

Why is there a dry fountain in the Redmond North campus?

devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20090303-00

March 3, 2009



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One of the things that may strike you if you visit Microsoft's Redmond North campus is that there's a large, dry fountain outside the cafeteria. Why isn't the fountain running?

The Redmond North campus was purchased from Safeco, and with the purchase, Microsoft obtained title to a fountain whose design had two fatal flaws:

1. It had chronic and serious problems with water leakage.
2. It was built atop a parking garage.

Having large quantities of water dripping into a parking garage is not a good situation, and the Facilities people shut off the water and drained the fountain to prevent any further water damage. Further investigation revealed that the problem was quite serious and was not a simple fix. In fact, things were so bad that repairing the fountain was ruled out as an option. To bring a fountain back to the area, the old fountain would have to be removed, the existing garage shored up to support the weight of a large fountain as well as making the joints waterproof, and then a new fountain designed and installed, an undertaking which is, shall we say, "not cheap."

Given that the Redmond North campus has drainage problems during the rainy season¹ as it is, you definitely don't want to compound the problem with a leaky fountain.

Consensus has yet to be reached on the unofficial nickname for the dry fountain. Some people call it *The Moonscape*; others call it *The World's Largest Zen Rock Garden*. But so far, the leader in the naming competition appears to be simply *The Broken Fountain*.

Whatever its name, the dry fountain remains, a desolate tribute to bad civil engineering.

Pre-emptive snarky comment: Microsoft itself is a giant tribute to bad engineering.

¹Standard Seattle joke:

Q: "When is the Seattle rainy season?"

A: "It runs from January 1 to December 31."

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