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Davies Symphony Hall Entitlement Process Update – August 2024

In September 2023, the San Francisco Symphony publicly shared that we had submitted a proposal that month to the San Francisco Planning Department to begin the entitlement process for potential renovations to Davies Symphony Hall. The project exploration contemplates changes to both the inside and outside of Davies Symphony Hall with the goal of making the San Francisco Symphony’s home base a more publicly accessible, transparent, and inviting space that can better serve the San Francisco and Bay Area communities far into the future and elevate the concert experience for both audiences and performers.

As this proposal proceeds through the entitlement process and additional materials and architectural renderings are produced, the Symphony is continuing to provide updated information and background on this project. Once complete, securing entitlements will allow the Symphony to make improvements to Davies Symphony Hall at some point in the future, but the organization is not yet filing any building permit applications or embarking on or announcing any major renovation projects beyond completion of the entitlement process.

What is the entitlement process?

The entitlement process is a process with the City’s Planning Department that is required for any potential modernization project to proceed with a development proposal, and it is expected to take approximately two years. It will also entail working with the City’s Historic Preservation Commission on the new design.

Davies Symphony Hall opened in 1980 and, as it approaches 50, the Symphony is exploring ways to enhance the physical space to make the building more publicly accessible, welcoming, and transparent; increase performance capabilities; and improve backstage and support spaces for our musicians. By submitting an application with the San Francisco Planning Department now, the Symphony is taking the necessary steps to start the public planning process and technical analysis for a potential renovation project in the coming years.

This effort is fully funded by private contributions offered to the San Francisco Symphony several years ago. These gifts did not supersede other contributions to the organization and the San Francisco Symphony is not actively fundraising for a renovation project right now.

Why is the San Francisco Symphony exploring renovation options? And what are the goals of this project?

As the San Francisco Symphony plans for future, the organization is exploring ways to strategically and thoughtfully expand the kinds of concerts and content it presents and enhance the ways that the San Francisco and Bay Area communities engage with the Symphony and Davies Symphony Hall.

If the Symphony does move forward with a renovation to Davies Symphony Hall in the future, the intent of these designs is to make Davies Symphony Hall more welcoming and accessible to patrons, bringing more foot traffic to the arts corridor and activating the ground floor along Van Ness Avenue, Hayes, Grove, and Franklin streets. The proposed designs also vastly expand the Symphony's back-of-house and musician support spaces for an improved experience for Symphony musicians and visiting artists. These potential changes are intended to be an investment in the experience for both our artists and our patrons to further uplift San Francisco's performing arts scene as a hub of energy and engagement, allowing the San Francisco Symphony to achieve new levels of creativity and connect more meaningfully with patrons and the public.

Arts and culture are a vital part of strengthening neighborhoods and cities, and the proposed designs by Mark Cavagnero Associates will contribute to the ongoing revitalization of Civic Center and the city as a whole and help energize this area of the city—for residents, the public, and those attending performances—especially after business hours when there is often less activity.

The Symphony is looking at many different possibilities with the intention to better serve its community, as well as the Organization's artistic, educational, audience development, and financial goals in the future.

Who are the architects involved?

The Symphony has been working with two acclaimed architecture firms on the proposals that were submitted to the Planning Department: San Francisco-based firm Mark Cavagnero Associates, who are responsible for designing the overall renovation and addition of the lobbies, exterior envelope, new recital hall, an outdoor performance venue, and backstage support spaces of Davies Symphony Hall; and architect Frank Gehry and his firm, Gehry Partners, LLP, who are creating new designs for the interior of Davies Symphony Hall's concert hall.

What is the timeline?

The San Francisco Symphony is working on completing the entitlement process, which is expected to take up to two years from submission in September 2023. Once complete, the entitlements will allow the Symphony to make improvements to Davies Symphony Hall at some point in the future, but the organization is not yet filing any building permit applications or embarking on or announcing any major renovation projects beyond completion of the entitlement process. The Symphony enthusiastically looks forward to sharing details about the plans as they evolve in the future.

About Mark Cavagnero Associates

[Mark Cavagnero Associates](#) has a decades-long commitment to designing buildings that support and foster the civic life of San Francisco, which is expressed in the proposed project for the San Francisco Symphony. MCA develops design solutions that serve their clients, San Francisco

neighborhoods, and the people of the Bay Area, aiming to craft civic spaces that can stand the test of time and generate long-term benefits for communities. The firm has contributed landmark projects to the Bay Area’s cultural ecosystem, including the SFJAZZ Center, Diane B. Wilsey Center for Opera, and the Ute and William K. Bowes, Jr. Center for Performing Arts, which—like the San Francisco Symphony—are in the city’s Civic Center.







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