



Staten Island Advance

Staten Island Museum's new \$27M space: Almost ready for its close-up at Snug Harbor



Hyphen area, still under construction will contain the Mastodon: Return of the Mastodon A Richmond County Savings Foundation Exhibition /Staten Island Museum (Staten island Advance/Jan Somma-Hammel)

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LIVINGSTON — The **Staten Island Museum**'s "Imagine: A Gala Preview Celebration" on Saturday night gave revelers a look at something no one is going to see again for years: The bare bones.

Party-goers toured the museum's new, nearly finished headquarters in Building A on the grounds of the **Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden** at 1000 Richmond Terr., Livingston.

It's empty for now but not for long.

Following nearly three years of construction (a 21st-Century steel superstructure was built inside the original late 19th-Century structure) the three-floor, 20,000-square-foot interior is now ready for surfaces, paint, lighting, exhibit cases, text and multimedia, not to mention paintings and other works of art, replicas, artifacts and interactive stations.

Ralph Appelbaum & Associates, the largest museum design atelier in the world, is completing the new renovation.

The new museum will have room for separate exhibits about prehistory and natural science, local art, antiquities and a version of "From Farm to City," a 2012 exhibit mounted at the Museum of the City of New York.

The \$27 million construction tab is being picked up by the city, but furnishings, surfaces and other details have always been the museum's responsibility. It has raised \$2.7 million (of a \$3 million target) towards the outfitting of the new facility.

Proceeds from last night's party will help with operating expenses. Fundraising will continue, however. Deep-pocketed benefactors (\$1 million-plus) may earn the chance to name a gallery for themselves or a loved one.

The museum's Henry Behnke, vice president for external affairs and advancement, says the museum is counting on help from existing members and supporters. "We're also hoping to bring new people into the family," he said. "All Staten Islanders should feel invested; after all it's their museum."

"A" Building, an 1879-vintage, Greek Revival structure, opened as dormitory space when the Harbor campus was a 130-acre, gated retirement community for mariners (from 1833 to the mid 1970s).

The retrofitting is invisible from the outside. The building's multi-landmarked granite and marble facade hasn't been altered, only repaired and cleaned.

Having been earmarked for the Staten Island Museum for more than 40 years, the building was the object of a failed conversion in the mid 1980s. The project restarted with a much-improved design in 2011.

The Staten Island Museum, one of the last few general interest museums around, was founded in 1881 and has been headquartered in St. George, at 75 Stuyvesant Pl., for much of its 133 years. The original building will eventually house its Staten Island Ferry collection.