



FORD HOUSE

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The Historic Ford House Opened New Visitor Center May 26
Restaurant, Event Space, Educational Rooms and Programs Announced
New exhibition features first-ever rare, vintage car collection

GROSSE POINTE SHORES, Mich. – Ford House, the historic estate of Edsel and Eleanor Ford, opened its first major expansion in over 90 years to the public May 26— a 40,000 square-foot Visitor Center and 17,000 square-foot Administration Building. The state-of-the-art Visitor Center will bring a new restaurant, four event spaces, exhibition spaces, expanded program offerings and breathtaking views of Ford Cove. The Ford family’s legacy will never change, but this expansion project has allowed Ford House to convey the history of one of America and Detroit’s most renowned families in an interactive and immersive style.

The Visitor Center and Administration Building were designed to be net-zero energy efficient, with great care to emphasize sustainability and the surrounding natural ecosystem. The buildings will enhance the visitor experience and allow the National Historic Landmark estate to plan and pursue long-term restoration and rehabilitation projects.

“Our goal is to weave together the Ford family legacy with 21st century technology,” said Ford House President & CEO Mark Heppner. “This milestone expansion project was designed with the visitor experience top of mind. The brand-new, state of the art Visitor Center is our commitment that Ford House will always be an inclusive community destination.”

Starting May 26 through May 29, visitors are invited to participate in an Open House to see both buildings, explore the grounds and gardens, and enjoy fun activities to celebrate the expansion. Adult admission for the open house event will be \$5 and includes access to the inaugural exhibitions, grounds and gardens. Ford House members will receive exclusive access the weekend before, May 21-23, with free admission. Purchase tickets in advance by visiting fordhouse.org.

The Visitor Center will open with three exhibitions—an orientation gallery and two rotating exhibitions. The *Ford Family Story* is a permanent exhibition that introduces visitors to Edsel and Eleanor Ford’s estate, demonstrates how the Fords built a life and home that paid tribute to the property’s natural environment, the arts and interior design. Equipped with multiple interactive displays including a virtual scrapbook and projected home movies, the exhibit shares intimate moments throughout the Fords’ lives



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on the estate. *Driven by Design*, the Visitor Center's first rotating exhibition, will feature three rare vehicles that have never been showcased together – the world's only 1939 Lincoln Continental prototype, the 1932 Ford Model 18 Speedster and 1934 Ford Model 40 Special Speedster – to tell the story of Edsel Ford's role in bringing elegant automotive design to Ford Motor Company. The second traveling exhibition, located in the education wing, will feature artwork from the community. *The Future of Movement* will be the inaugural display, showcasing the next wave of ingenuity and mobility-forward automotive designs from College for Creative Studies students. This exhibition space was designed to rotate offerings on a regular basis; therefore, visitors will only be able to experience *The Future of Movement* until August 2021.

"My grandparents, Eleanor and Edsel, placed such a high value on hospitality, making guests feel welcome in their home. Adding new amenities to the Ford House experience in the form of the Visitor Center extends that hospitality to everyone who visits the estate today," said Lynn Ford Alandt, chairperson of the Ford House board of trustees. "And in the new exhibits, you can hear the family's stories in a personal way. It's a lovely celebration of who they were and their legacy."

The Visitor Center offers four event spaces and three meeting rooms, all equipped with the latest technology and completely adaptable to accommodate your business meeting, social gathering or workshops. The two signature private event spaces, the Lake Shore Room and the St. Clair Room, have sweeping views of Ford Cove and Lake St. Clair from the Visitor Center's second floor. Both rooms open to a balcony or patio, allowing for outdoor entertainment. To meet the needs of the business community, the Visitor Center also offers three conference rooms that can be rented for break-out sessions or committee meetings.

The center's education wing is home to Ford House's expanded programming and perfect for hosting workshops or classes. There are two designated indoor spaces, The Jensen and The Kahn Rooms, with access to a tented patio. These rooms can be rented separately or combined to create a larger space. Following the opening week events, Ford House will kick off the summer 2021 season with a variety of activities including a live concert series, classes, workshops, lectures, picnics, yard games, the EyesOn Design Car Show and many more.

On June 3, Ford House will have the grand opening of *The Continental*, one of the only water-side restaurants in the Grosse Pointes. Celebrated Chef Michael Keys will carryover beloved items from the previous restaurant and present a modern twist on Detroit favorites, such as the iconic Maurice Salad from Hudson's. Lunch, dinner, and Sunday brunch will be offered alongside breathtaking views of Ford Cove. The 64-seat restaurant will also have outdoor dining on the lakeshore patio. Guests are encouraged to reserve their table in advance by calling 313-884-4222.

The Speedster, a quick-service dining option, is also available with "grab-and-go" options like salads, sandwiches, and snacks that can be enjoyed on the patio or anywhere on the estate grounds.



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The Visitor Center will also feature *The Shop* offering one-of-a-kind items inspired by the Fords' pastimes and passions, automotive history, as well as merchandise custom designed to reflect the Ford House architecture and seasonal programming.

Detroit-based SmithGroup designed the buildings to reflect and complement the Albert Kahn-designed historical buildings at Ford House, featuring a Cotswold style with a contemporary vernacular. The limestone exterior is paired with a slate roof, showcasing steep arched gables and prominent chimney features. The new buildings are sited to take full advantage of the waterfront property on Lake St. Clair, as well as the Jens Jensen-designed landscaping.

In addition to the architectural intent, core to the design was a commitment to advancing environmental stewardship. Ford House is positioned on a migratory bird path and maintains Bird Island as a wildlife habitat. To protect the migratory birds, the new buildings are fitted with bird-safe glass windows crafted to prevent bird casualties often caused by heavily windowed structures. The project incorporates an innovative stormwater management system that captures all stormwater on the estate in holding tanks and filters it through a series of wetland-like fields before releasing it into Lake St. Clair. As a result, the water released will be cleaner than the water already in the lake.

The new 17,000-square-foot Administration Building was designed to high standards of energy efficiency, targeting to be energy Net-Zero to Net-Positive, fitted with systems to create as much or more energy than the facility consumes. Any excess energy it creates will contribute energy to the operation of the Visitor Center. The buildings are equipped with solar panels, utilizing photovoltaic cells to harvest solar energy. Occupancy sensors and photocells track movement in the buildings allowing lights and ventilation systems to automatically modulate and save energy. Three-hundred-foot wells were dug to provide geothermal support to offset heating and cooling for the buildings and reduce their carbon footprint.

"We are thrilled that this project will be able to enrich the visitor experience by interpreting the vision of Jens Jensen and Albert Kahn, linking to the history of the estate," said design principal at SmithGroup Ben Grobe. "The ability to show the community that we can make our water cleaner than it was that we can create more energy than we spend, all while enriching our cultural heritage and adding beauty to the world is a powerful statement."

As the new buildings approach their opening, the estate has begun restoring the property's swimming pool, lagoon and surrounding landscape on the southeast corner to the original vision of the Fords. When the restoration project is complete, visitors will be able to see the pool, lagoon, landscape and views of Lake St. Clair as Edsel and Eleanor Ford and their children did when the estate was their home in the 1920s and 1930s. The restoration is expected to be completed in mid-2022. Additionally, staff will be relocated from the historic house to the Administration Building, allowing the organization to better preserve the estate's historic core. The offices were in the wing occupied by the Fords' staff, and those spaces in the Main Residence can now be restored to allow visitors to access more of the home.



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The property features four historic buildings designed by Detroit architect Albert Kahn, including the Fords' Main Residence. The 30,000-square-foot home comprises 60 rooms. Among the original buildings on the estate are the Gate Lodge, the estate's public façade, the Power House containing the original three boilers which provided hot water heat for the House and swimming pool, and a Recreation Building with racquetball courts and a poolside sunroom.

Ford House's grounds were designed by Jens Jensen, the Danish-born master of naturalistic landscape design and chief exponent of the prairie style in American landscape design history. Jensen worked closely with Edsel and Eleanor in the late 1920s and early 1930s on their vision for the estate, which included dredging Ford Cove to launch family boats, also creating a small peninsula, the Bird Island nature preserve.

"The addition of the new Visitor Center will allow Ford House to more completely tell the stories of the life and legacy of my grandparents, Edsel and Eleanor Ford, their beloved home and the artists and designers who collaborated to create it," Lynn Ford Alandt, chairperson of the Ford House board of trustees, said. "My grandmother wanted her estate to be a place where people feel welcomed. We look forward to welcoming visitors from all over the world to enjoy the expanded amenities these new buildings will offer."

Tours of the Main Residence are available for an additional fee, and are self-guided and enhanced with an app, handouts and strategically located staff. Hours for the grand opening are 1 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, May 26. The open house will continue Thursday, Friday and Saturday, May 27 -29, 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Additional information about the expansion project can be found [here](#).

About Ford House

Ford House is located at 1100 Lake Shore Road in Grosse Pointe Shores. Since 1978, Ford House has welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors to share in Eleanor Ford's vision of preserving the estate for future generations to enjoy through interpretive tours, family activities, lectures, exhibits and gardens and grounds events. For more information, visit www.fordhouse.org or call 313-884-4222 and connect with Ford House on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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