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February 8, 2005

New Staten Island Ferry Terminal Awash in Light



Standing before a panoramic backdrop of windows facing Lower Manhattan's skyscrapers, Mayor Michael Bloomberg made official the grand reopening of the Whitehall Ferry Terminal on Tuesday, February 8. Nearly double the square footage of the original terminal, the new Whitehall has all the bells and whistles of a contemporary 24-hour public transit station, along with stunning views of New York Harbor and the downtown skyline.

The new Whitehall Ferry Terminal opens with nearly double the square footage of the original space. "You can walk into this terminal day or night and feel like you're part of the city," said Bloomberg, who called the Staten Island Ferry ride his favorite mode of transportation in New York. "[The terminal] is a continuation of what you feel on the ferry."

The new, \$201 million terminal, which is built on a pier cantilevered over the harbor, is home to a lofty, 75-foot-high entry hall outfitted with new public-address and signage systems, police and tourist offices, concession spaces, and heating and air conditioning. Escalators at the entrances sweep commuters and visitors to and from the spacious waiting area, which includes an outdoor deck wrapped around the building.

"The idea is that you'd stand here and be surrounded by this great skyline -- you'd see the Statue of Liberty, historic Battery Park, the Brooklyn Bridge," architect Fred Schwartz said. His team's design unanimously won an international competition for the terminal in 1992 after a fire badly damaged the original Whitehall. "I'm very moved to see people standing at the window looking at the Statue of Liberty."



Mayor Bloomberg makes the Whitehall reopening official

The new structure is composed almost entirely of glass and steel and, in addition to capturing abundant natural light, gives commuters and visitors a "sense that they're suspended over the water," Bloomberg said.

The terminal employs modern technology in several ways, with features such as rooftop solar panels, which supply part of the terminal's electricity, and "radiant floors," which warm the terrazzo floor from below with water-filled tanks.

As of March, Whitehall also will be home to 28 granite benches designed by artist Ming Fay. His functional art pieces, entitled *Whitehall Crossing*, were commissioned by the city Dept. of Cultural Affairs' "Percent for Art" program and mimic Indian canoes crossing New York Bay.



New escalators welcome over 65,000 ferry riders daily

With more than 65,000 ferry passengers traversing the terminal daily, the construction team of Tishman/Harris has worked diligently since the mid-1990s to complete the work while maintaining regular ferry operations -- one of many elements that added to the project's complexity, explained Andrew Alper, president of the city Economic Development Corporation (EDC), which oversaw the renovation.

"Not one single service disruption occurred [as a result of] the renovation," Alper said. He explained that such a feat is remarkable considering Whitehall's high passenger volume, unique structural design, location above subway lines, proximity to major utilities, and delays from security and funding following 9/11.

The new terminal is complemented by a recent addition to the Staten Island ferry fleet,

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the [Guy V. Molinari](#), which launched on January 26. The *Molinari* is one of three new, \$40 million boats that will modernize the fleet with the latest marine technology and on-board systems; the next two vessels are slated for operation by fall 2005.

Meanwhile, the St. George Ferry Terminal in Staten Island is now wrapping up its renovation, on schedule for a spring 2005 opening.

Outside Whitehall, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, in cooperation with city Departments of Transportation and Parks and Recreation, is renovating Peter Minuit Plaza and neighboring subway station entrances. The revamped plaza will serve as a community gathering place with a covered walkway, 42 new trees, a taxi drop-off zone, and nearby bus loop for the M1, M6, and M15 buses.



The terminal's grand exterior is a beacon for commuters and tourists

Tiny Bradley, a three-year Staten-Island resident, has witnessed Whitehall Terminal evolve over the years from a construction zone to its newly completed state. Today, she stood waiting for the next boat, listening to Bloomberg and other officials explain the building's design and amenities. "I'm really amazed," she said. "It's brightened up, they have the signs up for the slips and the time -- they did a good job. It's 100 percent better."

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