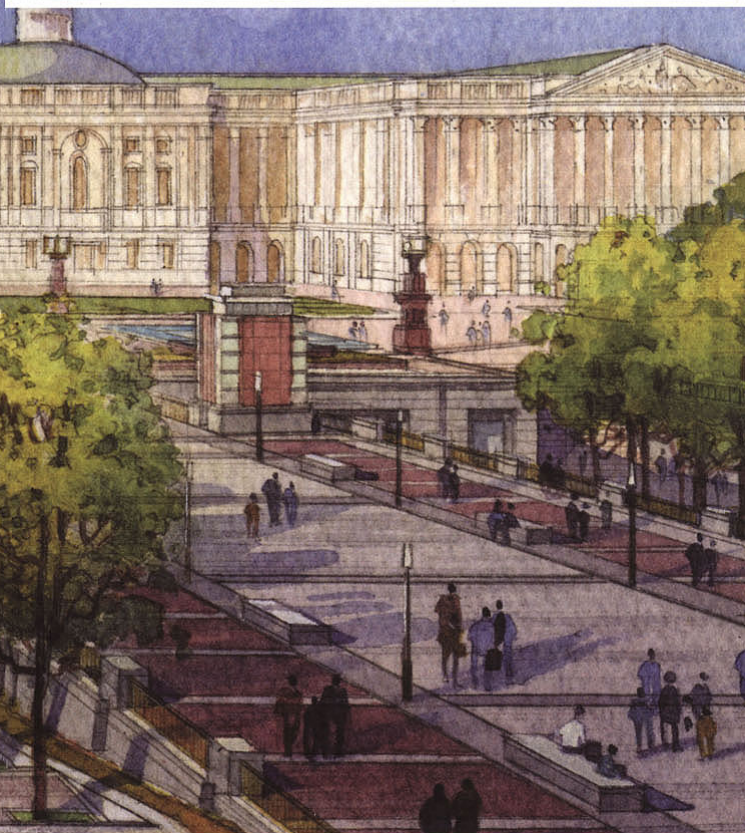
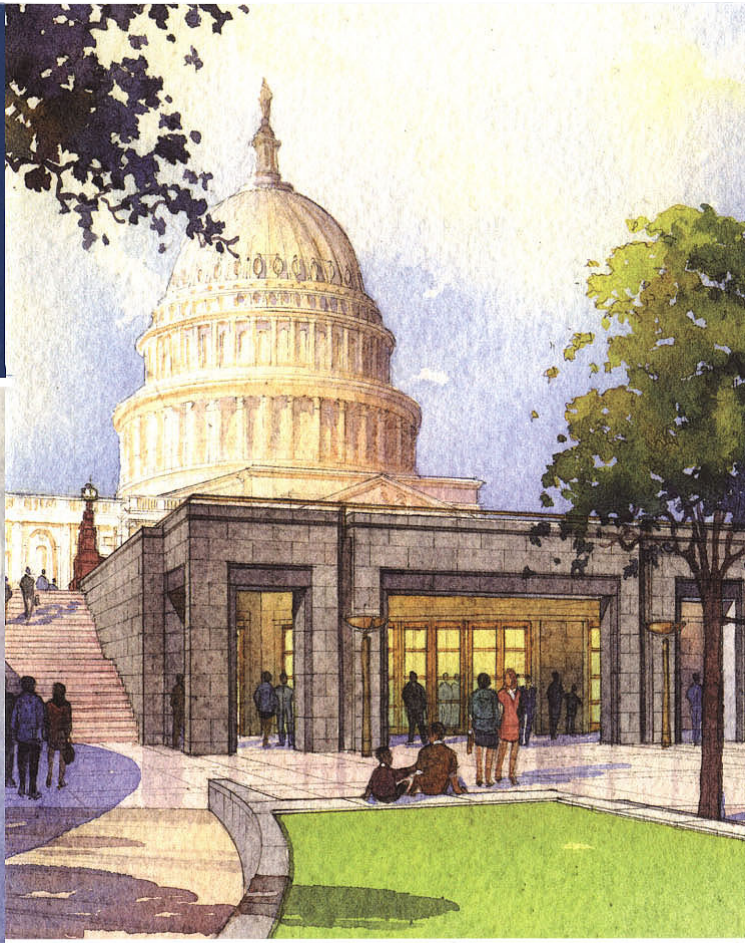


The United States Capitol Visitor Center



The Capitol Visitor Center

From its inception, the Capitol Visitor Center has been conceived as an extension of the Capitol that welcomes visitors to the seat of American government. Indeed, it is the largest project since the House and Senate additions were built over 140 years ago. When completed, the Visitor Center will welcome millions of visitors in a secure, educational, accessible and convenient environment, yet will respect the past by highlighting the Capitol and revitalizing its historic setting.

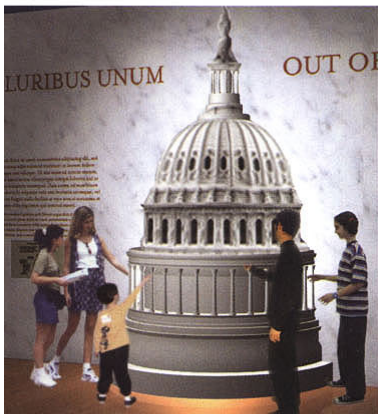
The design for the Visitor Center has been guided by four fundamental goals:

SECURITY ▪ The Visitor Center will provide a secure public environment to welcome and manage a large number of visitors and to protect the Capitol Building, its occupants, and guests in an atmosphere of free and open access.

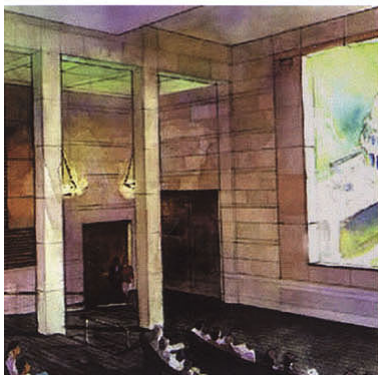
VISITOR EDUCATION ▪ The Visitor Center will establish and present lively and informative programs on the workings and history of the Congress, the legislative process, and the architecture of the Capitol.

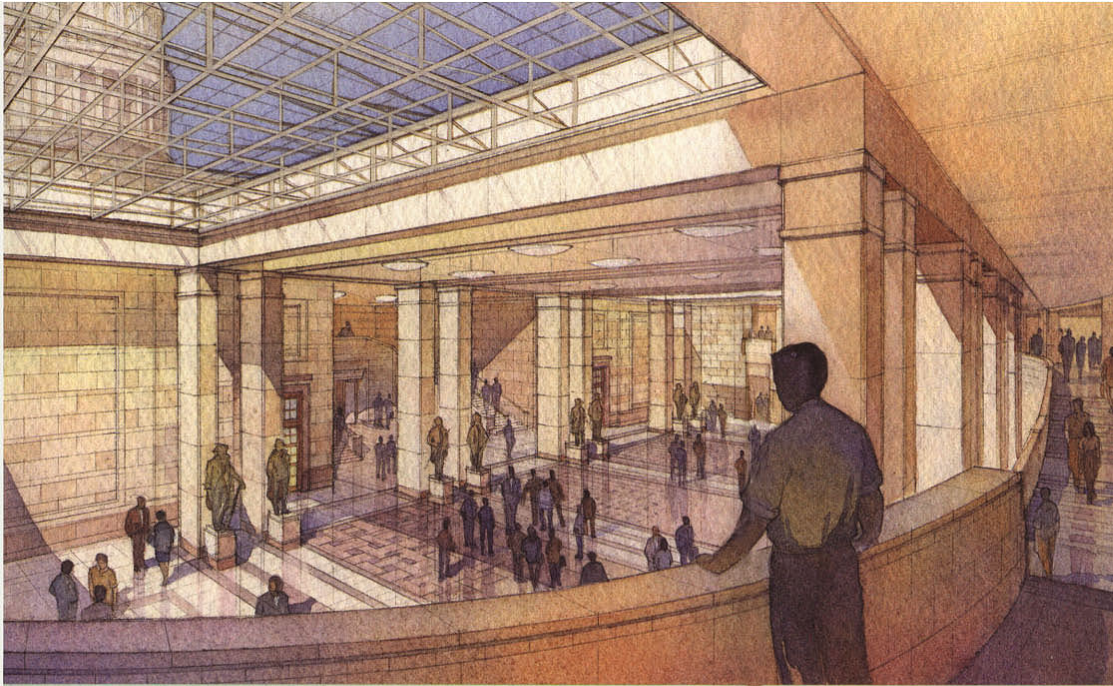
VISITOR COMFORT ▪ The Visitor Center will provide the amenities, comfort, and convenience for visitors appropriate to the world's most recognizable symbol of representative democracy and one of the nation's most visited tourist destinations. In addition, all its spaces and resources will be fully accessible to persons with disabilities.

FUNCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS ▪ The Visitor Center will respond to the physical limitations of the Capitol by providing modern, efficient facilities for such functions as truck loading and deliveries and improved connections to the Capitol Building.

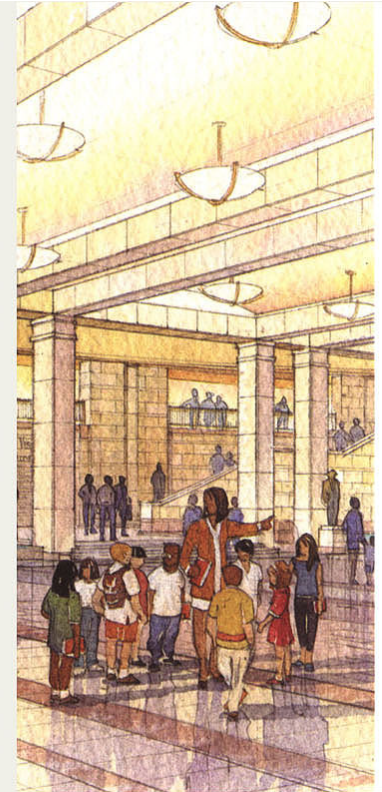


Left: A touchable model of the Dome will greet visitors to the Exhibition Gallery. Bottom Left: Inside one of two Orientation Theaters. Below: Inside the Exhibition Gallery





Above: The Great Hall, as seen from a balcony with a view of the Capitol dome through a grand skylight.
Right: The floor of the Great Hall.



Inside the Capitol Visitor Center

The Visitor Center will be located underground on the east side of the Capitol, so as not to detract from the appearance of the Capitol and of the grounds designed by Frederick Law Olmsted. Gradually sloping walkways will curve westward from First Street SE/NE toward the Visitor Center entrance set unobtrusively within the East Plaza.

When completed, the Capitol Visitor Center will feature:

A Great Hall that will include information and ticketing desks, and provide a spacious area where visitors can gather while viewing the Capitol Dome through grand skylights.

A large Exhibition Gallery that will tell the dual story of the development of representative democracy and the building of the Capitol. It will include original objects and precious documents from pivotal events in the

history of our lawmaking. The goals of the exhibition are to educate visitors about the legislative process and to inspire citizens to become more involved in their government.

Two Orientation Theaters that will present a specially-produced introductory film that will prepare visitors for their tour in the Capitol.

A new Dining Facility with a capacity for 600 people.

New elevators from the Visitor Center into the Capitol that will greatly improve accessibility to, and within, the Capitol. All aspects of accessibility have been a prime consideration in the design of the new facility.

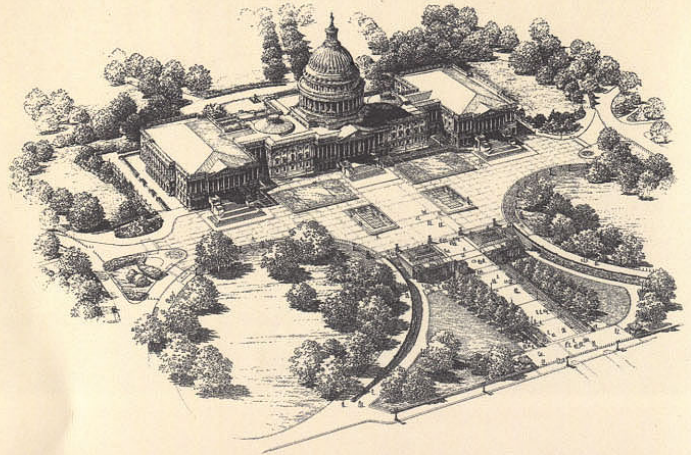
The U.S. Capitol and its stately dome have become the international symbols of our representative democracy. As the nation has grown in size and complexity, the Capitol has responded with architectural additions and technological advances. The Capitol itself has been built and rebuilt, extended and domed, re-domed and extended again. From the conversion of gas to electric lighting in the 1890s, to the implementation of modern computer technology, the Capitol has attempted to keep pace.

Tourism at the Capitol

Throughout its constantly evolving history, the Capitol has always attracted visitors. However, in the 19th century, no one could have anticipated the current number of tourists from the U.S. and around the world who would come each year to Washington, D.C. to experience democracy in action. In 2000 alone, more than three million people visited the Capitol. Today, due to increased security, visitors sometimes wait for long periods of time, often under difficult weather conditions, before entering the Capitol. They need better amenities, better accessibility and improved provisions for safety and security. Today's Congress understands that the people who come to the Capitol also desire a better opportunity to learn and understand their Constitution, their Congress and the history of their Capitol.

< Top Left: A ground-level view of the entrance of the Capitol Visitor Center. Gently sloping walkways gradually lead visitors into the facility. Cover: Tree-lined paths and a central promenade will revive the historic East Capitol Grounds.

The United States
Capitol Visitor Center
Washington DC



The Capitol Visitor Center lies below the East Front Plaza to minimize impacts to the historic grounds.

For More Information

If you'd like to read more about the Capitol Visitor Center project, please visit our web site at www.aoc.gov and be sure to click on the Capitol Visitor Center link on the homepage. For general information about Capitol tours, please contact the Capitol Guide Service at (202) 225-6827.

