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**First look at Orlando's new performing-arts center**

**Your first look at a work of art**

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August 22, 2008

A great steel roof, resembling the outstretched wings of a bird in flight, will draw visitors into the new Dr. P. Phillips Orlando Performing Arts Center, scheduled to open in 2012 across Orange Avenue from Orlando City Hall.

The center's design team will reveal its plans to the public for the first time this morning at an open house on the development site.

That soaring roof, supported by four massive columns, will jut 75 feet across Magnolia Avenue and serve both as a canopy that shelters visitors and their cars from rain and sun and as a welcoming arm to reach out and entice the community to come inside.

Seen from the plaza that will connect it to City Hall, the center will look both traditional and contemporary -- a modern-day Greek temple, with its strong horizontal cornice and supporting pillars, interpreted for 21st-century audiences.

"In many ways, it's a new version of a classical building," said California architect Barton Myers, who has designed arts centers in the U.S. and Canada.

Myers' firm is collaborating with the Orlando offices of HKS Architects and Baker Barrios Architects on the \$408 million project. Two-thirds of that will be paid for by public funding.

"It's a building that fits into Orlando," said Mayor Buddy Dyer during a Thursday evening unveiling for VIP guests. "That's what Barton was trying to do. The whole notion of what is Florida and what is Orlando -- I think they've captured the essence of that."

The center will house three theaters -- a 2,800-seat hall for Broadway tours and other amplified shows; a 1,700-seat acoustic hall for opera, classical music and ballet; and a 300-seat hall for smaller performances -- as well as a community room, rehearsal rooms, classrooms and offices.

The largest theater will be semicircular, with two balconies and two center aisles. More radical in design, the 1,700-seat hall will be a multiform, horseshoe-shaped theater, with an end that can be rolled away for opera and ballet performances or set into place to allow for the acoustics necessary for classical music.

The community room, which may be used for receptions, meetings, parties and other events, will be a glass box that projects 100 feet over Magnolia and will offer a view up that street to the Orange County Courthouse at its northern end.

Covering two city blocks, the center, its plaza and related commercial development will stretch from Orange to Rosalind Avenue and from South Street to Anderson Street.

"It's transformational," said Rita Bornstein, president emerita of Rollins College and head of the arts center's fundraising campaign. "It's going to re-create our notion of downtown Orlando."

The center's plaza is meant to serve as an outdoor theater, its stage framed by the center's cantilevered roof and its supporting columns on either side.

Myers hopes that the commercial development, which is expected to include a hotel on the northwest corner of the site and an office building for CNL on the southwest, will include rows of balconies looking out over the activity on the plaza.

The arts center itself is designed to glow, both from light pouring through its glass lobby walls and from the four big columns, which may be built of translucent glass. Exterior surfaces will be a warm off-white, probably of textured brick.

Light will be a major force inside, too, where an 85-foot-high lobby, 300 feet long and 30 feet wide, will be topped with a skylight. Back-of-house facilities, such as rehearsal rooms and offices, will open off a long hall, stretching from South to Anderson, that will be sky-lit.

The theaters will be lined up next to one another behind the lobby, with the two larger houses opening onto the ground floor and the smallest sandwiched between them one story up. From the lobby and its grand central staircase, the walls of the theaters will look like giant, sinuous drums, each with a different flowing, sculptural form.

A small, glass-walled donors' room will fit just underneath the cantilevered community room, while above it will be a rooftop garden. Atop the giant roof, 30,000 square feet of solar array will provide power from the sun.

Decisions on materials, colors and textures will be made in coming months, Myers said.

"We have to ask your readers to be patient," he said. "Theaters are the longest pregnancy in architecture."

See for yourself

There will be a public open house from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. today to reveal designs for the new center on the first floor at 455 S. Orange Ave., the round building across from Orlando City Hall. For details, go to [orlandopac.org/unveiling](http://orlandopac.org/unveiling)

Coming Sunday

The Local In-Depth section will offer a floor-by-floor look at the performing-arts center in all its majesty. 'It's transformational,' said Rita Bornstein, chief of fundraising. 'It's going to re-create our notion of downtown Orlando.'

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