



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Fort McHenry National
Monument & Historic Shrine

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Fort McHenry News Release

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Groundbreaking Set for Fort McHenry New Visitor Center to become a reality!

On Monday, April 27 at 10:00 a.m. Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, Baltimore's own National Park, will break ground for a new state-of-the-art visitor center. Senator Benjamin Cardin, Congressman John Sarbanes, Governor Martin O'Malley, Mayor Shelia Dixon and Senator Paul Sarbanes (retired) are expected to attend. The 18-month project will have the new facility ready to commemorate the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 and should open in the fall of 2010.

This new facility will replace the existing building dating to 1966. Built to accommodate only 250,000 visitors maximum in a year, Fort McHenry currently welcomes over 600,000 and expects visitation to continue to grow. "This new Center has been needed for so long, and we are thrilled that we'll have a beautiful new facility for orienting visitors and students and helping them to understand the remarkable resources of Fort McHenry," says Gay Vietzke, Park Superintendent.

Congress appropriated \$11,060,000 back in 2005 in federal transportation funding to support construction of a new facility at the park. Understanding the need and seeing Fort McHenry as a gateway to many other War of 1812 sites throughout Maryland, the City of Baltimore and the State of Maryland supported the project by committing matching funds both in excess of \$1,450,000. The project demonstrates the power of partnership and Monday's ceremony will highlight a number of important people who truly made this project happen.

Beginning in 2006, the National Park Service hired the Baltimore firm of GWWO Architects, Inc. to design the structure. Inspired by the flag itself, the building will be comprised of two sweeping elements - one of strong red brick like the Fort and the red stripe, the other of polished metal, like the white stripe of the Star-Spangled Banner. Forrester Construction Company of Rockville, MD has been awarded the contract to construct the building.

"While red, white and blue will still be our favorite colors, the new facility will also be green in the environmental sense of the word" says Superintendent Vietzke. The new facility is designed to achieve at least silver-level LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification.

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