

GOVERNORS ISLAND

2021 Year In Review



With unparalleled historic, natural and waterfront resources, Governors Island is a destination unlike any other.

2021 was a monumental year, with tremendous progress in fulfilling our mission to realize the full potential of Governors Island for the inspiration and enjoyment of all New Yorkers. This year also saw historic milestones in the Island's ongoing transformation, from expanding public access to 365 days a year and growing our arts and culture program, to moving forward with our bold vision to establish a leading center for climate solutions.

The Trust for Governors Island works together with its fundraising partner the Friends of Governors Island to ensure the Island is a beloved resource for New York City, and in close collaboration with the National Park Service and the Governors Island National Monument.

Our shared guiding vision supports the Island's growth as an extraordinary public place through:

Accessible Open Space & Recreation

Transformative Public Art & Culture

Education & Innovation Addressing the Global Climate Crisis

THE TRUST FOR
GOVERNORS ISLAND

THE FRIENDS OF
GOVERNORS ISLAND





A LONGSTANDING AMBITION REALIZED

Nearly two decades ago, a visionary idea to put Governors Island on the map as a public resource was put into motion with the transfer of the former military base from federal to local control. After years of serving as a seasonal public resource, in 2021 a longstanding ambition finally came to fruition when the City of New York and the Trust for Governors Island announced that the Island would be open to the public year-round. Also announced in 2021: more ways than ever before to get to Governors Island. Starting in 2022, NYC Ferry will add daily service to the Island on their South Brooklyn route, expanding more frequent access to the Lower East Side and Brooklyn waterfront neighborhoods.





ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

Snowfall in Colonels Row. Spring blooms in Liggett Terrace. Summertime views from The Hills. The changing leaves of Nolan Park. With this year's announcement that Governors Island is open to the public year-round, visitors can now enjoy the splendor of all four seasons on the Island.

A Park for All Seasons



A Citywide Resource, More Accessible Than Ever

2021 Top Neighborhoods:

East Village

Chinatown

Lower East Side

Two Bridges

Financial District

Brooklyn Heights

Boerum Hill

Prospect Heights

Park Slope

Red Hook

Kensington

“My favorite place in NYC. Still a hidden gem. A relaxing, peaceful oasis. I love to see families, solo visitors, friends, and groups enjoying the beautiful natural landscape and the historical sites.”

2021 Governors Island Visitor

“So fun! I love how quiet it is and how many activities and things there are to explore.”

2021 Governors Island Visitor

In 2021, the Trust partnered with 150+ community organizations to reach New Yorkers.

Seasonal ferry service in Brooklyn was doubled, running weekend ferries from both Red Hook and Brooklyn Bridge Park/Pier 6 for the first time.

Free ferries for residents of NYCHA housing, IDNYC holders, community and non-profit organizations, Governors Island members, military servicemembers, seniors and kids 12 and under at all times. Ferries are always free for all visitors on weekends before noon.

In 2021, 44% of Governors Island visitors utilized free ferries.

Our Visitors at a Glance

- The Island is home to a uniquely diverse audience from around NYC and the world: in 2021, we welcomed more than 600,000 visitors.
- Representation from 100% of NYC residential zip codes.
- Nearly half of our visitors return multiple times each year.
- Average visit duration is between 2-4 hours.

A Unique Open Space for Everyone

This year, Governors Island provided vital open space for New Yorkers as the city continues to respond to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic.

Recreational fields were used more than 400 times, including regular use by local groups Downtown United Soccer Club, Manhattan Kickers and Downtown Little League.

600 groups held gatherings at our outdoor grilling areas.

The GrowNYC Teaching Garden at the Urban Farm held over 2,000 in-person and virtual field trips for NYC public school students and senior centers, providing a safe and accessible connection to nature.

15,000 visitors and counting have enjoyed the brand-new Governors Island Winter Village, opened in December 2021, which includes lawn games, fire pits, seasonal treats, twinkling lights and a 5,000-square-foot ice skating rink in the heart of Colonels Row.



IN THE NEWS

"[The Winter Village includes] a 5,000- square foot skating rink (one of the few outdoor rinks in the city), games, food trucks, drinks, and crucially: fire pits. They'll also offer some additional holiday glow courtesy of seasonal twinkling lights."

Gothamist, December 2021

A Diverse Mix of Events & Amenities

Island visitors enjoyed expanded year-round culinary options, along with a robust calendar of free events from a diverse range of organizations and presenters.

23 food and beverage vendors brought their rich offerings to Governors Island this year, delighting visitors and creating culinary experiences like no other.

- **The Foodie Spot** spotlighted a rotating selection of small businesses operated by NYCHA residents in a partnership with the housing authority's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES).
- **Pizza Yard** installed their authentic wood-burning pizza oven in Colonels Row.
- **Little Eva's** debuted a seasonal winter menu in their location at the Winter Village, serving up hot chocolate, fire-roasted s'mores, vegan chili and more.

Groups and organizations from around the city presented **more than 70 free public, outdoor events** to Island visitors this year.

- **Jazz by the Water** welcomed renowned jazz musicians to the Island for two outdoor festivals celebrating the history and diversity of the genre.
- **Swamp in the City** held a weekend-long celebration of Cajun and Creole music.
- **Pumpkin Point** welcomed 15,000 families to enjoy one of New York City's largest pumpkin patches.
- **Free outdoor film screenings** co-presented with Film at Lincoln Center returned to the Parade Ground, welcoming visitors to enjoy Spike Lee's *Mo' Better Blues* at the most beautiful outdoor movie spot in New York City.



Free outdoor screening of *Mo' Better Blues*, co-presented by Film at Lincoln Center, August 2021



African Film Festival Family Day, September 2021



Sabor Restaurant & Bakery at The Foodie Spot, June 2021



FAD Market, June 9-10, 2021



New Yorkers Give Back

Volunteering surged in 2021, with **792 volunteers dedicating a combined total of 5,790 hours** to vital projects like welcoming and orienting visitors, leading free public tours and assisting the Trust's horticulture team.

Through a partnership with nonprofit organization **Futures & Options**, Governors Island hosted a dozen student interns for paid positions with the Island's visitor services, welcoming and assisting New Yorkers during their visit.

"I've been in love with New York City history my entire life. Volunteering on Governors Island the past two years has only deepened that love. Sharing Governors Island with our wonderful and enthusiastic visitors has been a joyful, rich and rewarding experience."

Michael Matthews,
Volunteer Tour Guide



Caring for Our Unique Landscapes



Our dedicated horticulture team works hard to care for the Island's 120 acres of open space. Highlighted initiatives from 2021 include:

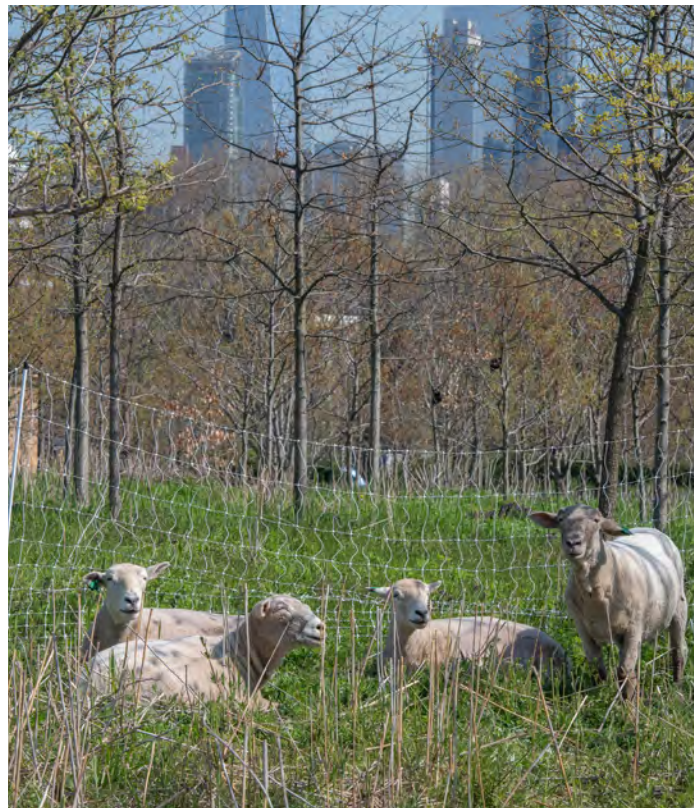
Planting more than 100 trees—with a commitment to plant at least 100 per year for the next three years.

Developing a Tree Canopy Master Plan for the Island's historic district to make sure our unique urban forest can continue to thrive in the face of a changing climate.

Planting more than 4,500 spring-flowering bulbs to create a beautiful array of blooms for springtime visitors to enjoy for the first time in the Island's history.

Propagating 1,800 plants to support native biodiversity and reduce reliance on outside plant suppliers.

Welcoming and caring for the Island's first flock of sheep, which made its debut in Spring, 2021. More than just adorable fixtures in Hammock Grove, the flock provided innovative, eco-friendly landscape care that reduced the need for harmful chemicals—clearing more than eight acres of invasive plants and helping ensure our native plant population can thrive.



Our Commitment to Sustainability

From the climate solutions engineered into Governors Island's award-winning park, right down to the dirt helping newly planted trees thrive in the Historic District, our commitment to sustainability saw innovative approaches to environmental stewardship in 2021.

The Island's horticulture team effectively employed **solarization**—a non-chemical, environmentally friendly technique using the sun's power—to eradicate invasive species across several acres of the South Island, allowing these areas to be replanted with native species.

90+ food vendors and events committed to our zero waste goals, using entirely compostable serviceware and composting food scraps and other organic materials.

Earth Matter NY processed more than 230,000 pounds of organics from Governors Island, including landscape materials, food vendor scraps, materials from public composting stations, leftover pumpkins from Pumpkin Point and oyster material from Billion Oyster Project—helping us return nearly 65,000 pounds of organic material back into the Island's landscape.

The GrowNYC Teaching Garden donated more than 10,000 lbs of produce grown on Governors Island to community-based organizations that support food-insecure New Yorkers, minimizing waste and advocating for increased food access.



The Urban Farm, open to the public weekends during the peak season, is a dedicated space for cultivating sustainable solutions.



All food vendors on Governors Island use compostable serviceware, minimizing waste while maximizing taste.



TRANSFORMATIVE PUBLIC ART & CULTURE

Cultural expression is at the core of Governors Island's identity, engaging hundreds of thousands of visitors each year through innovative arts and cultural interventions that interact with and respond to the Island's unique conditions.

A Cross-Sector Cultural Hub Thrives in the Historic District

Each year, the Trust hosts two dozen Organizations in Residence in Nolan Park and Colonels Row. This program transforms the Historic District into a cross-disciplinary hub for arts, cultural, environmental and educational non-profits to host unique public programs and artist residencies in a truly singular setting. With the Island now open to the public year-round, our vision for the future will build upon this seasonal model to cultivate a community of cultural tenants who call Governors Island home.

In 2021, the program provided **free workspace for 248 artists and researchers** and hosted **150 free public programs** to engage Island visitors.

- **The Climate Museum's** Beyond Lies project empowered visitors to join a poster campaign urging media literacy in the face of rampant misinformation perpetuated by the fossil fuel industry.
- **ArtCrawl Harlem** hosted artists in residence who explored the intersection of art and activism, with both virtual and in-person open studios for visitors.
- **New Art Dealers Alliance (NADA)** invited visitors to view hundreds of works by more than 50 artists across five houses in Colonels Row.
- **American Indian Community House** presented informative exhibitions, special events and performances, a lacrosse camp and more programming centered around their mission of increasing the visibility of American Indian cultures in urban settings.

“Working on Governors Island has allowed our programming to reach new audiences and spurred new forms of collaboration. We feel lucky to be a part of the Governors Island community.”

The Climate Museum



The Climate Museum's Beyond Lies poster campaign launch, July 2021



ArtCrawl Harlem 2021 Artist in Residence Michael Obele in his studio in Nolan Park



Visitors enjoy Endangered Language Alliance's 2021 exhibitions

Singular Public Art Experiences



Duke Riley's *Not for Nutten*

In 2021, the Trust's bold public art commissioning program afforded visitors and artists alike opportunities to engage in site-specific projects interacting with themes of storytelling, legacy, climate change, stewardship and more.

In the Battery Maritime Building ferry terminal, **Duke Riley's *Not for Nutten*** provides visitors with an introduction to their journey to Governors Island, reflecting on how storytelling, memory and human consumption make imprints onto our ever-evolving understanding of place.

Richard Move & MoveOpolis's *Herstory of the Universe@Governors Island*, the Trust's first ever performance-based public art commission, led visitors on a literal journey around the Island through a striking series of site-specific dance performances.

Mark Dion's *The Field Station of the Melancholy Marine Biologist* invites visitors to peer through the windows into a seemingly abandoned research lab that has been dropped into historic Building 105 on the Island, taking them on a voyeuristic journey confronting a future marred by climate change.

Shantell Martin's 2019 commissions ***Church and The May Room*** were extended yet again for 2021, welcoming visitors into these contemplative installations in the former Our Lady Star of the Sea church.



Mark Dion's *The Field Station of the Melancholy Marine Biologist*



Gabrielle Wills & Natasha Diamond Walker in *Herstory of the Universe@Governors Island*, October 2021



INNOVATION IN CLIMATE & THE ENVIRONMENT

Taking Shape: The Center for Climate Solutions

Building upon last year's announcement of the proposed Center for Climate Solutions on Governors Island, the City of New York and the Trust this year launched a global competition to invite universities and research institutions to share their visions for this groundbreaking initiative.

This project will further New York City's leadership in developing and showcasing equitable solutions to the climate crisis. On the Island, the project will support the research, development and demonstration of equitable climate solutions that can be applied globally.

Through interdisciplinary education, training and broad public engagement, the Center will support the growth of green and climate-related jobs driving New York City's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. At full build, the Center for Climate Solutions is estimated to create 7,000 direct jobs on Governors Island alone and nearly \$1 billion in fiscal impact for New York City.



IN THE NEWS

"As part of the city's vision, Governors Island, which already attracts roughly a million visitors each year, will bring residents directly into the conversation — fostering a "human element" of climate research."

Bloomberg CityLab, June 2021



Mayor Bill de Blasio, Trust President and CEO Clare Newman and students from the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School at the announcement launching a global competition to create a Center for Climate Solutions on Governors Island, June 2021

After launching a global competition to create a climate-focused research and educational hub on Governors Island and receiving 12 proposals with representation from leading institutions from around the world, the City announced in December that four finalist teams were selected to move forward in competing to build, program and operate the institution:

- The City University of New York (CUNY) and The New School
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
- Northeastern University
- Stony Brook University

Finalists will move onto a next round through a competitive Request For Proposals process in 2022.

At a Glance: Tenants Working in Climate

Governors Island is already home to a diverse mix of educational and environmental non-profit organizations and businesses drawing inspiration from the Island's unique resources.

Buttermilk Labs was designated as the lessee for historic Building 301 following a public RFP process. This new multi-tenant sustainability hub, expected in early 2024, will:

- Foster and grow businesses and non-profits that advance local climate solutions with potential for global scale.
- Host workforce and training programs dedicated to building an education pipeline for climate jobs in underserved communities by partnering with community organizations Asian Americans for Equality, Red Hook Initiative and the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

Billion Oyster Project reintroduced 28 million juvenile oysters to New York Harbor and began the Living Breakwaters project, a collaborative effort to reduce coastal risk, create and restore essential marine habitat and build coastal blue-green infrastructure.

The Trust and the New York City School Construction Authority jointly announced plans to expand the **Urban Assembly New York Harbor School on Governors Island** into historic Building 515, adding 60,000 square feet and 400 seats to the school with an additional 18 classrooms, a pool to support maritime programs and a gymnasium.





PLANNING, INVESTMENT & A GROWING
COMMUNITY OF TENANTS

Year-Round Tenant Progress

In addition to progress made by tenants exploring climate solutions, the existing community of year-round organizations that call Governors Island home worked within this extraordinary space to create something wonderful in 2021.

Lower Manhattan Cultural Council (LMCC)'s Arts Center at Governors Island reopened for their first full public season since 2019, providing residency space to 55 artists and presenting monthly public programming alongside three powerful installations:

- Onyedika Chuke's *The Forever Museum Archive_Circa 6000BCE*, exploring connections between history, archive, knowledge production and power as it applies to the US carceral system and presented with Pioneer Works;
- Meg Webster's *Wave*, using natural materials as a vehicle through which to address relationships to nature—both in the gallery space and throughout the Island;
- Muna Malik's *Blessing of the Boats*, a participatory work that asks the viewer to think about that society they would like to live within and how to make it happen.

Beam Center, a Brooklyn-based youth development non-profit organization that has a Maker Space in Building 107 on Governors Island, held its annual Beam Camp City, with dozens of New York City youth receiving a true summer camp experience on the Island. Campers assisted in fabricating Ye Qin Zhu's *CONSTELLATION*, a dynamic series of interactive sound sculptures Beam Center installed throughout the Island during the summer months.

QCNY Spa made progress on construction and is slated to open in 2022.



Visitors engaging with Muna Malik's *Blessing of the Boats* at LMCC's Arts Center at Governors Island

"Governors Island is a vibrant site for artists to connect with our city's ecology and incubate projects that invite all of us into closer relation with the natural world."

Ana Fiore
Director of Artist Services, LMCC



LMCC Artist in Residence Simon Benjamin, July 2021



Beam Center youth in the organization's year-round Makers Space on Governors Island

Our Tenant Community Grows



2021 saw the Trust continue to invest in and bring life back to our historic buildings, welcoming new tenants and incubating further opportunities for the intersections of culture, environment and public space.

Creativity Flourishes Year-Round in Nolan Park

Two new cultural organizations moved into Building 9 in Nolan Park in 2021, presenting opportunities for visitors and cultural practitioners alike.

- **Shandaken Projects** hosted a cohort of graduate students who worked with NYC youth to produce prints, posters and zines inspired by the Island, as well as provided residency space for a printer-in-residence.
- **The Institute for Public Architecture** embarked on hosting a 14-week residency on the Island, providing fellows with work and living space for independent research along with opportunities to present and discuss their work with the public.

Restoring Historic Buildings

Renovation work led by the Trust for Governors Island continued to ready some of the 52 landmarked buildings within the Historic District, including work in Nolan Park and the spectacular Admiral's House.

- **Billion Oyster Project** is set to grow their capacity at Governors Island and move their new office spaces into the restored Building 20 in Nolan Park, expected in 2022.



Admiral's House in Nolan Park

Investing in the Island's Next Chapter

Since its transfer from federal to local control, nearly \$400M has been invested in Governors Island. This year, thanks to continued capital funding support from the City of New York, the Trust for Governors Island made significant progress in projects dedicated to its ongoing transformation as an accessible, year-round resource.

Creating a Welcoming Ferry Terminal

The Trust renovated the Governors Island ferry waiting room in the historic Battery Maritime Building and opened a new year-round café operated by Joe Coffee, creating a welcoming start for the visitor journey to Governors Island

Modernizing Island Infrastructure

Investment in electrical infrastructure and new water and sewer mains to support renovation projects and a growing community of year-round tenants within the Island's historic district.

Expanding Transportation with a New Hybrid Ferry

The Trust completed design and bid out drawings for the Island's planned new vehicle ferry, which will be the first battery hybrid ferry of its class in New York Harbor—cutting emissions and making harbor history.



Nolan Park Building 20 in the Island's historic district



The lobby in the Battery Maritime Building Governors Island ferry terminal

Leadership

The Trust for Governors Island and Friends of Governors Island work together to ensure Governors Island is a beloved resource for New York City.

THE TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND

The Governors Island Corporation, doing business as The Trust for Governors Island, is the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization created by the City of New York and charged with the planning, redevelopment, and ongoing operations of 150 acres of Governors Island. The Trust's mission is to realize the full potential of Governors Island for the inspiration and enjoyment of all New Yorkers, demonstrating a bold vision for public space.

Board Members

Alicia Glen, *Chair*
Alice Blank
Karen Brooks Hopkins
Carolee Fink
Gaurav Kapadia
Patrick Kennell
Benjamin Lawsky
Grace Lee
Susan Mercandetti
Daniel Neidich
Michael Oppenheimer
Tokumbo Shobowale
Daniel Squadron
Matthew Washington
Carl Weisbrod

Clare Newman *President and CEO Ex Officio*

THE FRIENDS OF GOVERNORS ISLAND

The Friends of Governors Island is an independent nonprofit that works to ensure the Island's continued growth and accessibility as a vibrant public resource. As the designated fundraising partner of the Trust for Governors Island and the National Park Service, the Friends stewards the Island's green spaces, enhances the visitor experience and builds a community dedicated to the Island's future.

Board Members

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Andy Rosen
Darren Schluter
Jackie Snyder
Marc Treviño
Lauren Wolf

Merritt Birnbaum *Executive Director*

Governors Island continued to serve as a beloved destination and critical outdoor resource in 2021.

In a year filled with milestones, our visitors were with us every step of the way, and we are thrilled for even more people to experience the Island in the years to come. We look forward to continuing to grow our community, stewarding the Island and welcoming visitors in every season.

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