



# Introduction

## PROJECT CHARGE

The Koch Memorial Forest Theatre (KMFT) is one of the most iconic open spaces on the campus, sitting at the eastern edge of the historic core of the University. Along with Battle Park and the Coker Arboretum, it plays a key role in defining the identity of the institution when approaching from the east.

Following on the 100th anniversary of the Koch Memorial Forest Theatre, this project seeks to develop the vision for the theatre's second century as a place that supports a wider array of programming, deepening its role in the life of the University as well as the larger community. While the theatre is currently used for a range of events across the year — including puppet theater, weddings, admissions events, fraternity/sorority events — the lack of infrastructure and accessibility make these events more difficult to manage and prevent the ability to hold a host of other desired performances, lectures, classes, and other gatherings.

The KMFT is a magical space seemingly disconnected from its modern context and deeply embedded in the patterns of its natural environment. But modern times have encroached with increased surrounding density, the sounds of traffic emanating from busy streets, and deteriorating systems that have not kept up with the times. The patterns of nature are also at risk as the canopy matures, as the screening vegetation has been shaded out, and as climate change impacts the forest itself. This effort deploys knowledge — both theatrical and horticultural — to make improvements that complement and ready the Theatre for another century.

These efforts will make the site function at its highest, restore the lush plant communities people remember, and make performers and audiences alike more effective and comfortable. Yet these improvements must never call attention to themselves nor can they alter the essential qualities of being in this unique space and environment. In the end it must be the same Forest Theatre, only better.



# Legacy

## LEGACY

The creation of the Forest Theater made a powerful statement about the relationship between UNC and its environment, giving physical form to the values present in the University community.

Landscape historian Linda Jewell describes, in her forthcoming work *Gathering on the Ground: A Voice for Landscape in the American Outdoor Theater*, how multiple progressive ideals came to be embodied in the creation of outdoor theaters in the United States early in the twentieth century:

*“Whether proposing an asymmetrical adaptation of a traditional theater or a classic amphitheater plan, designers relied on first-hand observations of the landscape to highlight distinctive natural features and take advantage of views into the surrounding landscape. Moreover, the American theaters also became physical manifestations of the ideals of the patrons, communities, and designers who supported two progressive ideas:*

- (1) Gathering together diverse members of a community enhanced civic life.*
- (2) Spending time in the landscape experiencing nature provided spiritual renewal of every person, rich or poor.”*

Today, university campuses across the country are diversifying and working to be more inclusive and welcoming to new communities. The UNC Chapel Hill University Master Plan has positioned the campus landscape and the integration of Arts Everywhere as positive forces in this evolution. This project contains the opportunity to position the renewal of the Theatre as both a restoration of original intentions, aligned with this powerful legacy and as a visionary move forward — activating the intersection of gathering, community, education, and the arts toward a more open, expressive, and inclusive campus.

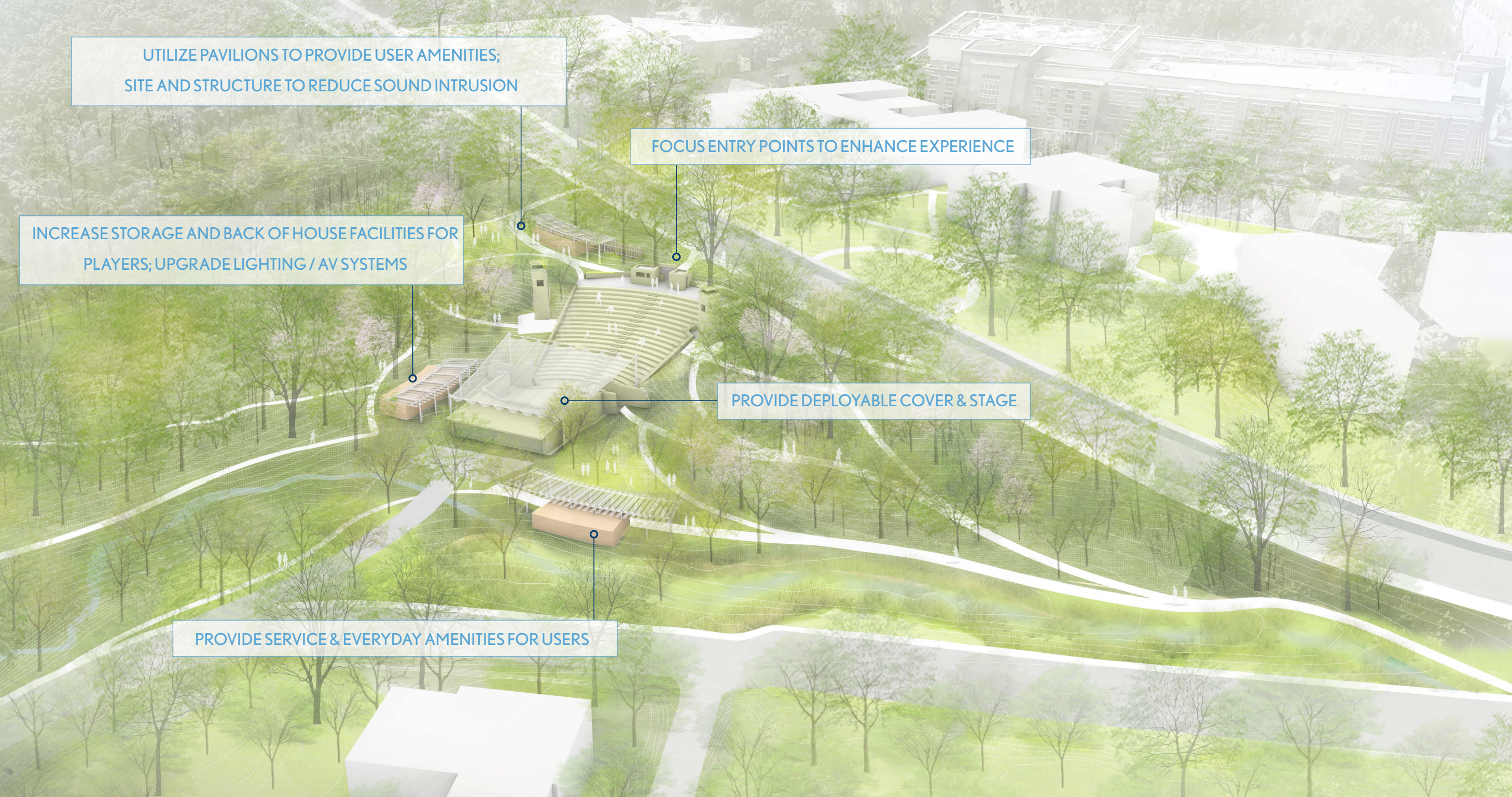


# Recommendations

## KOCH MEMORIAL FOREST THEATRE - GOALS

- The sense of nature around, above, and within the Theater is always close and embracing, never overpowered by other elements
- The built elements register, reinforce, and enhance the understanding of the surrounding landscape
- Permanent performance/event infrastructure is right-sized and flexible to encourage wider use, especially by smaller and more diverse performance groups, while not overbuilt just to support infrequent events
- Temporary and deployable elements enhance function without undermining the historic character
- The Theater supports the use of and enhances connections to Battle Park
- The Theater provides a space of respite for individuals and the spontaneous gathering of small groups
- The landscape welcomes all users and is not designed for a single function or group
- The arrival experience is clear and accessible; visually and physically
- External distractions of sound, movement, or light are mitigated
- A management and maintenance program supports both the stewardship of the landscape and the maintenance of build elements
- Active management by a single entity responsible for promotion and scheduling makes use simple and accessible
- A welcoming and flexible governance structure perpetuates the Theater's history as a site of progressive and experimental performance
- Improvements will respect and build upon the Theater's original 1918 design and its Depression-era improvements
- New elements complement but differentiated from existing conditions
- Change is reversible as much as possible





## KOCH MEMORIAL FOREST THEATRE - FOCUS AREAS

- Clarify the arrival experience by using buildings as thresholds and by reducing the number of entry points
- Improve the theatre infrastructure to support technology and performance equipment
- Increase BOH, storage, and amenities for players
- Provide spill-out space and amenities for patrons
- Separate the performance functions from the patron functions
- Provide comfortable seating options
- Improve accessibility and safety within the Theatre



# BUILDING PROGRAM

Renovation of the existing structures and limited new construction have been right sized to provide significant new space and necessary program support without overpowering the existing spatial character.

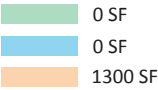
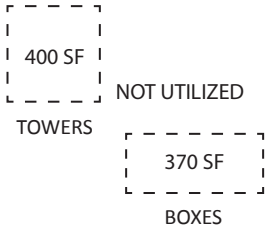
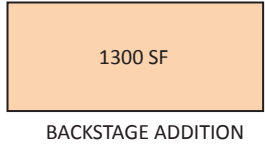
## LEGEND

- PUBLIC AMENITIES
- THEATRE FRONT OF HOUSE
- THEATRE BACK OF HOUSE

- A - 660 sf (public restrooms, utilities, storage)
- B - 890 sf (theater storage and support)
- C - 840 sf (box office, storage, office, public restrooms)

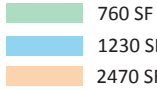
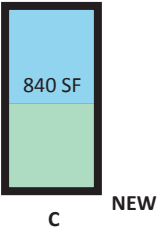
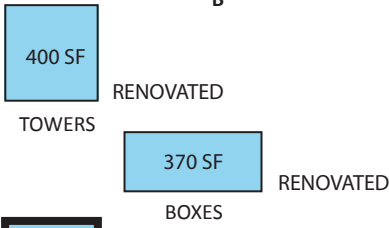
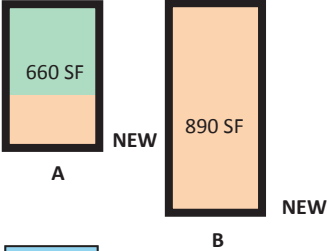
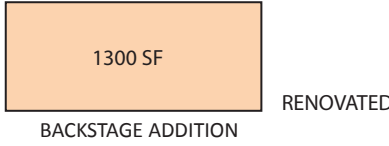
## EXISTING

RENOVATED AREA = 0 SF  
NEW AREA = 0 SF



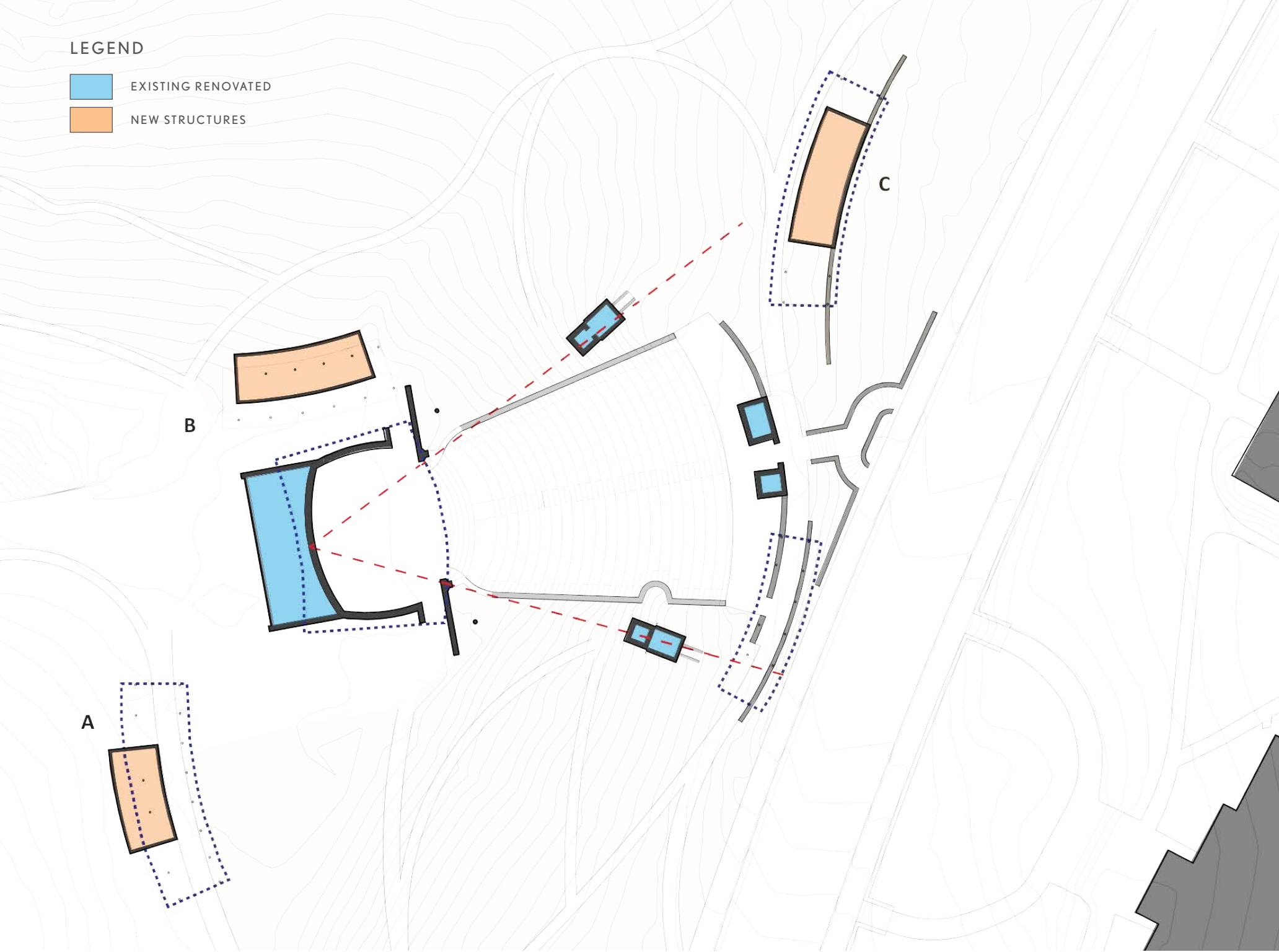
## PROPOSED

RENOVATED AREA = 2070 SF  
NEW AREA = 2390 SF



## LEGEND

- EXISTING RENOVATED
- NEW STRUCTURES





MANAGING CHANGE

To protect the authenticity and character of the Theatre, improvements should err on the side of deference and when at all possible should be reversible or demountable. The below improvements are considered in three categories related to their permanence.

PERMANENT	DEMOUNTABLE	TEMPORARY / PROVISIONAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New structures</li><li>• Accessible paths</li><li>• Safety features</li><li>• Handrails</li><li>• Drainage infrastructure</li><li>• Tower roofs</li><li>• New plantings</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stage canopy</li><li>• Stage surface / floor</li><li>• Sound / light rigging</li><li>• Wayfinding / signage</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seat cushions</li><li>• Sound attenuation</li><li>• Food service</li></ul>

KOCH MEMORIAL FOREST THEATRE

Project Overview By Category

RESTORE & MAKE ACCESSIBLE	ENHANCE PERFORMANCE & IMPROVE AMENITIES
<p><i>Implement a restorative upgrade to the theatre for improved access, safety, and performance infrastructure.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Theatre Improvements</li><li>• Power Capacity Improvments</li><li>• Infrastructure Improvements</li><li>• Accessible Pathways</li><li>• Country Club Sidewalk</li><li>• Planting Improvements</li><li>• Signage &amp; Wayfinding</li></ul>	<p><i>Create an enhanced performance venue and improve amenities, like bathrooms, ticketing, and food and beverage.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New Structures</li><li>• Theatre A/V / Sound Upgrade</li><li>• Pathways &amp; Driveway Repair</li><li>• Site Furnishings</li></ul>
ENABLE ALL WEATHER USE	
<p><i>Provide protection from natural elements and mitigation of noise pollution to augment performance types.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Deployable Stage Canopy</li><li>• Sound Attenuation</li></ul>	

KOCH MEMORIAL FOREST THEATRE

Component Cost Estimate

1. Theatre Improvements	\$1.5 - 1.9 m*
• Back of house retrofit	
• Box Office and Tower	
• General masonry repair	
2. New structures	\$4 - 4.6 m*
• Pavilion A (\$1.2 - 1.4 m)	
• Pavilion B (\$900 k - 1.1 m)	
• Pavilion C (\$1.4 - 1.8 m)	
• Utilities / site (\$400 k)	
3. Power capacity upgrades	\$270 - 330 k*
4. Infrastructure	\$180 - 220 k*
5. Theatre A/V/Sound	\$300 - 400 k*
6. Deployable Canopy	\$1.4 - 1.8 m*
7. Sound attenuation	\$270 - 330 k*
8. Parking improvements	\$270 - 330 k*
9. Pathways / drive paving	\$180 - 220 k*
10. Country Club Sidewalk	\$200 k*
11. Site Planting	\$300 - 400 k*
12. Signage and wayfinding	\$50-100 k*
13. Site furnishings	\$100 - 150 k*

\*Direct costs only - reflecting the ideal scope scenario

Note: Battle Creek stream restoration is not included in this project scope.

