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Tennessee Theatre goes into Act 2 Construction phase of renovation to roll

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Call it Act Two at the now-dark Tennessee Theatre.

Officials announced Tuesday that the 75-year-old theater has gone from the preconstruction phase to the construction phase in its renovation.

In preparation for construction, the theater has been gutted from the inside out, with seating, draperies and the carpeting being removed, including the curtains.

The backstage dressing rooms were also gutted.

"It looks dramatically different than it did two months ago," said Allan Cox, project executive for Denark Construction Inc., which is in charge of construction at the Tennessee Theatre.

Denark takes over the construction phase of the project from the Knoxville-based architecture firm McCarty Holsaple McCarty, which was in charge of design.

To give the public an idea of what has occurred since the Tennessee closed its doors in June, the media will tour the building today. The renovation is expected to cost about \$20 million.

Cox said the first part of the construction project is to demolish the "Arning Corner," where Arning Insurance Co. used to sit. A wall, shared by the theater and the business, will be reconstructed to its original form.

Several changes are planned during renovation. Highlights include expanding the stage for Broadway-type productions, expanded public restrooms, preservation and restoration in the Grand Lobby and Audience Chamber, new heating, air-conditioning and sound systems and new seating.

Bill Campbell, chairman of the building committee for the Historic Tennessee Theatre Foundation, said once the theater reopens, which is set for January 2005, theatergoers will be in for a shock.

