

# SWFLATODAY

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## Naples to build three-story garage near theater site

**Structure will contain  
360 parking spaces**

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Naples Daily News  
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

The city of Naples will build a three-story, four-level garage with 360 parking spaces near a future Gulfshore Playhouse theater and education center as part of an agreement approved Thursday.

Naples City Council, acting as the Community Redevelopment Agency, voted 6-1 to recommend a partnership agreement with Gulfshore Playhouse Inc. and the Wynn family acting as Downtown Naples LLC to build the garage at First Avenue South and 12th

Street South.

Gulfshore Playhouse and Downtown Naples would transfer to the city more than 1 acre with a value of approximately \$4.72 million to build the garage in exchange for a share of its parking space valued at \$4.7 million to support their individual development projects, according to a CRA memorandum.

On June 16, City Council will consider approving the agreement, interim City Manager Dana Souza said.

Of the 360 total garage parking spaces, 135 would be allotted to Gulfshore Playhouse and 65 to Downtown Naples. Gulfshore Playhouse would also receive an allocation for a valet parking area, according to a CRA memorandum.

The parking spaces in the garage will

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**The latest rendering on April 23 of the Gulfshore Playhouse is pictured. Construction on the new theater and education center is slated to begin in September. PROVIDED TO IN THE KNOW**

# Garage

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not be reserved for the organizations, Souza said.

Councilman Mike McCabe, who was the only vote against the agreement, cautioned about how the increasing use of autonomous vehicles and ride-sharing apps, as well as working remotely, is impacting the use of parking garages. He said the city should rethink the design of the garage.

"Then we would build for today and build for the future," McCabe said.

Vice Mayor Terry Hutchison said the city should take into consideration future growth and development within the city.

"If we misjudge the demand of this parking garage, we should expect people to park all over Naples Square," Hutchison said.

Souza said the design of the garage can include ways to repurpose it if and when it becomes necessary.

McCabe also said he could not vote in favor of the agreement because it would violate the city's charter, which limits the height of buildings in commercial districts to 42 feet.

Councilman Ray Christman said the 42-foot height limit does not apply to the specific area where the garage would be built due to a City Council resolution passed last year.

On June 16, City Council will vote on



**The latest rendering on April 23 of the Gulfshore Playhouse is pictured here. Construction is slated to begin later in the year, with targeted completion in time for performances in 2023. ANGELA BELL**

second reading on a code amendment that would limit the building height of structures in the city's commercial district to not more than three stories and 42 feet.

In response to a question from Councilman Ted Blankenship, City Attorney Nancy Stuparich said that if City Council approves the parking garage agreement before the code amendment, the new height rules would not apply to the garage.

The agreement was first proposed by Gulfshore Playhouse in December 2017.

"There is no doubt that we are making an exception for an extraordinary and important public project," Christman said.

The city would work to minimize the height of the garage during the design process. Construction would begin in October of next year and end in August

of 2023, Souza said.

In anticipation of this agreement, the CRA approved \$1 million in its fiscal 2020-21 budget for the design and targeted \$9 million in fiscal 2021-22 for the construction of the garage, according to a CRA memorandum.

Kristen Coury, CEO and producing artistic director of Gulfshore Playhouse, applauded the agreement.

"What I'm hopeful that will happen here is something that is for great public benefit and for the greater good," Coury said.

Jeff Wynn, president of Wynn Properties, said the agreement will have far-reaching positive effects.

"This decision has a profound impact not just on First Avenue South but in Naples as a whole," Wynn said.

Michael Wynn, chairman of East of 41 Coalition, agreed with Jeff Wynn. The

coalition is made of residents and business owners who support the agreement, its website states.

"Neighboring businesses and the entire 10th Street corridor will benefit from this investment, as well as those businesses and restaurants in renowned Naples destinations such as Bayfront, Tin City and Fifth Avenue," Wynn wrote in an email.

Last week Gulfshore Playhouse announced it is within \$5.6 million of its capital campaign goal. A \$10.4 million response to a \$10 million challenge pledge by philanthropists Patty and Jay Baker has put the theater close to its pre-construction capital campaign goal of \$60 million.

Now titled the Gulfshore Playhouse at the Baker Theatre and Education Center, the complex has an anticipated opening of late 2023. Groundbreaking is set for sometime this fall.

This most recent push came after a surprise announcement from the Bakers April 21 that they would pledge \$10 million as a matching grant. It was their second \$10 million pledge to the Gulfshore Playhouse project.

The \$10 million match was led by a pledge from Karl and Joanne Wyss of \$1.5 million, and a pledge increase from Sandy and Tom Moran that brings their contribution to \$5 million.

*Naples Daily News writer Harriet Howard Heithaus contributed to this report.*

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