

# DEVELOPER: PLAYHOUSE REDEVELOPMENT IN PALM BEACH SEEING SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS

JODIE WAGNER | PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS | MON, APRIL 22, 2024



The renovation of the Royal Poinciana Playhouse continues to progress. The Playhouse will reopen as a cultural arts center and waterfront restaurant.

A top-to-bottom renovation of the long-shuttered Royal Poinciana Playhouse is making “significant” progress, the project’s developer said Wednesday.

Critical infrastructure is nearly complete, and crews will soon begin focusing on completing the building’s shell structure, said Alexandra Clark, vice president of Asset Strategy & Experience for WS Development, the project’s developer.

Once that work is finished, the building’s tenants will be invited to start building their own spaces, she added.

Up Markets, a division of WS Development, has controlled the playhouse since 2014 under a long-term lease for the Royal Poinciana Plaza. It spent years searching for an operator for the landmarked venue before choosing INNOVATE, a publicly held company chaired by Palm Beach resident Avie Glazer, whose family owns the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Closed since 2004, the playhouse will reopen as a cultural arts center and a new waterfront restaurant.

Tutto Mare, a fine dining eatery, [won Town Council approvals in December.](#)

“The last several months have been spent on very critical infrastructure, but now we turn to the fun stuff,” Clark told the Daily News. “There will be a significant amount of visible progress over the next few months, and it will be an exciting time to drive over the bridge and see meaningful change every week.”



Workers have begun erecting the framework for a multilevel structure at the Royal Poinciana Playhouse construction site on April 4. [DAMON HIGGINS/THE PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS]

Massachusetts-based WS Development [announced redevelopment plans for the playhouse in January 2022](#), and [earned Landmarks Preservation Commission approval](#) for the project the following month.

Construction began last summer and included extensive demolition work that was undertaken after numerous structural issues were discovered within the 65-year-old building, WS Development said.

The extent of that work took town officials and residents by surprise.



Workers use a lift to help erect a multilevel structure at the Royal Poinciana Playhouse construction site on April 5. [DAMON HIGGINS/THE PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS]

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At an August meeting of the Landmarks Preservation Commission, [board members said they were shocked by the extent of the work](#) and expressed concerns that it was beyond the scope of what they had approved in February 2022.

However, WS Development said the work was fully approved by the town, and was needed in order to meet the minimum requirements of the Florida Building Code.

“Rebuilding what was there is not something we came to lightly,” [Clark told the Daily News last year](#). “We were advised by a team of experts that it was needed to make it safe for public occupancy.”

Since then, work has proceeded steadily, Clark said.





Construction crews, seen on April 5, are working to complete the Royal Poinciana Playhouse's shell structure, including masonry walls, concrete beams, columns, and the rest of the structural steel. [DAMON HIGGINS/THE PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS]

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Underground work was completed in February, including dewatering the site and installing an extensive foundation system to support the building, which includes 803 pilings, concrete grade beams, and a seating pit for the cultural arts space, she said.

Structural slabs were poured in March, followed by the start of vertical construction, Clark said. Additionally, crews erected the building's steel fly tower, marking the completion of the tallest part of the playhouse, she said.

During the next few months, Clark said, crews will work to complete the building's shell structure, including masonry walls, concrete beams, columns, and the rest of the structural steel. They also are working on creating new openings in the east and northwest facades to enable the installation of new storefronts and windows.

This work, Clark said, is "crucial" for integrating hurricane-rated storefront elements while preserving the building's façade.



Workers make their way across a large crane at the Royal Poinciana Playhouse construction site April 5. [DAMON HIGGINS/ THE PALM BEACH DAILY NEWS]

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“These are critical next steps before we invite tenants in to start building their own unique spaces this summer,” she said.

Throughout the summer, Clark added, efforts will shift to installing roofing, storefronts, and exterior architectural features while completing site work like underground utilities, hardscape, and landscape so that tenants can begin their buildouts later this year.

Clark said she expects “many” new businesses to be ready to open by next season.

“We are working closely with the new tenants to finalize their buildout schedules,” she said.

More details will be shared in the coming months, she added.

“We appreciate the public’s patience as we navigate challenging site logistics to complete all of this work,” she said.