

MOT 2035 Master Plan Vision Statement



MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE 2035

To maintain and present Miller Outdoor Theatre as one of the world's best free performing arts destinations

Planning Process

A - Concept Design

Develop design schemes to explore new configurations and program elements, including a “clean slate” scenario with no existing or constraining conditions within MOT’s boundary.

B - Final Master Plan

Refine and incorporate previous concept design schemes to align with Stakeholders’ input and commentary.

C - Cost Estimates

Evaluate the level of investment needed to implement the final Master Plan in the forecasted year of construction.

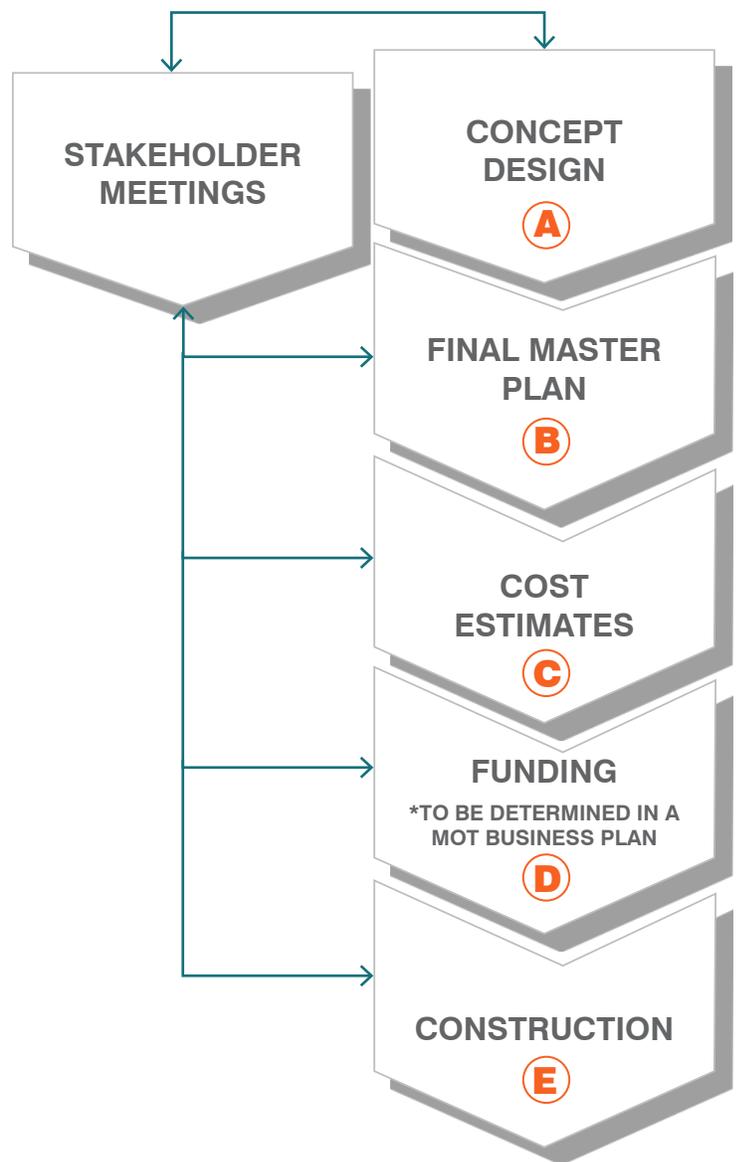
D - Funding

Determine sources of funds for the proposed initial and future improvements.

E - Construction

Phase construction so as not to severely disrupt MOT’s annual productions and performance schedule.

“Free does not mean there is no cost. Someone has to pay to defray the true cost.”



LEFT: FINAL STAKEHOLDER PRESENTATION | RIGHT: DIAGRAM OF PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

Miller Outdoor Theatre | HOUSTON, TX



MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE

Site: 7.5 Acres (Hermann Park, 445 Acres)
Theater: 100,000 SF
Seat Capacity: 1,705 (Fixed)
Seat Capacity: 6,000 - 9,000 (Lawn)
Patrons: 450,000 Annually
Budget: Approximately \$5.0 Million Annually
(Operations and Programming)
Context: Urban, Museum District, Medical Center, Rice University

MOT Design Factors

The Consultant Team considered that the challenges include not only a design solution for MOT, but also a higher level, organizational structure and management solution for its future. The design issues and questions listed below are categorized into functional factors that may help to inform decision-making at MOT.

REVENUE

- Can MOT be more closely tied to Hermann Park and Downtown seasonal events to expand patronage?
- How can MOT tailor itself to capitalize from these venues?
- Should MOT be available as a for-rent venue; does this conflict with its identity as a “open and free” public venue?
- What does MOT’s self-sustaining business model look like?

PROGRAM

- What is the “Miller Experience”?
- What are the supporting amenities, post-show activities for the next generation Miller Outdoor Theatre?

DESIGN

- How can MOT more effectively share common amenities of Hermann Park – access, parking, etc.?
- What should the ultimate audience capacity be?
- Should a smaller performance venue be added to MOT?
- Is the current ratio of lawn and fixed seating appropriate?

TECHNOLOGY

- What role does technology play in the “Miller Experience”?
- Should MOT become a model of sustainability?
- How might MOT be more connected to the natural environment and Houston’s cultural geography?

Key Challenges

A challenge with any Master Plan is to envision a place in the future that remains highly relevant to the ever changing environment and culture that surrounds it. In Houston, this momentum of change has accelerated to an unprecedented rate. More and more people from around the world call Houston home every month. How best to respond to these new patrons and to the next generation of MOT patrons? Below are a few important questions to be asked about the future for MOT.

1. **What does the Miller Outdoor Theatre aspire to be in 20 years?**
2. **What are the major barriers and opportunities seen today that work towards this aspiration?**
3. **What steps need to be taken to achieve this vision – how do we get there as a community and what role will each partner of the MOT play?**



FOURTH OF JULY AT MILLER OUTDOOR THEATRE

SWOT | Themes + Key Drivers

The SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis considered four major themes in the needs and wants of First Tier Stakeholders. These themes, elaborated below, also define the core values of MOT's and MTAB's mission statement to provide high quality and diverse programming to the local community at no charge.

Findings from the SWOT analysis were used as planning and design direction for the development of concept design schemes and final design

recommendations. The following pages summarize the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for each theme.

“There are 1,705 total fixed seats available. Up to 1/2 of these are distributed to the public and the remainder are provided to producers and promoters.”

A:

FREE + OPEN TO ALL

Free and open to all is a widely shared and strongly held value at MOT. Free performances are a founding value of MTAB's service to the public.

B:

DIVERSE PROGRAMMING

Diversity reflects MOT's essential role as being Houston's "window to the world". MOT's broad, cultural programming has been viewed as being the most diverse performing arts programming in the nation's most diverse city.

C:

HIGH-QUALITY

High-quality performances have been a hallmark at MOT for more than forty years.

D:

COMMITMENT TO THE ARTS + COMMUNITY

Commitment to the arts and community is represented by MOT's broad out-reach to the public in fostering the education and awareness of the performing and visual arts for all Houstonians.

“Integrate and leverage MOT more closely with other Houston First venues and attractions during city-wide, major events.”

“By 2025, audio and visual technology will be very different.”

SWOT | Themes + Key Drivers

A. FREE + OPEN TO ALL

STRENGTHS

- Free access + no controlled entry
- Informality is part of the experience
- Available to **ALL** patrons
- Popular attraction
- Serves a public need; a public amenity
- Takes the arts out of the tux, casual setting for the fine arts
- Carry-in food and beverages
- Diverse patronage
- MOT fulfills a public need

WEAKNESSES

- Vehicular parking and access
- Crowd control (egress, emergency, inclement weather)
- Current business model is not self-sustaining
- Open access increases maintenance of grounds
- Organizations / sponsors carry costs of production

OPPORTUNITIES

- Partnerships in facilities - office space, parking, event space
- MTAB's mission resonates with Houston's philanthropists
- Partnerships in funding, promotion through joint-ventures with TMC, Metro, Rice University, University of Houston
- Partnerships in programming, themed programs with museums

THREATS

- Vehicular parking and access
- Free is never free (Who Pays for MOT?)
- HOT subsidy approval, financial security
- Ticketing events
- Availability of the facility to the public through rentals and private events
- Open access threatens site security (i.e. vandalism, squatters, public safety)



PICNICKING AT MOT

B. DIVERSE PROGRAMMING

STRENGTHS

- Promotion of the cultural arts, not just the fine arts
- Programming reflects the diversity of Houston
- Enriching Houston's cultural vibrancy

WEAKNESSES

- MTAB's high quality standards in programming may be unreachable for certain performance groups
- Under-representing local art organizations
- Vetting organizations is based on quality and financial stability
- Limits joint-productions with the Theater District

“Since TMC aspires to be more community focused, it would be beneficial for shuttles to provide service between TMC to MOT events.”

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enriching the Quality of Life for all Houstonians
- Diversity in experience :: paid performances, VIP and donor passes
- Diversity in facilities :: varying sized stages, office space, dynamic seating, rental spaces for special events
- Partnerships in funding (philanthropic community, corporate sponsors, memberships, ticketing, promotion and advertisement)
- Subsidy to local art groups
- Houston First has multiple venues for joint productions (see Appendix page 89)

THREATS

- Under-representation of local art organizations
- Equal access must be available for all communities
- Jeopardizing MTAB's quality standards to expand local representation



PERFORMANCE AT MOT

“It will be immensely helpful to be able to house ‘technical rehearsals’ to assess lighting effects. This presents a challenge when rehearsals must occur during the day time.”

SWOT | Themes + Key Drivers

C. HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCTION

STRENGTHS

- World-class performances and staff
- Accommodations for canceled performances and rain days
- State-of-the-art stage equipment
- Organizations love to perform at MOT

WEAKNESSES

- MOT grounds are not as grand as its performances
- City of Houston’s noise ordinance limits time of productions
- Orientation of MOT limits production start times
- Proscenium theater space is not the same as a musical performance space (challenges organizations to tailor production to match the size of MOT)
- VIP, donor, sponsor accommodations and MOT experience
- High-quality food service is infeasible (limited customer base and access to parking)
- No protection from inclement weather
- Back of house facilities are deficient (storage, dressing rooms, bathrooms)
- Arrival to MOT is not welcoming and has a “neglected” feeling

“MOT’s security is a 24-hour, contracted service. Six security cameras are slated to be installed on the property and monitored by security staff in the designated guard room located off the south plaza.”

OPPORTUNITIES

- Technology and stage equipment upgrades
- Audience experience improvements (sight lines, food options, ticketing procedure, sound attenuation, broadcast productions, dynamic seating)
- Improve access (parking, valet, arrival plaza)
- Increase production time with solar shade or by changing orientation
- Fundamental questions of relocating or realigning MOT
- VIP, donor, sponsor accommodations (wine garden, viewing boxes, mingling space with performers)
- Establish identity of MOT in Hermann Park
- Parking and access improvements

THREATS

- Drifting from a performing arts venue
- Imperfections of MOT are seen as nuisances (noise, access, parking)
- Capacity to expand productions (time, funds, other park events, size of MOT)



PERFORMANCE AT MOT

D. COMMITMENT TO THE ARTS + COMMUNITY

STRENGTHS

- Family-oriented programming
- Stage experience for young performers and arts groups
- Builds patronage for younger organizations
- Equal access to the performing arts
- MOT is Houston's vessel for cultural expression
- MOT is an important connection to educate and grow audiences
- Enriching Houston's cultural vibrancy
- Represents local arts groups and organizations

WEAKNESSES

- Awareness (MOT is not Houston's flagship performing arts venue)
- Way-finding and promotion within and beyond Hermann Park
- Houston does not have festival grounds (MOT is not an ideal venue for festivals)

OPPORTUNITIES

- Enhance awareness and education in performing arts
- Joint-productions with surrounding attractions (zoo, museums, universities, and other local organizations)
- Cultural events, not just performing arts
- Educational hub for the performing and visual arts (HSPVA)
- Improve the quality of life for all of Houston

THREATS

- Adhering to original mission
- Trending amenities that are not appropriate for a performing arts theatre
- Accessibility to the community (physically and financially)
- Noise ordinance compliance
- Lack of local arts groups and organizations represented at MOT



LEFT: LATIN JAZZ JAM AT MOT | RIGHT: MOT FIXED SEATING

Olin Master Plan



MASTER PLAN FOR HERMANN PARK, 1995



LEFT: HERMANN PARK 1932 | RIGHT: HERMANN PARK 1993

Since its inception in 1914, the evolution of Hermann Park has been guided by an ever-changing vision of its future to fit the needs of an ever-changing city. One objective, however, has always been clear: to promote the quality of life in the city to a higher standard.

Being part of a larger park system, the MOT 2035 Master Plan supports the same design principles, or themes, of Hanna Olin's 1995 Master Plan for Hermann Park. These themes include access, restoration, park experience ("Life in the Park"), and stewardship. The particular goals of each theme are elaborated below.

ACCESS

- Reclaim center of park for public use
- Encourage regional transportation
- Promote multi-modal transportation
- Reduce congestion by dispersing parking lots
- Enhance the walking experience
- Separate conflicting forms of transportation

LIFE IN THE PARK

- Ensure the casualness of the Park
- Limit fenced areas
- Disperse new park facilities
- Expand range and type of security patrols
- Increase and diversify concession areas

RESTORATION

- Rehabilitate historic and natural resources for modern use
- A Ribbon of Live Oaks to wrap and define the edge of the Park
- Preserve the civic role of the Park
- A Green Sanctuary (more shade, more lawn, more water)

STEWARDSHIP

- Administer the Park
- Advise on development decisions
- Coordinate management and maintenance
- Follow a design standard
- Promote community outreach

Defining a Program

In addition to sharing the design principles of Olin’s 1995 Master Plan for Hermann Park, MOT 2035 identifies key issues and concerns expressed by the First Tier Stakeholders. The Design Team conducted numerous one-on-one interviews and meetings to understand Stakeholders’ unique perspectives of Miller Outdoor Theatre. Common issues that were shared by the Stakeholders are listed below. Generally, the comments expressed a need for improvements at MOT.

ISSUES + CONCERNS

- Back of house spaces
- Audience sight lines
- Crowd control devices
- Parking capacity
- Lawn seating
- Picnicking areas
- VIP and donor accommodations
- Noise pollution
- Accommodating smaller performance groups
- Patron’s safety and security
- Performer accommodations
- Loading dock
- Off-stage storage
- Food and drink (alcohol sales)
- Administrative offices
- Conference rooms
- Free access
- Way-finding and visibility in the park
- New attractions for patronage

Maintenance

Maintenance in particular was a shared concern of the Stakeholders. The MOT stage crew gave the Design Team a unique look at the challenges and everyday maintenance issues associated with operating MOT. The items listed below catalog the common issues and concerns the MOT staff encounters during performances and everyday use.

ISSUES + CONCERNS

- Injury due to steep side slopes on hill
- Grass is heavily worn at hill egress points
- Create designated entry to hill by ramp or stairway
- Grass recovery is patchwork and never becomes established
- Workout groups using hill for exercise degrades the grass further
- Crowd control accomplished by temporary barricades
- Shelter for inclement weather is needed
- Proscenium canopy is an attractive climbing surface and safety concern
- Building doors open into pedestrian paths
- HVAC and dust collection system are needed
- Mentally ill and homeless populations are common visitors

“Having an outdoor extension of a new Green Room would create a special ambiance where sponsors can meet and interact with performers.”

Levels of Improvement

The MOT 2035 Master Plan is a long-term vision. It also calls for immediate action to enhance current operations and accommodations. Three levels of improvement, or investment tiers, describe the implementation strategy for the MOT 2035 Master Plan. These tiers prioritize the proposed design features by their intention as described below.

IMMEDIATE IMPROVEMENTS
Enhance MOT’s performer accommodations and maintenance operations

INTERMEDIATE
Elevate MOT to provide a high quality patron experience

2035 VISION PLAN
Further integrate MOT and Hermann Park physical environments

Design Benchmarks

Two benchmarks define the extent of improvements for MOT and its surrounding park land. The first benchmark is 2025. All improvements that occur within this time frame are exclusive to the MOT activity boundary and focus on improvement of MOT facilities and grounds. These “on-site” improvements seek to enhance theatre operations, introduce multi-functionality to the theatre facility, and elevate patron and performer accommodations.

The second benchmark is 2035 which expands the scope of the MOT Master Plan to include the adjacent area south of MOT. These “off-site” improvements focus on access and connectivity to Hermann Park and more closely integrating existing park amenities with MOT.

“All improvements proposed for MOT and its immediate grounds are forecasted to be completed by 2025.”

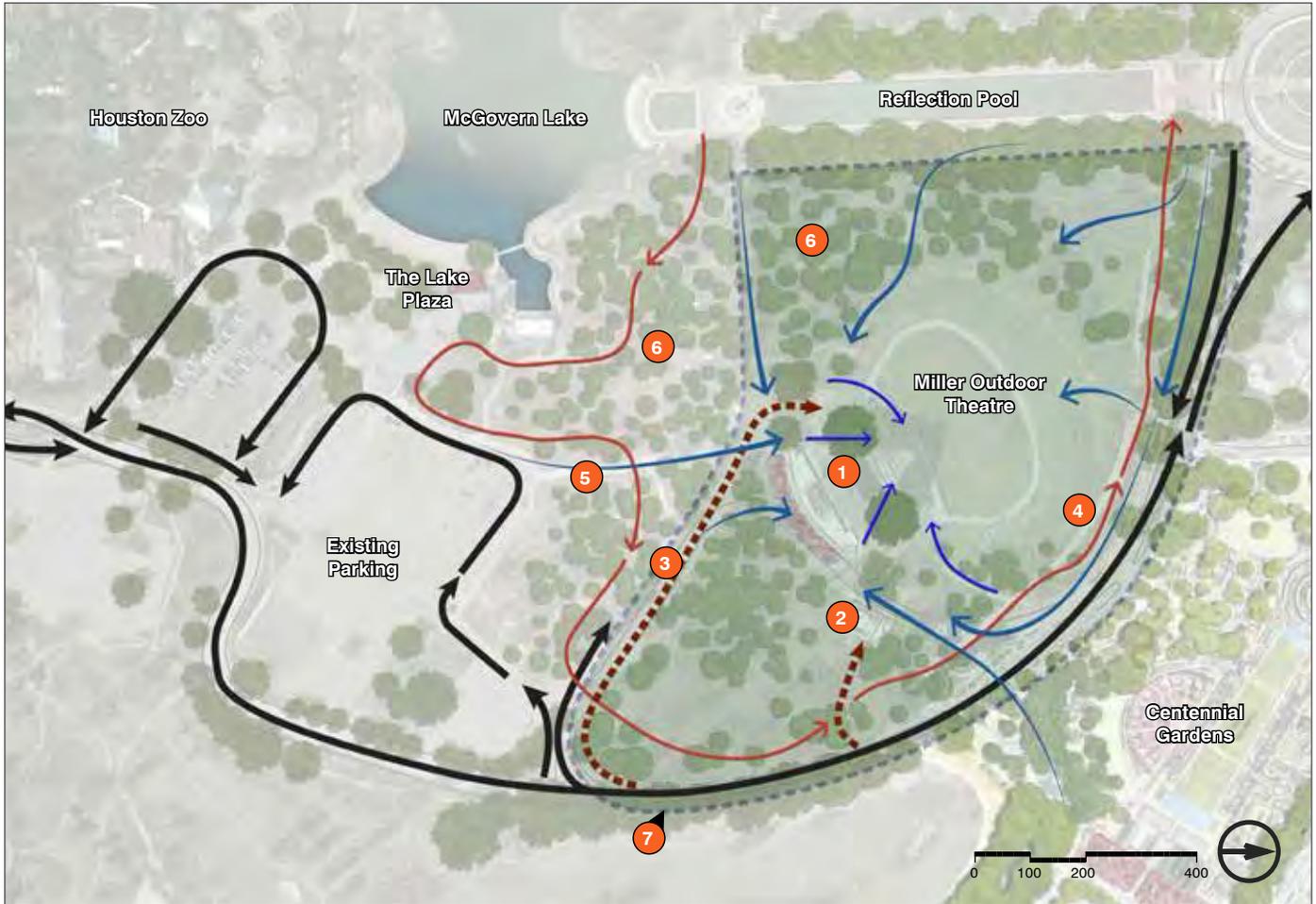
“Is a portable band shell possible at MOT?”

Existing Conditions



HERMANN PARK EXISTING CONDITIONS

ENLARGED AREA



LEGEND

- 1. MOT Stage House
- 2. MOT Concession Area
- 3. Parking Lot (66 spaces)
- 4. Train Stop
- 5. Playground
- 6. Picnicking Areas
- 7. MOT Activity Boundary

- Vehicular Route
- Loading Route
- Park Train Route
- Pedestrian Route

MOT is somewhat isolated at the northeast quadrant of the Park within Hermann Park Drive. MOT’s dead-end parking lot acts as a cleaver and interrupts the park experience between MOT and the Lake Plaza.

Truck access and parking are currently inadequate and cause conflicts with the various modes of transportation, including the miniature train route.

The concession area, which is only open during MOT performances, is separated from the center of the park and does not have functional affinity with the other park features such as the Reflection Pool or Lake Plaza. Site access to MOT is informal and organic; although not a negative, no “front door” entry experience exists at MOT.

The following conceptual schemes illustrate ideas on how these issues may be resolved and implemented.