



National Trust *for*
Historic Preservation®

October 21, 2025

Mr. William Scharf, Chair
National Capital Planning Commission
401 Ninth Street NW, Suite 500N
Washington, DC 20004

Ms. Jessica Bowron
Acting Director, National Park Service
National Park Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Ms. Billie Tsien, Chair
Commission of Fine Arts
401 F Street NW, Suite 312
Washington, DC 20001-2728

Re: Proposed Construction of White House Ballroom

Mr. Scharf, Ms. Bowron, and Ms. Tsien,

The National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States (“National Trust”) is a private charitable, educational, nonprofit corporation headquartered in Washington, D.C. and chartered by Congress in 1949 to further the historic preservation policy of the United States. 54 U.S.C. § 312102(a). This Congressional charter obligates the National Trust to “facilitate public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects of national significance or interest.” Our mission is to protect America’s significant historic sites and to advocate for historic preservation as a core public value.

President Trump has proposed the construction of a 90,000-square-foot ballroom on the east side of the White House campus, adjacent to the historic Treasury Building. Site preparation is already underway, including the demolition of a portion of the existing East Wing.

While the National Trust acknowledges the utility of a larger meeting space at the White House, we are deeply concerned that the massing and height of the proposed new construction will overwhelm the White House itself—it is 55,000 square feet—and may also permanently disrupt the carefully balanced classical design of the White House with its two smaller, and lower, East and West Wings.

The federally recognized Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation offer clear guidance for construction projects affecting historic properties. The Standards provide that new additions should not destroy the historic fabric of the property and that the new work should be compatible with existing massing, size, scale, and architectural features.

Owned by the American people, the White House was designed by Irish architect James Hoban, whose winning proposal was selected by President George Washington. The building respects Georgian and neoclassical principles. It is a National Historic Landmark, a National Park, and a globally recognized symbol of our nation's ideals.

We respectfully urge the Administration and the National Park Service to pause demolition until plans for the proposed ballroom go through the legally required public review processes, including consultation and review by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Arts, and to invite comment from the public. These processes provide a crucial opportunity for transparency and broad engagement—values that have guided preservation of the White House under every administration going back to the public competition in 1792 that produced the building's original design. Doing so will help ensure that the project both honors the exceptional historic significance of the White House and acknowledges the investment that the American people have in the preservation of this beloved place.

The National Trust stands ready to assist the White House, the National Park Service, and relevant review agencies in exploring design alternatives and modifications that would accomplish the objectives of the Administration while preserving the historic integrity and symbolism of the People's House.

As we approach the 250th Anniversary of our country's founding, the preservation of historic places that represent our nation's history has never been more relevant or important. We urge you to take into account the deep reverence that all Americans hold for this iconic place, and to initiate the review process that can ensure the preservation of the historic White House for future generations.

Sincerely,



Dr. Carol Quillen
President and Chief Executive Officer