

# Reader

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# Panida launches Century Fund campaign

*Theater's annual meeting to be held Oct. 20*

By Lyndsie Kiebert-Carey  
Reader Staff

Leaders of the historic, community-owned Panida Theater are preparing to launch an ambitious fundraising campaign, dubbed the Panida Century Fund, which aims to raise \$1.9 million ahead of the theater's 100th birthday in November 2027.

The funds are intended for badly needed capital improvements, Panida officials said, and each of the five years leading up to the Panida's centennial features a different fundraising goal. In the first phase — set to conclude in December 2022 — the theater hopes to raise \$273,000.

"Like anything 100 years old, whether it be a person or a building, it needs love and attention and there is wear that needs to be addressed," said Panida Board Chair Jim Healey, noting that the roof of the main theater is currently leaking and would be replaced under the first phase of the Century Fund plan. "We're heading into the winter months," he added. "The roof is a matter of concern that needs to be addressed right now."

Beyond the most dire needs, the Panida could see a wide spectrum of improvements made possible by the funding campaign.

"The Panida over the decades has served well as a venue for a movie-going experience, but is woefully lacking in infrastructure needed in a modern performing 'theatre,'" said Board Fundraising Chair Foster Cline. "The lobby is small and crowded. The restrooms are cramped. The backstage area is inadequate. The acoustics need to be upgraded. The beautiful aged plaster is in need of replacement. More comfortable and updated seating is needed."

To kickstart the Panida Century Fund campaign, local internet company Ting has pledged a \$200,000 match to all donations of up to \$5,000. Ting Marketing Manager Kari Saccomanno — a lifetime local — called the Panida "an anchor for local connection," and said Ting strives to support the "people and programs that make our cities so special."

"In fact, my first date was at the Panida, so it holds even more special memories for me," Saccomanno told the *Reader*. "I'm lucky to be a part of a company that values community as much as I do."

Also providing a boost is a new endowment fund through the Innovia Foundation, which will establish a consistent revenue stream for the theater.

"A gift to the endowment fund is essentially a never-ending gift," Panida Managing Director Veronica Knowlton told

the *Reader*.

Apart from the Century Fund plan, the Panida board also recently adopted a new five-year strategic plan meant to guide the nonprofit's steps leading into the next century.

"Our intended hopes for the Panida Theater are reflected in this strategic plan, which will be our roadmap heading toward the Panida centennial celebration," Knowlton said. "In establishing these specific objectives, we are united in our understanding of what is both possible and achievable as we work together."

In the spirit of working together, the theater has also initiated a Panida Advisory Council made up of about 30 members from various backgrounds who will provide input as the campaign gains steam.

All members of the public are invited to the theater's annual membership meeting, slated for Thursday, Oct. 20 at 6 p.m. Theater officials will hold board elections and Knowlton will provide opera-



*Above: From left to right, Panida Board Fundraising Chair Foster Cline, Panida Managing Director Veronica Knowlton and Panida Board Chair Jim Healey. Photo by Chris Bessler. Inset: A poster advertising the first-ever Panida show in 1927. Courtesy photo.*



tions updates.

The 2021 membership meeting included the re-lighting of the Panida's iconic First Avenue marquee, as well as a brief mention of a possible capital campaign. The campaign is now a reality, and the 2022 meeting will serve as an opportunity for people to learn more about future improvement plans through the Century Fund.

"All this is going to be costly

but essential as our community-owned theater evolves to meet the needs of a thriving live professional theater," Cline said.

Learn more at [panida.org](http://panida.org), or call 208-263-9191.