

Proposed transfer of the Sheriff's House to the federal government

Frequently asked questions

1. Why is the Sheriff's House parcel being subdivided?

As part of the proposed National Park Service unit to be established in Delaware, the state of Delaware has tentatively agreed to transfer ownership of the Sheriff's House to the federal government. In conducting due diligence to prepare for the legal transfer of this property, the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs discovered a heretofore unrealized fact: The parcel of land that the Sheriff's House legally sits on includes a large portion of The Green. The division moved quickly to prepare a plan to subdivide the parcel and include only a small setback around the Sheriff's House. If approved, only the structure of the Sheriff's House and this small setback will be transferred to the federal government, and not the larger section of The Green as identified in the current parcel. The division is proposing to subdivide the parcel in order to maintain single ownership of The Green and to preserve its integrity.

2. Why is this happening now?

There are two paths forward to create the National Park Service unit: either a legislatively authorized park, or an executive-office declaration of a national monument. (National monuments are often the first step toward a national park. The Grand Canyon, for example, began as a national monument.) In either scenario, the property-transfer documents must be created and ready to execute, hence the need to subdivide the property to preserve the integrity of The Green.

3. How is a national monument different from a national park? Will we still pursue a national park?

A national monument is a unit of the National Park Service, much the same as a national park. National parks require congressional authorization; national monuments can be declared by the president. National monuments are managed the same as national parks and both are listed on the National Park Service website so the public's experience should not be impacted regardless of the path taken. However, the establishment of a national monument—if that path is chosen—will not end the efforts for the national park.

4. What will the Sheriff's House be used for? What kinds of services will be provided? How many staff will be at the site?

Discussions have focused on utilizing the Sheriff's House as the headquarters for visitor services in the National Park Service unit. The headquarters is expected to include one or more National Park Service rangers to be at the location to assist with park information and interpretive tours.

5. How long will it take the National Park Service to restore the facility? What is the timeline for occupancy/startup of operations?

Once the unit is authorized (either via Congress or by the president), the National Park Service will have to request funding for the restoration of the Sheriff's House. This will likely be a multi-year process. The state of Delaware is currently finishing up its work on the restoration of the exterior of the building.

6. **How will ownership by the National Park Service affect the City of New Castle's use of The Green?**

The ownership of the Sheriff's House by the National Park Service should have no effect on the city's use of The Green.

7. **How can people stay informed about the process and provide comments?**

The **subdivision process** is a local process subject to public meetings governed by the City of New Castle, its commissions and city council. In terms of the larger discussion of creating a **national park in Delaware**, with the potential of locating **an interpretive unit in the Sheriff's House**, both federal and state officials have consulted with the local government and the general public through various meetings over the past few years and received strong public sentiment in favor of the initiatives. The creation of a **national monument** is a process of the National Park Service in the U. S. Department of the Interior. A meeting advertised to the public was held in August in New Castle County to provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the process and ask questions of Delaware's Congressional delegation and National Park Service representatives as well as state officials. The creation of a national park in Delaware has been an ongoing process with public meetings held throughout the state with opportunities for public input. Once either a national monument is designated or a national park is approved by Congress, public consultation will continue through the development of a **general management plan (GMP)**. This generally takes two to three years and involves public forums with opportunities for the public to comment through their attendance or via mail or email. More information about the national park initiative may be accessed through Senator Tom Carper's web page at <http://www.carper.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/delaware-national-park>.