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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation Unveils Newly Renovated Blackwell House**

*Historic Landmark Brings Community and Visitors Together to Experience Some of the Islands Most Historic Treasures*

*See Pictures and Information [Here](#)*

(ROOSEVELT ISLAND, NY – November 2020) The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) today announced the ribbon cutting for the newly renovated Blackwell House. Located at 500 Main Street, this two-story landmark is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is home to some of the island’s most historical treasures, records, and archives. This socially distanced, special invite only event will take place on Wednesday, November 18<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 AM, and will be live streamed on RIOC’s Instagram page ([rooseveltislandrioc](https://www.instagram.com/rooseveltislandrioc)).

“We are pleased to bring this well-loved island landmark back to life, using it to tell the history of Roosevelt Island through exhibition, as well as through community stories and experiences,” **said RIOC Acting President & CEO, Shelton J. Haynes.**

Established around 1796, the Blackwell House’s renovated interior features historically accurate décor from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century and includes images of other landmarked structures and buildings on the island that are no longer standing. The first floor of Blackwell House will be open to the public during specified times for viewings and tours.

The \$2.9 million Blackwell House Interior Project was funded by RIOC, with a contribution of nearly \$370,000 coming from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA). The work included installation of new partitions, stairs, ceilings, doors, trimming, heating and ventilation system, and as well as electrical, plumbing and fixtures. A new ADA compliant access ramp was also added to the exterior, providing access next to the front porch, which was also given an upgrade.

**Roosevelt Island Historical Society President, Judy Berdy said,** “Blackwell House serves as a concrete link to our past. If you have never taken a really good look at the house, you should note the delicate decorative work under the eaves of the roof and appreciate the scale and proportion.”

Throughout the years, the house served as residential quarters for local almshouse wardens and hospital directors, and was used for small community celebrations in the 1970s. The original resident of the home was James Blackwell, whose father inherited the island from his wife's stepfather, Captain John Manning, the Sheriff of New York. New York City purchased the island from the Blackwell family in 1823 to build institutions for the most populous city in the country.

**Congresswoman Carolyn B. Maloney (NY-12) said,** “The Blackwell House on Roosevelt Island is of great historical and cultural significance. I am thrilled to have helped RIOC obtain grants to restore this important landmark for all Roosevelt Islanders and New Yorkers to enjoy. Roosevelt Island’s rich history is oftentimes forgotten, and the Blackwell House aims to educate visitors about the Island and its importance place in the history of the City of New York.”

**State Senator Jose M. Serrano said,** "Blackwell House is Roosevelt Island's oldest landmark, and the recent renovations will not only preserve this piece of New York's history, but they will bring the house back to life by making it accessible to residents and visitors through exhibits, tours, and community space. Many thanks to the Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation for their commitment to ensuring the island's history can be experienced by future generations."

**Assembly Member Rebecca Seawright said,** “We are proud to have Blackwell House, one of the few farmhouses in New York dating from the years immediately after the Revolutionary War, in our district on Roosevelt Island. I have toured the house, newly renovated and beautiful, it is here to resource our community for generations to come. I commend the Roosevelt Island Historical Society and Judy Berdy for their diligent work to preserve and educate on the history of Roosevelt Island and New York City.”

**Council Member Ben Kallos said** "Roosevelt Island's history is unique and unlike anywhere else in New York City, preserving this structure and using it to educate the public is exactly the right thing to do. I am proud to have been able to help fund restorations to the property so that future generations are able to learn about New York's colonial history."

For more information on Blackwell House and to view pictures of the renovation, visit [rioc.ny.gov/176](http://rioc.ny.gov/176)

#### About RIOC

The Roosevelt Island Operating Corporation (RIOC) was created in 1984 by the State of New York as a public benefit corporation with a mission to plan, design, develop, operate, and maintain Roosevelt Island. With a focus on innovative and environmentally friendly solutions, RIOC is committed to providing services that enhance the island's residential community. RIOC manages the two-mile long island's roads, parks, buildings, a sports facility, and public transportation, including the iconic Roosevelt Island Tramway. Additionally, RIOC operates a Public Safety Department that helps maintain a safe and secure environment for residents, employees, business owners, and visitors.

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