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Downtown performing-arts center

[New arts center likely to draw from inspirations in our midst](#)

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Classical architecture such as the columns on First Methodist Church in downtown Orlando could be part of Barton Myers' design for Orlando's new performing-arts center, which will be revealed to the public Friday. (RICARDO RAMIREZ BUXEDA, ORLANDO SENTINEL / August 15, 2008)

Architect Barton Myers' design for Orlando's new performing-arts center, to be revealed to the public Friday, is a mystery.

But clues can be had, both in the choices Myers has made elsewhere during his long career and the cues he takes from the landscape.

"I try to make every building we do come out of the place," said Myers, who started his career in Toronto and then moved on to Los Angeles. "You can't do the same building in Edmonton that

you do in Orlando."

Myers and his colleagues have searched for what is peculiar to Orlando's landscape; some of those elements are sure to make it into their final designs for the Dr. P. Phillips Orlando Performing Arts Center.

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Water and land

Designers toured the St. Johns River, said Myers' colleague, senior associate Ryan Ihly, and took in the flatness of the Florida landscape and the ubiquitousness of Orlando's lakes. "We started with a building [design] that had a very high tower," Ihly said. "As we saw the natural environment -- the sky, the lakes -- we got the feeling that the building wanted to be more horizontal."

Colonnades and columns

Orlando has its share of classical architecture, from the columns of First United Methodist Church (above) to the colonnades at the SunTrust Center. Columns and colonnades are a way "to make the building inviting," Myers said. "They open up the walls and invite people in. We're trying to move that idea to a very great level, with a huge, covering roof that welcomes you in and makes a great umbrella. We're thinking about how to make the indoors and the outdoors work together."

The sun

Long fascinated by solar energy, Myers is surprised that Florida hasn't harnessed its sunshine nearly as much as his adopted state of California. "You're the sunshine city," he said. "You've got to wake up." Assigned by Orange County's commissioners to make DPAC a green building, Myers and his associates plan a huge solar array on the building's roof. "It will be the first performing-arts center to use solar energy to reduce costs," Myers said. "It seems logical to me. The French used the word elegant to mean the most natural solution. We're doing it in the most logical, elegant way possible."

Porches

At Harry P. [Leu Gardens](#), Myers visited the original home (above), now the Leu House Museum. He noted the wide veranda and the natural landscape in which the columned white house sits. "It's very much in the tradition of classical architecture," he said. "It's sitting there in a park

environment. It's of the land."

Alligators

"I love alligators," Myers said. He joked that if he were [Michael Graves](#), who designed Disney's Swan and Dolphin hotels, he would have had "big alligators coming out" of the top of the DPAC building. "How can we have some fun?" he asked. Swatches of alligator-textured prints are on display in DPAC's offices, but Myers said that decisions on color, textures and materials will come in the next phase of design.

Art deco

Myers noticed the art deco that has endured in downtown Orlando -- an element more common to [Miami Beach](#) but still visible here in the Kress Building (above left), the Wellborn Suites (above right) on Lake Lucerne and numerous private homes. "I've always been fascinated by art deco," he said. "It's made of nice materials, like terra cotta and brick, and it celebrates the festival activity going on."

See for yourself

DPAC designers will reveal their plans to the public from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday on the first floor of 455 S. Orange Ave. (the round building across from City Hall), the site of the planned center. Mayors [Buddy Dyer](#) and [Rich Crotty](#) will participate in a commemoration ceremony from 10 to 10:30 a.m., followed by design tours until 1 p.m. The event is free and open to the public.

Details: 407-839-0119.