

# Peek Inside Charles Smith's Urban Winery-In-Progress, Set to Be the Largest in North America

by Sara Jones, photos by Suzi Pratt Jun 17, 2015, 10:15a @DearSarajones

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*It will open in Georgetown July 25.*

**C**harles Smith didn't set out to create the **largest urban winery** in North America. "I make wine," he says repeatedly, stressing this wasn't his master plan, as we roam his 32,000-square-foot Georgetown winery-in-progress, opening July 25. When he set up in Walla Walla in 1999, he thought he'd make 2,000 cases a year. Fast forward 16 years and he's the largest independent winemaker in Washington, producing 750,000 cases of wine annually that he sells in 24 countries and 50 US states, and he's out of space. He opted to build in Georgetown because more people are here, and it just makes sense to "bring the wine to the people." Throw in the fact that he secured a space *literally* in Boeing's backyard, and voilà: enter **Charles Smith Wines Jet City**.

In this for-the-people spirit, though the buildout by **Olson Kundig Architects** is still in progress, the open, minimalist, local feeling of the new winery at 1132 S. Albro Place —originally a Dr. Pepper plant in 1963—is already evident. In particular, there is floor-to-ceiling glass across the whole front of the building and visitors enter through a 21-foot-tall steel door that extends the full first and second story. Inside, there are two tasting rooms: the downstairs room will have a more "rustic Northwest" style, and the larger upstairs space will exude an early '60s Northwest feel, including a nod to the aviation industry (have I mentioned the winery's proximity to Boeing?).

"[The rooms are] two things Northwest, but at different times in history," Smith says. "And wine encapsulates all of that: it's past, it's now, and it's forever."

Both rooms will pour vino from Charles Smith Wines, K Vinters, Wines of Substance, and more, and both provide a generous view of the winemaking at work in the back of the building. The company makes Rhône and Bordeaux varietals, Chardonnay, and Sauvignon Blanc, and the new space has capacity to produce 45,000 cases annually.



A rendering of the front of Charles Smith Wines Jet City, though the full building is much wider. This sign should be readable from I-5. Image courtesy of Charles Smith Wines.

Other highlights of the winery include a sky-lit event space (where live music just may be coming), complete with a commercial kitchen, and most striking of all, the vast views. These cannot be overstated. To the north you can see as far as the Columbia Tower and waterfront cranes, and to the south, as you see above, Mt. Rainer is visible in full right at the base of Boeing field, immediately in front of the building. Nothing is promised yet, but we're hoping Smith will eventually convert the roof into a deck where, with planes landing overhead, it would become unlike any other drinking or dining experience in the city. Stay tuned for updates closer to opening day next month.

· [Charles Smith Winery Complex Coming to Georgetown \[ESEA\]](#)

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