



Langston Hughes

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# Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center Seismic and Electrical Upgrades

## Public Meeting May 27, 2009

**During spring of 2008**, the Seattle City Council formed a committee to review current community desires for new and existing parks to be included in the proposed upcoming parks levy. Part of this review established that Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center, an important cultural center and historic landmark site, required both seismic and electrical upgrades to improve safety, and increase the life of the structure. The building was included within the 2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy with an established budget of \$2.5 million.

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

#### **New Seismic Upgrades proposed**

A study was completed in 2008, and provided a performance based seismic evaluation documenting the likely performance of the building during a seismic event. The study identified a number of deficiencies, and provided a series of recommendations for improving the seismic performance of the building.

#### **New Electrical Service Upgrades proposed**

The same 2008 study identified the need for additional electrical power to accommodate theater operations. The recommendation of this study was for a new 1,200 amp electrical service to be installed, replacing the existing 800 amp service.



## History

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center is housed in what was formerly the Jewish Synagogue of Chevra Bikur Cholim. The building is designated as a [\*historical landmark\*](#) subject to protection by city ordinance. The building was designed by [\*B. Marcus Priteca\*](#), a well known Seattle architect. Priteca's plans were completed in early 1913 and in August 1915 the synagogue was dedicated. The building is a commanding polygonal structure of tan brick with white terra cotta detailing.

The Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center was established in the building in 1969, and became a program of the [\*Seattle Parks and Recreation Department in 1972\*](#). The primary space in the building is the theater space, which has fixed seats with a capacity of 285 individuals. Within the lower part of the original building is a large activity hall which can accommodate almost 300 individuals.

## Construction History

A single story addition to the south side of the building was constructed in 1961. In 1971, a second story was added to the south addition. At the same time, the interior of the auditorium was renovated, replacing balcony area with seating. Another addition was added in 1991 on the east side of the auditorium, together with seismic retrofit improvements. A final addition was added in 2003 to the southwest corner of the auditorium. In general, the collective additions provide administrative offices and support spaces for the center, and provide barrier free access to the performing arts theater. The building is currently used year-round, functioning as an important cultural resource for the community and is acknowledged locally, nationally and internationally as such.



## **2008 Parks and Green Spaces Levy**

### **HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?**

The City Council created a Parks and Green Spaces Citizens' Advisory Committee in April 2008, and asked the Committee to propose options for parks, open space, boulevard, trail, green infrastructure, and recreation projects and to identify strategic funding options for these potential improvements and acquisitions. The Council asked the committee to report back by June 30, 2008. The Committee submitted its report, and the City Council adopted Ordinance 112749, placing a levy on the November 2008 ballot, on July 21, 2008. 59% of Seattle voters supported the levy.

### **WHAT KINDS OF PROJECTS WILL IT FUND?**

Green spaces (open spaces and greenbelts, and other open areas); neighborhood parks (existing parks, new parks identified in neighborhood plans, new parks identified in the Seattle's Parks and Recreation 2006 Development Plan, boulevards, and other properties purchased by the City for open-space and recreational purposes); and playfields (existing or new athletic fields, open play spaces, and similar areas, including spectator enhancements such as seating).

### **WILL THERE BE CITIZEN OVERSIGHT?**

Yes. A 16-member Citizen Oversight Committee will review expenditures, advise on allocations for upcoming budget years, make recommendations on Opportunity Fund expenditures, and perform other duties. Members will have staggered terms, will be appointed by the Mayor (eight members) and City Council (eight members) and will represent the community at large geographically.

### **MOVING FORWARD**

We would like to thank you for the interest in this project! If you did not have an opportunity to comment, ask a question, or share your thoughts about the project, please send us an email or phone message to:

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