

A Visual Guide to the U.S. Capitol Exterior & Grounds

aka “Where did this video/photo take place?”

Also see: [Interior locations](#)

Corrections/additions/ideas? Please tweet to [@SansaStark525](#) or [@HelpfulKoala](#).



West Side of the Capitol - a composite mockup of what it would have looked like on Jan 6 without people

Quick Tips: East side vs. West side

- People on **vehicles** in the plaza? → East side
- People milling around **greek columns** → East side
- People on **black wrought iron** fenced balconies? → East side
- **Scaffolding** or grandstands? → West side
- Look at the **buildings in the distance**:
 - Washington Monument? This wouldn't be visible from the east side.
 - Supreme Court or Library of Congress? You can't see these from the west side.
 - Other buildings most often visible are: Rayburn House, Longworth House, Cannon House, Russell Senate Offices, and the National Gallery of Art. Get to know their architecture.
- Also note: the **north and south sides are flat -- they have no dramatic protrusions or recesses**. If you see people in a walled courtyard type area, they are on the east or west side.
- **Final tip**: Watch and geolocate videos until your eyeballs fall out.

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Acknowledgements

Capitol Grounds Tours:

[Jan 5, 2021](#): Supreme Court, Washington Mall at 3rd Street, Near SE Lawn, East Plaza

Walk around the Capitol : [video](#)

West side scaffolds: [Photo Thread](#)

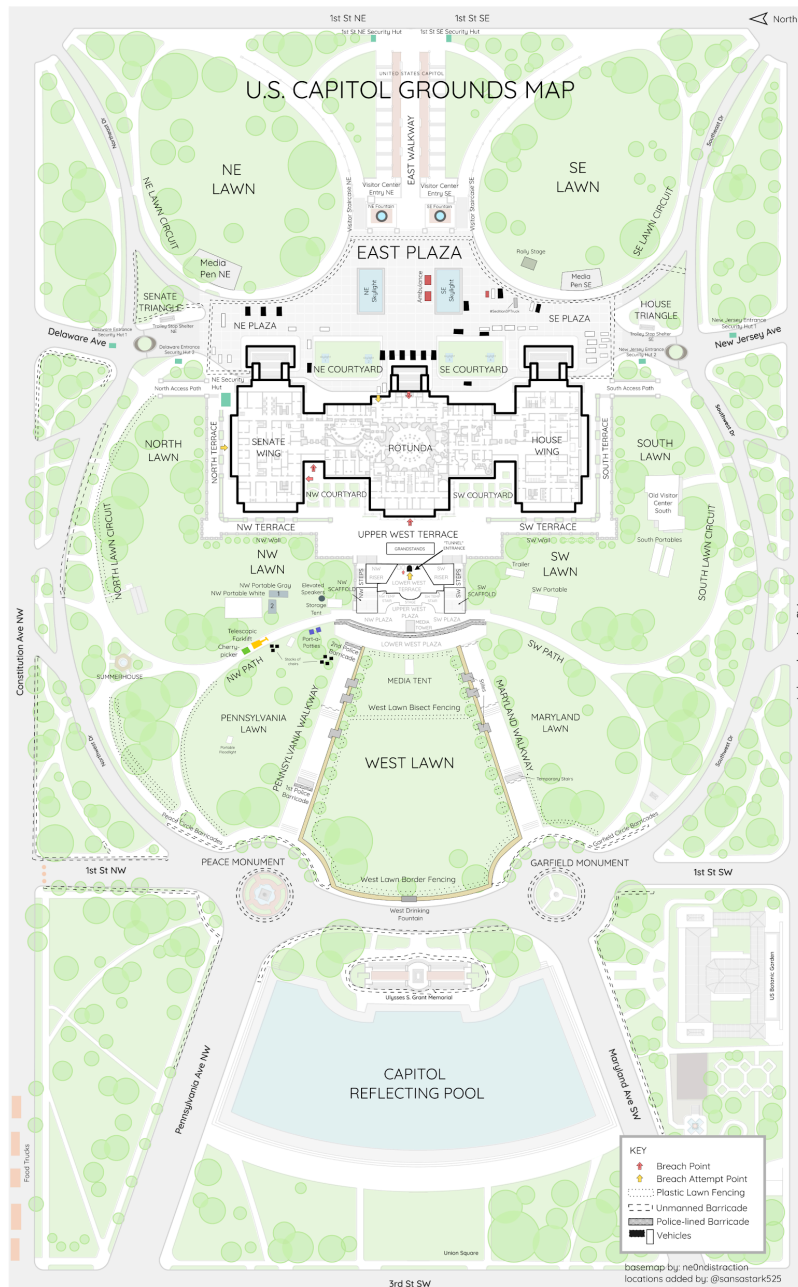
Capitol Grounds Maps

Here are various maps of the Capitol Grounds & Exterior. Click to link to larger versions.

Capitol Grounds Map

Structures, features, and paths traced from Google Satellite views by [@Ne0ndistracti0n](#).

Location labels added by [@SansaStark525](#)



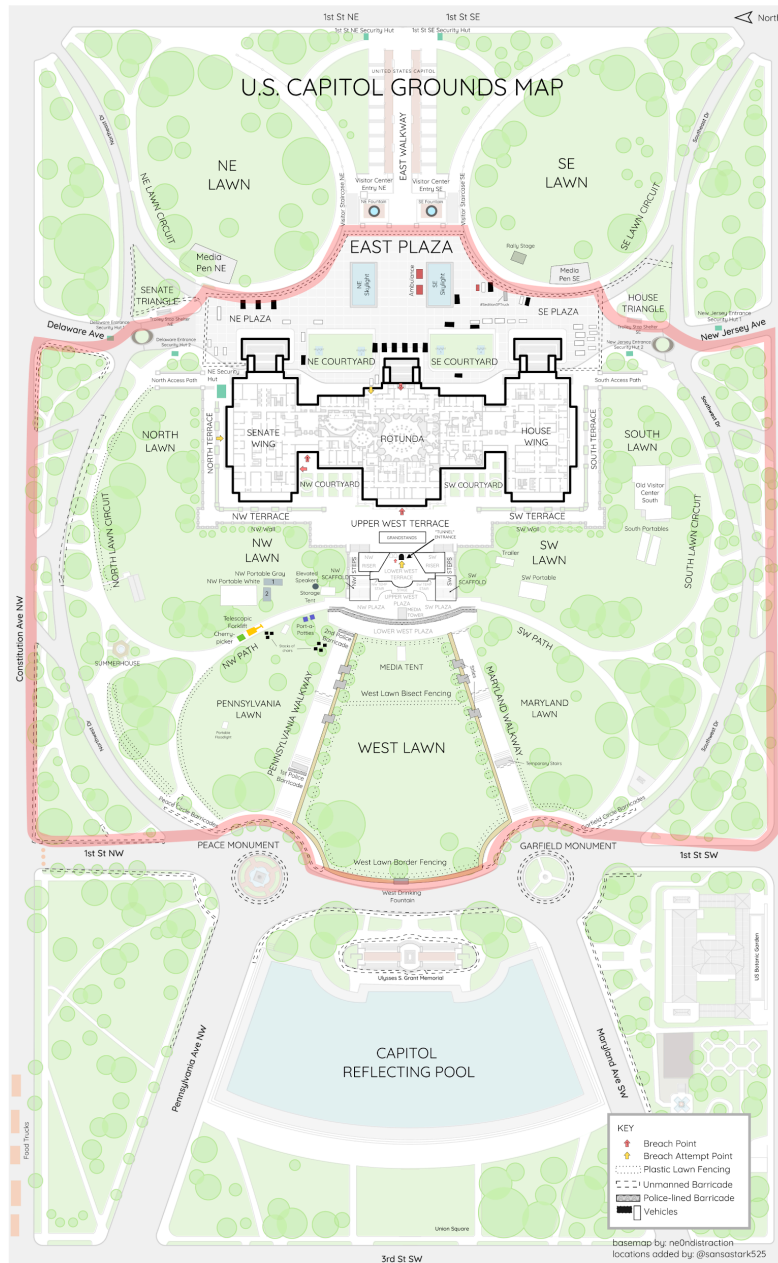
Barricades added after visually noting placement in the following videos: [Eddie Block Livestream](#) -- [YouTube YNtnGRnGyy](#) -- [Parler HS34fpbzqg2b](#) -- [Freedom Rally 8 of 17](#) -- [USA Sight - Lot of People In Front of the Capitol](#) -- [WYSIWYGTv](#) -

Capitol Grounds Map with Restricted Zone Marked

Structures, features, and paths traced from Google Satellite views by [@Ne0ndistracti0n](#).

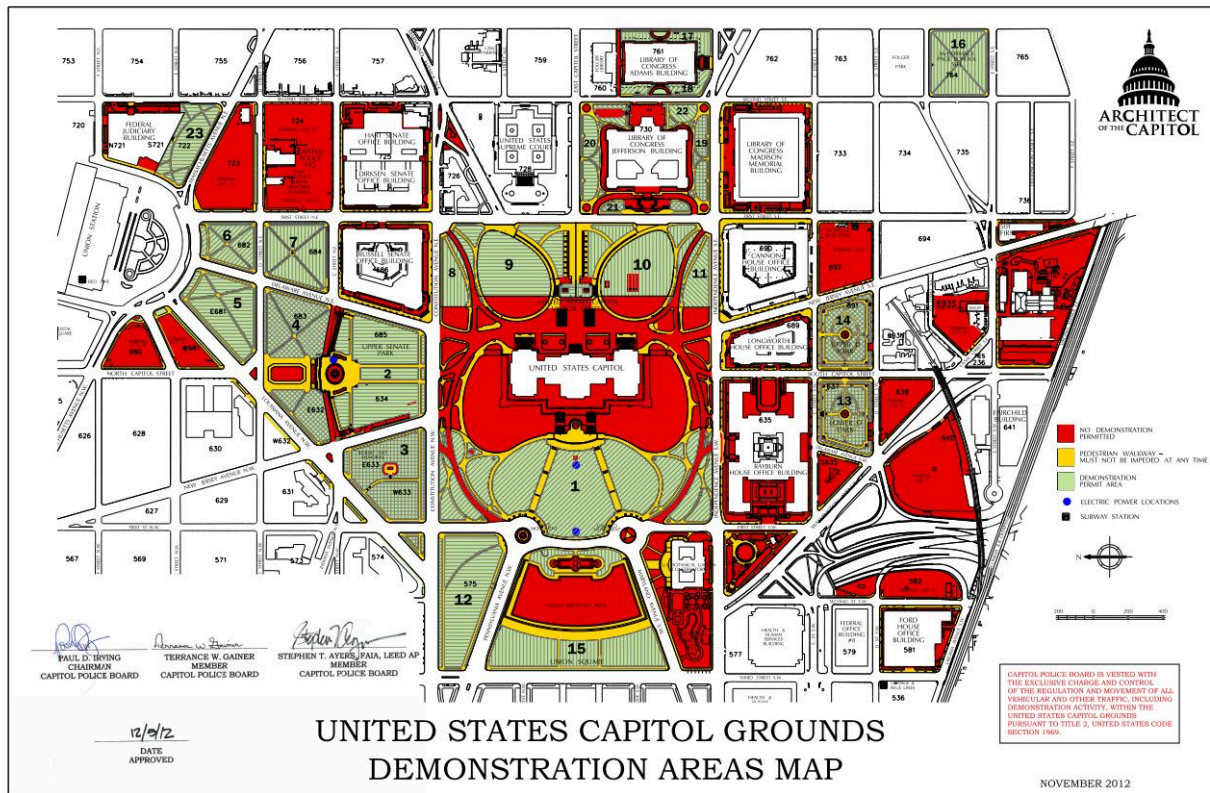
Location labels added by [@SansaStark525](#)

Jan 6 Restricted Zone found in: [DOJ](#)



Capitol Demonstration Areas Map

The map below shows the areas where one may request a permit to demonstrate. Note that the **areas marked in red** are **not** available for demonstration. Note that this prohibited area includes all Capitol Steps, the entire East Plaza, including the NE and SE Plazas, and the near-capitol side of the NE and SE Lawns, as well as the NW and SW Lawns. Note also that **areas marked in yellow** are pedestrian walkways and “must not be impeded at any time.”



Source: [U.S. Capitol Police](#)

Source: [DOJ](#)

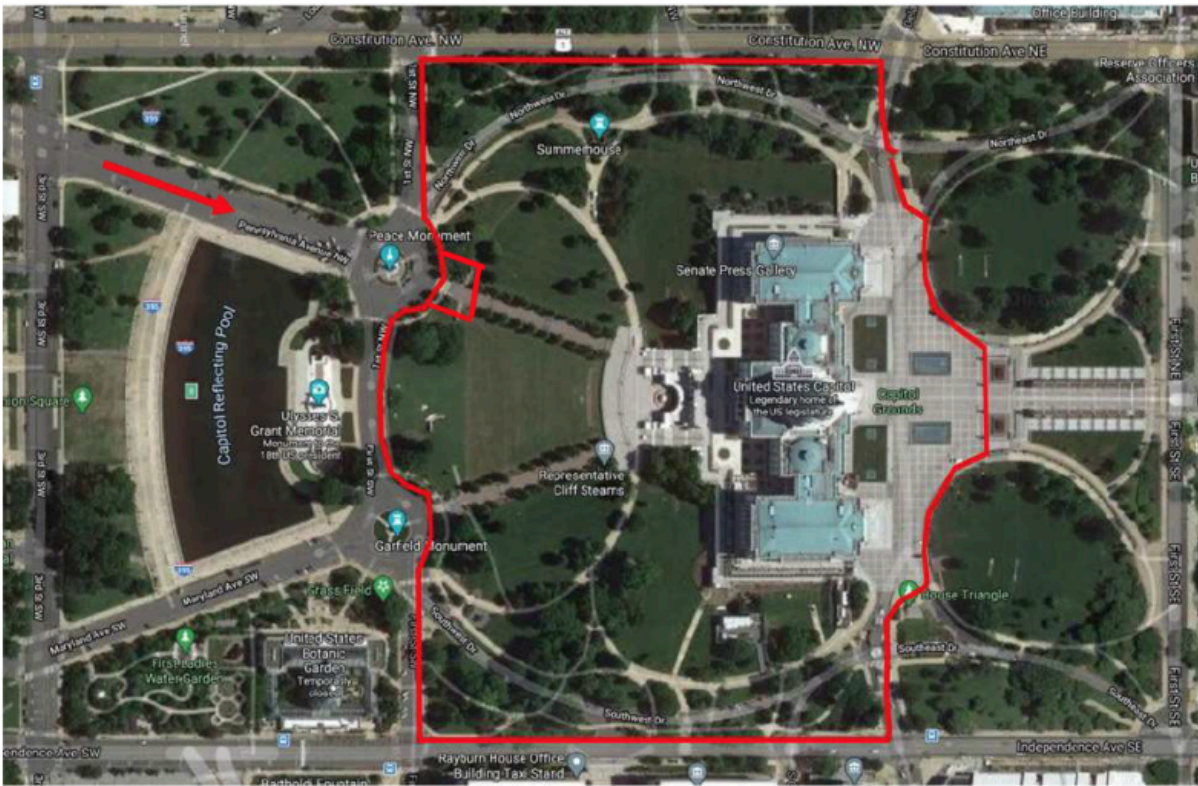


Figure 1. Aerial imagery of U.S. Capitol grounds, with the restricted perimeter outlined in red.

What Door Am I Looking At?

There are many doors on the Capitol Building and when reviewing footage it can be difficult to know which one you are looking at, especially if all that is shown is the door and immediate vicinity. Here is a quick comparison of the doors.

If you are viewing them from the exterior of the building, there are three door colors: brown doors, yellow doors and white doors.

Brown Doors

The following doors are brown: The three second floor East side doors (these are the most ornate, and what people often think of as the main entrances to the building), the North Doors, the South Doors.



Central East Doors

aka "The Columbus Doors"

These are often regarded as the **main doors** into the Capitol. They are located at the top of the Central East Steps.

These doors were sieged from 2:06pm until they were breached *from the inside out* partially at 2:25pm by #ScruffyBouncer and others and fully at 2:39pm. Many Oath Keepers and Proud Boys accessed the Capitol through these doors. You will encounter a great deal of footage at these doors.

Visual Clues: Brown doors. Ornate brown frame. Oversized. Double doors. Six square window panels. The doors are very tall and (when the outer bronze set are open as they were on Jan 6) consist of a series of square window panels and an ornate carving in the arch above.

Distinctive Feature: NO window panel above this door. Ornate carving instead.

Photo: [Doors of Washington](#)



SE Doors

aka “House of Representatives Doors”

Visually, these are very similar to the Central East Doors. They are located at the top of the SE Steps leading up to the House of Representatives Wing. These doors were filmed less than the Central East doors on Jan 6. These are the nearest doors to the House Chamber and to the Speaker’s Lobby where Ashli Babbitt was shot.

Visual Clues: Brown doors. Ornate brown frame. Double doors. Rectangular windows.

Distinctive Feature: Topped with a window panel containing a circular etched logo stating “U.S. House of Representatives”

Photo: Screenshot from video [Michael Ruane](#)

More Footage: [Parler \(t4AqEOluEwK2 \)](#)

NEED PHOTO

NE Doors

Aka “Senate Doors”

Visually, these are very similar to the Central East Doors. They are located at the top of the NE Steps leading up to the Senate Wing. These doors were filmed less than both the Central East and SE doors on Jan 6. These are the nearest doors to the Senate Chamber, and some of those who invaded the Senate Chamber stood on the steps outside the doors after being pushed out.

Visual Clues: Brown doors. Ornate brown frame. Double doors. Rectangular windows.

Distinctive Feature: Topped with a window panel containing a circular etched logo stating “U.S. Senate”



North Doors

These doors were the site of a long and vicious siege later in the day.

Visual Clues: Brown doors. Yellow frame. Double doors. Two large, rectangular windows in the door itself. A window above with a split yellow frame.

Photo: Screenshot from [Parler](#) [wvTbtnGOAknX](#)



NE Carriage Door

These doors are rarely seen from the outside as they are located in the Carriage Tunnel beneath the NE Steps. You will likely know them as the doors where JaydenX turned around inside near the metal detector.

Visual Clues: Brown doors. Yellow frame. Double doors. Narrow, rounded windows. A black grating over the window at the top.

Photo: Screenshot from a video hosted by [Bigfoot](#)

Yellow Doors

The following doors are yellow:



West Door

These doors are located in the Center-West of the building on the Upper West Terrace. The hallway beyond leads directly to steps up to the Capitol Rotunda. In footage, police officers lined this hallway, verbally discouraging rioters from continuing on. This photo is taken from the grandstands on the Upper West Terrace.

Visual Clues: Yellow doors. Yellow frame. No windows in the door itself. Window above the door has a spiderweb pattern. This pattern is also seen above doors on the East side.

Distinctive Feature: *Not* set in a portico or recess. The only other doors which are not are the NW & SW Side Doors.

Photo: [Ken Cedeno](#)



NW Door

(*& SW Door*)

This door is located in the NW Portico in the NW Courtyard. It was the first door breached on Jan 6. This occurred when Dominic Pezzola smashed an adjacent window, creating first access to the building. The first people to climb through broke down the door from the inside out.

Visual Clues: Yellow doors. Yellow frame. Single door, NOT double. Two thin windows in the door itself. Window above the door has a simple split frame. This sort of frame is also seen above the North/South Doors and the NW/SW Side Doors

Distinctive Features: Single door, not a double door. The NW & SW Side Doors are also single doors, but they are set in the open at the top of a narrow stair, not in a portico.

Photo: Screenshot from [BGOntTheScene](#)



NW Side Door

(& SW Side Door)

This door is located in the NW Courtyard, just off the Upper West Terrace. While the insurrectionists ran past it when initially breaching the building, it was breached half-an-hour later at 2:41pm.

Photo: Screenshot from [BGOOnTheScene](#)



Lower East Door 1

(NE Courtyard)

Lower East Door 2

(SE Courtyard)

Located in the SE Courtyard, just south of the Central East Steps, this door was one frequently used by police to push people out of the Capitol Building. Late in the day, "Murder the Media" was scrawled on this door.

Visual Clues: Yellow doors. Yellow frame. No windows in the door itself. Window above the door has a spiderweb pattern. This pattern is also seen above Lower East Door 1 and the West Door.

Distinctive Feature: It is nearly identical in appearance to Lower East Door 1 on the other side of the East Steps and the West Door on the opposite side of the building. It can be distinguished from the West Door because it is set in a recessed portico, not in the open. To distinguish it from Lower East Door 1, you will need to see more of the surrounding area. This door is on the south side of the Central East Steps, while Lower East Door 1 is on the north side.

Photo: [Stringer - via Getty](#)

More footage:

<https://twitter.com/OSINTyeti/status/1388274649025302530?s=20>



South Doors

These doors were barely accessed by the rioters on Jan 6. You will rarely see them in footage. They were the doors out of which Ashli Babbitt was evacuated.

Visual Clues: Yellow. Yellow frame. Double doors. Large, rectangular windows in the door itself. A window above with a simple yellow frame. Located in a recessed portico. Barricade in at top of the steps.

White Doors

The following doors are white:

Temporary Stairs

West Grounds



Pennsylvania Walkway at the site of the First Barricade Breach. Photo taken April 2019

Screenshot: [Google Maps 360s - User Cameron C.](#)

West Side Grounds 360°s

Trump 360

This account took 360 videos throughout the day on Jan 6th. Here are links to some of the locations she took footage -- note that this was later in the day:

[NW Path](#) -- [Pennsylvania Lawn](#) -- [NW Plaza](#) (~2:45pm)

(Also see the [Ellipse](#) Footage)

Note: None of the 360s below were taken on Jan 6th, 2021. They are simply 360 views from other times to help you orient yourself to the area. I selected ones where the trees were leafless as they were on Jan 6.

Pennsylvania Walkway 360°:

Taken in early spring but most of the trees are fairly leafless as they were on Jan 6

[Penn Walkway 360 - Google Maps](#)

Maryland Walkway 360°:

Taken in early spring but many of the trees are fairly leafless as they were on Jan 6

[Maryland Walkway 360 - Google Maps](#)

SW Plaza 360°:

Taken in winter, so the trees will be leafless as they were on Jan 6 (note that the inauguration setup / scaffolds will be missing, but the view west toward the lawn and Washington Monument will be very similar): [SW Plaza 360 - Google Maps](#)

Lower West Plaza 360°:

Taken in winter, so the trees will be leafless as they were on Jan 6 (note that the inauguration setup / scaffolds will be missing, but the view west toward the lawn and Washington Monument will be very similar): [Lower West Plaza 360 - Google Maps](#) // [View 2](#)

West Lawn 360°:

A different year and a Christmas Tree in the way, but it is 2016 so there is a similar inauguration setup with scaffolding. [West Lawn 360 - Google Maps](#)

NW Path - NW Lawn / Penn Lawn 360°:

A 360 from the NW Path between Penn and NW Lawns.
[NW Path 360 - Google Maps](#)

Constitution Ave & 3rd St 360°:

A 360 from the steps of the Frances Perkins Department of Labor Building
[Constitution & 3rd 360 - Google Maps](#)

West Exterior

On January 6th, the first breach onto restricted grounds was on Pennsylvania Walkway leading to the plaza on the West side of the U.S. Capitol Building. On that day, the West Plaza and the steps and terraces that surround it looked very different than they normally do, due to the construction of a great deal of temporary structures for Biden's Inauguration . These temporary structures included two large scaffolds covering much of the NW and SW Steps flanking the plaza, a stage all along the back of the upper West Plaza, a set of temporary steps built into (and masked by) a wall at the back of the plaza, a Media Tower in the center of the plaza, and risers and grandstands on the terraces above the plaza.

The image below is an edited **composite image** approximating what the West Side of the Capitol looked like on Jan 6th prior to the siege (do note that many of the trees would have been leafless).

West Exterior Composite



Here is the same image with the locations labelled:

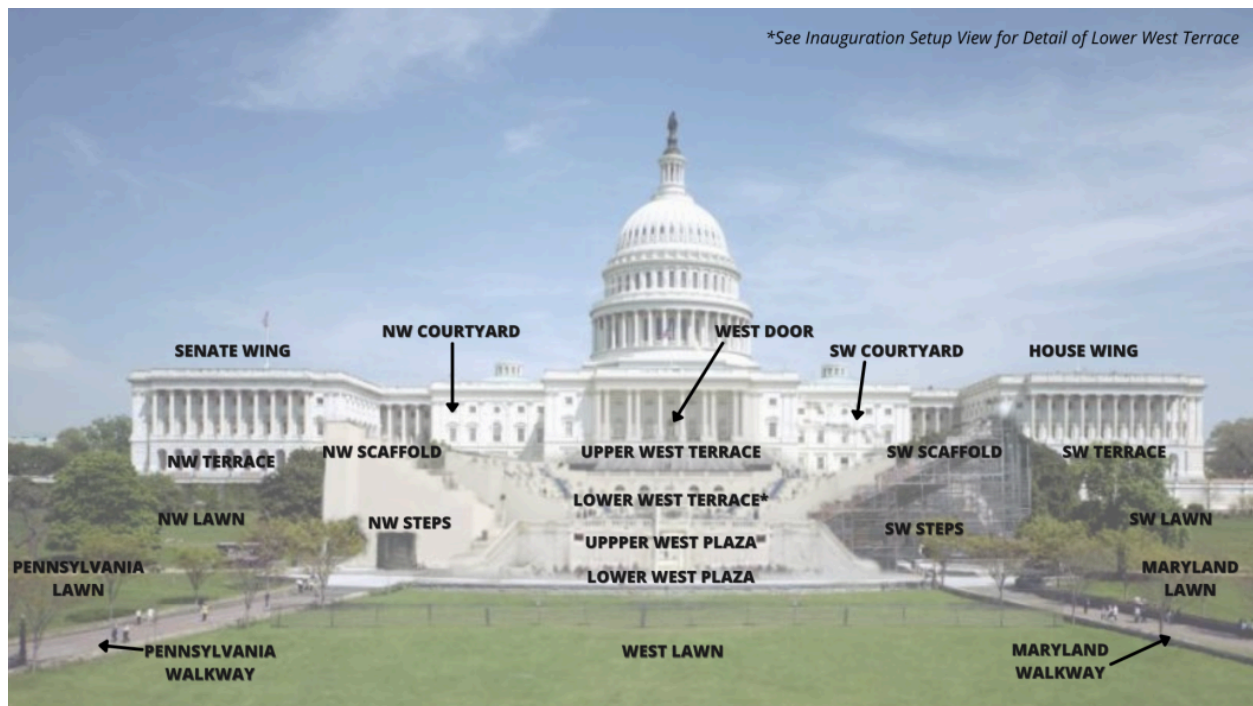


Image Composite by @SeditionData & @SansaStark525

West Side Tour:

See this series of photos taken by the scaffolding company the morning after the Jan 6 attack:

<https://twitter.com/DianthaSol/status/1372018873252388864>

West Plaza

And a **composite image** of the West Plaza from the Media Tower (note that in this image, chairs are set out for the inauguration, and people practice instruments on the stage):



And the same image with features labelled:



Image Composite by @SeditionData & @SansaStark525

More photos of the West Plaza:





West Plaza and Terrace Steps & Connectivity

It can be difficult to understand the various ways that people accessed the Terraces from the ground / Plaza level. This video may help you understand one of them:

https://d2hxnssq7ss7g.cloudfront.net/P965teMlfY6I_cvt.mp4

The above video is filmed from the seating area at the top of the SW Scaffold. At the 0:06 mark, the videographer pans down to the landing on the SW steps (this is located halfway up the steps) and you can see people entering a small tunnel area. This provides access to the Lower West Terrace. As the videographer continues on, at the 0:11 mark you can see the white SW Riser wall and some wooden steps on it (note that this, like the scaffolding, is a temporary structure built for the inauguration), and the upper half of the stone SW Steps peeking out on the far side. These steps lead up to the south side of the Upper West Terrace.

Screenshots and maps to be added!!

SW Temporary Stairs:

Stairs were built into each side of the Inauguration Balcony. The police retreated up these after the West Plaza was breached around 2:28pm. The mob followed shortly after. This shows a first-person view of that moment and the stair route.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27hmPMPaoy0&t=3060s>

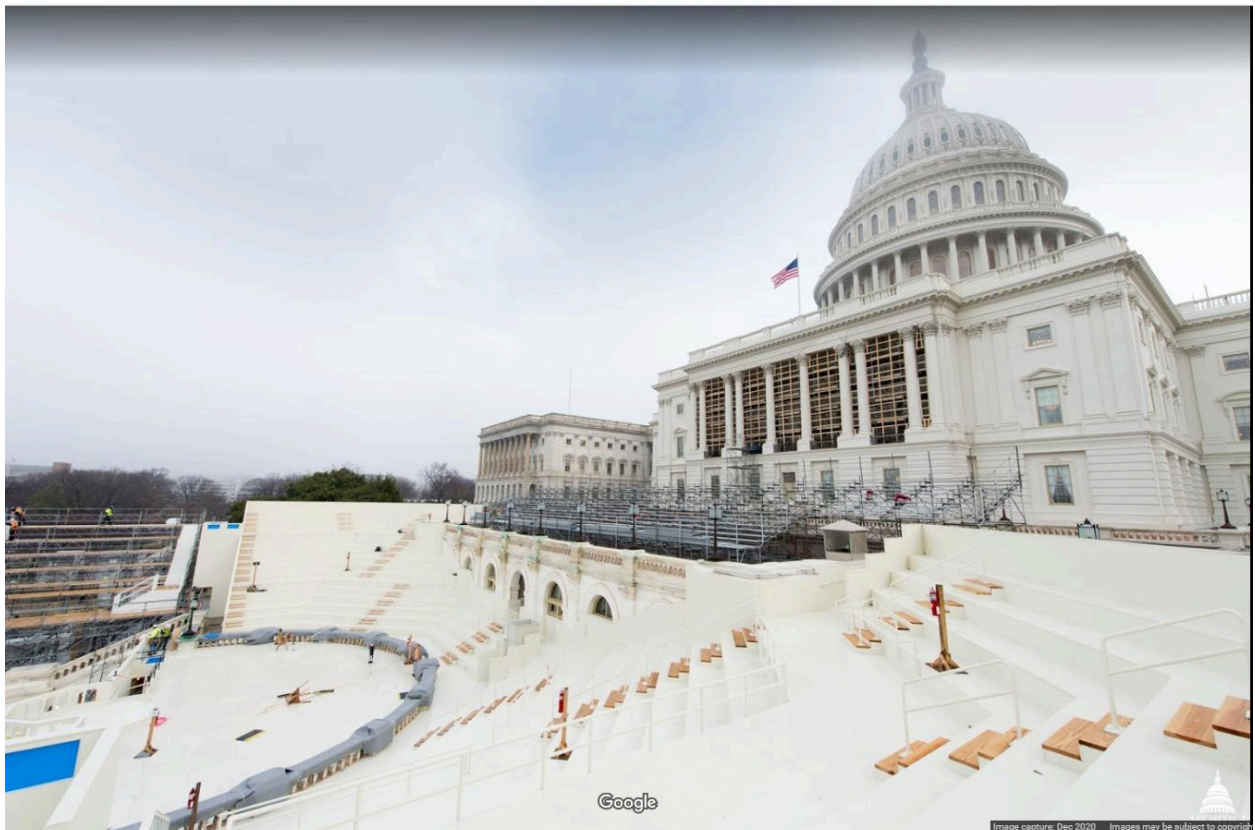
Lower West Terrace and Tunnel Entrance

The Lower West Terrace looked very different on Jan 6 than it normally does. This was due to a set of elaborate structures built for the 2021 Presidential Inauguration. The series of images below show what the Lower Terrace looks like with these structures present, including the risers that fan away on either side of the Inauguration Tunnel Entrance and the grandstands above.



Source: [Architect of the Capitol Flickr](#)

Lower West Terrace Side view:



Source: [Architect of the Capitol Flickr](#)

Tunnel Entrance Closeup



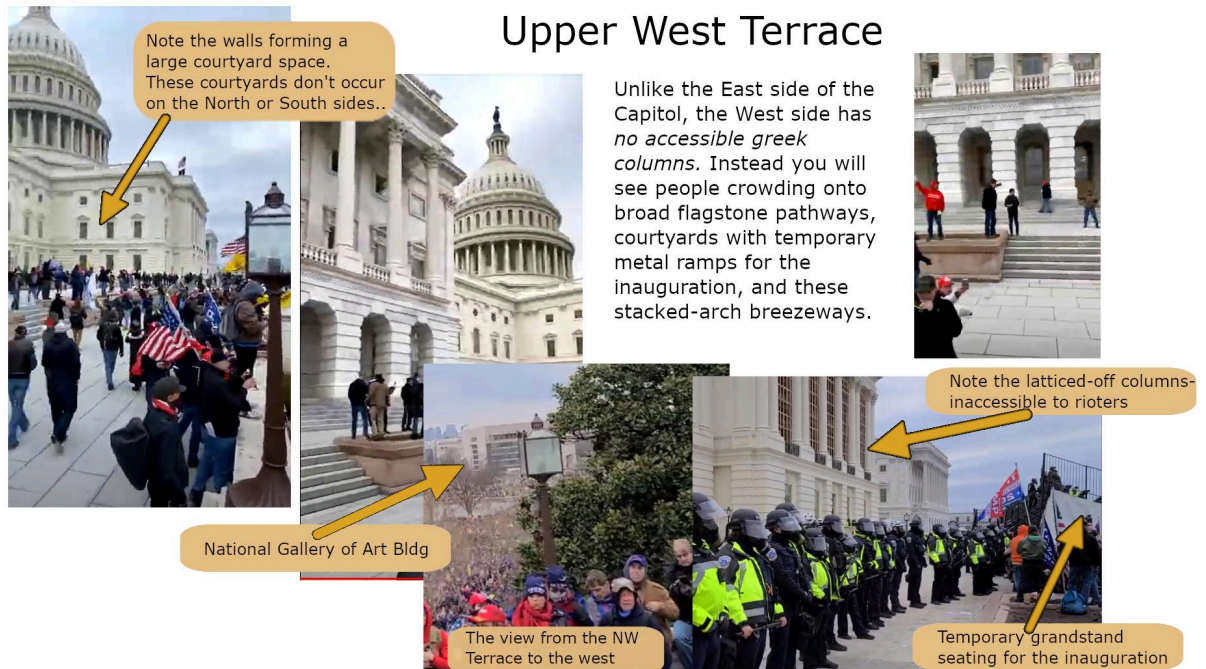
Source: [Architect of the Capitol Flickr](#)

Upper West Terrace

The Upper West Terrace was accessed by protestors initially via the NW steps (under the North Scaffolding) from the West Plaza. The same terrace wraps around the building to the north and south sides. The police held the south side of the terrace fairly tightly, so you will almost never see footage from there, with the exception of an instance in which the police (officially? unofficially?) stood aside and granted protestors access to the Central West Entrance, which leads to a hall and up to the Capitol Rotunda. Perhaps as an impressive distraction for the rioters, as the Rotunda had already been breached?

On Jan 6 there were metal ramps in places here (likely for the inauguration), and a large grandstand was set up in the Central area, in line with the Capitol Dome.

So if you're seeing broad terrace like this? It's probably the Upper West Terrace, or more rarely, the North Terrace, which is shorter, narrower, and has no courtyard-type recesses.



Sources: [MasonBexfield-lets go](#) // [Free America DC Rally](#)

NW and SW Courtyards

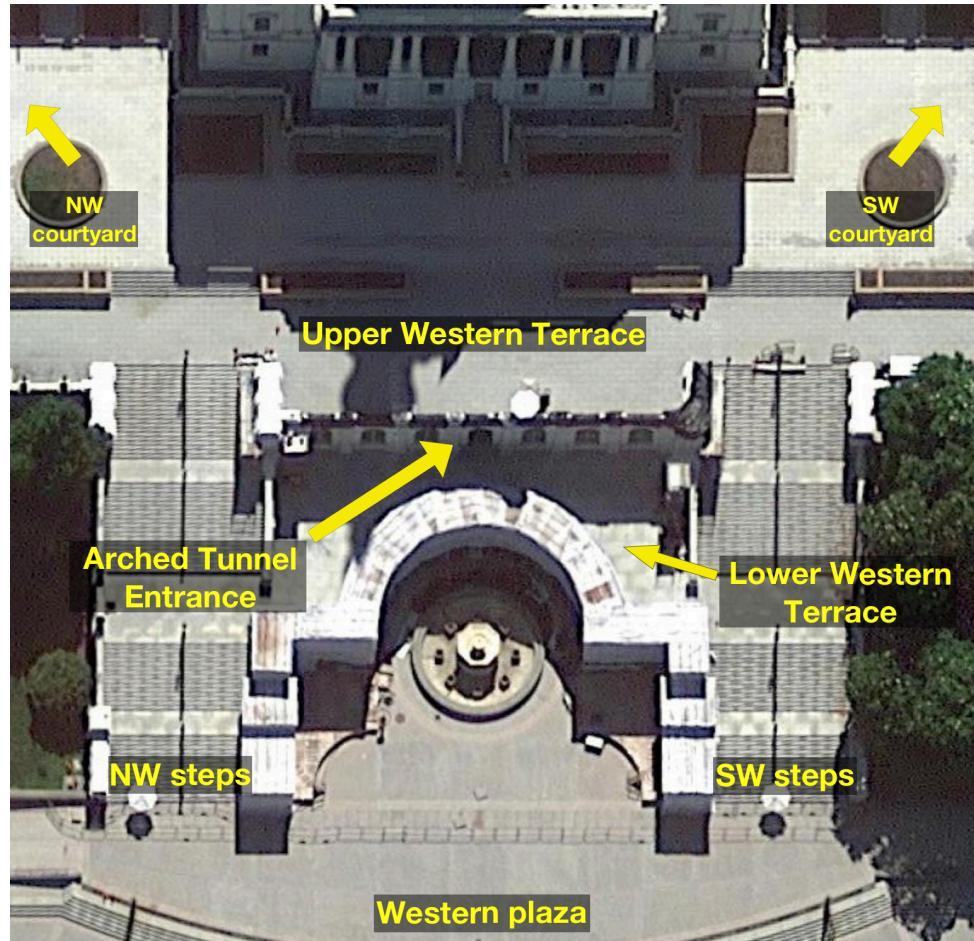


Source: [Free America Rally Video](#)

Aerial detail of west side

Note that on the day of the attacks there were a number of features that don't appear in this image, due in part to preparations for Inauguration:

- Scaffolding tower in center of Western Plaza
- Scaffolding just outside NW and SW steps
- Risers on Lower Western Terrace



3D Visualization

Helpful one-minute video showing the Capitol layout

IMPORTANT: We have determined that this provides very rough and ultimately **inaccurate information about the movement of the insurrectionists** on the day. Use only to look at rough layout.

: <https://twitter.com/KVUE/status/1350137117544910848>



What these locations looked like on January 6

NW edge of Capitol Hill grounds



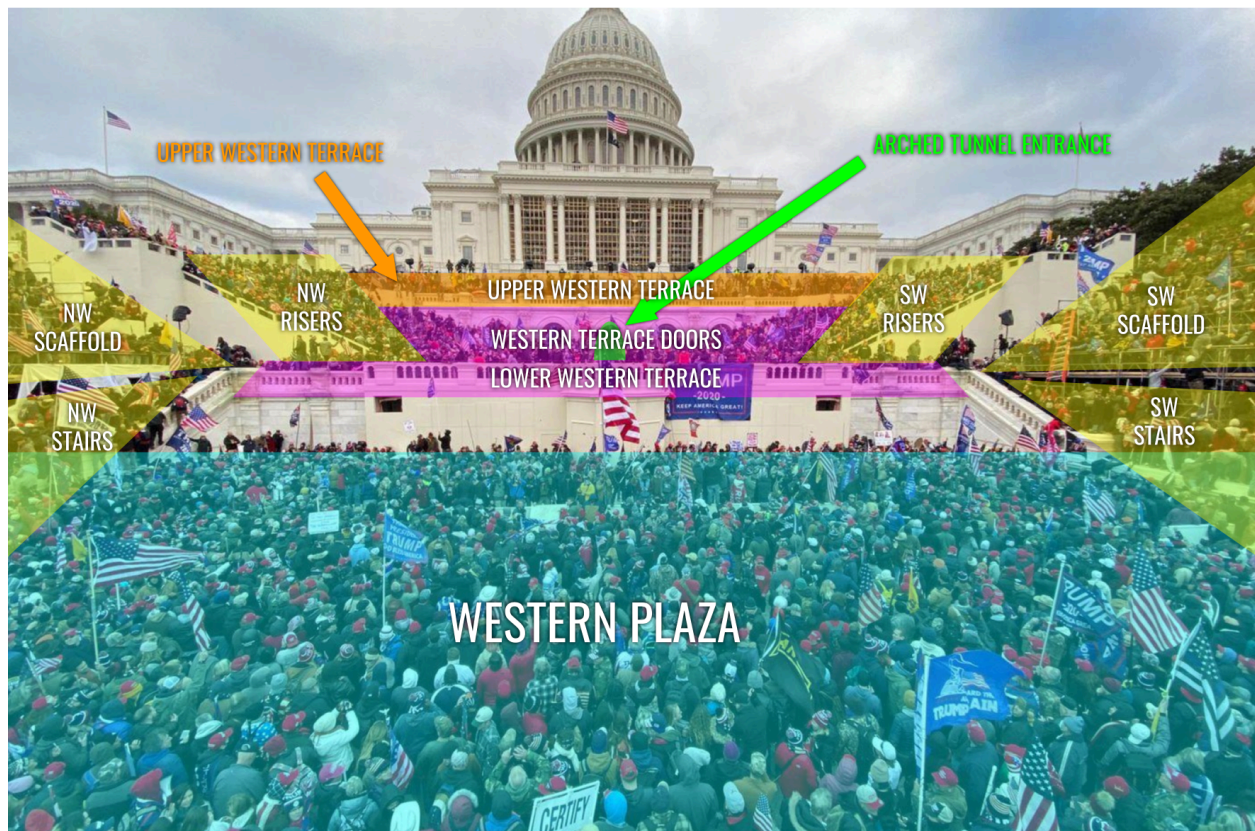
Moments before the first barrier breach

[Source](#)

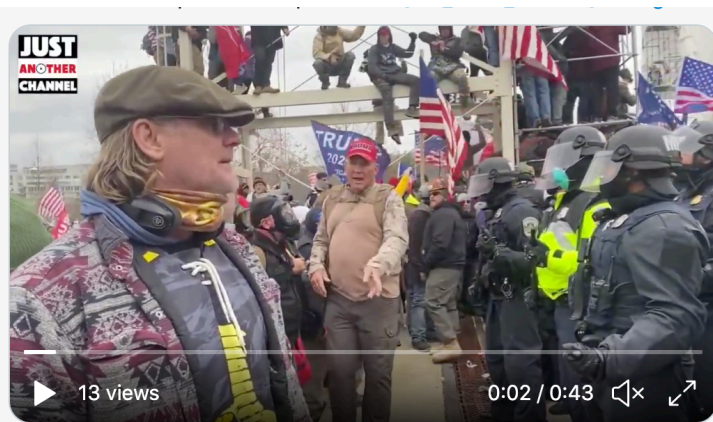
(Older man is #bigmagacamo)

Western Plaza and side of capitol

Facing West from plaza central scaffolding, after entire Western side is overrun



Here's [a link directly to this Google Drawing](#). If you are requesting an edit/improvement/correction, please comment on this text or on the Google Drawing. [Original image source](#).



Facing north toward central scaffolding, with police line in place before full breach

[Source](#)

(Present: #bigmagacamo and #FleeceNazi)



Same time, before full breach, shot from NW scaffolding (note that the South scaffolding has no white covering, while the North scaffolding does)



Shot from same location, after crowd surges past police line

Lower terrace and arched tunnel entrance



Tunnel entrance, seen from Lower Western Terrace

[Source](#) (at 0:59:23)



Facing north from just in front of tunnel entrance.

[Source](#) (at 1:12:41)



Lower Western terrace, seen from tunnel entrance

[Source](#) (at 1:12:46)



A view into the tunnel entrance
[Source](#) (at 1:19:09)



The mob fights the police inside the tunnel
[Source](#) (at 1:21:18)

Content warning: this section of video is scary, claustrophobic, violent

East Grounds



View from the NE Plaza looking northeast at the NE Lawn.

Screenshot: [Google Maps 360s - User Eric C.](#)

East Side 360°s

Note: None of these were taken on Jan 6th, 2021. They are simply 360 views from other times to help you orient yourself to the area. I selected ones where the trees were leafless as they were on Jan 6.

SE Lawn 360°:

Taken in January 2019, and the trees are leafless, though the sky is clear and the sun is setting so the light quality is different.

[SE Lawn 360 - Google Maps](#) // [View 2](#)

SE Lawn Circuit 360°:

A view from the path just to the south of the SE Lawn. Taken Feb 2017 so the trees are leafless.

[SE Lawn Circuit 360 - Google Maps](#)

SE Visitor Center Lawn 360°:

A view from the Visitor Center lawn on the south side of the East Walkway.

[SE Visitor Center Lawn 360 - Google Maps](#)

East - NE Plaza 360°:

A view from the East Plaza close to the NE Lawn / NE Plaza - Dec 2016.

[East Plaza 360 - Google Maps](#) // [View 2 \(only slightly different\)](#)

East Plaza 360°:

Views from the East Plaza in winter

[East Plaza 2013 - Google Maps](#) // [East Plaza 2](#) // [East Plaza 3](#) // [East Plaza 4](#) //

East Walkway 360°:

This 360 actually says it was taken in May, but I see very few trees with leaves.

[East Walkway 360 - Google Maps](#) //

NE Courtyard 360°:

A view at the edge of the NE Courtyard

[NE Courtyard 360 - Google Maps](#) //

Constitution Ave & Delaware 360°:

A view from across the street to the northeast of the Capitol

[Constitution Ave & Delaware 360 - Google Maps](#) //

East Plaza and Steps

If you see any of the following, you're likely looking at the East Side:

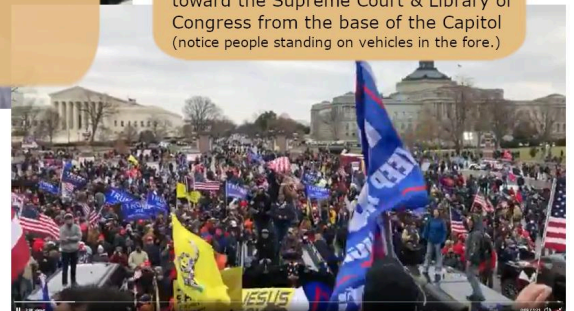
- people walking around greek columns.
- people standing on balconies with ornate black wrought iron fencing.
- people standing on vehicles in the Plaza.



East Side

The eastern side of the Capitol is distinct from the others in a number of noticeable ways. It is the only face of the Capitol which has round, greek-style columns that are accessible from the outside of the building. It is also the only side to have balconies with ornate black wrought-iron fencing. The plaza spills out flat from the base of the broad steps, with no terraces. On Jan 6, several vehicles were parked there, and the crowd sat on them. There was no scaffolding on this side on Jan 6.

View of the East Plaza. Looking East toward the Supreme Court & Library of Congress from the base of the Capitol (notice people standing on vehicles in the fore.)



Source: <https://twitter.com/mattmiller757/status/1346914900526948354?s=20> // [New Footage Shows What It Was Like Inside The Trump Mob At The Capitol | On The Ground - YouTube](#)

East Plaza

This is the view from the East Walkway looking toward the East Plaza and the Central East Steps of the U.S. Capitol

Tips for distinguishing the Central East Steps

- Columns indicate steps are on the East side (no round columns on west)
- Wrought iron balconies indicate East side
- Directly below the Rotunda
- The sculpture on the pediment (the triangular area above the columns) has only THREE figures. The sculptures above the NE and SE steps are filled with many figures.



Source: [Architect of the Capitol Flickr](#)

Edge of East Plaza looking southwest toward the SE Steps
(slice of the Central East Steps visible at the right)



NE Steps & Courtyard

A view of the NE Courtyard and NE Steps. Note the NE Carriage Tunnel which runs beneath the NE Steps -- allowing passage for (historically) carriages and (now) cars, and direct access to the NE Carriage Doors tucked beneath the steps. There is also a carriage tunnel under the SE Steps.



Source: [Architect of the Capitol Flickr](#)

North Side

North Terrace

In this image, the North Terrace is being cleared out by police, which began at approximately 4:30pm. Note the NE Security Hut with the green roof. *Note that this is the ONLY place where a security hut with a green roof is adjacent the U.S. Capitol Building.* If you see this small building near the Capitol in footage, you are seeing footage of the North Terrace / NE Plaza area.

Key distinguishing features:

- Security Hut with a Green Roof
- Shorter, narrower terrace compared to those on the west.
- No courtyards.



Source: [Bryan Dozier](#)

North Terrace (east end) as viewed from the North Lawn:



Source: [Bryan Dozier](#)

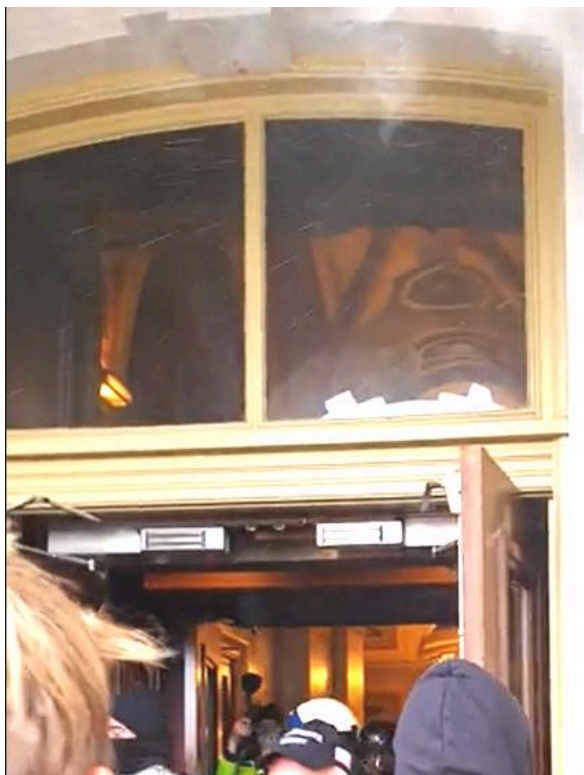
View *from* the North Terrace

View from the North Terrace looking out northeast toward the Russell Senate Office Building, with a view of the NE Security hut (the small building with the green roof) at the right of the screenshot. Note that this is the **ONLY** place where a security hut with a green roof is adjacent the U.S. Capitol Building. If you see it in footage, you are seeing footage of the North Terrace / NE Plaza area.



North Doors

The north doors are distinct from many of the other doors you will see in footage. They are simple wooden double doors (not ornately carved like the East doors), with a window frame above - and a glimpse inside shows the intricate ceilings of the Brumidi Corridors. Like the Tunnel Entrance doors, they consist of TWO sets of double doors with a small foyer between.



Screenshot: [Parler \(wvTbtngOAKnX\)](#)

South Side

You will rarely see the south terrace in footage, as the police held it very tightly. It was really only used to receive reinforcements and occasionally to escort people from the building. If you see a full terrace, it is NOT the south side. Here is one clip from later in the day:

<https://projects.propublica.org/parler-capitol-videos/?id=9T1Wgyjt0vKj>

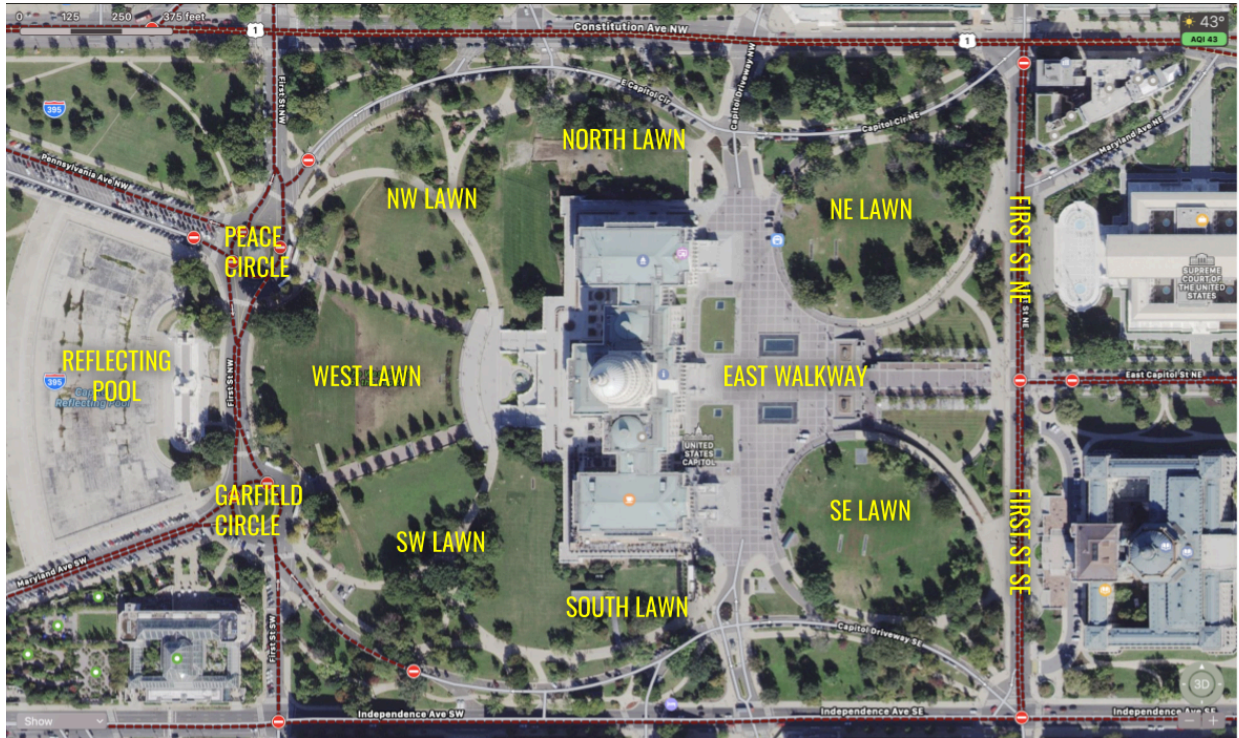
Other Useful Media:

Aerial Overviews - note that location names in current use are slightly different:



Here's [a link directly to this Google Drawing](#). If you are requesting an edit/improvement/correction, please comment on this text or on the Google Drawing. [Original image source without labels is Google Earth.](#)

Surrounding streets



Tours of the Capitol Complex:

Guided Virtual Tour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rl1NByGcDQs>

Acknowledgements

An enormous thank you to all of you who have sent me material to help compile this doc, including @bennybryant17, @quarkeee9, @justhelpingout6, @phoenixonwheels, @SeditionData, @ParlerVideos, @DianthaSol, @CynthiaMTeague, @FixthisNow2021, @sometimesusefu2, @OSINTYeti, @AbigaelAndi, and many anonymous submitters. A million thank yous! If you sent me something and wish to be acknowledged here, please let me know. I did not leave you off the list intentionally!!

Feedback/help

Got any more tips for identifying various areas of the Capitol?

We would love your help. Please tweet to [@SansaStark525](#) and [@HelpfulKoala](#).