



Executive Director's Recommendation

Commission Meeting: July 9, 2026

PROJECT National Gallery of Art Exterior Signage National Gallery of Art 6th Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington, DC	NCPC FILE NUMBER 8793
SUBMITTED BY National Gallery of Art	NCPC MAP FILE NUMBER 1.24(64.00)46240
REVIEW AUTHORITY Federal Projects in the District per 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)	APPLICANT'S REQUEST Approval of preliminary and final site development plans
	PROPOSED ACTION Approve preliminary and final site development plans
	ACTION ITEM TYPE Consent Calendar

PROJECT SUMMARY

The National Gallery of Art (NGA) has submitted preliminary and final site development plans for new and replacement signage and wayfinding around the NGA Campus, including the East and West Buildings and the Sculpture Garden, adjacent to the National Mall, between 3rd and 9th Streets, NW in downtown Washington, DC. NGA's signage and wayfinding initiative addresses longstanding visitor navigation challenges identified through audience feedback and visitor survey data, in which wayfinding consistently ranked as the top concern. Visitors face issues of recognizing, accessing, and navigating the NGA's campus, and are often not aware of the museum's resources. NGA's existing exterior signage has been developed and implemented over time and lacks a clear, coordinated approach. Rather than facilitating the visitor's experience, current signage often presents a disorganized appearance and does not consistently provide visitors with the information they need at the right point in their journey. These findings underscore a critical gap between the museum's mission to make the nation's art collection welcoming and accessible to all.

The wayfinding initiative's new family of exterior signs have been designed to deliver the right information at the right place and time to best support and enhance the visitor experience. The new signage will replace the existing ad hoc, disjointed display of signs with a program that reduces visual clutter, strengthens brand recognition, complements surrounding National Mall signage systems, and creates a more intuitive and welcoming visitor experience. The applicant worked closely with NCPC staff and other review agencies regarding the proposed signage program.

KEY INFORMATION

- The National Gallery of Art is one of the world's leading art museums, with a significant collection of American and European masterworks.

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- The mission of the Gallery is to serve the country by preserving, collecting, exhibiting, and fostering understanding of works of art for the American public.
 - The National Gallery of Art's West Building was designed by John Russell Pope and completed in 1941. The East Building, and the connecting link, was designed by I. M. Pei, and opened to the public in 1978.
 - The East Building houses and protects modern collections of paintings, works on paper, sculpture, textiles, and decorative arts. In addition to the public galleries, the East Building incorporates the Study Center, a major national art research center serving the Gallery's staff and visiting scholars.
 - The National Gallery of Art's Sculpture Garden was completed in 1999. It is a contributing site to the National Mall Historic District.
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RECOMMENDATION

The Commission:

Approves the preliminary and final site development plans for new wayfinding and signage for the National Gallery of Art campus on the National Mall.

Supports the applicant's goal to provide a unified wayfinding and signage program for the National Gallery of Art Campus that reduces visual clutter, strengthens brand recognition, complements surrounding National Mall signage systems, and creates a more intuitive and welcoming visitor experience.

Notes the proposed wayfinding and signage will thoughtfully enhance visitor orientation in support of Executive Order 14252 *Making the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful*.

Commends the National Gallery of Art for coordinating with review agencies early and receiving input and guidance as the wayfinding initiative was developed.

PROJECT REVIEW TIMELINE

Previous actions	- None.
Remaining actions (anticipated)	- None.

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Executive Summary

Staff evaluated the preliminary and final site development plans for new signage and wayfinding for the National Gallery of Art's campus and finds it consistent with the policies within the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. Further, the proposed wayfinding and signage will thoughtfully enhance visitor orientation in support of Executive Order 14252 *Making the District of Columbia Safe and Beautiful*. Therefore, staff recommends the **Commission approve the preliminary and final site development plans for new wayfinding and signage for the National Gallery of Art campus on the National Mall.**

Analysis

NGA's signage and wayfinding initiative addresses longstanding visitor navigation challenges identified through audience feedback and visitor survey data, in which wayfinding consistently ranked as the top concern. Visitors face issues of recognizing, accessing, and navigating the NGA's campus, and are often not aware of the museum's resources. NGA's existing exterior signage has been developed and implemented over time and lacks a clear, coordinated approach. Rather than facilitating the visitor's experience, current signage often presents a disorganized appearance and does not consistently provide visitors with the information they need at the right point in their journey. These findings underscore a critical gap between the museum's mission to make the nation's art collection welcoming and accessible to all. As such, staff recommends the **Commission support the applicant's goal to provide a unified wayfinding and signage program for the National Gallery of Art Campus that reduces visual clutter, strengthens brand recognition, complements surrounding National Mall signage systems, and creates a more intuitive and welcoming visitor experience.**

The new signage will replace the existing ad hoc, disjointed display of signs with a program that reduces visual clutter, strengthens brand recognition, complements surrounding National Mall signage systems, and creates a more intuitive and welcoming visitor experience. The applicant has worked closely with NCPC staff and other review agencies regarding the proposed signage program. Staff suggests the **Commission commend the National Gallery of Art for coordinating with review agencies early and receiving input and guidance as the wayfinding initiative was developed.**

Sign Types

The wayfinding includes NGA identification signs in the form of monument signs located at key entry points to the campus, while building and facility identification signs in the form of freestanding slim monument signs are located near entrances. The campus orientation signs will be new lectern signs, while freestanding policy signs will be located near entrances displaying policies that visitors need to be aware of before entering NGA, and replace the temporary A-frame signs found on the campus today. The scope of work includes replacement of thirteen (13) existing signs and the installation of fourteen (14) new signs at these locations:

- Sculpture Garden
 - 6 signs replacing existing signs
 - 2 new signs
- West Building
 - 6 signs remaining
 - 6 replacing existing signs
 - 9 new signs
- East Building
 - 1 remaining sign
 - 1 replacing existing sign
 - 3 new signs

Materials

For the new and replacement signage types, the sign material will be aluminum letters, panels, or frames, with a powder-coat finish. For the freestanding monument signs, the signs will have concrete bases, with aluminum panels layered on top. NGA's new brand colors will be used, incorporating blue and white.

CONFORMANCE TO EXISTING PLANS, POLICIES AND RELATED GUIDANCE

Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital

The project is consistent with the *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital*. In particular, staff considered policies from the Urban Design, Historic Preservation, and Visitors & Commemoration Elements.

National Historic Preservation Act

Both the National Gallery of Art (NGA) and NCPC initiated Section 106 consultation independently with the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Officer (DC SHPO) and determined that the proposed signage would not cause adverse effects to historic resources. The DC SHPO concurred with the determinations of no adverse effect to historic properties by both NGA and NCPC in writing on June 16, 2026.

National Environmental Policy Act

The National Gallery of Art does not have a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) responsibility for this proposed work; however, NCPC does have an independent NEPA compliance responsibility. NCPC staff determined that the proposed site improvements associated with the signage qualify for a Categorical Exclusion under NCPC's NEPA regulations, particularly categorical exclusion (2) which applies to the approval of the installation or restoration of minor site elements, such as, but not limited to, identification signs, sidewalks, patios, fences, curbs,

retaining walls, landscaping and trail or stream improvements. Staff determined no extraordinary circumstances were present prior to applying the categorical exclusion.

CONSULTATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed the project at their June 17, 2026 meeting. The Committee forwarded the proposed preliminary and final site development plans to the Commission with the statement that the proposal was coordinated with all participating agencies. The participating agencies were: NCPC, the U.S. General Services Administration, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the National Park Service, DC SHPO, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, DOEE, the District Department of Transportation, and the District of Columbia Office of Planning.

U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

The U. S. Commission of Fine Arts approved the final design for NGA's Wayfinding Initiative on the Consent Agenda for their June 18, 2026 meeting.

ONLINE REFERENCE

The following supporting documents for this project are available online at www.ncpc.gov:

- Submission Package

Prepared by Lee Webb
06/22/2026

POWERPOINT (ATTACHED)

National Gallery of Art Exterior Signage

6th Street, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

Approval of Preliminary and Final Site Development Plans

National Gallery of Art

Project Summary

Commission Meeting Date: July 9, 2026

NCPC Review Authority: 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) and (d)

Applicant Request: Approval of Preliminary and Final Site Development Plans

Session: Consent Calendar

NCPC Review Officer: Lee Webb

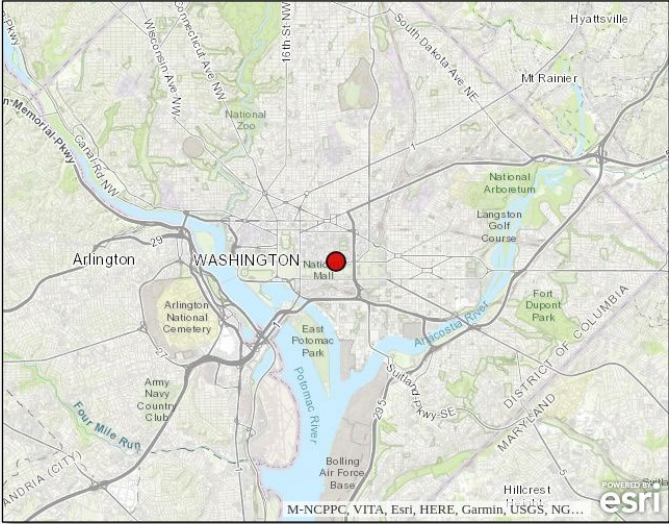
NCPC File Number: 8793

Project Summary:

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The wayfinding initiative's new family of exterior signs have been designed to deliver the right information at the right place and time to best support and enhance the visitor experience. The new signage will replace the existing ad hoc, disjointed display of signs with a program that reduces visual clutter, strengthens brand recognition, complements surrounding National Mall signage systems, and creates a more intuitive and welcoming visitor experience.

Site Location

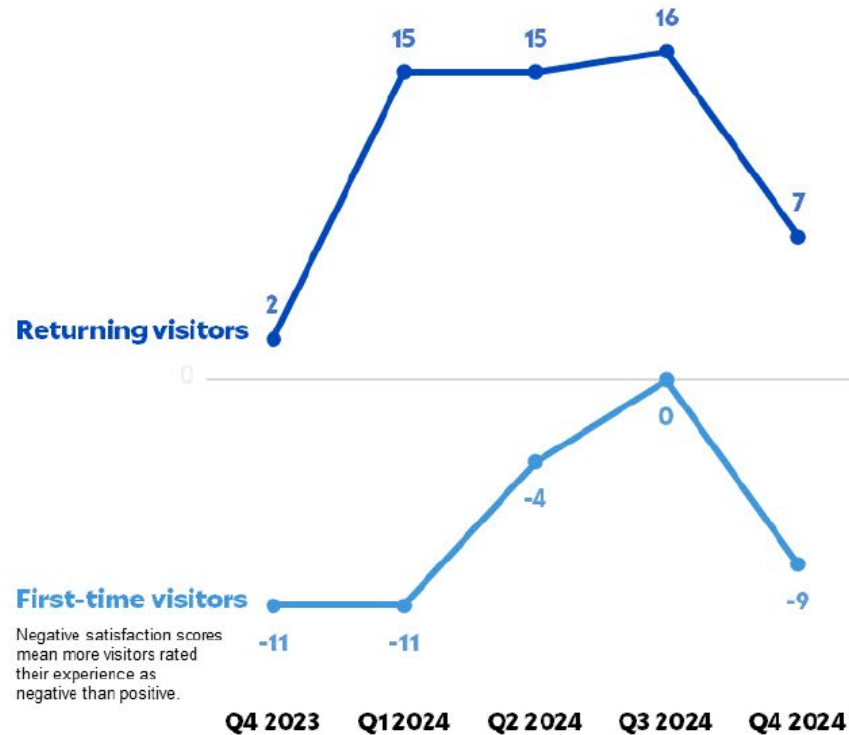


Location Map

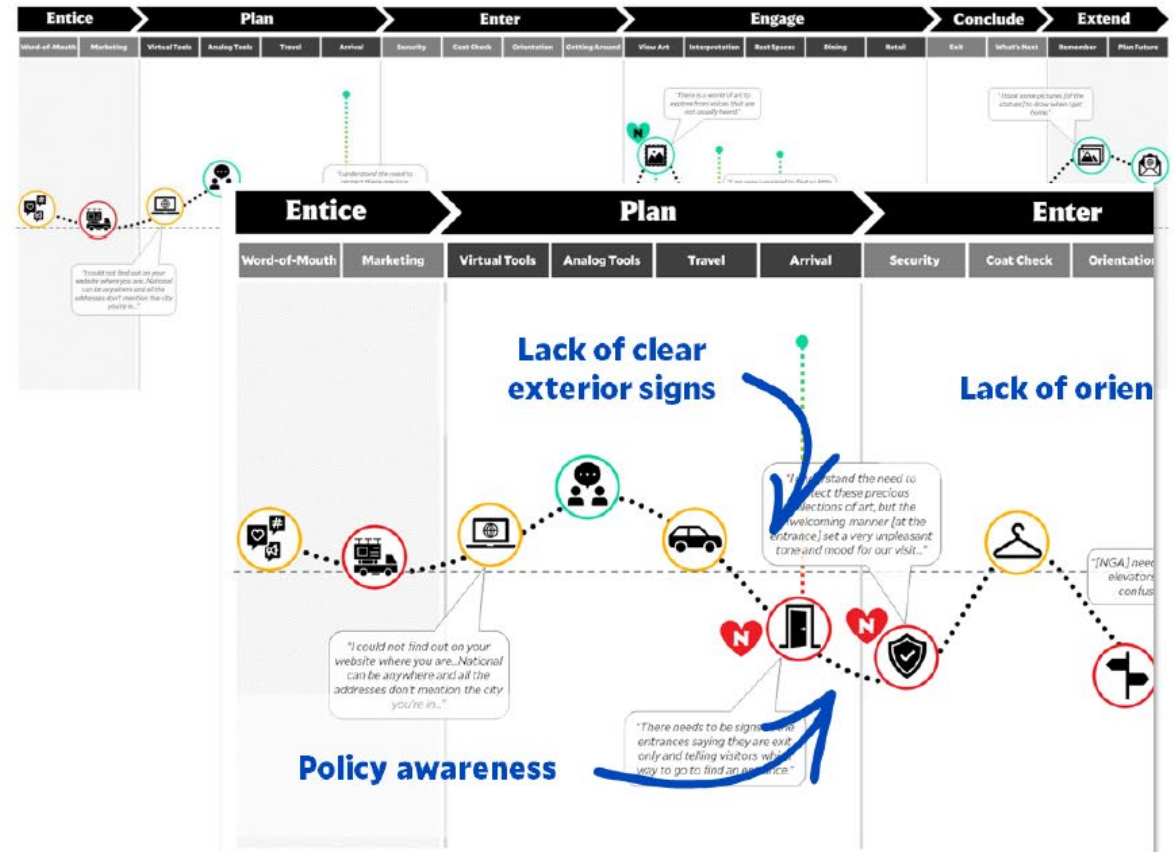
National Gallery of Art Wayfinding Project Introduction

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.



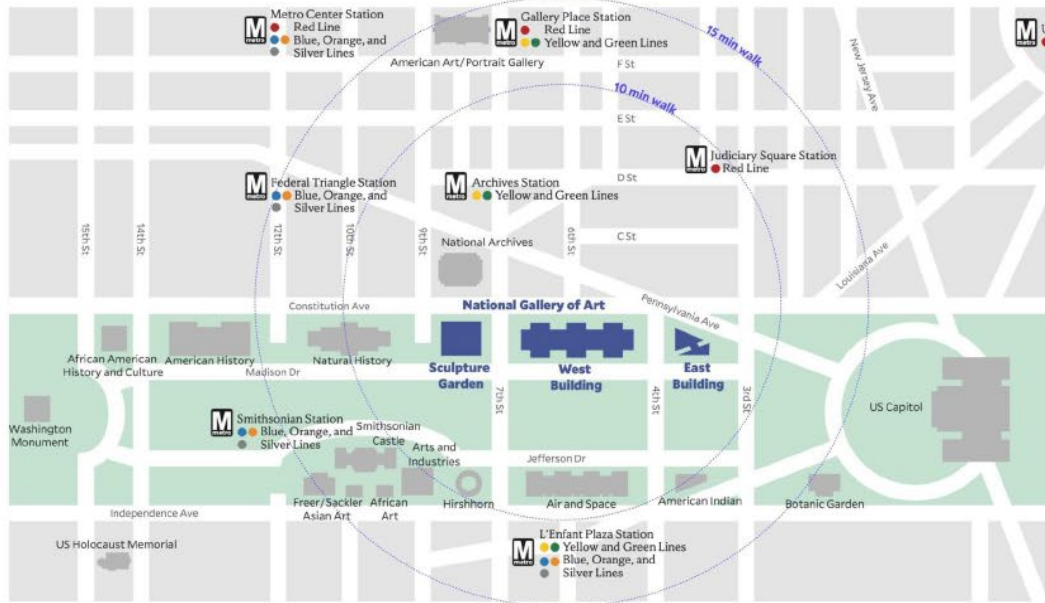
Wayfinding impacts the visitor's entire journey but has the greatest impact at the beginning of the journey when a visitor is still considering to visit.



Project Introduction Continued

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?

Project Introduction Continued

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.



Project Introduction Continued

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.

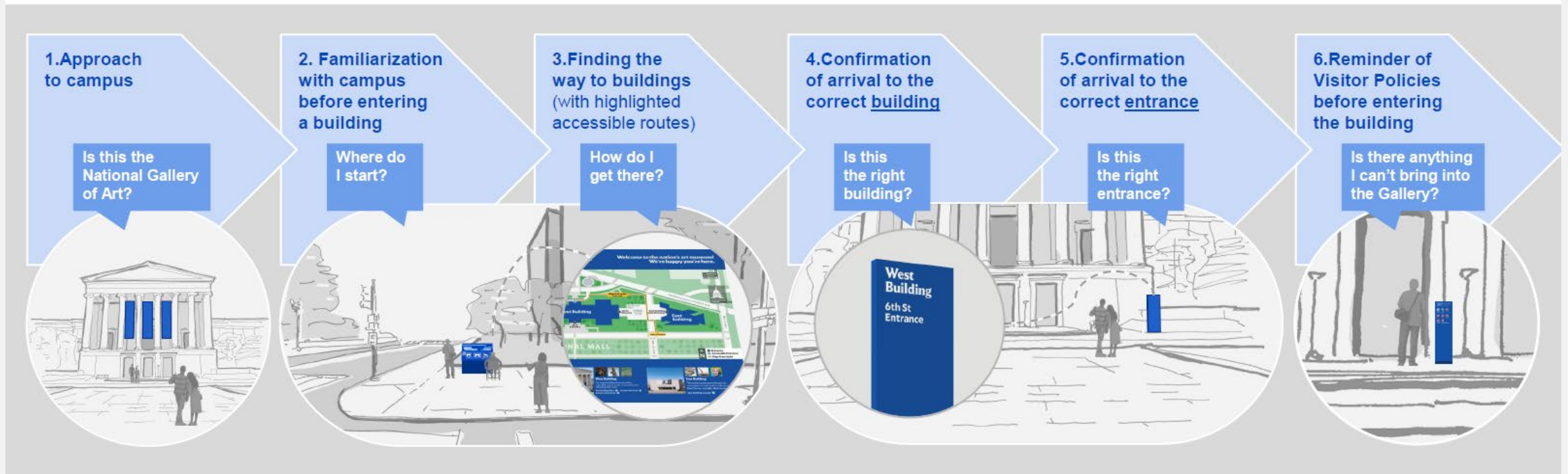


Project Improvement of Visitor Experience

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.

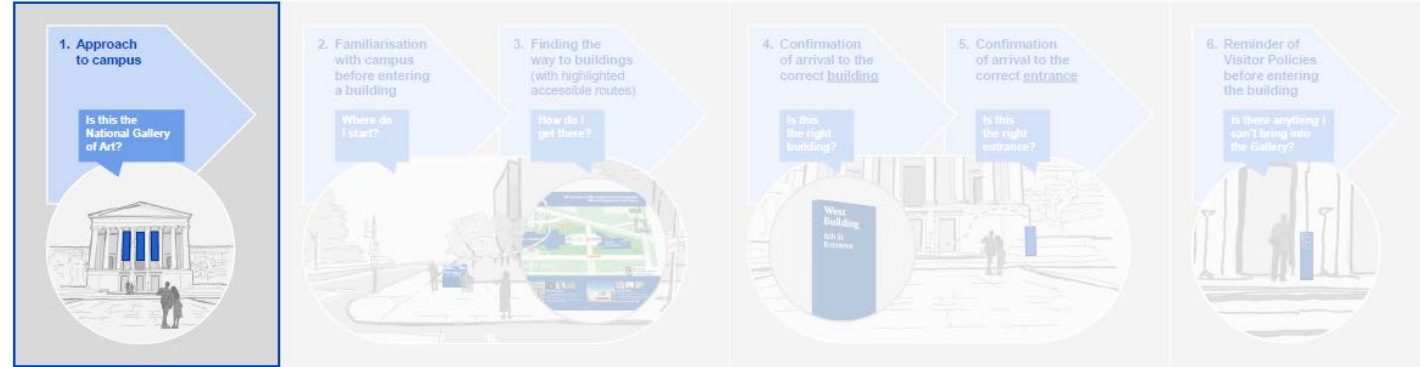


Project Improvement to Visitor Experience

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



Project Improvement to Visitor Experience

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

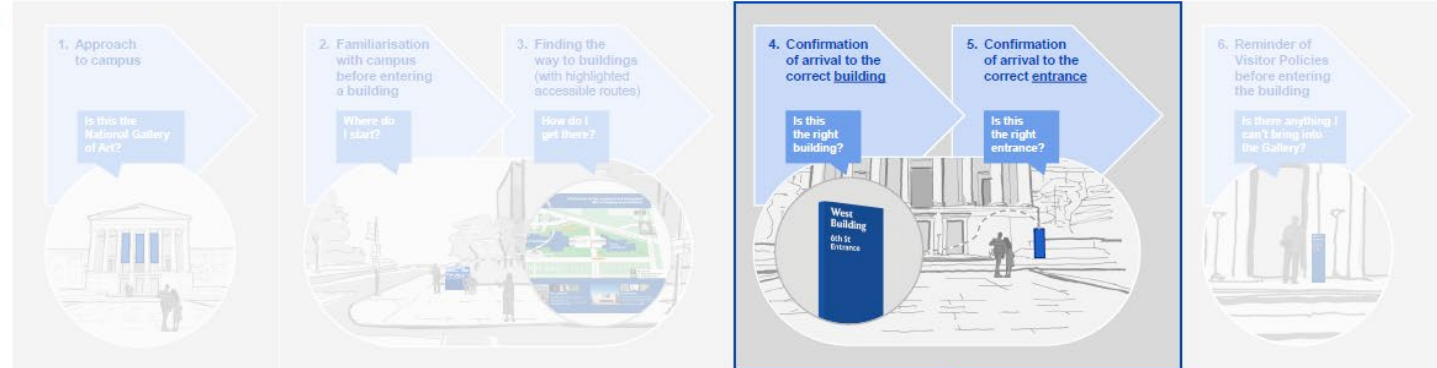


Project Improvement to Visitor Experience

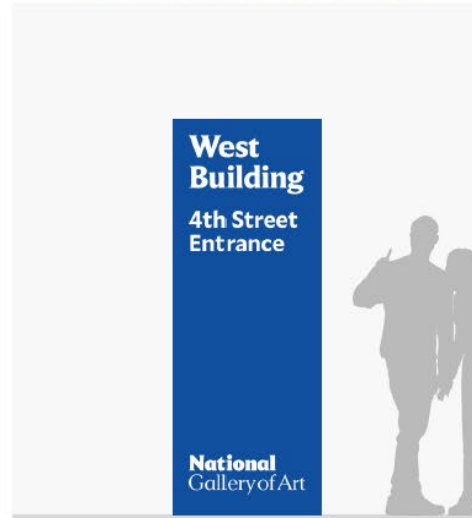
How the proposed new exterior signs support the visitor

Building/Entrance Identification Signs

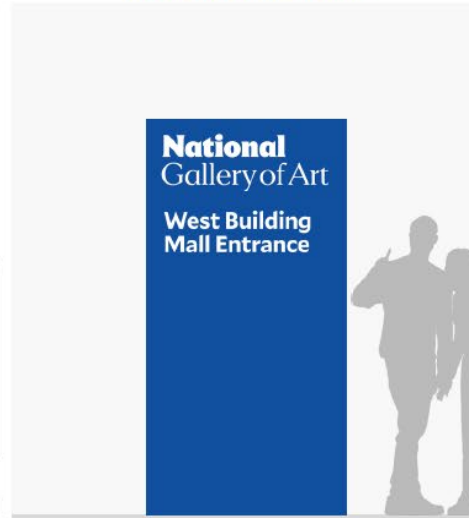
These signs draw visitors towards entrances and identify buildings and entrances. They are located close to entrance doors and are visible even when the Gallery is closed.



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



Project Improvement to Visitor Experience

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

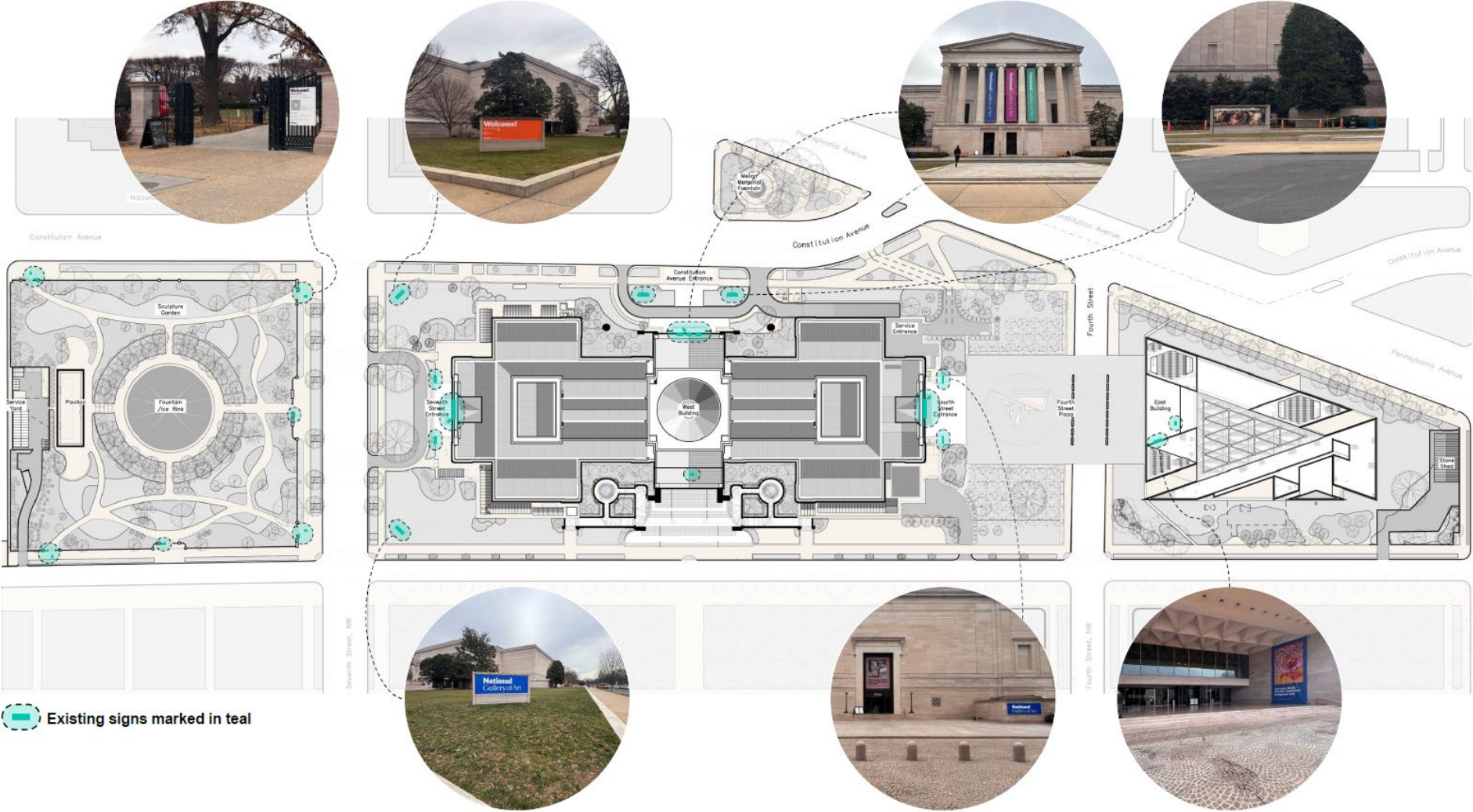


Close-up view (content is indicative)



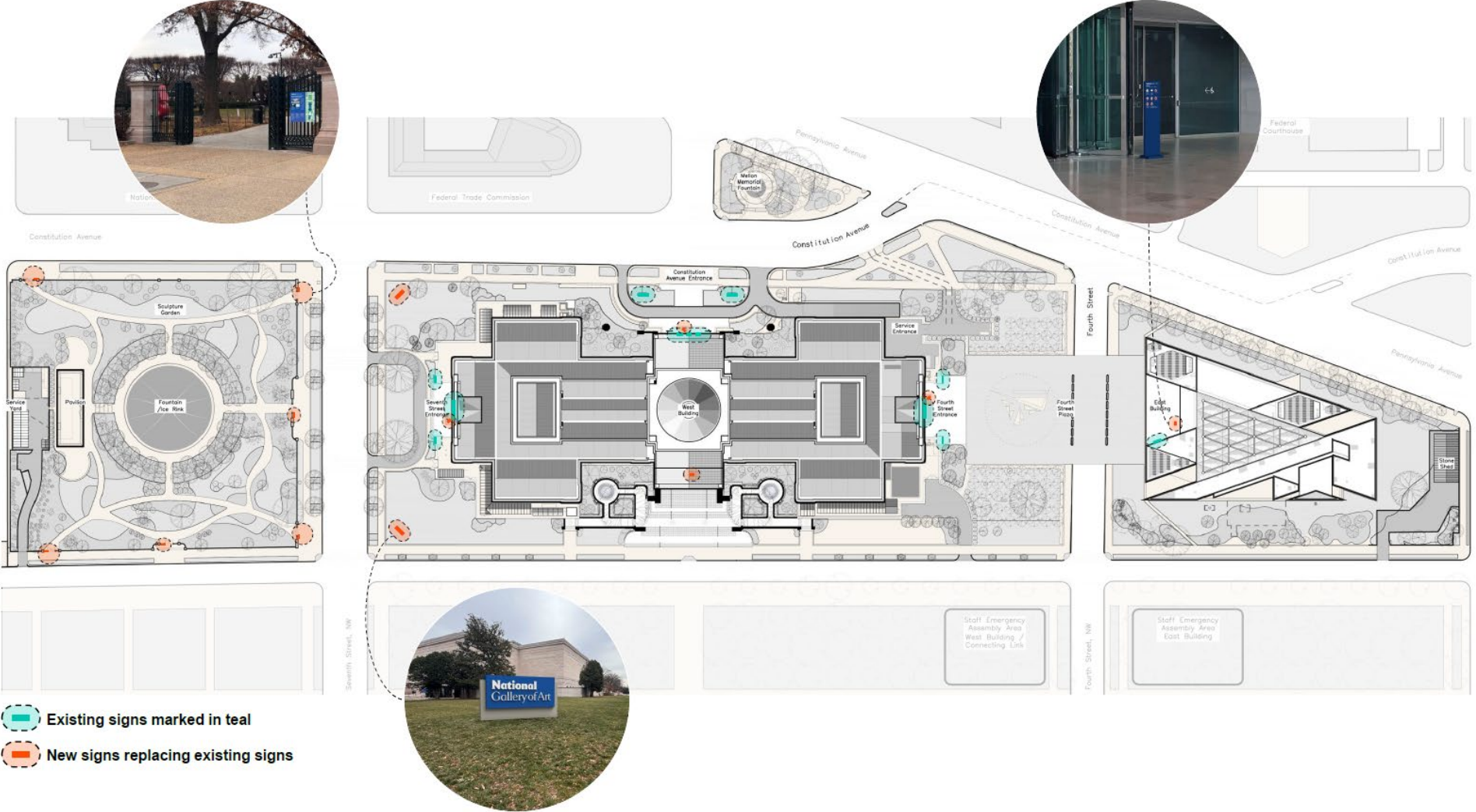
Existing Signs Around NGA Campus

Existing signs around the campus



Proposed Signage Plan

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



Proposed Signage Plan Continued

Proposed signage plan (2/2) – new signs at new locations

The plan includes three maps: a central map of the West Building, a left map of the Fountain/Ice Rink area, and a right map of the East Building. Six circular photographs provide visual context for the sign locations:

- Top-left: A sign near a fence and a lamp post.
- Top-middle: A blue sign in front of a classical building.
- Top-right: A blue sign with a map on a lawn.
- Bottom-left: A blue sign near a set of stairs.
- Bottom-middle: A blue sign on a path.
- Bottom-right: A blue sign on a lawn.

Map labels include: Constitution Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, Melion Memorial Fountain, Federal Trade, West Building, Constitution Avenue Entrance, Service Entrance, Fourth Street Entrance, East Building, and Staff Emergency Assembly Area.

-  Existing signs marked in teal
-  New signs replacing existing signs
-  New signs at new locations

Other Signage Systems in the Vicinity of NGA

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

Map labels include: Pennsylvania Avenue, North Street, Seventh Street, Third Street, Constitution Avenue, Madison Drive, Jefferson Drive, and various building names like US Naval Memorial & Navy Heritage Center, National Archives, Federal Trade Commission, Federal Courthouse, D.C. Municipal Building, National Mall, and National Museum of the American Indian.

View 1, 6th Street Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 1
6th St Entrance

Existing



View 1
6th St Entrance

Proposed



View 2, 6th Street Entrance, Existing and Proposed

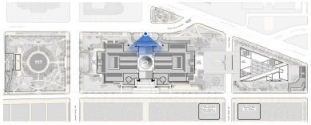
View 2
6th St Entrance

Existing



View 2
6th St Entrance

Proposed



View 3, 7th Street & Constitution Ave , Existing and 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 Street and Constitution Ave, Existing and Proposed

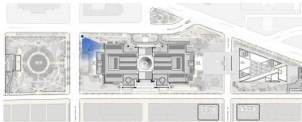
View 4
7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Existing



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

Proposed

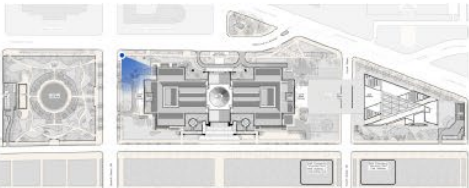


View 4, 7th Street and Constitution, Night-time Simulation

View 4

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

Proposed Night-time simulation



View 5, 7th Street Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 5
7th St Entrance

Existing



View 5
7th St Entrance

Proposed



View 6, 7th Street Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 6
7th St Entrance

Existing



View 6
7th St Entrance

Proposed



View 7A, 7th Street and Constitution Ave, Existing and Proposed

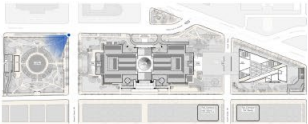
View 7A
7th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the Sculpture Garden

Existing



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

Proposed



View 7B, 9th Street and Madison Dr, Existing and Proposed

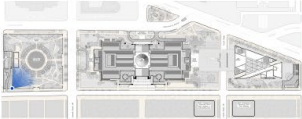
View 7B
9th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the Sculpture Garden

Existing



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

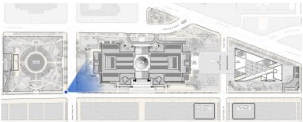
Proposed



View 8, 7th Street and Madison Dr, Existing and 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

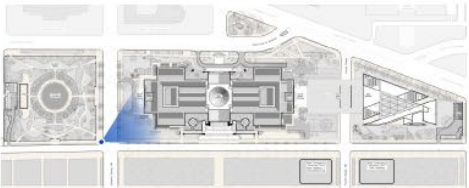


View 8, 7th Street and Madison Dr, Night-time Simulation

View 8

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

Proposed Night-time simulation



View 9, 7th Street and Madison Dr, Existing and Proposed

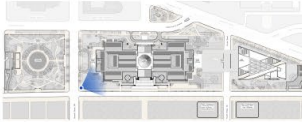
View 9
7th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Existing



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

Proposed



View 10A, Mall Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 10A
Mall Entrance

Existing



View 10A
Mall Entrance

Proposed



View 10B, Mall Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 10B
Mall Entrance

Existing



View 10B
Mall Entrance

Proposed



View 11, Mall Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 11
Mall Entrance

Existing



View 11
Mall Entrance

Proposed



View 12, 4th Street Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 12
4th St Entrance

Existing



View 12
4th St Entrance

Proposed



View 13, 4th Street Entrance, Existing and Proposed

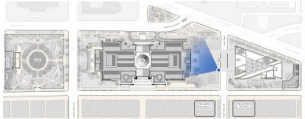
View 13
4th St Entrance

Existing



View 13
4th St Entrance

Proposed



View 14, 4th Street and Madison Dr, Existing and Proposed

View 14
4th St & Madison Dr NW

Existing



View 14
4th St & Madison Dr NW

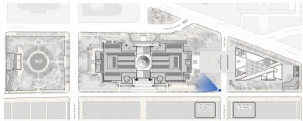
Proposed



View 15, 4th Street and Madison Dr, Existing and Proposed

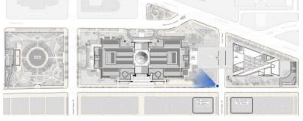
View 15
4th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the West Building

Existing



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

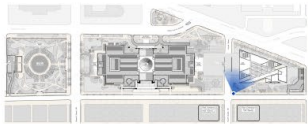
Proposed



View 16, 4th Street and Madison Dr, Existing and Proposed

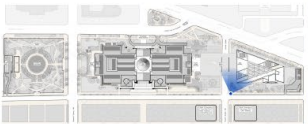
View 16
4th St & Madison Dr NW, facing the East Building

Existing



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

Proposed



View 17, East Building Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 17
East Building Entrance

Existing



View 17
East Building Entrance

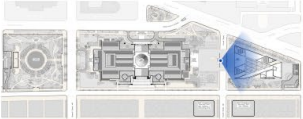
Proposed



View 18, East Building Entrance, Existing and Proposed

View 18
East Building Entrance

Existing



View 18
East Building Entrance

Proposed



View 19, 4th Street and Constitution Ave, Existing and Proposed

View 19
4th St & Constitution Ave NW

Existing



View 19
4th St & Constitution Ave NW

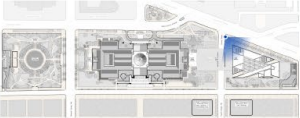
Proposed



View 20, 4th Street and Constitution Ave, Existing and Proposed

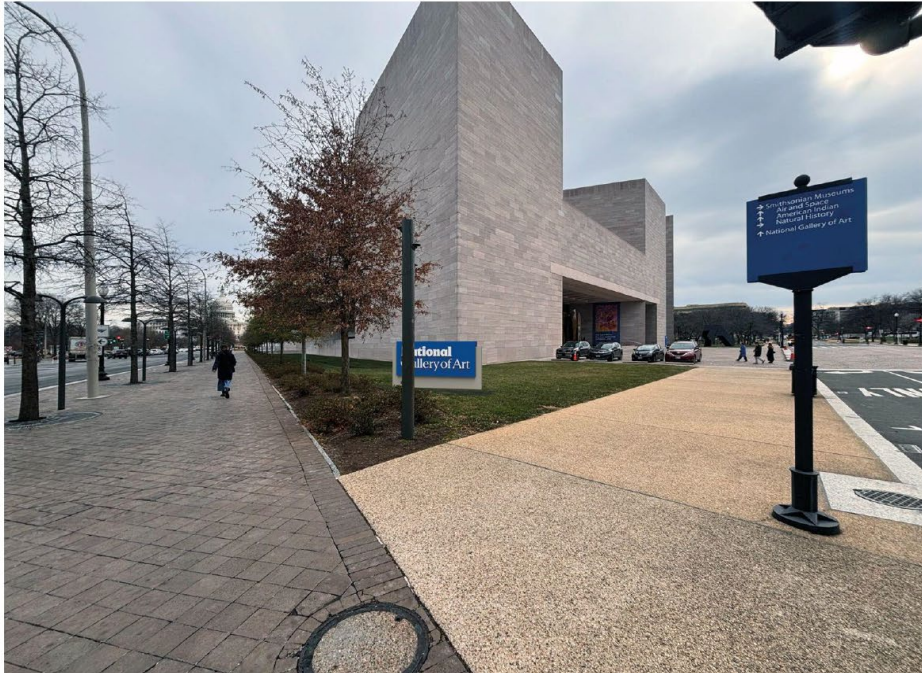
View 20
4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the East Building

Existing



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

Proposed

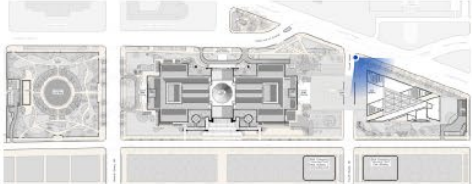


View 20, 4th St and Constitution Ave, Night-time Simulation

View 20

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

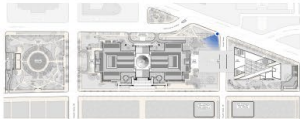
Proposed Night-time simulation



View 21, 4th St and Constitution Ave, Existing and Proposed

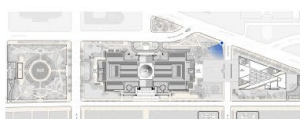
View 21
4th St & Constitution Ave NW, facing the West Building

Existing



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

Proposed



Proposed Signage Summary

Summary

Proposed signs for review



Signage replacement existing

