

Amazon opens plant-filled 'The Spheres' buildings

Internet giant Amazon on Monday, 29 January, opened its plant-packed The Spheres buildings in its home city of Seattle. The Spheres are the newest addition to Amazon's "urban campus" in Seattle, and are billed as a workplace "more like a tropical rainforest in the clouds than an office".



The Spheres, by Ron Cogswell, [Flickr](#), CC BY 2.0

The structures, which look like giant glass and steel balls, house more than 40,000 plants and include features such as treehouse meeting rooms, a river and waterfalls.

"Our goal with The Spheres was to create a unique gathering place where employees could collaborate and innovate together, and where the Seattle community could gather to experience biodiversity in the centre of the city," John Schoettler, Amazon's vice president of global real estate and facilities, said in a statement.

"We are thrilled to officially open the doors."

The Spheres were designed to provide a link to nature typically lacking in urban offices, and one which studies suggest inspires creativity and might even enhance brain functioning, according to Amazon.

A visitor centre called The Understory will be open to the public and provide insight into the science, engineering and plants at the facility.

"These unique buildings are so much more than a beautiful creative space for Amazon employees," Washington State governor Jay Inslee said in a statement.

"They will help conserve a number of rare plant species from around the world and provide countless educational opportunities for local students."

The largest of the three joined spheres is over 27 metres tall and 39 metres in diameter. There are no closed office spaces, with collaboration taking place along paths or in tree houses.

"Plants, trees, sunlight, soil, and water take centre stage - the sound of running water and the scent of flowering plants create an instant botanical immersion that takes visitors far away from the urban landscape," Amazon said.

Amazon's quest for a second North American headquarters has thrust 20 cities into a cutthroat "Hunger Games" style contest.

The technology and lifestyle powerhouse this month narrowed its list of candidates from 238 applications for the prize, which could provide an estimated \$5bn in investments and 50,000 new jobs. Amazon expects to announce a decision later this year on "HQ2", which will be equal to its Seattle headquarters, and is asking the finalists to refine their pitches.

Source: AFP

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