

**For Immediate Release**  
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## **City Officials Celebrate Groundbreaking Ceremony for the New Home of the Staten Island Museum**

(Staten Island, NY – March 23, 2011) Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin, Staten Island Deputy Borough President Edward Burke, and Council Member Deborah Rose today joined Staten Island Museum President and CEO Elizabeth Egbert, Chairman Henry A. Salmon, trustees and supporters for a ceremonial groundbreaking event on the steps of what is to be the Museum's new home in **Building A**, a landmarked facility **on the Snug Harbor Cultural Center Campus**, a Historic District on the National Registry.

"Culture is the backbone of New York City's identity, and the Staten Island Museum is one of our most dynamic and longest serving cultural institutions," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The City is pleased to break ground on a spectacular new home for the Museum on the Snug Harbor Cultural Center campus - one of our treasured historic districts - and to help expand its wealth of creative offerings for Staten Island residents, New Yorkers from across the five boroughs, and visitors from around the globe."

"The Museum's new home is the fulfillment of a dream forty years in the making, dating from our efforts in the 1960s to save the Snug Harbor buildings from demolition and move our operation to the site," said Elizabeth Egbert, President and CEO of the Staten Island Museum.

Borough President James P. Molinaro said, "This is the start of an exciting new cultural venture for Staten Island, and I particularly want to express my joy on behalf of our younger residents who will be passing through these halls and learning so many amazing and wonderful things about our Borough. I also want to congratulate the Museum's Board and Director Elizabeth Egbert on this project, and thank Mayor Bloomberg and Commissioner Levin for their leadership in seeing it come to fruition."

"Since 1881 the Staten Island Museum has celebrated Staten Island's rich history and culture," said Cultural Affairs Commissioner Kate D. Levin. "The reconstruction of Building A is a tremendous step for the Museum, and will play an important role in attracting a wider audience to experience the museum's expanded programs."

"The reconstruction of Building A has been long awaited and is most welcomed. The Staten Island Museum outgrew its other facility long ago. The new museum allows for

expanded viewing and growth of the museum's valued collections. School children, tourists and the general population will have access to our treasured past and historical data," said Councilwoman Debi Rose (49th District/North Shore).

"The Trustees of the Staten Island Museum are very proud and excited that we have reached this extraordinary milestone in our history, as we complete our 130th year of operations: the transformation of a landmarked building into a 21st century museum facility that will soon be filled with the best of our art and natural science collections," said Chairman of the Staten Island Museum Board of Trustees, Henry A. Salmon.

The event was also attended by project architects, Gluckman Mayner Architects, who are renowned for their work with museums and adaptive reuse of historic buildings, both in the United States and abroad. The firm's notable projects include the Dia Center for the Arts in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Mori Arts Center in Tokyo, Japan.

### **About Building A at Snug Harbor – History and Future**

Originally built in 1879, Building A was one of over 50 structures that comprised Sailors' Snug Harbor; an 83-acre site founded by Robert Richard Randall as a "haven for aged, decrepit and worn out sailors." In its day, Sailors' Snug Harbor was the richest charitable institution in the United States and a self-sustaining community composed of a working farm, dairy, bakery, chapel, sanatorium, hospital, music hall and cemetery. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, however, the institution experienced serious financial difficulties and declining number of residents which led to many of the once magnificent buildings falling into disrepair and later being demolished. In the 1960s, the Staten Island Museum led the fight to preserve Sailor's Snug Harbor and to designate it a New York City landmark. In the original master plan for the "saved" Snug Harbor site, Buildings A and B were designated as the future home of the Staten Island Museum. The historic Greek Revival building (Building A) will become the nexus of the Museum's activities and will exemplify the goals of preservation, history and respect for the natural environment that are the core of the Museum's mission.

Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden, a Smithsonian Affiliate, is Staten Island's premier destination for culture and entertainment. Set within an 83-acre park-like setting, Snug Harbor presents a blend of gardens, museums, theaters, educational opportunities, and seasonal festivals. Snug Harbor's grounds and Greek Revival buildings house organizations across arts disciplines, providing numerous ways for visitors of all ages and backgrounds to engage with culture. The addition of the Staten Island Museum to the Snug Harbor landscape will build on the offerings of this campus and attract new audiences from across the five boroughs and beyond.

### **Funding for the Project**

The New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York City Council and Office of the Staten Island Borough committed \$25 million to the \$31 million renovation project. Private support comes from the Achelis and Bodman Foundations, The Mid-Island Rotary Foundation, National Grid, and The New York Community Trust as well as the Museum's trustees and individual supporters. The initial \$70,000 Master Plan was supported by The New York Community Trust, Richmond County Savings Foundation, The Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation, and The Staten Island Foundation. Some \$750,000 has already been raised or pledged with substantial help from the generous matching grant from the Staten Island Foundation. The Museum will raise an additional \$6M to fund the development and fabrication of three floors of exhibitions as well as one floor dedicated to collections care and research.

### **About the Design**

Once Building A is completed, the expanded Museum will provide over 18,000 square feet in usable space, including an auditorium/performance venue, open for use by the public, as well as a multipurpose room that can host community exhibitions. The building will be the first historical landmark building on Staten Island to earn a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold rating, and meet the stringent environmental standards of the American Museum Association. The new facility will utilize a closed loop geothermal system which uses the earth and a series of circulating pumps to heat and cool the building which will boost efficiency and reduce the operational costs of the building's heating and cooling systems.

### **Inaugural Exhibitions**

A full scale Mastodon replica will greet visitors in the first floor lobby leading into the Museum's fossil collection. The first floor will also include the Hall of Natural Sciences, where the importance and qualities of the Earth's geological resources will be driven home in a fascinating presentation. Beautifully crystallized minerals from all over the world will be matched by common objects made with the same material with interactive displays to help the visitor make the connection between them.

Also on the first floor, in the South Gallery, will be the Museum's collection of Hudson River School paintings. This major art exhibition, *This Island Scene/Seen*, is a visual interpretation of Staten Island, including masterworks from the Museum's permanent collection by Edward Moran and Jasper Cropsey, placed in counterpoint with newly commissioned contemporary and iconic representations of the ever-shifting 20th – 21<sup>st</sup> century Staten Island landscape. The exhibit will reveal Staten Island's rapid environmental changes: a key concern in the Museum's founding mission over 130 years ago, and a major reason that Staten Island has served as a muse to so many artists throughout the years.

The Museum's second floor will host treasures from the Museum's diverse permanent collection which includes Egyptian, Greek and Roman objects, Renaissance paintings, medieval armor, Native American sculptures and African art. The new Museum will also

feature and exhibition on loan from the private collection of Donald Rubin in conjunction with artworks from The Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art. The ground level of the new Staten Island Museum will be home to *The Green Museum: Keeping Our Cool* exhibition, where visitors can learn the history of Snug Harbor's architecture and the innovative engineering of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as compared with contrasted with today's green technology.

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**About the Staten Island Museum:** For 130 years, the Staten Island Museum has been fostering and sustaining scientific and cultural heritage on Staten Island. Founded in 1881, NYC's only general interest museum explores the arts, natural science, and local history through permanent and changing exhibitions and welcomes about 80,000 adults and school children to a comprehensive array of programs every year. Located two blocks from the Ferry Terminal, visitors can embark on a voyage through time in the Staten Island Ferry exhibit; see rocks glow in the dark in the Hall of Natural Sciences; and experience the lives of Staten Island's first inhabitants. Down the road in Building H on the Snug Harbor Campus, visitors can explore the latest exhibitions in the History Center Gallery, or make a research appointment for the History Archives & Library. Staten Island Museum is owned by the City of New York and benefits from public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. For current exhibitions, visit [statenislandmuseum.org](http://statenislandmuseum.org).

**Staten Island Museum (St. George)**

75 Stuyvesant Pl.  
Staten Island, NY 10301

**Museum Hours:**

Monday – Friday: 11am– 5pm

Saturday 10am–5pm

Sunday 12pm-5pm

**Main number: (718) 727-1135**

**The museum building is wheelchair accessible. Call (718) 727-1135 for assistance.**

**Admission**

Adults \$3.

Students and Seniors: \$2.

FREE to members and children under 12.

FREE Lunchtime Break: Every Tuesday between 12–2pm

**History Center & Archives \*New Location\***

1000 Richmond Terrace  
Snug Harbor Campus, Building H  
Staten Island, NY 10301

Hours: Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 10am – 4pm by appointment  
Please contact Cara Dellatte at (718) 727-1135, ext. 122

Gallery Hours: Tuesday – Friday, 1pm – 4pm  
Free admission

The groundbreaking event is supported by the following:

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