



## Riverfront Park & Ascend Amphitheater

*The Cumberland River itself becomes the stage for this public park with river activity -- barges, the occasional riverboat and the constant flow downstream - all contributing to the spontaneous dance across the waters, which draws the attention of the park visitors as its spectators.*

### **BACKGROUND**

The newest 11-acre addition to Riverfront Park has a rich and varied history, from rail lines to most recently functioning as the site of the Nashville Thermal Transfer Plant. The thermal plant was the first waste-to-energy facility in the United States when it was established in 1972. It was torn down in 2004 and environmentally mitigated soon after. Its resurgence as a public open space prompted much conversation in the Nashville community. Over the years, the site was suggested for multiple mixed-use office developments, a baseball park and a music venue.

In 2011, Metro Nashville and Davidson County created an open space plan that officially identified the site as an important addition to the city's open space. In 2012, the South of Broadway Master Plan was commissioned, which reviewed the planning in downtown Nashville in the aftermath of the 2010 flood and the impending completion of the Music City Center convention center which occupied six blocks within the south portion of downtown. Through those two very public community processes, the highest and best use of the Thermal site was once and for all determined to be public open space. A concept plan was developed as a part of that study and in December, 2013, a team of project managers, designers and construction managers was selected to move that vision forward.

### **DESIGN INSPIRATION**

#### *RIVER MORPHOLOGY*

With the prominence of this particular site on the banks of the Cumberland River and its location within a bend of the river, the language of the Cumberland River itself became the design muse for the park and amphitheater. Inspired by the morphology of the river, through the carved out limestone bluffs and remnant sand bars along its bends, and the industrial history of the river, evident from viewpoints within the park, these elements came together to form a design vocabulary that would be referenced throughout the design process.

Design references to the river morphology include the sinuous curves throughout the park, the multi-coursed limestone walls and building face, and the earth-toned pavements utilizing regional aggregates. The site walls and architecture are intended to feel as if they are being carved out of the earth. The river industry, manifested at this segment of the river through abandoned gantry cranes from the barge industry and steel structured bridges, becomes evident in the amphitheater steel skeleton, the open roof structures of the pavilions and in the rebar fence and railing designs throughout the park.

#### *PARK FIRST*

It was the longtime desire of city leaders and the community for this site to be first and foremost a park. The "Park First" theme permeated the design direction throughout and evokes the feeling of a "front porch" for the city sitting along the banks of the Cumberland.



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Park First becomes especially evident in the open back to the amphitheater structure allowing for views through the structure toward the downtown skyline beyond. Additional pivoting wind screens allow for an even more open flow of visual sight lines.

All of the amphitheater accessory buildings create a permeable front to the city streets with sliding gates that facilitate an ebb and flow into the site on a daily basis, with gates sliding closed only during ticketed events.

Over-scaled customized swings, which marry the regional precast material and the industrial steel references, are strategically located to provide focused views down the Cumberland River and toward the main flow of the greenway path for people walking through the park.

A primary greenway path slips through the park, serving as a connection to city greenways and parks both north, south, east and west of this pivotal location.

### *MUSIC VENUE & EXPERIENCE*

Early in the design process, the design team met with venue operators and consultants, and used the expertise from the amphitheater's own nationally acclaimed acoustician and theater planner to determine the required parameters for a world-class outdoor music venue fitting of Nashville's Music City brand. In order to equally accommodate acoustic and amplified music, Ascend Amphitheater provides a state-of-the-art electronic shell that allows for acoustic performance through small microphones over the orchestra to feed advanced digital signal processing and loudspeakers to create the same reflections an orchestra would hear from a physical hall. It is one of only a handful of outdoor electronic shells in the world.

The amphitheater provides seating for approximately 6,800 made up of 2,200 removable chairs in the reserved seating sections near the stage, a lawn capacity of 4,500 and approximately 100 premium box seats between the reserved seating and lawn. The seating bowl takes full advantage of the approximately 45-foot grade change over the site, each seat providing a very intimate concert experience and excellent sightlines with a maximum of 300 feet from the stage to the back of the seating area. The 55-foot x 100-foot stage provides a 45-foot clear height to the rigging structure and a full catwalk system to expedite show rigging for load-ins.

Operators and industry experts noted that one of the top drivers for artists determining whether to play a particular venue is the artist experience. The artist wing of the amphitheater supports five well-appointed dressing rooms of varying sizes with private baths. In addition, "The Alley" is an artist lounge area where a private outdoor deck is provided. "The Mockingbird Cafe" has a full kitchen and provides dining for the stage crew or a small event. The 2500-square-foot "Riverfront Room" sits below the stage facing the park green with an adjacent outdoor, natural stone terrace to accommodate meet-and-greet events with artists or private community events.

*"Ascend Amphitheater and Riverfront Park transform a prime piece of downtown real estate with great music and beautiful green space for all of our residents and visitors to enjoy."*

*-Mayor Karl Dean*

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### LEED/SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS

- 2,800-square-foot green roof
- 400,000-gallon rain harvesting tank
- Geothermal heating and cooling system
- Geothermal ice machines
- 1,350 square feet of solar panels on the roof
- 267 trees representing over 38 different species and will achieve Level 1 arboretum status
- 48 bike parking spaces and a bike repair station
- 9,000 square feet of permeable paving
- 2,705,500 tons of recycled content through April
- 2,895 tons of crushed rock used onsite
- Solar-powered media charger

*\*Currently on track to receive LEED Gold Certification*

### ASCEND AMPHITHEATER

- A custom electronic orchestra shell allowing the Nashville Symphony and other musical acts to feel right at home while looking up at the stars
- State-of-the-art sound system with the flexibility to provide articulate, studio quality sound to all patrons in the park, be it 50 or 6,500
- 2,200 temporary fixed seats, 100 premium box seats, and 4,500 lawn capacity.
- Road connections for additional sound equipment through stage points and towers to accommodate any band that wishes to play the Amphitheater
- Extensive fiber-optic based video infrastructure allowing an easy connection for broadcasting Amphitheater events
- Back of house and motor coach connection capabilities allowing all performers to see and hear the activities on the stage
- 2,500-square-foot community event room facing the Green side of the amphitheater with a 1,600-square-foot outdoor terrace.
- 5,000-square-foot artist wing
- 3,400 square-foot kitchen and crew dining facilities
- 100 foot x 55 foot stage

### RIVERFRONT PARK

- 11 acres of park space that incorporates gardens, gathering areas, and lawns for events and others activities.
- Over 1-mile of paths
- Provides greenway connection to Rolling Mill Hill under Korean Veterans Boulevard
- 13,000-square-foot dog park
- 18,000-square-foot ornamental garden along the river with plant material labeled to botanic gardens standards
- 25 foot wide, 1,000 foot long promenade along First Avenue that incorporates a two-way protected bike lane
- 45 foot tall, large- scale, public art sculpture by artists Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan of Seattle, WA located at the terminus of Demonbreun along the promenade
- Restrooms and concessions located within the park
- Includes a variety of activities such as two custom ping pong tables, nine custom swings, two half-court basketball courts, game boards for chess and checkers, and active workout area including 11-station fitness circuit
- Public Wi-Fi available in selected areas of the park
- 1.5 acre event lawn on the north side of the amphitheater