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Work to start in 2018 on new amphitheater

By [JOURNAL STAFF](#)



Image from ORA Architects [\[enlarge\]](#)

The amphitheater will have a roof and moveable panels.

Construction is slated to start late next year to replace the amphitheater in Volunteer Park on Capitol Hill, according to ORA Architects.

The nonprofit Volunteer Park Trust is managing and fundraising for the project, which will be owned and operated by Seattle Parks and Recreation.

The new amphitheater will be north of the existing one. ORA said this will allow a path within the Great Lawn to be restored. The path was part of the original Olmsted design, but was removed in 1971.

The existing amphitheater will be demolished. It was designed in 1971 by Seattle landscape architect Richard Haag, who also designed Gas Works Park.

ORA is the architect and lead consultant for the project, which is slated for completion in 2019. The total cost is \$3 million to 4 million, which ORA said is expected to come from donations and public funding.

Schematic design is nearly done, and an open house is set for 5 to 7 p.m. April 6 at Volunteer Park Conservatory.

The new amphitheater will have a covered roof, and moveable panels to provide a view of the landscape when the stage is not in use.

The stage floor will have a resilient surface that is better for live performances and public use than the current concrete surface, ORA said.

There will also be backstage support spaces and restrooms for performers, as well as new public restrooms.

The architect said theatrical groups now often bring tents for changing and overhead cover.

The public restrooms will be reintegrated in the amphitheater, and located near the restored Olmsted path for easier access, visibility and safety. Existing paths will be modified to provide ADA access to the seating, restrooms and stage areas. The seating area will be re-sloped to create better sightlines.

ORA said the design evolved through public engagement over the past 18 months, supported through Department of Neighborhood grants and funding by Volunteer Park Trust.

Extensive reviews with the community, neighbors, performers and historic groups have brought broad community support for the project, the architect said.

With its press release, ORA included letters of support from groups, including GreenStage, Seattle Chamber Music Society, Whim W'him Seattle Contemporary Dance and Seattle Shakespeare Company.

Ken Holmes, managing director of GreenStage, wrote that the project, as depicted in drawings, will improve the experience for performers and audiences, and blend in with the park.

Olivier Wevers, artistic director of Whim W'him, wrote, "I cannot wait myself to see exquisite dances performed in that setting."

ORA partner Owen Richards said there has been no significant opposition to the new amphitheater, but some people living nearby have said they want the acoustics to be well designed.

Consultants include Walker|Macy, landscape architecture; Magnusson Klemencic Associates, civil and structural engineering; and Stantec, acoustical consultant.

Volunteer Park Trust focuses on preserving the park, and works with the city on events, landscape restoration and capital projects. Its website says the park is Seattle's most complete and well-preserved example of the Olmsted Brothers' design approach.

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