

The new iPhone will land in Apple's flying-saucer shaped campus

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iPhone, schm-iPhone. What we all really want to see come Sept. 12 is Apple's newly landed flying saucer of a headquarters.

Looking like a love child of the Close Encounters of the Third Kind ship and Rio de Janeiro's Maracana soccer stadium, Apple Park HQ sprawls over 175 acres.

The multi-storied ring set into a quadrilateral studded with 9,000 trees will eventually be home to 12,000 employees who, lapping the building in search of colleagues, presumably won't curse the company when they walk outside only to find their car is on the monolith's other side.

It's unclear how many of Apple's staffers have made the transfer from Apple's longtime Cupertino, Calif. headquarters, but the exodus started in the spring and should be complete by the end of the year. It's cost: \$5 billion

Among its most impressive stats: 2.8 million square feet of office space (nearly four times the square footage of New York's Madison Square Garden), 80 acres of parking (so much for eco-friendly self-driving work shuttles) and 17 megawatts of power from its rooftop solar panels (according to the Solar Energy Industries Association, 1 megawatt can power 164 average homes, so that's around 2,800 houses' worth).

More: Apple Park opens with cautionary note: glitzy corporate digs don't always pan out

Apple says the building was designed "in collaboration with" architecture firm Foster + Partners, which may be a way of saying that this is what its star designer Jony Ive has been hammering away on for a few years.

All we need now is the video featuring his dulcet tones explaining how the elevators are—and this is poetic license—"perfect embodiments of form-follow-function transportation that evoke the beauty of a surf-polished stone."

If you're waiting for details about the new edifice, keep waiting. The media hordes descending on Apple Park next week surely won't be allowed to romp freely around the UFO.

Instead, here's what we do know. Reporters will arrive early in the morning and be directed across a small portion of the campus—HQ undoubtedly will be a look-but-don't-touch affair—to the new Steve Jobs Theater, where the trumpeted unveiling of the iPhone 8 and other products will christen the facility.

The theater, which seats 1,000, sounds basically like a bunker with Wi-Fi. Apple's description of the hilltop gathering-spot notes that it is marked by 20-foot-tall glass cylinder that is 165 feet in diameter and is supported by a metallic carbon-fiber roof.

Visitors are then guided four stories underground via either spiral staircases or circular elevators that swivel as they descend, according to a Bloomberg report. The idea here seems to be very Apple: "Hey, most elevators don't swivel, so ours will swivel."

Naming the theater after Steve Jobs is fitting in many ways. The most obvious is the symbolism of using the new venue to pull the wraps off what many hope will be a groundbreaking, augmented-reality focused iPhone.

And it comes 10 years after Jobs famously told a similar gathering that he was pleased to introduce three new products—an iPod, a phone and an Internet communications tool—that was of course the very first iPhone.

But in truth, the whole place could have rightly been dubbed Steve Jobs Park, given how critical the late marketing and tech visionary was to resurrecting Apple from a few botched leaderships.

Apple has offered up comments about Jobs' influence over this new headquarters from the likes of CEO Tim Cook, his widow Laurene Powell Jobs and his longtime friend Ive. The quotes bubble with similar words, such as "vision," "energy" and "inspire."

Cook says "Steve's vision for Apple stretched far beyond his time with us. He intended Apple Park to be the home of innovation for generations to come," while Powell Jobs says "Steve was exhilarated, and inspired, by the California landscape, by its light and its expansiveness. It was his favorite setting for thought."

Ive's thoughts about his late friend run more toward how the Apple co-founder "invested so much of his energy creating and supporting vital, creative environments."

That observation gives pause. Apple Park's design is meant to encourage employees to collaborate more by creating more opportunities for them to bump into each other.

But as any biography of Jobs will tell you, the man was a mercurial genius whose "think different" mantra often did not leave room for dissent. In some ways, Apple is what it is precisely because one man said "take this hill," and an army saluted.

One can guess that being on Apple's new campus will inspire a measure of awe at what one man's technological vision has built. And it's a shame Jobs isn't around to see the fruits of brash decisions that, for better and for worse, put not just songs but the world in our pockets.

What's really left to see is whether Apple can live up to Apple Park. And part of the answer will be revealed dozens of feet below the surface of this gleaming new headquarters.

iPhone built this place. iPhone 8 needs to justify it.

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