

David Scott Parker Architects

February 18, 2026

Mr. Rodney Mims Cook, Jr., Chair
U.S. Commission of Fine Arts
401 F Street, NW Suite 312
Washington, DC 20001

re: White House Complex, 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. East Wing modernization and ballroom addition. Concept.

To the Chairman and Members of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts:

As a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and a practicing architect for the past 36 years, I write to oppose the current White House ballroom plans and offer several design alternatives to preserve the historic integrity and symbolism of the People's House.

The massing, height, scale, and especially the volume of the proposed 90,000 square-foot construction will overwhelm the 55,000-square-foot central structure and disrupt the carefully balanced classical design of the White House, with its East and West wings. Classicism is predicated on overall symmetry.

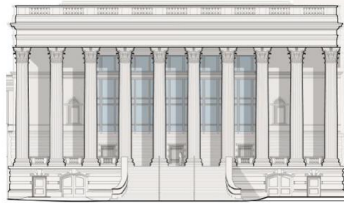
Below are detailed comments and proposed changes with visuals:

Comparison of Scale – South Porticos

The scale of the proposed South Portico is too large; as is currently designed, the proposed ballroom South Portico is 166% larger than the current White House Portico and 40% larger than Treasury’s South Portico.



White House – South Portico
Approx. 54' W x 60' H



Ballroom – Proposed South Portico
121'-8" W x 71' H
*166% larger than White House South Portico
and 40% larger than Treasury South Portico*



Treasury – South Portico
Approx. 88' W x 70' H

COMPARISON OF SCALE – SOUTH PORTICOS

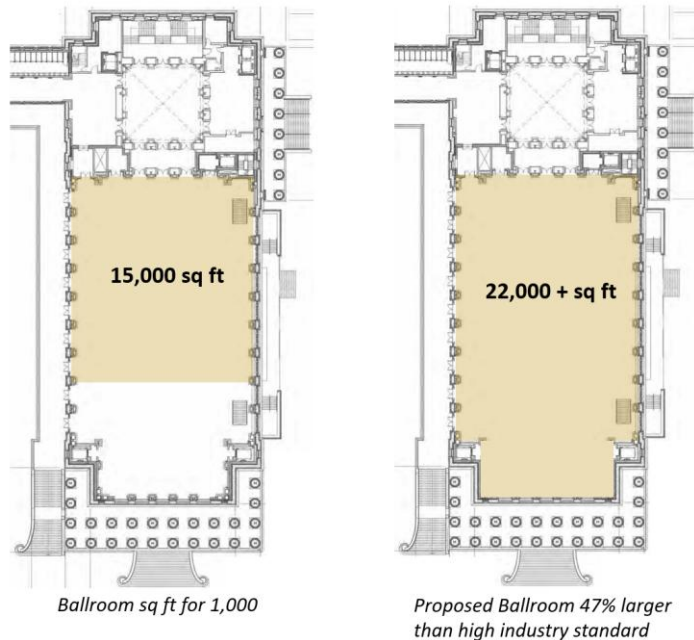
Programmatic Considerations

The architectural industry high standard space for ballrooms is 15 sq. ft. per person (and the low standard is 10 sq. ft. per person). The proposed ballroom is being designed for 1000 people, which means the ballroom should be 15,000 sq. ft. The proposed ballroom is estimated at 22,000 sq. ft, which makes it 47% larger than the industry high standard.

PROPOSED BALLROOM = 22,000+ SQ FT

Architectural industry high standard space for ballrooms is 15 sq ft / person or 15,000 sq ft for 1,000 people.

Ballroom as proposed is **47% larger** than high industry standard.



PROGRAMMATIC CONSIDERATIONS

Volume and Massing

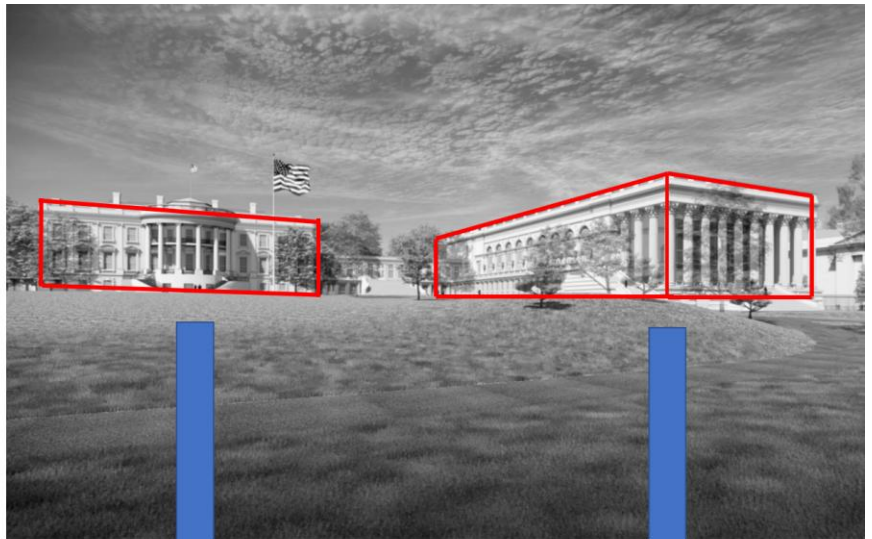
The current ballroom structure is estimated at approximately 2.36 million cubic feet. The original White House structure was approximately 794,000 cubic feet. Square footage comparisons can be misleading regarding the overall size of a structure; however, in this case, the proposed ballroom massing is nearly three times the original White House volume. The volume and oversized massing challenge the classicism on which the White House is based. Classicism is predicated on balance and symmetry, and the central main structure should always be the largest.

VOLUME / MASSING

CURRENT BALLROOM STRUCTURE =
APPROX. 2.36 MILLION CUBIC FEET

ORIGINAL WHITE HOUSE STRUCTURE =
APPROX. 794 THOUSAND CUBIC FEET

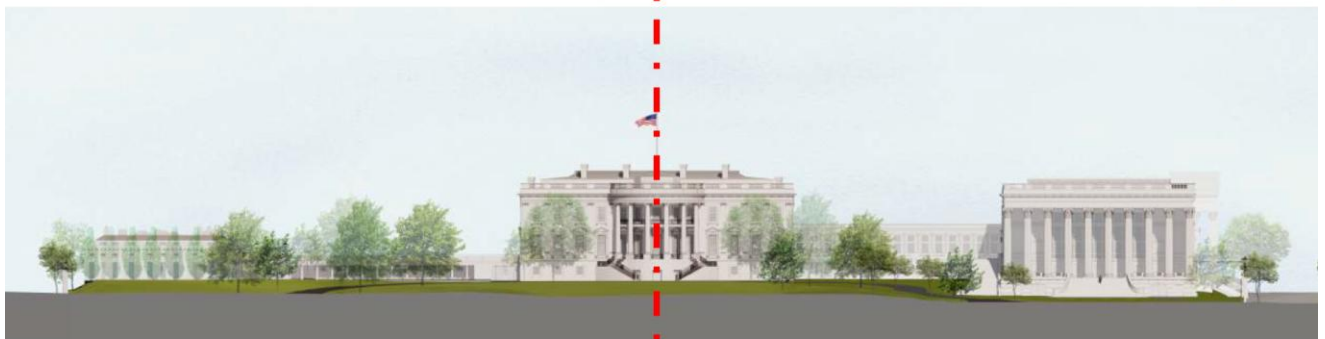
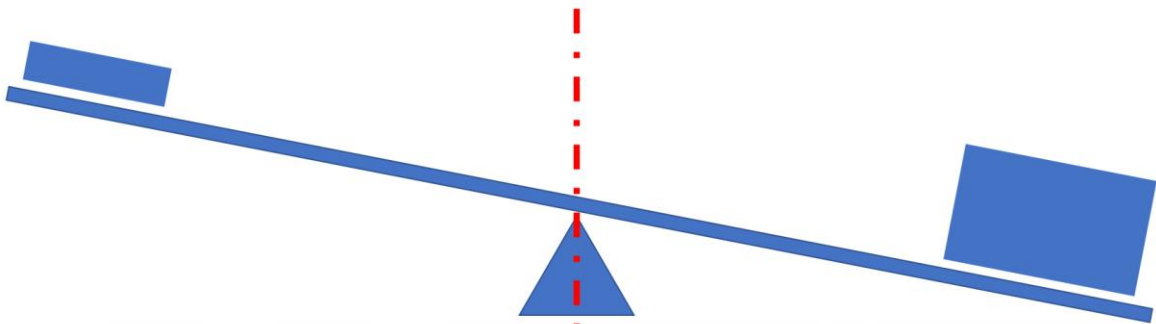
Square footage comparisons can be misleading regarding the overall size of structures. Note that the proposed Ballroom *massing* is nearly **THREE times** the original White House volume.



875 thousand cubic feet
(+ 41 thousand cu ft of portico volume)

VERSUS

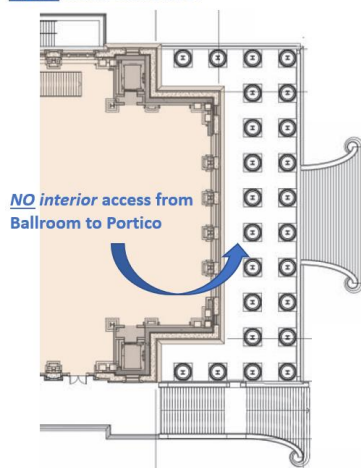
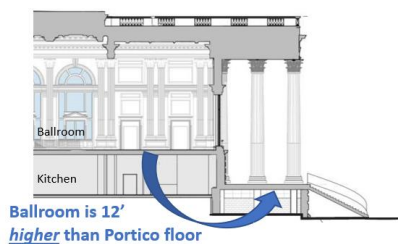
2.36 **million** cubic feet
(+ 284 thousand cu ft of portico volume)



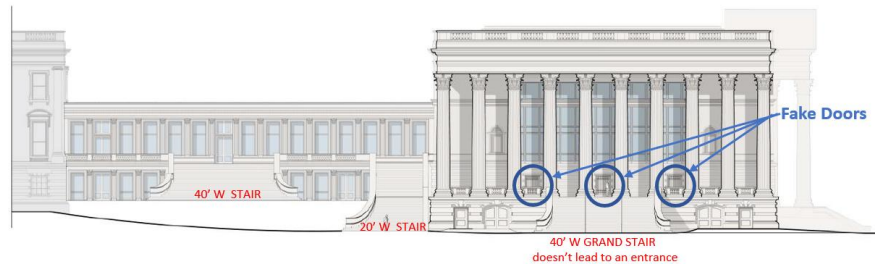
CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURAL SYMMETRY ISSUES

Proposed South Portico Does Not Serve a Purpose and is Not ADA Compliant

The 4,000 sq. ft South Portico as designed has no access whatsoever to the interior and is not ADA accessible. The doors shown on its South Elevation are fake. The massive grand staircase leading to it is gratuitous with no function or purpose. Lastly, the South Portico contains (24) 5-foot diameter columns that only block views from the interior.



Plan and Section of south portion of proposed Ballroom



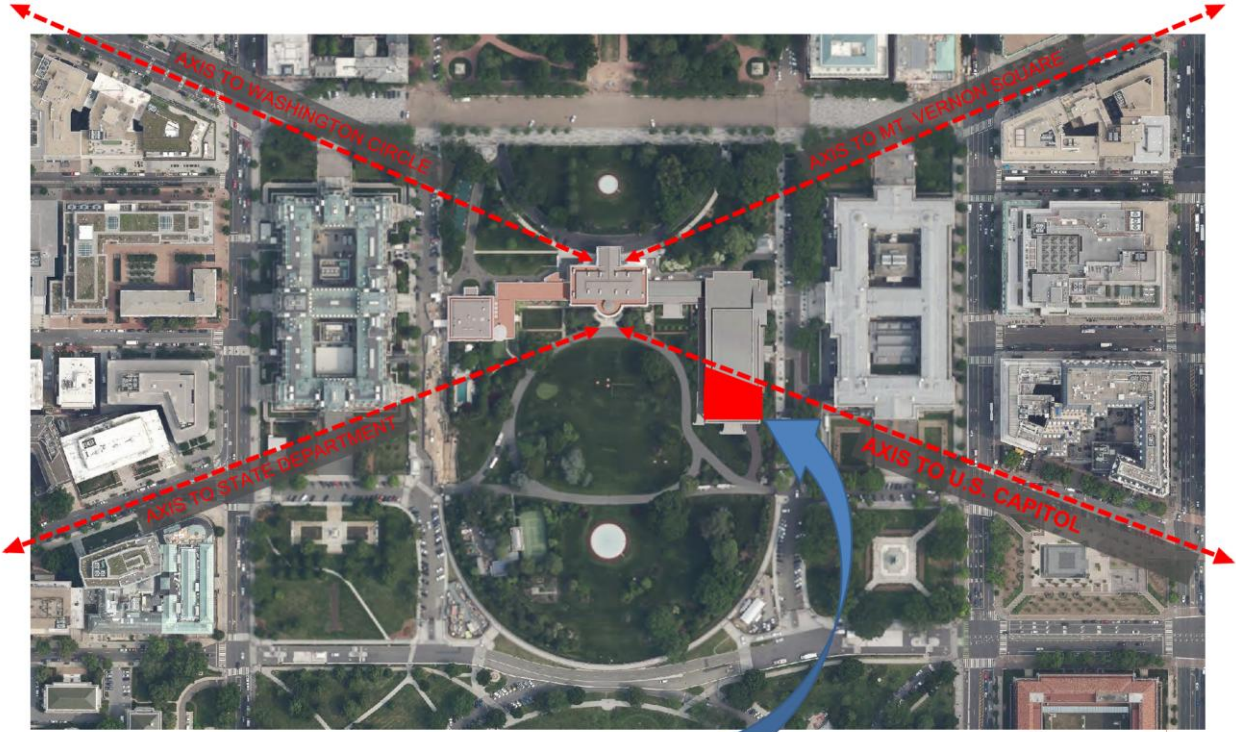
South Elevation of Proposed Double-height Colonnade and Ballroom

PROPOSED 4,000 SQ FT SOUTH PORTICO:

- Has **NO ACCESS** whatsoever to interior and is **not ADA accessible**
- Doors shown on its South Elevation are **FAKE**
- Massive grand stair leading to it is gratuitous with no function
- Has (24) 5-foot diameter columns that only block views from interior

Proposed Ballroom Structure Impedes Important Historic Axial Vistas

The original vista of the White House conceived by L'Enfant and our founding fathers would be blocked and restricted with the construction of the ballroom as proposed. The axial vista from the US Capitol steps looking northwest up Pennsylvania Avenue is one of the most important views and relationships in L'Enfant's original 1791 design for Washington, DC.



BUILDING COMPLETELY BLOCKS AXIAL VIEWSHED

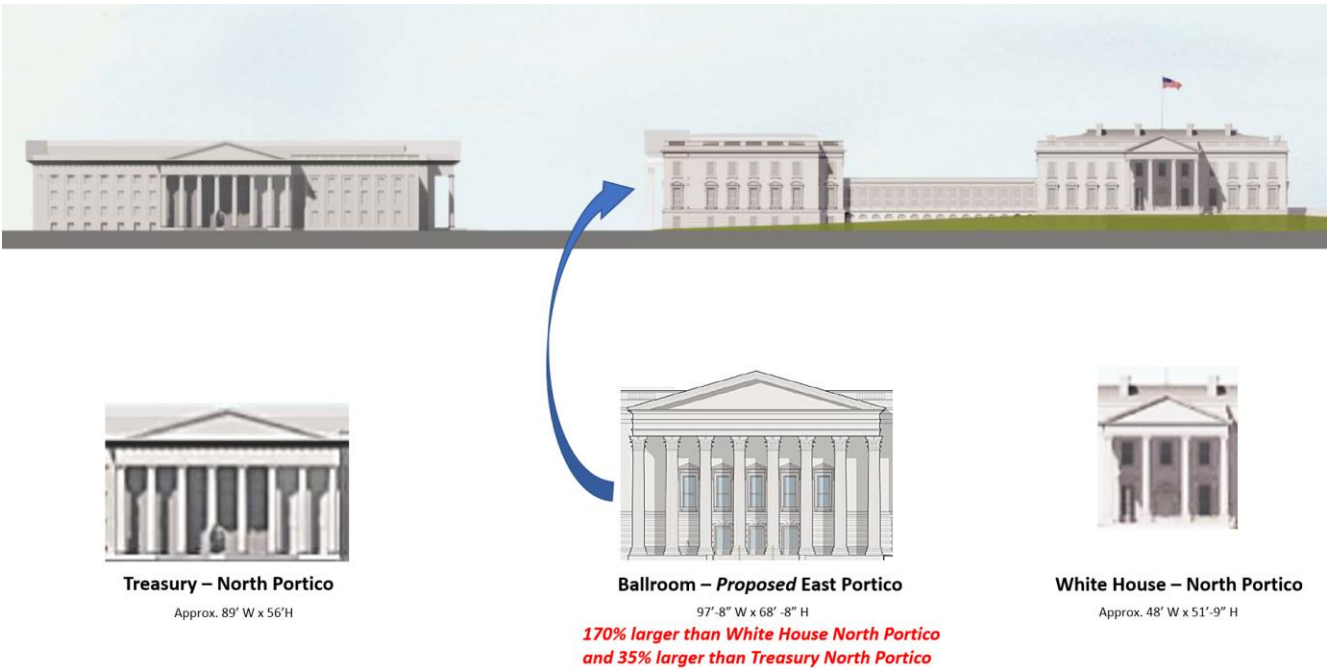
AERIAL SITE PHOTO A22
 shkim barans associates architects



VIEW FROM CAPITOL STEPS TO WHITE HOUSE COMPLETELY BLOCKED BY NEW BALLROOM

Comparison of Scale – North and East Porticos

The proposed East Portico is 170% larger than the White House North Portico and 35% larger than the Treasury North Portico. Following principles of classical architecture, the White House North Portico should always be larger and more prominent than a portico on an ancillary wing.

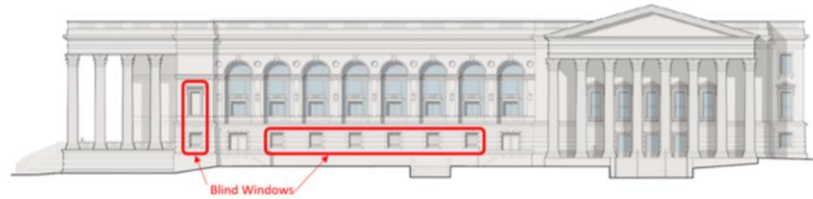


COMPARISON OF SCALE - NORTH AND EAST PORTICOS

Majority of Functions Shown on Level One Could Be Put Below

Most spaces now shown on the primary entrance level are service (non-public) support and do not need daylight or to be above grade. Note that the kitchen areas as shown are immense (13,000 sq. ft.), more than 2 ½ times the industry standard to serve the proposed 1,000 guests. This creates the opportunity to lower these functions below ground and reduce the overwhelming height of the building.

MAJORITY OF FUNCTIONS NOW SHOWN ON LEVEL 1 COULD BE PUT BELOW GRADE



Most spaces now shown on the primary entrance level are service (non-public) support and do not need daylight or to be above grade.

Note also that the kitchen areas as shown are immense (13,000+ sq ft), more than **2½ times the industry standard to serve 1,000 people.**

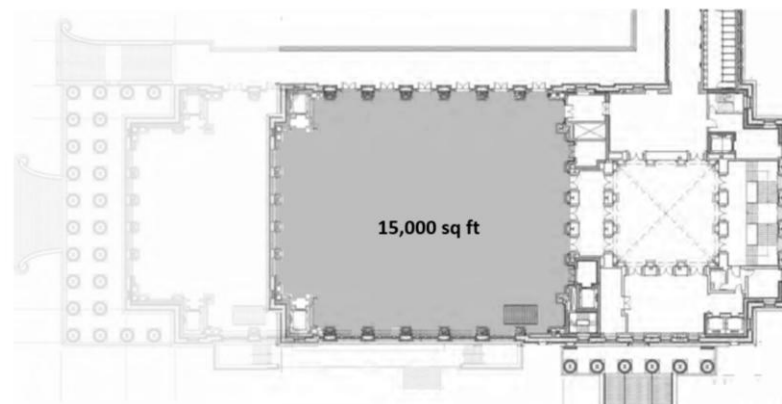


Moving non-public kitchen and service spaces from the main floor to the lower level while sizing the ballroom to the high industry standards and eliminating the non-accessible South Portico would reduce the immense volume of the proposed structure by approximately 38%. This would lessen harmful impacts on the historic Executive Residence while preserving the highly important symbolic axial relationship and viewshed between the White House and the US Capitol.

REDUCING HARMFUL IMPACTS WHILE PRESERVING HISTORIC SYMBOLIC RELATIONSHIPS



Moving non-public kitchen and service spaces from the main floor to the lower level while sizing the ballroom to the high industry standard and eliminating the non-accessible south portico would reduce the immense volume of the proposed structure by over 38%. This would lessen harmful impacts on the historic Executive Residence and preserve the highly important axial relationship and viewshed between the White House and the US Capitol.



Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on this important project. I would be happy to answer questions about this submission and serve as a resource to the Administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Scott Parker". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Scott Parker, FAIA