



National Park Service and Gateway Arch Park Foundation host groundbreaking celebration to commence Old Courthouse renovations

Construction will begin this week, marking the official beginning of the final phase of the CityArchRiver project to expand and revitalize Gateway Arch National Park and its surrounding areas. For the first time in its history, the Old Courthouse will be accessible to visitors of all abilities.

ST. LOUIS, MO (February 2, 2023) Last week, more than 100 community members and civic leaders joined the National Park Service and Gateway Arch Park Foundation for a groundbreaking ceremony to commence the historic renovation of the Old Courthouse at Gateway Arch National Park.

Construction will begin this week, marking the official beginning of the final phase of the [CityArchRiver Project](#). Structural updates, which will help revitalize and maintain the building's integrity, will include a new heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system; renovated ceilings and flooring; a new fire suppression system; and general restoration and improvements.

Perhaps most anticipated are the **all-new exhibit galleries, which will focus on the Scott family's fight for freedom** and the relevancy of their case today; the post-Civil War era of civil rights and the exploration of African American life in St. Louis; the architectural features of the Old Courthouse; and the importance of courts in our society.

Importantly, the Old Courthouse renovations also include accessibility improvements, which, according to Gateway Arch Park Foundation Executive Director Ryan McClure, will mean that **"for the first time in its history, the Old Courthouse will be accessible to visitors of all abilities, with the transformation of a former conference room into an elevator."**

Partners in the historic renovation of the Old Courthouse include two St. Louis-based companies – the construction company Tarlton Corporation, and the architectural firm Trivers – as well as the exhibit design company, Haley Sharpe Designs, based in the U.K., who also designed the beautiful exhibits of the new Museum at the Gateway Arch, which opened in 2018.

In opening remarks, Gateway Arch National Park Superintendent Jeremy Sweat spoke about the title of the event, "Groundbreaking a New Vision for the Old Courthouse," which is not only about making the Old Courthouse more accessible for people of all ability levels, but will include updated exhibits telling a more full, rich history about Dred and Harriet Scott, freedom suits, women's rights, and the judicial system. He also discussed the role of the National Park Service

in preserving and interpreting some of the most important historic sites in America, including many sites and buildings related to our nation's civil rights history.

Ms. Lynne Jackson, President & Founder of the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation and great, great granddaughter of Harriet and Dred Scott joined speakers to celebrate the historic occasion, saying “We’re getting to share a deeper part of [Dred and Harriet Scott’s] story... you see a truer story being told. When people walk into this Courthouse—like I did as a teenager—they won’t just see their small picture somewhere on a wall upstairs. Over the years, their story has come to light in a much more significant way, and I appreciate that.”

City of St. Louis Mayor Tishaura Jones underscored the importance of confronting our nation's problematic past: “As we break ground on this important project, on the eve of Black History Month, let us remember both what this building represents, and how these renovations will make sure the Old Courthouse remains a destination for education and learning for generations to come.”

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About Gateway Arch National Park

Gateway Arch National Park is a unit of the National Park Service that commemorates Thomas Jefferson's vision of a unified continental nation and St. Louis' role as the gateway to the American West during the 19th century and preserves the Old Courthouse as the site of the Dred Scott case. The park includes the Gateway Arch, the Arch grounds and the Old Courthouse, located on the riverfront in downtown St. Louis. Admission to the Museum at the Gateway Arch is free, and most programs are free of charge and open to the public. Many programs and events at the park benefit from the generous support of park partners Gateway Arch Park Foundation,

Jefferson National Parks Association, and Bi-State Development. The Gateway Arch is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. The Old Courthouse is currently closed. The park is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas Day and New Year's Day. For more information, visit [NPS.gov/jeff](https://www.nps.gov/jeff).

About Gateway Arch Park Foundation

Gateway Arch Park Foundation is the official philanthropic partner and conservancy for Gateway Arch National Park. Its mission is to ensure the Gateway Arch, its grounds, neighboring public spaces, and attractions are a vital, welcoming, well-supported resource to the community and nation for generations to come. It seeks to fulfill its mission by providing for ongoing conservation, preservation and education at the park, in addition to hosting, facilitating and promoting community programs that bring the park and its surrounding areas in Downtown St. Louis to life. The Foundation is part of an alliance that helps meet this mission, which includes the National Park Service, Bi-State Development, Great Rivers Greenway, Jefferson National Parks Association, and the City of St. Louis. For more information, visit [ArchPark.org](https://www.archpark.org).