

THE TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND

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TRUST FOR GOVERNORS ISLAND UNVEILS BOLD VISION FOR CLIMATE SOLUTIONS CENTER

With a focus on research, education and public engagement, center will cement NYC as a leader in climate change action

Ambitious plan will preserve all existing open space on the Island, expand public access and establish long-term funding stream for its operations

Trust plans to issue solicitation for anchor institution and complementary uses following proposed South Island rezoning

NEW YORK (September 17, 2020)—The Trust for Governors Island today unveiled plans to develop a center for climate solutions, leveraging Governors Island’s unique environment and waterfront location as a public living laboratory. The proposed center will provide a central convening spot for researchers, advocates, innovators and students from around the globe focused on climate change solutions, while offering meaningful opportunities for public engagement, bringing hands-on education, programming and advocacy initiatives around climate and environmental issues directly to New Yorkers. The Trust’s proposal comes as the ongoing pandemic has underscored the need for coordinated, cross-sector planning that centers equity around the world’s most urgent issues.

The center is projected to create 8,000 direct new jobs and \$1 billion in economic impact for New York City. The proposal could include:

- An academic or research anchor institution to study the impacts of climate change to advance related fields, bringing climate science, policy, communications, climate justice initiatives and solution development under one roof
- A living laboratory and/or cultural uses that showcase solutions and invite conversations on the environment through public art and programming
- Platform for environmental justice organizations and environmental non-profits to research, host programs and convenings, and connect with New Yorkers
- Commercial innovation for technological research in the climate field
- Dormitories to support an academic anchor and create a uniquely immersive community for learning and innovation

- Space for convenings that offer opportunities for New Yorkers and visitors alike to engage in conversations about climate change
- Space for policy, advocacy and programming organizations to engage with the Island's nearly 1M annual visitors

“Governors Island has a distinguished past in New York City, and an even brighter future,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “We’re proud to continue the growth of Governors Island as a resource for New York City to fight climate change, create jobs, and showcase our city’s world-class research and scientific talent.”

“Governors Island is a jewel in New York Harbor, and it is poised to serve as an inspirational demonstration of how New York and other cities around the world can adapt to climate change,” said **Deputy Mayor Vicki Been**. “This ambitious plan to pair research and innovation in the climate field with public education and meaningful opportunities for dialogue about climate change is exactly the sort of project the city needs as we turn our attention to getting New Yorkers back to work and restarting our economy. We are excited to work with the Trust for Governors Island on a project that will further position New York City as a leader in climate action, while simultaneously delivering jobs and cementing Governors Island’s position as a beloved cultural, historic and recreational resource.”

“As we recover from the ongoing pandemic, New York City will continue to do what we do best – bring forward bold and creative solutions to pressing problems,” said **Trust for Governors Island Chair Alicia Glen**. “As a city of islands with 520 miles of coastline, the devastating impacts of climate change remain one of the most urgent issues facing our communities. This exciting plan for Governors Island will bring a tremendous resource that not only represents an important step forward for the City’s recovery, but also acknowledges and builds upon our history as the global center for innovation and progress.”

“Even before the pandemic, the need for preparation and innovation around our world’s most urgent crises was clear,” said **Trust for Governors Island President & CEO Clare Newman**. “As one of New York City’s great public places, Governors Island can serve as a powerful platform and living laboratory for research, innovation and advocacy. We’re thrilled to announce a vision that realizes the full potential of Governors Island, marrying its extraordinary open space, history, arts and culture with a visible center for confronting one of the defining issues of our time. We look forward to working with working with community stakeholders and our local elected officials in the coming months as we begin to make this plan a reality.”

“As we watch California burn while record-setting hurricanes pummel Louisiana, it is clear that even amid a pandemic we cannot lose sight of our looming climate crisis,” said **Daniel Zarrilli, NYC’s Chief Climate Policy Advisor**. “Today’s announcement of a climate solutions hub on Governors Island is exactly the kind of initiative we need to deliver on New York City’s world-leading Green New Deal and end the age of fossil fuels. We are committed to doing our part by divesting from fossil fuels, decarbonizing our economy, and investing to create a resilient and inclusive city. That’s how we will create the jobs that will accelerate our economic recovery, achieve justice for our communities on the front lines of our climate crisis, and ensure a livable future for the next generation.”

“As we face down climate disaster, we must reimagine a new world—and that world will be built right here in New York City,” said **Mayor’s Office of Resiliency Director Jaimey Bavishi**. “Drawing on New York City’s boundless talent and existing expertise in climate

adaptation, this first-of-its-kind center will foster new strategies and technologies with the goal of creating a safer, fairer, and more prosperous future.”

“Twenty years ago, I succeeded in returning Governors Island to New York,” said **Congressman Jerrold Nadler**. “Today’s announcement of a global center for climate solutions continues the remarkable transformation of Governors Island. Climate change is an existential threat to life on our planet, if we don’t take action now the harm will be irreversible. By bringing together a wide array of perspectives, including those of researchers, environmental justice advocates, educators, and members of the public, the center will position New York City to lead the fight against climate change. It is a fight we must win.”

“While the impact of climate change remains one of the world’s greatest challenges, we have the opportunity to make our communities more resilient and to build a 100% clean renewable energy economy that works for everyone. Governors Island could play a role in achieving that vision,” said **State Senator Brian Kavanagh, who represents lower Manhattan, western Brooklyn and Governors Island**. “I’m glad that the Trust for Governors Island has committed to an inclusive approach to developing a plan for this portion of the island. I cannot stress enough the importance of having communities in both Manhattan and Brooklyn actively involved in every step of the process. I look forward to working with the Trust, my colleagues in government, community residents, and other key stakeholders to ensure that the public engagement and review are thorough, open to all voices, and equitable.”

“The Trust for Governors Island, through their plan for a global center for climate solutions, is working to implement an important step in protecting our city from the harshest effects of climate change,” said **Assemblymember Yuh-Line Niou**. “It is not about if there will be another super storm, it is about when, and I am excited and grateful that Governors Island is putting forth this initiative in their unique space to create a research institute, laboratories, and a place to have these crucial discussions on climate change. It is important that we prioritize resiliency in our city and in our country and part of that is having these important conversations as well as having access to spaces which focus on this urgent issue.”

“Manhattan Community Board 1 is encouraged by the Trust's vision for an Island that is a hub of environmental consciousness and action,” said **Manhattan Community Board 1 Chairperson Tammy Meltzer**. “We look forward to working closely with the Trust to ensure that the Island is equitable for all and achieves the mutual goals of the community, including exciting opportunities such as energy self-sufficiency, carbon neutrality, prioritizing open space and green infrastructure”

“I applaud the Trust for Governors Island for creating its innovative vision for the Climate Solutions Center,” said **Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig, Head of the Climate Impacts Group at NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and former Co-Chair of the New York City Panel on Climate Change**. “The Center will provide a myriad of opportunities for the actions and knowledge-sharing needed to tackle climate change challenges. New York City has long been a leader in responding to climate change and this exciting initiative will ensure that the City will expand this significant role, both locally and globally.”

“As New York Harbor continues to become a flash point for the impacts of climate change, Regional Plan Association applauds the Trust’s timely decision to create a center for climate solutions in the heart of the harbor,” said **Regional Plan Association President and CEO Tom Wright**. “Since the mid-1990s when RPA convened the Governors Island Alliance to plan the future of the Island, we have advocated for a place that is truly public in nature and which

preserves open space, prioritizes educational uses and adheres to sustainable development principles. The Trust is taking a bold step towards these goals with the re-zoning plan, and we look forward to reviewing the plan during the land use review process.”

“The climate crisis will be one of the greatest challenges of our generation, but we know that smart design at parks and open spaces can help communities be more resilient, absorb stormwater, and reduce heat levels,” said **Trust for Public Land New York and New Jersey Director Carter Strickland**. “In New York City we have already demonstrated the power of parks to create healthy, livable, and resilient communities, and by providing a dedicated Center for Climate Solutions at Governors Island, we can refine our designs and spread our best practices.”

“From our coastlines to our street trees, New York City’s open spaces are integral to climate resilience,” said **New Yorkers for Parks Executive Director Adam Ganser**. “Housing an innovative center for addressing climate change on Governors Island, one of the most unique public spaces in our city, is a natural fit. It affirms the many important roles that public spaces serve: protecting the environment, supporting the health and wellness of visitors, and serving as anchors for community and collaboration.”

“Governors Island is closely entwined in our region’s history, and its future potential is tied to its role as a revitalized, resilient, accessible, and innovative waterfront community,” said **Waterfront Alliance President and CEO Courtney Worrall**. “What better place for a center of excellence and innovation focused on the climate crisis than on Governors Island? As a hub for future engineers, scientists, researchers and planners working together for resilience, the Island will play a critical role and provide opportunities for hands on learning and more direct access to the waterfront.”

“This makes so much sense for Governors Island, which is such an iconic and appropriate place to anchor New York’s research might in the fight for solutions to climate change,” said **Center for an Urban Future Executive Director Jonathan Bowles**. “It has the potential to help make the city a global leader in climate change research, and it will create a lot of good jobs at a time when that’s needed more than ever.”

“As longtime tenants of Governors Island and proud partners of the Trust for Governors Island—not to mention citizens of New York City and the world—we at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council are thrilled to be aligned with this urgent and visionary initiative,” said **Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Executive Director, Artistic Programs Lili Chopra**. “Climate change is among the most dire threats to our city, our country, and our planet, and we believe firmly that artists and the arts have a vital role to play in the public’s investigation of issues surrounding the environment, ecology, and sustainability.”

“For decades LMCC has been rooted in Lower Manhattan and on Governors Island, and as such we have experienced firsthand the devastating effects of climate change on our neighborhoods, our infrastructure, our city,” said **Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Executive Director, Finance & Administration Diego S. Segalini**. “We have always taken an active role in the recovery of our communities, and are proud to stand alongside our partners at the Trust for Governors Island in this proactive initiative to acknowledge and address climate change now, and meet future challenges head-on.”

“We fully support this new vision for Governors Island and are thrilled that the plans are designed to make real use of the Island’s position in the center of New York Harbor,”

said **Billion Oyster Project Executive Director Pete Malinowski**. “We look forward to working with the Trust to achieve this ambitious vision.”

“This is an inspiring, urgently necessary initiative,” said **Climate Museum Director Miranda Massie**. “We’re thankful the Trust is stepping up to the extraordinary challenge of the climate crisis and looking forward to extending our generative, rewarding partnership.”

“Lower Manhattan has always been a gateway to the future and to Governors Island,” said **Alliance for Downtown New York President Jessica Lappin**. “It is thrilling to think of a center, here, that could help us solve one of the great crises facing not only New York, but the entire globe. It’s a perfect use for this precious place.”

“We are grateful to the Trust for accommodating GrowNYC’s Teaching Garden on Governors Island for the past seven years,” said **GrowNYC President and CEO Marcel Van Ooyen**. “For the first six, our primary focus was hands-on environmental education for New York City school children and other visitors. But this year we pivoted to concentrate on food production and, to date, have distributed more than 12,000 pounds of food grown on the island to New Yorkers struggling with the effects of Covid-19. Governors Island is a uniquely special resource for New Yorkers, and we look forward to working with the Trust and others as they plan the next phase for the Island.”

“The vision for the Climate Center is perfectly aligned with the early values our organization helped establish,” said **Friends of Governors Island (formerly the Governors Island Alliance) Executive Director Merritt Birnbaum**. “Despite the great progress of the last two decades, Governors Island is still only a seasonal destination. The proposed plan will create a year-round environment where more and more people can discover and enjoy the Island’s extraordinary park and public space, while enhancing its existing focus on sustainability, education, the arts and recreation. As our City and our world look to overcome the burdens of recovery and resilience, this ambitious proposal will unlock the Island’s full potential and could not come at a better moment.”

In the coming months, the Trust will work with stakeholders, local elected officials, agencies and New Yorkers to help bring the vision to life, including through a proposed rezoning of the South Island to bring a resilient, mixed-use climate innovation district to life. The new district would allow for academic, commercial, non-profit, cultural, convening and hospitality facilities. The rezoning proposal, expected to enter the City’s formal public land-use review process in October, would extend uses allowed in the North Island to designated South Island development sites to support a year-round, 24/7 mixed-use district, anchored by an educational or research center. All buildings across the development sites will strictly adhere to flood-resistant construction methods.

The rezoning would expand the Island’s open space, increase its public connections, and protect all open space on the South Island. No zoning changes are being proposed for the North Island/Governors Island Historic District. All earned revenue generated on the Island through the rezoning will stay on the Island and go toward funding park maintenance, property management, transportation, security, utilities and infrastructure, creating a long-term path for the Trust’s financial sustainability. As part of this vision, the Trust plans to issue a solicitation to attract an anchor institution and complementing uses. At the same time, The Trust plans to continue to issue requests for proposals for historic buildings within the North Island, including cultural, educational and amenity uses to support expanded public access.

Governors Island provides the ideal location for such an ambitious proposal. Accessible by ferry, its position at the center of New York Harbor offers the feeling of being a world away with close proximity to Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, making it a potential magnet for the city's talent and a retreat for research, collaboration and education. The Island is also imbued with a focus on confronting and adapting to the impacts of a changing climate on a daily basis, from its direct water access and natural upland environment to its award-winning 43-acre park, which is a global leader in resilient landscape design and construction.

Thirty-three acres of development area on the Island's southern end were designated for future construction as part of the Island's Park and Public Space Master Plan, released in 2010, including the 6.5-acre Western Development Zone and 26.5-acre Eastern Development Zone. The proposed rezoning would comprise roughly 4.2 million square feet of development across those two zones.

The Island has undergone a wide-ranging transformation over the past decade, including a \$400 million investment to build an award-winning 43-acre park and in infrastructure upgrades. The Island is currently home to year-round tenants, including the New York Harbor School, the Billion Oyster Project and the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's newly expanded Arts Center at Governors Island, as well as dozens of seasonal arts and cultural partners. Since opening to the public in 2005, the Island has welcomed more than 6M visitors, and welcomed nearly 1M in 2019 alone. Nearly 80% of Governors Island visitors reside in New York City.

In March, the Trust issued a Request for Proposals from artistic, cultural, environmental and educational organizations for the use of two buildings in Nolan Park, a collection of 20 former military officer homes, on a long-term basis. The RFP is part of the Trust's broader efforts to breathe new life into several buildings within the Island's Historic District with year-round tenants in the areas of arts and culture, commercial activity, and hospitality and amenities to support both expanded access and increasing visitorship.

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About The Trust for Governors Island

The Trust for Governors Island is the nonprofit corporation created by the City of New York that is responsible for the redevelopment and operation of 150 acres of Governors Island. The Trust's mission is to transform Governors Island into a vibrant resource for New York City, making this island at the center of New York Harbor a destination with extraordinary public open space, as well as educational, not-for-profit and commercial facilities. For more information, visit www.govisland.org.

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