

Palace of the Governors

MEDIA ALERT

It's No Berlin Wall, but Construction Fence's Exit Heartens New Mexico History Museum Officials

***Barrier around new museum set for removal
– weather permitting –
this weekend***

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SANTA FE – A bane to Downtown drivers, shoppers and merchants but a boon to New Mexico History Museum construction workers, the fence that ate part of Lincoln Avenue west of the new building will come down this weekend, barring snow, ice or a highly unlikely hurricane.

“This is an important benchmark for us,” said John McCarthy, Deputy Director of the Palace of the Governors and New Mexico History Museum. “We’ve laid the sidewalks, we’re getting ready to install the exhibits, the public artwork should go up on the exterior soon.

“Since our groundbreaking in 2004, we’ve worked carefully within a tight footprint to create a way that all of New Mexico can celebrate more than four centuries of history – while doing no damage to the historical buildings around us.”

Those buildings include the venerable Palace of the Governors, which will become the new Museum’s most important exhibit upon its grand opening this Memorial Day Weekend. The 96,000-square-foot Museum will enable the cohesive storage and display of more than 200,000 artifacts, many of which have been behind wraps for decades.

With the fence’s removal, Lincoln Avenue will return to two-way traffic and parallel parking, said Bill Hon, Director of Santa Fe’s Parking Division. And while parking spaces lost to the construction fence will return, the change from angled parking to parallel parking will result in a net gain of ... no new parking.

“We’re not going to overall lose spaces,” Hon said. “Unfortunately, the width of the street doesn’t support two-way traffic with angled parking.”

If all goes according to plan (i.e., if the mystical wonderments of the weather comply), he said, the city will mount parking meters on the construction-site

spaces, but leave them hooded until early next week. The spots should become available to motorists on Tuesday or Wednesday, he said, after the city is able to re-stripe the street and make other adjustments.

More adjustments on the Museum's part are yet to come. Before the sidewalk can open to the public, work on the landscape planters and other finish details must be completed. A date for that has not yet been set.

For Dr. Frances Levine, Director of the Palace of the Governors and New Mexico History Museum, the fence's removal means people will now have their first unobstructed view of the new Museum's façade – tangible evidence that the state's newest Museum is becoming a reality.

"Get set for two days of free, family events May 24 and 25, at the Museum and on the Plaza," she said. "With musicians, dancers, chautauqua performers and an ice cream social, we're planning to throw a party that, like our Museum, will make history."

(Note to fence-sitters and weather-watchers: This weekend's forecast is for partly cloudy skies with highs of 36-41 degrees, lows of a considerably brisk 14-18 degrees.)

For more information about the New Mexico History Museum, including a selection of user-ready high-resolution photographs, log onto <http://media.museumofnewmexico.org/nmhm>. More than 8,000 additional, high-resolution photographs illustrating the history of New Mexico are available by keyword search at www.palaceofthegovernors.org (click on "Digitized Collections"). Most requests for scans from this site can be delivered the same day, and usage is free for publicity purposes only.

The Palace of the Governors, built from 1609 to 1610, is the state history museum for New Mexico and is housed in the oldest continuously occupied public building in the United States. The museum's collection of more than 17,000 historical objects documents the Spanish Colonial, Mexican, American Territorial and recent eras in New Mexico history. Items date from the time of the earliest Spanish explorations in the 16th century and chronicle 223 years of Spanish administrative control, 25 years as part of Mexico, 66 years as a territory of the United States, and from statehood in 1912 to the present. The Palace also administers the Fray Angelico Chavez History Library and Photo Archives, The Palace Print Shop & Bindery, and the Portal Program. In 2009, the Palace of the Governors will be incorporated into the New Mexico History Museum, a 96,000-square-foot building under construction behind the Palace, opening Memorial Day weekend.

The Palace of the Governors is a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs. The Palace is located on the Santa Fe Plaza at 105 W. Palace Avenue. For more information, call 476-5100 or visit www.palaceofthegovernors.org.

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