

MAY 05, 2003

Howard Hughes Medical Institute Breaks Ground For Janelia Farm



Image Title: Hanna Gray, Chairman of HHMI's Trustees, joins architect Rafael Vinoly (left) and HHMI President Thomas Cech (far right) in showing a model of the Janelia Farm campus to Virginia Governor Mark Warner at the groundbreaking ceremony. - Paul Feters

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) today officially broke ground for its Janelia Farm Research Campus that will be built on a 281-acre parcel that lies along the Potomac River near Leesburg.

Virginia Governor Mark Warner and Loudoun County Board of Supervisors Chairman Scott York joined Hanna H. Gray, chairman of HHMI's Board of Trustees, and HHMI President Thomas R. Cech in turning the ceremonial first shovel of earth on the \$500 million project. When completed in early 2006, the 760,000-square-foot complex will house a permanent research staff of 200 to 300 scientists who will carry out a broad range of biomedical research.

“This is a significant moment in the Institute's 50-year history of support for innovative biomedical research,” said Mrs. Gray. “This new campus will deepen our commitment to first-rate, independent science. The discoveries made here will benefit medicine well into the future.”

Governor Warner applauded HHMI's decision to develop the research campus in Virginia. “The investment in research and technology represented by Janelia Farm is essential ingredient for Virginia's success in the information age,” said Warner. “With the Institute as a hub for innovation and investments elsewhere in Virginia, I believe the Commonwealth is well on its way to becoming a biotechnology powerhouse.”

The design by internationally renowned architect Rafael Viñoly makes the most of an environmentally sensitive and historically significant site. The Janelia Farm complex - which includes a “landscape” laboratory building, conference housing and apartments for visiting scientists - will blend into the natural surroundings of the site and feature highly flexible laboratory space that can be easily adapted to meet changing research needs. All aspects of the technologically advanced research center - the programs, the people, the design of the buildings and infrastructure - will stimulate the multi-disciplinary, team-driven research needed to advance medical science.

“We have been developing the concept of this unique research campus for some time, and it is gratifying to see it come to life,” said Dr. Cech, who shared the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1989. “Janelia Farm will be a distinctive, exciting collaborative place for chemists, physicists, computer scientists and engineers to share their expertise and invent new technologies that will reshape biomedical research.”

HHMI acquired Janelia Farm in 2000, shortly after Dr. Cech joined the Institute as its president. Gerald M. Rubin has directed planning for the new campus, along with David A. Clayton, HHMI's chief scientific officer and Robert McGhee, the Institute's architect.

“On behalf of the Board of Supervisors and the people of Loudoun County, I am pleased to welcome a good neighbor,” said Supervisor York. “HHMI has designed a world-class research center that considers both the needs of science and of our community. Loudoun County looks forward to working with HHMI in the months and years ahead and being home to truly unique and vital scientific programs.”

Long a Loudoun County landmark, Janelia Farm was the home of Vinton and Robert Pickens and their 1930s-era house is now on the National Register of Historic Places. The name represents a combination of the names of their daughters, Jane and Cornelia. The manor house itself will be restored for use as a living and entertaining space.

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute was established in 1953 by the aviator-industrialist. HHMI's principal mission is conducting basic biomedical research, which it carries out in collaboration with more than 70 universities, medical centers and other research institutions throughout the United States. Its more than 300 investigators, along with a scientific staff of more than 3,000, work at these institutions in Hughes laboratories. The Institute also has a philanthropic grants program of approximately \$90 million per year, which it devotes to science education and training, from elementary school through graduate and medical school. It also supports the work of biomedical researchers in many countries around the globe.

HHMI is one of the largest philanthropies in the world, with an endowment of more than \$10 billion and a budget of nearly \$600 million in the current fiscal year. Its headquarters are located in Chevy Chase, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.