



GUADALUPE ROYAL THEATRE PROJECT

PROJECT STATUS REPORT

MAY 2026





Royal Theatre Project – Status Report

Guadalupe, California | May 2026

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Guadalupe owns the Royal Theatre and has begun the work of renovating the historic movie theatre and its expansion to a performing arts center. The project transforms a long-vacant, red-tagged movie theater into a working, multi-use space. It is designed to support films, live performances, educational programming, and community events.

Planning has included architectural design, community input, and a formal historic evaluation. To make room for expansion, the City combined the theatre parcel with two adjacent properties into a single site. The renovation and construction plans include a one-story addition at the rear of the historic building, which will house classrooms, a kitchen, and other support areas. The theatre has since been listed on both the California and National Registers of Historic Places.



The theatre will comply with California Historic Code and will be upgraded to include audio/visual and lighting systems for films, performances, and events. On the south side of the theatre, where vacant land was located, the plan introduces a public plaza and an outdoor amphitheater. These spaces are designed for use throughout the day and into the evening, allowing for gatherings before and after events, as well as programming that can occur independently of the theatre itself. Taken together, the site

functions as more than a single-use building. It becomes a flexible, year-round gathering space.

The project aligns with multiple City planning efforts that identify the Royal Theatre as central to downtown revitalization. Its role extends beyond the structure itself. It serves as a place where activity, connection, and economic movement can take hold in a visible way.

PROJECT STATUS AND TIMELINE

Construction began following City Council approval of the contract with Pre Con Industries of Santa Maria in October 2025. The contract was awarded through a competitive bid process managed by City staff and approved by the City Council. A groundbreaking ceremony was held on December 1, 2025, and the Notice to Proceed was issued on December 15, 2025.

The current construction schedule anticipates completion of the base portion of the project construction in February 2027. This timeline aligns with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) required deadline of March 2027. The project's timeline is subject to change, particularly true with projects involving historic rehabilitation. Any request for additional time must be justified, documented and will need to be approved by the Construction Manager, the Project Manager, and the City.



REDESIGN

The project was originally designed as a larger, multi-story performing arts center attached to the historic theatre. That design was fully prepared and approved. Plans were completed, permits were issued, and the project was ready for bid. At the same time, the City was awarded funding through the Economic Development Administration (EDA). That funding came with a firm construction deadline of March 2027.

The City had originally requested \$10 million. The award was reduced to \$5 million when the EDA reduced the maximum award from \$10 million to \$5 million, creating an immediate funding gap. Since then, construction costs have continued to rise. With limited time and fewer funding options available, the City made the decision to redesign the project to reduce costs.

Working with the design team at Andrew Goodwin Design (AGD), the City redesigned the project focusing on the scale of new construction. The original three-story addition was replaced with a one-story structure with a larger footprint. Additionally, the amphitheater was also simplified, shifting from a concrete venue to a grass-based design. This approach allows the project to move forward within current funding while preserving the core function of the site. The revised plans were approved and released for bid in July 2025.

To maintain flexibility, the bid package included a base-bid scope of work along with five alternates that would complete the project but could be finished after the theater was completed—the renovation of the theater was required by the three funding sources. These alternates allow for five elements of the project to be completed if funding becomes available. Essentially, the theater could be open and operational while any of the alternates were still seeking funding. It should be noted that several factors have led the City and Guadalupe Community Action Coalition (GCAC) to recalculate the project's costs, including COVID-19, recent tariff increases, and the passage of time.

The decision to move forward with construction despite the funding gap reflects the reality that delays would likely increase costs further. Securing a contractor at a fixed price was viewed as the most practical path forward, with the expectation that the remaining funding gap can be addressed as the project progresses.



FUNDING

The project is supported by a combination of federal, state, and local funding.

The EDA has awarded \$4.8 million. EDA funding is provided on a reimbursement basis and is tied to the Royal Theatre construction deadline of March 2027. Project costs are paid first, and reimbursement follows when eligible work is completed. This process is defined by federal program requirements. The five alternates are separate from this deadline.

To address the EDA award reduction, the City asked Senate President pro tempore Monique Limón to help address the loss of the \$5 million in funding. She added a General Fund State line item, and with the pass of the budget, City was awarded. The funds were assigned to the state's California Arts Council to administer. These funds are in place and are being used for pre-construction and construction costs.

The City of Guadalupe, through their prior Redevelopment Agency, had \$600,000 assigned to the project to renovate the Royal Theatre. Total available funding currently stands at approximately \$10.4 million.

PROJECT COSTS AND FUNDING GAP

With construction bids received, the project now has a clear picture of total cost. The lowest responsive base bid was submitted at \$9.7 million by Pre Con Industries.

Pre Con Industries also submitted their bids for the five alternates, totaling \$1.6 million. These alternates are structured to allow

any or all of them to be approved for construction as additional funding becomes available. The City will decide which alternates will be approved for construction based on the amount of additional funding secured and any requirements that may be associated with the new source of funds.

Soft costs are estimated at \$2.1 million. Total projected project cost is approximately \$13.4 million. Based on current funding, the remaining gap is approximately \$2.95 million. This gap does not prevent the project from moving forward. However, it affects the ability to complete all planned elements within the current construction phase.

ADDITIONAL PRIOR FUNDING EFFORTS

The City has explored multiple funding options to close the gap.

Applications for federal and state historic tax credits (HTC) were unsuccessful. The City could not utilize the federal HTC due to federal regulations. While the City did apply to the state HTC program, all funding was allocated to the first applicant under the state's first-come, first-served basis, leaving no funding available for the City's application. The City plans to apply again if the state offers another round of funding.

Loan-based financing options were also evaluated, including commercial loans, I-Bank programs, and USDA funding. These options were determined to be financially unsustainable due to long-term debt service requirements.

A General Obligation Bond was considered. While it advanced through initial steps, it did not receive the required level of City Council support to proceed to a public vote. The City will continue to apply for funding via state and federal grant programs or other programs such as foundations.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

To address the remaining funding gap, the City has initiated a capital campaign and appointed the Project Manager as the Capital Campaign Coordinator. On March 24, 2026, the City Council named Tom Brandeberry as the Capital Campaign Coordinator.

A group of local volunteers have come together under the name *Friends of the Royal Theatre*. This group collaborates with the Capital Campaign Coordinator to develop and coordinate local fundraising efforts, as well as to promote the campaign and the renovation of the Royal Theatre.

Funds raised through the campaign are managed by the City's fiscal agent, GCAC, in collaboration with the City under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). All donations are made payable to GCAC, which oversees the funds until they are used for renovation or new construction costs.

The Capital Campaign details, including a donation link, can be found on the GCAC website: <https://guadalupecac.org/donate-to-the-royal-theater-capital-campaign/>

On May 2, 2026, the Friends of the Royal Theatre held its first community event, where they sold Royal Theatre t-shirts. Other outreach events and small donor engagement initiatives are in the planning stages. Additional campaign efforts will include foundation outreach, grant research and applications, potential naming rights for plaques on theatre seats, a donation board, and more substantial naming rights opportunities.

COMMUNITY ROLE AND USE

The Royal Theatre is being transformed into a multi-use space to meet various community needs. While the historic theatre will play a vital role in the economic future of downtown Guadalupe, expanding it into a performing arts center is crucial to accommodate local requirements. These include:

- Local entertainment
- Additional space for schoolchildren's needs, which is currently lacking
- Enhanced business outcomes for downtown establishments by attracting more customers

Survey data (see Economic Impact below) indicates that the completed Royal Theatre, with its added features, will serve as an economic anchor for downtown. The venue will support films, live





performances, and public events. It will also provide space for educational programming and partnerships with schools and local organizations, enabling, for example, Hancock College to offer community classes in Guadalupe—something that has not been available before.

The theater plaza is designed to be open to the public, with no restrictions between the sidewalk and the plaza. It will

be a regular gathering place, accessible 24/7. With seating and landscaping, it will offer a resting and meeting space currently unavailable in downtown Guadalupe.

Private rentals and ticketed events will help cover operating costs while keeping the space accessible for community use, including low- or no-cost events now provided by the City in less suitable venues. Over time, the theatre is expected to promote both cultural activity and economic movement in downtown Guadalupe.

Finally, to support the value of this project, it should be noted that the Royal Theatre renovation is backed by several planning documents¹ as part of the downtown revitalization effort:

- General Plan
- Resilience Guadalupe
- Mobility and Revitalization Plan
- Recreational Economy for Rural Communities Plan

ECONOMIC IMPACT

As part of the EDA application process, local businesses were surveyed regarding expected impacts of the theatre reopening. The results indicated:

- Financial investment: \$10.4 million
- Job creation: 500
- Jobs retained: 170

These figures reflect survey responses from local businesses regarding anticipated impact. It is their

¹ These documents can be found on the City of Guadalupe's website: <https://cityofguadalupe.org>

belief that in renovation of the Royal Theatre, there will be significant investment and jobs created, which only be a great outcome for this small rural and farmworker community.

HISTORY OF THE ROYAL THEATRE



The Royal Theatre has long been a central part of Guadalupe's downtown and cultural life. It opened on August 30, 1940, under the leadership of Japanese American developers Arthur Fukuda and Jack Takeuchi. Following Executive Order 9066 in 1942, the Fukuda family was forced into internment camps, and the theater closed. It later reopened under new ownership. The Fukuda family never regained control of the theaters, losing their other Royal Theatres in the Central Valley locations.

Over the decades, the theatre reflected the community it served. Spanish-language films, Filipino films, school events, and local performances became part of its regular use. For many residents, it was a place to gather and participate in shared community experiences, as expressed in the project's Facebook page during its development. Guadalupe is a small community, with a population of less than 10,000 today, and the theater was the heart of the community's meeting place.

The City of Guadalupe acquired the property in 2001. Ownership was later fully transferred to the City under the condition that the site serves as a performing arts center. However, the building eventually fell into disrepair and was red tagged after an electrical fire. In 2020, the City began the process of restoring the theater. By 2022, it was listed on both the California and National Registers of Historic Places. The criteria for its placement on the Registers were in part due to the brick building's prominence in downtown and the somber history of the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II.

Today, the project builds on that history. It carries forward the theatre's long-standing role as a shared space and will restore it as an active part of daily life in Guadalupe. As it returns to use, it reconnects past generations with those who will shape Guadalupe's future.

THANK YOU TO OUR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN SUPPORTERS

Foundation Support

Santa Barbara Foundation (Towbes Fund for the Performing Arts)
Hutton Parker Foundation

Business Donors

Mechanics Bank

Nonprofit Donors

Housing Authority of the County of Santa Barbara

Individual Donors

Garret Matsuura
Tom Brandeberry
Steve Lavagnino
Mark Kennedy
Susan Shields
Jesse Reyes

Capital Campaign Volunteers²

Deborah Sykes
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Cynthia Payan

PROJECT TEAM

Andrew Goodwin Design (AGD)
Filippin Engineering, Inc.
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Pre Con Industries
Labor Consultants of California (LCC)
Guadalupe Community Action Coalition (GCAC)

PROJECT CONTACT

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Capital Campaign Coordinator: Tom Brandeberry, brandeberrytom@gmail.com, (916) 281-7638

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61562308899027>

GCAC project page: <https://guadalupecac.org/donate-to-the-royal-theater-capital-campaign/>

² A special thanks to Melissa Chavez of this parish for her editing support of this report.

COMING SOON



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³ Renderings completed by the project architect Andrew Goodwin Design (AGD)