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ENCORE! Tampa to raise curtain on performance theater

KATHY STEELE | TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2014

The musically themed **ENCORE! Tampa** is setting the stage for a professionally operated performance theater at its newest residential building, the Tempo.

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The 203-unit apartment building is under construction at the corner of Scott and Governor streets, adjacent to the city's Perry Harvey Sr. Park. Construction on the approximately \$43 million project will be completed in 2015.

"We are going to go looking for an operator (for the theater)," says Leroy Moore, COO for the **Tampa Housing Authority**, which is developing ENCORE! as a \$425 million master-planned, mixed income community of apartments, shops, hotel, offices and a black history museum. "We always wanted to be able to incorporate music and art into the park."

The 5,000-square-foot theater will add a new element to the overall music and art themes of ENCORE!, which is located just north of downtown Tampa. Encore replaces the former public housing complex of Central Park Village, which was torn down in 2007 as part of the city's revitalization efforts.

Moore says the theater is not envisioned as a community theater but as a privately operated business. He likens ENCORE!'s theater concept to the **Stageworks Theater**, which is located at the **Grand Central at Kennedy** condominium in the Channel District.

Once the theater's management is in place, Moore says, "They'll plan the theater's interiors."

In addition to plays, the venue could host small concerts, debates and oratory events. THA representatives are reaching out to members of Tampa's arts community for advice.

ENCORE! is spread across nearly 40 acres between Cass Street and Nebraska Avenue in a neighborhood settled by freed slaves after the Civil War. During segregation, nearby Central Avenue - known as "Harlem South" - thrived as a black business and entertainment district drawing legendary musicians and singers including Ray Charles, Hank Ballard and Ella Fitzgerald.

ENCORE! and the city's plans to redesign Perry Harvey Sr. Park honor the neighborhood's history and musical legacy. The first apartment building opened in 2012 as The Ella, housing seniors and named for Fitzgerald. The Trio, Encore's first multi-family apartments, opened earlier this year. Streets are named for Charles, Ballard and educator Blanche Armwood. Public art installed at ENCORE! is an homage to jazz and local history.

A former church on-site will be restored as a black history museum. A contractor will be chosen in the next week to handle a partial demolition and stabilization of the historical building's facade. Bids will go out early in 2015 for the project's construction contract of about \$1.5 million.



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THA and the Banc of America Community Development Corporation are development partners on the ENCORE! project. [Bessolo Design Group](#) is the architectural firm for Tempo. The general contractor is [Siltek Group, Inc.](#), which also is in charge of The Reed's construction.

The Reed, a second senior housing building, is under construction but is expected to have its first tenants in early January. Leasing is under way. "It is filling up incredibly fast," says Moore.

Work on a re-design for Perry Harvey Sr. Park is pending final approval from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Moore expects the green light in the next month or so.



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Kathy Steele is a feature writer and editor at 83 Degrees Media in the Tampa Bay region of Florida.

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