

FROM: Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation

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ELLIS ISLAND MUSEUM TO BE REIMAGINED FOR THE 21ST CENTURY VISITOR

\$100 million campaign will vastly enhance the museum experience, more than double the number of immigration records available for visitors' personal discovery, and help preserve the historic building

New York, NY (March 28, 2024) - The [Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation](#), the official National Park Service philanthropic partner for [Statue of Liberty National Monument](#) and [Ellis Island](#), today announced that the 34-year-old museum on Ellis Island will undergo a full revitalization. The project, commencing in 2024, will preserve the 125-year-old historic landmark, enhance its exhibits, and tell a more vibrant story of immigration in a building that once processed 12 million immigrants. The \$100 million revitalization will also expand the Records Discovery Center experience by newly including ports of entry from across the U.S., allowing millions more families to trace their immigration story.

In addition to performing essential building and systems upgrades, the non-profit Foundation will reimagine installations for a more interactive experience, showcase the museum's historic architecture, and improve accessibility throughout its 137,000 square feet. Taken together, these enhancements will offer the museum's two million annual visitors a more compelling and comprehensive experience inside a modernized and more immersive museum. The Foundation will create a timeless museum whose content can be updated as history is made. The revitalization is expected to be completed in 2026.

"We are a nation of immigrants, and Ellis Island is the symbol of that history. Our project will ensure that the National Museum of Immigration will welcome, educate, and inspire visitors for decades to come," said **Jesse Brackenbury, Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer**. "As with all Foundation projects, it is through the generosity of donors across America – not government funding – that this transformative reimagining of one of the nation's most beloved and popular museums will succeed."

The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation works hand-in-hand with the National Park Service (NPS) to enhance the visitor experience on Ellis Island. The Foundation's interior revitalization coincides with the National Park Service's rehabilitation of the exterior of the Main Immigration Building. The NPS project, funded by the [Great American Outdoors Act's Legacy Restoration Fund](#), will address underlying structural issues of the building's exterior, as well as repairs to masonry facades, windows, skylights, and clay tile roofing.

"Ellis Island was the gateway to the American Dream for millions of immigrants in search of a better life in the United States for themselves and their descendants," said **John Piltzecker, Statue of Liberty National Monument and Ellis Island superintendent**. "The National Park Service is grateful to our partners at the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation for supporting

the restoration of this iconic building and helping to share the countless stories of hope and triumph associated with it. We look forward to working collaboratively to ensure that this site, so crucial to American history, is properly preserved and enhanced.”

The museum will be built on people-centered storytelling, featuring powerful personal stories of immigrant journeys, and the history of how immigrants have shaped America’s economy and culture. Visitors to the National Museum of Immigration on Ellis Island will walk away with a resonant emotional experience, building empathetic connections across time. Revitalization elements include:

- **100,000+ square feet of reimagined exhibits:**
 - A Timeline of Immigration will guide visitors through centuries of history across the new galleries on the Museum’s three floors: the Pre-Ellis Years (3rd floor), Ellis Years (2nd floor), and Post-Ellis Years (1st floor). Historic artifacts, maps, models, and murals will engage visitors.
 - Nearly 100 media pieces—films, numerous interactives, and soundscapes—will be added. Visitors will enjoy a 120’ x 7’9” media screen and numerous new theaters.
 - New public spaces will be created, including a Temporary Exhibits Gallery and a Flexible Program Space for events and education programs.
- **Accessible and Inclusive Tours:** New self-guided tours in 12 languages—including with the ferry ticket—will include American Sign Language (ASL) tours; a family-friendly tour for children ages 6-10; and a descriptive audio tour for visitors who are blind or with low vision.
- **Records Discovery Center:** The Foundation will renovate and expand the existing family history center. New exhibits, a mini-theater, and a green screen will welcome visitors, and the number of public research stations will grow by 50 percent. Additionally, the project will more than double the current database from 65 million Port of New York arrival records to approximately 154 million by adding records from ports of entry across the U.S. The emotional journey of unearthing and connecting to family history has long been at the core of the Ellis Island experience. The expanded Records Discovery Center will allow millions more to participate in this genealogical exploration.
- **Wall of Honor:** In June 2024, in honor of National Immigrant Heritage Month, the first phase of renovations will be completed with the expansion of The American Immigrant Wall of Honor. Originally unveiled in 1990, the Wall of Honor celebrates the immigrant journey – from those who arrived on our shores centuries ago to recent arrivals – and currently includes nearly one million inscriptions etched across more than 770 panels.

The American people have been the most important supporters of Ellis Island, funding its restoration and all subsequent projects. The Foundation is so grateful to its Board and other early supporters, as their generosity means that the project is 60% funded as we embark on the public phase of the campaign. "The reimagined Ellis Island Museum follows the Foundation's award-winning Statue of Liberty Museum, which opened in 2019 and welcomes four million visitors annually," said **Luis Ubiñas, Chairman of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation.**

“When this project is completed, visitors to both islands will enjoy 21st-century museum experiences designed to inform and engage.”

History

In the 1800s, rising political instability, economic distress, and religious persecution plagued Europe, fueling the largest mass human migration in the history of the world and leading the U.S. government to construct the first Federal Immigration Station on Ellis Island.

The new station began receiving arriving immigrants on January 1, 1892. Annie Moore, a teenage girl from Ireland, accompanied by her two younger brothers, made history as the very first immigrant to be processed at Ellis Island. Over the next 62 years, more than 12 million immigrants would arrive in the United States via Ellis Island, before the facility closed permanently in 1954.

In 1982, President Ronald Reagan asked Lee Iacocca, then Chairman of the Chrysler Corporation, to head a private-sector, philanthropic effort to raise funds for and oversee the restoration and preservation of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island for their respective centennials. The Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation restored the Main Immigration Building on Ellis Island and opened the Museum to the public in September of 1990. The Museum has since served more than 50 million visitors. In 2011, the Foundation renovated the historic Kitchen & Laundry Building to add galleries on pre- and post-Ellis stories. The Foundation now intends to lead this powerful beacon of American history into the 21st century.

Photos and B-Roll can be found here:

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ABOUT THE STATUE OF LIBERTY-ELLIS ISLAND FOUNDATION

The [Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation](http://www.statueofliberty-ellisland.org) is a non-profit that collaborates with the National Park Service in one of America’s most successful public-private partnerships. In 1982, President Ronald Reagan asked Lee Iacocca to raise private funds for the historic restoration of the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The Foundation has since created the museum on Ellis Island, developed the free 65-million-record Ellis Island Passenger Database, constructed the Statue of Liberty Museum, maintained museum exhibits, and funded hundreds of additional projects on the islands.