

News Photos

Lafayette's Historic Park Theatre Is Torn Down to the Studs as Renovations Move Ahead



Bay Area Telegraph Editorial Team • 6 days ago



📷 Park Theatre Renovation~~Historic Park Theatre building under renovation with marquee reading "Please donate so we can renovate," Lafayette, California

LAFAYETTE, CALIFORNIA – One of downtown Lafayette's most recognizable landmarks now looks dramatically different.

The long-awaited renovation of the historic Park Theater has moved deep into demolition, with much of the interior stripped back to its structural frame.

In its April 15 construction update, the Park Theater Trust said demolition was “moving right along” and that the building’s “bones” are now clearly visible. The group said foundation work is next, followed by construction of a steel skeleton inside the building. ([Park Theater Trust](#))



Credit: Thomas Smith

That matches what the site has looked like in recent weeks. In a March 21 update, the Trust said the stucco siding on the west side had been completely removed, exposing the building’s redwood interior structure.



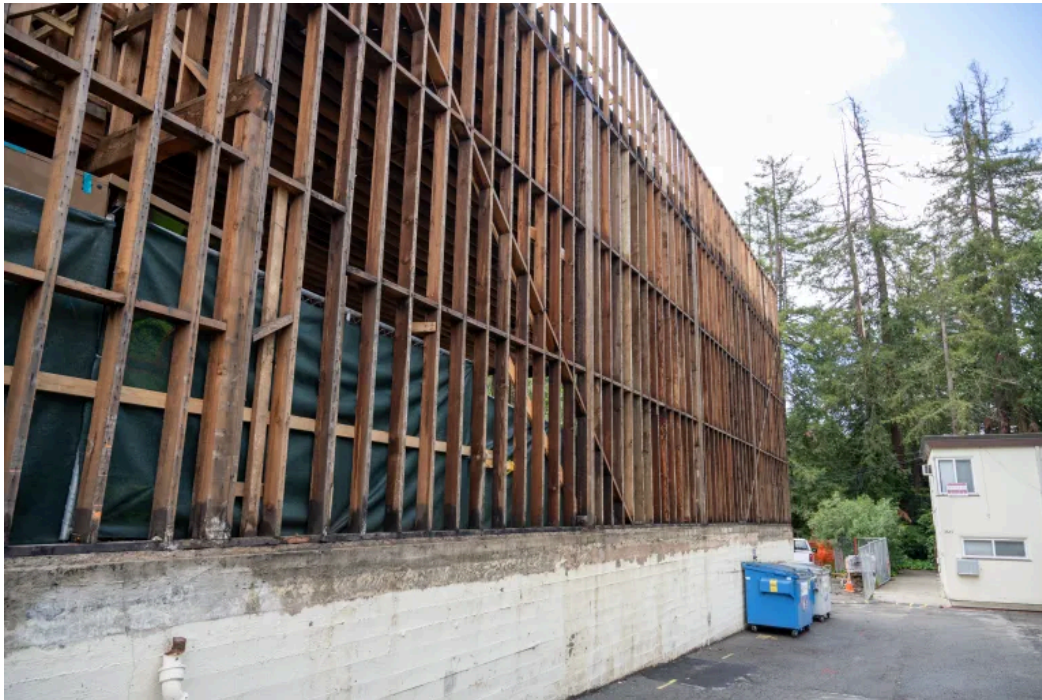
Credit: Thomas Smith

A few days earlier, it said interior demolition was largely complete and that the primary structural framing had been exposed, including the full height of the main theater space and its original curved roof framing.



Credit: Thomas Smith

For Lafayette residents who have watched the Art Deco theater sit dark for years, the sight is startling — but it is also a sign that one of the town's most ambitious restoration projects is finally taking visible shape. The Park Theater Trust says construction officially began in February, and the project has now shifted from demolition toward structural improvements.



Credit: Thomas Smith

The absolute best way to keep up with major Lafayette development and restoration stories is to join our free 925 News newsletter, which covers the projects, openings and local changes people are actually talking about.

The Park Theater first opened in 1941 and closed in 2005. Since then, it has become one of the most emotionally resonant preservation efforts in Lafayette.



Credit: Thomas Smith

During a February presentation later reported by Lamorinda Weekly, Park Theater Trust president Kathy Bowles said the nonprofit had raised about \$12 million toward a \$15 million goal after purchasing the property in 2021 on behalf of the community. (lamorindaweekly.com)



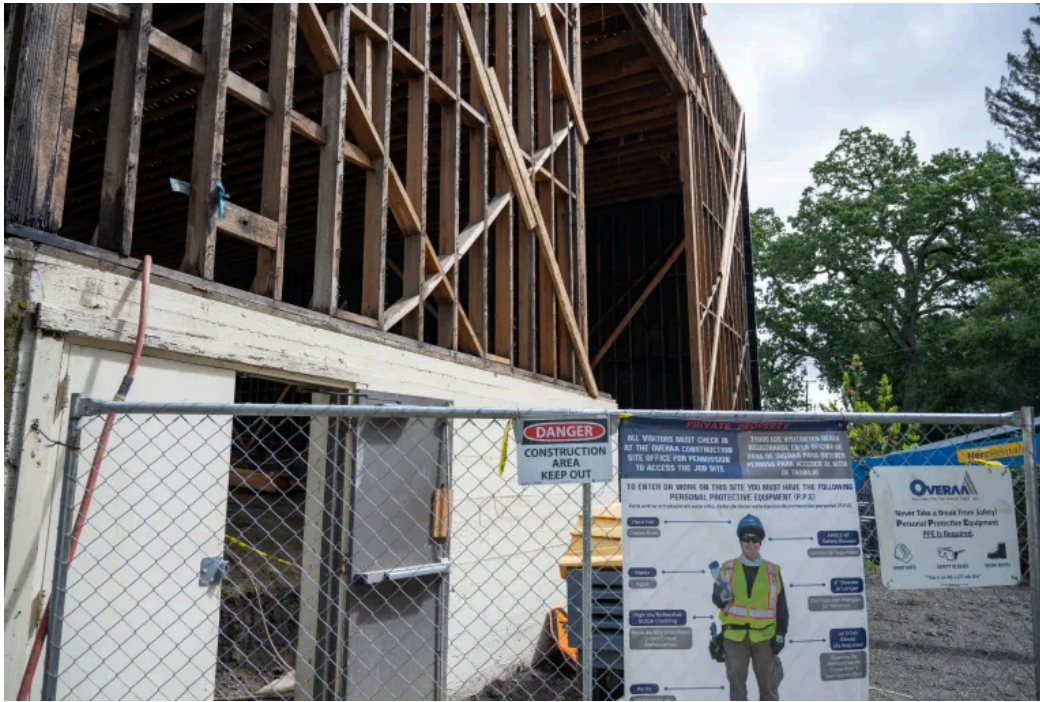
Credit: Park Theatre Trust

The project is not just about reopening a movie house. The Trust says the reimagined venue is planned as a community-centered arts and culture hub, with two theaters for daily movies plus live music and special events, a multifunction community space, and a rooftop terrace. The organization has also said it wants to preserve the theater's old-school charm while making the building more accessible and sustainable.



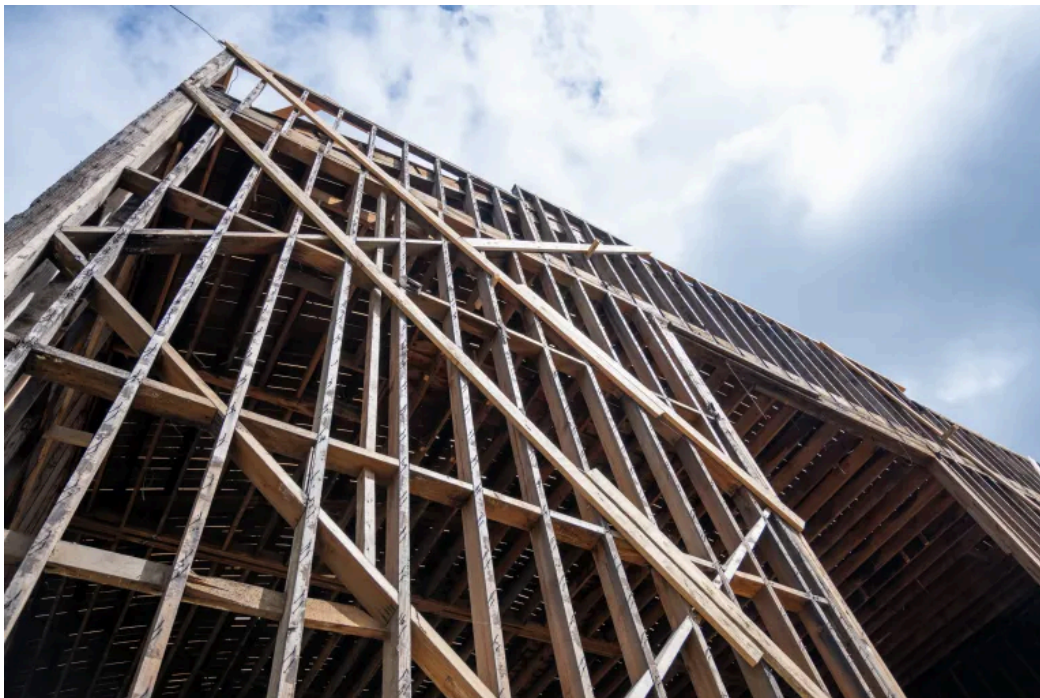
Credit: Park Theatre Trust

Even as the interior has been taken apart, several historic elements are being protected. In its March 16 update, the Trust said the Park Theater sign remained in place while the neon had been moved into off-site storage for safekeeping. Earlier city communications also said decorative artifacts including Art Deco wall sconces and teardrop lobby lights were to be removed and stored until they could be repurposed in the new theater.



Credit: Thomas Smith

That careful balancing act — dramatic reconstruction paired with historic preservation — has become central to the theater’s revival. Bowles told city leaders earlier this year that saving the marquee and historic architecture had been one of the Trust’s core promises to the community.



Credit: Thomas Smith

Lamorinda Weekly reported that the building's original architect, William B. David, designed more than 25 cinemas in California and Oregon, and that the Park's marquee includes distinctive 1941 Noviol glass tubing from Murano, Italy. (lamorindaweekly.com)



Credit: Thomas Smith

Back in March 2025, the City of Lafayette said true demolition would begin in mid-April, with reconstruction and renovation slated for September, and described a planned reopening in late 2026 tied to the theater's 85th anniversary.

More recently, the Trust's homepage has continued to describe 2026 as its reopening goal, although it looks like that might extend into 2027 depending on how things go.



Credit: Thomas Smith

What is clear now is that the project is no longer theoretical. After years of fundraising, planning, approvals and anticipation, the Park is visibly being rebuilt from the inside out.

And at this stage, that may be the biggest milestone yet.

We'll continue to follow the renovation. Join our free 925 News newsletter so we can keep you updated.

