

Via fax to
Sabrina
Lissa 6-5709
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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 8, 1995

TALKING POINTS FOR THE FIRST LADY ON OPENING THE WH VISITOR
CENTER, MONDAY, MARCH 13

FROM: Melinda Bates MB

- Thank National Park Service staff and volunteers, ask them to stand for recognition. Thank WH Historical Association board, ask them to stand.
- The NPS has been connected to the WH since President Washington chose the site in 1790. (They are the "long-termers"...)
- Restoration of this beautiful space is a good indication of their care for historic buildings and living history.
- WH is the only residence of a chief of state in the world that is open to free public tours on a regular basis - and it always has been.
- Our administration increased tour visits from 1,070,000 in 1992 to 1,500,00 in our first year. The VP recognized this achievement in customer service with a "Heroes of Reinventing Government" award for the WH Visitors Office. This was only possible because of the cooperation between the NPS, the Visitors Office and the USSS/ Uniformed Division Tour Division. I know the tour officers are looking forward to guiding visitors who have already absorbed the information in these displays. Recognize tour officers in attendance.
- The public, through their constant visits, make it clear to all of us that the WH is not a museum, it is a home which the people lend to the President and his family.
- "I have often heard the President describe us as a mom and pop operation - and we just live over the store."
- The wonderful displays here will connect the public to the WH in a very intimate (immediate?) way. For example, in one of the first displays I was astonished to see a daguerreotype of President Polk with Dolly Madison in the group. Imagine finding a photograph of the First Lady who saved the famous portrait of George Washington - the only object continuously in this House since 1800! Visitors enjoying the exhibits will surely find other displays to astonish and delight.
- End with a description of a personal experience from living in the WH and a word of appreciation for being part of the process to provide such a fascinating educational opportunity to children and parents from around the world.

10: Patti

6-2311

fax

FEB - 9 1995

March 28

From: Melinda

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
MEMORANDUM

February 2, 1995

TO:

Patti Solis

Director of First Lady Scheduling

FROM:

Melinda N. Bates

Director, Visitors Office

RE:

HRC Participation in Visitors Center Opening

The Visitors Office asks for your help concerning FLOTUS participation in the opening of the NPS White House Visitors Center (in the Commerce Building).

Many months ago the NPS gave us the date of Tuesday, March 7 for the opening of this long awaited building. We have sent numerous memos/calendars/announcements to the Hill and elsewhere informing the public of this date as the beginning of the free ticket distribution system, FROM THE TICKET BOOTH INSIDE THE VISITOR CENTER.

NPS now tells us that they will not open the building until the First Lady attends an opening party there, perhaps in early April. They maintain that they need 6 WEEKS TO SEND OUT INVITATIONS. They are waiting for a date from your office. We pointed out that Mrs. Clinton has gone to great lengths to make it clear that her schedule should not interfere with the public. Undoubtedly, their invitation to her does not mention that the public use of this public building will be delayed until she attends the opening party. They have also raised as an excuse for not opening the possibility that the space might not be completed. This is ridiculous. March 7 is 3 WEEKS after their scheduled finish date. Even if the facility were not ready they should still be able to open the doors and direct the public through a roped-off area to obtain tickets, without impacting the rest of the space.

Our concern is that word will get out that her schedule is inconveniencing the public, as well as that the White House and NPS cannot keep to the schedules we set for ourselves.

Our hope is that she could be available any date before March 7 to attend the party, so that the building could open on schedule.

Please let me know what you think. Thanks! (6-2324 is my private line.)

Patti - What we need is for HRC to commit to a night before March 7 and tell the Park Service that is their only choice. They will protest, but it is important to stick to it. Let me know. Thanks!!

MB

Melinda -
let me
know what
needs to do
for this
Patti



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
1100 OHIO DRIVE, S. W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242



A8215 (NCR-WHL)

FEB 10 1995

Ms. Patti Solis
Office of Scheduling for
the First Lady
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Ms. Solis:

For many years, visitors to the White House have had to wait in long lines in all kinds of weather before going into the White House on the public tour. If visitors could not make the narrow window of opportunity for the public tour, they were left with no meaningful alternative White House experience. And for those who went through the tour and wanted to learn more about the White House, there was no nearby place where they could go to satisfy this desire.

Now, with the opening of the new White House Visitor Center in the Department of Commerce building at 1455 Pennsylvania Avenue, we can begin to address some of these problems.

We would like to invite Mrs. Clinton to help us "cut a ribbon" and open this new service facility to visitors on one of the following dates:

First Choice....Thursday, March 23, 1995 at 3 p.m.
Second Choice...Thursday, March 30, 1995 at 3 p.m.
Third Choice....Wednesday, March 29, 1995 at 3 p.m.
Fourth Choice...Tuesday, March 28, 1995 at 3:00 p.m.

Mrs. Clinton has indicated that she would like to be involved in the opening of the White House Visitor Center and we would do whatever we could to accommodate her participation.

Our preliminary plans call for an informal, low-key reception to introduce the facility, its visitor services and exhibits to the public and to thank those who made this project possible. We would hope that Mrs. Clinton might comment on the importance of improving the service that we provide to White House visitors, and help us celebrate the higher level of quality service that this partnership effort has yielded.

SN
March 7 3pm
Mrs. would like to do this before we leave.
Invites have not gone out.

Mrs. Clinton's interest in improving the experience of White House visitors is foremost in our minds as we extend this invitation. We hope for your favorable consideration and we would be most pleased to work with you to address any questions.

We appreciate Mrs. Clinton's continuing active interest in the people and programs of the National Park Service.

Sincerely,

Robert Stanton
Regional Director, National Capital Region

Enclosure (2)

- *Jim McDaniel*
Regional Director
619-6344

WHITE HOUSE VISITOR CENTER
National Park Service
National Capital Region

Background

When selecting a site for the President's House in 1790, George Washington could not have anticipated the growth and development of the city, the throngs of visitors seeking to set foot inside the White House, and the elaborate security measures needed to protect the Chief Executive in the 1990's. Today, responsible managers are concerned about the lack of facilities to accommodate the more than one and one-half million people who visit the White House and the hundreds of thousands of others who are unable to visit because they cannot meet the strict time and capacity criteria for such a visit. In addition, the priceless historic heritage represented by nearly 5,000 White House Collection artifacts is stored in an offsite warehouse facility away from the view and enjoyment of the public.

While the White House visit has been enhanced by recent program and facility improvements, many basic visitor needs are not served adequately or at all. A permanent, year-round facility is needed to house information services, interpretive and educational programs, museum displays and exhibits, restrooms and research functions.

During the summer of 1990, an interagency committee convened by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior agreed that a White House Visitor Center would solve a number of existing problems and would be an appropriate development for the bicentennial of the White House.

A permanent solution is being studied within the scope of the White House Comprehensive Design Plan. For the immediate future, however, a White House Visitor Center is being developed in Baldrige Hall in the Commerce Department at Pennsylvania Avenue and 15th Street, NW.

Project Summary

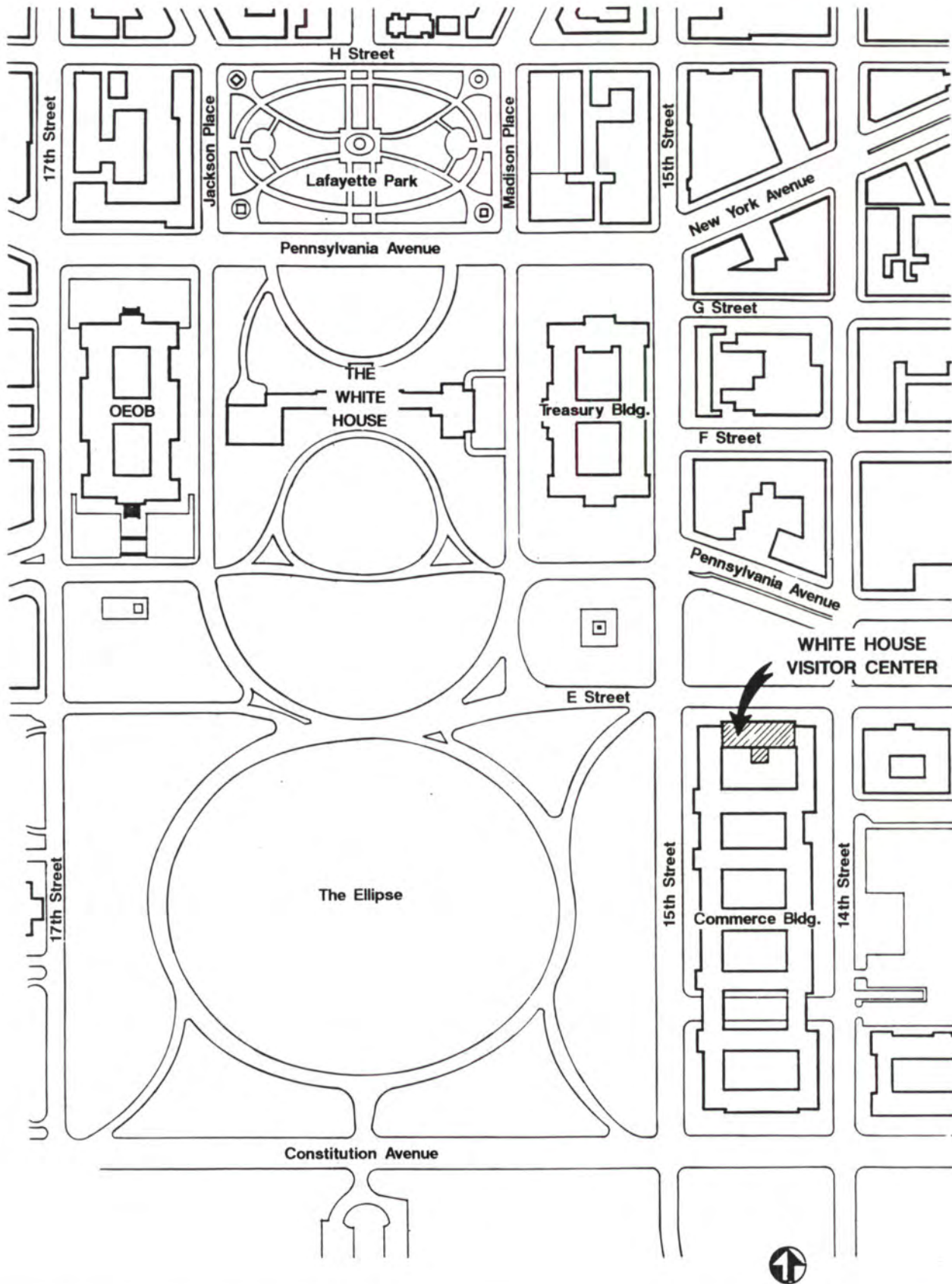
Baldrige Hall is located at one of the major intersections before visitors enter the President's Park enroute to the White House tours. Its entrance is on Pennsylvania Avenue between 14th and 15th Streets, NW., and it has approximately 10,000 square feet of floor space.

The White House Visitor Center will primarily serve the 1.5 million annual visitors to the White House as well as those others who are unable to take the White House tour and those who would just like to learn more about the history of the White House.

The Visitor Center will include distribution of White House tour tickets, restroom facilities, information, and interpretive programs and exhibits.

The fine architectural details of this historic room, the Great Hall, will be restored to the extent that funding allows. Special fixtures will be added to provide for queuing, ticket distribution, sales of appropriate materials, visitor information, and interpretive exhibits. Out of respect for the interior architecture of the space, the new fixtures are being mounted on, and wired through, the floor only. Public restroom facilities have been created in space adjoining the Great Hall.

Information services are intended to facilitate taking the White House tour and to assist visitors in planning their time. Visitor information will be available to orient visitors, describe the tour, and introduce interpretive events through a coordinated approach of National Park Service rangers, signs, video monitors and interactive computer consoles.



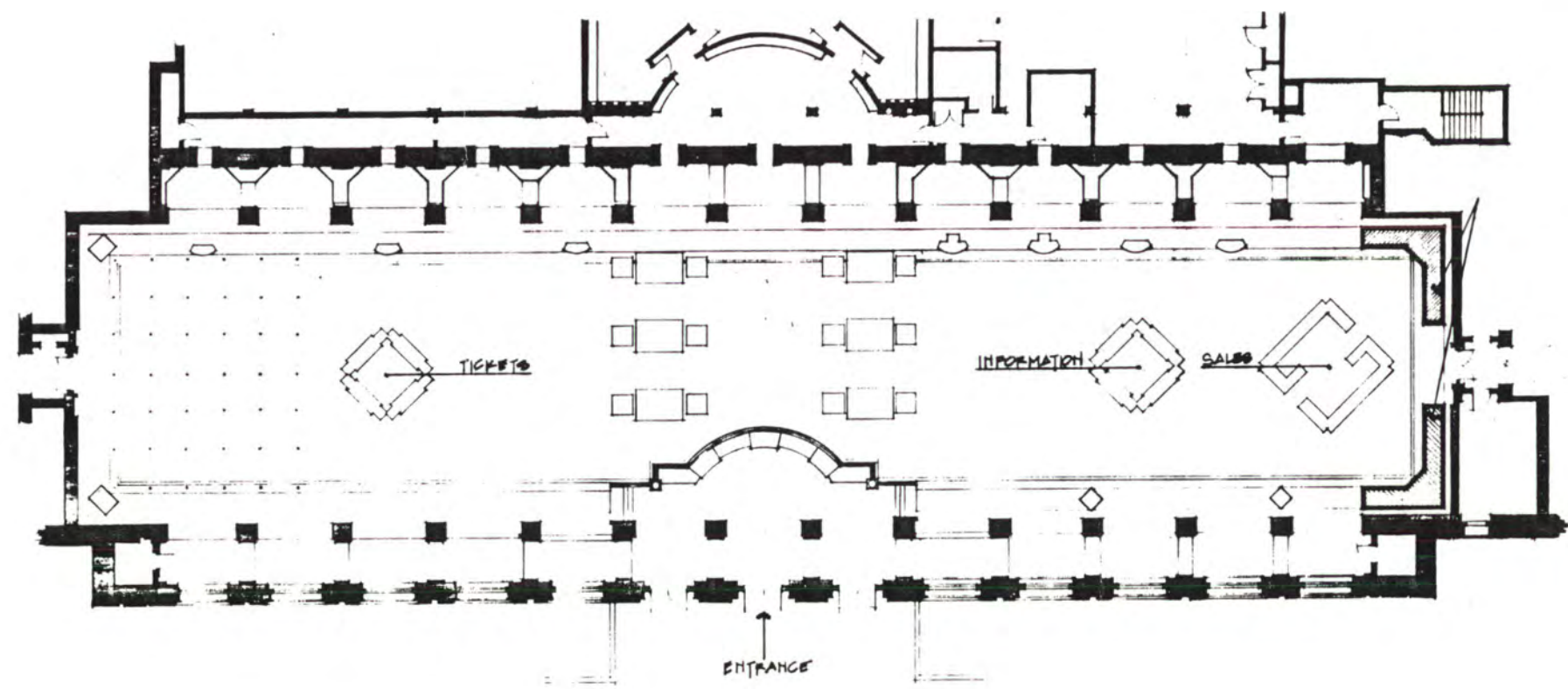
White House Visitor Center

Site Plan



FOURTEENTH STREET

FIFTEENTH STREET



PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

White House Visitor Center Proposed Floor Plan

