National Park Service
US Department of the Interior

The White House and President's Park

White House
East Wing Modernization and State Ballroom
Environmental Assessment

Washington, DC

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NPS-25012

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Chapter 1 – Purpose and Need

Background

The White House is the oldest public building in the District of Columbia and has been the home and office of every President of the United States except for George Washington. The White House, including its wings and grounds, serves as the residence of the First Family, offices for the President and staff, and an evolving museum. It sits within President's Park, which includes Lafayette Square, the First Division Monument, Sherman Park, and various sites in and around the Ellipse.

The White House itself has expanded since its original construction and has been subject to many major and minor renovations since its first cornerstone was laid in 1792. Although the White House has undergone expansions and many presidents have proposed large changes to the White House, its design remains a timeless representation of stability and resilience in our nation (Bushong 2005).

Beginning in 1805, various presidents have expanded the colonnade leading to the east of the White House. In 1902, the East Wing colonnade was reconstructed in the same location. During excavations, the contractors found and dug up the original East Wing's foundations (McDonald 2011). The East Wing, as we know it today, includes the colonnade leading to a two-story building that was added to the White House in 1942.

Congress established The White House as a unit of the National Park System in 1961, and it is managed by the National Park Service (NPS) through President's Park. The enabling legislation (Pub. L. No. 87-286, 75 Stat. 586 (1961)) states that the NPS will give primary attention to the preservation and interpretation of the museum character of the principal corridor on the ground floor and the principal public rooms on the first floor of the White House. The enabling legislation provides that NPS management of the park shall not conflict with the administration of the Executive Office of the President or with the use and occupancy of the buildings and grounds as the home of the President and his family or his official purposes.

Purpose and Need

The White House stands as one of the most stunning and historically significant buildings in the world. However, it faces a fundamental limitation: it cannot host large events without resorting to the installation of huge, unsightly tents positioned over 100 yards from the Executive Mansion and within view of visitors to President's Park. For 150 years, Presidents, administrations, and White House staff have needed a permanent indoor event space at the White House that can hold substantially more guests than currently allowed.

The continued use of temporary tents and outdoor set-ups for high-profile events has taken a toll on the cultural landscape and architectural integrity of the area. These installations pose threats to vital infrastructure and landscaping, while diminishing the overall visitor experience. During events, large stakes are driven into the ground, risking damage to underground utilities.

Meanwhile, temporary flooring damages the turf, leading to a need for expensive repairs, and the lack of sufficient restrooms adds to the growing urgency to establish a permanent event space and event support facilities. Visual distractions and the aged appearance of these temporary facilities further undermine the experience for visitors to the White House and President's Park (NPS 2000).

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.

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 NPS has prepared this environmental assessment (EA) consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Department of the Interior (DOI) NEPA regulations, 43 CFR 46, and the 2025 DOI Handbook of NEPA Implementing Procedures (516 DM 1 Handbook).[1,2]

Project Area and Issues

The project area includes the East Colonnade, portions of the east side of the Executive Mansion where the colonnade meets the building, the East Garden, the East Wing of the White House, and space west and south of the East Wing extending down to the South Drive. The project area extends from Pennsylvania Avenue, running south along the East Executive Park (East Executive Avenue), and reaching Hamilton Place (Figure 1). Hereafter, when this document refers to the East Wing, it collectively includes the East Colonnade. Where necessary, the East Colonnade will be specifically called out.

[1] Certification related to Page Limits: The NPS certifies it has considered the factors mandated by NEPA; that this EA represents its good-faith effort to prioritize documentation of the most important considerations required by the statute within the congressionally mandated page limits; that this prioritization reflects NPS's expert judgement; and that any considerations addressed briefly or left unaddressed were, in NPS's judgment, comparatively not of a substantive nature that meaningfully informed the consideration of environmental effects and the resulting decision on how to proceed.

[2] Certification related to Deadline: The NPS certifies that this EA represents a good-faith effort to fulfill NEPA's requirements within the congressional timeline; that such effort is substantially complete; that, in NPS's expert opinion, it has thoroughly considered the factors mandated by NEPA; and that, in NPS's judgment, the analysis contained therein is adequate to inform and reasonably explain its decision regarding the proposed Federal action.

Impacts to Cultural Resources and Visitor Access and Experience are evaluated for each alternative. The following issues were considered but dismissed from detailed analysis (see Appendix A): Air Quality, Archeological Resources, Floodplains, Museum Collections, Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use, Socioeconomics, Soils, Traffic and Pedestrian Access, Vegetation, Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat.

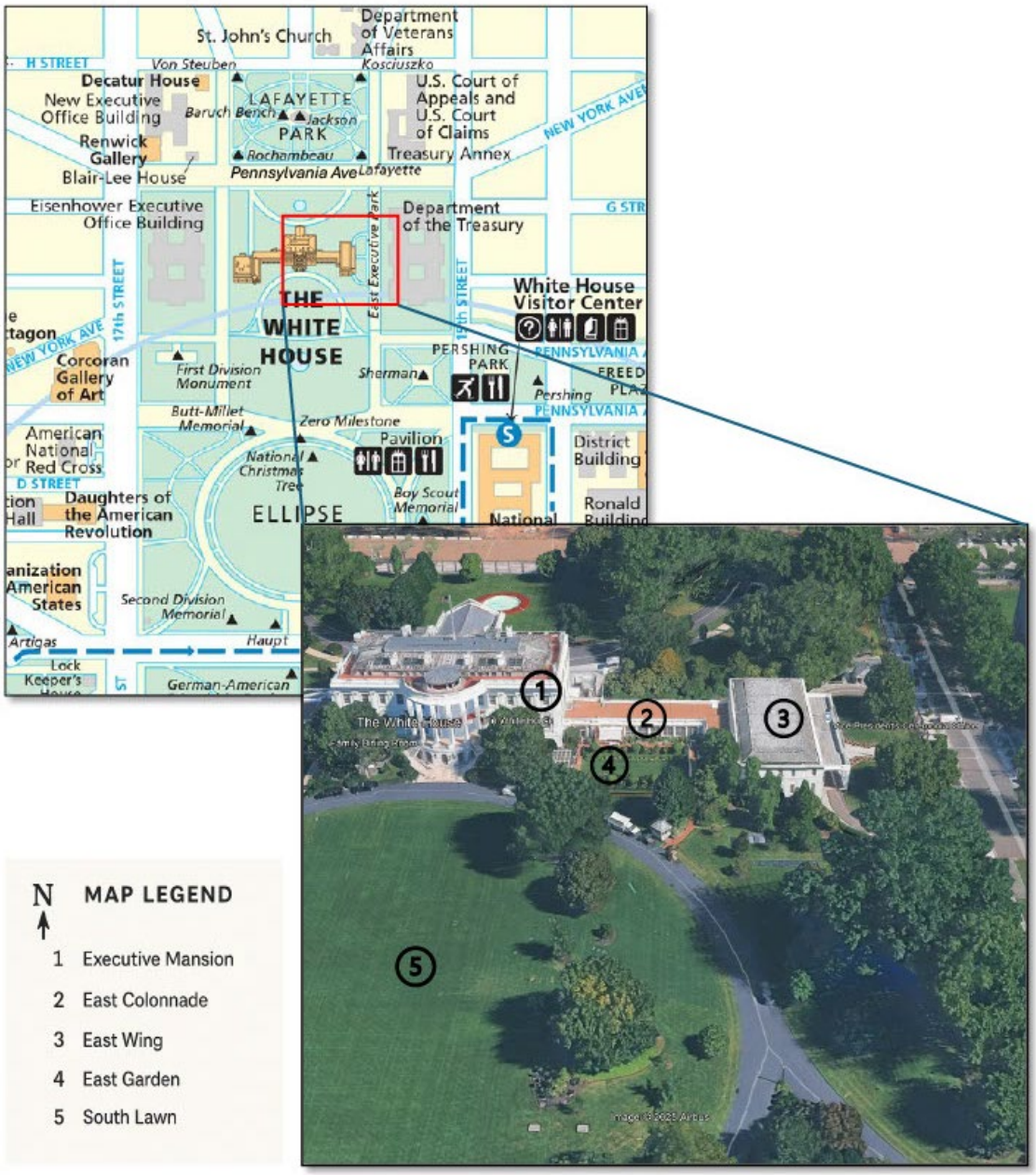

Figure 1. The East Wing Modernization Project Area within The White House and President's Park.

Chapter 2 – Alternatives

This section describes the no action alternative and the proposed action. The proposed action is informed by concept-level designs developed in collaboration with the Executive Office of the President's planning team and architects. A discussion of alternatives considered but dismissed is included in Appendix B.

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.

Proposed Action

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

Deconstruction and Design

The existing East Wing and East Colonnade would be deconstructed. Prior to deconstruction, the NPS would remove all museum collections, artifacts, and paintings (collectively "museum objects") from the East Wing and some museum objects from the Executive Mansion. Museum objects from the East Wing may be relocated to other areas within the White House, which could result in temporary removal or modification of interior designs or museum objects in those spaces. If removed from the White House, all items would be stored in accordance with White House standards to ensure proper preservation and accountability.

The interiors and exteriors of the East Wing and East Colonnade have been evaluated to identify historic fabric with potential for salvage and possible reuse. Both buildings would be documented as outlined in the Documentation section below prior to removal of any features or finishes. Selected interior features would be documented, removed, and stored for potential reinstallation including wood paneling, light fixtures, movie theater elements, and interior columns. Selected exterior features, such as exterior columns, Seneca sandstone, the East Wing commemorative cornerstone and bronze plaque from the 1942 renovation, wrought iron fencing and gate, the Kennedy Garden arbor, two fanlight windows from the East Colonnade, and cobblestone paving, would be documented, removed, and stored for potential reinstallation. Some interior and exterior features would be reinstalled at and around the new building.

The new building would be approximately 90,000 square feet and would be connected to the Executive Mansion through the East Colonnade. The East Colonnade would be renovated to include an enclosed second story that would provide direct access from the East Room to the State Ballroom, while maintaining ground-floor access to and from the Executive Mansion.

Limited portions of the east façade of the Executive Mansion would be carefully removed to tie in both levels; stones removed for this work would be cataloged and reinstalled.

The exterior design of the new East Wing building would be compatible with the Executive Mansion through classical elements such as columns and pediments. Materials would include a white painted exterior, historically compatible windows and doors, and an architecturally compatible roof. Interior finishes would include stone slab flooring, decorative plaster moldings, and high-quality finishes for elevator cabs. Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing (MEP) upgrades would include custom chandeliers, fixture updates, and architectural grilles, along with advanced audio-visual (AV) system enhancements.

The second floor would contain the State Ballroom with capacity for over 1,000 guests, depending on final design configuration. The State Ballroom would allow flexible staging on the south or east sides and provide views to the west, south, and east. A flat tray ceiling with decorative chandeliers is proposed. The first floor would continue to serve as the visitor entrance to the building with monumental stairs to the ballroom and would house storage, mechanical equipment, and mission space. Ground-floor restrooms are proposed to support events on the South Lawn.

Construction and Staging

Under the proposed action, a temporary construction zone would be established near the East Wing until project completion (summer 2028). This zone would close Madison Place NW from H Street NW to E Street NW and portions of Pennsylvania Avenue NW, extending approximately 260 feet east and 350 feet west from the Madison Place NW centerline to non-construction or emergency vehicles. The construction area would extend south from the East Colonnade, with the South Drive as the western boundary and East Executive Drive as the eastern boundary. The construction zone would extend south to Hamilton Avenue. The construction would not impede visitation to other parts of President's Park.

A tower crane would be erected on site, with its final location determined upon completion of the final design documents. Other heavy construction equipment would be used, and contractors would employ ground protection to prevent turf and utility damage. Given the project's size and duration, turf replacement and ground remediation, such as decompaction of compacted topsoil, are expected to occur during project closeout, along with the repaving of affected roadway areas.

Landscaping

The proposed action would expand the footprint of the East Wing, resulting in adjustments to landscaping in the project area. To accommodate the larger building, a variety of ornamental trees and shrubs would be removed from the project site. The commemorative Southern Magnolias on the east front of the East Wing would be removed due to the proposed footprint of the building (north magnolia planted in 1947, south magnolia planted in 1942 by Franklin D. Roosevelt). The East Garden would be carefully removed during construction and reinstalled similar to its existing design. The arbor in the East Garden would be removed, restored, and reinstalled in the East Garden once exterior construction is complete.

The brick pavers along the garden paths would be carefully removed. The bricks would be stored and ready to be relaid as part of the garden reinstallation. The fountain, including its statue, a centerpiece of the garden, would also be carefully dismantled and preserved for future reinstallation. Meanwhile, the Laura Bush Silver Linden Tree would be fenced and protected with a rigid barrier to ensure its safety throughout the construction period.

Documentation

The NPS would continue to survey and record the current interior and exterior conditions of the East Wing, East Colonnade, and Jacqueline Kennedy Garden (East Garden) of the White House. The documentation would consist of two components:

1. Digital Survey: A 3-dimensional digital survey of the property using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) laser scanning equipment would be done. Scanning would be conducted using Leica P50 and RTC360 terrestrial laser scanners. A Leica TS16i total station would be used to create a control network for the scanned data. A single three-dimensional model of the building and site would be completed.
2. High-Resolution Digital Photography: The NPS would capture high-resolution digital photographs of the building and site to include the primary interior and exterior spaces, significant features, and contextual views. Photographs would be executed using a Phase One medium-format digital system and a Canon R5 full-frame digital mirrorless system.

Chapter 3 – Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

This chapter is organized by issue. The current and expected future conditions of the resource, including reasonably foreseeable future actions and trends, are presented first, followed by an analysis of the environmental consequences of the alternatives on each resource.

Cultural Resources

Cultural Landscapes

Current and Expected Future Conditions of the Environment if No Action is Taken

The White House and President's Park includes 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). 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. The period of significance of the historic district is 1790 to 1942 (NPS 1997; 2016).

- **Lafayette Park**. Lafayette Park, located north of the White House, is a 19th-century public park redesigned in the 1960s. H Street bounds the park to the north, Madison Place to the east, Pennsylvania Avenue to the south, and Jackson Place to the west. Two brick elliptical paths bisected by two brick parallel straight walkways inscribe the rectangular park. Elliptical fountains accent the east-west line of the park. Monuments to Revolutionary War heroes (Marquis Gilbert de Lafayette, Comte Jean de Rochambeau, Tadeusz Kosciuszko, and Baron Frederich Wilhelm von Steuben) anchor the corners, and an equestrian statue honoring President Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812 sits in the center of the park. Two 19th-century urns, known as the Navy Urns, flank the south-central entrance to Lafayette Park.

- **White House Grounds**. The White House Grounds cultural landscape consists of the gardens and grounds within the iron fence line of the White House that provide privacy, protection, and recreation for the first family, as well as the backdrop for official events. Thomas Jefferson originally designed the grounds and they have evolved through designs by Andrew Jackson Downing and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., as well as others. The north grounds consist of a semi-circular drive arching around a circular fountain centered on the house. Groves of trees, many commemorative, flank the drive to the east and west. The south grounds consist of a circular drive reached by a tangential road on the south with entrances at the east and west ends. A circular fountain, centered on the house, is located further south of the drive. Groves of trees and bushes, many commemorative, flank the east and west sides of the south lawn.

- **The Ellipse (President's Park South)**. The Ellipse area, or President's Park South, to the south of the White House grounds, is another important cultural landscape. President's Park South consists of the park area including the Ellipse, Sherman Park to the

northeast, and First Division to the northwest. An elliptical roadway serves as the centerpiece of the Ellipse with narrow curved roads, referred to as dog legs, in the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners. President's Park South is ringed with a series of monuments and memorials that include: the First Division Monument, the Zero Milestone, the General William T. Sherman Monument, the Boy Scout Commemorative Tribute, and the Second Division Memorial. The park is also significant for its views of and from the National Mall, the Washington Monument, and the Jefferson Memorial.

Views and vistas were among the most essential features of the first plan of Washington, DC, drawn by Pierre Charles 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. Perhaps the most critical view associated with the site is the long vista linking the White House, Washington Monument, and Jefferson Memorial. The NPS has worked to maintain this historically significant corridor between these preeminent sites. The axial relationship is evident and remains one of the defining attributes for the entirety of Washington, DC's monumental core. Other significant vistas include views north from the First Division Monument to the Eisenhower Executive Office Building and south to E Street, the view from Sherman Park north to the Treasury Building, the view from Constitution Avenue north to the Second Division Memorial, and the view to and from the North Portico across Lafayette Park and up 16th Street. During special events, views of the White House and other features of President's Park are impacted by the installation of large white event tents on the south lawn of the White House. These installations include large stakes driven into the ground and temporary flooring, which impacts utilities and the turf at the White House. These tents detract from views of the White House and President's Park during the special events as well as a period of construction before and after the events for setup and take down of the tent structures (The White House – Office of the President 2025b).

The White House grounds are constantly changing with the seasons and to support essential executive functions, and vegetation is moved and removed frequently. Recent changes include major renovations to the Rose Garden in 2020 and 2025. The 2020 project improved accessibility and sustainability by widening walkways, reconfiguring flower beds, and upgrading drainage, while removing crabapple trees to open sightlines and reduce shading of the roses to encourage floral propagation. In 2025, the central grass panel was replaced with a diamond-patterned concrete paver patio to better support events in the space and existing rose bushes and ornamental planting beds were retained. That same year, the historic Jackson Magnolia, a long-defining feature of the South Lawn, was removed due to advanced decline. A 12-year-old sapling that is a direct descendant of the Jackson Magnolia was planted in its place (The White House- Office of the President 2025a). Also in 2025, the NPS relocated a commemorative tree from the Biden Administration and a few non-commemorative plants to other locations on the White House grounds.

Environmental Consequences

<u>Proposed Action</u>

Replacing the existing East Wing with a new building that is approximately 90,000 square feet and 55 feet tall would have permanent adverse impacts on the cultural landscape, particularly the White House Grounds cultural landscape. Its removal would alter the architectural symmetry and historical continuity of the White House. The increased footprint and the addition of a second story along the colonnade, compared to the existing East Wing, would increase the massing and scale of the eastern portion of the property, potentially deemphasizing the prominence of the West Wing and the Executive Mansion. This change could be seen as a departure from the traditional aesthetic values and architectural integrity that have been maintained over the years.

However, the introduction of a new building to house the State Ballroom would also bring certain improvements to the cultural landscape. The permanent event space would eliminate the need for temporary event tents, enhancing the overall appearance and functionality of the White House grounds, providing a more seamless and dignified setting for large gatherings. This change would also reduce the wear and tear on the lawn, utilities, and surrounding areas, preserving the landscape's integrity into the future. While the new ballroom would represent a shift in the White House's architectural narrative, it would offer practical benefits that align with the longstanding needs of the White House and essential executive functions.

The viewscape and axial relationships as identified in the L'Enfant Plan of the City of Washington, DC and the 1901 McMillan Plan would not be affected by the new building. The primary vista related to the White House extends north-south from the Ellipse to the Jefferson Memorial and the southern horizon (NPS, 2016). This view is maintained since the new building would be sited on the east side of the property and bordered by the U.S. Treasury Building, which is of nearly equal scale.

Impacts on landscaping within the cultural landscape would include both temporary and permanent effects. The temporary removal of the 1960 Holly Trees surrounding the East Garden would be a notable change, as these trees have long contributed to the garden's historical and aesthetic value. To mitigate this impact, the construction contractor would carefully uproot, preserve, and replant the trees, ensuring their continued role in the landscape. The Laura Bush Silver Linden Tree, planted by the former First Lady and of historical significance, would be protected with a rigid barrier during construction. Other non-commemorative shrubs, bushes, trees, and turf would be removed, altering the garden's appearance and ecosystem during construction, but allowing for new landscaping plans. Overall, while the project would alter the manicured environment of the cultural landscape during construction, preserving and reintroducing significant elements would help maintain the historical and aesthetic value of the White House and its grounds.

Several hardscape features on the landscape would also be modified. Features of the East Garden, like the brick pavers along the garden paths and pergola, would be carefully removed and stored for reinstallation following construction. The fountain, including its statue, a centerpiece of the garden, would be dismantled and preserved, ensuring that this feature can be reinstalled and would continue to contribute to the garden's aesthetic and historical value.

The period of significance for the L'Enfant Plan historic district is 1790-1942. Many of these features were installed after 1947 and, therefore, their removal or change would not impact the cultural landscape. In addition, specific planned landscapes such as public parks are generally considered contributing, but their individual component elements are not enumerated for each site (NPS, 1997).

Conclusion

Overall, the proposed modernization of the East Wing would introduce both adverse and beneficial effects on the White House Grounds cultural landscape. Permanent changes would include the reduction in architectural symmetry and alterations to the manicured environment and built features of the East Garden. During construction, the White House grounds, Lafayette Park, and the Ellipse would also be visually altered. However, nothing in the proposed action would permanently alter the critical view associated with the site, the long vista linking the White House, Washington Monument, and Jefferson Memorial. Impacts would be offset in part by mitigation measures, such as replanting historically significant trees, salvaging and reusing historic materials, and preserving or reinstalling garden features. The addition of a permanent ballroom would further reduce the need for temporary event infrastructure and lessen physical stress on the surrounding grounds. While the project would alter aspects of the cultural landscape that have developed over centuries, measures to preserve significant elements and adapt the grounds for continued use would help maintain continuity between historic values and contemporary functions. The cultural landscape's period of significance ending after 1947 reflects the understanding that continual changes would be needed by the Executive Office of the President, demonstrating that this project aligns with the long-standing practice of adapting the White House to meet evolving essential executive functions. There are no other reasonably foreseeable future actions that may affect cultural landscapes. For this reason, the proposed action would contribute all of the effects to this resource.

Historic Buildings

Current and Expected Future Conditions of the Environment if No Action is Taken

Today, 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 iconic porticoes extend beyond the main structure, contributing to the building's grand and welcoming presence for visitors. On the northern façade, the building attains a height of 60 feet 4 inches, while the southern façade reaches an elevation of 70 feet. The interior consists of a sophisticated arrangement of 132 rooms, each steeped in historical significance, including 16 family and guest suites, three kitchens, and 35 bathrooms.

The East Wing has undergone many notable transformations since its original construction. President Thomas Jefferson was the first to expand the White House, adding colonnaded terraces to both the east and west sides, which not only enhanced the functionality of the building but also augmented its aesthetic appeal. It was during the renovations undertaken by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1902 that the East Wing assumed its more formal architectural style. This initial building served to welcome dignitaries and the public, featuring a long

cloakroom designed for the accommodation of guests' coats and hats during grand social gatherings.

During a substantial remodeling project in 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt enlisted the expertise of architect Charles McKim. McKim sought to instill a sense of Beaux-Arts order into the exterior and advocated for the removal of the greenhouses. He revitalized Jefferson's vision for a graceful flat-roof promenade and was able to construct a more harmonious architectural balance with the West Wing, thereby transforming it into a secondary entrance serving this historic residence (McDonald 2011).

In 1942, under the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt, the East Wing as it exists today was constructed. This addition incorporated an underground facility, currently referred to as the Presidential Emergency Operations Center, illustrating the complexities of governance during the turbulent period of World War II (White House n.d.).

Although the exterior of the Executive Mansion has largely retained its original design since its reconstruction following the War of 1812, the interior has experienced notable renovations, particularly between 1949 and 1952 during the administration of President Harry S. Truman. This extensive renovation prioritized the preservation of the historic floor plan while enhancing the interior's beauty and functionality.

On December 19, 1960, the White House was designated as a National Historic Landmark (NHL) under Criterion 1 (Significant Historical Events) for its critical role in the establishment of the nation's capital and its resilience during the British invasion in 1814. Significant documentation of the building has been completed over the years, including a Historic American Building Survey (HABS), Nos. DC 37A and DC 37B.

Currently, the East Wing provides office space for the First Lady and her staff, which includes the White House Social Secretary, Graphics and Calligraphy Office, and correspondence teams. In addition, visitors are welcomed at the ground floor entrance, which leads into the East Colonnade, a corridor connecting the East Wing to the Executive Mansion. The East Wing also features a movie theater for the First Family which also serves as a cloakroom for events. The East Wing encompasses approximately 60,000 square feet, forming an essential operational space for the First Lady and her team.

Each administration has left its imprint, shaping the building to reflect the evolving administrative needs, culture, and ideals of the nation (Table 1). The evolution of Jefferson's wings illustrates a continuous cycle of usage and adaptation, reflecting the dynamic nature of the White House itself. While innovation remains essential, the preservation of the historical significance of this landmark is equally paramount. This balance underscores the enduring legacy of the White House as an institution, one that embodies both a vibrant present and a promising future (McDonald 2011).

Table 1. Notable changes to the White House.

Year	Notable Change
1814-1815	Rebuilding following the War of 1812
1824-1829	Addition of the South and North Porticos
1902	Classical renovation of the White House interior and construction of the West and East Wings under President Theodore Roosevelt
1909-1930	Expansion of the West Wing, including the addition of the Oval Office and various renovations
1942	Second story of the East Wing constructed
1948-1952	Major structural renovation under President Harry S. Truman
1961	Redecoration by First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy
1979-1980	Exterior paint and stonework restored
2019-2020	Tennis Pavilion constructed to replace an existing facility
2019-2023	Replacement and upgrade of White House perimeter fence
2020	First Lady Melania Trump renovated the Rose Garden
2024	First Lady Jill Biden expanded the White House tour route and upgraded interpretive exhibits within the tour experience
2025	President Donald J. Trump renovated the Rose Garden

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

The proposed action is the addition of an approximately 90,000-square-foot building to house the State Ballroom, which would require replacing the existing East Wing and adding a second story to the East Colonnade. This action would result in both adverse and beneficial effects on historic buildings and their character.

Deconstruction and replacement of the East Wing would result in the permanent alteration of a component that has been integral to White House operations since its construction in 1942. Both the exterior and interior spaces of the East Wing, including circulation corridors, office suites, and the theater, would be removed. This would disrupt the historical continuity of the White House grounds and alter the architectural integrity of the east side of the property. The new building's larger footprint and height would 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 would 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. Construction activities would also introduce temporary risks to the historic building, including noise, vibration, and potential settlement effects, which could affect the structural stability or finishes of the Executive Mansion and adjacent features.

While the proposed modifications would alter the design, setting, and feeling of the White House grounds, they are not anticipated to affect its continued designation as a National Historic Landmark. The designation is based on the White House's historical and cultural

significance, particularly its association with the presidency and role in American history. Core elements that contribute to its national significance would remain intact, although the project would represent a substantial change to one portion of the landmark.

Mitigation would include comprehensive documentation of the affected buildings. Existing HABS records would be supplemented with new documentation, including three-dimensional digital surveys using LiDAR scanning and high-resolution photography of exterior and interior spaces. This process would create a permanent record of the East Wing, East Colonnade, and related features prior to construction. Salvage and storage of some of the existing historic building materials would be reused in the new modernized East Wing, and to ensure their availability for future preservation or restoration projects. These measures would help preserve knowledge of the buildings' architectural and historical qualities for future generations, even as the project introduces functional and physical changes to the site.

The deconstruction of the East Wing and East Colonnade would likely impact other features of the building through the removal of historic materials, like Seneca sandstone.[3] The Seneca sandstone extant in the East Colonnade parapet walls would be salvaged and stored for future preservation projects, either at the White House or for other significant structures in Washington, DC. This effort would ensure this finite material remains available for restoration, helping maintain the architectural integrity of the White House and other historic buildings in the area.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed action would alter the scale and architectural balance of the White House grounds through the replacement of the existing East Wing and modification of the East Colonnade. These changes would affect elements that have shaped the property's character since the early 20th century. Mitigation measures, including salvage of historic materials and comprehensive documentation, would preserve a record of the affected features and support future preservation needs. The addition of a permanent ballroom would also reduce reliance on temporary event infrastructure, limit wear on the grounds, and provide functional benefits for large gatherings. Taken together, the project would introduce both adverse and beneficial effects, but the White House and its grounds would continue to retain the core characteristics that convey its national significance, and thus its designation as a National Historic Landmark. Although there could be further changes to the building during this, or future, administrations, there are currently no reasonably foreseeable actions or projects that would affect the White House and its grounds. For this reason, the proposed action would contribute all of the effects to this resource.

[3] Seneca sandstone, known for its rich, reddish-brown color and durability, was quarried from the Seneca Creek area in Maryland and was a popular building material in Washington, DC, during the 19th century. Seneca Quarries provided building stone to Washington, DC from 1781 to 1901, and supplied distinctive red sandstone for some of the most significant structures and infrastructures in Washington, DC, including the East Wing of the White House. The quarries were closed in 1901, largely depleted. While the primary construction of the East Wing did not heavily rely on Seneca sandstone, it was used in various structural and decorative elements throughout the White House grounds.

Visitor Access and Experience

Current and Expected Future Conditions of the Environment if No Action is Taken

President's Park

As noted above, the White House sits within President's Park, which also includes Lafayette Park, the Ellipse and its side panels, the First Division Monument Park, and Sherman Park. These locations, excluding the White House and its grounds, are open to the public without the need for a scheduled tour, however, temporary area closures do occur 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.

Most visitors to President's Park view the White House from Lafayette Park or the north end of the Ellipse. Views of the White House from Lafayette Park include the northern façade of the East Wing. The East Wing is currently obscured from view by trees from the Ellipse, while the East Colonnade is partially visible. During special events, visitors can see large event tents on the south lawn of the White House. These tents detract from views of the White House and President's Park during special events as well as a period of construction before and after the events for setup and take down of the tent structures (The White House – Office of the President 2025b). Additionally, the setup and teardown for these events require a portion of President's Park to be temporarily closed to the public, resulting in impacts to visitor access.

Visitors to President's Park experience an urban environment with frequent noise from crowds, vehicles, construction, and overflights. Between 2014 and 2024, excluding 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, President's Park welcomed an average of approximately 1.5 million[4] visitors annually (NPS 2025a).

The White House

A distinctive feature of the White House, as one of the few official residences of a head of state regularly open to the public, is its role in providing unique visitor opportunities. 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).

One purpose of the White House as a unit of the National Park System is to provide public access to the principal corridor on the ground floor and to the state rooms on the first floor (NPS 2000, NPS 2014). Public tours have been offered since the early 1800s. Availability has periodically been suspended or rerouted due to security concerns, renovations, wartime restrictions, budget limitations, pandemics, or significant presidential events.

[4] The years 2020 and 2021 were excluded from the calculation due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically reduced visitation numbers.

Today, tours are coordinated by the White House Visitors Office, part of the Executive Office of the President, with day-of security screening and logistics overseen by the U.S. Secret Service. Members of the public request tours through their Member of Congress, which naturally limits the number of tour visitors. Once approved, visitors are notified of their scheduled tour date and time. Visitors enter the area through Sherman Park and start their tours in the East Wing. Interpretation within the tour is provided through interpretive exhibits and the tour itself is self-guided. The focus on maximizing tour capacity can limit the depth of visitor engagement. Security and event requirements often result in the closure of Sherman Park, the First Division Monument, and portions of President's Park South. These closures can affect circulation and reduce opportunities for interpretation.

While proposals to construct a permanent visitor screening facility have been made for more than two decades, this has not occurred. As a result, visitors pass through temporary screening tents before entering the East Wing. The current tour includes public rooms such as the Vermeil Room, Library, China Room, East Room, Blue Room, Red Room, Green Room, State Dining Room, and a view of the East Garden. U.S. Secret Service officers are stationed along the route and are knowledgeable about each room's history, art, furnishings, and current use. The White House tour route has evolved over presidencies, with new routes proposed and created in accordance with each administration's priorities and needs.

Tours are currently offered Tuesday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., and on Friday and Saturday from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. However, tours are subject to change or cancellation due to various special events and security reasons. Between 2014 and 2024, excluding 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions, the White House welcomed an average of approximately 488,200[5] visitors annually (NPS 2025b).

Multiple tourism sources identify the White House and President's Park as among Washington, DC's top attractions (Tripadvisor n.d., Washington.org n.d.a, U.S. News and World Report n.d.). The city recorded its highest-ever visitation in 2023 and 2024, a trend that is expected to continue. Visitor numbers are projected to peak in 2026, coinciding with the nation's 250th anniversary (Washington.org n.d.c). These visitation trends, coupled with the popularity of the White House and President's Park, indicate that visitation to the park and pressure for tours is likely to increase in the near future.

Construction activity around the White House and President's Park is expected to increase, coinciding with proposed East Wing work. Nearby, the National Mall is slated for renovations to landmarks such as the Lincoln Memorial, Constitution Gardens, Jefferson Memorial, and other event plazas (Washington.org n.d.b). In 2024, Washington, DC released its Downtown Action Plan, which covers areas east of the White House and President's Park and proposes new apartments, expanded pedestrian space, cultural hubs, and other construction projects (District of Columbia 2024). Lastly, as part of the President's Executive Order, *Making the District of*

[5] The years 2020 and 2021 were excluded from the calculation due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which drastically reduced visitation numbers.

Columbia Safe and Beautiful, (The White House 2025c) NPS and other federal agencies in the area will be taking actions such as removing graffiti, upgrading public benches, restoring buildings, cleaning public parks, and refurbishing fountains, among other actions. These actions, including construction projects, could result in short-term disruptions, lasting the length of construction, to visitor access and experience near President's Park through increased noise, changes in circulation patterns, and views. However, these projects are intended to improve the visitor experience in the long term.

Environmental Consequences

Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities would be ongoing from fall 2025 to summer 2028. During deconstruction and construction of the new building, heavy equipment, increased heavy truck traffic, and construction noise would temporarily detract from the aesthetics and setting of President's Park and the White House. For approximately three years, construction fencing, cranes, and staging areas would disrupt the site's visual integrity and historic character from certain viewpoints as described above in the cultural landscape section. Views from Lafayette Park would be most affected, while views of the main White House façade and North Portico would remain unobstructed. Views from the Ellipse to the White House may change, as construction activities and portions of construction fencing would be visible. Visitors are likely to see construction from this vantage point which would impact the visitor experience until construction concludes. Pedestrian access to sites in President's Park would remain largely unchanged both during and after construction (more detail provided in Appendix B, *Impact Topics Considered but Not Carried Forward for Analysis- Traffic and Pedestrian Access*).

The East Wing currently functions as the entry for White House tours. If deconstructed, visitors would no longer experience this space directly in its current state, which would represent a permanent change to the visitor experience. However, extensive documentation conducted prior to deconstruction, including HABS records, LiDAR scanning, and photography, would provide a detailed archival record of the East Wing, thereby reducing the intensity of effects on the visitor experience in this one location.

Construction would interrupt normal tour flow through the East Wing, 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 this 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 (DiMella 2025, Kurtz 2025). The President and First Lady have expressed commitment to continuing the tradition of public access to the White House (DiMella 2025, Kurtz 2025). Current plans anticipate that tours would continue to include the State Floor, comprising the Cross Hall, East Room, Green Room, Blue Room, Red Room, and State Dining Room. The Ground Floor State Rooms (Vermeil Room, Library, China Room, and Diplomatic Reception Room) would remain closed during construction. The NPS and the Executive Office of the President are also committed to continuing major public events at the White House. Based on these measures and the

Administration's stated commitment, any impacts on visitor access would be temporary, with the potential for enhanced public access to new spaces once construction is complete.

Upon completion, the modernized East Wing could incorporate accessible design, interpretive exhibits, enhanced tour features, and upgraded visitor amenities. Designed for a larger capacity than can currently be accommodated indoors, the State Ballroom would eliminate reliance on large temporary tents on the White House lawn, along with associated temporary flooring, generators, and portable restrooms, and would therefore avoid repeated staging, set-up, and tear-down that currently requires short-term closures of portions of President's Park and recurring turf repairs (The White House- Office of the President 2025b). Consolidating major events indoors would reduce the frequency and duration of lawn closures and lessen visual and noise intrusions during event preparation. These improvements would strengthen the White House's role as a national symbol and enhance the overall visitor experience.

Conclusion

Implementation of the proposed action would result in temporary but noticeable effects on visitor access and experience at President's Park and the White House during the approximately three-year construction period, due to the presence of heavy equipment, construction noise, and temporary visual obstructions. While views from certain locations, particularly Lafayette Square and portions of the Ellipse, would be altered, primary views of the White House façade, including the North and South Portico, would remain unaffected. Public access to the White House would be modified but maintained through adjusted tour routes, consistent with past practices during renovations, and supported by the Administration's stated commitment to preserving public access and hosting major events. These changes would be temporary, with no lasting restrictions on access once construction is completed. The design intent is for visitors to continue to enter through the ground floor of the modernized East Wing building for public White House tours and events. Upon completion, the project would provide a modernized East Wing and permanent Ballroom space designed to improve functionality, accessibility, and visitor amenities, while reducing the need for temporary event spaces. Collectively, these improvements would enhance the White House's ability to host large indoor events, reinforce its role as a national landmark, and contribute to an improved long-term visitor experience.

When combined with other reasonably foreseeable future actions described in the *Current and Expected Future Conditions of the Environment if No Action is Taken* section, visitors to and near the White House and President's Park are likely to experience greater short-term impacts while construction projects are underway. However, once construction is complete, both visitor access and experience will be largely beneficial, with the proposed action contributing most of the effects.

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Appendix A – Impact Topics Considered But Not Carried Forward for Analysis

Air Quality

The proposed action would result in the following short-term, construction-related emissions:

- Tailpipe emissions from construction equipment (e.g., dozer, backhoe) and trucks hauling construction materials to the site.
- Vehicle emissions from construction workers commuting to and from the site.
- Fugitive dust from soil excavation, site disturbance and deconstruction.

To protect air quality, the Clean Air Act (CAA) requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six pollutants (called "criteria" air pollutants) which can be harmful to public health and the environment.[6] The primary NAAQs are established at levels considered protective of public health, including "sensitive" populations such as children, the elderly and people with heart and lung conditions. Areas where monitored air quality does not meet the NAAQS are designated as nonattainment and the appropriate air regulatory agency must develop an implementation plan to address air pollutants contributing to the NAAQS violations.

The Washington, DC, area (DC-MD-VA) is in moderate nonattainment for the current ozone standard (U.S. EPA 2025a, b),[7] and is a maintenance area for particulate matter less than 2.5 microns (U.S. EPA 2025c).[8] Section 176(c) of the Clean Air Act requires federal agencies to ensure that air emissions from federal actions located in nonattainment areas will not cause new violations of the NAAQS or increase the frequency or severity of existing NAAQS violations (called a “general conformity” determination). To assist federal agencies in making conformity determinations, the associated regulations provide “de minimis thresholds” which are emission thresholds (in tons per year) below which federal actions are assumed to conform, and a conformity determination is not required.[9]

[6] These include carbon monoxide (CO), lead, nitrogen dioxide (NO_x), ozone (O_3), particulate matter (less than 10 microns, referred to as PM_{10} and less than 2.5 microns, referred to as $PM_{2.5}$) and sulfur dioxide (SO_2).

[7] The Washington, DC (DC-MD-VA) is area is classified as moderate nonattainment status for the 2015 eight-hour ozone standard and maintenance for the 2008 eight-hour ozone standard marginal designation. See EPA’s Green Book at https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/jbca.html (U.S. EPA 2025a) and https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/hmca.html (U.S. EPA 2025b). Information current as of July 31, 2025.

[8] The Washington, DC (DC-MD-VA) is area is a maintenance area for the 1997 PM2.5 NAAQS. See EPA’s Green Book at https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/qmca.html (U.S. EPA 2025c). Information current as of July 31, 2025.

[9] See 40 CFR § 93.153(b)(1) and (b)(2) and EPA de minimis emission threshold rates information at https://www.epa.gov/general-conformity/de-minimis-emission-threshold-rates.

It is expected that the proposed action emissions would be well below the minimum pollutant thresholds established in the regulations for $PM_{2.5}$ and ozone[10] based on (1) the limited potential grading area, (2) the limited duration of construction equipment use, (3) the relatively small emissions generated by individual pieces of equipment, and (4) the limited numbers of equipment used in a project of this scope. In addition, it is expected that construction activities would conform with Washington, D.C. on-road and non-road diesel engine idling requirements, which would further reduce construction-related emissions.[11] Therefore, this impact topic was dismissed from detailed analysis.

Archeological Resources

The construction of an approximately 90,000 square foot building in an area with a history of substantial ground disturbance poses a small risk of uncovering unknown archeological sites. Given the extensive past disturbances, any artifacts or features uncovered during excavation are likely to be out of context, meaning they may not be found in their original locations or conditions. This can complicate the potential interpretation and preservation of these materials, as their historical and cultural significance might be harder to ascertain. In addition, out-of-context archeological materials would be difficult to assess for their integrity and archaeological interest. The White House Curator's Office has trained staff on site who can identify signs of archeological materials and has established standard operating procedures in the event archeological remains are found. Therefore, because of the low likelihood of uncovering an unknown and undisturbed archeological resource, and the presence of trained staff and standard operating procedures for found items, this topic has been dismissed from detailed analysis.

Floodplains

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map 1100010018C, the project area is located within an area determined to be outside the 0.2 percent annual chance floodplain (FEMA 2010). Additionally, the project does not propose any new structures or uses within the floodplain. The actions proposed in this environmental assessment would not have any impact on flood storage capacity or downstream flood elevations, nor would they obstruct, restrict, or redirect flood flows. Therefore, impacts to floodplains were considered but dismissed from detailed analysis.

Museum Collections

The NPS, in partnership with the White House Office of the Curator, manages the museum collections and archives for the White House. These collections include historic artifacts, American and European furnishings, fine art, and archival materials that expand with each

[10] Ozone is a secondary air pollutant, formed through atmospheric reactions of NOx and. For this reason, de minimis thresholds are established for NOx and VOC emissions. $PM_{2.5}$ is both a primary pollutant (e.g., emitted directly from a tailpipe), and a secondary pollutant formed through atmospheric reactions of particle-forming pollutants such as SO_2, NO_x, VOC and ammonia. For this reason, de minimis thresholds for $PM_{2.5}$ are established for primary $PM_{2.5}$ as well as SO_2, NO_x, VOC and ammonia.

[11] See DC municipal regulation 20-900.

administration. Exhibits at the NPS's White House Visitor Center make portions of the collection publicly accessible, linking visitors to the presidency and White House history.

As part of the proposed action, the NPS would remove all collections, artifacts, paintings, and other museum objects (collectively "museum objects") from the East Wing of the White House. Museum objects from the East Wing may be relocated to other areas within the White House, which would result in the temporary removal or modification of interior designs and museum objects in those spaces. All handling, relocation, and storage would follow established White House preservation standards, minimizing the potential for accidental damage.

The museum objects proposed for removal represent a small portion of the larger White House museum collection. Effects would be temporary, limited to the period of construction, and fully reversible. The NPS routinely relocates museum objects as part of White House operations, including building maintenance, renovations, and changes in administration. Such practices are authorized by the park's enabling legislation and institutionalized through longstanding practices between NPS and the White House Office of the Curator. Objects not on display are curated or stored within the White House or at the Executive Support Facility and may be returned to display at any time.

Because the proposed modernization of the White House East Wing primarily targets structural and functional improvements, the White House museum collections and archives would remain largely unaffected. The proposed action does not involve changes to the collections or how they are managed. For this reason, the White House would continue to function as a living museum, preserving museum collections for future generations. Impacts to museum collections were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Noise and Noise-Compatible Land Use

Once complete, the project would not result in any material changes to the acoustic environment. Temporarily, construction noise would be present.

The NPS defines acoustic resources as physical sound sources, including both natural sounds (wind, water, wildlife, vegetation) and cultural and historic sounds (battle reenactments, tribal ceremonies, quiet reverence) (NPS 2006). The White House and President's Park are located in downtown Washington, DC, and experience noise common to most urban areas (e.g., traffic noise, construction noise, social gatherings). The existing median summer daytime sound pressure level is approximately 56 dBA (Mennitt et al. 2014; Mennitt 2015). This background sound pressure is high enough that group discussions, such as interpretive programs in President's Park, would not be fully audible to an audience around 5 meters apart (U.S. EPA 1974). Finally, 56 dBA is a median measure- meaning that the background noise in the area is higher than this 50% of the time.

The proposed action includes construction for approximately three years. For outdoor noise considerations, construction noise would be limited to the deconstruction and exterior builds (i.e., not noise in the interior of the building). Therefore, it would be more limited than the full

construction schedule, which includes interior buildouts. Further, the project proposes using standard construction equipment.

The U.S. Department of Transportation Construction Noise Handbook lists equipment and operation noise levels associated with common construction equipment (U.S. Department of Transportation 2017). Equipment such as backhoes, concrete mixer trucks, cranes, and excavators have actual measured Lmax values at 50 feet of around 80 dBA.

Like many cities, Washington, DC has noise regulations, promulgated through the District of Columbia Noise Control Act (1977), as amended. The area of the White House is listed as Zone D-2 (District of Columbia n.d.). The purposes of the D-2 zone are to accommodate high-density housing with a limited amount and type of commercial use on only the ground floor and to ensure the scale of new development is compatible with the scale of the historic areas in the vicinity of lower 16th Street, NW, 17th Street, NW near the White House, President's Park, and Judiciary Square. The Washington, DC, noise regulations have different considerations for daytime and nighttime noise, including construction noise. Specifically, daytime construction noise (7 am to 7 pm) is limited to a maximum level of 80 dB at 25 feet from the edge of the site, while construction at night is limited to the zone maximum, in this case 60 dB at 25 feet from the edge of the site.

Construction noise associated with the proposed action would elevate noise levels. However, noise attenuation from the construction site would likely fall below the maximum allowable noise regulations in Washington, DC. For example, a noise of 80 dB at 50 feet would attenuate to a level of 74 dB at 100 feet and 68 dB by 200 feet. Given the unique challenges of construction projects at the White House, the NPS and the Executive Office of the President would work closely to implement best management practices related to construction during the duration of the project.

Considering the elevated existing acoustic ambient noise of downtown Washington, DC, the temporary nature of the noise (i.e., construction noise), the attenuation of noise from off the construction site, and that construction noise is expected to be below local noise regulations, the NPS has dismissed noise as an impact topic from detailed analysis.

Socioeconomics

The socioeconomic environment of the project area consists of local, regional, and national businesses, government agencies, residences, and tourist attractions. White House tours and some major events would likely continue during construction, although the extent and number of tours offered could change for a period of approximately three years. These tours represent a valued public opportunity to access the White House and experience its history, but they do not constitute a major economic driver for the region. Visitors to the White House typically combine tours with broader trips to Washington, DC, where numerous museums, monuments, and cultural institutions remain available year-round at no cost. A temporary change in tour capacity or events represents a limited inconvenience to some visitors but is not expected to meaningfully affect the regional economy, tourism sector, or local employment. Following

construction, tour capacity and events would be expected to return to current levels, with no lasting socioeconomic effects.

Construction of the modernized East Wing and State Ballroom would result in a short-term need for construction workers, but the number of workers would be minimal and most of them would already be employed, and there would be no effect on the population, income, or employment base of the surrounding community. The need for construction workers would provide minimal increases in employment opportunities and revenues for local businesses, but any increases would be below the level of detection due to the scale of the local economy. For these reasons, impacts related to socioeconomics were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Soils

Construction of the modernized East Wing and State Ballroom would temporarily disturb soils within the project footprint over an estimated three-year period. The site has been heavily excavated and reworked during past construction episodes, and soils are already highly disturbed. As a result, impacts would be limited to short-term compaction, mixing, and handling of fill material during excavation and construction. No unique or undisturbed soil resources are present, and effects would end once construction is complete. For these reasons, impacts related to soils were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Traffic and Pedestrian Access

Roads near the White House have greater security restrictions than most areas of Washington, DC. Pennsylvania Avenue NW, north of the White House, is closed to public vehicles between 17th Street NW and 15th Street NW but remains open to pedestrians. West Executive Avenue, East Executive Avenue, State Place, and Hamilton Place on the west and east sides of the White House are closed to public vehicles from Pennsylvania Avenue to E Street, with access limited to White House staff. Pedestrians can access Lafayette Square from Pennsylvania Avenue, Madison Place, Jackson Place and H St NW.

Under the proposed action, a temporary construction zone would be established near the East Wing until project completion (summer 2028). This zone would close Madison Place and portions of Pennsylvania Avenue, extending approximately 260 feet east and 350 feet west from the Madison Place centerline. Access would be limited to construction and emergency vehicles. Pedestrian access would remain along portions of both streets.

Because existing restrictions already prohibit public vehicle access on these road segments, the additional closures would not result in any change in vehicle circulation patterns. Primary pedestrian and authorized vehicle routes would remain available, and no measurable change in regional traffic operations or pedestrian connectivity is anticipated. Therefore, traffic and pedestrian access impacts were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Vegetation

The project area is in a highly developed region and urbanized setting. Vegetation within the project area consists primarily of maintained lawn and landscape trees. All of the plant species

are common in the Washington, DC area. Vegetation within the White House grounds has historically been subject to frequent change and management, reflecting both evolving functional needs and aesthetic updates to the property. Examples include the redesign of the Rose Garden in 2020 and 2025, which altered lawn and planting configurations, the 2025 removal of the Jefferson Magnolia due to advanced decline, and 2025 relocation of a commemorative tree. Routine arboreal and horticultural activities, such as tree removals, pruning, and replacement of shrubs or turf, are common and ensure that the grounds remain safe, healthy, and visually consistent with their historic character. Following larger construction projects, notable species have often been replanted or otherwise reintroduced to preserve the cultural and historic values of the grounds.

Because the White House grounds have a long history of managed vegetation changes, and because replanting or replacement would occur after project completion, the effects of vegetation removal or alteration during construction would be small and temporary. No rare, threatened, or sensitive plant species are present, and no long-term ecological consequences would occur. For these reasons, impacts to vegetation were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat

Construction activities associated with the proposed action could temporarily damage or remove vegetation and displace wildlife that use landscaped features for food, cover, or nesting. Wildlife present in the project area is typical of an urban environment and consists primarily of species adapted to human activity. Birds commonly observed include house sparrows, European starlings, common grackles, and rock pigeons, as well as edge-associated species such as gray catbirds, northern mockingbirds, eastern phoebes, blue jays, and northern cardinals. Canada geese and mallards are common along the nearby Potomac River, and small mammals such as eastern chipmunks, gray squirrels, and occasional Norway rats, and house mice may occur. These species rely on ornamental trees and shrubs for nesting and foraging, but habitat within the project area is limited and fragmented by surrounding roads and development. Any effects would be temporary and minor, limited to the approximately three-year construction period. Habitat altered during construction would be revegetated following project completion.

The NPS reviewed the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) website to identify federally listed species that may occur within the project area. The northern long-eared bat, tri-colored bat, and monarch butterfly were identified as potentially present (U.S. FWS 2025). However, there are no known observations of these species or suitable habitat within the project area. Based on this information, the NPS determined that the project would have no effect on these species.

Following construction activities, there will be a permanent reduction of approximately 33,000 square feet, less than an acre, in available wildlife habitat. Disruption to migratory birds is not anticipated because birds would return as vegetation regenerates or is replanted. Given the common and urban-adapted nature of wildlife present, the limited scale of potential effects,

and the planned restoration of vegetation, impacts on wildlife would not be significant and were dismissed from detailed analysis.

Appendix B – Alternatives Considered but Dismissed

Alternative Design Concepts- Multiple locations, layouts, and design concepts were considered, including options that preserved the entire East Wing with a new building that would include a state ballroom built south of the East Wing and attached to the East Wing through a walkway, locating the State Ballroom to the north façade of the East Wing, and concepts that matched the East Wing height without additional stories while retaining second-story access from the Executive Mansion. The park's enabling legislation (Pub. L. No. 87-286, 75 Stat. 586 (1961)) states that the NPS's management of the park may not conflict with the administration of the Executive offices of the President or the President's residential and official use of the buildings and grounds. As identified in the *Purpose and Need* statement in Chapter 1, there has been a longstanding need to construct a large event space at the White House to facilitate the hosting of large events, such as State Dinners. The Executive Office of the President identified executive functional goals for any event space: immediate adjacency to the Executive Mansion, a direct ceremonial procession from the East Room into the venue, and enclosed second-story access from the Executive Mansion. Alternatives that placed the venue farther from the Executive Mansion, interrupted the East Room procession, or removed second-story access would not meet these operational goals. Concepts that shifted the footprint outside the East Wing or reduced the project scale would limit capacity and create circulation and security conflicts that could disrupt executive functions. Additionally, design concepts set further from the Executive Mansion of the White House would require the continued use of tents for security and would subject guests to weather events like rain when moving to and from the event space. Because these alternative design concepts would not meet the purpose and need, they were dismissed from detailed analysis.