

IN OUR *opinion*

Revived theater will improve quality of life

San Angelo's steady march back to the future advanced another step last week with the sale of the once-grand Texas Theatre.

A San Antonio car salesman bought the stately building from San Angelo's two most notable preservationists. More important, Cal Collins has big dreams for the Texas and great enthusiasm for bringing them to life.

Lee Pfluger and Ken Gunter bought the theater in 1998 with this kind of sale in mind. Their desire was to put the Texas in the hands of someone who would not just reopen it but make it a vibrant part of a thriving downtown district.

Their track record in that area is excellent. Gunter was the main player in the revival of historic Concho Avenue, which started the revitalization of downtown and enhanced San Angelo's tourism draw.

Pfluger saved the Cactus Hotel, the city's most visible landmark and at one time its economic and societal pulse, and turned it into a cultural and civic hub.

They didn't buy the Texas to unload it for the best price they could get.

They wanted a buyer who would breathe new life into the 1,262-seat theater and make it an integral part of the city. If Collins is successful, Pfluger and Gunter will have achieved that and more.

Within two years Collins wants to stage musicals and other productions there, which would greatly add to the city's cultural offerings.

The city is increasingly seen as a cultural hub in the Lone Star State.

Collins sees the Texas as a venue to fulfill his personal dreams, and he's serious enough that he will invest \$1 million to make it happen.

The Texas Theatre isn't just an old movie house.

Built in 1929, it was an architectural marvel as well as a terrific place to be entertained. Collins was wowed by the charm of the building and saw the promise it still holds.

We hope he can make his dream come true and turn the Texas into a quality 21st Century entertainment venue.

That would bring at least three important results: delivering new entertainment options for a city always striving to improve the quality of San Angeloans' lives, preserving a building with cultural and historical significance, and continuing the laudable trend of making the heart of the city an important part of its cultural and civic life.

We commend Gunter and Pfluger for investing their money and energy in San Angelo. And we wish Collins the best of luck for his sake and the city's.