

COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE: WHAT'S NEXT

NEXT STEPS:

- **County Judicial Appeal.** On June 17, 2019, Miami-Dade County submitted a petition to the Appellate Division of the Circuit Court of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit, appealing the veto by City Mayor Francis Suarez of the County's application for a final Certificate of Appropriateness for the Coconut Grove Playhouse project. In addition, the County submitted a motion accompanied by an affidavit requesting that the appeal be calendared for a hearing on an expedited basis.
- **There Is No Other Plan.** Only the County and FIU have a 99-year lease with the State for the property, have secured \$23.6 million, and have a viable and sustainable business model to return great theater to the Grove.
- **Building Permit.** Construction documents are ready to be submitted for City of Miami Building Department review.
- **Garage Development.** A solicitation will be issued by the Miami Parking Authority (MPA) for a garage developer/operator. The County will be participating in the review and selection of the respondents.
- **Construction Bidding.** Once the majority of the City of Miami Building Department's comments are addressed by the design team, a solicitation will be issued by the County for the construction contract, subject to a successful judicial appeal.
- **Construction.** Construction contract award and commencement of construction can begin as soon as possible, subject to a successful judicial appeal.



ABOUT THE PLAYHOUSE PROJECT

- **A Partnership.** Miami-Dade County and its partner Florida International University (FIU) entered into a long-term lease agreement with the State of Florida in 2014 to rescue the Coconut Grove Playhouse.
- **Secured Funding and an Expert Team.** The County has approved \$23.6 million specifically for the project and has authorized an agreement for architectural and engineering services with an outstanding team, led by Arquitectonica and including noted historic preservation architect Jorge Hernandez, renowned theater consultants Fisher Dachs Associates, and expert cost consultants, Venue, a firm specializing in capital cost estimates for theaters.
- **Return of Great Theater.** GableStage has been selected by the County to operate and program the theater. The theater's focus will be on cultivating the talent of Miami's theater professionals. GableStage and FIU are collaborating on joint initiatives ranging from internships for students in a professional theater company to partnering on creating the first master's degree in theater offered by a college or university in the county.
- **A Thoughtful and Effective Project.** The County's design team spent a year at the outset of the project thoroughly studying the Playhouse building, documenting the successive architectural changes that erased the vast majority of the interior features of the original silent movie theater, determining the best strategies for honoring the history of the Playhouse, and returning the finest dramatic theater to Coconut Grove, creating magical performances for new generations of 21st century audiences.
- **History Revitalized.** The resulting project is an elegant campus with the historic front building on Main Highway restored faithfully to its 1927 design, a new, state-of-the-art 300-seat theater that incorporates the remaining historic elements of the original theater (e.g., the double proscenium arch, Solomonic columns, etc.), a garage with its facades attractively lined with offices facing Main Highway and the residential neighborhood to the north, and plazas, promenades, lush landscaping and a pocket park.

- **Overwhelming Support.** 78% of likely voters in City Commission District 2 said that they supported the County's project to redevelop the Playhouse, based on an April 2019 poll by Bendixen and Amadi.
- **A Good Neighbor.** The project has been designed specifically to be a good neighbor to and cultural asset for the adjacent residential neighborhood. It offers the following features:
 - A pedestrian promenade provides direct connectivity between the residential neighborhood to Main Highway;
 - Landscaping and a pocket park serve and add to the residential neighborhood;
 - The theater's low-profile, single-story structures are on the residential side of the project; and
 - The service entrance to the theater on Charles Street has a gate and service vehicles will enter a long driveway with deliveries to occur deep inside of the site.
- **Right for the Grove.** As designed, the Coconut Grove Playhouse pays homage to its architectural heritage, returns great theater to its "ancestral" home, and respects the pedestrian and village nature of the Grove.

ACTIONS BY CITY OF MIAMI REGULATORY BOARDS

- **Approvals.** As part of the regulatory and permitting process, the project has been reviewed and approved by the following City of Miami boards:
 - Historic and Environmental Preservation Board (HEPB) - Certificate of Appropriateness for Master Plan (which included restoring the front building and replacing the auditorium) - April 4, 2017
 - Coordinated Review Committee (CRC) - January 10, 2018
 - Urban Development Regulatory Board (UDRB) - February 21, 2018
 - Planning, Zoning and Appeals Board (PZAB) - November 7, 2018

On May 23, 2019, the City of Miami Commission upheld Mayor Francis Suarez's veto of the City of Miami Commission's earlier vote in favor of the County-FIU Playhouse project. There are significant flaws and errors in Mayor Suarez's veto message. The County's application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the Coconut Grove Playhouse project and the detailed testimony provided by the County's historic preservation and architectural experts establish a compelling record for the approval of the project. The County is pursuing a judicial appeal of the veto to resolve this final approval and move forward with the project.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") with Miami Parking Authority ("MPA").** The Board of the MPA and the County's Board of County Commissioners have approved an MOU for the development of the parking garage and compatible/related project components (offices, retail, food and beverage). Revenue from these non-theater elements is dedicated to repaying MPA for its building costs and for the operation and programming of the theater.
- **Major Knight Foundation Grant Award.** On December 3, 2018, the County received a \$2 million grant award from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation to benefit the construction of the Coconut Grove Playhouse project. This funding will further ensure that an outstanding regional theater can be built as designed - to the very highest standards of quality. Knight Foundation support is a strong affirmation that this project is the right one for Coconut Grove, for the arts community, and for South Florida.
- **Appellate Court Ruling in Project's Favor.** The City's Historic and Environmental Preservation Board's approval of the master plan in April 2017 was appealed by two Coconut Grove residents.
 - In December 2017, the City of Miami Commission overturned their HEPB's decision and imposed additional requirements on the project.
 - The County appealed this action and in December 2018, the Appellate Division of the 11th Circuit Court issued a unanimous ruling in favor of the County's position that the appellants did not have standing to file the appeal and it overturned all of the City of Miami Commission's conditions, including the improper requirement that the shell of the existing auditorium be maintained.
- **Major Historic Preservation Endorsement.** On January 23, 2019, the board of directors of Dade Heritage Trust voted overwhelmingly to support the County-FIU plans for the Coconut Grove Playhouse.
- **Support from the Coconut Grove Business Community.** The Coconut Grove Business Improvement District (BID) endorsed the County-FIU plan for the Coconut Grove Playhouse to reactivate the site for a thriving downtown commercial core.