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Ed Smith renovations near completion

By [Carrie Wells](#)

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Now, Ed Smith Stadium is a cacophony of scaffolding, cement, Pink Panther-brand drywall, dirt and hard-hatted workers.



In just a little over six weeks, however, the stadium will be done with time to spare for the Baltimore Orioles' first spring training game against the Tampa Bay Rays on March 1.

About 260 workers are working 10 hours a day, six days a week to finish the \$24 million project, a much-anticipated spot for baseball fans to get close to the players.

So far, they have logged 170,000 man-hours, according to Mark McCaskey, a construction manager.

Amenities will include nearly triple the amount of concession and beer stands, almost 100 additional toilets and urinals, and, most importantly for Sarasota, shaded awnings.

"It's just a delightful view of a game that most fans don't get to see," said Kevin G. Greene, the executive vice president of International Facilities Group, a contractor on the project. "That's the idea behind spring training, is building up the fan base."

The renovation to the 20-year-old stadium is being handled by locally managed W.G. Mills, along with Hunt Construction Group, which has overseen renovations to Citi Field, where the New York Mets play.

With recent legal and eagle issues taken care of, project managers expect to meet their tight deadline.

Except for a concession area off left field that is currently a pile of dirt, most of the major structural work has been done, according to Carolyn Eastwood, a manager for Sarasota County's Public Works department.

On the construction site, scaffolding rises to the top of the new second-floor concourse so workers can put the finishing touches on clubhouses and administrative offices.

Workers on mechanical stilts bob and weave through piles of sheetrock. Pipes stick out of the ground, soon to be flowing with beer.

Fans will be able to see the players at batting practice, pre-game in a garden concession area and sit in 7,100 seats shipped all the way from Camden Yards.

Architects have made a few additions to the original plans, including an overhaul of the old scoreboard.

"It's a lot like designing a kitchen with my wife," joked Greene. "Everyone has a

different idea."

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