

Work continues at Canton's Pro Football Hall of Fame Village with enshrinement week one month away

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CANTON, Ohio — Pro Football Hall of Fame weekend in Canton is now about a month away. As construction continues on the Hall of Fame Village and the hall itself looks to make up for a lost year to Covid-19, what can visitors expect?

“An exciting time for everybody in northeast Ohio and really all across the NFL universe,” says Rich Desrosiers, Vice President of Communications and Public Relations at the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

It’s a historically big weekend for the city of Canton and one they missed last year. Now in about a month, the Pro Football Hall of Fame will look to make up for lost time by welcoming fans to 2 enshrinement ceremonies, the class of 2020 and 2021, a gold jacket ceremony, and the Hall of Fame game.

Desrosiers says, “A lot of excitement. It’ll be the first full stadium for an NFL game since the Super Bowl in Miami.”

While many are excited for the Cowboys and Steelers to kick off the NFL preseason, the Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Company has been busy booking programs to keep venues busy outside that weekend in August. Later this month, the Women’s

Football Alliance Championship will take place at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium. After Hall of Fame Weekend, the hall will host things like the Black College Hall of Fame Championship Classic, while the village will bring in the Highway 77 Music Festival.

“Concerts, festivals, meetings and business gatherings, we like to think that we have something or a space to offer for just about any gathering,” says Mike Crawford, the President and CEO of the Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Company. “We’re having people getting married here.”

The Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Company has been deep into construction around the hall as well. They’ve added youth fields, redone the stadium, worked on infrastructure and have been building the Constellation Center for Excellence, which is scheduled to be completed in a few months. After that, the plan is to move onto retail. They’ve already announced Top Golf, Don Shula’s Steakhouse and Starbucks as three tenants. Then, it’s on to the hotel and indoor waterpark.

“Frankly, had it not been for a delay in steel shipment, there would already have been retail being built,” says Crawford.

Hall of Fame Village has received its fair share of praise and skepticism since the plan was announced. Most recently, an outlet called the whole idea "a mirage." Crawford says not only were they not contacted for the story, but he’s pretty sure they never visited either.

“If you come here and you start to see the programing and you start to see the assets being built, you realize it’s not a mirage,” says Crawford. “You realize there are a real things happening a very difficult environment.”

Crawford says they’ve learned to ignore the chatter and keep their eye on the prize, a prize that the hall is also just as excited for.

“It’s really taking shape,” says Desrosiers. “I got to say, it will affect parking for people coming down this summer, but it’ll be a big payoff on the other end.”