



July 2026

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Advocacy Update



Proposed Demolitions at Fort McNair

A battle is brewing over a piece of American military and architectural history in Washington, DC. Under a congressional mandate, **the US Army is moving forward with plans to demolish Officer Quarters 13, 14, and 15 at Fort Lesley J. McNair.**

The demolition of these three historic houses was set in motion by a provision in the Fiscal Year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (FY23 NDAA). While the original bill targeted Quarters 4, 13, and 15, a technical correction in the FY25 NDAA shifted the target to Quarters 13, 14, and 15.

The Army has stated that they have "no authority to consider no action, alternatives, or avoidance" because Congress directly ordered the demolition. It gets worse — the Army has no plans to build anything new in their place; the buildings, which are in pristine condition, will simply be torn down and replaced with "manicured green space."

Federal agencies ordinarily undergo a rigorous review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) to explore alternatives before damaging or destroying historic properties. By mandating demolition through the NDAA, Congress is effectively bypassing the NHPA, setting a worrying precedent that federal historic protections can be legislated away.

These quarters are part of the master-planned Beaux-Arts campus designed by the legendary architectural firm McKim, Mead & White. The structures were intentionally built to face the grand parade ground in a strict visual hierarchy, with two-story classical columns gracing the officer quarters. Removing Quarters 13, 14, and 15 will cause irreversible damage to the site's historic fabric that has remained intact for over a century.

DCPL is working with its partners to secure the reversal of the language in the Fiscal Year 2027 NDAA, but [we need your help!](#)

[Contact your Senator](#) and tell them to reverse the demolitions in the upcoming NDAA. Voice your opposition to the demolition of these buildings by the Army.

Deadline for Public Comments is August 13, 2026, and can be emailed to:

[Cultural Resources Program Manager](#)
[Directorate of Public Works - Environmental Division](#)
CENAB-FortMcNair_GFOQDemo@usace.army.mil



Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle To Be Demolished

The National Park Service has released the final Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for the proposed removal of the Foundry Branch Trolley Trestle bridge.

The Foundry Branch Trestle is the only remaining one of at least eight or ten that originally lined the route of the Washington and Great Falls Railway from Georgetown to Cabin John, Maryland. This route is significant as a dramatic example of how real estate developers in the 1890s took advantage of newly electrified streetcar technology to expand the city into many new suburban locations. Earlier horse-drawn streetcar systems were limited in range and ability to traverse rugged terrain. After electrical streetcars were successfully demonstrated in Richmond in 1888, there was an explosion of newly chartered lines offering speedier cars to more distant locations in newly developed suburbs. The construction of these suburban lines was a crucial element in the development of such suburbs as Eckington, Chevy Chase, Brightwood, Congress Heights, and many others in the DC area.

The structure, which is owned by the **Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)**, **has been neglected for decades, resulting in its current degraded condition.** It spans federal parkland and is historically significant as the last remaining streetcar bridge in the District of Columbia. It is also a contributing resource to Glover-Archbold Park. Managed by the National Park Service's Rock Creek Park, Glover-Archbold Park is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and the DC Inventory of Historic Sites.

Since 2014, feasibility and engineering studies have assessed whether the bridge could be adapted for uses such as a recreational trail. Despite these evaluations, the bridge remains in an extreme state of disrepair and poses a safety hazard. Conditions included in the National Park Service Special Use Permit will allow WMATA to temporarily use federal parkland to stage equipment and materials and to access the site.

DCPL listed the Foundry Branch Trestle in its list of Most Endangered Places in 2008, and has advocated for its reuse as a multimodal recreational and trail connecting the Palisades neighborhood on the west to Georgetown on the east. There have been many starts and stops to this project, but what has not changed is the steadfast public support for the trestle's rehabilitation and return to public use.

[Read more about the history and DCPL's advocacy and legal efforts to preserve the trestle.](#)

After demolition, the area will be cleared of materials and replanted with native vegetation to support the park's natural environment. The historic Glover-Archbold Park trail that passes under the bridge will also be reopened after years of closure, reestablishing an important pedestrian connection and improving access to the park for visitors.

A copy of the final MOA is available on the NPS Planning, Environment, and Public Comment (PEPC) website at: <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/foundrybranchbridge>.



Image released by the Secretary of the Department of Interior.

East Potomac Park (Golf Links Redesign)

The Trump Administration has officially announced a major redesign proposal by Fazio Design to transform the century-old municipal golf property into an upscale, championship-level facility spanning 7,660 yards, with the capability to host major PGA tournaments. This initiative follows a



Rendering of the Triumphal Arch.

Triumphal Arch (Memorial Circle)

Plans are moving forward for a 250-foot-tall Neoclassical "Victory Arch" to be located at Memorial Circle on Columbia Island, positioned directly between the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington National Cemetery. This structure is intended to commemorate the US

newly established long-term lease agreement with the National Links Trust (NLT), ensuring that the courses remain open and affordable for local residents.

However, a federal lawsuit filed by local golfers and the DC Preservation League is still pending. The lawsuit claims that the administration failed to conduct mandatory environmental and historic resource reviews as required by the Administrative Procedure Act.

Active litigation is ongoing in federal court. Since our last update, President Trump, Secretary Burgum, and the golf course architect were photographed on a site visit to East Potomac Golf Links with site plans in hand.

At the July 2nd hearing, US District Court Judge Ana C. Reyes grilled the Department of Justice (DOJ) attorney on the status of the planning. Having very few answers, Judge Reyes ordered the DOJ to respond to the following questions by July 17th:

1. Has the Secretary of the Interior or any other high-ranking official made any statements or given any directives to anyone at the Agency — oral or written — concerning the President's statement that they will begin "building one of the Greatest Golf Courses in the world" by September 1, 2026? Donald J. Trump, Truth Social (June 28, 2026, 2:42 PM), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116829203090822692>;
2. On what date did Clark Construction conduct testing on the excavated soil, and when did NPS receive the results?
3. Which individuals from the Agency accompanied President Trump during the site visit?;
4. Who created the conceptual renderings reviewed at that visit, and who currently possesses or maintains those renderings?

In addition to answering the above questions, the judge ordered the parties to meet and confer regarding proposed language for an interim preservation protocol governing activities at the site pending court action.

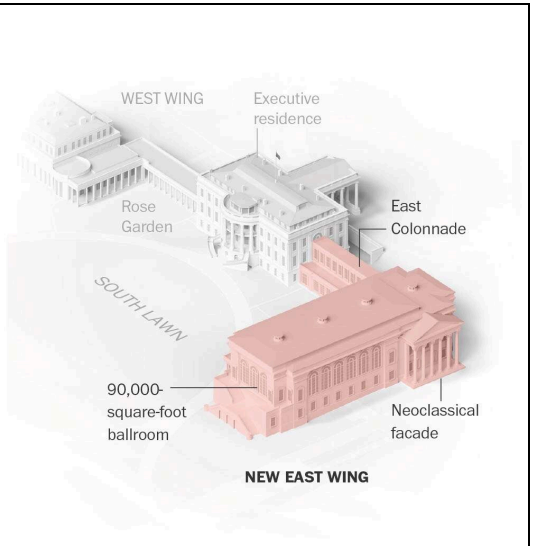


Image by The Washington Post.

White House Ballroom (East Wing Modernization)

The physical landscape of the White House complex is undergoing its most

Semiquincentennial, marking the 250th anniversary of the country. However, it would overshadow the 99-foot-tall Lincoln Memorial and disrupt the historic views of Arlington House. Local preservationists have strongly opposed the project, and a coalition of Vietnam War veterans have filed a lawsuit to prevent its construction, arguing that it would alter the solemn atmosphere of Arlington Cemetery.

Since our last update, the project received concept and site approval from the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), despite more than 3 hours of powerful testimony from veterans, preservationists, and citizens opposing the Triumphal Arch's location. NCPC will take up the issue of the 1910 Height of Buildings Act at its September meeting. NCPC has historically followed the act; however, the applicant and NCPC Chair contend that it does not apply to federal buildings or monuments. DCPL disagrees.

The National Park Service received more than 100,000 public comments as part of the Section 106 process. DCPL and other organizations had not previously been permitted to participate as consulting parties; however, NPS invited DCPL following the NCPC hearing. No meeting has been scheduled to our knowledge. [Read DCPL's comments here.](#)



Photo by Carol M. Highsmith, courtesy of Library of Congress.

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool

The National Park Service has contracted a company to apply an industrial-grade "protective coating" in "American Flag Blue" and is proceeding without compliance under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). By bypassing standard regulatory processes for what it describes as "national aesthetics and readiness" ahead of the 250th anniversary, the administration has not scheduled any public planning hearings.

Instead, advocacy efforts are focused on an active federal [lawsuit filed by The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#), which seeks to mitigate the adverse effects on the reflecting pool and the broader cultural landscape of The National Mall. Additionally, upcoming congressional appropriations hearings are addressing the project's shifting costs.

On June 29th, Judge Carl Nichols, ordered plaintiffs to amend their complaint before July 2nd; defendants to file their Motion to Dismiss on or before July 17th; with plaintiffs response due before July 31st.

significant modifications in a generation. The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) has formally approved the design and planning phases of the East Wing Modernization Project. This project includes a substantial 90,000-square-foot footprint, which features a 22,000-square-foot State Ballroom designed in the Gilded Age style.

Attention has now shifted significantly to congressional oversight due to the rising \$600 million budget. This change comes in light of a transition from funding through private donors to federal defense and security spending, especially after recent security incidents in April. Additionally, the construction includes plans for an extensive, fortified underground military command center beneath the building.

Judge Leon of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ruled in favor of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), ordering a halt to construction of the above-grade East Wing addition until the project receives congressional authorization.

On June 5th, the DC Circuit Court of Appeals heard oral arguments from both NTHP and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

NTHP attorneys argued that the administration violated 40 U.S. Code Section 8106, which explicitly bans erecting new buildings on federal land in Washington, DC, without "express" authorization from Congress.

The DOJ argued that the project was legally justified under the National Park Service Organic Act (as the White House grounds are technically a national park) and 3 U.S.C. § 105(d). The DOJ also insisted that critical national security elements built into the ballroom (i.e., protection against drones, biohazards, and missiles) made the project a military imperative that courts shouldn't halt.

The government also argued that NTHP and its members had no standing to sue because any "aesthetic injury" to the White House's historical appearance was a generalized grievance. Judge Millett pushed back, pointing out that because the government demolished the East Wing in October 2025 before starting public reviews, they had actively prevented timely legal challenges. She characterized this as a strategy of moving so quickly that no one could legally stop them in time.

A decision is expected any day.



Rendering of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building with a painted exterior.



Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, 1980.
Photo by Carol M. Highsmith, courtesy of Library of Congress.

The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

After back-to-back federal court hearings in May, Judge Christopher Cooper ruled in the Beatty case that Donald Trump's name must be removed from the façade and the Kennedy Center can not close on July 5th. **The Board of Trustees of The Kennedy Center have appealed the name removal. On July 8th, a three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit denied a request to halt the removal of Trump's name and restore it to the facade while the broader appeal is heard.**

The *DCPL et al.* case is still pending in the U.S. District Court and Judge Cooper has made clear that no construction activity outside of the maintenance work authorized by Congress in the "Big Beautiful Bill" may take place.

In a declaration filed with the court on July 15th, Matt Floca, the Kennedy Center's Executive Director, provided an update on planned construction, maintenance, and operational options for the Kennedy Center, emphasizing no current plans for demolition or major architectural changes.

Notably, the Kennedy Center's management is preparing for a board meeting in August 2026 to discuss full, partial, or phased closures for construction.

Initial maintenance activities are underway, including painting, electrical work, and asset logging, with timelines subject to change.

No plans exist for demolition or significant architectural alterations; future changes require Board approval.

DCPL's legal efforts on the Kennedy Center will run the next two years, while we ensure that the work at the Kennedy Center does not violate the judge's order. Please consider an additional donation to the fund to help support these ongoing efforts.

Donate to the Kennedy Center Legal Advocacy Fund



Eisenhower Executive Office Building (EEOB)

The current administration has proposed a major "Exterior Beautification Project" to paint the historic gray granite exterior of the EEOB, which is designed in the French Second Empire style, solid white. Preservationists have strongly opposed this \$7.5 million plan, arguing that painting the granite would cause irreversible changes to both the historical significance and structural integrity of one of Washington, DC's most distinctive landmarks. A total of 900 letters were submitted to the Commission on Fine Arts, with 100% opposing the painting. Additionally, nearly 2,000 letters were sent to the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), with all but two opposing the plan.

The lawsuit filed by Cultural Heritage Partners and the DC Preservation League is still pending and challenges the General Services Administration's authority to delegate its oversight of the management and maintenance of the EEOB to the Executive, thereby avoiding regulatory requirements.

[Read more about the lawsuit and the expert opposition to the proposal.](#)

The District Cup Polo Match Played in West Potomac Park,
DCPL Archives, 2026.

West Potomac Park

In June, the DC Preservation League joined a coalition of advocacy, conservation, and historic preservation organizations, and an individual Washington, DC resident, to save West Potomac Park.

In the complaint, the [National Parks Conservation Association](#), DCPL, [National Mall Coalition](#), [Olmsted Network](#), the [Committee of 100 on the Federal City](#), [The Cultural Landscape Foundation](#), and resident Steve Longenecker are seeking to stop the Trump-Vance administration's unlawful attempt to remake West Potomac Park, national park land that belongs to all Americans. The coalition is represented in the matter by [Democracy Forward Foundation](#).

[Read the full press release here](#)

[Read the full complaint filed here](#)

[Read more about the East and West Potomac Parks Historic District](#)

There are no current updates on this case at this time.

Upcoming Event

Hains Point Hoopla: Protect The Point

Saturday, July 18th | 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
In-Person, Hains Point Picnic Area A



Join the Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA) and the DC Preservation League (DCPL) this upcoming Saturday at the Hains Point Hoopla, a community gathering in support of protecting Hains Point. The point is a popular recreation area and cultural landscape within East Potomac Park, the location of the Trump Administration's planned golf course (see above Advocacy Update).

WABA and DCPL hope to see you there!

Rebecca Miller, DC Preservation League Executive Director,

Interviewed on *CBS News Sunday Morning*



On the July 12th episode of *CBS News Sunday Morning*, Rebecca Miller, DC Preservation League Executive Director, was interviewed about the many projects the Trump Administration is pursuing within the District, from the Monumental Arch to the demolition of the White House East Wing. The story, "Trump's monumental reimagining of Washington, D.C.," can be found at the below link.

[Watch Story Here](#)

Additional Date Just Added

Guided Tour: New Deal Murals at the Wilbur J. Cohen Building

Monday, August 3rd | 12:30 - 1:30 pm
In-Person, Cohen Building, C Street SW (between 3rd and 4th streets)



New Deal Mural in Wilbur J. Cohen Building. Photo by Carol M. Highsmith, courtesy of Library of Congress.

The [Wilbur J. Cohen Building](#) features massive mural cycles by three celebrated artists of the 20th century: Philip Guston, Ben Shahn, and Seymour Fogel. Each mural vividly illustrates life in 1930s America, and highlights the government’s role in caring for its citizens through the Social Security Administration.

The Cohen Building is considered under serious threat of sale and potential demolition. Congress authorized the sale of the building, and the General Services Administration (GSA) has included it in an expedited disposal program.

This tour is free but has limited space and will fill up quickly; register today! If you are unable to make it this time, don't worry! We are hoping to offer one more tour in May.

[Register Here](#)

In Case You Missed It

Public Meeting: Black Women's Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC (1848-1973)

Recording Now Available on YouTube



Ida B. Wells and the Alpha Suffrage Club marching in the Women's Suffrage Parade in Washington, DC on March 3, 1913.
Photo from the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1913.

At this virtual public meeting, which took place in June 2026, Dr. Portia Hopkins presented research related to the *Black Women’s Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC (1848-1973)* Historic Context Study, and the associated nomination for the headquarters of the National Association of Colored Womens' Clubs at 1601 R Street, NW.

In 2020, the DC Preservation League (DCPL) partnered with the DC State Historic Preservation Office to implement grant funding from the National Park Service to produce a context study on Women’s Suffrage in Washington, DC. Adding on to that project, in 2022, DCPL received a competitive grant from the National Park Service to underwrite development of a Historic Context Statement on the Black Women’s Suffrage Movement in Washington, DC.

[Watch Recording Here](#)

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