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# White House Visitor Center Reopens in Washington, DC

**Designed by SmithGroupJJR and Gallagher & Associates, renovated center shows public its unique role as office, stage, museum, park and home**

WASHINGTON, DC, October 16, 2014 – The White House Visitor Center, in an effort led by the National Park Service and the White House Historical Association, reopened its doors after a two-year, $12 million renovation. For the project, the Washington, DC, office of [SmithGroupJJR](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/), provided architecture and engineering services, working closely with [Gallagher & Associates](http://gallagherdesign.com/) for exhibit design.

The newly renovated Visitor Center shows the White House in all of its uses – office, stage, museum, park and home. The 16,000-square-foot space now offers a special and unique educational experience that complements a tour of the White House while also serving as a standalone experience.

The White House Visitor Center first opened in 1995 in historic Malcolm Baldrige Hall in the U.S. Department of Commerce building. The primary mission of the facility was to distribute timed entry passes to the White House and provide a brief historical overview of the White House and President’s Park to visitors prior to their visit. With the elimination of daily timed entry following the events of 9/11, the facility’s mission evolved to primarily serve as an educational center for nearly 700,000 visitors per year.

With the renovation, the design team’s goal was to create opportunities for children and families to connect to the history of the White House, highlighting its complex role as a symbol to the world. Features include new interactive interpretive exhibits, a theater with a 14-minute film, a new permanent museum gallery, a temporary exhibit area, a new retail shop and visitor information facilities. All of this was accomplished while respecting the historic fabric of Baldrige Hall and in compliance with The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. This seamless integration of architecture and exhibits within the distinct character of the room creates a dialog between old and new by enhancing the qualities of Baldrige Hall as a backdrop to the contemporary new visitor experience.

“Not only does this transformative design help the White House Historical Association better achieve its educational mission, but it also exemplifies the National Park Service’s larger mission of preservation of the nation’s heritage, stewardship of the environment and accessibility for all visitors,” said [David Greenbaum](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/people/david-greenbaum), FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, vice president at SmithGroupJJR and design principal for the project.

“The essence of this new experience is to bring to life the voices of those who worked and lived in the White House through time in an environment that’s both engaging and interactive,” said [Cybelle Jones](http://gallagherdesign.com/meet-the-team), principal and creative director at Gallagher & Associates and exhibit design leader.

The project is targeting LEED-CI Gold certification.

**SmithGroupJJR** ([www.smithgroupjjr.com](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/)) is a recognized [integrated](http://bit.ly/18pDMZI) design firm with 800 employees in 10 offices. As a leader in the design of museums and memorable visitor experiences, SmithGroupJJR’s recent projects include the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC; and the Normandy American Cemetery Visitor Center, Coleville Sur-Mer, Normandy, France. With more than 100 LEED certified projects, SmithGroupJJR is a leader in [sustainable](http://www.smithgroupjjr.com/sustainability) design.

 **Gallagher & Associates** ([www.gallagherdesign.com](http://www.gallagherdesign.com)) is an internationally recognized museum planning and design firm with offices in Washington, DC, San Francisco, New York, and Asia. The firm specializes in museum master planning and exhibition design, media design and programming, environmental graphics, and brand development.

**National Park Service** ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)) is a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior. The NPS manages the 401 parks of the National Park System. The NPS also helps administer dozens of affiliated sites, the National Register of Historic Places, National Heritage Areas, National Wild and Scenic Rivers, National Historic Landmarks, and National Trails.

**White House Historical Association** ([www.whitehousehistory.org](http://www.whitehousehistory.org/)) is a nonprofit educational association founded in 1961 for the purpose of enhancing the understanding, appreciation, and enjoyment of the Executive Mansion. All proceeds from the sale of the association's books and products are used to fund the acquisition of historic furnishings and art work for the permanent White House collection, assist in the preservation of public rooms, and further its educational mission.