

National Gallery of Art

Proposal for **Exterior Visitor Wayfinding System**

May 2026

Summary of Changes

Proposed signs for review

Reviewed on 2/14/2026

Campus ID Monument



Campus Orientation Sign (lectern)

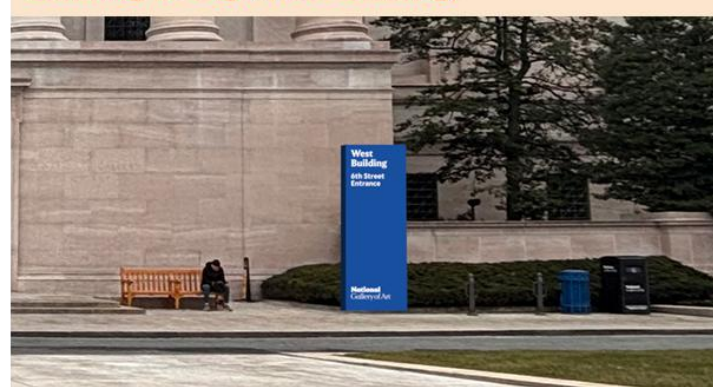


Gallery Overview Sign (lectern)

Inside the Sculpture Garden

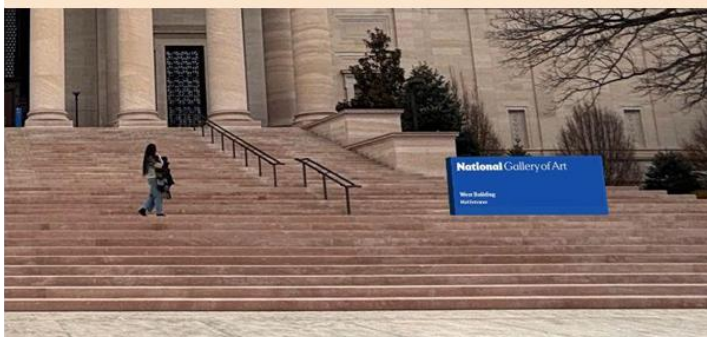


Building ID Sign (freestanding)

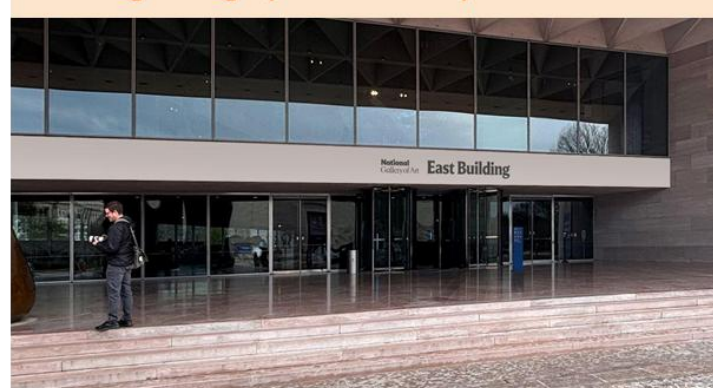


Building ID Sign (plinths at Mall Entrance steps)

Historical precedence for sign location



Building ID Sign (wall-mounted)



Proposed signs for review

Revised as of 5/20/2026

Campus ID Monument



Campus Orientation Sign (lectern)



Gallery Overview Sign (lectern)

Inside the Sculpture Garden



Building ID Sign (freestanding)

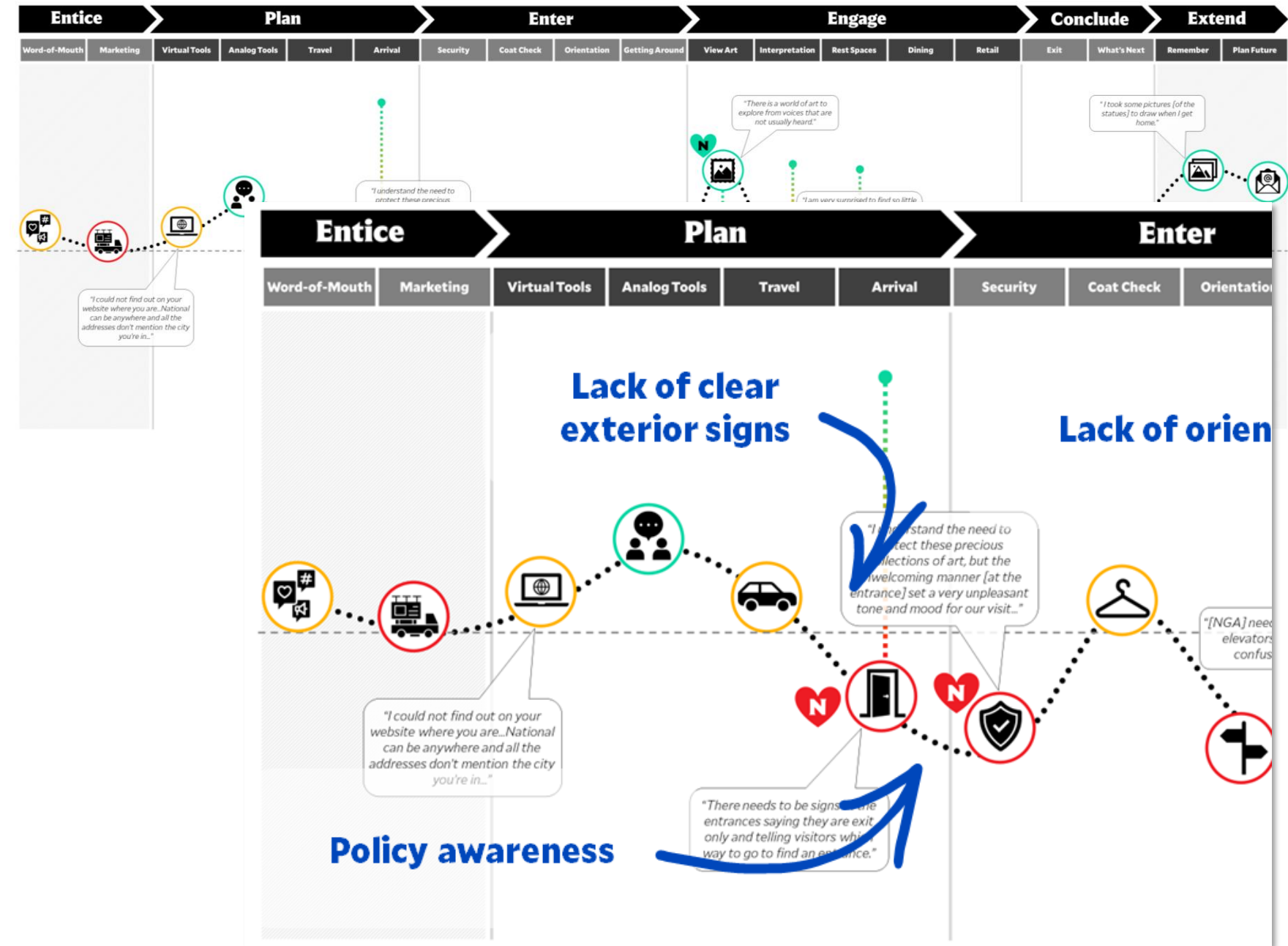


- The Campus ID Monument has been redesigned in response to agency feedback on the character/compatibility of design previously proposed. The revised design updates the existing signage and maintains the same overall dimensions.
- The number of different sign types has been reduced. The Building ID Sign is now used consistently at all entrances. All Building ID Signs are freestanding, and do not attach to the building in any way. In several locations, the Building ID Sign has shifted away from the building and closer to the sidewalk. Previously proposed plinths on the Mall stairs and wall-mounted banner over East Building entrance have been eliminated.
- The base of the Campus Orientation Sign (lectern) has been redesigned to appear less "heavy."
- Size of signage and scale of text have been revised to improve legibility.

Wayfinding is the #1 issue amongst visitors to the National Gallery.

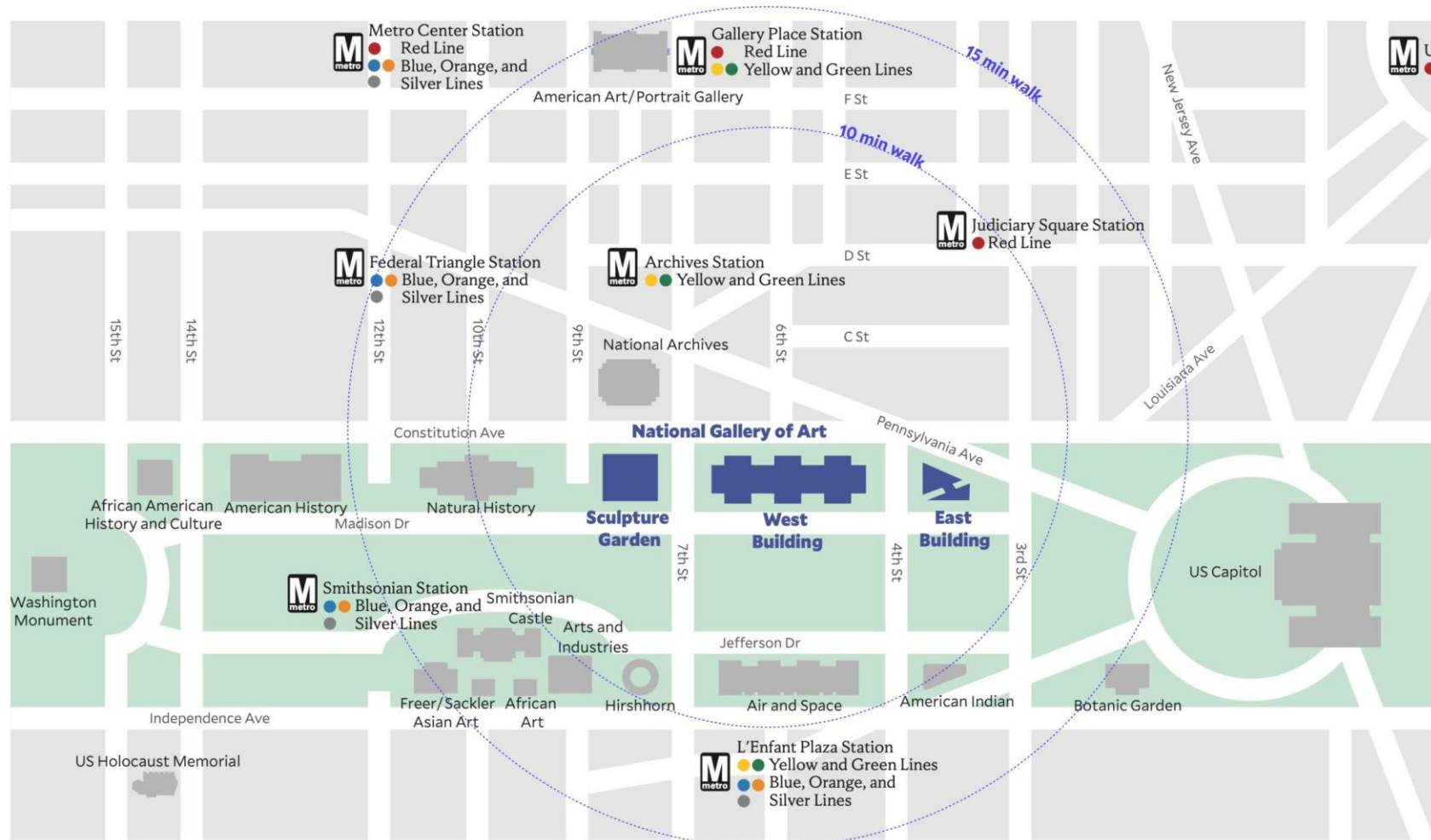
Wayfinding satisfaction is consistently low amongst our current audiences, especially our first-time visitors, with an average -2 satisfaction score.

Wayfinding impacts the visitor's entire journey but has the greatest impact at the beginning of the journey when a visitor is still considering to visit.



The National Gallery of Art has the largest footprint along the eastern end of the National Mall.

The National Gallery occupies about 25% of the central museum portion of the National Mall yet draws only 15% of the area's visitation. This imbalance highlights a **missed opportunity to better serve and engage the millions of visitors who come to the Mall each year.**



When surveyed in the Sculpture Garden, only 10% of visitors knew they were at the National Gallery and **<5% were aware of the existence of the East and West Buildings**

Visitors to the National Mall are more likely to **mistake the National Gallery's Mall entrance for the Supreme Court or a Federal office building** comparative to more clearly identified Smithsonian museums.

The National Gallery is host to *the nation's* art collection. How might we ensure that all visitors navigating the complexity of the National Mall are aware of and can access this resource?

The National Gallery serves the nation by welcoming all people. To achieve this, its campus environment needs to be accessible.

Unlike our Mall counterparts, the **National Gallery has 11 public entrances**. This openness is a great benefit but also presents a challenge for clear identification and navigation to entrances, especially for **first-time visitors (40%)**.

Our Mall audience has a **wide range of access needs** – from families with small children and strollers to those with limited mobility or wheelchair users – **who rely on clear and accessible routes across the Mall**.

Visible, high-contrast signage is critical for those with low vision, supporting **safe navigation, early orientation, and independent decision making**.

Majority of visitors don't do much planning before a visit (72%), relying on environmental graphics to support their journey. **Passersby often aren't aware of key amenities** such as restrooms and dining options.



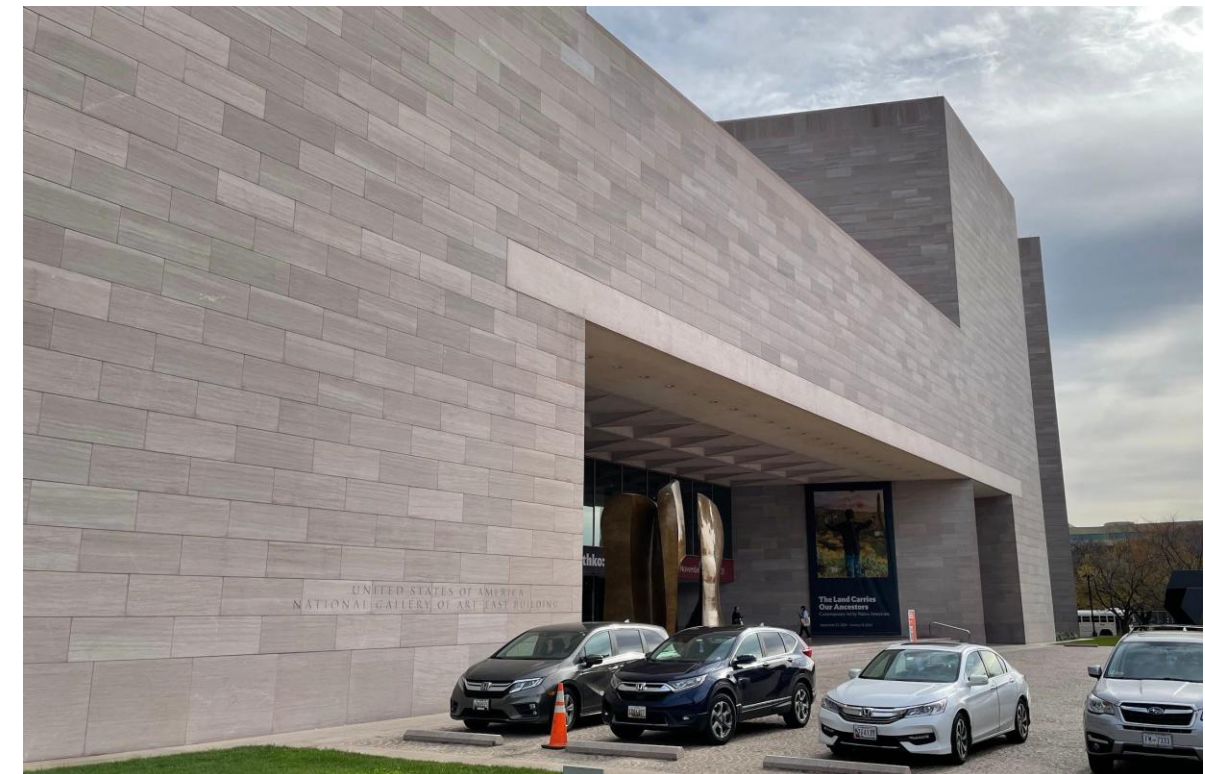
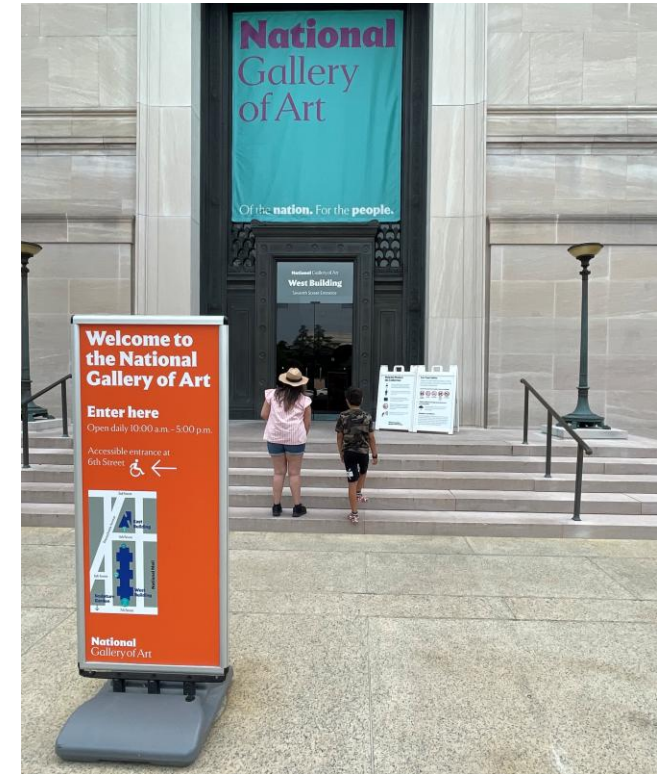
A clearly defined offer enhances the public's engagement and follows pre-established visual rhythms.

To meet the needs of our Mall audiences currently, the National Gallery has **existing sign solutions**.
However, the design and ad hoc placement are confusing and present a disorganized image to visitors.

Replacing ad-hoc sign solutions with thoughtful and logically patterned interventions to **reduce visual clutter**.

Recognizable family of sign types that sequence information for Mall pedestrians, **following familiar patterns** seen outside Smithsonian museums by extending and complementing the BID and NPS systems on the National Mall itself.

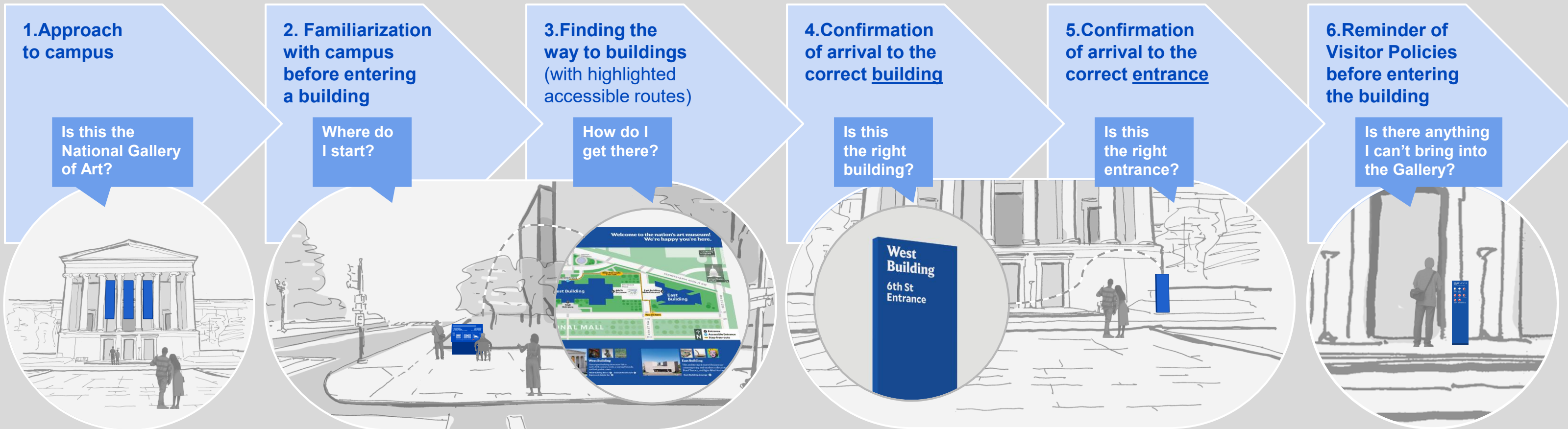
Historic engravings that identify the National Gallery are illegible and do not adequately meet the needs that audiences need and come to expect in the 21st Century.



How the proposed new exterior signs support the visitor

The visitor's arrival journey

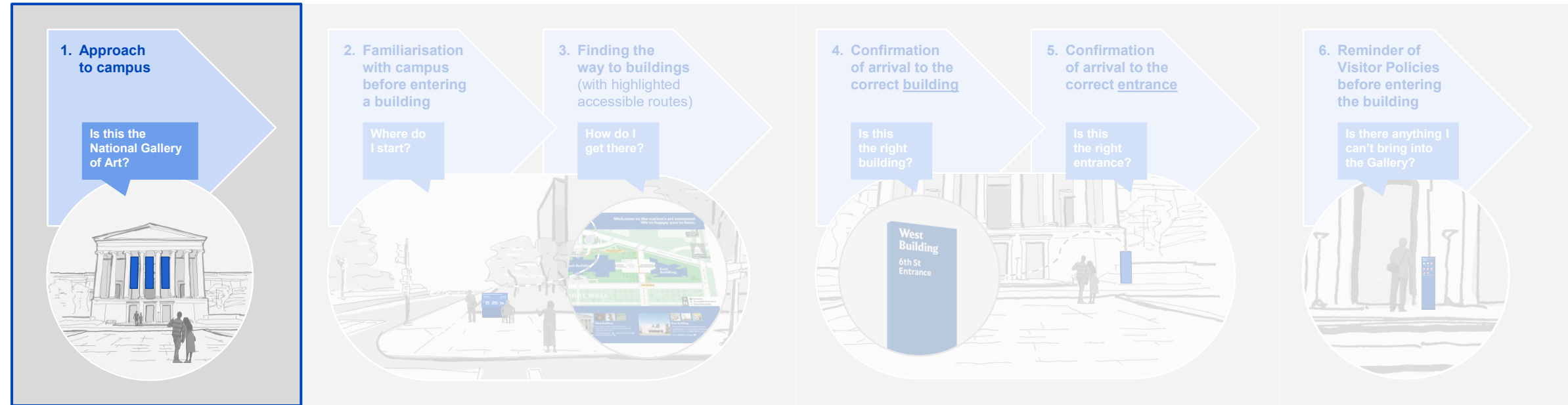
Below, we outline the steps of a visitor's arrival journey, and frame the visitor's needs as questions at each point in this journey. The following pages provide more detail on how each sign function directly responds to these visitor needs.



How the proposed new exterior signs support the visitor

Campus Identification Signs

These signs identify the campus from afar. They are located at key entry points to the campus on its perimeter – at intersections between Pennsylvania Ave, Constitution Ave, Madison Dr, and 4th, 6th and 7th Streets.



Campus ID Monument at intersections

Existing Campus ID Banners at the West Building 6th St Entrance

With accessibility and legibility in mind, this design was developed to provide a high contrast between the NGA logo and the backing blue plinth (white on the brand blue provides for the highest color contrast between text and background).

Furthermore, the 'white-on-blue' visual language is a key part of the Gallery's visual identity and has strong brand equity with visitors.

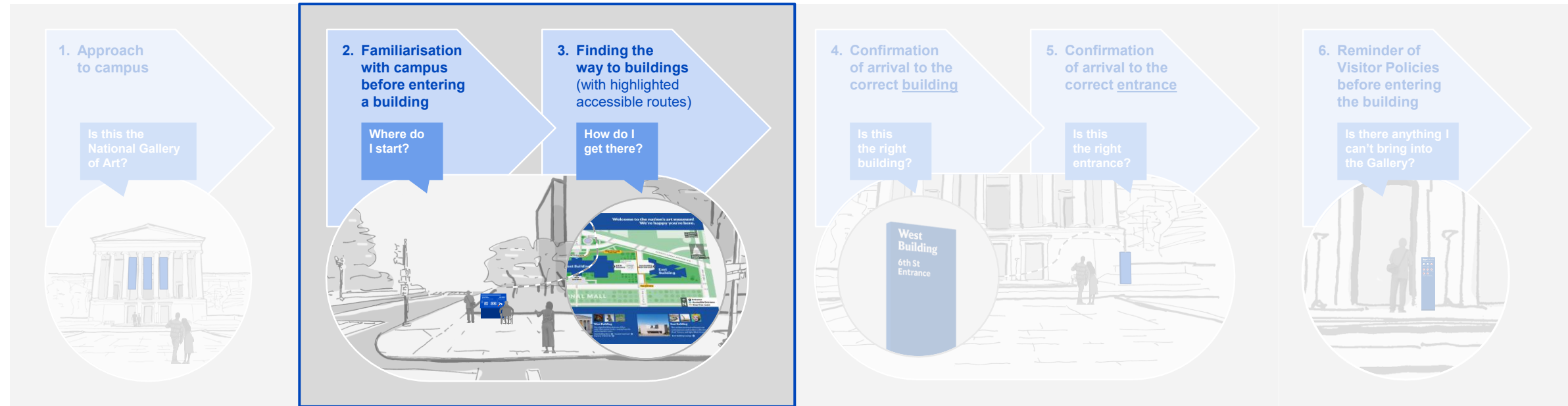
National Gallery of Art



How the proposed new exterior signs support the visitor

Orientation Signs

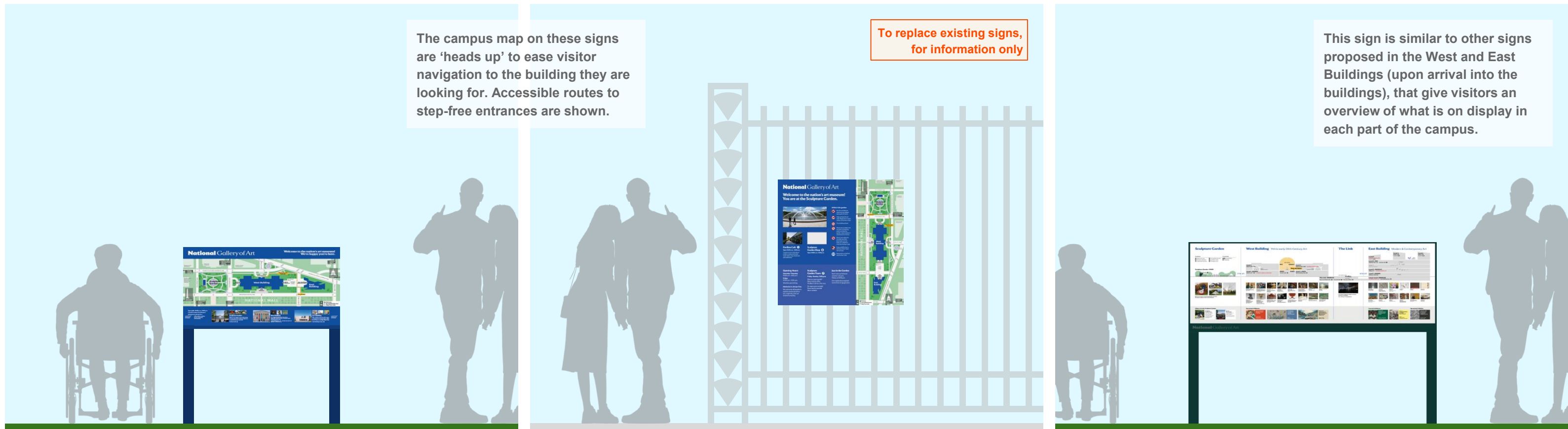
These signs confirm arrival to the NGA campus, provide overview information about the buildings and Sculpture Garden, and show accessible entrances and how to get to them. They are located at key entry points to the campus on its perimeter.



Campus Orientation Sign (lectern)
at intersections/ West Building Mall Entrance

Campus Orientation Sign (railing-mounted)
at entrance gates to the Sculpture Garden

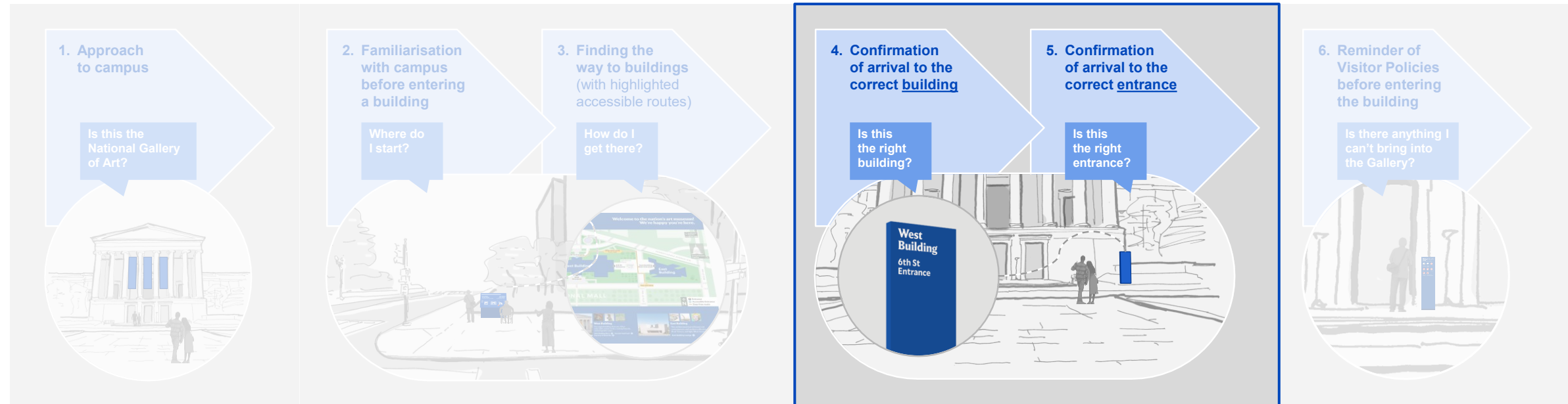
Gallery Overview Sign (lectern)
Inside the Sculpture Garden, close to entrance gates



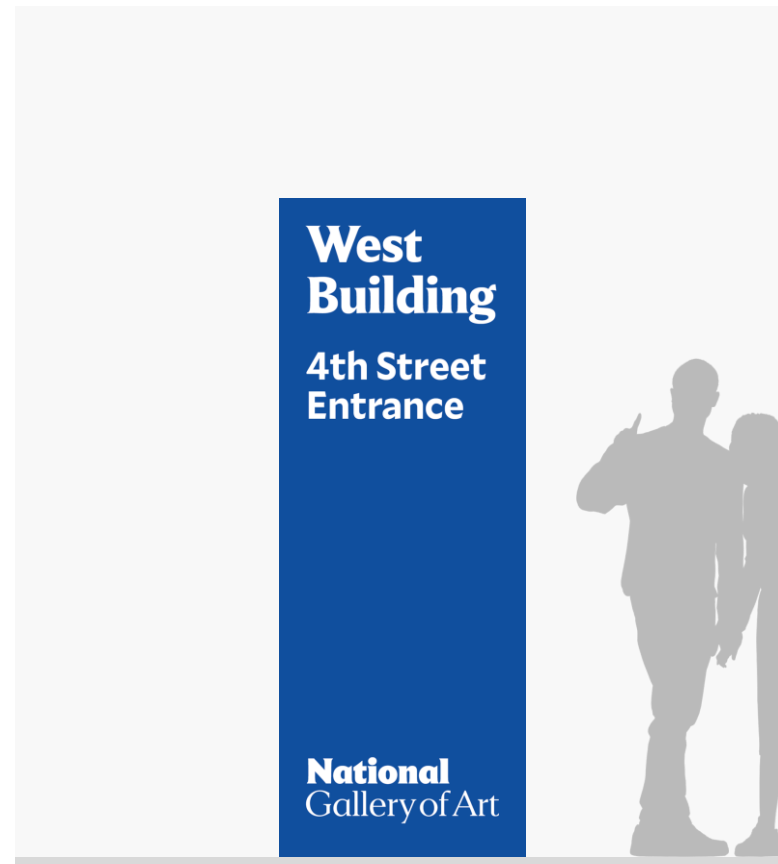
How the proposed new exterior signs support the visitor

Building/Entrance Identification Signs

These signs draw visitors towards entrances and identify buildings and entrances. They are located close to entrance doors and are visible even when the Gallery is closed.



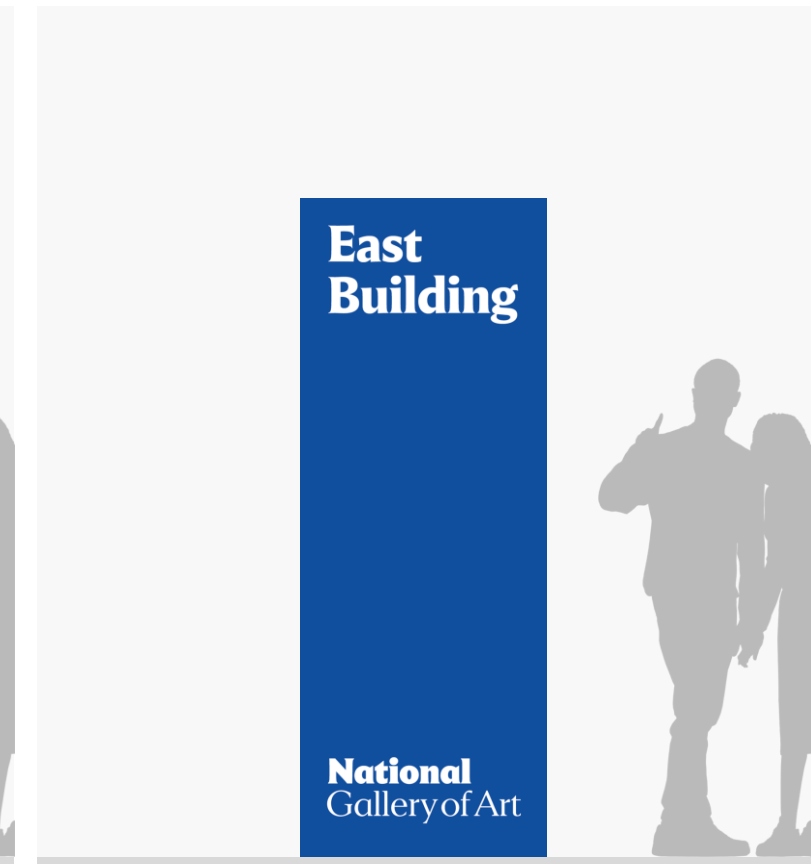
Building ID Sign (freestanding)
West Building 4th / 6th / 7th St Entrance



Building ID Sign (freestanding)
West Building Mall Entrance



Building ID Sign (freestanding)
East Building Entrance

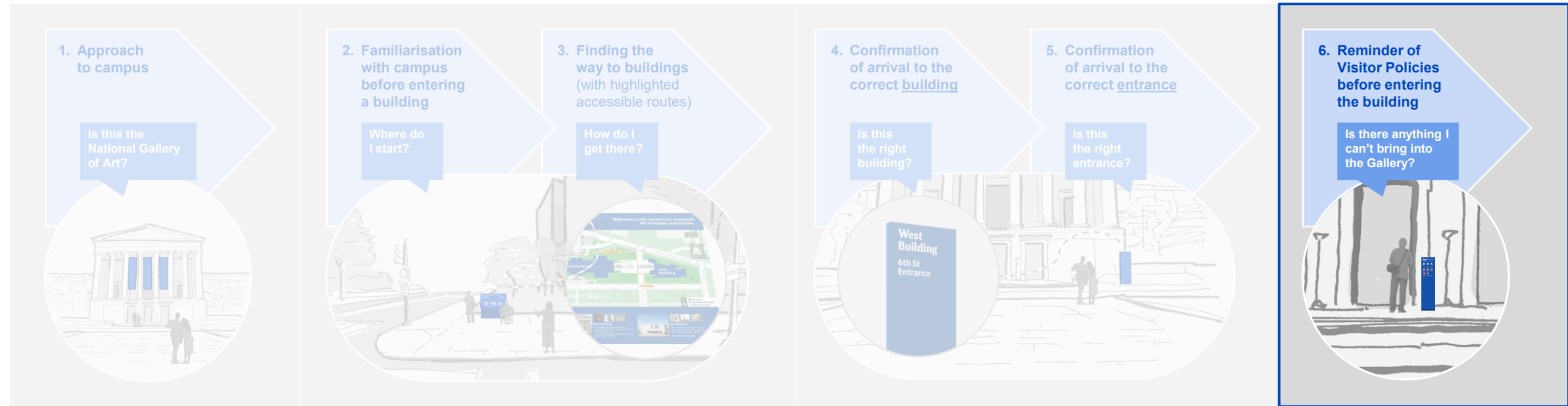


How the proposed new exterior signs support the visitor

Visitor Policies Sign

These signs display visitor policies that visitors need to be aware of before entering the National Gallery. They are located at entrances.

These have been designed to replace the temporary A-frames currently in use.

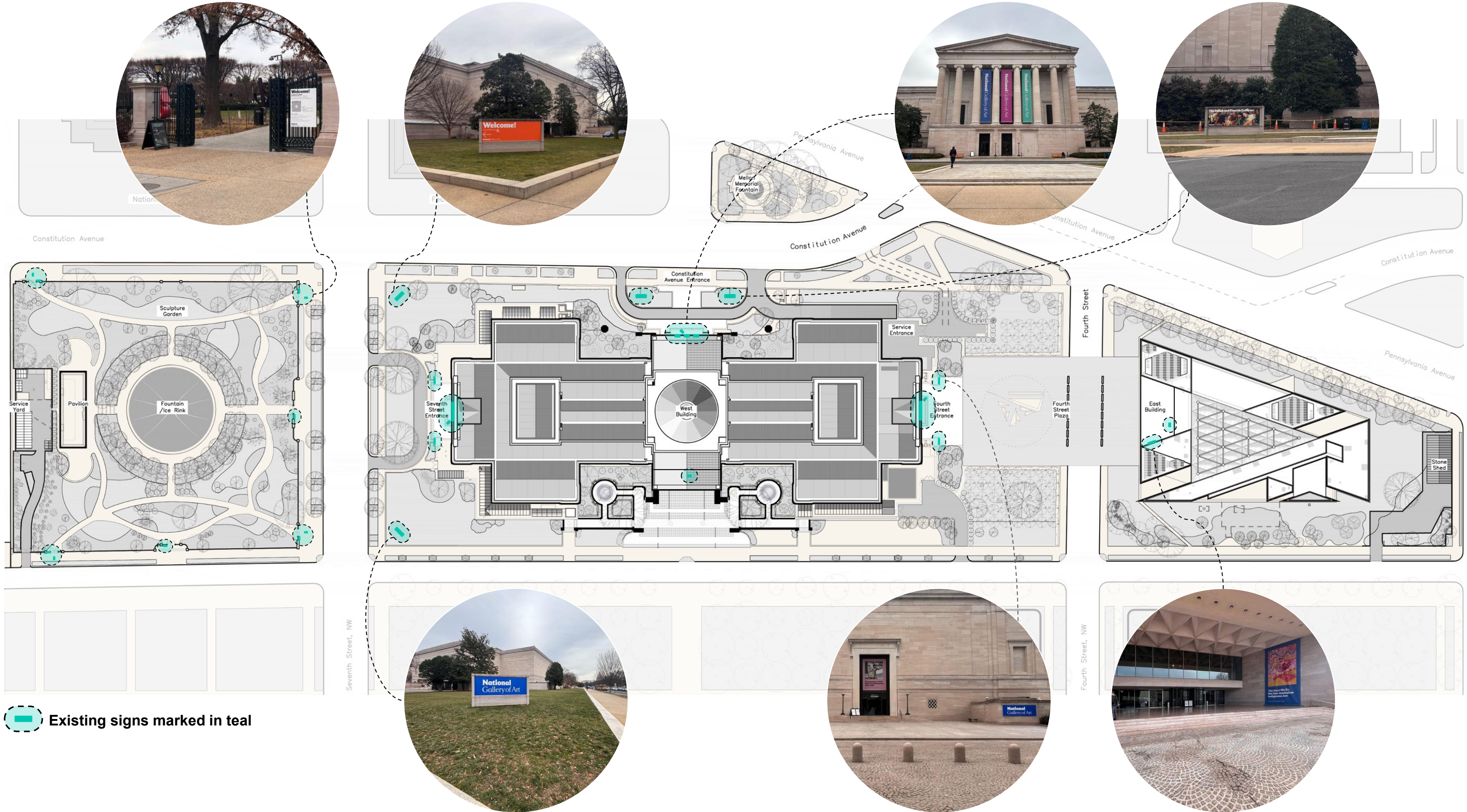


Visitor Policies Sign (freestanding)
Next to the ingress door, at all entrances

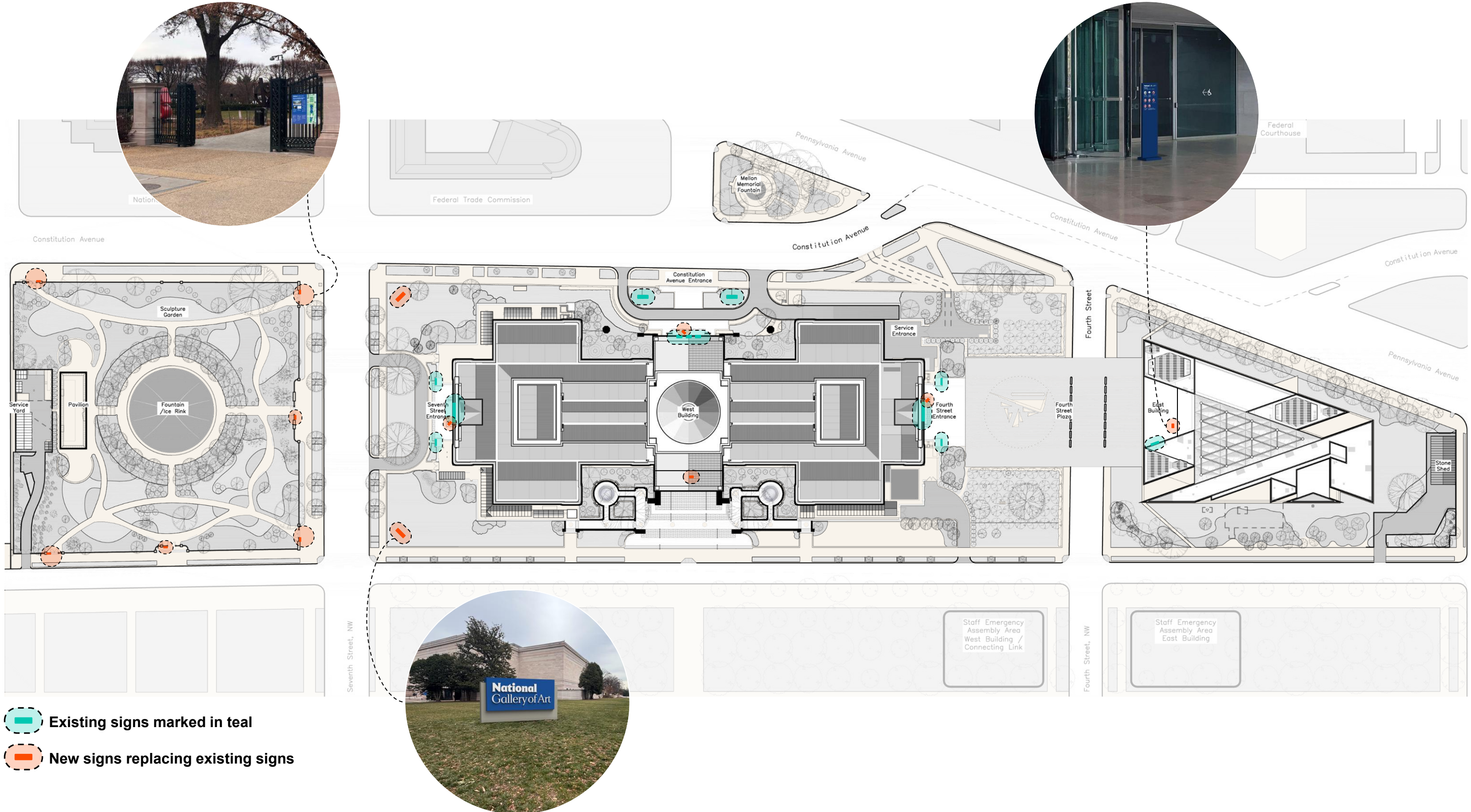
Close-up view (content is indicative)



Existing signs around the campus



Proposed signage plan (1/2) – new signs replacing existing signs



Other signage systems in the vicinity

Smithsonian Museums Information Kiosks

Building ID totems around Federal Triangle

City-wide Directional Signs

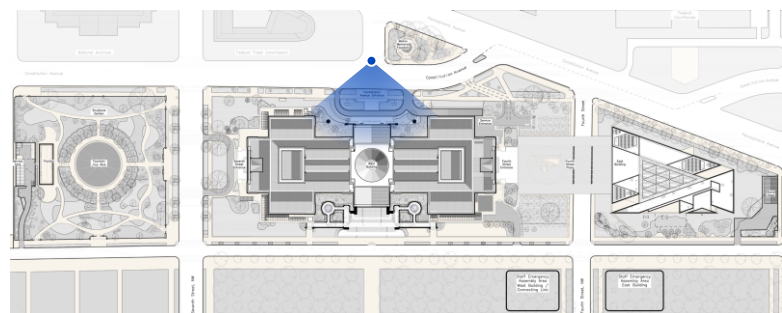
National Mall signs: Info. Totems/Lecterns

National Mall signs: Directional Signs

Other labels on the map include: US Naval Memorial & Navy Heritage Center, Archives Navy Memorial Metro Station, National Archives, Federal Trade Commission, D.C. Municipal Building, Federal Courthouse, The National Mall, Smithsonian Museums, Freedom Plaza, Ronald Reagan Building, White House Visitor Ctr., National Archives, Federal Triangle, Museum of Natural History, Arts & Industries Building, Sculpture Garden, National Air & Space Museum, National Museum of the American Indian, and United States Botanic Garden.

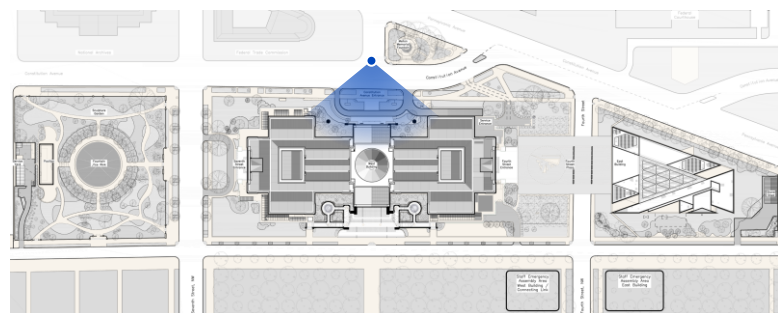
View 1 6th St Entrance

Existing



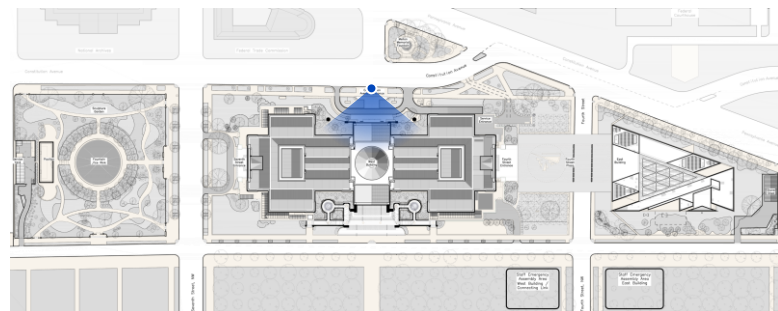
View 1 6th St Entrance

Proposed



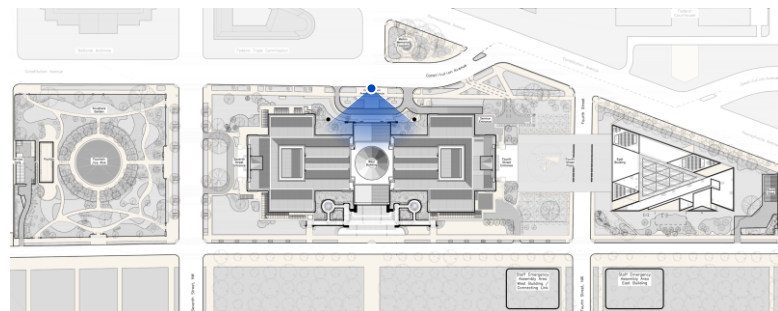
View 2 6th St Entrance

Existing



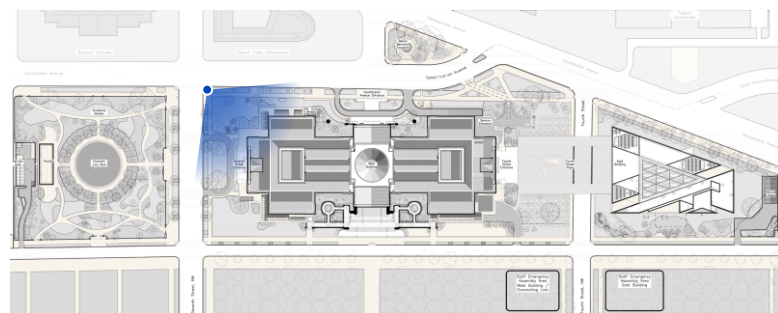
View 2 6th St Entrance

Proposed



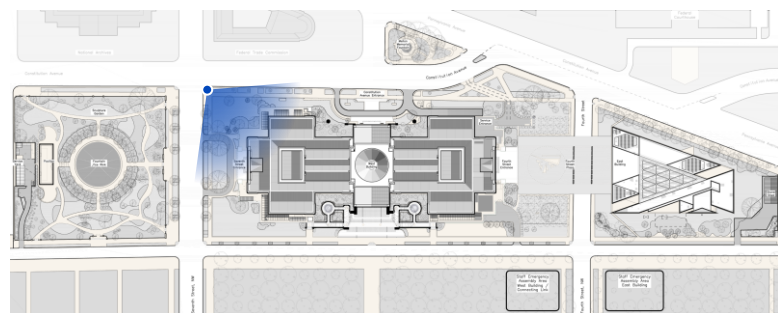
View 3 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Existing



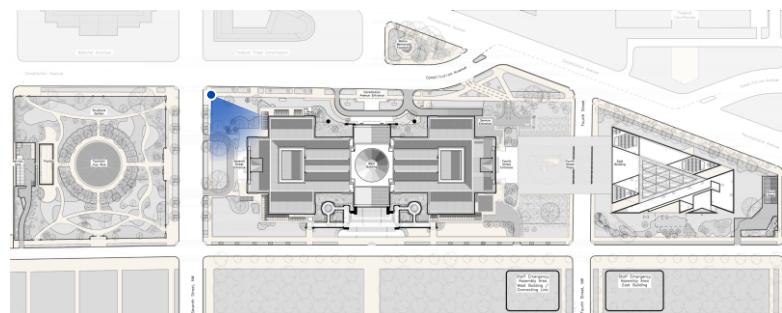
View 3 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Proposed



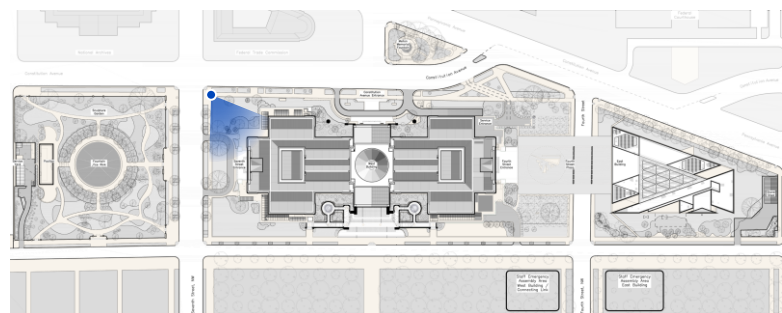
View 4 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Existing



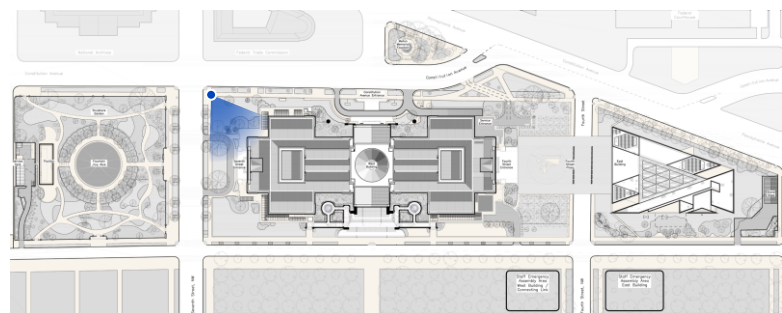
View 4 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Proposed



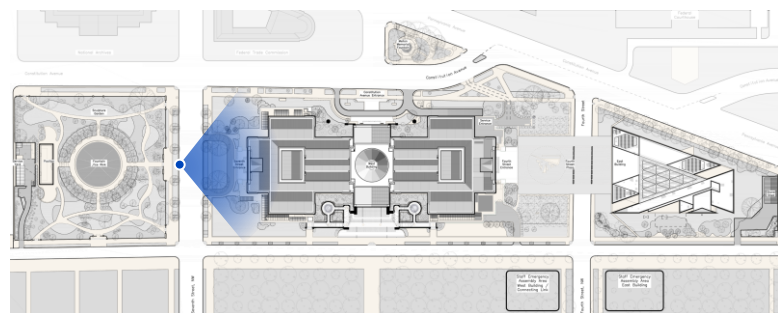
View 4 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Proposed Night-time simulation



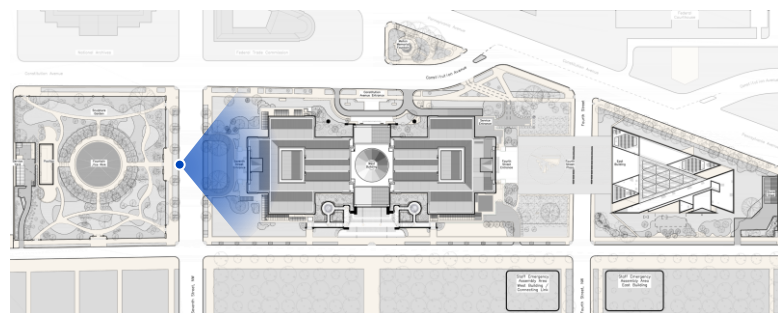
View 5 7th St Entrance

Existing



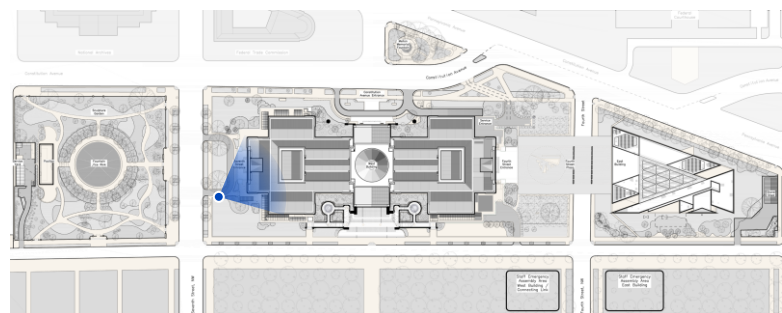
View 5 7th St Entrance

Proposed



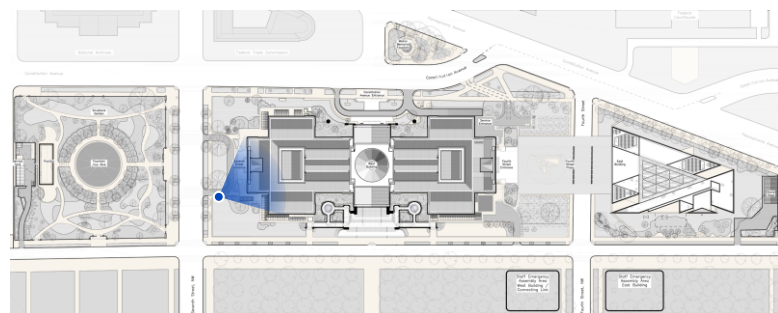
View 6 7th St Entrance

Existing



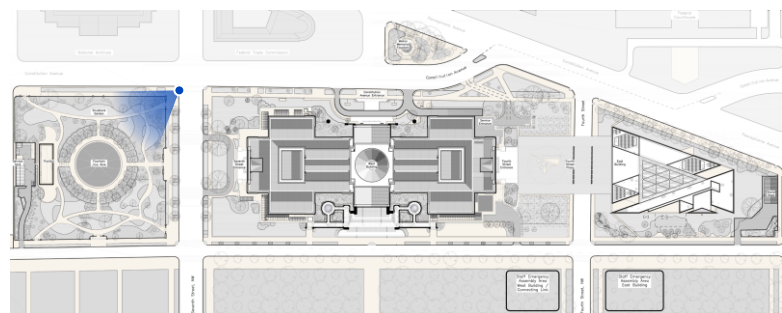
View 6 7th St Entrance

Proposed



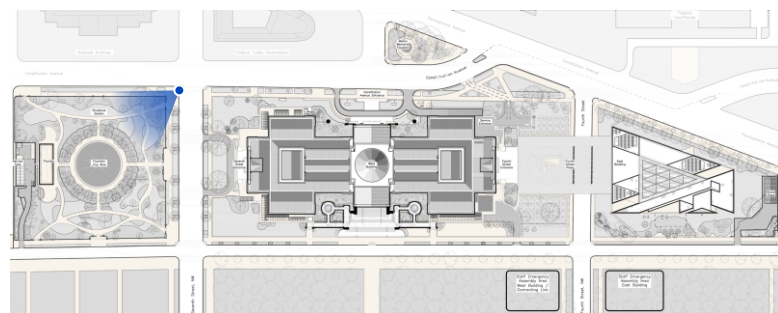
View 7A 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the Sculpture Garden

Existing



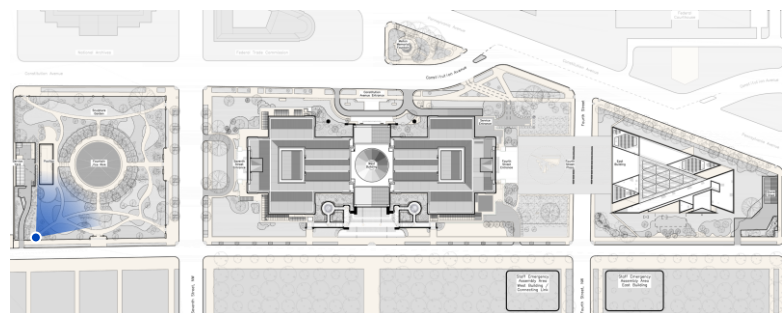
View 7A 7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the Sculpture Garden

Proposed



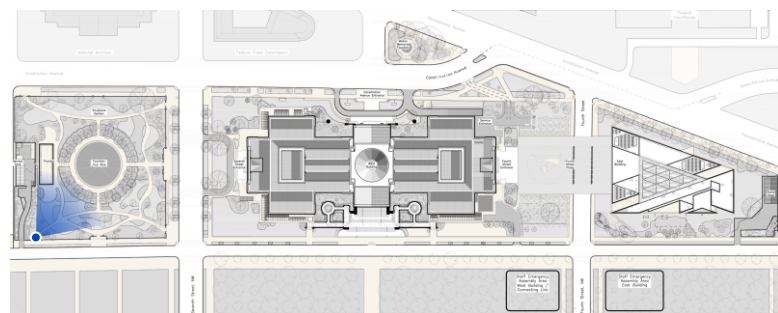
View 7B 9th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the Sculpture Garden

Existing



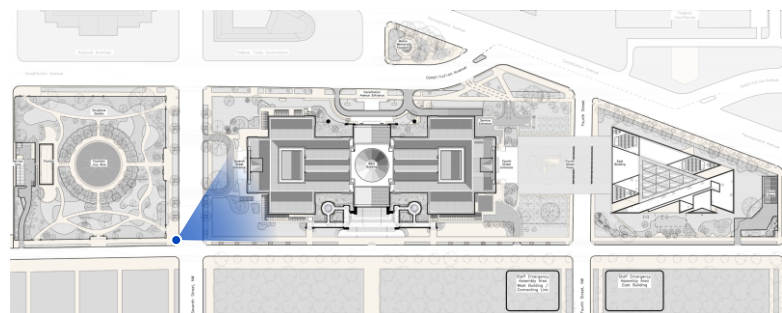
View 7B 9th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the Sculpture Garden

Proposed



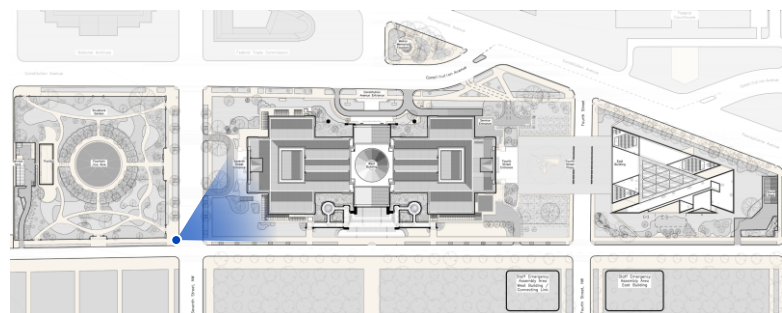
View 8 7th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Existing



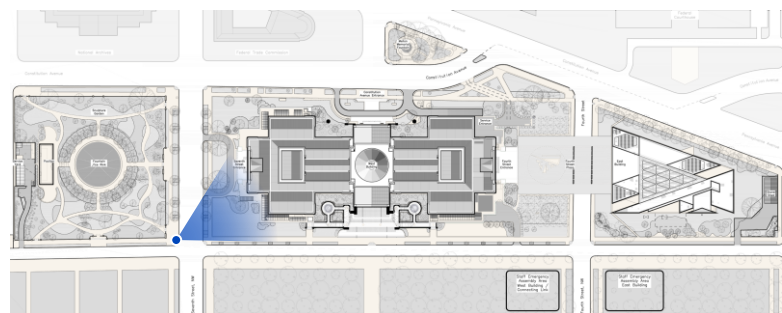
View 8 7th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Proposed



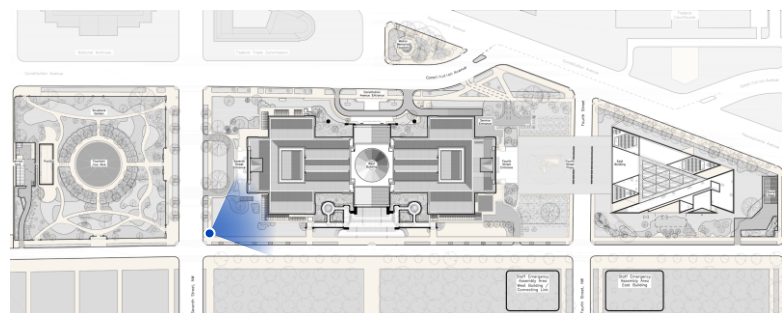
View 8 7th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Proposed Night-time simulation



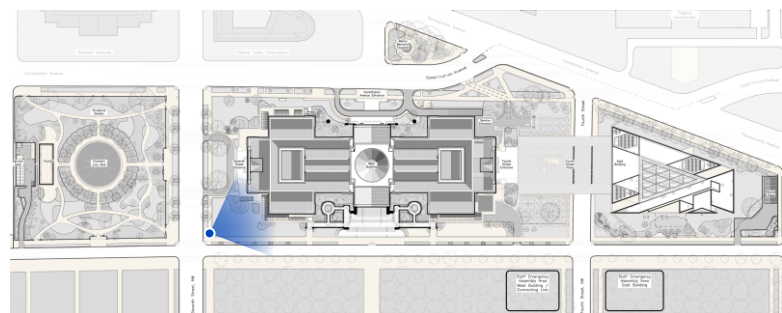
View 9 7th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Existing



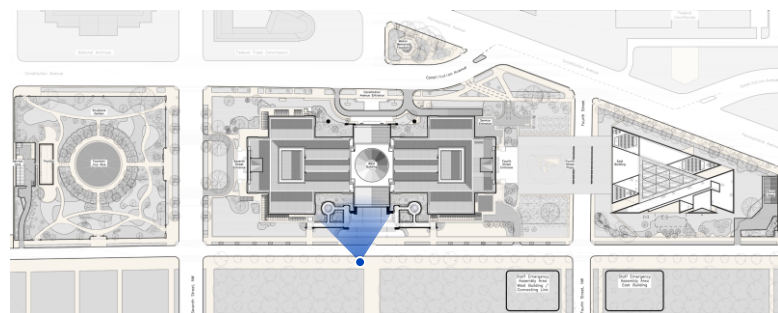
View 9 7th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Proposed



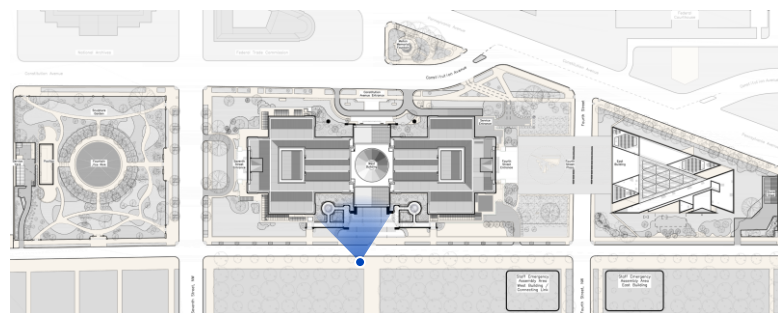
View 10A Mall Entrance

Existing



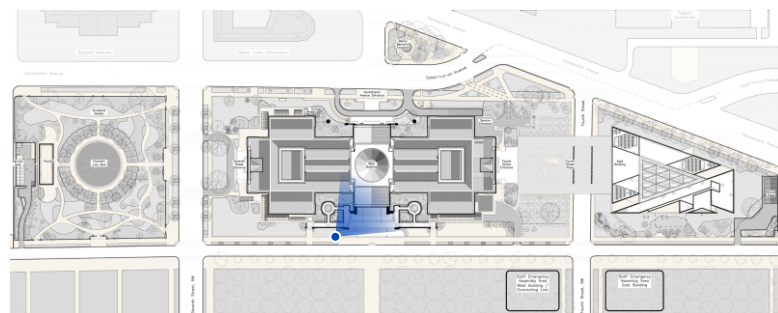
View 10A Mall Entrance

Proposed



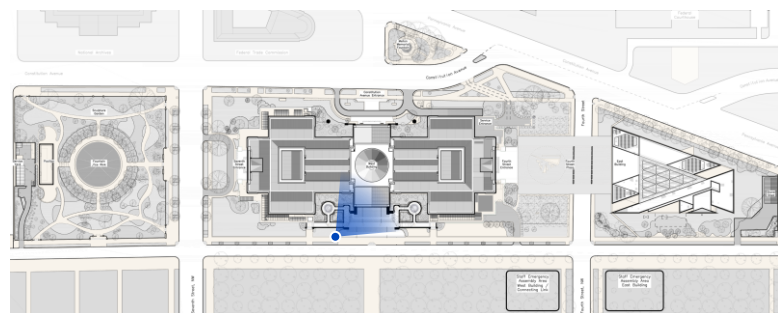
View 10B Mall Entrance

Existing



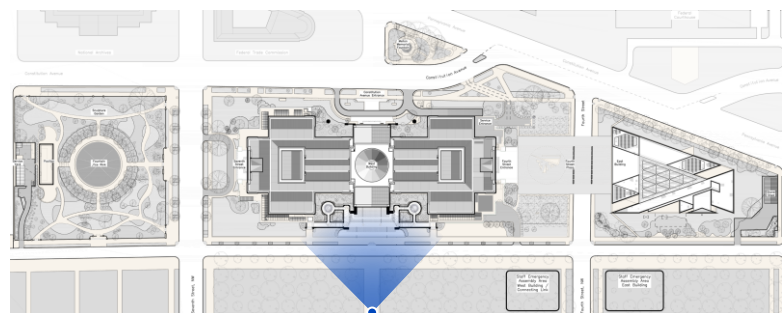
View 10B Mall Entrance

Proposed



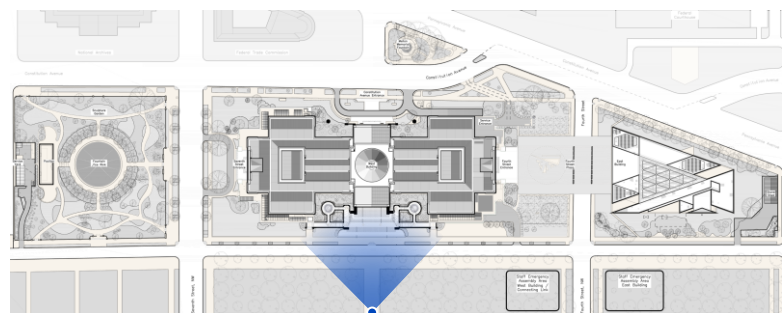
View 11 Mall Entrance

Existing



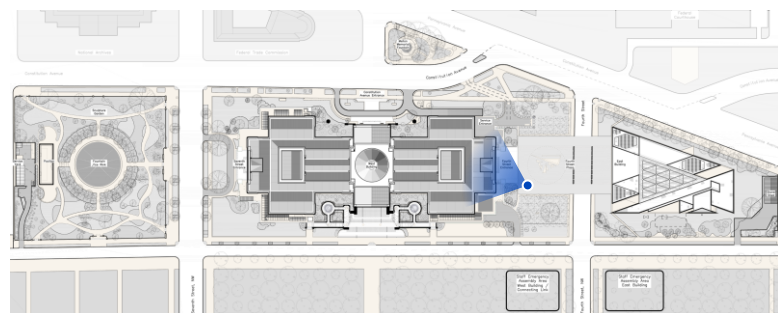
View 11 Mall Entrance

Proposed



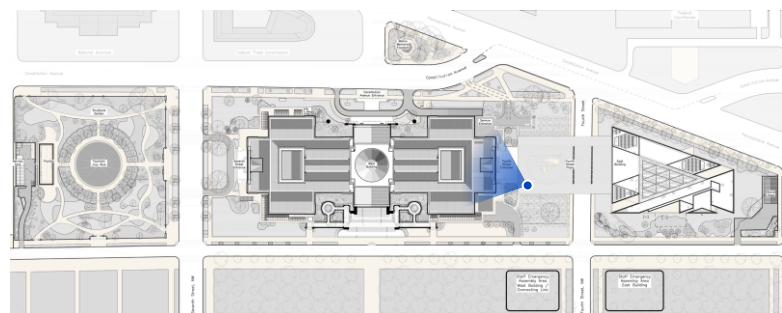
View 12 4th St Entrance

Existing



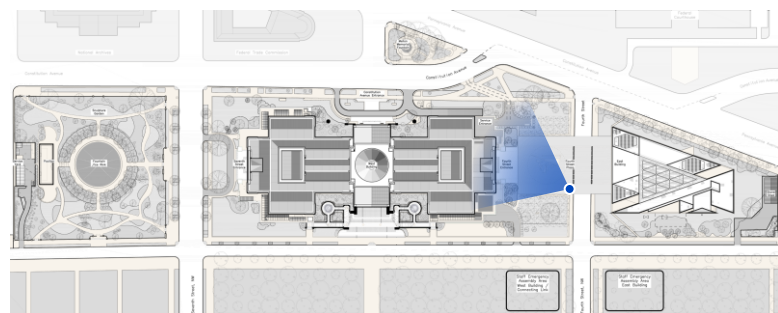
View 12 4th St Entrance

Proposed



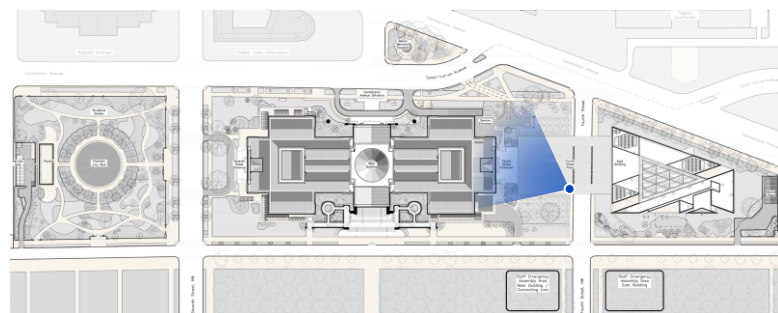
View 13 4th St Entrance

Existing



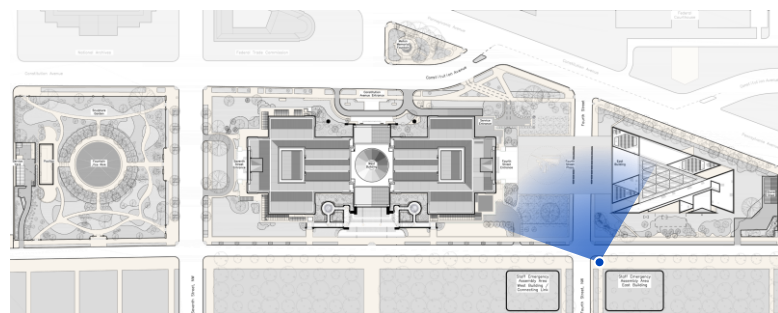
View 13 4th St Entrance

Proposed



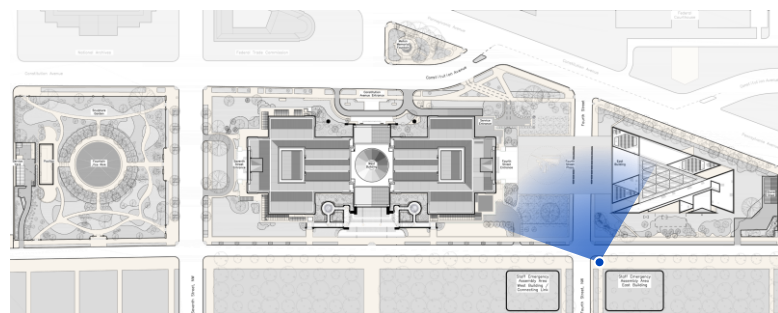
View 14 4th St & Madison Dr NW

Existing



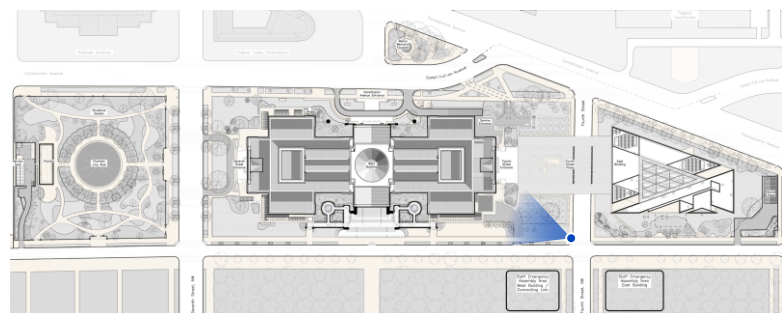
View 14 4th St & Madison Dr NW

Proposed



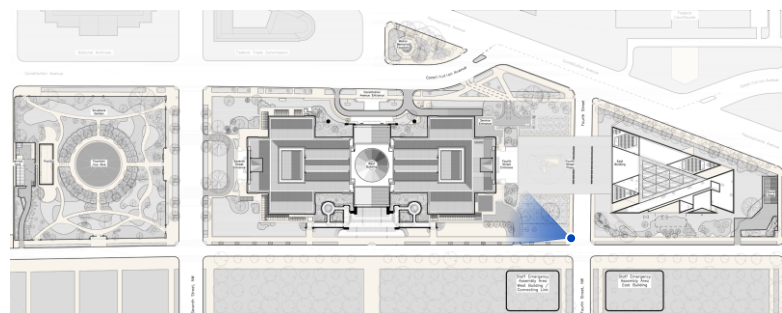
View 15 4th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Existing



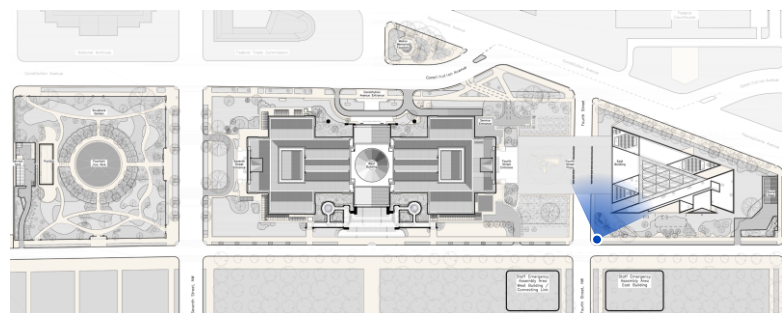
View 15 4th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Proposed



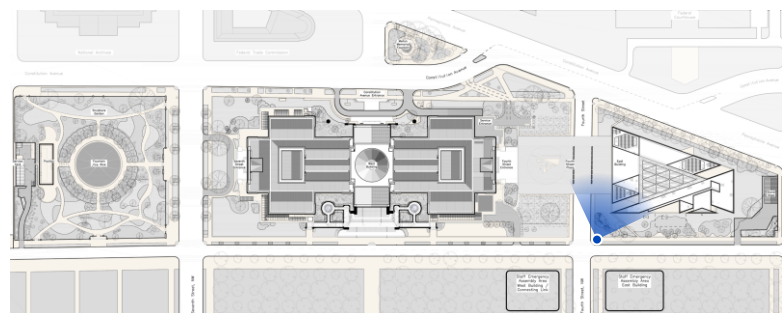
View 16 4th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the East Building

Existing



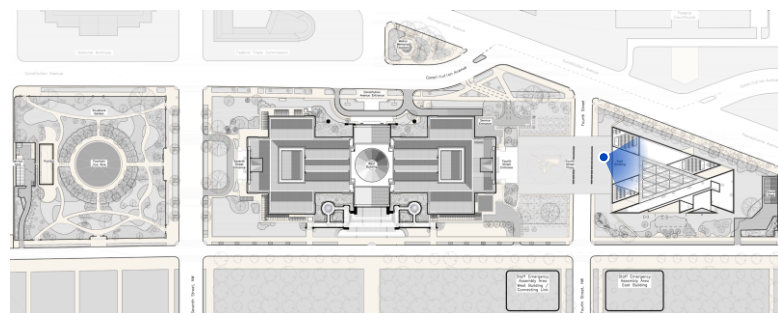
View 16 4th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the East Building

Proposed



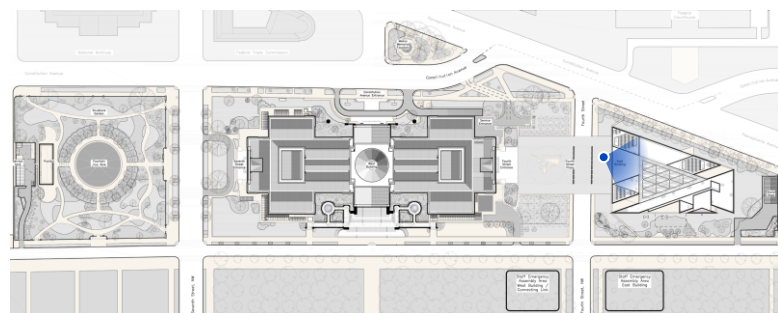
View 17 East Building Entrance

Existing



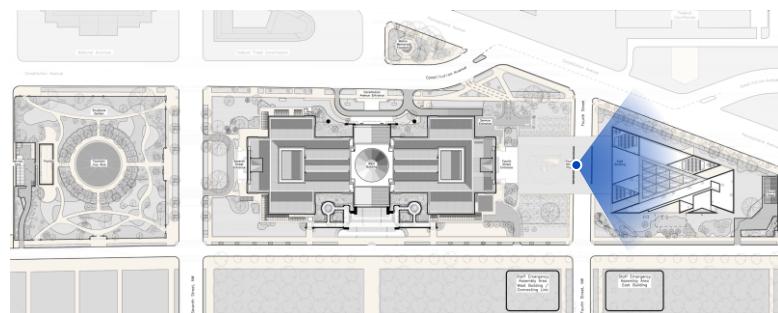
View 17 East Building Entrance

Proposed



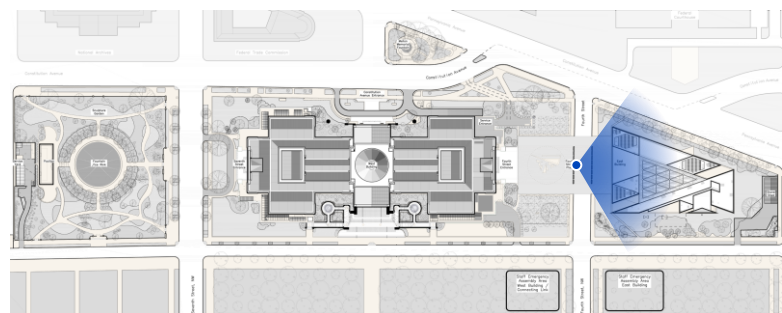
View 18 East Building Entrance

Existing



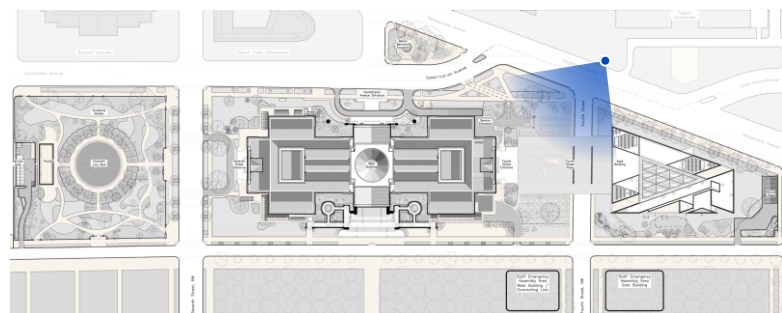
View 18 East Building Entrance

Proposed



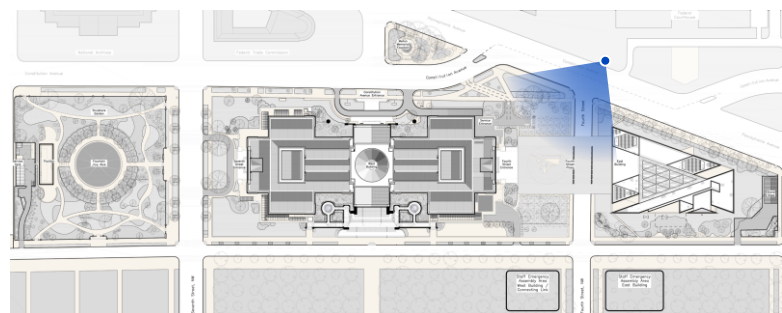
View 19 4th St & Constitution Ave NW

Existing



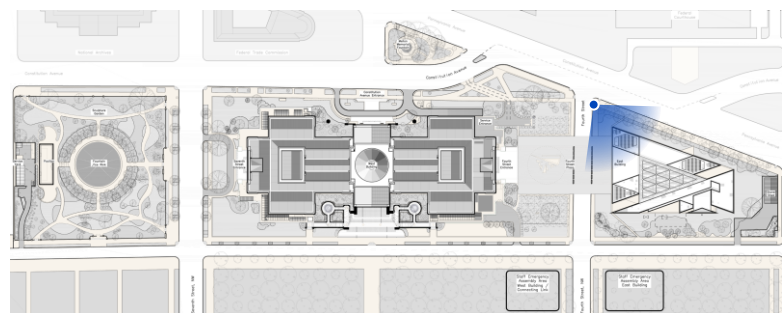
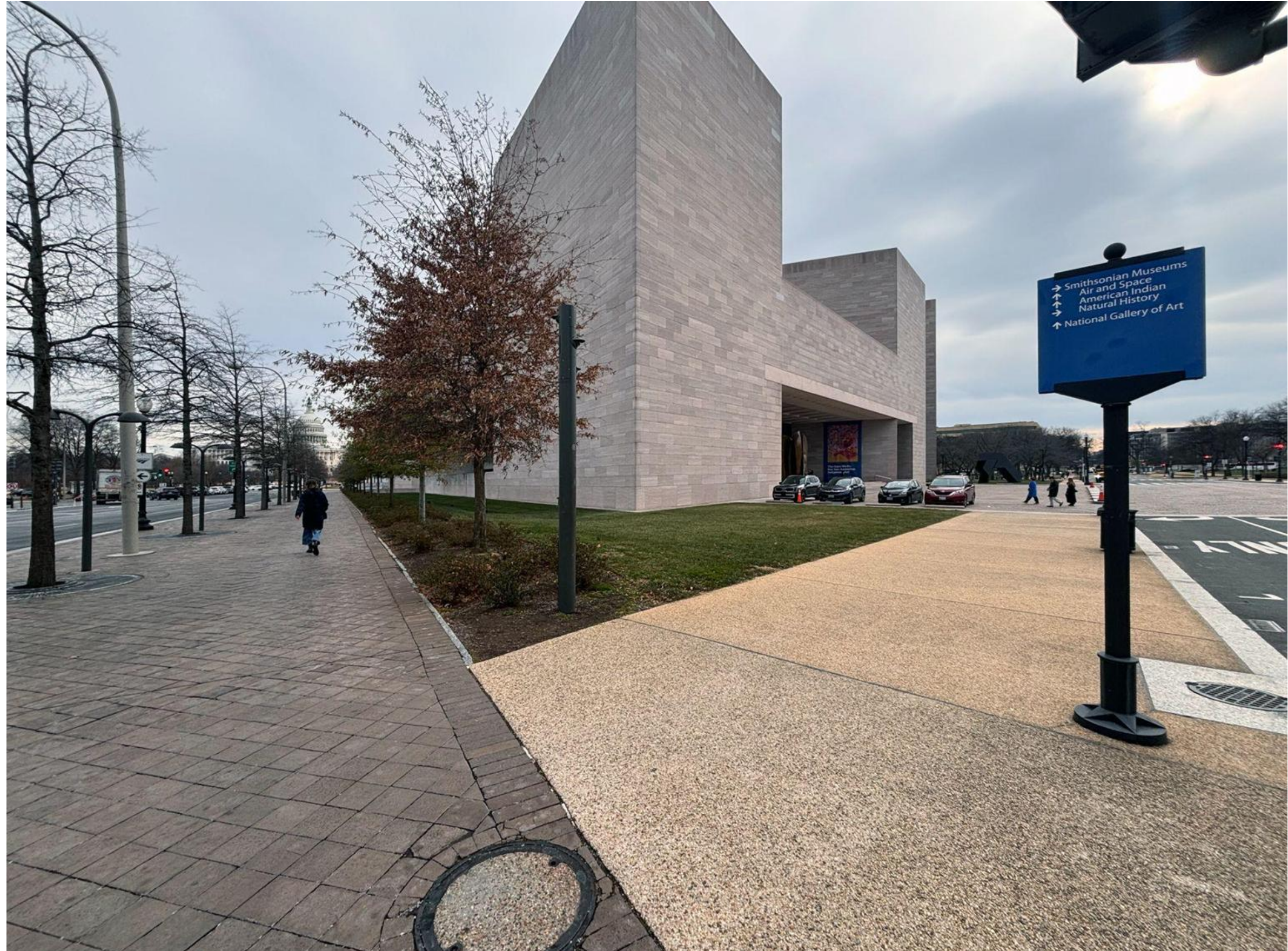
View 19 4th St & Constitution Ave NW

Proposed



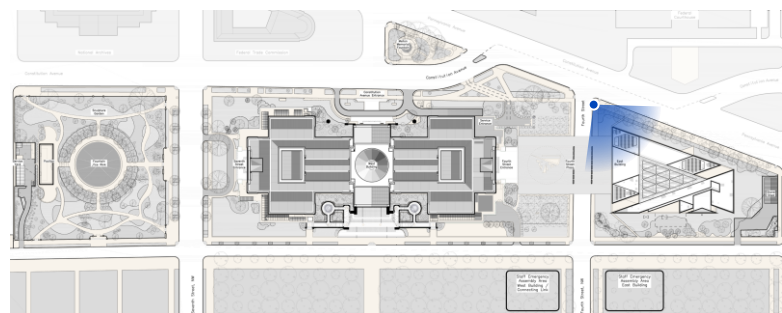
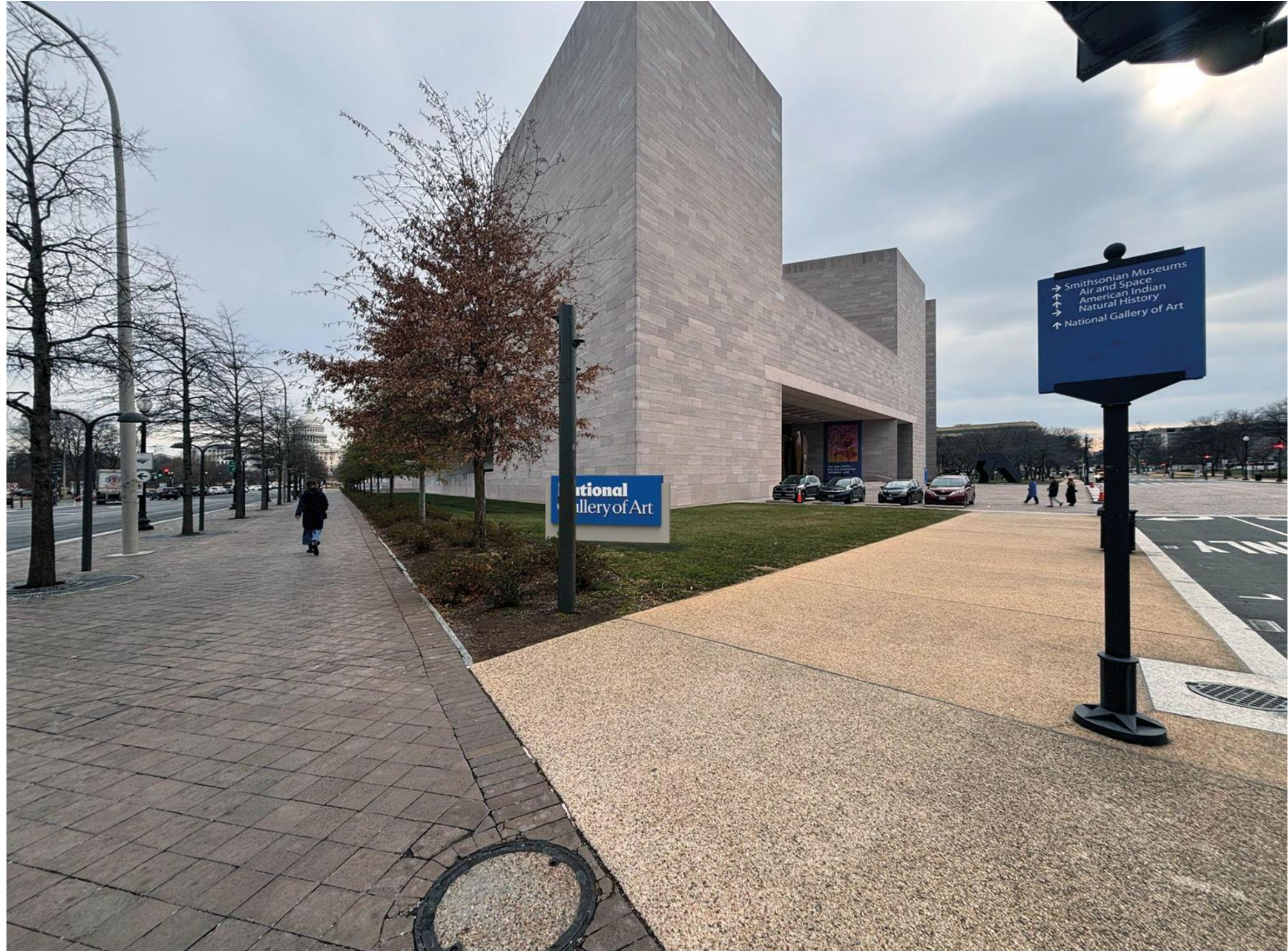
View 20 4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the East Building

Existing



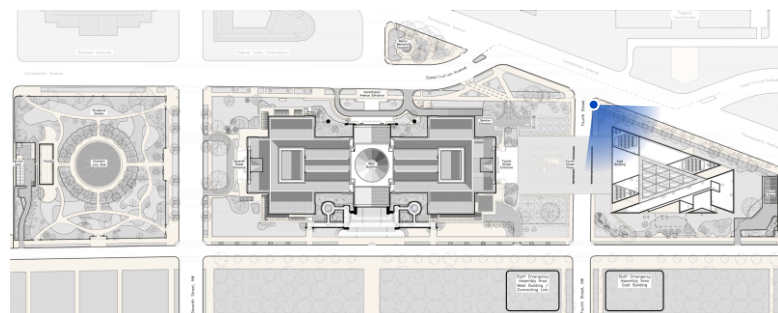
View 20 4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the East Building3

Proposed



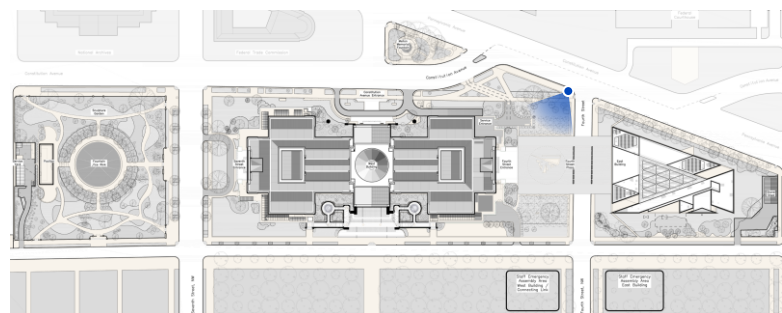
View 20 4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the East Building

Proposed Night-time simulation



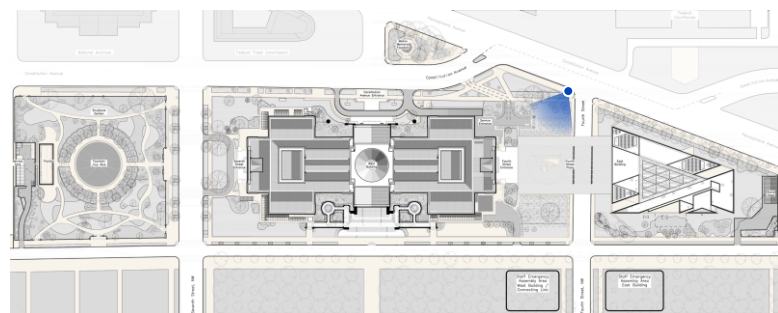
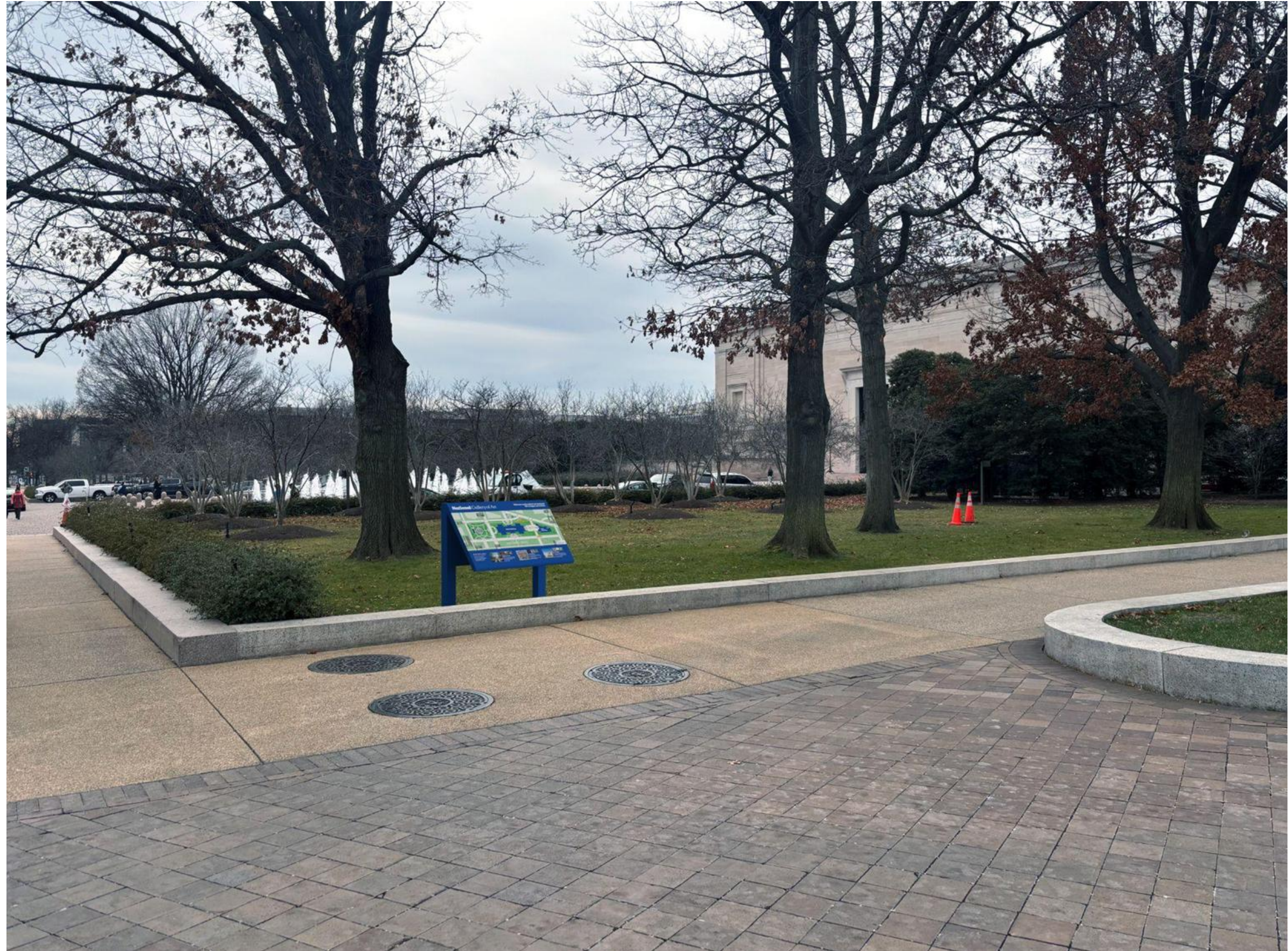
View 21 4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Existing



View 21 4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Proposed



Summary

Proposed signs for review

Campus ID Monument



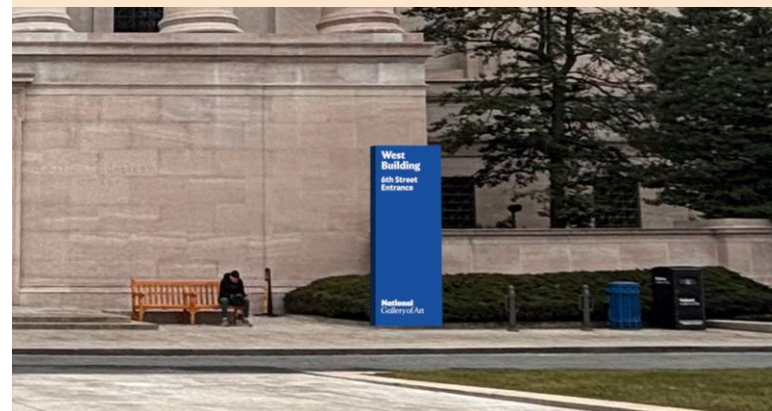
Campus Orientation Sign (lectern)



Gallery Overview Sign (lectern)
Inside the Sculpture Garden



Building ID Sign (freestanding)



Signage replacement existing

Campus Orientation Sign (railing-mounted)
Replacing existing signs



Visitor Policies Sign (freestanding)
Mobile signs to replace existing A-frames

