



## **DELACORTE PUBLIC RESTROOM RENOVATIONS AND SITE ACCESSIBILITY IMPROVEMENTS**

### **PROJECT SUMMARY**

August 2023

### **Project Objectives**

The Central Park Conservancy's (CPC) project to reconstruct the Delacorte public restroom and improve accessibility in the surrounding area is going hand in hand with the Public Theater's reconstruction of the theater facility itself (slated to start construction this fall 2023). CPC will be reconstructing the public restroom, which serves as the theater's primary restroom facility, and the network of paths in this section of the park to create multiple accessible routes to the theater and restroom. By adjusting grades on these paths to comply with ADA accessibility standards, we will also improve accessibility to other park locations and facilities, including the Great Lawn, Swedish Cottage, and Shakespeare Garden. Although accessibility is the primary objective, the project will also serve to repair, replace and upgrade park infrastructure in conjunction with regrading and repaving paths as is typical for a park landscape restoration project.

For the restroom reconstruction, the Public Theater's design consultants, Ennead and Li Saltzman Architects, will be completing the design work and CPC will bid out and oversee the construction.

### **Background/Existing Conditions**

#### Public Restroom

Constructed in 1912 near the southwest corner of the Old Croton Reservoir, the restroom predated the Delacorte Theater and originally backed onto the western wall of the masonry reservoir. Early on it was referred to as the Belvedere comfort station for its proximity to Belvedere Castle. The decades that followed saw a transformation of the surrounding park landscape and use, beginning in 1916 with the addition of the terraced Shakespeare Garden built into the slope between the Swedish Cottage and the Belvedere. A far more dramatic change of context would follow in the mid-1930s with the demolition and filling of the obsolete reservoir and its replacement by the Great Lawn. In 1962, the Delacorte Theater was built on the east side of the restroom building, in the landscape at the southwest corner of the Great Lawn, to serve as a home to the Public Theater's Shakespeare in the Park program.

Described in the Parks Department's 1912 Annual Report as *"of English Gothic design, constructed of light rubble granite, trimmed with light stone, with slate roof,"* the building as completed housed men's and women's restrooms and attendants' rooms on the ground floor, with a boiler room and tool storage in the basement. The primary building material is rusticated granite masonry set on an ashlar granite water table. Limestone was used as decorative secondary material for window enframements, door enframements, coping stones, roof gable finials, and the gutter course at the eaves of the roof. The one-story public restroom has a gray slate roof finished with copper ridges, flashing, and gutters. Historically, the building had multi-light leaded glass windows, Collegiate Gothic style entry door and transom assemblies, and wood attic louvers. Based on historic photographs, decorative Collegiate Gothic style lighting fixtures were originally installed at the transom of the main entry door on the west elevation and atop the rusticated granite piers at the north and south elevations.

The public restroom has undergone multiple alterations, renovations, and selective removals over the past century, although documentation for when most of this work happened doesn't exist. The most significant alteration was the removal of two (2) center limestone window bays and the rusticated granite below to create a new masonry opening for a new hollow-metal paired door assembly at the east elevation. Next was the removal and replacement of the original window and door assemblies throughout. Another noticeable alteration was the removal of three (3) of the four (4) original decorative limestone finials at the northwest, northeast, and southwest gables. Lastly, the historic Collegiate Gothic style lighting fixtures were removed throughout and are now replaced with wall mounted flood lights at each of the four (4) entry doors to the public restroom.

### Site Work and Accessibility

The central portion of the project site, where two accessible routes to the restroom will be created, is located just north of the 79th St Transverse Road and east of the West Park Drive. The current configuration of the site is the result of several additions and modifications that occurred over a century of park history. The first addition to the landscape was the Swedish Cottage in 1877, followed by construction of the restroom in 1912. The Shakespeare Garden was completed in 1916, and in the 1930s, the Great Lawn was built to the east of the site, replacing the receiving Reservoir (that had in turn been replaced by the current Reservoir to the north). When the Delacorte Theater was completed in 1962, the east-west path between the park drive and the Great Lawn was added to provide a more direct route to the theater (this path is not intended to be regraded as an accessible route, but instead to retain its existing vertical alignment which is designed to accommodate large trucks to service events at the Great Lawn and the theater).

While the paths included in the scope of this project vary in terms of condition of paving and curbs, none of them currently provide an ADA-accessible route to the Delacorte facilities, since they exceed the standards for linear slope, cross pitch, or both. In addition, some sections of the asphalt paths intended to be regraded cross the bridle trail, interrupting the asphalt surface with sections of stone screenings which are difficult to maintain to a precise grade. Many of the landscapes through which the paths travel include large, mature trees, which will be assessed and taken into account when developing plans for regrading.

## **Project Goals**

### Public Restroom

- Restore the building's exterior consistent with the historic design
- Update MEP systems to reduce carbon footprint of the building
- Improve restroom accessibility to meet jurisdictional requirements and best practices
- Maximize fixture count in the women's room by reconfiguring interior partitions

### Site Accessibility Improvements

- Create multiple accessible routes to the theater and public restroom facility from West Park Drive and the West 81<sup>st</sup> Street park entrance

- Improve accessibility to adjacent park locations and facilities including the Great Lawn, Swedish Cottage, and Shakespeare Garden

## **Scope of Work**

### Building Envelope

- Selective replacement and repairs to the slate roof
- Replacement of the gutter system
- Restoration of the exterior masonry, including cleaning, repointing, and replacement of lost or damaged elements
- Structural repairs
- Replacement of windows and doors based on historic photographs

### Interior Renovation

- Reconfiguration of the building interior, including removal of the attendants' rooms and the non-original service entrance and stair on the east side, to accommodate an increase in the fixture count for women, which are consistently stretched beyond capacity during performances at the Delacorte Theater
- Full replacement of interior fixtures, finishes, and lighting

### Building Systems

- New mechanical (heating and ventilation), electrical, and plumbing systems
- New life safety system as required by code.

### Site Accessibility Improvements

- Regrading and repaving of paths
- ADA accessibility ramps and handrails in required locations
- Repair, replace, and upgrade park infrastructure in conjunction with regrading and repaving paths