

Seattle Daily Journal of Commerce

SEATTLE ASIAN ART MUSEUM RENOVATION & EXPANSION

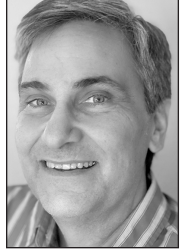


February 6, 2020

SAAM REESTABLISHES ITS CONNECTION TO VOLUNTEER PARK

The new Park Lobby is composed mostly of glass – creating the impression that it is floating in space.

The expansion of the Seattle Asian Art Museum is designed to showcase the rich legacy of Asian art, while also highlighting the beauty of the Olmsted-designed Volunteer Park.



BY SAM BENNETT
SPECIAL TO THE
JOURNAL

Reestablishing connections with Volunteer Park was high on the list of design priorities, according to LMN Architects partners Wendy Pautz and Sam Miller.

LMN's mission, Pautz and Miller said, was a design that creates a seamless integration with the spectacular site.

The museum has been closed for three years and will reopen Saturday. The general contractor and construction manager on the \$56 million project was BNBuilders.



The museum has been closed for three years for the \$56 million renovation.

PHOTO BY TIM GRIFFITH

The original art deco building, built in 1933 and designed by the architectural partnership of Bebb and Gould, featured the Fuller Garden Court and dramatic entry lobby.

LMN's design adds the Park Lobby, which creates a circulation spine that helps join the

building with the park.

LMN designers said they recognized that Fuller Garden Court was a central hub and pivot point to galleries and the new Park Lobby, which visually connects the museum to the east side of the park. It also creates a vertical circulation system, via

staircases, to program spaces and is composed mostly of glass – creating the impression that it is floating in space, according to Pautz and Miller.

A new 2,600-square-foot gallery adds significant space to the museum, and at the same time LMN designed a new education

studio, conservation center and community room.

The evolution of the project's goals spans nearly 15 years, according to Miller. The initial scope of the renovation was limited to mechanical and electrical infrastructure improvements, as well as a seismic upgrade.

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The 2008 recession meant that the project would be put on hold for several years. When the museum's leaders revisited the plan, they expanded the scope to include an addition that allowed more exhibit programming and brought the museum up to contemporary museum standards, Miller said.

Pautz said a key goal for the addition was connecting with Volunteer Park.

"The park is an amazing community asset," she said, adding that LMN worked with landscape architect Walker Macy. "The addition is a contemporary interpretation of that connectivity to the park."

The addition opens up new possibilities for exhibits, because the museum now has two wings divided by the central courtyard, she said.

"While the historic galleries worked well, there was also a

desire for traveling exhibits," said Miller. "The goal was to create a large gallery space for those traveling exhibits."

Designers created the effect of skylights by using light boxes — which block out harmful daylight rays but still create a sense of illumination.

The project included facade restoration work for the original building, as well as major upgrades to the building's interior walls, floors and ceiling elements to modernize the spaces and make them structurally sound. And while the exterior cladding on the addition is different in color and texture, Pautz said it is still compatible with the existing building.

Throughout the design process, Miller said LMN worked closely with the city's Landmarks Preservation Board and National Park Service.

"The biggest issue was how the addition met the park and relat-

ed to the park," Miller said, noting that designers also had input from the Volunteer Park Trust. The input from these sources created "a great sounding board for design ideas," he said.

LMN designers also worked closely with the museum's curators, who consulted on how to design exhibit spaces and con-

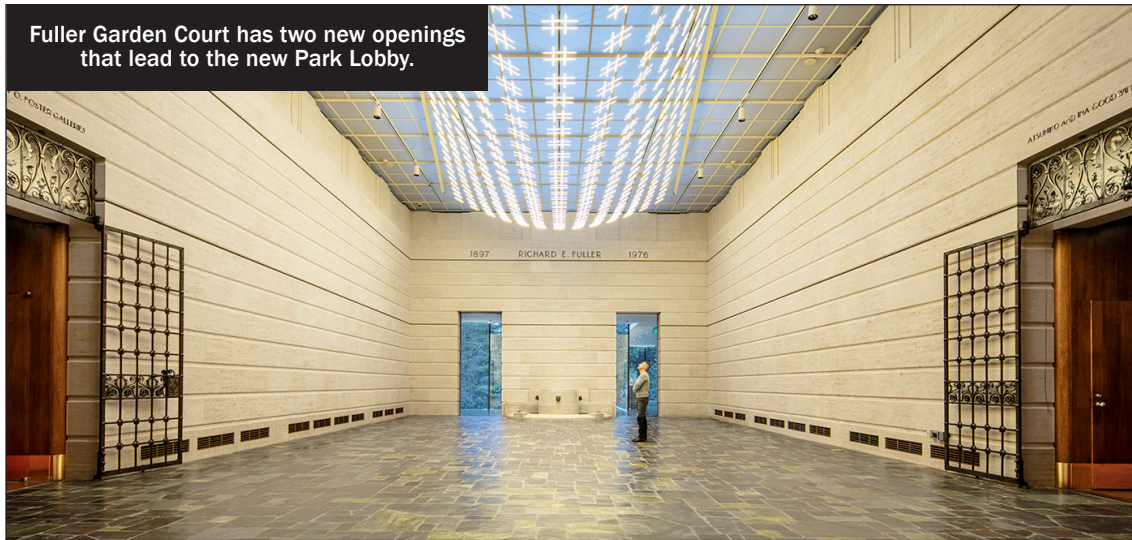
siderations such as lighting and ceiling heights.

The renovation includes the addition of a desperately needed loading dock and large freight elevator, which will help with traveling exhibits, Miller said.

Miller said the addition will help curators expand the contemporary art exhibits while also

including a larger geographic area to include south Asia.

The additional loading dock space and enlarged elevator means that the Asian Art Museum will accommodate exhibits with larger, more modern pieces, Miller said. The museum's inaugural installation will be "Boundless: Stories of Asian Art."



Fuller Garden Court has two new openings that lead to the new Park Lobby.

PHOTO BY ADAM HUNTER/LMN ARCHITECTS



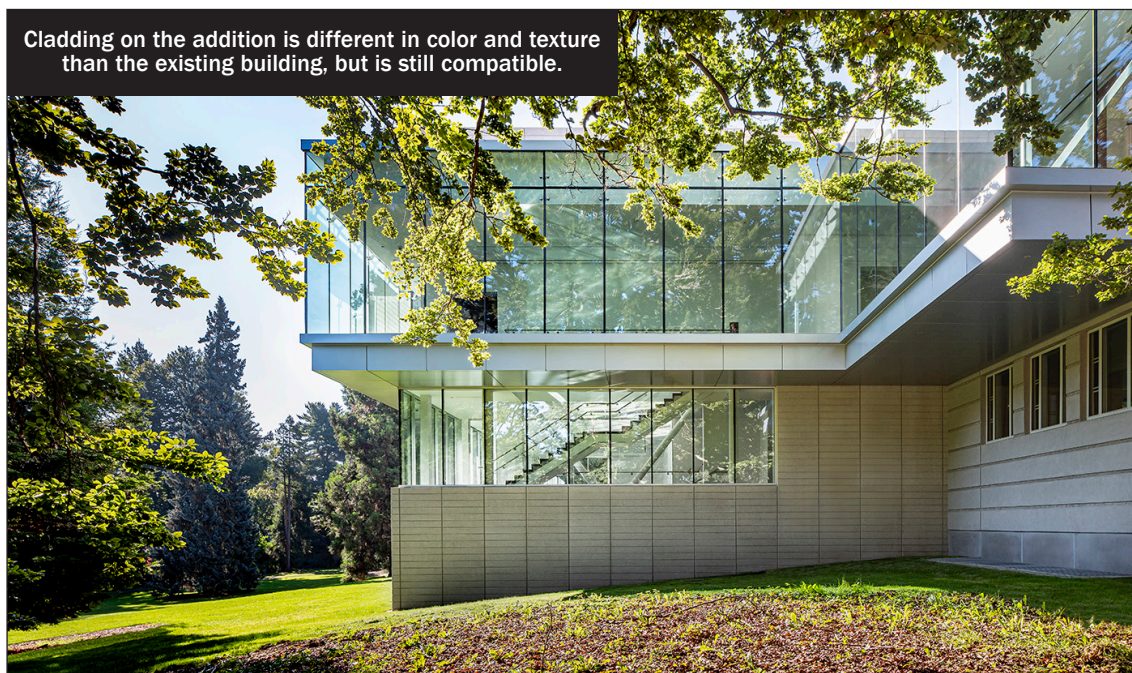
"Some/One" by Korean artist Do Ho Suh is one of the pieces on display at the museum.

PHOTO BY ADAM HUNTER/LMN ARCHITECTS



Park Lobby creates a circulation spine in the back of the museum.

PHOTO BY ADAM HUNTER/LMN ARCHITECTS



Cladding on the addition is different in color and texture than the existing building, but is still compatible.

PHOTO BY TIM GRIFFITH

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ON THE COVER

The Seattle Asian Art Museum is nestled in the bucolic surroundings of the Olmsted-designed Volunteer Park. PHOTO BY TIM GRIFFITH

DJC TEAM

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PROTECTING THE TREASURES OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM

The project team used an understated approach to preserve trees and restore circulation throughout the park.

Volunteer Park is special: Designed by the Olmsted Brothers in 1903, the nationally prominent landscape architecture firm that planned Seattle's park system, it is one of the most loved and intensively used parks in Seattle. Towering trees, gently rolling lawns, and paths that wind alongside flowering borders provide a range of immersive experiences, allowing visitors to move seamlessly from one area of the park to the next.

BY LARA ROSE,
PAUL DICKOW
AND HOLLY IOSSO
SPECIAL TO THE
JOURNAL

The Seattle Asian Art Museum sits at the top of the park on the boulevard above the reservoir, commanding the most significant view over the city.

Although most visitors assume the museum is original, it was added to the park in 1933 — an addition strongly protested by the Olmsted Brothers. Nonetheless, the museum landed in the park with a gracious entrance fronting the park's boulevard, and both the park and the museum are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



A critical root zone was mulched to increase root growth for this copper beech tree after an asphalt footpath was removed.

Later additions to the museum left it with a hulking backside, and service to the building had been situated so that visitors arriving from the east on one of the park's historic paths now passed directly through the loading area and up the driveway.

This museum renovation and expansion project raised an

important question: Given the substantial change that had already occurred in this area of the park, what is the right way to preserve the original design intent?

Which aspects of the park's evolution should the landscape improvement project focus on: the expansive meadow of the

Olmsteds' design, or the forest setting that has since grown up around the museum? How should the project address the museum's connection to the park? How should the museum take advantage of the park's natural light and beautiful setting while retaining the necessary light and climate-controlled spaces inside?

Walker Macy and Tree Solutions collaborated with the

architectural design team and worked closely with the Seattle Art Museum, Seattle Parks and Recreation, and numerous community and advisory groups — including the Volunteer Park Trust and Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks — to address these questions. Our approach was grounded in an understanding of the park's original design

PHOTOS BY HOLLY IOSSO/TREE SOLUTIONS

TREASURES — PAGE 8

INTEGRATIVE DESIGN INTEGRATED STORY

Rushing is a proud long term design partner with the Seattle Asian Art Museum. Today we celebrate the re-opening of a renovated and expanded SAAM—another chapter.



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Photo ©Tim Griffith



Crews built this elevated walkway to bridge over structural roots of an exceptional deodar cedar.



The finished walkway caused minimal damage to structural tree roots.

BALANCING COMMUNITY, SITE LEGACY AND MUSEUM NEEDS

Neighborhood committees, park advocates and city officials each had distinct ideas of what the final product should be.

The updated Seattle Asian Art Museum has been more than a decade in the making. And it's safe to say that when it opens Saturday, many hands helped bring the renovation to life.

It's common for Seattle projects to have many stakeholders and be greatly influenced by the community. After all, ours is a community that's vocal, informed, and sincerely cares about our city's development. Nowhere is this on better display than the Asian Art Museum.



BY KEN WIERSEMA
COUGHLIN PORTER
LUNDEEN

In the case of SAAM, the Seattle Art Museum's needs were only the beginning. The structure's unique home within Volunteer Park meant working closely with many agencies within the city of Seattle, including Seattle Parks and Recreation and Seattle Public Utilities.

The park's legacy required navigating original designs by renowned landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted. The museum was designated a Seattle historic landmark in 1989, meaning

historic preservation groups had to approve any and all renovation plans. And its position in an active neighborhood meant consulting with deeply invested neighborhood and community groups.

Neighborhood committees, park advocates and city officials all had a voice, and each held different priorities, unique approaches and distinct ideas of what the final product should be.

Decisions made by the project team were greatly influenced by these voices. As the civil engineer, the Coughlin Porter Lundeen team spent much time working with lead designer LMN Architects and landscape architect Walker Macy to develop solutions that reflected stakeholder input. It's common practice here in Seattle and an essential part of serving a community that's invested, vocal and truly cares.

The Seattle Asian Art Museum is the perfect case study for such a practice. The project team collaborated to identify the themes shared at community forums, reconcile the needs of the community with the needs of the museum, and ultimately, create strategies for the site. To our civil engineering team, this meant respecting Volunteer Park's sta-



Restored pathways and a new receiving dock had to respect the legacy of the Olmsted-designed park surrounding the museum.

PHOTO BY TIM GRIFFITH

BALANCING — PAGE 8



BNB 20 YEARS

Congratulations to the Seattle Art Museum on the newly renovated Asian Art Museum. Projects like this continue to inspire us after 20 years.

Thank you to our many partners who helped this project become a reality.



Photography by Tim Griffith

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HERE'S HOW THE MUSEUM WAS PROTECTED DURING RENOVATION

In some cases, historic components were replicated because of damage sustained over years of use or constructability requirements.

Historic building renovations are distinctly challenging and different from new building construction. This is especially true when the building is a Seattle landmark located in the middle of a beloved public park. Such was the case with the renovation and addition to the Seattle Asian Art Museum.



BY MATT LUBBERS
BNBUILDERS

Originally constructed in 1933, this landmark art deco building is located in Volunteer Park atop Seattle's Capitol Hill.

Modernizing the existing facility and expanding gallery and education space became necessary in order to meet current museum and preservation standards. To achieve this goal, the MEP and structural systems required upgrades and additional space was added to the back of the building. However, maintaining the original interior and exterior design of the building through preservation or identical reconstruction was a requirement.

HISTORIC FABRIC

First and foremost, maintaining the integrity of the building's historical elements was of critical importance. Parts of the building are protected under the city of Seattle's landmark preservation designation and not subject to modification without approval. This includes the facade, interior galleries, garden court, entryway, auditorium and library.

So, it was necessary to maintain the exact look, feel and construction of these spaces. In some cases, such as where the new addition connects to the garden court, changes required review and approval.

In order to execute construction, many historic elements were removed or protected in place. Extensive documentation and cataloging facilitated reinstallation of these elements. All told, nearly 15,000 documentary photographs were taken, and numerous items moved to storage. Protection placed on remaining components prevented damage during construction.

In some cases, historic components were replicated because of damage sustained over years of use or constructability require-

The flooring in Fuller Garden Court was protected by sheets of plywood during construction.



PHOTOS FROM BNBUILDERS

ments. These specialty items presented both procurement and installation challenges.

All replacement components in protected spaces needed to be identical to historical components and be approved by the city's Landmarks Preservation Board. Ultimately, plaster cornices, theater seating, Masonite floors and scagliola (faux travertine) wall panels were identically reproduced.

Given the specialized nature of the materials, finish quality and authenticity of replicated historical elements, identifying vendors and securing qualified installers presented challenges. For example, there are only two companies in the United States from which to source scagliola wall panels and very few installers with applicable experience.

NEW SYSTEM INSTALLATION

The key to efficient and successful installation of new MEP and structural systems was developing comprehensive as-built data to facilitate coordination and determine construction means and methods. Having an accurate and reliable survey of existing conditions was the single biggest driver of efficiency once construction began.

Early in design, the BNBuilders team laser scanned the entire building, developing point cloud



The project team laser scanned the entire building, developing point cloud data of existing conditions to support design and system coordination.

data of existing conditions to support design and system coordination. This information was invaluable as new systems were located in very tight spaces near historical elements, above ceilings and behind existing walls not originally designed to accommodate such systems.

Working with our subcontractor partners, VECA and Holaday-Parks, we fully modeled new systems and coordinated the model with as-built drawings during preconstruction. In some cases, augmented reality was used to overlay the model onto the actual condition in the field.

Structural seismic upgrades including steel to support the concrete structure and fiberglass-reinforced panels applied to the hollow clay tile brought the building up to modern standards. As-built point cloud data and BIM coordination again proved invaluable in executing these upgrades efficiently and without extensive field changes or damage to in-place historic elements.

WORKING IN A PUBLIC PARK

One of the most challenging aspects of this project was

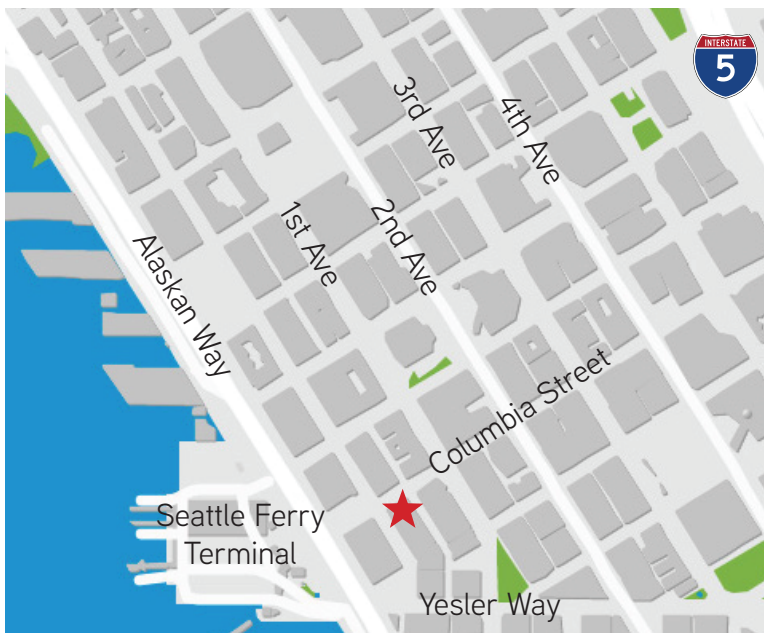
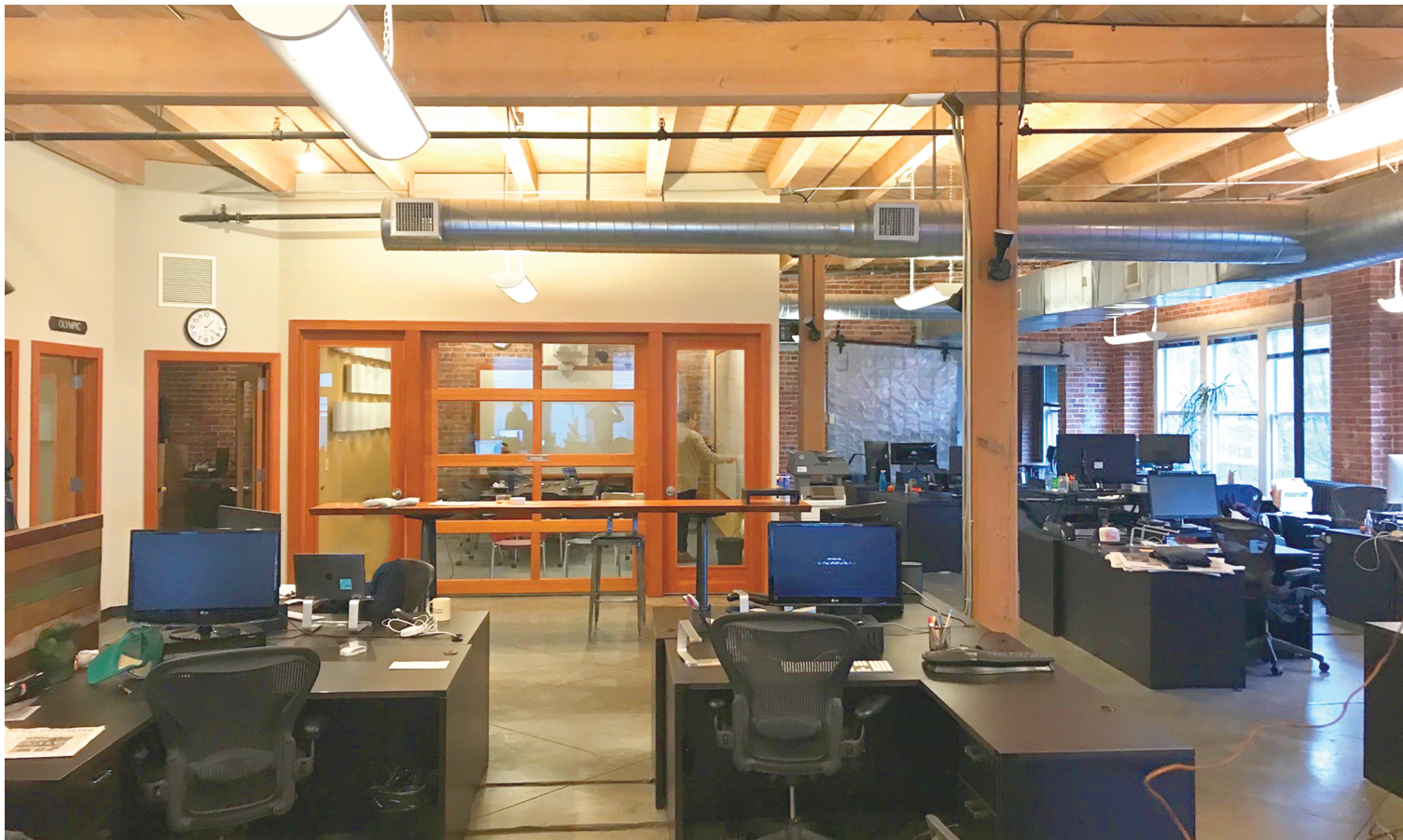
working in Volunteer Park, which remained open throughout construction. Located on Capitol Hill amongst many of Seattle's most notable estates, the park presents access and logistical challenges. The Olmsted-designed park also has a range of stakeholders in addition to those involved with the museum, including neighborhood residents, Volunteer Park Trust, Friends of Seattle's Olmsted Parks and Seattle Parks and Recreation.

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General contractor:
BNBuilders

Landscape architect:
Walker Macy

Civil engineer:
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Structural engineer:
Magnusson Klemencic Associates

Mechanical engineer:
Rushing Co.

Electrical engineer:
Stantec

Lighting designer:
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Envelope consultant:
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Historic preservation:
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BALANCING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

tus as an Olmsted-designed park and a Seattle treasure by finding low- to no-impact solutions.

Before this renovation, the museum hadn't received a significant upgrade in almost 90 years. Launching this week, it's poised to be a contemporary museum boasting a stunning collection and visitor experience. Therefore, some updates were non-negotiable. The loading dock was entirely out-of-date, built with the original structure, and couldn't support current

collections. Additionally, building entrances had to be updated to adhere to ADA standards.

These upgrades were done with great care. In addition to the restoration of Olmsted-designed pathways, carefully designed ramps protect existing elements and natural vegetation. Extraordinary measures (including arborist consultations and the deployment of an air spade) were taken to protect a large beech tree and its root system on the east side of the building.

Even things like utility metering, garbage and loading docks were evaluated, resulting in an atypical back-of-house strategy that accommodates the small exterior footprint and fits more seamlessly into park surroundings.

And that's all above ground.

Measures were taken beneath the surface too. When Coughlin Porter Lundeen joined the team and became familiar with the site, record drawings and geographic information system (GIS) data review revealed a significant issue. An existing public water main ran directly beneath the museum's planned addition area.

While water mains typically run beneath roads, this Seattle Public Utilities main, built in the

1940s, runs through a field connecting Volunteer Park's water tower to the rest of the Seattle Public Utilities local water main network.

Moving the main was a near impossibility, but it could not be left under the new museum addition. A unique civil solution rerouted the main around the footprint of the new addition, providing Seattle Public Utilities continued access and clearing the way for the addition.

While rerouting around the museum may sound simple, the solution required extensive permitting, collaboration with Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Parks, arborists and other stakeholders. It also required unique geometries, installation methods to reduce effects on the

trees, and careful construction operations to respect the park and park visitors. The revised water main is no more apparent to park users than before the museum was expanded.

It's exciting to witness the museum reassume its position as a Volunteer Park centerpiece. With the renovation behind it, the museum now stands as a beautiful home for art and cultural gathering space. To us it will always be a shining example of our commitment to the Seattle community's problem solving, perseverance and collaboration.

Ken Wiersema, PE, LEED AP, has over 20 years of experience as a civil engineer. He is a civil project manager at Coughlin Porter Lundeen.

PROTECTING THE MUSEUM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

tion was important, especially early in the approval and planning stages.

Logistics and construction execution planning and coordination were critical, and a series of public meetings allowed us to present our approach, solicit feedback and refine the plan. Top priorities included mitigating impacts to park users and the neighborhood, isolating the site and ensuring safety — all while still efficiently executing construction.

Once construction began, weekly coordination meetings with Seattle Parks and Recreation ensured the ongoing effectiveness of our plan or dictated updates.

Volunteer Park's numerous exotic trees, especially near the

addition on the building's east side, also presented a logistical challenge. Our construction execution plan prioritized tree protection and an arborist was regularly on site to review and approve construction activities.

Working on an iconic and beloved historical building is a unique challenge and there is no blueprint for success.

The success of the Seattle Asian Art Museum renovation was the result of an integrated and collaborative effort between the owner, LMN Architects, our subcontractor partners and a wide range of highly qualified craft workers.

Matt Lubbers is a project executive at BNBuilders.

TREASURES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

and intent, modifications that occurred over the next century, and patterns of use that deserve to be retained in balance with the museum's expansion.

MODERNIZING THE ENTRY

The renovated entrance terrace now provides two universally accessible paths to the museum's front door, an important improvement over the existing design. Gently sloped and laid out in graceful curves, the symmetrical paths are inconspicuous and comfortable.

PRESERVING THE PARK'S INTERIOR

Early in the design process, we explored several different ideas for the landscape on the east side of the museum, including a small terrace area and more extensive work that would have restored the open lawn in the original Olmsted plan. Eventually, we arrived at an elegant and deliberately understated approach to preserve the park's trees and restore circulation throughout the park.

We designed this area to feel as if it had always been there. We addressed the poor transition from park to museum with human-scaled plantings, additional trees and subtle regrading similar to the original condition. The final design achieves continuity between historic and contemporary forms, preserves the park's grand trees, and restores a cherished footpath to provide intuitive circulation across the park.

SAVING TREASURED TREES

Trees are the heart and soul of Volunteer Park. Majestic cedars, beeches, hemlocks

and redwoods reign over the grounds, enchanting newcomers and regular visitors alike. When expansion of the Seattle Asian Art Museum was planned, Tree Solutions was engaged by the design team to ensure that these towering treasures would be preserved.

One of the objectives of the museum renovation was to add a climate-controlled environment that would aid in the preservation of Asian artwork. Our mission was to protect the existing treasures on the outside of the museum.

During design, Walker Macy and Tree Solutions coordinated closely to develop preliminary pavement details that could be adapted to a range of conditions in the field. Tree Solutions determined where the bulk of roots were present and where and how building expansion and accessible pathways could be sited safely. They bridged the gap between design and construction and were heavily engaged in on-site work.

Some of the tree-friendly solutions developed by the design team and Tree Solutions included:

- Preservation of a 53-inch-diameter beech tree that takes center stage for museum visitors, viewable through a wall of windows on the second floor of the addition.
- Creation of an ADA ramp using drilled piles for support rather than a traditional footing to minimize impacts to structural roots.
- Modification of finished grades during installation for the new gravel footpath through the park, which minimized root cuts.
- Removal of an asphalt path

beneath a 66-inch-diameter copper beech tree (a heritage tree that is the largest of its kind in Seattle). The soil beneath the tree had been compacted previously from maintenance vehicles and pedestrians. Following the path removal, the soil was decompacted using compressed air, while organic matter was incorporated throughout the area.

● During the project, the scope expanded to include path improvements beyond the museum's limit of work, mitigating for park real estate given over to the expanded museum footprint. Walker Macy upgraded existing paths in the greater Volunteer Park circulation system, realigned non-original paths to better align with the original Olmsted park plan, and added a new path where a historic one had been lost, working closely with Tree Solutions to limit impact to the park's large trees.

When the museum opens this month, it will sit amidst a beautiful natural setting that is the result of many hours of work aimed at making the landscape appear effortless and untouched. Take a moment to consider the trees, stroll through the park in bloom, and admire the way the museum has opened up to bring the experience of the park inside.

Lara Rose is a principal and landscape architect who leads Walker Macy's Seattle office. Paul Dickow is Walker Macy's marketing director. Holly Iosso is a senior consulting arborist at Tree Solutions.

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