

THOLOS

VOLUME 29

USBG HIGHLIGHT

Community Partners

SNAPSHOTS OF SUMMER

The People's Gardens

MEET THE ARCHITECT

Q&A With Thomas E. Austin

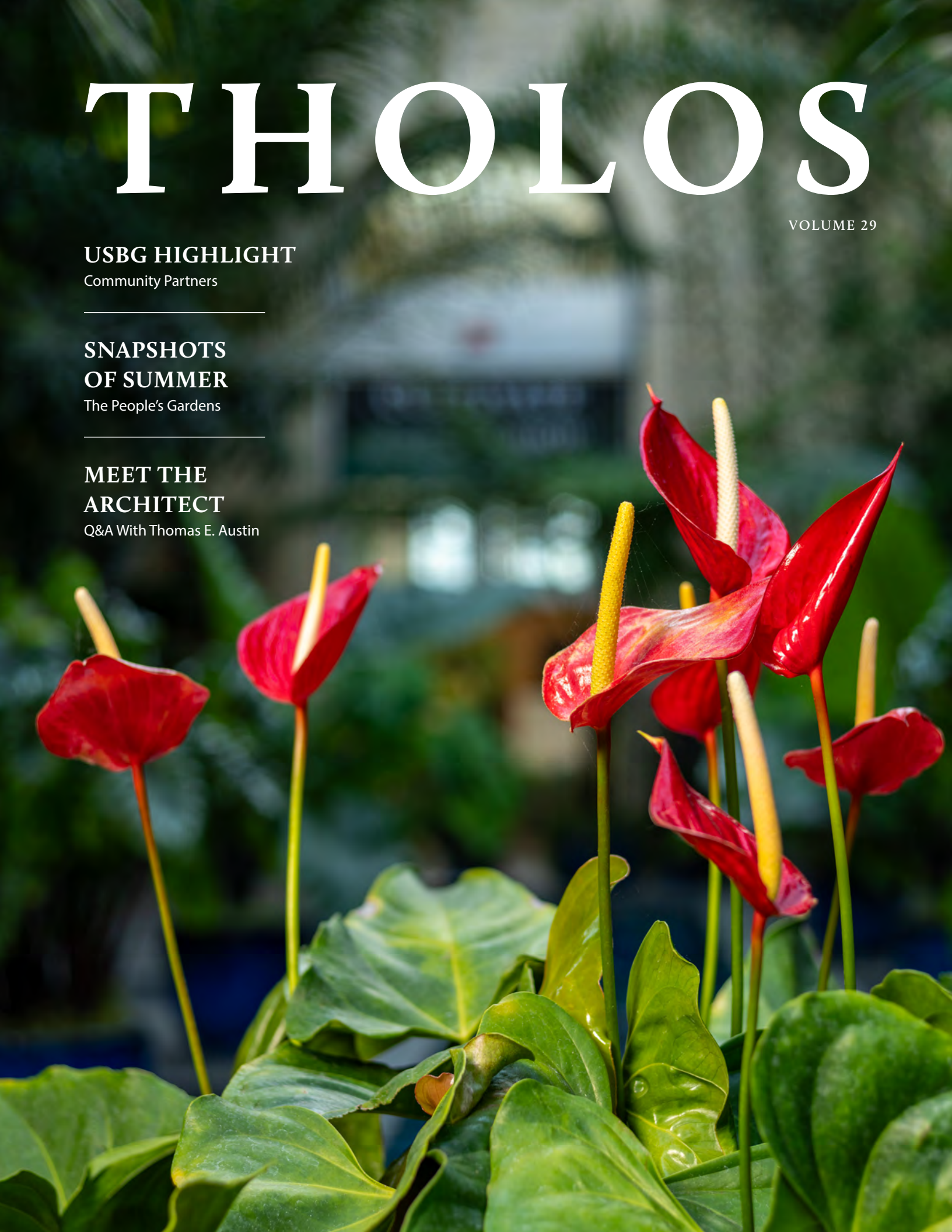


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MEET THE ARCHITECT

Q&A With Thomas E. Austin



Blooming Beauties

This pineapple (*Ananas comosus* 'Lava Flow') plant is featured in the U.S. Botanic Garden's Conservatory. Originally native to tropical America, principally Brazil, today pineapples are grown around the world. They are a tasty fruit, a beautiful foliage plant, and a symbol of hospitality. The USBG plant collection includes a large number of food and economic plants.

Read more about the work of the U.S. Botanic Garden in this edition of Tholos.



USBG HIGHLIGHT

U.S. BOTANIC GARDEN SUMMER EXHIBIT SHOWCASES

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

WRITTEN BY DEVIN DOTSON

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS HATZENBUHLER

In a special outdoor summer exhibit, the U.S. Botanic Garden (USBG) is spotlighting four local organizations enriching their communities through plants, urban agriculture and food growing. From June to October 2024, “Cultivate: Growing Food in Urban Gardens” shares the stories of a diverse tapestry of urban agriculture through local gardens and green spaces supported by Washington, D.C., community groups through special outdoor installations on the USBG Terrace. Organizations showcased include Building Bridges Across The River, City Blossoms, The Green Scheme and Washington Parks & People.

“The idea to spotlight local organizations connecting people and plants had surfaced a few years ago, and this summer’s Terrace exhibit presented a great opportunity to share the stories of several local organizations,” said Nina Graham, USBG Community Engagement Specialist. “I’m excited to highlight these groups east of the river and tell the stories of the great work they are doing.”

Visitors are invited to explore the organizations’ significance through the lenses of culture, history and workforce development. Displays feature marquee visuals such as a 30-foot replica of the future 11th Street Bridge Park, a recreation of the D.C. stream and park that inspired Marvin Gaye’s music, a colorful function-meets-art installation of gardening tools and a solar dehydrator, and vibrant garden art created by local children, with gardenscapes and food plants throughout.



▼
Top: A vibrant solar dehydrator is featured in The Green Scheme’s display. Solar dehydrators harness the sun’s energy to dry fruits, vegetables and herbs in a simple, effective way to preserve food for later use.

Bottom: City Blossom’s garden display showcases multiple large, colorful artworks created by DC youth in addition to many useful food plants.

For more info on upcoming exhibits and programs, visit www.USBG.gov.



1.



3.

1. CITY BLOSSOMS

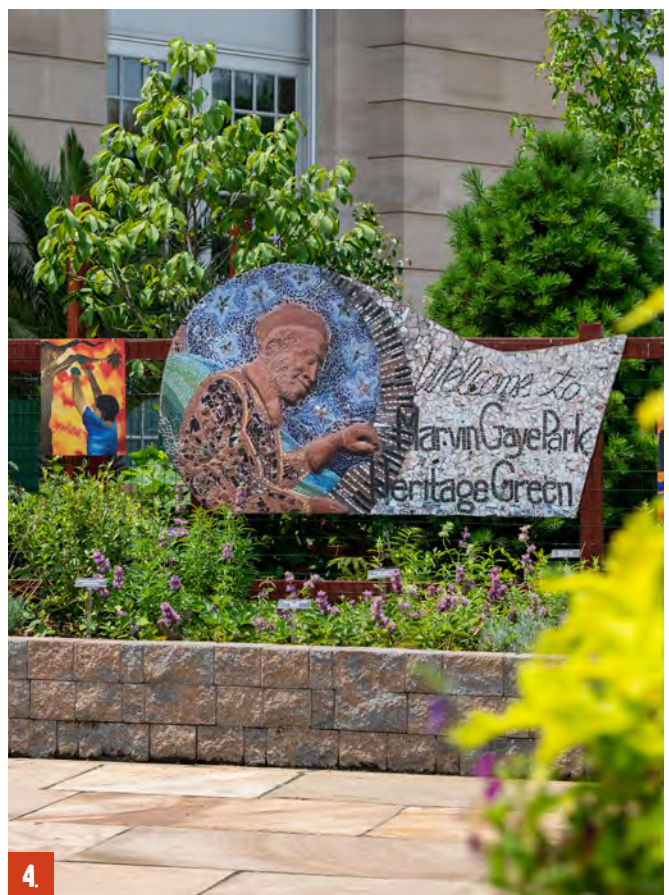
creates opportunities for children and youth in Washington, D.C., to access nature in and out of school and engage with environmental education, food, culture, entrepreneurship, community and art using green spaces.

2. BUILDING BRIDGES ACROSS THE RIVER

provides residents east of the Anacostia River with programs in arts, culture, education, health and more. They manage green spaces such as Building Bridges Farms — urban farms that grow and distribute organic produce to help address food injustice — and the future 11th Street Bridge Park.



2.



4.

3. THE GREEN SCHEME

unites Black urban growers and environmentalists, forging connections and making strides toward a healthier, more sustainable community.

4. WASHINGTON PARKS & PEOPLE

revitalizes historically underserved areas through outdoor initiatives uniting people with nature and bringing positive change to the neighborhood by rejuvenating D.C.'s outdoor spaces with arts, play, resilience and wonder.



Photo by Ike Hayman,
CAO House Creative Services

FEATURE

House Hearing Room Renovation

WRITTEN BY MADELEINE LUCCHETTI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN GREENE &
THOMAS HATZENBUHLER

If you’ve ever toured a historic building, you might have thought — or heard your tour guide remark — “Wow, if only these walls could talk!” In one Rayburn House Office Building hearing room, they can.

Room 2172, which contains the House Foreign Affairs Committee, recently underwent renovations that include a refurbished wall-to-wall audiovisual (AV) system designed by the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), allowing for surround sound. Now, when Members speak at a hearing, their voices are picked up more clearly, making for better broadcasts.

The Architect of the Capitol (AOC) also designed and introduced a custom dais, the first of its kind in the House office buildings, and added several improved accessibility features. The craftspeople behind it all hope they’ve helped to breathe new life into a storied space.



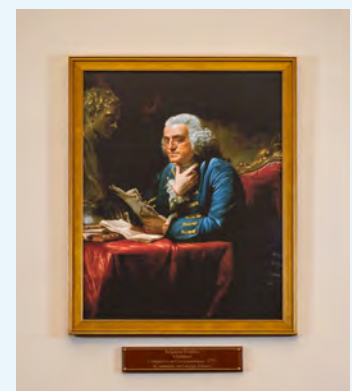
Rayburn 2172, the House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing room. Renovations preserved historic elements and added better technology.

The room has held its fair share of famous and routine gatherings alike. Like the other hearing rooms within the House and Senate office buildings, it is used for Members to meet for formalized hearings or committee and subcommittee meetings.

The first iteration of the House Foreign Affairs Committee originated in 1775 as the Committee of Secret Correspondence, chaired by Benjamin Franklin. Together, the group aimed to gather intelligence from the country's English colonizer and monitor European support for American independence. In 1822, it became the Committee for Foreign Affairs. Today, as the House Foreign Affairs Committee,

its work looks quite different — the representatives are focused on oversight and legislation across areas including diplomacy, international law, foreign aid and the promotion of democracy. Just as the committee's work has evolved, so have the needs of its diverse Members.

Members of the 118th Congress already divide their time between home states and Washington, D.C. While on the Hill, they work across their personal offices, respective committee assignments and the House or Senate floors. It's imperative that all these areas are secure, accessible and conducive to lawmaking activities.



A portrait of Benjamin Franklin hangs in Rayburn 2172.

A TEAM EFFORT

The preservation of Rayburn 2172, like the rest of the House and Senate office building space, is under the purview of the AOC. Until 2022, when the AOC began to move forward with plans to renovate, the space's features were characteristic of a typical hearing room: the three-tiered dais, with a seat for each Member, was flanked by stairs running up either side. The tall, curtained windows met crown molding at the top. The ceiling was punctuated by "egg crate" tiles backlit by fluorescent lights. Nestled in the room's corners were speakers from a bulky, outdated AV system.

In their design plans, the AOC's teams hoped to make the room more accessible for those using wheelchairs and other assistive mobility or speech devices. They also aimed to refurbish the room with several electrical upgrades — all while respecting its historic fabric.

Rachel Davis, General Engineer in the House Office Buildings, served as Program Manager for the renovation project from its start. Liaising between project teams as well as Members of the committee, she was tasked with balancing fluctuations across construction and delivery timelines with stakeholders' expectations. Essentially, she needed to foster an innovative and empowered workforce by "keeping everyone in the loop." For nearly two years, Davis helped lead the project as it evolved

through three phases. The first was the design phase. Architect Robin Ingram, who's been with the AOC for more than three decades, took the lead on the design. He created the construction documents by using existing master drawings and taking his own painstaking measurements. Exactitude was paramount. The upgrades needed to be compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards, which specify dimensions down to the inch. But Ingram was prepared; throughout his tenure, he's renovated several hearing rooms and has worked on projects across every building on the Capitol campus.

"One of my favorite things about this job is that I still get to be a 'doer,' and I do something different each day," Ingram remarked. "This was a huge project, and the other folks made me look good. We all worked together quite well."

“One of my favorite things about this job is that I still get to be a ‘doer,’ and I do something different each day... This was a huge project, and the other folks made me look good. We all worked together quite well.”

Robin Ingram, Architect



Jeff Rye, Rachel Davis and Bill Burns pose together in the hearing room. They credit great teamwork as key to the project's success.

▼
AOC Woodcrafter
Dan Watts
measures cuts to
accommodate
monitors in the
new dais.





A section of the new dais is constructed in an AOC wood shop. This model will serve as a prototype for future renovations.

“These projects are definitely joint ventures,” Davis agreed. “Everyone’s involvement was crucial in getting us from stage to stage.”

During the design phase, Davis, along with teams within the Office of the Chief Engineer, CAO and the committee itself, selected colors and styles for elements like drapes, paint and chairs. Once selections were complete, the project moved into its second stage: procurement.

Ingram’s designs were sent to the AOC’s Construction Division, which forecast associated costs and gathered approvals needed to eventually begin the third and final phase, construction. Approval must always come from the Committee Chair, the Majority and Minority Leaders, and the Speaker of the House. Next, the plans are sent to appropriations.

Once the funds for the renovation were approved, the Construction Division started to work its magic. Bill Burns, who served as the on-site Construction Manager for the project, worked with Davis to reconcile any divergence between the plans outlined in the design and the dimensions and physical specifications of the room itself.

“Ninety-five percent of the time we can make [the plans] happen, but those other times we simply shift components around because of how the building is erected,” Burns said. “You could call that other 5 percent the ‘pipe dreams.’” The House Office

Buildings are a well-oiled machine. It was a team effort for everyone, and there were a lot of players — but all the entities played well together. We had weekly or biweekly meetings throughout the project, so everyone was always well-informed.”

Nearly all the renovations were planned out in advance. But certain steps — as with many construction projects — just couldn’t be entirely anticipated.

GETTING TO WORK

The renovation involved myriad behind-the-scenes tasks. Woodcrafters innovated new designs that would allow for screens, wires and other electrical components to be worked seamlessly into the dais. They were able to separate the original dais’ historic façade from the sides and rear and preserved it throughout the process before reattaching it to the reconstructed parts.

The custom dais now features a computer monitor for each seat that lays flush with its wood surface, assistive technology to help Members with disabilities better communicate with the rest of the committee, and room for chairs and wheelchairs to pivot. It’s also outfitted with space for better wiring and allows for future upgrades to be built in seamlessly.

Electricians found pathways through the dais that allowed the correct power load and capacity. They also rewired the room for new lighting. Elsewhere in the room, plasterers and painters



▼
AOC Construction
Division woodcrafters
use bar clamps to
secure sections of
the dais.

refinished and recoated surfaces and performed repairs to historic elements. Stonemasons helped with retrenching and marble replacement. Mechanics and plumbers helped replace and repair affected heating and cooling systems.

“Our goal was to bring the committee room up to today’s technology standards for a modernized, televised public hearing space,” said Jeff Rye, a Construction Representative in the Construction Division who worked with Burns on the project. “One of the most important tasks in the renovation was allowing television systems to better capture sound and image well, since hearings are often broadcast. So everything else in the room needed to support that.”

But installing a new AV system meant more than flipping a switch. Burns, Rye and the rest of the Construction Division team had to re-channel the whole room to accommodate new technology. In layman’s terms, this means removing large sections of the ceiling, walls and floor. These daunting measures were made more complicated by their obligation to preserve the historic elements of the room.

“I would say our biggest goal is to be able to dismantle anything, then put it back and have it look like we were never there,” remarked Rye.

The Construction Division is accustomed to working in historic buildings. In Rayburn 2172, the team knew they’d need to think outside the box to retrofit an aging space with long-term accessibility and technological solutions that aligned with the room’s specifications as well as the needs of Congress.

Davis agreed that ensuring cohesion between elements of the renovation and protecting them from the risk of damage were some of the most challenging aspects of the project. Whether it was installing dimmer panels for the new LED lights, protecting speakers close to water pipes from potential leaks or adding audio panels around historic artwork, the renovation resembled an operation and each tradesperson acted as a surgeon.

“My favorite part of historic preservation is knowing that we have the skill set, knowledge, tradespeople and management that cares about the fabric of the building,” said Rye. “The high level of craftsmanship in the AOC’s shops makes it easy to provide project guidance on my end. Our employees make it happen and they care about what they do.”

It’s expected that the flagship designs created for Rayburn 2172 — particularly the new dais — will likely be recreated across hearing rooms on the Capitol campus for years to come. When it’s time, AOC teams will be poised to jump into action.

“It’s a privilege and honor to work here. When it comes together, it makes the work all worth it,” Rye said. “We’re always looking forward to what’s on the horizon.”

NEW INNOVATIONS

By the time the construction phase was complete, the AOC and CAO successfully created a prototype for House-side hearing room renovations.

Together, those improvements included:

The design, fabrication and installation of a custom dais, the first of its kind on the House side

The installation of a new brass railing

The design, construction and installation of new AV systems

The construction of a separate AV room to house controls and panels

The construction of new ADA-compliant restroom facilities adjoining the hearing room

HVAC rewiring and duct repairs

Reconfiguring anteroom stairs to install an ADA-compliant chairlift

Adjusting the placement of each dais to better accommodate wheelchairs

Repainting the walls and refinishing crown molding

New furniture, drapes and carpet



SNAPSHOTS OF SUMMER

THE PEOPLE'S GARDENS

BLOOMING BEAUTY AROUND THE CAPITOL CAMPUS

WRITTEN BY CAROL CAMPOS AND KATIE SEROCK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY THOMAS HATZENBUHLER

The Capitol Grounds and Arboretum jurisdiction maintains and preserves the historic landscape of the Capitol campus. The grounds encompass 286 acres, including Union Square, the 13-acre site situated between the U.S. Capitol's West Front and the National Mall. Nestled among historic buildings are meticulously maintained garden beds, showcasing vibrant flowers, lush greenery and carefully selected plant species that provide a serene escape for visitors and staff and a picturesque backdrop for the country's most important legislative buildings. Take a stroll through our pictorial tour to experience the beauty of these unique garden beds and meet a few members of the jurisdiction's Gardening team that work hard year-round to keep the Capitol campus looking beautiful.

▼
A blend of elephant ear (*Alocasia sp.*), croton (*Codiaeum sp.*), and coleus (*Plectranthus scutellarioides*) provide a range of textures in our Olmsted Tubs on the East Front Plaza.

1.



2.



3.

1. PURPLE CONEFLOWER

(Echinacea purpurea) stands tall, intermingled with other pollinator-attracting plants at the Capitol South Metro Station.

2. SUNFLOWER

seeds are collected and saved by Capitol Grounds and Arboretum gardeners to provide a display of sunflower varieties at the Capitol South Metro Station.

3. YARROW & BEEBALM

An ethnobotanical garden was designed and installed in the spring at the Russell Senate Office Building, hosting a diverse selection of native plants. Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and beebalm (*Monarda didyma*) bloom in the summer.

THE GREEN THUMBS

Meet a few of the green-thumbed visionaries who bring life and beauty to the campus. We asked them to share their thoughts on what makes gardening so special, here's what they had to say.



▲ WILLIAM PARKER

"I love having a garden project in front of me and taking my time to make it look better than when I started. There is something very rewarding to step back after a project is done and look at the finished product."

ISAIAH MCBRYDE ►

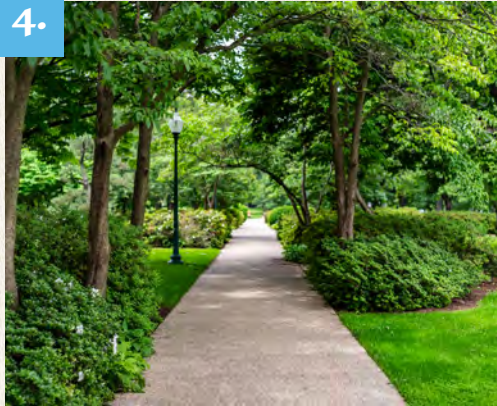
"Gardening allows me to create spaces that pay homage to nature and serves as an escape from urban environments."



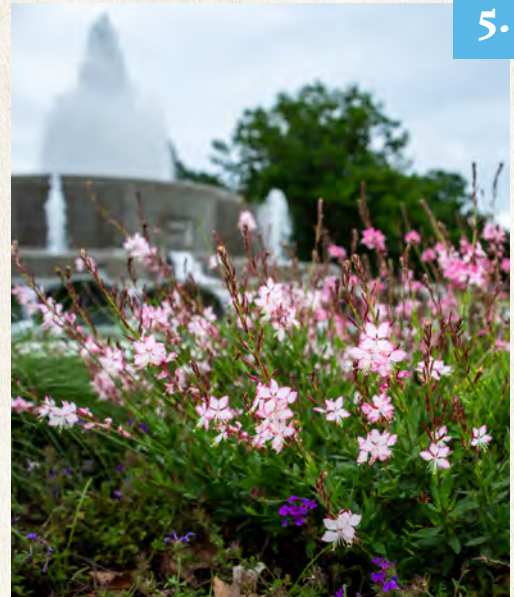
▲ REBECCA BLITHE

"Gardening allows me to connect with nature by observing and participating in its rhythms. The seasons changing, watching the plants, animals and insects all prepare for the winter followed by the joy of them waking in the spring to flourish in the summer to start the cycle all over again."

4.



5.



6.



4. OLD SENATE PARK

located across from the Russell Building provides shade and respite for all to enjoy in the summer heat.

5. BEEBLOSSOM

(*Gaura lindheimeri* 'Siskiyou Pink') in full bloom at the Senate Fountain.

6. GARDENING

Chris Oliver, from the Capitol Grounds and Arboretum Gardening team, weeds, waters and fertilizes annual plants to ensure they put on an exceptional display throughout the summer.

7. PLANTING FOAMFLOWER

Thomas O'Brien, a gardener from Capitol Grounds and Arboretum, plants foamflower (*Tiarella cordifolia*) as part of the renovation of the Summerhouse.

7.



FIVE TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL GARDENING

1.

Plant selection. Set yourself up for success by selecting the right plant for your environment. Be sure to check if your plants need full sun or partial shade to avoid scorched leaves or leggy stems. If you are looking for blooms throughout the year, plan for what color, texture and size you're looking for in your garden. It's wonderful to have a bed that can transition through the year to provide color for you and food for wildlife. Some of our favorite perennial bloomers that put on a colorful show and provide beneficial wildlife food sources are coneflower (*Echinacea*), beebalm (*Monarda*), and beeblossom (*Guara*). Hydrangeas are always a great showstopper and fill large spaces well.

2.

Plant spacing. It's nice to have a full-looking garden bed but try to give the proper spacing plants need to provide more air circulation and limit the risk of disease spread. Nurseries normally provide proper plant spacing on the plant tags.

3.

Watering practices. Water deeply instead of frequently. Deep watering encourages roots to grow deeper instead of close to the surface. This helps plants become more resilient to drought. Water in early morning or late in the evening to reduce evaporation.

4.

Use mulch. Spread a 2-inch-thick layer of mulch over your soil. This helps the soil retain moisture. Here at Capitol Grounds and Arboretum we use double-shredded hardwood, pine straw, pine nuggets and compost/mulch mix in garden beds.

5.

Attract beneficial insects. Plants in these families tend to attract beneficial insects to your garden: carrot family (*Apiaceae*), aster family (*Asteraceae*), legumes (*Fabaceae*), mustard family (*Brassicaceae*) and verbena family (*Verbenaceae*). Some of the beneficials they attract are lady beetles, small parasitic wasps and flies. Take a close look at your garden to see the diversity of insects and wildlife that you can help thrive in your yard.



Constantino Brumidi's fresco "Apotheosis of Washington" in the eye of the U.S. Capitol Building's Rotunda. This 2023 photograph by Sean Greene and Ryan Pierce offers an unprecedented view of the entire painting, assembled from several photographs mapped to a highly accurate 3D model of the concave mural.

THEN & NOW

PHOTOGRAPHY & TECHNICAL
IMAGING BRANCH MARKS

75TH
ANNIVERSARY

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL DUNN

PHOTOGRAPHY BY AOC PHOTOGRAPHY AND TECHNICAL IMAGING BRANCH

This article includes a photographic timeline that represents the history of the AOC's work. You may notice that some activities in these historic photos do not comply with our current safety standards. It is important to note how far we have come to ensure safety for our workforce.

Recent historical research has confirmed that the Architect of the Capitol (AOC) is home to the first federal government photography office, what is today called the AOC Photography and Technical Imaging Branch (PTIB). Responsible for the documentation of the historical buildings and grounds of the Capitol complex, PTIB has been capturing the historic activities, events and moments within those spaces for 75 years.

“As part of the Curator Division, PTIB provides vital information for conservators and architects and is also an invaluable resource for researchers,” reflects AOC Curator, Dr. Michele Cohen.

Today, PTIB provides a versatile range of high-quality multimedia products and services to help document, inform and archive the mission of the AOC, from the biggest lifts to the subtlest brushstrokes.

EARLY HISTORY, 1856–1949

PTIB's origin story began in 1856 with Captain Montgomery C. Meigs, engineer in charge of the Capitol expansion, and photographer John Wood using cutting-edge technology for both efficiency and documentation. Wood's large-format glass-plate photographs and stereographs depicting the Capitol Extension and Dome are among the first in the early history of photography to memorialize a building construction project. PTIB holds a number of these original objects.

Photography operations continued after Wood's departure until 1881, when they paused for a generation. Revived by then-Architect of the Capitol Elliott Woods, the program

resumed from 1900 to approximately 1923, with a new emphasis on documentation of building systems and management processes. A photography enthusiast himself, Woods corresponded with Thomas Edison during these years and ultimately acquired two of Edison's new movie cameras, adding motion pictures to still photography as part of the AOC's documentary mission. Woods' premature death and the ascent of his successor David Lynn during the Great Depression and World War II set photography aside once again, leaving almost no photographs in our record from this period in American history.

POST-WORLD WAR II ERA, 1949–PRESENT

The AOC photography mission was restored by Lynn in 1949 and made permanent by Architect of the Capitol J. George Stewart to document the construction of the Dirksen Senate Office Building, Rayburn House Office Building and the East Front Extension of the Capitol. The enterprising photographer Harry Burnett, only 19 when he signed on, guided the success of photography at the AOC from the postwar period into the early 1980s.

This year, the AOC photography mission that John Wood started more than 160 years ago celebrates its 75th year of continuous operation. Since the end of WWII, the office has told in pictures a story of continuity and change. Enormous growth on Capitol Hill in the postwar period mirrored the expanding needs of a booming economy and population in the United States. During these years, the AOC added to its responsibilities approximately 15 million square feet of office space, through building acquisition or construction, as well as tens of acres of new land. Directing





Left: From the biggest lifts Delivery of heat recovery steam generator and combustion turbine generator, part of Capitol Power Plant East Refrigeration Plant upgrades. *Susanne Bledsoe, 7.24.2017* **Right:** To the subtlest brushstrokes Artist Robert Beckmann inpaints Citrus panel following installation. U.S. Botanic Garden Conservatory interpretive panels depicting the human cultivation of corn, cocoa, citrus, cotton, tea and rice were added to the permanent exhibit. *Michael Dunn, 2.28.2005*

photographers Harry Burnett (1949–1985), Mark Blair (1985–1990), Wayne Firth (1990–2005) and Michael Dunn (2005–present) have led the AOC’s modern photography mission, supporting Architects of the Capitol from David Lynn through Thomas E. Austin in their service to Congress and the American people.

Today’s AOC photographers continue to embrace photographic innovation in the service of documentation, support the AOC’s engineering and design efforts, facilitate institutional communications and document presidential inaugurations and other important national events at the U.S. Capitol.

Two major updates to John Wood’s U.S. Capitol Dome construction photography of the 1850s bookend this modern period: Burnett’s mid-century documentation of the East Front Extension to the U.S. Capitol, including a centennial renovation and repainting of the Dome; and photographer Chuck Badal’s coverage of the Dome renovation in the mid-2010s (roughly the sesquicentennial of its construction).

The last 75 years have seen the design and building of the Dirksen, Rayburn, Madison and Hart Buildings, as well as the Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building, the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, the House Underground Garage and Parks and the Library of Congress (LOC) book storage modules in Fort Meade, Maryland. Major restorations were executed on the Thomas Jefferson Building, the U.S. Capitol West Front, the Supreme Court, Cannon House Office Building, O’Neill House Office Building, Senate Underground Garage and Park, Capitol Power Plant and the LOC Packard Campus for Audio-Visual Conservation in Culpeper, Virginia. There were conservation treatments of most major paintings in the U.S. Capitol and the Jefferson Building, including Constantino Brumidi’s enormous “Apotheosis of Washington” fresco 200 feet above the Capitol Rotunda floor. The bronze Statue of Freedom was lifted to the East Plaza by helicopter crane for conservation and then replaced without incident. In addition to these major projects, there are scores of maintenance, repair and small-scale construction projects completed by the AOC at the

direction of Congress each year, as well as maintenance of living collections at the Botanic Garden Conservatory and under the care of the Capitol Grounds and Arboretum. The AOC’s photographic record has documented all of this and more.

The pictures you see here are drawn from the AOC’s well-organized photographic database, which is surely one of our quietest but most significant and enduring collective achievements as an agency — a heritage asset in its own right, one that provides enduring value to the agency in the course of its business, and to a congressional community that rightly prizes its institutional history.

This accompanying photo timeline features more than three dozen gems from the photography archives. The photographs offer only a taste of the immense range and depth of work undertaken by the AOC in the last 75 years, working with generations of leaders in Congress to shape, build and preserve Capitol Hill as the American people and our guests from around the world see it today.

1949–1955



View from the top of apartment house on the north side of C Street, NE showing start of demolition of row of houses to make room for Additional Senate Office Building (later named the Dirksen Senate Office Building). Large format black and white film — geometry, detail, archival durability. *Harry Burnett, 6.27.1949*

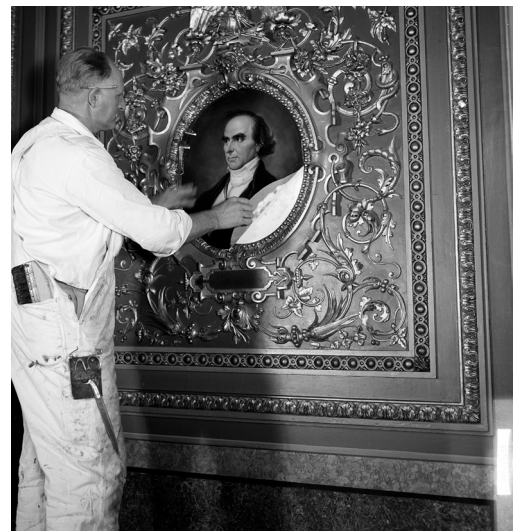


One of the earliest views from PTIB's 75-year modern era. This aerial photograph shows the House and Senate wings of the Capitol under renovation prior to the East Front Extension project. This period re-established the core elements of PTIB's current mission, including documentation of new construction, renovation of existing structures, historic preservation, fine art and conservation, major congressional events and Capitol Grounds. *Harry Burnett, 11.1.1949*



In the 19th century, Capitol photographer John Wood took the first known photograph of a presidential inauguration (James Buchanan), and the only extant photographs of the Lincoln inaugurations. Here, Harry Burnett continues PTIB's coverage of presidential inaugurations with this picture from Dwight D. Eisenhower's speech, while outgoing President Truman and Vice President Nixon listen. He had covered the setup for the inauguration of Harry S. Truman in 1949. *Harry Burnett, 1.20.1953*

The AOC has told a story in more than half a million pictures touching nearly two centuries of continuity and change on Capitol Hill.



As a branch of the AOC Curator Division, PTIB has from its earliest days a record in pictures of art in and around the Capitol. In this photograph, an AOC painter carefully adheres one of several new portrait paintings on canvas in its ornamental gilt setting in the Senate Reception Room off the floor of the Senate Chamber. *Harry Burnett, 10.14.1958*

1955–1958



The period between 1949 and 1975 saw the construction or beginning of construction for four new buildings: the Dirksen Senate Office Building, the Rayburn House Office Building, the Library of Congress Madison Building, and the Hart Senate Office Building. Here the “Additional Senate Office Building” (later the Dirksen) nears completion. *Harry Burnett, 5.22.1957*



A pair of horse drawn caissons bear the coffins of the Unknown Soldier on the East Plaza of the U.S. Capitol. The Capitol has always provided a stage for nationally significant events, and PTIB has photographed major congressional events, including lyings-in-state and -honor, since its earliest days. *George Holmes, 5.28.1958*



AOC photographer Harry Burnett, with his 4x5 camera, gets a lift from D.C. Fire Truck Company No. 3's Pirsch aerial ladder truck. PTIB photographers have always taken pride in doing what it takes to get the picture, in this case a condition photo of the sculptural grouping in the House pediment. *Mark Blair, 8.28.1958*



When context is everything, sometimes only an aerial view will do. This is one of PTIB's earliest aerals, showing most of Capitol Square and surrounding neighborhoods. Note the Rayburn construction site, the Dirksen under construction, and residential blocks where the Madison and Hart will eventually be built. WWII-era temporary buildings cover blocks on the Mall nearest the Capitol. *Harry Burnett, 1958*

1958–1965



Photographs made on large negatives like this 4x5 progress view of the East Front Extension Project from the roof of the Senate are prized for their high level of detail. Black and white silver-based film was preferred for documentation meant to last, given its superior archival keeping compared with color films of the era. These were used later in planning the recent Dome renovation. *Harry Burnett, 11.30.1959*

U.S. Capitol East Front Extension and Dome Renovation Project. The mid-19th century portico under which Abraham Lincoln was twice inaugurated president has been removed (the columns are now displayed at the National Arboretum). The Dome sports a dark red prime coat to prevent rust before painting, which coincided with Russian Premiere Nikita Krushchev's visit to the U.S. The temporary color of the Dome may have inspired this rare use of color film. *Harry Burnett, 3.24.1960*



Iron workers positioning an unpainted rib on the Capitol Dome. This is a rare use of color film for construction documentation. *George Holmes, 4.1.1960*

President Kennedy makes remarks at the cornerstone laying for the new Rayburn House Office Building. *Harry Burnett, 5.24.1962*



Sam Rayburn statue dedication in the Rayburn Building – a big day for Texas! First Lady Lady Bird Johnson offers dedicatory remarks as President Lyndon B. Johnson and the statue itself look on. A more journalistic subject called for medium format photography in a smaller camera from photographer George Holmes. *1.6.1965*

1966–1978



Dramatic weather, like this blanket of snow from 1966, has always been a temptation to photographers. This is one of PTIB's first, hence the use of color film, showing the Capitol Grounds setting off the Capitol to good advantage near the Olmsted Summerhouse. The Capitol Grounds remain one of PTIB's major areas of interest.

Harry Burnett, 1.31.1966



Site for Madison Building, Library of Congress – view from Adams Building roof. The block had been cleared of residential housing and used for an interim period as a parking lot prior to construction. *Harry Burnett, 4.30.1971*

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey's casket borne up the east steps of the U.S. Capitol. Humphrey lay in state in the Capitol Rotunda. The former Vice President and Presidential nominee had returned to serve in the Senate from the State of Minnesota at the time of his death. *Harry Burnett, 1.14.1978*



House Republican Leader (later President) Gerald Ford lights the national Christmas tree on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol, accompanied by Architect of the Capitol, J. George Stewart. In later years, this ceremony would move closer to the tree, a gift from a different state each year. *Harry Burnett, 12.16.1968*



President James E. Carter shakes hands with outgoing President Gerald R. Ford at Carter's inauguration. Carter's was the last inauguration to date on the East Front of the U.S. Capitol. Beginning with the inauguration of Ronald Reagan, the event has taken place on the West Front. *Harry Burnett, 1.20.1977*

1979–1991



Hart Building under construction, steel superstructure near completion. Site addresses the Dirksen Senate Office Building and leaves space for the historic Sewell House.

Harry Burnett, 7.27.1979



Conservator Larry Keck cleans the surface of the Constantino Brumidi mural "Apotheosis of George Washington." Conservator Bernard Rabin is on the lower scaffold of the enormous painting.

Wayne Firth, 7.13.1987

Our mission is capturing history at the Capitol in light and shadow.



PTIB photographers in the field. Wayne Firth and C. Stephen Payne utilize the nearly completed floor to ceiling scaffolding in the Capitol Rotunda to photograph the "Apotheosis of George Washington" mural before conservation. They would have had to climb the scaffolding from the floor, then pulled up their large format 4x5 camera kit by rope. The challenge has always been to take a single edge-to-edge photograph of the "Apotheosis" mural, which is impossible from the Rotunda floor given the obstruction of the visitor gallery. *Unknown photographer, 6.9.1987*



Aerial view of the West Front of the U.S. Capitol set up for the inauguration of President George H.W. Bush. The Architect of the Capitol is responsible every four years for building the stage for the nation's peaceful transition of power.

Wayne Firth, 1.18.1989

Supreme Court west terrace and steps renovation. Though a separate branch of government, the Court relies on the AOC to help maintain and modernize its buildings. *Loretta Beasley, 10.1.1991*



1992–1999



AOC glory shot of the presidential inauguration. Beginning with the inauguration of President Ronald Reagan, ceremonies were moved from the East Front to the West Front of the U.S. Capitol. AOC photographer Mark Blair established this overall view of the ceremony as the new capstone of PTIB inauguration coverage with the Reagan swearing in. This image shows Firth's use of Blair's composition from the inauguration of President William J. Clinton. *Wayne Firth, 1.20.1993*

View of Bartholdi Park and Fountain through the second story windows of the Botanic Garden Administrative Office Building. One of the pleasantest challenges of photographing on Capitol Hill is making the most of the juxtapositions between architecture and the grounds. *Loretta Beasley, 7.7.1993*



Reinstallation of the gilt copper flame atop the Thomas Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, part of a holistic renovation of the building that included the conservation of dozens of fine art murals decorating the inside of the building. *Chuck Badal, 6.23.1997*



A sky crane helicopter replaces the conserved bronze Statue of Freedom atop the U.S. Capitol. This photograph was taken by a remote camera. PTIB uses remotely triggered cameras for many tasks. *AOC Photography, 10.23.1993*



Botanic Garden Conservatory renovation. The project was among the last documented using silver process film. PTIB converted to digital by 2004. *Chuck Badal, 7.6.1999*

2000–2015



Smoke billows from the Pentagon following the airliner attack on September 11, 2001, as seen from the West Terrace of the Capitol. The Capitol was evacuated moments later, but spared attack when passengers on Flight 93 overcame hijackers, crashing in a field in Pennsylvania. The first quarter of the 21st century was marked by a number of attacks and emergencies (anthrax attack, 2011 earthquake, 2020 pandemic), which the AOC responded to and PTIB helped to document. *Chuck Badal, 9.11.2001*

Taken on 8x10 black & white sheet film with a large format camera, this view of the nearly completed excavation on the East Front of the Capitol for the CVC provides a window onto a scene no longer available to us. Photography as time travel. *Chuck Badal, 10.1.2003*



Michael Dunn, middle, covers the 2009 presidential inauguration from the center media platform. PTIB first used digital cameras at an inauguration in 2005, and first used 4K digital video at the 2009 inauguration. *Chuck Badal, 1.20.2009*

The construction of the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) began as PTIB was making its transition from wet chemistry to digital photography. This photograph on film shows a step in the process of moving the Liberty Tree (a Tulip Poplar), roots and all, for safekeeping prior to excavation for the CVC. Although PTIB has always documented the evolution of the Capitol Grounds, this picture in some ways marks an increased commitment to the subject, as digital photography met major changes to Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the grounds, and the grounds were re-classified as an arboretum, or urban forest. *Chuck Badal, 12.19.2001*



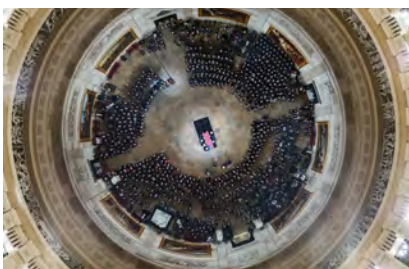
PTIB has composed and operated time-lapse photo views of the Capitol from surrounding building roofs, including this view from a camera on the roof of the Thomas Jefferson Building. Taken following a storm during the Dome renovation, this image is one of a series reminding us how changes in light and atmosphere convey an everchanging mood to a building associated with unchanging permanence. Both aspects are true, to the delight of photographers. *Chuck Badal, 11.19.2015*

2016–2021

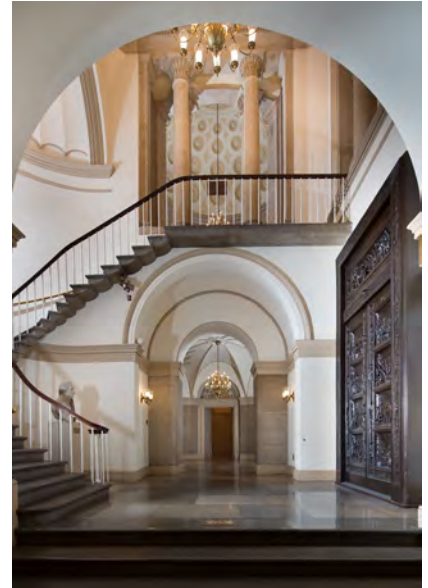
One of the major renovation projects of the early 21st century was the renovation of the U.S. Capitol Dome. The inner and outer domes are constructed from interlocking pieces of cast iron, with Constantino Brumidi's "Apotheosis of George Washington" and a staircase leading from the base to a balcony below the tholos and Statue of Freedom in between the two domes. This wide-angle photograph shows painters in protective gear repainting the cast iron and starts at the oculus level of the inner dome. *Chuck Badal, 4.12.2016*



U.S. Military Honor Guard pall bearers position President George H.W. Bush's coffin on Lincoln's black-draped ceremonial catafalque to lie in state in 2018. This photograph is noteworthy for a technical reason: it was the first to show a presidential lying-in-state from a camera positioned exactly in the center of the Rotunda oculus. The position was made possible by a custom-built cable trolley designed for the Dome renovation and has since been replaced by an off-center cantilevered camera mount. *Thomas Hatzenbuehler, 12.3.2018*



PTIB's inauguration glory shot from the center media stand. President Joseph R. Biden, having just been sworn in as the 46th U.S. President, addresses a masked audience spaced widely apart from one another to help discourage the spread of COVID-19, a virus that had reached pandemic levels across the global population by the time of the speech. *Sean Greene, 1.20.2021*



PTIB takes well-crafted architectural photographs, in addition to documenting trade craft, construction, events and other subjects. The evolution of portable lighting into the 21st century has allowed photographers greater flexibility to light complex architectural spaces, such as this Capitol interior. *James Rosenthal, 5.26.2017*



The first of six replacements for weather damaged Capitol exterior stone rosettes is shaped in marble by a water-cooled computer-guided drill bit. *James Rosenthal, 5.3.2016*

2022–2024



Fluted Corinthian columns at the entrance of the Supreme Court of the United States, with James Earle Fraser's statue Contemplation of Justice. The gilt flame on the copper cupola roof of the Thomas Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, is visible in the background. The AOC assumed responsibility for the operation, maintenance and preservation of the Library of Congress and the Supreme Court in the 20th century. *Luke Walter, 10.21.2022*



In this compact aerial view, the Cannon House Office Building renovation (foreground), the Capitol, and northwest Washington, D.C., are shown in relationship to one another. Photography's ability to record novel perspectives on Capitol Hill help the AOC analyze and plan its past, present and future. *Thomas Hatzenbuhler, 11.6.2023*

Marking 75 years of photography in public service.

Water flows in the recently restored Olmsted Summerhouse on the Capitol Grounds. Built for visitors as a place of rest and shelter from the weather in an era before air conditioning, it exemplifies how the best landscape architecture creates an enchanted portal between architecture and nature.

Thomas Hatzenbuhler, 10.12.2023



A sweeping view of the House Chamber during a recent Joint Session of Congress. Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, addresses Members of Congress. Events that take place on the nation's stage are a significant part of the history of the stage itself. *Rodney Norman, 4.11.2024*



Cannon House Office Building renewal. The most recent 25-year period has seen many large-scale building renovations on the Hill. Most are phased to allow continued occupation during construction. *Sean Greene, 5.8.2024*



MEET THE ARCHITECT

QA

&

With Thomas E. Austin,
13th Architect of the Capitol

I

What inspired you to apply to be the next Architect of the Capitol?

Outside of my family, the three passions of my adult life are service to my country, engineering/construction and history. The final assignment of my Army career was as the Director of Engineering for Arlington National Cemetery, in charge of not only the entire existing campus but also a large expansion project. I loved that job because it combined my passions in a way that could have a lasting effect for generations to come. When it was time to retire from the Army and leave Arlington in the summer of 2023, I thought I would never again get a chance to work on something so consequential and engaging. When I was approached about the Architect of the Capitol role, I jumped at the chance to apply! I can think of no other job in the world that so perfectly matches my interests, my experience, and my desire to contribute to a worthwhile mission. I feel beyond blessed and humbled to be chosen to be here and lead this amazing team.



2

What has been and will continue to be your priorities in your first year?

My first priorities are revising the Human Capital Strategic Plan and the Capitol Campus Master Plan, as well as rebuilding trust in the workforce and from our stakeholders in Congress.

▼
Top: Mr. Austin speaks with Pedro Flores during his visit with the House Office Buildings jurisdiction.

Bottom: Employees from the House Office Buildings' night shift meet Mr. Austin.



3

As one part of our mission is Inspire, what are some of the places you've visited that have impacted and inspired you?

It is hard to overstate the impact of seeing the Dome of the Capitol with the Statue of Freedom at the top. Every morning when I come in, I am in awe of the building and what it represents. Inside the Capitol, I am truly amazed by the artwork throughout the building — everything from the tiles on the floor to the paintings on the walls and the state statues along the corridors. The whole Capitol is a masterpiece!

I've also been really inspired by my visits with staff and seeing the work they're doing to care for our buildings and grounds — from the artistry of our gifted tradespeople to the commitment of our teams maintaining the offices and our green spaces and so many, many other things. The breadth and talent of our teams is incredible!

I will share one story that happened when I was visiting the night shift team at the House Office Buildings. The team there had a complaint of a bad smell from a third-floor office. After some investigation, they traced the smell back to an air handler in the basement where they eventually discovered a massive accumulation of stagnant water in a closed-off sub-basement below it. That led to the team working through the weekend to pump out over 125,000 gallons of water, thoroughly clean the air handler, replace the filters, and get the whole operation back in order by Monday. I found that story inspiring — people identifying a problem and solving it as a team, for the good of everyone.



▼
Top: Mr. Austin receives a tour of the Senate Office Buildings' recycling operations from Stephanie Jones and William Contee.

Bottom: Mr. Austin kicks off his first employee meet and greet with the Senate Office Buildings' night shift.

4

Going to another part of our mission, Preserve, what is one of your favorite preservation or restoration stories or projects you've been involved with?

One of the more visible projects I had the good fortune to implement at Arlington National Cemetery (ANC) was the reconstruction of one of the four historical gates of the cemetery — the Ord and Weitzel Gate (named after two Civil War generals). In the early 1900s, ANC had four historic gates corresponding to the four cardinal directions. However, over subsequent years with the expansion of the cemetery and the advent of the automobile, three of those gates were torn down. The staff at ANC discovered that the stones of two of those gates had been discarded in the Arlington woods and worked to get them collected, sorted/tagged and restored. After restoration, we contracted with a historic masonry company to reconstruct Ord and Weitzel Gate to its original state but slightly away from the current vehicular gate. That project essentially restored a piece of the spiritual fabric of the cemetery and brought a beautiful part of history back to life.

With the closure of parts of ANC due to the COVID pandemic, we were able to tackle several long overdue restoration projects without the added complication of keeping the spaces accessible to the public. The most visible one was at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, perhaps the most sacred monument in all the country. One of the little-known parts of the Tomb is that there is a superficial crack



that completely encircles the tomb and has been repeatedly patched over the years. Over time, the repairs start to degrade, and the crack becomes more visible. The ANC preservationist, along with a team of interns and specialists from the National Park Service, removed the failing mortar and created a special blend of materials that would provide a more durable repair and be essentially invisible to visitors. Another challenge we were able to address was the growth of black biofilm that discolors marble, which had gotten quite bad for both the Tomb and the adjacent Memorial Amphitheater. Our directorate led a combined effort of our facilities maintenance team, preservationist, cultural resource specialist and other volunteers to apply a first-of-its-kind treatment using zinc oxide (not unlike the kind that's used in sunscreen!). This proved to be extremely successful and is now being used as an example for similar treatments for other monuments and historic buildings in the D.C. area and beyond. I really enjoyed being part of this truly collaborative and innovative team effort!



▼
Top: Samuel Harden discusses his current Senate project with Mr. Austin.

Bottom: Jim Kaufmann and employees from Capitol Grounds and Arboretum provide a tour of the team's spaces for Mr. Austin.

5

How do you foster a positive work environment?



I've always found that the most important thing is to be honest and engaged with your team — and personally model the behavior you want your team to emulate. In my opening day message, I noted that the four touchstones of my leadership are **Professionalism, Integrity, Accountability and Transparency**. To be a true professional, you need to treat others with dignity and respect as well as holding your own conduct to the highest standard. You need to be honest with your team and do the right thing even when it might be the hard thing. You must set clear expectations and hold each other accountable for meeting them. Finally, you must be transparent even if the information might not be flattering. If you can do all those things, you will build trust from and within your team. That is a path to a positive work environment.

I would be remiss if I didn't say that you should also recognize and reward those in the team that exceed the standard. Let them know how much you appreciate their efforts and the positive results they bring. Thank people for what they do. I also hold to the old adage of "praise publicly and criticize privately." We should all feel respected for the work we're doing here and recognize that we're part of something greater than just ourselves.

▼
Top: Kelly Fields and colleagues from the House Office Buildings meet Mr. Austin during his visit to the jurisdiction.

Bottom: Employees from the Office of the Chief Financial Officer gave Mr. Austin a tour of their office during his meet and greet with the team.



6

What's something you wish someone told you early on in your career?

There are so many things! It's hard to reduce it to just one or two. I'll list a few:

People: They are your greatest asset; treat them accordingly.

Mission: Success is a journey, not a destination. Break the big things down to smaller, achievable chunks and start there. It's important to see progress.

Education: You will never know it all, but that's not an excuse to stop learning.

Conduct: Always act like a professional and demand others do the same. Be yourself — just try to be the best version of yourself you can be.

Computers: Never hit the "Send" button when you're angry!



7

What do you like to do for fun outside of work?

I think it's important to have hobbies and things that have nothing to do with work to give yourself a break and to help find a little extra joy in your life. For me, I enjoy running, hiking, camping, reading, gardening, playing with my dogs and traveling.

I love books — especially military and political history but also science fiction and biographies.

I try to keep myself in shape by running 20–30 miles a week. Besides the physical benefits, I find running to have a lot of mental fitness benefits. Just having time to tune things out and concentrate only on the road or whatever spoken word content I have coming from my earbuds helps calm my mind and melt away my stress.

I've always hiked and taken short camping trips. When I left the Army, I took the opportunity to hike a 200-mile section of the Appalachian trail over two weeks from Waynesboro, VA to Waynesboro, PA. I loved

being in nature, doing something physical, and taking a break from technology and the overwhelming noise of life. It was an amazing adventure, and I hope to get back on the trail someday to do the rest — only 1,800+ miles to go! I've also done a four-day hike through the Andes to Machu Pichu in Peru, which was extraordinary.

In the last five years or so, I've also gotten into gardening. I enjoy the experience of seeing how things grow and what it takes to maintain them and make them flourish. I'm growing several things in my home garden right now, including strawberries, blueberries, apples, roses and even a few hybrid American Chestnut trees. The strawberries have really taken off, and I am now canning about 200 jars of jam every year, most of which we give away. I also have three active beehives, and I've started doing an annual honey harvest. My wife refers to all this as my "Farmer Tom phase" but what's not to like about homemade strawberry jam every year?



On June 24, 2024, Thomas E. Austin was sworn in as the 13th Architect of the Capitol by Supreme Court Chief Justice of the United States John G. Roberts, Jr., at the U.S. Supreme Court Building. Mr. Austin was honored to be selected to serve as the next Architect of the Capitol. In this role, he has found perfect alignment for his dedication to service, passion for history and care of iconic architecture.

Photography provided by the Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States



Mr. Austin was joined by members of his family for his swearing-in, including his (L-R): nephew, Adam Lange; sister, Anne Lange; daughter, Meredith Austin; wife, Shannon Austin; brother, Robert Austin; and nephew, Owen Lange.





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The Architect of the Capitol strives to meet its mission 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to **serve** Congress and the Supreme Court, **preserve** America's Capitol, and **inspire** memorable experiences for all who visit the buildings and grounds.

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