Volunteer Park Trust Amphitheater Campaign

- A PLACE FOR CONNECTION
- A CELEBRATION OF CULTURE
- A PLATFORM FOR EXPRESSION
- AN ASSET FOR THE REGION
Crown Jewel of Seattle

Volunteer Park is an urban oasis in the heart of Seattle. As our city’s crown jewel park, it is equally a bustling gathering space and a serene sanctuary. Mountain and city views matched with a world-class art museum, a century-old glass conservatory, and an iconic water tower create a dynamic park that serves everyone. The park’s amphitheater adds a space for showcasing and celebrating culture through performing arts and human interaction. Residents from down the street and across the region visit Volunteer Park to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, experience art, and gather as a community.

As a legacy Olmsted Park, Volunteer Park lives up to the Olmstead Brothers’ original vision of an open space for all people. It is one of the most complete and well-preserved examples of the Olmsted design in the city.

“I believe this project to be of the highest importance culturally and socially for our city.”

— Olivier Wevers, founder and Artistic Director, Whim W’Him Seattle Contemporary Dance
Art brings us together, opens our hearts, and strengthens our community in transformative ways.

**Destination for the Arts**

Every year, Volunteer Park’s Amphitheater welcomes tens of thousands of visitors for performances, community gatherings, and cultural events. The outdoor space is a catalyst for experiencing cultures, honoring heritage, and exploring art forms. Events held at the park celebrate creativity and instill the significance of inclusivity and expression. From Shakespeare to modern light exhibits, the Volunteer Park Amphitheater offers distinct opportunities to experience art in the elements. Something magical happens when you hear music in the open air, watch a performance at sunset, or listen to the spoken word in the moonlight. Outdoor performances in Volunteer Park spur enduring connections among artists, audiences, and nature.
Volunteer Park Trust is launching a $3 million campaign to replace our aging amphitheater

For over 100 years, artists have entertained and inspired through performances in this same location on the west lawn. Now is the time to renew this local venue for the arts.

Join us as we transform Volunteer Park’s outdoor performance space into a community destination for all.

Limiting Artistic Potential

Volunteer Park’s nearly 50-year-old amphitheater is outdated and no longer meets the needs of the community:

**Concrete stage surface** is unsuitable and unsafe for many dancers and performers, forcing many to use the lawn as a stage.

**Poor acoustics** hinder the experience for performers and audiences. Without a roof, sound is easily broadcasted into the neighborhood.

**No protection from the elements** for performers, stage sets, equipment, and instruments limits use of the space.

**Unsafe atmosphere** where solid walls hide illegal activities. The bathrooms are unsafe and remain locked for most of the year.

**Lack of accessibility** for people with disabilities to perform on the stage and attend events.

“This project will enhance the artistic quality of our performances, gracefully integrate performing arts with the lush natural landscape of Volunteer Park, and present great opportunities for the community to experience meaningful performances in a unique setting.”

— Connie Cooper, Executive Director, Seattle Chamber Music Society
Amphitheater for All

Over the past four years, Volunteer Park Trust has engaged with the community to reimagine the Volunteer Park Amphitheater. The project will replace the brick-and-concrete structure with a new, covered stage, enhancing the use of the outdoor performance space. The new amphitheater will:

Broaden performance diversity by accommodating theater, film, music, spoken word, and multimedia performances. The new amphitheater will be the only public venue in Seattle specifically designed to accommodate outdoor dance performances.

Improve conditions for performers with enhanced backstage spaces, improved stage access, and protection from the elements.

Build meaningful connections through diverse community gatherings to inspire greater understanding among residents of all ages and backgrounds.

Upgrade acoustics and reduce noise by using design strategies that direct sound to the audience rather than into the neighborhood.

Improve the space for daily park use with safe public restrooms and a covered stage to support informal activities, such as yoga or school group classes.

Honor the Olmsted Brothers’ philosophy of providing open space for all, and continuing to offer free public performances.
“Seattle is a dynamic city that has always been at the forefront of artistic innovation. The expansive programming planned for the new Volunteer Park Amphitheater — and the widespread community support for the project — reflects our city’s deep commitment to enriching the lives of citizens and making art accessible to all.”

— Kimerly Rorschach, Illsley Ball Nordstrom Director and CEO, Seattle Art Museum

New Design Elements

Weather Protection and Acoustics: A roof over the stage will provide weather protection and improve acoustics during performances. Proper and easy sound rigging will reduce sound leakage while allowing performers to hear themselves and project toward the audience.

Backstage: The flexible backstage space will include a changing/staging area (500 sq. ft.), two single restrooms, and a storage area (100 sq. ft.). The spaces will be configurable to accommodate uses ranging from summer youth programs to informal activities. A space behind the backstage area will allow for loading and unloading.

Public Restrooms: Accessible, all-gender restrooms will replace the existing outdated and normally closed restrooms and will serve amphitheater audiences as well as general park users.
Honoring a Growing Diversity

Volunteer Park Trust worked with ORA Architects and Walker Macy landscape architects to design a space that honors the growing diversity of Seattle’s population. It meets the needs of a broad range of arts organizations, community groups, and neighborhood park users. The new amphitheater will celebrate the beauty and strength of our community and serve as a catalyst for cross-cultural artistic expression.

Stage: A 1,200-square-foot resilient floor surface will accommodate a broad range of performances, including theater and dance.

Lighting: Lighting design at the restrooms and the performance space will increase visibility and improve safety while providing appropriate screening to reduce ambient light pollution in the park.

Lawn and Amphitheater Seating: The continuous lawn area will ensure flexible use of the space and will include an ADA-compliant pathway.

Parking: An independent study concluded that there will be minimal impact on current parking due to the size of the events not increasing with the new amphitheater.
Investing in a Legacy of Artistic Expression

The performing arts allow us to express our shared humanity, build bridges, and spark new ways of thinking about ourselves and the world around us. With your support, Volunteer Park’s new amphitheater will foster community connection and cross-cultural artistic expression. Your generosity will create a regional destination for the arts and a vibrant gathering space. Your gift helps create a legacy of outdoor performances that teach, inspire, and engage.

Join us in creating a place for connection and a platform for expression. Join us in celebrating culture.
“Volunteer Park is in the heart of one of Seattle’s most densely populated neighborhoods, and the possibilities for multicultural programming are significant. The new amphitheater will open up a whole new world of performances for people of all ages to enjoy. It will serve as a creative hub for decades to come. This project isn’t just for us. We are doing this for the future.”

— Terry Morgan, musician and CEO, Modern Enterprises, LLC (event production company)
Overwhelming Community Support

Volunteer Park Trust spent over four years engaging with the community to envision an improved Volunteer Park Amphitheater. Participants in the planning process have included neighbors, Volunteer Park stakeholders (including Seattle Asian Art Museum and Friends of the Conservatory), the city’s Landmarks Preservation Board, Seattle Parks and Recreation, Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks, civic leaders, and more than 30 community groups and arts organizations. The amphitheater design and project goals are shaped by input from these diverse community members. They expressed overwhelming support for the amphitheater to become a regional destination for the arts and a vibrant community gathering place.

Organizations Engaged in Amphitheater Planning

12th Avenue Arts  
ACT Theatre  
Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks  
GreenStage (Shakespeare in the Park)  
Hugo House  
Jack Straw Cultural Center  
Jubilee Women’s Center  
Make Music Seattle  
On the Boards  
Pacific Northwest Ballet  
Parkour Visions  
Seattle Asian Art Museum  
Seattle Chamber Music Society  
Seattle Choral Company  
Seattle Opera  
Seattle Peace Concerts  
Seattle PRIDE Picnic  
Seattle Shakespeare Company  
Seattle Symphony  
Southside Booty Camp  
Spectrum Dance  
Saint Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral  
Taco Truck Challenge  
Theater Schmeater  
Theatre Puget Sound  
Velocity Dance Center  
Vibrations Festival  
Volunteer Park Conservatory  
Wayward Music Festival  
Whim W’Him

“Our company loves the setting of Volunteer Park, and with a beautiful and functional amphitheater space, there is expanded potential for public engagement with the arts.”
— George Mount, Artistic Director, Seattle Shakespeare Company
Every year, the Amphitheater hosts over 50 free events with nearly 40,000 attendees.

40% of event attendees come from underserved neighborhoods.

43% of attendees come from outside Seattle, as far away as Olympia, Everett, Issaquah, and Bainbridge Island.
Stewarding Volunteer Park’s Legacy

Volunteer Park Trust is the steadfast champion for the park. For six years, a small group of dedicated volunteers have stewarded and enhanced the park to meet the growing needs of the community. Their efforts supplement the city’s limited budget to ensure upkeep and improvements are keeping pace with the community’s use of this beloved destination.

From better lighting to the restoration of major Olmsted garden beds to fencing for the Lily Ponds, the Trust makes the park safer and friendlier. As local residents and frequent visitors, they have experienced the power of the amphitheater. They have witnessed the impact of sharing cultures and celebrating art in an outdoor setting. They donate their time and energy to preserve and enhance this landmark park for today and for generations to come.

“Volunteer Park represents the character and heritage of Seattle. The new amphitheater will broaden the opportunities to celebrate our history and our future.”

— Doug Bayley, co-founder, Volunteer Park Trust