

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why does the Asian Art Museum need to renovate and expand?

The landmark, city-owned building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is the original home of the Seattle Art Museum. It has not been substantially renovated or restored since it was built in 1933. A major renovation is needed to address infrastructure issues, including climate control system and seismic upgrades, as well as to increase ADA accessibility to the museum.

After careful evaluation of what the Asian Art Museum required to remain viable in Volunteer Park, it was determined that a modest expansion was also necessary. The proposed expansion will offset a loss of space in the existing building created by the addition of new mechanical equipment for heating and cooling systems, as well as address the critical need for new programming and gallery space.

The entire project will increase access to a world-class cultural resource and allow the museum to better serve the needs of the people of Seattle. It will also greatly enhance Volunteer Park and the underutilized area directly east of the museum.

What is the project's benefit for the community?

The renovation and proposed expansion will strengthen the museum's ability to serve as a community resource—a gathering place to be used by all—and a cultural focal point for Volunteer Park, Capitol Hill, and the entire city.

New gallery space will enable the museum to more regularly showcase art from all of Asia—not only its original collection featuring works from China, Japan, Korea, but also its growing South Asian collection.

Education is a major part of the museum's mission, and addressing the needs of thousands of K–12 students in the area through special programming and learning opportunities is a high priority. The proposed expansion will enable the addition of a dedicated space for educational activities.

We also believe the museum's expansion will help increase racial equity and cultural diversity by enhancing the museum's ability to celebrate and raise awareness of the cultures of Asia, including those representative of a fast-growing South Asian community in the Seattle area. The updated museum will be a better reflection of the diverse community it serves.

What is the scope of the project?

The renovation and proposed expansion goals include preserving the historic building and its Art Deco façade, improving the museum's infrastructure, protecting the collection with climate control and seismic system upgrades, adding vital gallery and education space with a modest expansion, and enhancing ADA accessibility and the museum's connection to Volunteer Park.

What is the design process for the project?

The current proposed design under consideration is the product of years of research, discussion, and meetings with the museum's board of trustees, executives, curators, museum members, architects, project partners, the City, parks groups, and the community.

The design process began with our museum board and staff, determining critical museum needs and defining project goals. From its early stages, the design exploration has been informed by feedback and guidance from the City's Landmarks Preservation Board. Those meetings continue as the design evolves.

Once we felt confident that we had something substantial and well-researched to show for consideration, SAM hosted the project's first community feedback meeting on July 16, 2016, with subsequent meetings on August 20, September 10, and October 15. Additional meetings to discuss the design and other aspects of the project are scheduled for Saturday, November 19 and Saturday, December 10, 2016. Meeting information and an online project feedback form can be accessed by visiting seattleartmuseum.org/inspire.

Community feedback and input from other stakeholders is reflected in the current design evolution. Construction is not scheduled to begin until next September 2017, so there is plenty of time for public comment.

How will the project affect Volunteer Park?

The proposed expansion is modest, increasing the museum's footprint in Volunteer Park by roughly 3,600 square feet—less than one quarter of one percent of the park's 48-acre total area.

One may recall that SAM's Olympic Sculpture Park transformed an industrial site into a beautiful nine-acre green space for all to enjoy. We value green space and the decision to explore a small museum footprint increase in Volunteer Park has not been made lightly.

Steps have been taken in the design evolution to protect the park's significant trees, in addition to aesthetically improving an unsightly east-facing exterior.

We believe that the improvements we are exploring at the Asian Art Museum will enhance visitors' enjoyment of Volunteer Park.

Can the Asian Art Museum expand elsewhere?

It would be difficult for the Asian Art Museum to expand elsewhere. Not only is it not economically feasible to add an additional location to SAM's existing three locations, but the museum is also a historic and vital part of Volunteer Park. To move completely or divide the museum's collection and offerings would be a disservice to the community.

SAM does own several additional floors in its downtown expansion building. This space is leased until 2031 and is not available. The current lease payments repay debt incurred when the building was constructed in 2007.

What is the project timeline?

The design phase for the Asian Art Museum renovation and proposed expansion is currently underway. The

museum is planning to close its doors at the end of February 2017 to begin moving its collection in anticipation of the start of construction.

Construction is planned to begin September 2017 and will last approximately one year, followed by an additional six months for moving the art back into the building. The museum will reopen in 2019.

How much will the Asian Art Museum project cost and how is it being funded?

The estimated cost of the renovation and expansion is approximately \$49 million dollars (subject to change based on the final renovation plans). The City of Seattle and King County have already committed funds to the project, but SAM expects to raise a majority share of the funds privately. A museum capital campaign is underway.

City funding for the project was initially included in the voter-approved 2008 Parks & Green Spaces Levy. The project was delayed, and the levy funds were reprogrammed for other purposes. Honoring the original partnership between the city and SAM on this project and recognizing the needs and scope of the project have changed in the past decade, Mayor Ed Murray has allocated funds for the project in his 2017/2018 budget which is being considered by the City Council.

The Asian Art Museum is not significantly subsidized by the city. The museum building was donated by the Seattle Art Museum to the city in 1933. While the city does contribute some funds for building utilities and upkeep, the significant costs associated with running the Asian Art Museum are covered by SAM.

How has SAM shared information about the project?

We felt that it was important—prior to presenting something for public consideration—that we discuss project concepts with key park stakeholders, such as the Volunteer Park Trust and the Friends of Seattle’s Olmsted Parks. Once we felt confident that we had something substantial and well-researched to show for consideration, we hosted the project’s first community feedback meeting on July 16, 2016. To date, we have hosted four community feedback meetings to discuss the project (July 16, August 20, September 10, and October 15) with an additional two meetings scheduled for November 19 and December 10, 2016. The museum has also met with the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board (one meeting to date) and its Architectural Review Committee (four meetings since May 2016). These meetings were open to the public.

We have been working to get the word out about the community meetings. All of the meetings are listed on SAM’s website and are also featured in our bi-weekly SAM News email which goes out to over 90,000 museum members and other interested parties. Meeting dates are also posted on a sign in front of the Asian Art Museum. And we always share information about the meetings on all of our social channels, including Facebook and Twitter. Digital advertisements have run in outlets including Capitol Hill Seattle Blog, International Examiner, and KCTS eNews. SAM’s online events calendar features the meetings, and calendar listings have been running in media outlets including The Stranger and The International Examiner—with frequent media coverage of the project also mentioning upcoming community meetings. The project itself was featured in the summer issue of SAM Magazine, with close to 40,000 recipients, and it will again be featured in greater detail in upcoming issues.

Seattle Parks and Recreation will be co-hosting the community meeting on Saturday, November 19 at 1 pm at the Asian Art Museum. Postcards about the event will be distributed to families in the neighborhood around Volunteer Park.

How can I get involved?

Additional public meetings are scheduled throughout the remainder of the year, Saturday, November 19 and Saturday, December 10, 2016, at the Asian Art Museum. For more information, or to provide feedback on the project, please visit seattleartmuseum.org/inspire