

500 FIFTH AVENUE NORTH

NEWS ABOUT THE FUTURE HEADQUARTERS / ISSUE #10 / SUMMER 2008

A quarterly newsletter to keep the community informed about progress on the new Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation headquarters.



Foundation leaders were joined by Mayor Greg Nickels (right) at the groundbreaking for our new campus.

It's Official: Construction of New Campus Is Underway

Foundation staff, neighbors, local grantees, and construction partners celebrated breaking ground on July 22.

[Read more](#)

Excavation Has Begun at 500 Fifth Avenue North

Digging a big hole takes time, trucks, and traffic adjustments. Here's what neighbors can expect.

[Read more](#)

Diseased Trees Will be Replaced

The London plane trees on Fifth Avenue North, cut down by city order, will be replaced.

[Read more](#)

Update: Visitor Center

Though the outside looks inviting now, the exhibits won't be ready for visitors until 2011.

[Read more](#)

Keeping Up With Construction

Sellen Construction Bulletins keep you informed about the work on the site and its expected impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

[Read more](#)

It's Official: Construction of New Campus Is Underway

On July 22, 2008, ground was officially broken—with real shovels and a symbolic pile of dirt—for the new campus of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Two office buildings are scheduled to open at the end of 2010, along with a visitor center that will open to the public in 2011.

Foundation co-chair Melinda French Gates thanked future neighbors in Queen Anne for "putting up with an even messier Mercer Mess" during the two and a half years ahead. By then, she said, "this place will look like something you can be proud of."

Please visit our Web site for details about the [groundbreaking event](#).

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Excavation Has Begun at 500 Fifth Avenue North

The big dig for our new headquarters began in August 2008. Excavation and dirt removal is scheduled through February 2009. This six-month excavation will affect local traffic more than any other phase of construction.

We appreciate your patience during this messy but necessary operation. Our 35-foot-deep hole will be transformed in a couple of years into an eco-friendly campus for employees who are proud to work in the heart of Seattle.

Planning ahead for safety and traffic congestion

We encourage neighborhood drivers to check weekly construction bulletins (see story below) for traffic alerts.

Please be assured that we are taking all possible steps to minimize inconvenience to the public—including queuing trucks on site (rather than on surrounding streets), taking measures to control dust, and using flaggers to direct trucks and ensure pedestrian safety.

Some questions drivers frequently ask

How will excavation affect local traffic?

On the busiest days, up to 120 trucks will enter and leave the site between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. The location of truck entrance and exit gates will change frequently as different areas are excavated.

Where are the trucks going?

Dirt-removal trucks will travel via I-5 to three transfer sites in south Seattle.

What streets will be affected?

When planning alternate routes, remember that the construction site boundaries are Mercer Street

(north) to Harrison Street (south), between Fifth Avenue North (west) and Aurora Avenue and Broad Street (east).

What about pedestrians?

Sidewalks will be open during construction except for brief interruptions. Pedestrians will be re-routed, for example, while tower cranes are installed.

How big is this dig?

About 500,000 cubic yards of soil will be removed from the construction site. (A cubic yard weighs about 1.5 tons.) The deepest part of the hole will be 35 feet.

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Diseased Trees Will be Replaced

The London plane trees lining the east side of Fifth Avenue North were, sad to say, diseased. The city arborist considered them dangerous to the public in their weakened state and required us to remove them.

Many of us miss the texture, color, motion, and shade they added to the busy street. Before our new campus opens, we will plant new street trees to replace the ones lost to disease.

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Update: Visitor Center to Open in 2011



Since the groundbreaking in late July, we've received many inquiries about the visitor center's opening date. Although the outside wall along Fifth Avenue North looks inviting with photos of the foundation's work in the United States and around the world, the center's exhibits will not be ready until 2011. The shell for the center was completed in July, just after Seattle Center's new public parking garage opened.

We're busy planning exhibits that will spotlight the work being done by foundation grantees. We appreciate the public interest and look forward to welcoming many visitors to the center when it opens in 2011.

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Keeping Up With Construction

Interested in more details about upcoming construction work? You can stay up to speed by reading bulletins posted by [Sellen Construction](#), the project's general contractor.

The bulletins help our future neighbors know what to expect and when to plan for changes around the project site, including street closures.

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Keeping Our Neighbors Informed

We want to make it easy for you to find out more about the campus project.

More information is available on our [Web site](#).

Questions or comments about the project may be emailed to 500Fifth@gatesfoundation.org, or you may contact us at:

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