

Martin Theatre

Historical Background

The Martin Theatre is a well-known and well-loved icon in the City of Panama City. Built in 1936, the Art Deco-style cinema was originally named the Ritz. When the Martin family bought and renovated the space in the 1950s, they renamed the theater and modernized the space with a new marquee and larger screen.

The cinema closed in 1978 and the building fell into disrepair until 1987, when the Panama City Downtown Improvement Board purchased and restored it. In 1990, the Theatre opened its doors for a second time with new lighting and sound equipment and was a popular venue for live concerts, theater productions, and other community events.

The Theatre was severely damaged during Hurricane Michael and has been closed to the public since. Parts of the Theatre's ceiling collapsed onto the seats below and the carpet was soaked in the storm, leaving the City without one of its most cherished cultural landmarks.

Sources: MartinTheatre.com, CinemaTreasures.org, [Historic Florida II Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/HistoricFloridaII)



The Theatre was damaged during Hurricane Michael and has been closed to the public since. Photo credit: Jack Gardner

Recovery Progress

Recognizing the unique place that the Martin Theatre holds in the hearts of many locals, the City has made restoring the Theatre to its former glory a priority.

Major renovations are underway at the Martin Theatre. Photo credit: City of Panama City



The City is currently in the process of restoring the Theatre's exterior. A restoration expert was hired to complete repairs to the exterior light fixtures while preserving their historic charm. Once the Theatre's façade is repaired, the City plans to renovate the interior space to modernize the lighting and sound equipment, make the building more accessible, and reconfigure the interior space to increase its multi-purpose usability.

