

EXHIBIT 24



The East Wing of the White House has been demolished. Here's a look at its history

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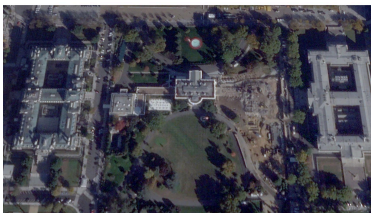
The East Wing of the White House, the traditional headquarters for the first lady and her staff as well as the public entrance to the "people's house," was **largely torn down this week** to make way for President Donald Trump's new \$300 million ballroom.

Trump has touted the planned 90,000-square-foot space as an attempt to modernize the East Wing. Trump officials say the construction process is following legal and historical precedent.

But the images that emerged this week of construction equipment demolishing the facade have prompted outrage over the lack of oversight of the project and raised questions about its scope.



A Virginia couple sued the Trump administration on Thursday in an attempt to **halt the ballroom project**. Charles and Judith Voorhees asked a federal judge to issue a temporary restraining order to stop further destruction to the mansion, saying the project moved forward "without legally required approvals or reviews."



READ MORE: Who's paying for Trump's \$300 million ballroom?

Several preservation groups have **expressed concern** in recent weeks about the project, which is the first major change to the exterior of the White House in 83 years. Collectively, their separate statements said a more transparent and thorough review process was needed before the ballroom project got underway.

Two satellite views that show the East Wing of the White House before (top) and after demolition (below) in Washington, D.C. Images by 2025 Planet Labs PBC via Reuters

Communication about how the ballroom project would affect the main structure of the building was confusing from the beginning, said Priya Jain, chair of the Society of Architectural Historians' Heritage Conservation Committee.

"There was kind of an ambiguity about the way things were framed from the get-go," she said, adding that the society's letter **asked for more clarification and transparency** around the White House's statements, given the mansion is a highly significant historical building. In remarks to reporters last week, Trump said that two unnamed advisors had told him he could start the ballroom construction immediately, forgoing any oversight or zoning. He said the advisors told him, "Sir, this is the White House. You're the president of the United States. You can do anything you want."

What was the history of the East Wing? How has it changed over time?

In flattening the East Wing of the White House, "we lose a significant piece of history," author Kate Andersen Brower said.

The wing, which was **originally constructed in 1902** and renovated in 1942, served as the public entrance to the White House, and **housed the family movie theater** as well as offices on legislative affairs, the military and the in-house calligraphers. Perhaps most prominently, though, it included office space for the first lady and her aides.

Rosalynn Carter was the first presidential spouse to keep an office in the East Wing, Brower said. Before that, many first ladies worked out of the residence in a sitting room near their bedrooms.

For Brower, who wrote "The Residence" about daily life inside the White House and "First Women" about the role of modern first ladies, what has happened to the East Wing "speaks a lot to how diminished the role of the president's spouse has become."

"Truly, the power center in the White House is always the Oval Office and the West Wing, and proximity to the Oval Office is so important," she added. "If you have the first lady and her staff working out of the Eisenhower Executive Office Building, which I think is what will likely happen, they're even more removed from the center of power. I mean, the East Wing has been called 'Siberia' as a joke inside the White House. If there's anything farther away than Siberia, that's it."



President Barack Obama with Melissa Winter, an aide to first lady Michelle Obama, in the East Wing, March 2009. Source: National Archives

During the White House press briefing on Thursday, Leavitt indicated the first lady's offices would **move back into the rebuilt East Wing.**

During Donald Trump's first term as president, first lady Melania Trump did not use her East Wing office, Brower noted.

"It was so, basically, vacant that her staff had it as a gift-wrapping room and had gifts put in there," she said.

Is the White House exempted from a preservation process?

Watch the segment in the player above.

The U.S. has a long-standing process for assessing a federal or a federally assisted project in terms of its effect on historic and cultural buildings, Jain said.

A key part of the National Historic Preservations Act of 1966 is the **Section 106 review process.** It outlines steps for various stakeholders and agencies to follow, such as determining whether any one project would have adverse effects on a structure, and developing alternative approaches that would avoid or minimize these effects on these properties.

However, three buildings and their grounds are exempt from the Section 106 requirements: the U.S. Supreme Court, the U.S. Capitol building and the White House.

"Because of that reason, a formal 106 process was not initiated," said Jain, also an associate professor of architecture at Texas A&M University.

That doesn't mean the White House can't or hasn't taken preservation processes into account in the past. Before Trump, earlier projects have advanced after consultations with the National Park Service and other agencies, she added.

Jain pointed to a comprehensive plan **released in 2000** for a project that assessed the preservation and management needs for a parcel of land that included the White House and President's Park. The design plan was drafted after an environment impact assessment had been prepared and public comments analyzed. It also laid out all the agencies involved.

The White House East Wing demolition is necessary for a "strong and stable" ballroom, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said. Video by PBS News

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt responded to multiple questions about the lack of oversight for the project Thursday, saying Trump is **following legal precedent**. She also held up several images of past renovation projects that she said demonstrated how the president's decision on the East Wing aligned with actions other presidents have taken.

"There have been many presidents in the past who have made their mark on this beautiful White House complex," she said. "I think sitting here today we're all grateful for those efforts and the modifications that happened at that time."

Leavitt also said the administration made it clear that the East Wing would be "modernized" since the project was **announced earlier this year**.

The Trump administration has said it would **release its ballroom plans for review**, though officials have not said when it would do so and demolition is already underway.

The White House did not respond to a question from PBS News about whether or when the administration would submit plans for the ballroom.

What will happen to the items in the East Wing?

The White House Historical Association said in a statement to PBS News on Wednesday that "a comprehensive digital scanning project" and photographic record of the East Wing and gardens had been created when the construction project was announced in July.

The association added that historical artifacts that were located in the East Wing "have been preserved and stored."



Arrival of the guests at Alice Roosevelt's wedding, White House, Washington, D.C., in 1906. Image by Keystone View Company via Library of Congress

The association's website provides a 360-degree virtual tour of the White House and includes the East Wing portion that has since been torn down.

'The White House is not a private building'

While Americans may have been OK in the past with adding onto the White House, the project, as it has unfolded, is "just taking a wrecking ball to the East Wing," Brower said.

"I think Americans feel such an emotional attachment to the House itself that it's hard to stomach watching bits of it be gutted and torn down and bulldozed," she said. "It's just heartbreaking."

The American Institute of Architects, in its **August statement and letter** about the project, stressed that while the project may be funded by private donors, "the White House is not a private building."

In a follow-up statement Friday, the institute condemned the demolition and urged decisionmakers to "halt any further irreversible alteration of the historic fabric," publish full documentation of the project's scope, as well as budget and schedule and "reopen meaningful engagement" with the public.

The AIA has been advising its members to urge Congress to launch an investigation into how the administration could proceed "**without adhering to any process or review.**"

"[The White House] is something that belongs to the American people, as a lot of other federal buildings," Jain said, adding that SAH "wanted to emphasize that because of the visibility of this project and the public nature of it, it really has the ability to impact how we treat historic buildings more broadly in the country and our approach to them."

The White House has said the project is expected to be completed before the end of Trump's term.

White House correspondent Liz Landers contributed to this report.

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By — Joshua Barajas

Joshua Barajas is a senior editor for the PBS NewsHour's Communities Initiative. He's also the senior editor and manager of newsletters.

 [@Josh_Barrage](#)

By — Dan Cooney

Dan Cooney is the PBS NewsHour's Social Media Producer/Coordinator.

 [@IAmDanCooney](#)