**United States Capitol Complex**

Generally speaking, the layout of the United States Capitol Complex is simple. The US Capitol Building is in the center of the complex, and it is a large building, roughly in the shape of a capital “I”, situated in a north-south direction. It sits between Constitution Avenue on the north side and Independence Avenue on the south side. To the east of the Capitol is First Street, and to the west of the Capitol is the Capitol Reflecting Pool and the National Mall.

Due north of the Capitol, on the north side of Constitution Avenue is Upper Senate Park. Moving east from Upper Senate Park along Constitution Avenue the first cross street you will come to is Delaware Avenue, and on the other side of Delaware Avenue is the Russell Senate Office Building. If you continue to move east along Constitution, the next cross street you will come to is First Street, northeast. Directly on the other side of First Street, northeast is the Dirksen Senate Office Building. Finally, farther east on that same block is the Hart Senate Office Building. Because the Senate Chamber in the Capitol and all of the Senate office buildings are on the north side of the complex, it is generally called the “Senate side” of the complex.

On the south side of the Capitol Building is the House chamber and south of the Capitol, on the opposite side of Independence Avenue, are the three House office buildings, so naturally, this side of the complex is known as the “House side.” The orientation of the three House office buildings is similar to the Senate side; however, the House office buildings are situated slightly farther west, since there is no park area directly south of the Capitol. Due south of the Capitol is the north-south running South Capitol Street. On the west side of South Capitol Street and the south side of Independence Avenue is the Rayburn House Office Building. Moving east from Rayburn along Independence and crossing South Capitol Street you will come to the Longworth House Office Building. If you continue east on Independence and cross New Jersey Avenue, you will encounter the Cannon House Office Building.

**Russell Senate Office Building**

The Russell Senate Office Building is the oldest of the three Senate office buildings. It occupies an entire city block with Constitution Avenue to the south, C Street northeast to the north, Delaware Avenue northeast to the west, and First Street northeast to the east. The building is roughly in the shape of a hollow square with a courtyard in the center, but because Delaware Avenue is one of Washington DC’s famous (infamous to some) diagonals, the north side of the “square” is noticeably shorter than the south side. Not counting the basement, Russell has three floors. You can move freely around all sides of the square from the interior of each floor.

In the basement of Russell, there are a few interesting features. First is the Russell Carry Out, the building’s sole eatery, located in the northwest corner. Second are two tunnels that cross under First Street to allow members of Congress, staff, and guests to easily move between Russell and the two other Senate office buildings without having to go outside and through security again. These two tunnels are located in the northeast and southeast corners of the basement, parallel to C Street and Constitution Avenue respectively.

**Interesting Fact:** The Kennedy Caucus Room in the Russell Senate Office Building was used for numerous hearings of national importance including a 1912 hearing on the sinking of the Titanic, a 1974 hearing on the Watergate Scandal, and a 1991 hearing on the nomination of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

**Dirksen Senate Office Building**

The Dirksen Senate Office Building is the second oldest Senate office building and is located on the western half of the block bordered by Constitution Avenue to the south, C Street northeast to the north, First Street northeast to the west, and Second Street northeast to the east. The building is in the shape of a large capital “E” with five floors. Because the Dirksen Senate Office Building and the Hart Senate Office Building are right next to one another, with no street between them, you can access the Hart building from any floor in Dirksen via stairwells and elevators in the northeast and southeast corners of the building.

If you find that you are hungry in between meetings on the Senate side, Dirksen is exactly where you want to be. There are two eateries in Dirksen, one in the northwest corner of the basement, and another in the basement on the south side of the building. These two large eateries combined can accommodate several hundred people.

**Interesting Fact:** The majority of the space in the Dirksen Senate Office Building is devoted to Senate committee work, containing twelve separate committee rooms and office space for committee staff.

**Hart Senate Office Building**

The Hart Senate Office Building is the newest and largest of all the Senate office buildings. It occupies the eastern half of the block bordered by Constitution Avenue to the south, C Street northeast to the north, First Street northeast to the west, and Second Street northeast to the east. The building is in the shape of a large rectangle, situated in a north-south orientation, with a smaller rectangle that extends from the side of the building that faces Second Street. The building has eight floors and a large interior atrium space. Because the floors in Hart were designed to be shorter than those in the older Russell and Dirksen buildings, each floor in Hart will have a connecting stairwell and elevator in the northwest and southwest corners that will allow you to access all floors in the Dirksen building.

The only eatery in Hart is the slightly more formal Hart Senate Chef, which is located in the Dirksen-Hart ground floor connecting corridor.

**Interesting Fact:** Office suites in the Hart Senate Office Building take up two floors, and while the staff occupy office space that has a ceiling height of just over eight feet, the Senator’s office in the suite contains the traditional sixteen-foot ceilings found in Russell and Dirksen.

**Cannon House Office Building**

The Cannon House Office Building is the oldest of the three House office buildings and occupies the entire city block bordered by Independence Avenue to the north, C Street southwest to the south, New Jersey Avenue southeast to the west, and First Street southeast to the east. The building is roughly in the shape of a hollow square, but because New Jersey Avenue is one of Washington DC’s famous (infamous to some) diagonals, the north side of the “square” is noticeably longer than the south side. Cannon has five floors.

A tunnel on the west side of the basement will allow you to access the Longworth or Rayburn House Office Buildings without having to go outside and through security again.

**Interesting Fact:** The Cannon House Office Building and the Russell Senate Office Building were both constructed at the same time, which is why their floor plans are practically mirror images of one another on opposite sides of the Capitol.

**Longworth House Office Building**

The Longworth House Office Building is the second oldest of the three House office buildings and occupies the entire city block bordered by Independence Avenue to the north, C Street southwest to the south, South Capitol Street southeast to the west, and New Jersey Avenue southeast to the east. The building is a roughly in the shape of a large hollow rectangle situated in a north-south orientation, but because New Jersey Avenue is a diagonal (running northwest to southeast); the north side of the building is shorter than the south side. Additionally, because Longworth is located on the slope of Capitol Hill, the west side is nearly two whole floors taller than the east side.

A tunnel on the west side of the basement will allow you to access the Rayburn House Office Building without having to go outside and through security again, while another tunnel on the east side of the basement will allow you to access the Cannon House Office Building. Additionally, there is a large cafeteria located in the basement of Longworth.

**Interesting Fact:** During 1949 and 1950, the Longworth House Office Building served as the official chamber of the US House of Representatives while the House Chamber in the Capitol was undergoing renovations. The full 435 member House of Representatives met in Longworth’s Ways and Means Committee Room.

**Rayburn House Office Building**

The Rayburn House Office Building is the newest of the three House office buildings and occupies the entire city block bordered by Independence Avenue to the north, C Street southwest to the south, First Street southwest to the west, and South Capitol Street southeast to the east. The central part of the building is a hollow square, with a large ground level courtyard in the center. Each corner of the square has a wing that extends from it. The wings on the northwest and southwest corners extend due west, and the wings on the northeast and southeast corners extend due east. There are four above ground floors, and two basement levels.

A tunnel on the east side of the basement will allow you to access the Longworth and Cannon House Office Buildings without having to go outside and through security again. Additionally, the ground floor of Rayburn has a large cafeteria.

**Interesting Fact:** The Rayburn House Office Building is the largest building in the US Capitol Complex at nearly 2.4 million square feet.