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By Warren Kagarise

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Gov. Chris Gregoire, Mayor Ava Frisinger and hospital executives broke ground on a Swedish Medical Center campus in the Issaquah Highlands today.

Dignitaries dipped gold-painted shovels into soil to mark the late-morning event. Crews began excavation work at the site in August.

Dr. John Milne, medical director for strategic development and a physician at the Swedish/Issaquah ER, said the new hospital would be vital to the community.

"This is going to be your hospital," Milne said. "This is going to be Issaquah's hospital."

Kevin Brown, a Swedish Medical Center senior vice president leading the Issaquah expansion, recalled how hospital officials studied the market before planning to build in Issaquah.

"We just saw this incredible need for local health-care resources," he said.

Swedish/Issaquah Executive Director Chuck Salmon listed the amenities and features of the new hospital, including electronic medical records and healing gardens. Salmon also touted the ecofriendly credentials of the new facility.

The highlands campus will be the first new hospital built in King County in 25 years. Moreover, the facility will be "the most energy-efficient facility of its kind in the state of Washington," Salmon said.

Gregoire praised hospital executives for building in Issaquah.

"This is the only community of its size in Western Washington without a hospital," she said.

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