



Rendering depicting view of park entrance from Columbus Ave. and 79th Street.

Dear Neighbor:

As an Upper West Side resident, you may know that the American Museum of Natural History was created 150 years ago by New Yorkers who believed that this City needed a great museum to advance scientific research and to serve as a center of learning for school children and visitors. Those goals are still at the heart of our mission—and are even more crucial today.

I'm Michael Novacek, Senior Vice President and Provost of Science at the Museum, and I oversee the Museum's scientific research and exhibitions. I am reaching out to you today to share the tremendous progress that we are making on the Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation, the new building planned for the west side of our campus, and to share more about why this project is such an important part of the Museum's service to New York and beyond:

- **Modern educational facilities for hundreds of thousands of school children:** The Gilder Center's 13 new or renovated classrooms will offer the latest technology and scientific instrumentation for students and teachers throughout the five boroughs.
- **Programming for thousands of New York State teachers:** The Gilder Center will support the Museum's Master of Arts in Teaching program, which educates one-third of all newly-certified New York State teachers in Earth science, and thousands of local science teachers will use the new halls and classrooms for professional development and student learning programs.
- **Exhibition halls for visitors and school groups:** A new state-of-the-art theater exploring new worlds of scientific discovery, as well as galleries that highlight vital scientific topics—such as insects' role in our food supply, in human health, and as indicators of climate change—will bring important new science to the public.
- **A view into the scientific collections for the public:** The Collections Core will hold millions of specimens from the Museum's research collections — which form an irreplaceable record of life on Earth — in new, state-of-the-art facilities, to offer visitors a close look at the essential factual evidence that underpins scientific research by scientists and scholars at the Museum and from around the world.

You may have heard about a lawsuit challenging the project. I'd like to correct mischaracterizations that have been raised with some important facts:

- **The Museum is passionate about Theodore Roosevelt Park and is committed to improving it.** The Museum has worked with Friends of Theodore Roosevelt Park since 2002 to support the Park and recently announced a commitment of \$100,000 annually for the next 10 years for the Park's maintenance. Together with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation (NYC Parks) and Park Working Group, the Museum developed new designs with more benches and more green space for passive recreational uses. The Parks Department found that these improvements would enhance the adjacent area of the Park by increasing the amount of publicly accessible open space and by providing additional seating and gathering areas.
- **At every turn, the Museum has worked to minimize the impact on the Park.** To reduce the project's overall footprint, the Museum revised the project's plans to keep the extension of its footprint to only .25 acre beyond what it is today in the 17.58-acre park. While seven trees will be removed following appropriate court resolution, 22 new trees (including six canopy trees) will be planted once construction is completed.
- **The Museum received regulatory approval for the project after an extensive review process.** Several City agencies, including NYC Parks and the Landmarks Preservation Commission, approved the project after a multi-year review process that included numerous opportunities for public comment.
- **There is nothing out of the ordinary about the environmental conditions of Theodore Roosevelt Park.** The results of the site investigations were typical of other construction sites in New York City. No evidence was found of an onsite chemical release, and the City's expert agencies concluded that there are "no known risks with respect to hazardous materials that cannot be controlled through the use of the measures commonly used at construction sites throughout New York City." This conclusion is corroborated by the fact that prior construction in the Park has never yielded any such concerns—including as recently as the Rose Center project. That project included work in parkland not previously occupied by the Hayden Planetarium and on the same site as the Gilder Center, for the reconfiguration of the Museum's service yard, the construction of the Weston Pavilion, and improvements in the north and west parts of the Park.

In short, this is an important civic project that is in the public interest, which is why it has the support of public officials, without exception, and of Manhattan Community Board 7 and civic groups such as New Yorkers for Parks and Friends of Theodore Roosevelt Park.

I hope you find this update helpful. If you have any questions, please call 212-769-5246 or email gildercenter@amnh.org, or join our email list at amnh.org/gildercenter.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Novacek, Ph.D.
Senior Vice President and Provost of Science
Curator and Professor of Paleontology
American Museum of Natural History