringing this facility up to contemporary standards requires the following modifications:

1) Accessibility for the Disabled
   Ramp to provide an ADA-compliant accessible route from the parking lot to the stage floor.

2) Public Plaza
   New outdoor area for gathering that also serves as an exterior extension of the lobby.

3) Ticket Sales/Registration
   Multipurpose counter for movie ticket sales or registration/information point for other functions.

4) Toilets/Utility Core
   New ADA-compliant toilet rooms, maintenance closet, and mechanical space (if required).

5) Concession Sales/Manager’s Office
   New concessions counter equipment recommendations. Directly adjacent to this area is a storage area and an office for the facility manager.

6) Intermediate Lobby
   New acoustical finishes to provide sound isolation between the main lobby and the auditorium.

7) Auditorium
   New ceiling finishes, acoustical wall finishes and new seating.

8) Stage
   New lighting, movable movie screen, and wings.

9) Changing Rooms/Multipurpose Rooms
   New multipurpose rooms with divider curtain. New toilet rooms with makeup counters and theatrical lighting.

10) Backstage Area
    New prop/general purpose storage.

11) Storage/Shop Space
    New storage that can also accommodate light scene construction and lighting shop functions.

Existing Plan
Renovated Lobby Plan

Prototypical Renovated Plan
1000 Person Facility

The existing floor plan below depicts a 1000 person theater constructed in the continental United States by AAFES during the 1960s and 1970s. Bringing this facility up to contemporary standards requires modifications similar to those required for the 500 person facility. The bold numerals on the opposite page correspond to the descriptions in the previous section on 500 person facilities.

General guidelines for materials and finishes for both schemes can be found on the following two pages. In general, materials and finishes should be of adequate quality to ensure good wearability and maintainability under heavy use conditions. For example, use a seat upholstery-cover material that has good soil hiding characteristics and that is easily cleaned. The list of suggested sources only provides a reference or starting point for finish and material choices and does not represent sole source recommendations.

To assist in the programming and budget estimate phases, prototypical budget estimates have been provided for both the 500 person and 1000 person theater renovations and can be found in the sections following materials and finishes.

Existing Plan
1000 Person Facility

Renovated Lobby Plan

Prototypical Renovated Plan
Materials and Finishes

Use the following list of materials and finishes as a reference point for defining levels of quality. Do not consider these sole source recommendations.

**LOBBY AND AUDITORIUM FLOORS**

**Carpets**
- Karastan Bigelow, NecRhythms, Antron BCF nylon, color Nocturne 4418-56836 for lobby and aisles of auditorium.

**WALLS AND DOORS**

**Vinyl Wall Covering**
- Lobby: Koroseal Spellbound, color Avante Garde 8821.76.
- Auditorium: Forbo Virotex, Crescendo Type 2, color Hasson's Cove; perforate for acoustical panel covering.

**Acoustical Wall Panels**
- Auditorium: Armstrong Soundsoak Scores with perforated wall covering; Armstrong Soundsoak custom shaped panels.

**Wood Strip Acoustical Wall System**
- Auditorium: Ventwood vertical strips of select kiln-dried red cedar, spaced on black-stained connector dowels, mounted over black fiberglass acoustical blankets.

**Paint**
- Auditorium Doors: Duron 6315N Burgundy
- Auditorium Trim: Duron 5494D Hidden Blue

**Push Plate for Lobby/Auditorium Doors**
- Chemetal, anodized aluminum. Bright Smoked Chrome 911

**RESTROOMS**

**Ceramic Tile**
- Floors: American Olean unglazed 2x2 Ceramic Mosaics, Empire Gray C17.
- Walls: American Olean Glazed porcelain 2x2 Satin Brites. Lite Sterling Y62 (field), White D26 (pin dot).

**Lavatory Countertop**
- Nevamar Fountainhead solid polymer, color Black Matrix FM-6-1.

**CEILINGS**

**Lobby Ceiling**
- Ventwood Panels to match Auditorium walls.

**Auditorium Ceiling**
- Armstrong Omega, suspended acoustical ceiling panels without foil backing; 1.5" thick; factory standard black grid and ceiling panels.

**LIGHTING**

**Typical Lighting**
- Indirect Warm fluorescent tubes, incandescent downlights.

**Decorative Wall Sconce**
- Winona Lighting, Aaron Architectural, Domini 3704 or Mentor 3705.

**CONCESSIONS AREA**

**Ceramic tile**
- Floors: American Olean, 8x8 Naturtones, color: Obsidian NT 60; Fog Mist NT 53.
- Paint: Match Pantone 3262 Turquoise.

**AUDITORIUM SEATING**

**Upholstered Chair**
- American Seating, 35M Stellar Series construction; Marquesa Lana Olefin, Sherpa Shire, color Maroon 82; abrasion and flame resistant.

**STAGE CURTAIN**

**Curtain Fabric**
- Dazian Fabrics, NY, NY; Angelo Velour 30681, color Wine 3443; 100% Trevira CS, no back coating; clean only with dry cleaning solvent.

**Curtain Track**
- Rose Brand Theatrical Fabrics and Fabricating; New York, NY; motorized center pull curtain track...
Materials and Finishes

Material and Finish Samples

BASE THEATER DESIGN STANDARDS
# Budget Estimate: Prototypical 500 Person Theater

## Fiscal Year 1992

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## Lobby Addition

| Selective Demolition                          | 5,520      |
| Foundations                                   | 1,768      |
| Slabs on Grade                                | 14,400     |
| Exterior Walls                                | 64,400     |
| Exterior Glass (Curtain Wall)                 | 80,000     |
| Exterior Doors                                | 10,400     |
| Interior Doors                                | 2,100      |
| Interior Walls                                | 16,200     |
| Ceilings                                      | 7,200      |
| Roof Structure (Built Up)                     | 36,000     |
| Carpet                                        | 62,400     |
| Tile Floors                                   | 4,352      |
| Wall Paint                                    | 1,500      |
| Wall Tile                                     | 6,800      |
| Millwork/Counters                             | 6,250      |
| Concessions Equipment                         | 22,000     |
| **Lobby M/E/P**                               | **$370,090**|

## Auditorium Renovation

| Selective Demolition                          | 4,140      |
| Exterior Doors                                | 5,200      |
| Interior Doors                                | 600        |
| Wall Finishes                                 | 33,600     |
| Acoustical Ceilings                           | 10,800     |
| Carpet                                        | 26,000     |
| Chairs                                        | 150,000    |
| ADA Char Lift                                 | 3,000      |
| **Auditorium M/E/P**                          | **$258,540**|

## Backstage Area Addition

| Selective Demolition                          | 3,588      |
| Foundations                                   | 2,080      |
| Slabs on Grade                                | 12,816     |
| Exterior Walls                                | 70,000     |
| Exterior Glass                                | 1,800      |
| Exterior Doors                                | 2,600      |
| Overhead Doors                                | 3,600      |
| Interior Doors                                | 4,200      |
| Interior Walls                                | 16,200     |
| Ceilings                                      | 4,680      |
| Roof Structure                                | 23,400     |
| Floors                                        | 27,584     |
| Wall Paint                                    | 1,560      |
| Wall Tie (Toilets)                            | 2,500      |
| Backstage Equipment                           | 10,000     |
| **Backstage Area Addition Subtotal**          | **$205,528**|

Note: As conditions will vary, the costs shown here should only be used as an aid and checklist for preliminary discussions.
# Budget Estimate: Prototypical 1000 Person Theater

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<td>Wall Tile</td>
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<td>Concessions Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wall Finishes</td>
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<td>ADA Chair Lift</td>
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<td><strong>Auditorium M/E/P</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Auditorium Renovation Subtotal</strong></td>
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**Backstage Area Addition Subtotal** $209,717

**Note:** As conditions will vary, the costs shown here should only be used as an aid and checklist for preliminary discussions.
Base Theater Design Standards