



## Featured Project: EW Howell delivers a show-stopping renovation at Northwell at Jones Beach Theater

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Wantagh, NY Prior to the 2023 concert season at the iconic Northwell at Jones Beach Theater at Jones Beach State Park on Long Island, EW Howell Construction Group stepped into the spotlight.

The firm was tasked to complete a comprehensive venue modernization — the largest investment in the theater's 72-year history — before the first note of the 2024 season rang out.

Through intense collaboration and attention to detail, this behind-the-scenes performance would prove to be as impressive as any show the theater had ever hosted.

This case study examines how EW Howell, armed with its “Build Simply” philosophy, tackled a complex renovation project under tight deadlines and challenging conditions.

### The Problem: A Beloved Venue Faces the Music

The Jones Beach Theater, a popular, 15,000-seat venue built in 1952, was prime for an upgrade. Live Nation, the theater's operator, faced a multitude of critical issues to be addressed so that the venue could compete against other concert halls with more amenities.

The theater's existing infrastructure offered opportunities for improving the fan experience and operational efficiency with technical upgrades for more elaborate productions by top-tier performers. Optimizing entry points and concourse areas would shorten wait times and congestion for future concertgoers.

Furthermore, the theater's location was ideal for integrating VIP perks to bolster the venue's reputation among high-profile artists.

Adding to these challenges was an incredibly tight timeline. The majority of the work had to be completed between concert seasons, leaving only eight months for a project that would typically require much longer.

Finally, the theater's waterfront location, while picturesque, posed additional logistical challenges related to environmental preservation. It was important to keep a tight footprint during each phase to ensure that the surrounding parkland wasn't negatively affected.

#### The Solution: EW Howell Takes Center Stage

Executives at Live Nation and its partner, New York State Parks, knew they couldn't trust such an important project to just any construction company. After careful consideration, they selected EW Howell for several compelling reasons.

EW Howell's reputation for delivering complex projects on time and within budget was an important factor. "During bidding we outlined a logistics plan," said Juan Romero, senior project manager at EW Howell. "That really showed the team at Live Nation that we understood the complexity of the project and how to deliver it successfully."

However, it was the firm's collaborative approach that sealed the deal. EW Howell offered a comprehensive, flexible strategy rooted in its "Build Simply" philosophy. This approach emphasizes efficient processes, clear communication, and proactive problem-solving — elements that would prove vital for managing the project's unexpected twists and turns.

Once hired, EW Howell's first priority was to conduct intensive pre-construction planning. This phase involved collaborative sessions with Live Nation and New York State Parks, during which the team meticulously mapped out every aspect of the renovation. This thorough preparation laid the foundation for the agile project management that would become the project's hallmark.

The initial duration of pre-construction on the project was six months, for which EW Howell provided over one dozen estimates. However, this phase was extended, lasting for the entire project duration. Throughout the project, EW Howell value-engineered over 113 items presented during pre-construction and construction, with a total accepted value of approximately \$30 million.

With planning complete, EW Howell initiated the first construction phase while the 2023 concert season was still underway. "Our phase 1 goal was to secure the site without affecting the customer or artist experience," Romero said. "We installed 3,100 linear feet of custom fencing and walls, which allowed us to proceed with construction demolition, waterproofing of certain areas, and the replacement of precast joints in the upper bowl seating area with minimal disturbances."

EW Howell implemented a management approach that allowed for quick adaptation to unforeseen challenges. A commitment to on-the-spot problem-solving and decision-making kept the project on

track despite numerous obstacles.

“Since we were working with designs that required continual updates, we all had to push our emotions to the side,” Romero said. “Whenever an issue came up, the team would regroup, collaborate, and get it done.”

When faced with design issues that caused budget concerns or time constraints due to extended material lead times, the EW Howell team proposed alternatives. For instance, when it became clear that the specified design for limestone entry piers made installing the built-in lighting extremely difficult, EW Howell recommended a cast stone material that was more economical, easier to work with, and maintained the desired aesthetic.

Due to the size of the project site, a method to survey and monitor the entirety of the project was necessary. EW Howell utilized drone technology along with timelapse cameras, allowing the firm to continuously develop and update logistics, and monitor work progress. Aerial shots were also utilized in owner/design team meetings for the redesigning and planning of future work and real-time schedule tracking.

Resource allocation was another critical factor in the project’s success. EW Howell mobilized a workforce of predominantly local Long Island professionals. This supported the local economy and ensured a workforce familiar with local conditions and regulations, further maximizing efficiency within the project’s tight timeframe.

Throughout the project, EW Howell maintained complete transparency and frequent communication with all stakeholders. Regular updates on progress, challenges, and solutions helped build trust and allowed for quick action when issues arose.

#### The Results: Hitting All the Right Notes

EW Howell’s flexibility and creative problem-solving led to remarkable outcomes. Despite the tight eight-month timeline, the theater was ready for its grand reopening on June 29, 2024, when Willie Nelson, Bob Dylan, and Robert Plant took the stage.

The renovation dramatically enhanced the fan experience. The new Art-Deco inspired design with improved entrances reduced wait times and generated excitement. An enlarged plaza with new amenities provided more space for concertgoers to relax and socialize, while upgraded concourse areas with additional food and beverage options improved circulation and reduced congestion.

Artists, too, benefited from the improvements. Modernized backstage areas and production facilities improved the efficiency and quality of performances, while enhanced VIP areas and premium seating options increased the venue’s revenue potential. The new back-of-house facilities also streamlined event management and logistics, improving operational efficiency and reducing maintenance costs.

Beyond these immediate enhancements, the renovation focused on long-term sustainability and

resilience. Energy-efficient LED lights were installed throughout the complex, significantly reducing energy consumption and operating costs.

Stakeholder feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. According to Live Nation Entertainment, Tom See, president of Live Nation's Venue Nation, praised the renovation for "leveling up the hospitality experience for artists and fans — before, during, and after the show." New York senator Kevin Thomas said "The completed renovations at the Jones Beach Theater preserve a cherished landmark while enhancing Long Island's role as a top destination for live entertainment. I am proud to support these investments by NYS Parks and Live Nation, as they will boost the local economy and ensure that future generations of music lovers can continue to enjoy all we have to offer."

#### Tuned for the Future: The Jones Beach Theater Enters a New Era

The Jones Beach Theater renovation stands as a testament to EW Howell's expertise and innovative problem-solving. The successful project has positioned Jones Beach Theater for a new era of live entertainment, preserving its legacy while setting the stage for future generations of music lovers.

The project showcases how thoughtful planning, collaborative partnership, and agile execution can transform even the most daunting challenges into resounding successes. As concertgoers enjoy the enhanced experiences and artists perform in the upgraded facilities, the Jones Beach Theater renovation will long be remembered as one of EW Howell's most impressive "live performances."

For more information about EW Howell, visit [ewhowell.com](http://ewhowell.com). For tickets and more information about the Jones Beach Theater, visit [JonesBeachTheater.com](http://JonesBeachTheater.com).

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