

NATIONAL MALL PLAN: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT PARK FACILITIES

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POLICY GUIDANCE

The National Park Service provides visitor and administrative facilities and has policy guidance that relates to park facilities. The NPS *Management Policies 2006* address park facilities in chapter 9, which begins with the following statement.

The National Park Service will provide visitor and administrative facilities that are necessary, appropriate, and consistent with the conservation of park resources and values. Facilities will be harmonious with park resources, compatible with natural processes, esthetically pleasing, functional, energy- and water-efficient, cost-effective, universally designed, and as welcoming as possible to all segments of the population. NPS facilities and operations will demonstrate environmental leadership by incorporating sustainable practices to the maximum extent practicable in planning, design, siting, construction, and maintenance.

NECESSARY AND APPROPRIATE FACILITIES

Policy. Visitor facilities for park use and enjoyment will be limited to what is necessary and appropriate (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.3). Necessary and appropriate are important criteria for determining whether facilities are needed. Park managers should consider whether a facility needs to be located within the park, or whether it could be provided or located outside the park boundary. Policies recommend that

public input be sought at the earliest stages of decision-making, particularly in those areas where controversy is likely (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.1). Guidance is provided for specific types of facilities.

Background. The National Mall provides a limited number and variety of visitor facilities, such as restrooms, food service facilities, bookstores, information stations, and retail. In addition there are numerous small-scale site furnishings, such as seating, orientation maps, signs, and lighting.

Public facilities are also provided at adjacent visitor destinations, such as museums, galleries, and the National Archives. Adjacent destinations typically provide information, restrooms, a variety of food service, and merchandise (books, retail, postcards, convenience items) related to their purpose or theme. However, visitors need to clear security checkpoints to use these facilities, and hours of operation are shorter than on the National Mall.

The park has received repeated complaints about the lack, location, and quality of facilities. When planning for the National Mall plan began in November 2006, the National Park Service sought public comment on necessary and appropriate facilities.

Best Practices. In order to limit the development footprint, a best practice is to co-locate visitor services such as restrooms, bookstores, food, and retail. Additionally, it is a best practice to merge information, stewardship messages, and education throughout all visitor facilities, including restrooms.

LOCATION OF FACILITIES

Policy. A preferred location for visitor facilities within park boundaries minimizes impacts on resources and should be situated to stimulate use of alternative transportation systems, bicycle routes, and pedestrian walkways. Facility loca-

tions should be identified in an approved plan (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.1.2).

Management facilities will be located outside the park whenever necessary functions can be adequately supported. When located inside the park, they will be located away from primary resources and features so as not to adversely affect resources and values or to detract from visitor experience. Historic properties will be adaptively reused (i.e., used for another purpose) to the maximum extent practicable if it does not affect their significance (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.4).

Background. The National Mall facilities are generally located in accordance with policy, and several historic buildings are being adaptively reused for visitor services and office space. Because walking is the primary means of visiting multiple destinations on the National Mall, it is important to understand reasonable walking distances and necessary pedestrian site furnishings. Reasonable walking distances are assumed to range from 800 feet to 1,700 feet (1/3 mile) for most visitors.

HARMONIOUS, ESTHETICALLY PLEASING FACILITIES

Policy. If determined necessary within park boundaries, facilities will be integrated into the park landscape with sustainable designs and systems to minimize environmental impacts. Development or facilities will not compete with or dominate park features. Any desired cohesive design theme will reflect the park’s purpose and character, whether for the whole park or an individual developed area (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.1.2).

When important cultural resources are present, efforts will be made to use existing contributing structures. New structures will harmonize with the area and the cultural resources in proportion, color, and texture. No attempt will be made to duplicate or mimic a historic design, nor will any modern construction be portrayed to the public as being historic. However, vernacular styles of architecture are appropriate when they provide visual compatibility with the cultural

landscape (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.1.3).

Background / Existing Character. The character of Washington, D.C., and the National Mall is monumental and symbolic. Much of the character can be traced to the historic L’Enfant and McMillan plans, which identified locations for iconic structures such as the U.S. Capitol and the Lincoln Memorial. Each monument or memorial and its surrounding area have a unique character and may contain or provide facilities for visitors such as information, exhibits, restrooms, bookstores, or retail. In two cases historic structures (Monument Lodge and Survey Lodge at the Washington Monument) have been adaptively reused to provide visitor information, bookstores, and restrooms.

There are three general architectural styles of park facilities:

- Circular, flat roofed, restroom buildings date from the 1970s and are located on the Washington Monument grounds and at Constitution Gardens and Ash Woods. The exterior finishes and building sizes vary, and the modern design is not harmonious or sensitive to the context of the historic landscape.
- Small circular structures with metal roofs have been used for information and refreshment stands. While the roofs are higher quality materials, they project a somewhat circus tent appearance, and the exterior walls are painted.
- The most recent architectural style for visitor service facilities is a simple, square cruciform with hipped copper metal roofs, wood trim, and stucco walls. There are several variations and sizes on the National Mall. The quality, materials, colors, texture, scale, and detailing are compatible with the historic landscape.

Smaller scale site furnishings are diverse and reflect numerous uncoordinated designs. There are more than 1,000 benches or chairs in 10 or more styles, 9 styles of drinking fountains, 7 types of paved surfaces, and 8 types of trash containers. There are more than 1,000 light fixtures, with different sizes of bulbs. There are also more than 400 signs, but there is no comprehensive

pedestrian guide or wayfinding system. The park is currently updating the sign system.

Best Practices. A cost-effective best practice is to use a recurring and recognizable architectural theme for visitor facilities. An easily identifiable style improves visitor experiences because visitors know what to look for, making them more self-sufficient and increasing their comfort level. High-quality and context-sensitive facilities and buildings generate visitor respect as well as encourage stewardship behavior on the part of visitors and staff.

RESTROOMS

Policy. NPS policies state that the level of use determines the size of facilities (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.3.3).

Background. As a biological and public health necessity, restrooms within parks are both necessary and appropriate. The fact that the National Mall is a large area with multiple destinations, consistently high levels of visitation, and a number of large annual celebrations and events underscores the need for restrooms.

There are 10 restrooms west of 15th Street, including 5 that are within or part of memorials (the Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, World War II, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorials) and 2 that are within information areas or bookstores (at the Washington Monument Lodge and Survey Lodge). These restrooms have 102 toilets (including 23 urinals). Family restrooms are provided in three locations (Survey Lodge and the World War II and Thomas Jefferson memorials). There are no NPS public restrooms east of 15th Street. While restrooms are available in nearby museums (see Table 1), as previously mentioned users must go through a security checkpoint and the hours of operation are limited.

TABLE 1: PUBLIC RESTROOM AVAILABILITY ON AND NEAR THE NATIONAL MALL

	Number of Toilets / Urinals			
	Women	Men	Family	Total
National Park Service	52	46	4	102
Adjacent Museums and the National Archives	299	307	129	735

NOTE: This count does not include the Capitol Visitor Center, which will also have food service, restrooms, and retail.

Visitors are generally equally divided between males and females (a comprehensive survey in 2003 showed 51% of visitors were female). No restrooms are available near food service, a common requirement to support good public hygiene.

Best Practices. Several standards may provide useful guidance about the distribution and number of restrooms needed. One common best practice is to co-locate drinking fountains near restrooms. According to the National Standard Plumbing Code, there should be one drinking fountain for every 1,000 visitors.

The National Recreation and Park Association's *Park, Recreation and Leisure Facility Site Planning Guidelines* recommend that restrooms be located every 800 feet (1,000 feet at a maximum) at major tourist sites (such as National Mall memorials) and adjacent to food service. Restrooms should be located near entries at minor tourist sites (smaller or single destinations that attract tourists), or every 1,000 feet when minor tourist sites are dispersed. According to the American Restroom Association, for outdoor sites with more than 2,000 visitors daily, the maximum distance between public restrooms is 0.3 mile. At highly visited theme parks, such as Disneyworld, with very densely concentrated attractions, restrooms are located every 300 feet.

The American Restroom Association, the National Standard Plumbing Code, and the International Plumbing Code have criteria for numbers of toilets and urinals (see Table 2). Typically more facilities should be provided for women than for men. Considering the National Plumbing Code, the National Mall may be most comparable to the category of museums / exhibits / food courts, or outdoor assembly areas / fairs.

TABLE 2: NATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC RESTROOM FACILITIES

American Restroom Association Guidelines		
Hourly Visitation	Toilets/Urinals for Men	Toilets for Women
<500	1/2	6
500–1,000	2/4	9
1,000–2,000	4/8	12
2,000–3,000	6/15	18
3,000–5,000	8/25	30

International Plumbing Code Guidelines

	Ratio of Facilities to Visitors		
	Men	Women	Generic
Assembly Areas	1/125	1/65	
Restaurants			1/75
Transportation Facilities			1/500

National Standard Plumbing Code Guidelines

	Number of Facilities for Men	Number of Facilities for Women
Outdoor Assembly / Fairs (peak hour)		
400	6	10
2,600	8	14
20,000	64	130
40,000	132	263
60,000	199	396
Museums, Exhibits, Food Courts		
100	2	2
300	2	3
900	5	9
1,500	7	13
3,000	11	21

FOOD SERVICES

Policy. Food and lodging may be provided if necessary and appropriate to achieve the park purpose, or in-park facilities or services may be justified when the distance and travel time are too great or leaving the park would detract from the overall visitor experience (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.3.2)

Background. The pedestrian nature of the National Mall justifies the need for food service. Distances to facilities off the National Mall are not convenient for visitors during the day, and the capacity of food service venues at adjacent museums and the National Archives is limited (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: PUBLIC FOOD SERVICE AT ADJACENT MUSEUMS AND THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Venue	Seating
Café/Food Courts	1,155
Restaurants	824
Outdoor Cafés	116
Total Seating	2,095
Outdoor Carts	5 locations

NOTE: Does not include the Capitol Visitor Center, which will have food service, restrooms, and retail.

Currently the National Mall has 10 refreshment stands (none with restrooms located nearby), which also provide retail/souvenirs and convenience items such as rain ponchos, film, water bottles, and aspirin. Seven refreshment stands have outdoor seating. Refreshment stands are supplemented by mobile food carts during the peak season.

A restaurant was planned and approved in the 1970s for Constitution Gardens but was not built because of inadequate funding. Commercial service plans examine in more detail the feasibility of alternative services.

Best Practices. The National Recreation and Park Association emphasizes that “eating out for pleasure is one of the primary leisure activities of many people” and that indoor and outdoor restaurants (food service) can enhance the visitor experience. Encouraging people to linger at food service locations can help concentrate waste at these locations and help protect memorials. (Recently, eating and drinking near cultural tourist destinations in Italy such as memorials and fountains were restricted for preservation reasons.) To get people to linger, pleasant environments, amenities, and seating are essential.

VISITOR CENTERS

Legislation. Legislation prohibits the construction of visitor centers within the Reserve, which comprises much of the National Mall.

Policy. Visitor centers may be provided when needed for visitor information and interpretive services. Visitor centers are not substitutes for on-site interpretation and will be constructed only when it has been determined that indoor media are the most effective means of communicating major elements of the park story. The size and scope of visitor centers will be evaluated using an NPS planning model tool (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.3.1.3).

Visitor centers may provide indoor media, audiovisual programs, museums, museum collection storage, exhibits, information services, sales of educational materials and theme-related items, self-help programs, and spaces necessary for high-quality visitor

experiences (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.3.1.3).

Visitor centers have traditionally been used to encourage visitors to explore a full range of park resources. NPS visitor centers have been located near park entrances or near special attractions to provide an overview of resources, educate visitors about park resources, and inform visitors about the range of opportunities. Additionally, parks may have outdoor education areas, orientation / welcome areas, and amphitheaters. Today, there is widespread availability of websites that facilitate advance planning, understanding of park resources, and an overview of visitor opportunities. Multipurpose facilities provide information and education that may be integrated with other visitor services.

Background. A National Visitor Center was provided at Union Station for the 1976 Bicentennial but was later removed. When the Washington Monument was restored, a temporary visitor center was provided. Neither of these facilities proved to be well used.

There is no single entry point to the National Mall, and destinations are widespread, with visitors primarily walking to them. NPS information and education has been provided at major memorial destinations — the Thomas Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the World War II Memorial, the Korean War Veterans Memorial, and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial. Temporary and permanent wayside exhibits have been provided, along with small audio-visual components, at the Thomas Jefferson and Lincoln memorials, and interactive components have been provided at the World War II and Korean War Veterans memorials. Maps, area brochures, educational wayside panels, onsite radio information, guided walks, scheduled programs, and cell-phone tours are other means of providing information. Additional educational waysides are being developed. Currently, a cohesive system of National Mall signs, orientation maps, and pedestrian guide signs is being developed to update orientation signs and maps and to provide wayfinding information.

The Smithsonian Metro station is a primary pedestrian entrance to the National Mall. Surrounding museums and galleries also provide visitor information.

Best Practices. A best practice is to provide some level of information, stewardship messages, and education at all visitor facilities. Traditional visitor centers, with auditoriums and extensive media or museum exhibits, have been occasionally replaced by open air facilities that provide these functions.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Policy. New and altered facilities will be accessible and comply with accessibility standards. They will incorporate universal design (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.1) and be accessible and usable to the greatest extent reasonable (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.2).

Background. Some memorials have elevators to provide access for visitors with disabilities. Wheelchairs are available upon request. The park provides more parking for the disabled than standards require, and staff are working to improve the park website to make it accessible for people with visual disabilities.

SUSTAINABLE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

Policy. The National Park Service will incorporate sustainable principles and practices into design, siting, construction, building materials, utility systems, recycling of all unusable materials, and waste management (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.3).

Reduced greenhouse gases and improved energy efficiency are required for all facility designs. The incorporation of solar, photovoltaic, insulation, and glazing strategies, along with energy-efficient lighting and appliances and renewable energy technologies, are also recommended. Visitors should be educated about sustainable approaches. All projects must incorporate LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards to achieve a silver level (*Management Policies 2006*, sec. 9.1.1.6).

Background. Refreshment stands near the Lincoln Memorial, completed in 2006 and 2007, meet these standards and include geothermal technology for cooling and icemaking, saving millions of gallons of water annually.

Public comments indicate a common expectation that the government and the National Park Service should set an example of using sustainable, green development, including recycling. The park is working with the Environmental Protection Agency to examine trash makeup, identify ways to reduce waste, and improve recycling and solid waste management on a daily basis as well as during events.

Best Practices. Capital cities are expected to exemplify wise or sustainable development.

Efficient solid waste management systems utilize mechanized trash pickup, locate trash containers conveniently along visual lines of sight, use strong stewardship education messages, co-locate recycling and trash containers, but focus recycling containers near areas where recyclable materials are generated. Also, trash and recycling containers should be available in various sizes to meet demands in different areas, and they should be designed in coordinated, attractive styles so that they are immediately recognizable.