



Newsletter

Preservation Month May 2026

DCPL's Preservation Month celebrations continue with a variety of free, engaging programs scheduled—please join and invite your friends too! The fundraising campaign to bolster DCPL's education and outreach programs, as well as honor DCPL's 55th Anniversary, continues as well. Please be generous and make a contribution. No gift is too small and every dollar makes an impact!

Make a Preservation Month Gift!

Advocacy Update



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.

A hearing on a preliminary injunction will be held in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia on May 21st at 2 pm.



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 U.S. 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.

A revised design submission is scheduled to be discussed at the next Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) meeting on May 21, 2026. Those interested in testifying in person or submitting comments must sign up by Wednesday, May 20th, at noon by emailing info@cfa.gov.

The National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) will hold a hearing on the Arch at its meeting on June 4th. For more information on how to submit comments or to sign up to testify in person or virtually, please visit <https://www.ncpc.gov/participate/guidelines/>.



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 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, and the project is not currently listed on the agenda of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC).



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

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, D.C.'s most distinctive landmarks. A total of 900 letters were

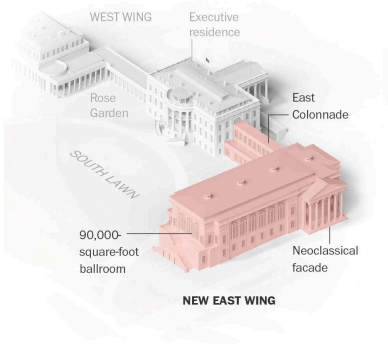


Image by The Washington Post

White House Ballroom (East Wing Modernization)

The physical landscape of the White House complex is undergoing its most 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 \$400 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, ordering a halt to construction of the above-grade East Wing addition until the project receives congressional authorization. **However, the D.C. Court of Appeals has permitted construction to continue pending a hearing scheduled for June 5th at 9:30 am.**



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

The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts

Ongoing legal battles continue over the administration's controversial mandate to completely close the renowned performing arts venue for up to two years to facilitate major renovations and to change the branding of its facade.

Preservationists, architectural advocacy groups, and lawmakers—including Representative Joyce Beatty (D-OH)—have filed lawsuits seeking injunctions.

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.](#)

They argue that the Kennedy Center Board has not obtained the necessary congressional authorization and has failed to comply with the requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

After back-to-back federal court hearings late last month presided over by U.S. District Court Judge Christopher Cooper, the court is currently reviewing additional information submitted in both lawsuits. Advocacy groups are closely monitoring the court docket for updates on the next trial schedule or preliminary injunction rulings, which are expected before the targeted shutdown date in July.

Donate to the Kennedy Center Advocacy Fund

Happening Tonight!

Panel Discussion: Yes, in Your Backyard! How Accessory Dwelling Units are Compatible in Historic Districts

Tuesday, May 19th | 7:00 - 8:30 pm
Online via Zoom



Photo credit: Ileana Schinder

Join us for a this Zoom presentation hosted by the [Cleveland Park Historical Society](#) and DCPL exploring how Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), including basement apartments, backyard cottages, and garage conversions, can be thoughtfully integrated into historic districts. This program will focus on the idea that preservation and change can work together to support a more inclusive and sustainable city.

Architect Ileana Schinder will begin by defining what qualifies as an ADU and explaining the different types homeowners might consider. Drawing on her expertise navigating zoning and working with the Historic Preservation Office (HPO), she will walk through the process of designing and gaining approval for ADUs.

Todd Jones of the Historic Preservation Office at the DC Office of Planning will provide an overview of the common ways that ADUs appear in historic districts, how preservation guidelines apply, and how HPO evaluates proposals to ensure compatibility with existing historic resources.

Whether you’re a homeowner considering an ADU, a preservation advocate, or interested in how DC can grow thoughtfully, this conversation will offer valuable guidance and a fresh perspective on how we can say “yes” to both history and housing.

This panel discussion is free to attend!

Register Here

Upcoming Event

Public Meeting: Housing Black Washington Multiple Property Document

Thursday, May 21st | 7:00 - 8:30 pm
Online via Zoom



Please join the [DC Historic Preservation Office](#), the DC Preservation League, and [Architectural Historian Heather McMahon](#) for this public presentation about the Housing Black Washington Multiple Property Document. This project is funded by an Underrepresented Communities Grant from the National Park Service.

This study looks closely at the places Black Washingtonians have called home over time. It especially explores housing considered “affordable,” meaning it was intended for working-class residents, since African Americans have always made up a significant portion of the District of Columbia’s working class since racial restrictions kept many in lower-wage, blue-collar or service-sector jobs. Since the District of Columbia’s founding, housing for African Americans had often been relegated to rear yards, back alleys, isolated neighborhoods, and undesirable locations. Their homes were hidden although their work was salient: Black Washingtonians helped build the White House, the U.S. Capitol, Washington’s grand avenues, and national monuments.

This meeting is free to attend!

Register Here

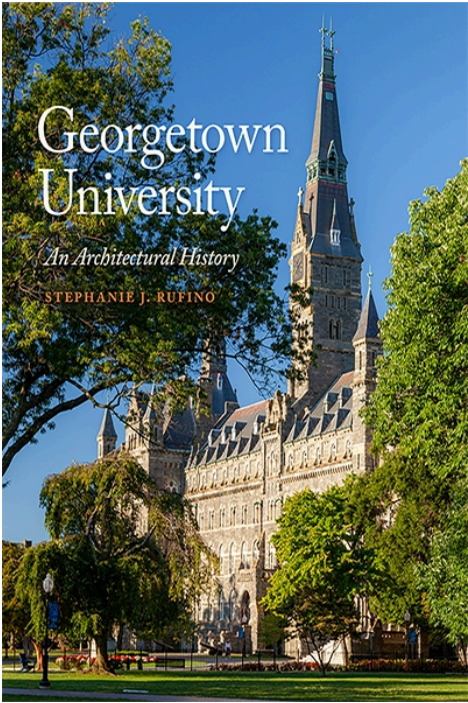
Upcoming Book Talk

Georgetown University: An Architectural History

Thursday, May 28th | 7:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Online via Zoom

Spanning the university’s genesis in 1789 through to today, the new book, *Georgetown University: An Architectural History*, by Stephanie Rufino provides the reader with a close look at over fifty campus buildings.

This book presentation will explore the Georgetown University campus over time with highlights of its historical and modern architecture, from the Old North building (1795) to its twenty-first-century development. With modern photographs as well as historical images drawn from the university archives, we will discuss the background of Georgetown’s buildings. The talk will highlight multiple periods in the university’s history including its entanglement with slavery, the presidencies of Patrick Healy, SJ and W. Coleman Nevils, SJ as well as its mid-twentieth century and later university leadership.



The Georgetown campus includes architecture by leading historical and contemporary designers such as John Smithmeyer and Paul Pelz, Emile Perrot, John Carl Warnecke, Hugh Hardy, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, and Robert A.M. Stern Architects. The buildings exemplify a host of architectural styles including Federal, Romanesque and Gothic Revival, International Style, Brutalist and Postmodern. Changes in the university landscape and connections to broader trends in American campus development will be highlighted. Lastly, we will also discuss the book’s curriculum connected development.

You can [buy the book here](#) or on Amazon.

This book talk is free to attend!

Register Here

Celebrating Preservation Month and DC Historic Sites



[DC Historic Sites](#), a website and [cell phone app](#) managed by the DC Preservation League, continues to be the most comprehensive listing of DC historic landmarks and historic districts, as it is updated weekly with new content. For example, last month, the Historic Preservation Review Board designated the [Doris Fleeson House \(3344 P Street NW\)](#), adding the former Georgetown home of the trailblazing female political journalist to the DC Inventory of Historic Sites. And DC Historic Sites has since been updated with information and photos about the Fleeson House, DC's newest historic landmark. Thus, DC Historic Sites has become one of the nation's most successful cell phone apps devoted to historic preservation!

In honor of Preservation Month, visit DC Historic Sites or download the app today to explore **more than 1150 site entries** and **over 55 virtual tours** that thematically explore DC's history, culture, and built environment.

DC Historic Sites

Virtual Tours at DC Historic Sites

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