



EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY

America's Most Historic Prison

Dear friend:

Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site has done the seemingly impossible: we have transformed this collapsing, once dangerous property into a thriving cultural attraction. We have firmly established a reputation as a destination for Philadelphians, leisure tourists from around the nation and world, and school students and their teachers. More than 250,000 people visit Eastern State annually to discover stories of the men and women who lived and worked behind the prison walls, and reflect on some of the most critical issues facing our nation today.

I am writing you, and other friends, members, supporters, and colleagues, to brief you on highlights of our recently completed Strategic Plan, and some improvements we expect to complete during the next decade.

I hope that we can count on your input, participation, and encouragement on the road ahead.

“...Their conversation ended with the tour guide asking my daughter if she was scared of her because she had been in prison. My daughter said, “No!” and they departed with a huge hug!!!!

My daughter's little mind just broke through numerous barriers. But, even more barriers were broken because over the years I have tried to keep her from learning that her own uncle, my baby brother, is in the middle of a ten year prison sentence.

Last night we discussed the truth of where her uncle has been, and I owe it all to this tour guide, and her openness, her honesty, her bravery, and her kindness.”

– Cherie

Eastern State visitor in 2016

It is time to talk about criminal justice reform.

Many Americans believe that criminal justice reform is the civil rights issue of our times. Eastern State Penitentiary is already the site where these issues are most robustly addressed with a broad audience.

We continue our commitment to balanced, inclusive public history. We continue to engage our visitors with Eastern State's rich legacy and its international influence as the world's first true "penitentiary." We tell the stories of famous Eastern State prisoners "Slick Willie" Sutton and Al Capone.

But, increasingly, we use the power of this rich historic setting to deepen the national conversation about some of the most critical and complex issues facing the United States.

■ **Nationally-Recognized Criminal Justice Exhibits.**

Every visitor to Eastern State encounters *The Big Graph*, a 16-foot tall, 1.5 ton infographic sculpture that compares the staggering U.S. incarceration rate to all other nations in the world. It illustrates the ongoing crisis of racial disparity in the American prison population. A companion exhibition, *Prisons Today*, uses digital interactives and creative film making to pose challenging questions. The exhibit won the 2016 **Overall Excellence in Exhibition Award** from the

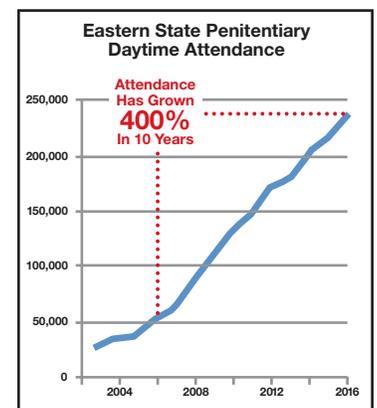


American Alliance of Museums, the highest award in the museum exhibition field. A full 91% of our visitors now report that they have learned something thought-provoking about today's criminal justice system.

■ **Behind the Scenes Tours.** Our *Hands-On-History* tours bring visitors into hard-to-reach places, such as "the Hole," underground punishment cells beneath Cellblock 14. Small groups of visitors explore these solitary confinement cells, experience the profound isolation, and reflect on the uses of solitary confinement in prisons today.

■ **Returning Citizen Tour Guides.** In a pilot program, recently incarcerated men and women ("returning citizens") have joined our staff as part-time tour guides. They compare life at Eastern State Penitentiary to their own experiences while incarcerated in the modern U.S. prison system. Although more than 600,000 Americans leave prison every year, most of our visitors have never had a conversation about incarceration with someone who has lived through it. This project also offers returning citizens a valuable employment opportunity.

By combining historic preservation with contemporary relevance, we have created a thriving historic site model. We have raised \$16.3 million in preservation funding. We have hosted 3.5 million visitors from around the world. And we have experienced **400% attendance growth in the last 10 years.**



A Ten-Year Strategic Plan

We are at a crossroads. Having addressed most of the stabilization and programmatic challenges that faced the organization 20 years ago, the time has come for a new, more ambitious vision.

We have rewritten our mission statement to embody our new vision, and created an ambitious Strategic Plan for the infrastructure and visitor amenities necessary to realize this site's extraordinary potential.

Our New Mission

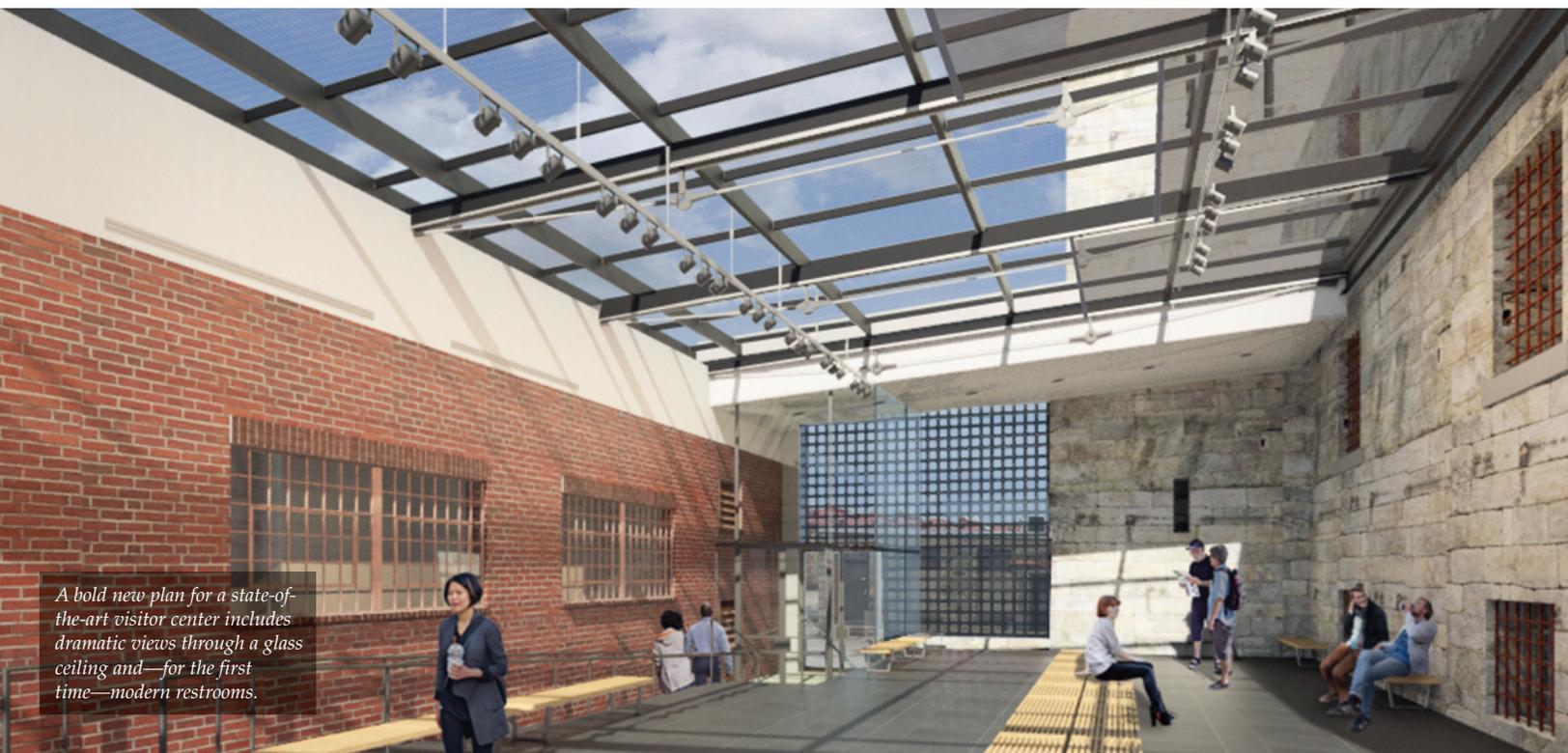
"We interpret the legacy of American criminal justice reform, from the nation's founding through to the present day, within the long-abandoned cellblocks of the nation's most historic prison."

Modern Facilities, Adaptive Re-Use, and Innovate Historic Preservation



Tour Guide Hifiece engages visitors at the punishment cells, sharing his personal experience in prison as part of the Returning Citizens Tour Guide Project.

In the coming five years, we will continue our careful preservation work, knowing that care for this National Historic Landmark will always be critical to the visitor experience. We will expand the number of programs that address the thorny issues of race, poverty, and policy, interpreting current day criminal justice issues. Our programs will remain social, multi-generational and interactive. They will continue to value our visitors' many perspectives and personal experiences.



A bold new plan for a state-of-the-art visitor center includes dramatic views through a glass ceiling and—for the first time—modern restrooms.

Financial Stability and Growth

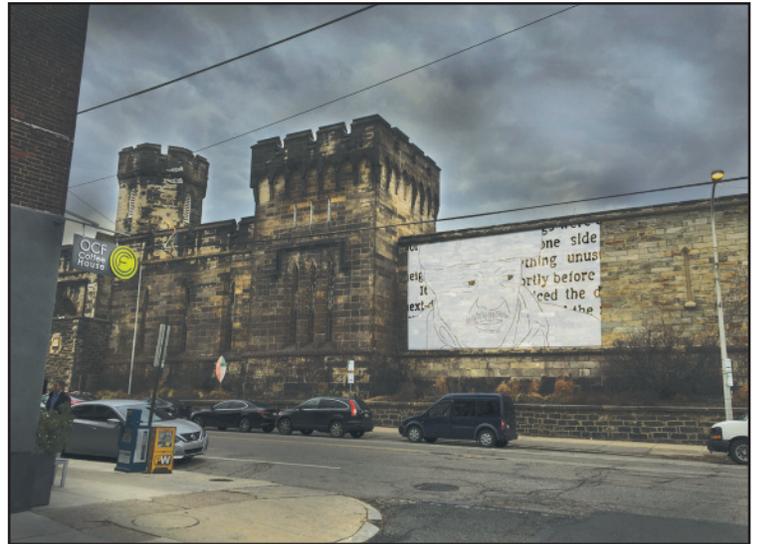
Our nighttime haunted attraction, *Terror Behind the Walls*, supports daily operations, exhibitions, and educational programs, and has funded modest investments in the building. To realize Eastern State's full potential, however, our Strategic Plan will require us to earn greater support from individuals and the philanthropic community.

The Projection Project

We are commissioning original animated films from incarcerated artists. With funding from the Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, the project will use the penitentiary's dramatic façade as a canvas for these stories told directly by men and women living and working in prison. These films will be projected every night for a month during the fall of 2019.

A Modern Visitor Center

Visitors will be welcomed into a climate-controlled atrium with striking views of Eastern State's historic towers. Nearby modern restrooms will be the first ever offered to visitors. The space will provide a group tour gathering place protected from the weather, and a comfortable venue for small evening events 12 months a year.



Artist rendering of the Projection Project, slated for 2019.
Image: *Last Day of Freedom*, courtesy of Living Condition LLC.



Eastern State's chapel on the second floor of the Industrial Building.
Photo: *Historic American Building Survey*, 1998.

Chapel and Industrial Building Renovation

The renovation and adaptive re-use of the Industrial Building, with its spectacular chapel, is the key to realizing Eastern State's potential as a national center for criminal justice dialogue. The chapel will seat 250 people, allowing the site to host nationally-recognized thought leaders, criminal justice symposia, and summits of lawmakers and policy experts.

If you would like to learn more about the Strategic Plan, we have posted the full Executive Summary on our website www.EasternState.org. And if you would like to have a conversation, please email me at sje@easternstate.org. Better yet, please meet me in the cellblocks to witness these changes in person!

Sincerely,

Sara Jane (Sally) Elk
President and CEO