



Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez

**Cultural Affairs**  
111 NW 1st Street • Suite 625  
Miami, FL 33128-1994  
T 305-375-4634 F 305-375-3068  
miamidadearts.org

[miamidade.gov](http://miamidade.gov)

## COCONUT GROVE PLAYHOUSE: WHAT'S AT STAKE NOW

### NEXT STEPS / WHAT'S AT STAKE:

- At its April 25, 2019 meeting (sometime after 2 pm), the City of Miami Commission is scheduled to hear the County's appeal of the Historic and Environmental Preservation Board's recent, unmerited vote to disapprove the County's Playhouse application.
- **There is no other plan.** The City of Miami Commission will have the choice of approving the County's thoroughly developed plans or deciding that nothing will happen. 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 Coconut Grove.
- Subject to City Commission review and approval of the appeal, construction documents will be submitted for City of Miami Building Department review for a building permit.
- 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.
- 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.
- Award of the construction project and commencement of construction can begin in 2019.



### 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 focus of the theater 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

- ***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 nature and village scale 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 March 5, 2019, the City of Miami Historic and Environmental Preservation Board (HEPB) voted 6-4 to deny Miami-Dade County's application for a special certificate of appropriateness for the Coconut Grove Playhouse revival project. The HEPB's decision overruled its own staff's professional recommendation to approve the County's application and was based on erroneous and unfair actions of a number of HEPB's board members.

## **RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND MILESTONES FOR 2019**

- ***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 the operation and programming of the theater.
- ***Major Knight Foundation Grant Award, Recognition for GableStage, and Community Benefits.*** 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. The Knight Foundation also named Joe Adler, GableStage's producing artistic director, as one of the 2018 Knight Arts Champions, and provided a \$10,000 contribution that Mr. Adler directed to arts education nonprofit Arts for Learning, for its robust student programs in the heart of the West Grove community, reaching underserved children and families in the area. This designation was made to reinforce GableStage's commitment to serving the entire Grove community with emphasis on the educational needs of the West Grove.
- ***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.

Coconut Grove Playhouse Updates and FAQ's: <https://miamidadearts.org/coconut-grove-playhouse-updates>.