



## World's largest Chihuly exhibit breaks ground in Seattle

By VANESSA HO, SEATTLEPI.COM STAFF  
Updated 06:07 p.m., Tuesday, August 23, 2011

The largest Chihuly exhibit in the world broke ground at Seattle Center Tuesday, with a design that calls for a garden, nine exhibit rooms, and the Northwest glass artist's biggest sculpture to date: A crowning installation measuring 4,500 square feet.

"This is truly a gift to our city," Seattle Center director Robert Nellams said at the celebratory ground-breaking. The event, which featured mimosas and goofy poses of shovel-wielding officials in hard hats, drew nearly 300 people.

"Seattle Center is about delighting, inspiring and bringing people together..." Nellams said. "This project will help us to do that."

Called "Chihuly Garden and Glass," the 1.5-acre exhibit is scheduled to open in spring of next year, in time for the Seattle Center's 50th anniversary on April 21, 2012. Located at the site of the former Fun Forest amusement park, it will feature a cafe, patio, 50-seat theater, 16,000-square-foot garden, and a 12,000-square-foot indoor pavillion.

The ground-breaking followed last year's loud debate over public space at Seattle Center. Saddled with budget woes, the city had embraced the exhibit, which is expected to bring 400,000 visitors and \$1.1 million in revenue to Seattle a year. The privately owned Space Needle is funding the project.

But many people worried that the paid-entry exhibit would shut out poorer people and eat up open space. It's predicted that local residents will account for only 30 percent of the exhibit's yearly attendance.

In a nod to those concerns, the Space Needle plans to invest \$2 million for a playground at the Center that will be open to all. It will also fund admission and transportation for Seattle Public School 8th graders, as a commitment to public arts education.

In vying for the old Fun Forest spot, the Chihuly exhibit had edged out KEXP, a decision that had disappointed the alternative radio station's many fans. But the city has found a way to bring the station's operations to the Northwest Rooms at Seattle Center.

"The idea of a world-class and world-renowned art exhibition of one of our own, Dale Chihuly, here at the Center was a lifetime opportunity for us," said Space Needle chairman Jeff Wright, whose family owns the iconic structure.

Wright said partnerships and community interests had helped strike a "harmonious chord."

Chihuly said the project represented his largest and most comprehensive exhibit to date.

"It's the most important day of my career," the Tacoma-born artist told the ground-breaking crowd. He offered a quick sketch of his project but was otherwise a man of few words.

The attraction will have nine rooms, each featuring one to 25 glass installations. The garden will have 10 to 12 glasses pieces. A glass house will feature Chihuly's largest sculpture ever, a 4,500-square-foot installation measuring 43 feet high.

"So, thanks again for coming," he said. "See you here next spring."

A fact sheet showed the exhibit will feature Chihuly's famous chandeliers, glass forests, mille fioris, ikebanas and towers.

The Space Needle has said the Seattle project will cost \$12 to \$15 million to develop, and that it will be fully paid by private funds.

Visit [seattlepi.com](http://seattlepi.com)'s home page for more Seattle news. Contact Vanessa Ho at 206-448-8003 or [vanessaho@seattlepi.com](mailto:vanessaho@seattlepi.com), and follow her on Twitter as [@vanessaho](https://twitter.com/vanessaho).

**Need A Cash Loan Today?**

Get Up to \$2500 In Mins, Even If You Have Bad Credit.  
[www.SecureLinkCorp.com](http://www.SecureLinkCorp.com)

**Best Money Market Funds**

Find the Highest Yields In the US. Compare the Trusted  
[MMA.Bankrate.com](http://MMA.Bankrate.com)

**#1 Penny Stock Newsletter**

News and Views on the Hottest OTC Stocks. Join Now Free!  
[WallStreetsHottestStocks.com](http://WallStreetsHottestStocks.com)

[Ads by Yahoo!](#)

The banner features the WFP logo on the left, the text "Hunger Crisis in the Horn of Africa" in large blue letters, and "You can save lives." below it. A red "DONATE NOW" button is on the right. The background includes a map of the Horn of Africa with labels for Ethiopia and Kenya, and a photo of several children's faces.

**Reader Services:** [My account](#) | [Mobile](#) | [RSS feeds](#) | [Follow us on Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [E-mail newsletters](#) | [Corrections](#) | [Site index](#)

**Local services:** [Air conditioning contractors in Seattle](#) | [Car dealerships in Seattle](#) | [Cleaning services in Seattle](#) | [Family doctors in Seattle](#) | [Furniture stores in Seattle](#) | [Injury attorneys in Seattle](#) | [New car dealers in Seattle](#) | [Real estate agents in Seattle](#) | [Real estate attorneys in Seattle](#) | [Restaurants in Seattle](#)

**Company Info:** [Advertise online](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Send us tips](#) | [Job openings](#) | [About the P-I](#) | [Hearst Corp.](#) | [Terms of use](#) | [Privacy policy](#) | [About our ads](#)

**Advertising Services:** [SEO by LocalEdge](#) | [PPC Management by Metrix4Media](#)

[Send comments to newmedia@seattlepi.com](mailto:newmedia@seattlepi.com)

© 2011 Hearst Communications Inc.  
**HEARST** newspapers

