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Historic Tower Theatre Begins Careful Facade Deconstruction

SALT LAKE CITY — (March 23, 2026) — Salt Lake Film Society (SLFS), Utah’s home for independent cinema, is taking an important step in the future of the Tower Theatre and in protecting the nearly century-old cinema. This week, SLFS submitted a permit to begin preliminary facade deconstruction as part of a careful effort to investigate the integrity of the 1950s facade materials and discover what remains of the original 1928 facade, famously designed with two towers inspired by the Tower of London. The deconstruction will allow project architects to determine next steps for the facade approach as part of the renovation.

A beloved cultural landmark in Salt Lake City’s 9th and 9th neighborhood, the Tower Theatre has welcomed generations of cinema audiences since opening in 1928. The upcoming work marks the first phase of a delicate process designed to better understand the building’s original facade condition and ensure future plans honor the Tower’s historic eras. This initial phase is a critical first step in the theater’s long-term renovation, with additional updates on future construction and reopening timelines to be shared as plans are finalized. SLFS continues to actively fundraise for the project and anticipates expanding its fundraising efforts in the coming months.

Beginning this spring and continuing through early summer, SLFS, its architectural partner Muir Architecture, led by Prescott Muir, FAIA, and construction partner Big-D Construction will carefully remove portions of the theater’s front facade to evaluate the original structure and determine what historic elements remain intact. The process will allow the Tower Theatre: Next 100 Years architectural, design, construction and engineering teams to identify materials and architectural details from the original design that can be protected or incorporated into future plans for the building.

During this phase, construction activity is anticipated to occur from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. The adjacent alley and roadway next to the Tower Theatre will be temporarily closed to traffic during active work hours and reopened after hours. Crews will clear and clean the area at the end of each workday to ensure it is safe and accessible when reopened to the public. SLFS has coordinated with neighboring businesses to minimize disruption and maintain access to surrounding shops and restaurants throughout the process.

A construction fence will be installed approximately 18 feet from the building's main entrance and will not encroach on the sidewalk or bike lane, allowing pedestrian and cyclist access to remain uninterrupted.

In historic preservation, facade discovery is a critical step that allows architects to uncover hidden or altered original features — helping guide plans so buildings retain as much of their authentic character as possible. SLFS expressed appreciation to the generous anonymous donors at Alternative Visions Fund, the Salt Lake City mayor and City Council for approving the Preservation Incentive Ordinance, which helped make the project possible.

This phase focuses on careful deconstruction, allowing architects and specialists to document historic components while assessing the structural integrity of the facade. The findings will help inform the design approach and construction timeline for the theater's renovation.

“The Tower Theatre is a beloved cultural landmark in our community and has been for nearly a century,” said Prescott Muir, owner of Muir Architecture and lead architect on the project. “This step allows us to better understand the original 1928 facade so we can thoughtfully plan what comes next. Our goal is to honor the building's legacy and its operational eras while ensuring it can serve audiences for generations to come.”

For more information about Tower Theatre and to track updates visit: <https://slfs.org/tower-theatre-update/>.

About Salt Lake Film Society (SLFS)

Founded in 2001, Salt Lake Film Society (SLFS) is an Oscar-nominated federal 501(c)(3) nonprofit cinema with a mission to exhibit, create, and preserve the cinematic experience. SLFS that screens motion-picture films at the Historic Tower Theatre (established in 1928) and the Broadway Centre Cinemas (established in 1989). SLFS has established cultural film festivals such as FILMEXICO, MASIMA: Pacific Island Film Festival, and Czech That Film, as well as the MAST (Media Accelerator Studio) for animators. Now celebrating 25 years of impactful mission work, SLFS serves as an economic anchor in downtown Salt Lake City and the 9th and 9th neighborhood, continually innovating to create immersive, transformative, and engaging cinematic experiences accessible to everyone in the community. SLFS programs unite artists, their films, and audiences, allowing them to experience films as they were meant to be seen—in a darkened room, on a big screen, in the company of friends, family, and neighbors. Supporters can donate at slfstix.org/donate/give-to-slfs.

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