



EAST WING MODERNIZATION PROJECT

White House Complex
Washington, DC

Finding of No Significant Impact

Pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and National Capital Planning Commission's (NCPC) NEPA Regulations, I have evaluated the East Wing Modernization Project Environmental Assessment, prepared by the National Park Service (NPS), dated August 2025, and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), prepared by NPS and dated August 28, 2025. The EA is incorporated into this FONSI by reference based on the Commission Action on NCPC Project No. 8733 dated [XXX, 2026]. Based on the foregoing, I have determined the project will not have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and therefore an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The purpose of the proposed action is to establish a permanent, secure event space within the White House grounds that provides increased capacity for official state functions, eliminates reliance on temporary tents, temporary support facilities, and associated infrastructure strains, and protects the historic integrity and cultural landscape of the White House and its grounds while maintaining a high-quality visitor experience, consistent with essential functional requirements of the Executive Office of the President.

The *Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House and President's Park* (2000) identified the need for expanded event space to address growing visitor demand and provide a venue suitable for significant events. Successive administrations have recognized this need as an ongoing priority. To meet this need, the Executive Office of the President outlined three functional goals for any permanent event space: (1) immediate adjacency to the White House Executive Mansion, (2) a direct ceremonial procession from the East Room into the venue, and (3) enclosed second-story access from the Executive Mansion.

PROPOSED ACTION

Selected Action

The selected action would establish a permanent, secure event space within the White House grounds. This would be accomplished by replacing the East Wing of the White House with a new building that would house the White House State Ballroom.

No Action Alternative

Under the no action alternative, there would be no physical changes to the White House or its grounds or the ongoing and continuing management of the site. Tents and other temporary facilities would continue to be erected on the South Lawn to host large White House events, such as State dinners.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES EVALUATED

The Executive Office of the President and the NPS considered several other options for renovating the East Wing and creating space for large events. These alternatives were dismissed from detailed analysis because they did not adequately support the functional goals identified by the Executive Office of the President. A discussion of alternatives considered but dismissed is included in Appendix B of the EA.

STANDARD FOR EVALUATION

Under NEPA, an EA is sufficient, and an EIS need not be prepared if the EA supports the finding that the federal action will not significantly affect the quality of the human or natural environment. The NEPA documents, including the EA and FONSI prepared by NPS, were prepared in accordance with this standard. As described below, no significant impacts were identified that will require analysis in an EIS.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

A description of all potential environmental effects associated with the selected action and no action alternative is included in the EA, incorporated by reference herein. The EA evaluated the significance of the selected action, identified as the proposed action in the EA, by analyzing the potentially affected environment and the degree of the effects of the selected action. Significance is determined solely in relation to reasonably foreseeable adverse effects. The degree of effect is considered by evaluating both short-and-long term effects, both beneficial effects and adverse effects, effects on public health and safety, economic effects and effects on the quality of life of the American People.

The EA discloses the reasonably foreseeable effects of the selected action, including the combined effects of the selected action with those of past, ongoing, and anticipated future actions on the park's cultural resources and on visitor access and experience. While other park resources may experience some effects, those effects are minimal and were determined not to warrant detailed analysis in the EA. Accordingly, these resources are not discussed further here, as the anticipated effects are so minor that they have no potential to reach a level of significance. For a detailed description of impact topics considered but dismissed, see Appendix A of the EA.

Potentially Affected Environment

The White House is the oldest public building in the District of Columbia and has served as the home and office of every U.S. president except George Washington. Together with its wings and

grounds, the White House functions as the residence of the First Family, the workplace of the President and staff, a national park, and an evolving museum.

The White House and President's Park include three distinct cultural landscapes that were identified as contributing features to the L'Enfant Plan of the City of Washington, DC, a historic district listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 1997): Lafayette Park, White House Grounds and The Ellipse. These cultural landscapes are fundamental to the park and provide the setting for the "President's Park" as defined by Pierre L'Enfant in 1791. Situated on a high point within the city, the White House is a focal point on the principal north-south axis of L'Enfant's plan. Views and vistas were among the most essential features of L'Enfant's plan. The White House grounds are dynamic, changing with the seasons and the needs of the Executive Office of the President. Vegetation is frequently moved or removed, and at times temporary event tents obstruct views of the White House and other features of President's Park.

The Executive Mansion encompasses approximately 55,000 square feet, not including the West and East Wings and colonnades. This historic main building is organized into three primary sections: the Ground Floor, the State Floor, and the Executive Residence floors. The East Wing, constructed in 1942, has undergone multiple renovations and provides office space for the First Lady and her staff, including the White House Social Secretary, Graphics and Calligraphy Office, and correspondence teams. It also serves as the public entrance for White House tours and special events held at the White House.

The White House hosts major public events such as the Garden Tours, the Easter Egg Roll, and the National Christmas Tree Lighting. President's Park offers open space for recreation, First Amendment expression, and community programming. The NPS provides visitor access, interpretation, and educational services throughout these areas (NPS 2014).

A more detailed description of the potentially affected environment is included in the EA under the subheadings Current and Expected Future Conditions of the Environment if No Action is Taken.

Short and Long-term Beneficial and Adverse Effects

Cultural Resources - Cultural Landscapes

Under the selected action, the White House Grounds Cultural Landscape, which was originally designed by Thomas Jefferson and later modified by the designs of Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., and others, will be altered through an expansion of the White House footprint and the addition of a larger structure on its east side. These changes will result in long-term adverse effects on the cultural landscape. Similarly, views of the White House from Lafayette Park and the Ellipse will be permanently altered due to the selected action. In the short term, construction activities, including the presence of equipment and the removal and replanting of vegetation, will result in temporary adverse effects on these landscapes. However, the EA also identifies long-term beneficial effects from eliminating the need for temporary tents and other temporary facilities to support large events.

Despite the adverse impacts identified in the EA, the selected action will not result in significant adverse impacts to the park's cultural landscapes. The selected action will not permanently alter the park's most critical view, the long vista connecting the White House, Washington Monument, and Jefferson Memorial. In addition, mitigation measures such as replanting historically significant trees, salvaging and reusing historic materials, and preserving or reinstalling garden features will help maintain continuity between the site's historic character and its contemporary functions. These measures ensure that significant elements of the landscape are preserved and adapted for continued use, supporting the conclusion that the selected action will not result in significant impacts to cultural landscapes.

Cultural Resources - Historic Buildings

The White House is designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL). Under the selected action, the former East Wing will be replaced with a new building, representing a permanent loss of a component that was integral to White House operations since 1942. This change has disrupted the historical continuity of the White House grounds and altered the architectural integrity of the east side of the property. The new building's larger footprint and height will dominate the eastern portion of the site, creating a visual imbalance with the more modestly scaled West Wing and Executive Mansion. Adding a second story to the East Colonnade will further modify the setting, contrasting with the single-story design of the West Colonnade and changing the traditional spatial organization and sightlines of the grounds. These changes will adversely alter the design, setting, and feeling of the White House and the grounds over the long-term. In addition, construction activities will also introduce temporary risks to the Executive Mansion, including noise, vibration, and potential settlement effects, which could affect the structural stability or finishes of the Executive Mansion and adjacent features. The selected alternative will also provide long-term benefits by reducing reliance on temporary event infrastructure, minimizing wear on the grounds, and improving functionality for large gatherings through the addition of a permanent ballroom.

The selected action will result in a substantial change to one portion of the NHL. However, the essential features that make it nationally significant, particularly its role in establishing the nation's capital and its resilience during the War of 1812, will remain unchanged. Moreover, the NHL documentation identifies the period of significance as 1792-1955, a period that saw significant changes in the configuration of the White House, namely the addition of the East and West Wings. Therefore, the overall impact will not significantly affect the property's significance as an NHL and it retains the qualities that caused it to be designated as an NHL.

Further, mitigation measures, including documentation of the former East Wing as well as salvage and storage of some of the existing historic building materials, will be reused in the new modernized East Wing, and to ensure their availability for future preservation or restoration projects at the White House or for other significant buildings in the district. These efforts will support preservation efforts by providing hard-to-replicate or replacement building materials that can be used at the White House and other historic buildings in the area, including the Smithsonian Castle, limiting potential significant adverse impacts to these resources in the future.

The White House is also unique in that, while it is a historic structure, it continues to evolve to meet the operational needs of the Executive Office of the President. This ongoing adaptation is

part of its historical significance. Thus, the selected action will not result in a significant adverse impact to historic buildings.

As noted in the EA, the White House and grounds are not subject to the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA).

Visitor Access and Experience

President's Park, excluding the White House and its grounds, is open to the public without the need for a scheduled tour; however, temporary area closures may be in place due to events and activities. U.S. Secret Service operations may also temporarily affect access to areas of the park to ensure necessary security and safety for the adjacent White House grounds, its occupants, and the public. These closures are frequent given the high level of activity that occurs in and around the park.

Under the selected alternative, certain areas within both President's Park and the White House and its grounds will become temporarily inaccessible. Visitors to these areas will also experience increased noise and visual intrusions, resulting in adverse effects. However, these impacts are expected to be temporary and will conclude with the completion of construction, anticipated to be summer 2028, limiting the duration and extent of the adverse impacts.

Construction will interrupt normal tour flow, necessitating rerouting (e.g., alternate entry point) or postponement. Historically, tours have been suspended or altered during renovations or heightened security conditions. At the time of the EA's preparation, new tour bookings have been paused while a collaborative group of White House, NPS, and U.S. Secret Service staff work to determine the best way to ensure public access to the White House as this project begins and for the duration of construction. While the selected alternative will temporarily alter the existing White House tour route and potentially reduce tour availability during construction, tours will continue in some capacity and will include access to the State Floor of the Executive Mansion. This will help minimize the overall impact on visitors seeking to tour the interior of the White House. Because these closures are temporary, limited to the construction period, and consistent with previous renovation practices, they do not constitute significant adverse impacts.

In the long term, the selected alternative will provide a modernized East Wing and a permanent ballroom designed to enhance functionality, accessibility, and visitor amenities, while reducing reliance on temporary event spaces. Collectively, these improvements will strengthen the White House's capacity to host large indoor events, reinforce its status as a national landmark, and contribute to an improved long-term visitor experience.

Effects on Public Health and Safety

The selected action will not result in significant adverse effects on public health and safety. As detailed in Appendix A of the EA, the project's limited grading area, short duration of construction equipment use, and minimal vehicle trips will not significantly affect regional air quality. Emissions will remain below applicable pollutant thresholds.

Vehicle traffic is already restricted on streets near the project area, and additional restrictions will be clearly marked and enforced to ensure public safety. Pedestrian access may also be limited or rerouted in certain areas, as described in the EA under Visitor Access and Experience, to maintain a safe environment during construction. Finally, the selected action does not involve the release of hazardous or solid waste or other hazards to human health.

Economic Effects

Socioeconomic impacts were considered but dismissed from detailed analysis, as explained in Appendix A of the EA. While White House tours and visits to President's Park offer valuable experiences, they are not major economic drivers for the region. These sites are typically one of many stops for visitors, and temporary changes to tour availability or site access are not expected to significantly affect the regional economy, tourism sector, or local employment. Although construction may generate some limited opportunities for local businesses, these effects are expected to be minor and likely undetectable.

Effects on the Quality of Life of the American People

As described in the EA, the selected action will affect visitor access and experience, resulting in both adverse and beneficial impacts. In the short term, temporary site closures and reduced tour capacity will create adverse effects. However, over the long term, these areas will reopen and remain accessible, benefitting the American people. The selected action will not significantly alter educational opportunities or public understanding of the park. As noted, White House tours will continue, allowing visitors to engage with the park's purpose and unique resources. The modernized East Wing and new State Ballroom will directly benefit the American people by expanding the White House's ability to host large indoor events, celebrate America's history through new interpretive opportunities, and create a symbolic space for events of national importance, reinforcing shared civic identity and pride. It will also directly benefit the American people by providing comfort facilities that may be used for outdoor events on the South lawn. The selected action will also indirectly benefit the American people by providing modern office space for the Executive Office of the President.

The selected action will not restrict the public's ability to consume, purchase, or use products from public lands. It will also have no impact on public services, traditional land and water use practices, or the cultural heritage of Native American communities. Additionally, the selected alternative will not affect passive recreational use of ecosystems.

Rationale for the Decision

The proposed action to modernize the White House East Wing and construct a new State Ballroom is the selected action. The EA evaluated two alternatives: a no action alternative and proposed action, which is the selected action. In addition, the Executive Office of the President and the NPS considered several other options for renovating the East Wing and creating space for large events. These alternatives were dismissed from detailed analysis because they did not adequately support the functional goals identified by the Executive Office of the President. The no action alternative was not selected because it does not meet the project's purpose and need, as it lacks a permanent,

secure event space within the White House grounds and would continue reliance on temporary tents and associated infrastructure.

As described in the EA, successive administrations, including the current one, and existing planning documents have consistently recognized the need for a secure event space capable of hosting large official functions without reliance on temporary tents and associated infrastructure. The selected action fulfills this need by providing permanent facilities to support the operational needs of the Executive Office of the President, including both office and large event space.

Although the number and format of White House tours will differ from past practice resulting in some temporary effects to the NPS's ability to interpret the unit, tours will resume as soon as practicable and will continue to include access the principal ground floor corridor and the public rooms on the State Floor of the Executive Mansion. Some ground floor rooms adjacent to construction zones or temporarily repurposed as offices for East Wing staff will be unavailable during construction, but this limitation will be temporary, lasting only for the duration of construction. As a result, the selected action will continue to preserve and interpret the museum corridor and principal public rooms of the White House, ensuring that visitor access and the park's core interpretive mission are maintained.

Additionally, under the selected action, museum objects previously on display in the East Wing and some objects in the Executive Mansion will be relocated or removed. Items not currently in use or on display are curated or stored. The routine removal of museum objects from the White House and off-site storage of those objects when they are not in use or being displayed is consistent with longstanding regular practice.

As described in the EA, the White House is unique in that, while it is an historic building, it is also a building that has evolved over time. Since 1805, Presidents have expanded and updated the White House to meet the needs of the Executive Office of the President. The selected action is consistent with this historic pattern of use. Finally, as further explained in the NPS's Non-Impairment Determination (Appendix A of the EA), the action will not result in impairment of, or unacceptable impacts to, the park's resources.

In summary, the selected action best meets the project's purpose and need by providing permanent, secure space for large official events within the White House grounds, eliminating reliance on temporary tents. It aligns with the long-standing functional goals of the Executive Office of the President, meets the current operational needs of the Executive Office of the President, and is consistent with the White House's historical evolution. The action maintains public access to key interpretive areas and ensures that the museum character of the principal ground floor corridor and State Floor public rooms is upheld. As documented in the EA and the Non-Impairment Determination attached, the selected action will not result in significant environmental impacts or impair the park's resources, allowing the NPS to continue fulfilling its stewardship and interpretive mission.

NCPC DETERMINATION AND FINDING

Based on the information contained in the EA and FONSI prepared by NPS, described above, adopted by NCPC in the Commission Action on NCPC Project No. 8733 on [XXX, 2026], the

selected action does not constitute a major federal action meeting the criteria that normally requires preparation of an EIS. The selected alternative will not have a significant effect on the human environment in accordance with Section 102(2)(c) of NEPA. Based on the foregoing, it has been determined that an EIS is not required for this project and, thus, will not be prepared.

Marcel C. Acosta
Executive Director

Date

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