

South Philly review Going Live!

Excerpted

Oct. 9, 2008



Replacing the Wachovia Spectrum is Philly Live! a development by the Cordish Company who has built similar entertainment districts in Baltimore Harbor, Atlantic City, Kansas City and Louisville.

Going Live! A hotel will take the Spectrum's place as details of the retail/dining/entertainment district to come are unveiled.

Nine months after the press conference announcing the fate of the Spectrum, the future has gotten much clearer.

Artist's renderings earlier this year left the 41-year-old venue being connected to the 300,000-square-foot retail/dining/entertainment district Philly Live! or razed to

make way for a 300-room hotel as part of the development by Baltimore-based The Cordish Co.

The hotel is a go. The Spectrum, a goodbye.

"Philly Live! is progressing exactly as planned," Cordish Co. Chairman David Cordish said in an e-mail earlier this week. "Tenant response to Philly Live! has been overwhelming and we are in the fortunate position of having a choice of excellent operators in every category. Philly Live! will include a major hotel as planned."

As of now, no date has been given for demolition of the Spectrum. Comcast-Spectacor, owners of the Spectrum, Wachovia Center and the 76ers and Flyers, only released a date for the arena's final concert: Sept. 30. The performer has yet to be named.

Construction will begin shortly after the razing, Cordish said

Comcast-Spectacor Chairman Ed Snider called the venue his "baby" in January. Although saying goodbye is bittersweet, these days he's more fired up about what's coming.

"I can't wait. I think it's going to be an exciting addition to South Philadelphia," he said. "I think we're taking advantage of a great location. It will be more choices for all the residents of the city, and in particular, of South Philadelphia."

Before the walls come down and the new ones go up, the venue is in the middle of an ongoing party.

"We're the first building to really celebrate our closing with a special year. Other arenas, when they decided to take them down, didn't do all of this special celebrating. We want this to [be] special for everyone," Comcast-Spectacor President/COO Peter Luukko said. "We're working hard to bring back some of the acts who once played the Spectrum stage. We were very successful with two Philadelphia Flyers preseason games here, already this year, and we're anticipating a terrific Sixers regular-season game here in March."

Once Philly Live! is built, those involved think it will become a place residents and out-of-towners will want to visit regardless of the event or venue.

"We believe that it will be a destination and people will come down even when there is a game, during the game, not for the game, to enjoy everything else that's down there," Snider said. "In other words, it would be sort of like if the arena was in Center City; there'd be people going to the arena, but there would also be people going to the [on-site] entertainment and dining facilities. We want it to be a destination location despite the fact that events are going on."

Philly Live! is ready to get down to business sooner rather than later.

"We are working through the design and due diligence phase of the development process and fully expect to break ground by the end of next year," Cordish said.

The absence of the Spectrum may take awhile to get used to, but those behind the change believe what's taking its place will create just as many happy memories.

"Philly Live! is really for everyone," Luukko said. "It will be an amazing addition to the experience of attending sporting and entertainment events here at the complex, but better yet, it's really going to enhance the overall experience for the entire region with entertainment, shopping and dining. I think people are really going to love Philly Live!"