

Design Guidelines

The White House
& President's Park

Washington, D.C.

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United States Department of the Interior · National Park Service

Contents

Introduction	1
<i>The Design Challenge at the White House and President's Park</i>	2
<i>Urban Design Consideration</i>	5
<i>Scale, Texture, and Continuity</i>	6
<i>Guiding Principles</i>	10
<i>Implementation</i>	13
Architecture	15
<i>Architectural Style</i>	15
<i>Scale, Texture, and Continuity</i>	17
<i>White House Architecture</i>	19
<i>Architecture within President's Park</i>	30
<i>Architecture Facing the White House and President's Park</i>	37
Landscape Architecture	57
<i>Design Traditions</i>	57
<i>Plant Materials</i>	59
<i>Offsite Influences</i>	59
<i>Landscape Vernacular</i>	60
Design Elements	71
<i>Fences</i>	72
<i>Gates and Gateposts</i>	79
<i>Lighting</i>	86
<i>Paving</i>	93
<i>Bollards</i>	103
<i>Other Design Elements</i>	106
Signs and Graphic Design	117
Temporary Facilities	119
<i>Notes</i>	121
<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	122
<i>Contributors</i>	123
<i>Photo Credits</i>	124



*Executive Committee
Comprehensive Design Plan
for the White House*

These guidelines have been adopted by the Executive Committee for the Comprehensive Design Plan for the White House. The committee, which includes representatives from the following agencies and congressionally chartered organizations, works with the director of the National Park Service to help guide the development and implementation of the comprehensive plan. These agencies and organizations have stewardship and oversight responsibilities for the White House and within President's Park:

Executive Office of the President
Executive Residence at the White House
White House Military Office
U.S. Department of the Treasury
U.S. Secret Service
General Services Administration
National Park Service
District of Columbia
Commission of Fine Arts
National Capital Planning Commission
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

Introduction

The intent of design guidelines for the White House and President's Park — including Lafayette Park, the White House and its adjacent grounds, and the Ellipse — is to provide a framework of mutually agreed upon tenets that guide, but do not dictate, future development. Adopting such guidelines will serve to protect the public trust and conserve the area's important resources for future generations of Americans.

The character of the White House and President's Park is complex, having developed over 200 years. The site evolved from the monumental planning initiative by George Washington and Pierre Charles L'Enfant in 1791 to the intriguing cultural ensemble we see today. Its very ambience centers on a concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* — a collection of individual elements that go together to create a singular work of art. At President's Park the individual elements combine to produce a special feeling and sense of place.¹ Without an understanding of how the diversity of park spaces and structures complement one another, there is the potential for this area to lose its design cohesiveness. Future plans must continue to be sensitive to how the White House precinct as a whole relates to the overall design of Washington, D.C.

The development of the White House landscape has often literally reflected larger national historical trends. For example, the portion of Pennsylvania Avenue to the north of the White House was not a part of the initial plans. Here the founders of the republic saw an expansive forecourt, including what would later become Lafayette Park; the entire property would serve as a point of convergence for avenues in this part of the city. But as the republic of the Federalists became the democracy of the Jacksonians, the forecourt of the White House became bisected by a street. That right-of-way became a symbol of American democracy — a public street where the president lives and works. From that time Pennsylvania Avenue has separated

The White House and President's Park represent a collection of individual elements that go together to produce a special feeling and sense of place.

The design guidelines provide a framework by which to assess new design proposals within the context of the site's history and character.

Lafayette Park from the rest of the White House grounds, and until May 1995 it carried public vehicular traffic.

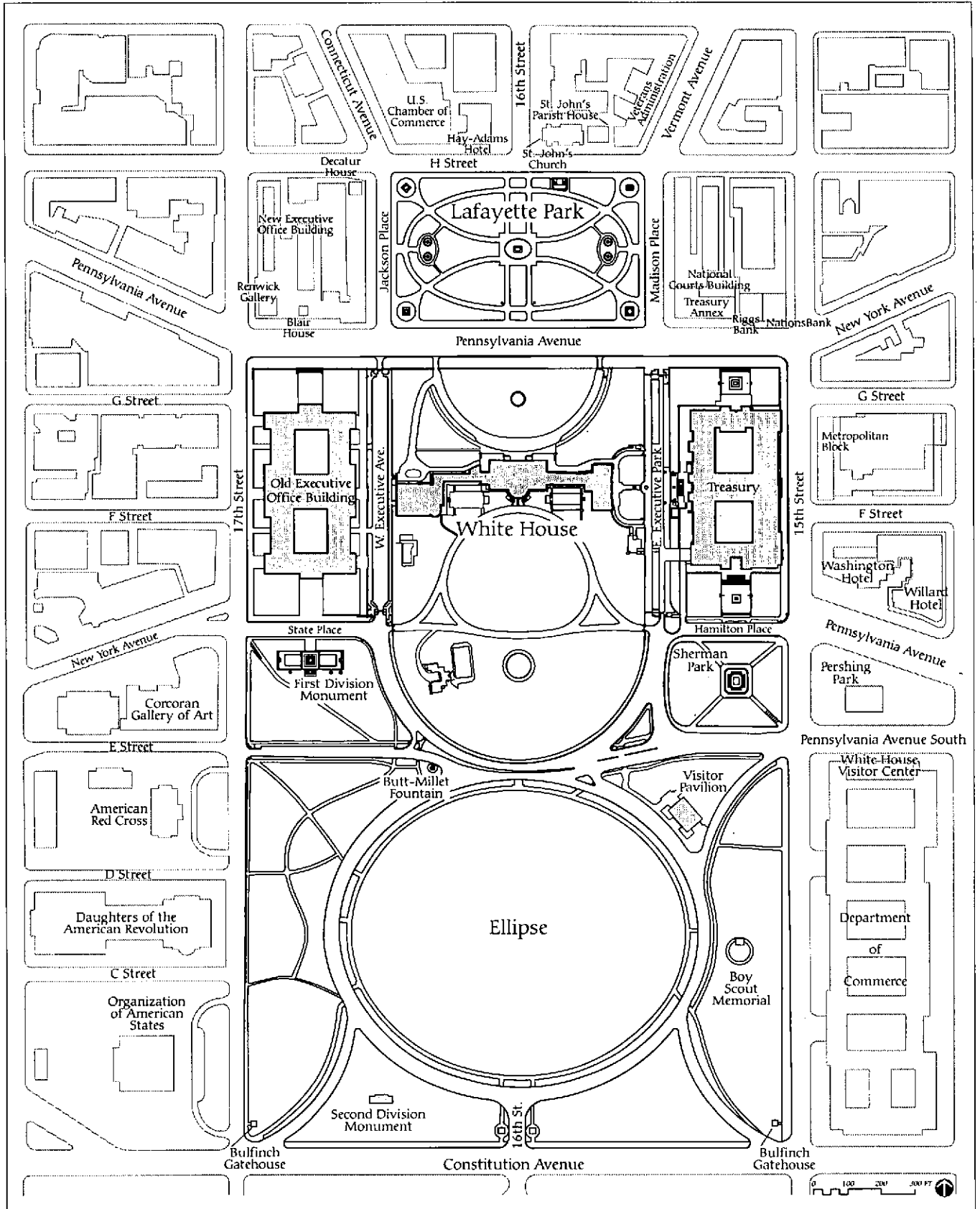
President's Park and the White House have benefited from earlier public participation in their development, for example, the City Beautiful movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In the early 1900s the Senate Park Commission redesigned portions of the city, including President's Park, and established memorials and parkways. A major legacy of this effort, known as the McMillan plan, is the architectural and symbolic coherence of public and private buildings that front on monumental spaces such as President's Park. It is within the context of this much honored tradition of broad participation that the design guidelines have been formulated and will be administered.

The design guidelines are presented as a palette of ideas developed by cultural resource and design professionals who have been privileged to work with the resources of President's Park for some years. While these ideas are not intended to be prescriptive, they do provide a framework by which to assess new design proposals within the context of the site's history and character. With this assistance, combined with the creative initiative of some of America's best and most original minds, it is hoped that future solutions will always reflect design excellence at President's Park.

The Design Challenge at the White House and President's Park

L'Enfant's original 1791 concept (as reinterpreted by Andrew Ellicott in 1792), Andrew Jackson Downing's 1851 plan, and the work of the Olmsted brothers in 1935 are the major plans that have generally guided the development of the White House and President's Park over the last 200 years. Other general

President's Park



For the most part great care has been taken to preserve the context of the original idea of President's Park as an important design element in the federal capital city.

plans, including the McMillan plan of 1901, have also had some effect, particularly on surrounding traffic patterns, but all have generally based their proposals on L'Enfant's vision. Individual projects that have occurred apart from the formal planning efforts have at times compromised L'Enfant's original concept; however, for the most part great care has been taken to preserve the concept of President's Park as an important design element in the federal capital city.

President's Park lies within a neighborhood containing five historic districts and over 60 sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The 82-acre parcel (including the 18 acres immediately surrounding the White House) contains commemorative plantings by presidents and first ladies, as well as a variety of monuments and memorials. Its buildings range widely in architectural expression and include Georgian, Greek Revival, Classical Revival, Gothic Revival, modernist, and post-modernist styles. It is a site rich in historic archeological resources and has the potential to yield prehistoric resources as well. The White House museum collections compare favorably with those of international galleries.

The White House must accommodate both public and private functions on a daily basis — as a state residence, an executive office, a museum, a security area, a military installation, and a national shrine. As the site of the home and office of the president of the United States, the White House and its grounds constitute a traditional cultural landscape that is ceremonial by design. Like other landscapes serving state residences, the grounds are highly manipulated. They change on a daily basis according to need, but changes are generally within a tradition that attempts to protect both resources and vistas.

President's Park must also accommodate a variety of functions — as a point of public assembly, an urban park, a recreation area, and a ceremonial stage. While the daily use of the

property must remain flexible to accommodate the range of intense uses and demands placed on its limited resources, these resources are truly unique and as such must be preserved. The mandate to protect resources while allowing for flexibility to meet presidential needs remains central to the continuing design challenge at President's Park.

Urban Design Considerations

Urban design impressions in and around President's Park depend on how one enters and moves through this area. When entering President's Park from adjacent neighborhoods to the west, north, and east, one is aware of passing from densely developed urban streetscapes into an open area with lawns, trees, and memorial statues before attention is drawn to the White House itself. When entering President's Park from the south, one is aware of a gradual transition from large ceremonial and memorial spaces within the Monumental Core to President's Park and then to an urban setting. Within President's Park, one can sense the symbolism of the urban design and the reciprocal linkages to both the Monumental Core and downtown Washington.

While L'Enfant's intent — that the home of the president be the focus of broad vistas and grand approaches — was never fully realized, his concept of how President's Park relates to the city plan is still valid. The complementary relationship between the home of the president and the city is symbolized by views toward the White House that are just as dramatic as those from the mansion's north door or the south portico. Over the past 200 years surrounding urban development has become dominant and out of proportion to the scale of the White House as a building, but the distinctive setting of the executive mansion within President's Park emphasizes its importance, and the open spaces reinforce a sense of dignity and power.

Within President's Park, one can sense the symbolism of the urban design and the reciprocal linkages to both the Monumental Core and downtown Washington.

The classical concept of decorum in public architecture has been the dominant philosophical element in the architectural evolution of the White House and President's Park.

Today, the basic urban design form evident in and adjacent to President's Park must be considered as a composite of architectural and landscape features, streetscapes and buildings, site-specific details and long-range views. These basic forms are articulated and tied together by major public walkways and thoroughfares. The enhancement of areas beyond President's Park is essential to preserving the site's fundamental and historic design elements. The perpetuation of this urban design legacy in the broadest sense involves not only the conservation of the irreplaceable and desirable forms that have evolved so far, but also the flexibility to create new forms that enhance the impressive traditions of the past.

Scale, Texture, and Continuity

The classical concept of decorum in public architecture has been the dominant philosophical element in the architectural evolution of the White House and President's Park. Rediscovered by Italian Renaissance designers, this ancient concept refers to the selection of building styles and sites that evoke an appropriate public message of power and respect.² The qualities of scale, texture, and continuity are integral to how the concept of decorum is applied at the White House and President's Park, contributing substantially to the site's overall character and central design message.

The ability to illustrate the power of the executive in a republic has always been and continues to be the single most difficult challenge for designers. The attributes of the imagery that conveys this authority are subtle yet undeniably present, and they are immediately discernible to all who visit the site. The White House continues to serve as a symbol of power and authority largely as a result of designers over 200 years understanding the importance of these design principles and applying them with genius. As a result of their efforts, the White House and

President's Park today are international symbols of democratic power and participation in the government of a great republic.

The White House and President's Park are first and foremost a public trust, an important part of our national heritage. To protect this unique and important legacy, future designers must understand the collaborative history and evolution of this important resource.

Scale

The application of scale at the site is the single most problematic consideration in design. The overscaling of detail and elements combine with monumentalism to convey the message of authority. L'Enfant provided a grand city design to emphasize the authority and power of the new republic. The sweeping, unoccupied vistas to the Potomac River further supported this concept. James Hoban understood this idea well when he designed the White House in 1791. The windows and panes, the carved stonework, the engaged pilasters, and other detailing are all oversized for a relatively small structure. But Hoban remained sensitive to how this overscaling was used, and the result was a mansion that seems much larger than it really is. The later additions of the north and south porticos play off this same concept.

Later designers also understood Hoban's initial ideas of overscaling and created complementary designs. The entrance to the East Wing serves as a brilliant example, with a relatively small structure given monumentality through the symmetrical placement of Tuscan columns to provide a sense of entrance. The gateposts at entry points to the White House continue the use of the Tuscan order and quoining to contribute a sense of strength. The subtle yet authoritative punctuation of gateposts around the White House grounds helps join the gigantic

The overscaling of detail and elements combine with monumentalism to convey the message of authority.

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masses of the Old Executive Office Building (formerly the State, War, and Navy Building) and the U.S. Treasury Building to the White House. On the north the gateposts are topped by oversized torchères, further conveying the message of authority and power. Gates and fencing, however, had remained open and light until security concerns required heavier and more authoritative elements.

Texture

Texture is the subtlest of the three qualities. It can be found throughout the built environment — walls, walks, steps, building facades, roofs, paving, curbing detail — all vary greatly but generally respect the sense of decorum. Various materials are used, including granite, limestone, bluestone, sandstone, marble, glazed and natural terra cotta, brick, flagstone, terrazzo, and travertine. All have their own special finishes, catching and playing with the light in ways that vary at certain times of the day and throughout the seasons. All the textures evoke a sense of timelessness. The sensitive combination of these elements lends substantially to the sense of place at the White House and President's Park.

Cut stone was used for the White House to indicate power, permanence, and stability. When it was built, the White House was the largest such stone residence in the nation, and Scottish and Italian stone masons had to be hired to work the material. The executive offices, originally housed in Georgian brick structures, were soon replaced with substantial cut stone structures to further underscore a message of permanence and stability.

Continuity

Color, rhythm, proportion, and placement are the finishing touches that give the White House and President's Park their special sense of place. Colors of gray to white and buff predominate, with subtle accents. Verdigris, bronze green, and black add to the sense of decorum.

Rhythm is crucial, whether in the repetitive, elegant flow of carved festoons, flowing vine details in terrazzo and balustrades, or in the many paving patterns in both walkways and drives. It contributes a mute yet visual consonance, adding strength and a sense of correctness.

Proportion is closely aligned to rhythm, and together these two elements contribute to the geometry of the space. To illustrate power and authority, they must remain harmonious; otherwise, the message becomes discordant.

Structures within President's Park have traditionally been placed at right-angle relationships within a landscape composed of circular forms. At times statuary has been obliquely placed, but usually to complement or accent another design element, such as a street or vista. The careful placement of structures in association with the other elements can substantially contribute to the continued historical and aesthetic ambience of the White House and President's Park.

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Guiding Principles

The historic layout of Washington, D.C., physically shows the functional relationship of the three branches of government, with the White House and President's Park representing the executive branch. The White House and President's Park will continue to exhibit a sense of unity and to be an integral element of the urban fabric, with a direct connection to the District of Columbia, the Monumental Core, and the National Mall.

The design principles and guidelines for President's Park are based on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation*,³ which provide the general structure for this document and which should be consulted whenever design issues are discussed for President's Park. The following general principles define the parameters for design. They are not prescriptive; rather, they provide designers a philosophy and a framework within which to provide creative yet appropriate designs for the White House and President's Park.

1. Site elements from earlier significant planning efforts will be respected and conserved, including the classical 18th century forms that are inherent to the layout of President's Park and the city of Washington, D.C. All components of President's Park are designed historic landscapes, and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation* will be followed in the management and treatment of these landscapes.
2. The distinct character of each of the site's three areas — Lafayette Park, the White House, and the Ellipse — will be respected, while recognizing that together these areas function as a significant design element in the layout of Washington, D.C.

3. The design vocabulary and palette for the site will complement and articulate the dignity and importance of the resource, drawing from the existing appropriate architecture and landscape architecture in and around the site. To this end, proposed design elements will respect the size, scale, mass, proportion, and aesthetics of existing elements, and the spatial relationships between them.
4. The traditional vistas from the White House to the north and south, as well as vistas toward the White House, will be respected at all times.
5. All designs will incorporate sound environmental principles and environmentally and economically beneficial resource management technologies and practices.
6. The quality of the pedestrian experience will remain a high priority in all designs.
7. The needs to accommodate service, security, and ceremonial functions will be met in a manner that is consistent with the dignity and importance of the site.
8. Neither security nor aesthetics will be compromised by actions on site.
9. Design elements that communicate appropriate visual quality, continuity, and consistency will define the boundaries of President's Park and will create a specific identity for the park, but will also complement the design qualities of adjacent areas. For example,
 - Materials used on the site will be compatible with its unique character. To this end, all items used in the park — including benches, stonework, grillwork, fences, light posts, and other elements — will relate to the

Proposed design elements will respect the size, scale, mass, proportion, and aesthetics of existing elements, and the spatial relationships between them.

Designs for President's Park will remain flexible and capable of being appropriately adapted in response to technological advances, future demands, and changes in adjacent historic and commercial neighborhoods.

whole and will complement the overall District of Columbia federal park system.

- All elements must be designed to withstand intense use while still imparting a sense of dignity and elegance.
 - Transitions into President's Park should show a connection with the city. The quality and appearance of materials will announce a special precinct. President's Park and the National Mall need special treatment as transition zones that reinforce mutual relationships.
 - Signs and signals will be kept to a minimum within and adjacent to President's Park, consistent with adequate visitor orientation and safety messages.
10. Plant materials will reflect traditional landscape elements in mass and alignment. The choice of specific plant materials will remain flexible but will be guided by the intent of principle 1 and will complement the palette of existing plant materials.
 - The landscape design will continue to use vegetation to define and refine spatial relationships.
 - Plantings and planting designs outside the White House fence will complement those inside the fence in quality, scale, and selection.
 11. Designs for President's Park will remain flexible and capable of being appropriately adapted in response to technological advances, future demands, and changes in adjacent historic and commercial neighborhoods.

Implementation

These guidelines are intended to be dynamic and to be amended to incorporate the best design ideas. Amendments should be the result of a carefully considered review process.

An interagency review board for standards will be established to supervise the administration of the guidelines and when appropriate to suggest, review, and incorporate amendments. The members of the review board for standards will consist of representatives from the White House Office of the Chief of Staff, the Office of the Chief Usher, the Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Historic Preservation Office of the District of Columbia, the American Institute of Architects, the National Park Service, and two university professionals from the fields of architecture, landscape architecture, design, or history. This board will also serve as advisors on large projects at President's Park; however, formal review and comment will remain the purview of the commissions and boards already in place.

The design guidelines for President's Park will be administered on a daily basis by the Office of the Chief Usher of the White House and the U.S. Department of the Interior through the National Park Service's Office of White House Liaison.

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Architecture

Pierre L'Enfant's initial concept for the republic's capital city has generally been respected, even though some gradual changes have been made. The concept of the grand vista and the use of the radial/grid street scheme are L'Enfant's two most lasting contributions to the city of Washington. The vistas from Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capitol or from 16th Street south to the White House remain intact, and the command of the landscape and the relationship of buildings to the environment is still evident. These elegant and powerful concepts remain the framework on which modern Washington was built, and they are integral to the design ethic of President's Park and the siting of the White House.

Architectural Style

The built environment of President's Park and the surrounding neighborhood contain examples of American architecture over the last 200 years. The architecture of most of these structures draws its inspiration from classical Greek and Roman models, and they are interpretations based on classical orders. James Hoban's design for the White House, the oldest of these structures, was based on the model of an Anglo-Irish manor house of the 18th century. The general style of the building evokes the designs of architects of the late Georgian period, including British architect Robert Adam; this style is generally known in the United States as Federal. The building's architectural detail draws from classical elements embellished with floral designs, swags, imbrication, and other motifs reminiscent of the earlier works of Grinling Gibbons and Inigo Jones in the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The U.S. Treasury Building, constructed in stages between 1836 and 1869, draws from a simpler Greek classical design. The Old Executive Office Building, constructed in a neoclassical Second

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Symbolism is everywhere in the architecture of the White House and President's Park. Classical allusion and allegory remain an important part of the President's Park vocabulary.

Empire style between 1871 and 1888, also draws from a classical vocabulary.

Symbolism is everywhere in the architecture of the White House and President's Park. Ornamentation on the White House uses oak garlands and griffins to represent strength and authority, and roses to represent both fidelity and confidentiality — all appropriate symbols to embellish a structure designed to serve as both the home and office of the president. On the U.S. Treasury Building ornamentation is simpler and less allegorical, relying on ancient motifs such as the ritualistic egg-and-dart designs, alluding to ancient Greek religious rites. On the Old Executive Office Building these ornamental components are adapted more to a late 19th century vocabulary, such as the escutcheon and star motifs above the windows and the superimposing of various classical architectural orders in the structure. Classical allusion and allegory remain an important part of the President's Park vocabulary.

The majority of buildings immediately surrounding the site also draw from these classical traditions. Some, such as the Renwick Gallery, are earlier representations of the Second Empire architecture of the 1850s; however, its vermiculated quoining and other detailing are drawn from neoclassical designs. Blair House, a vernacular urban expression, relies on classical proportions, as do the townhouses on Jackson Place. More monumental office structures — such as the Riggs National Bank, the Organization of American States Building, the American Red Cross National Headquarters, and the Daughters of the American Revolution Memorial Continental Hall — are all Beaux Arts adaptations of classical models. The Department of Commerce represents a modernist expression of classical applications.

Some anomalies exist, such as post World War II architectural expressions, including the various office structures west of 17th Street and north of Pennsylvania Avenue. For the most

part, however, classical applications have continued to dominate the architecture of President's Park, even in exaggerated, classically inspired postmodern structures, like the visitor pavilion on the Ellipse completed in 1994.

Scale, Texture, and Continuity

Scale, texture, and continuity in architecture vary greatly on and around the site, even though the concept of decorum is generally respected. A variety of materials are used, from marble to granite, brick, terra cotta, slate, limestone, bronze, and copper. The applications of these elements generally impart a timeless quality and a sense of place, stability, and authority. Color palettes for the most part remain subdued, ranging through browns, grays, and greens, with occasional muted accent colors.

Future site designs need to respect this legacy of design continuity while incorporating the best of modern theory and technology. Environmental concerns, including sustainable practices, energy conservation, construction materials, and similar methodologies, must now be factored into any assessment of new construction on the site. The experience of visitors and how diverse populations use the site, including all aspects of accessibility, must also be considered in new designs.

President's Park is a constantly evolving resource, and the continuum of past, present, and future must be considered in all designs. Designs over the past 200 years have always shown a respect for the site's history, while incorporating the best of contemporary ideas. Continuing this tradition will ensure the vitality of thought and expression, while conserving those precious and powerful elements that constitute the legacy of President's Park.

Scale, texture, and continuity in architecture vary greatly on and around the site, even though the concept of decorum is generally respected.

The following photographs and illustrations exemplify the built environment of President's Park and the surrounding neighborhood. The design elements shown incorporate scale, texture, and continuity on and around the site. They ennoble the vernacular building traditions by demonstrating their fitness for civic architecture — an appropriate aesthetic that has created a symbol for our nation.

White House Architecture

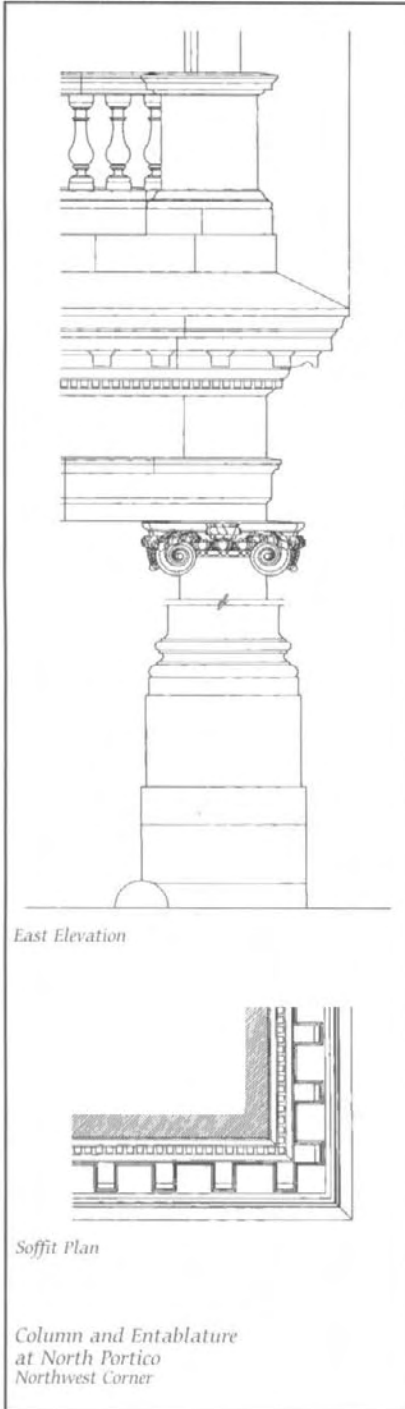
Hoban's scale of major architectural features and his exaggeration of detail, such as the window hoods, create the impression of a monumental structure, although the White House is actually of modest size.

White House, North Portico

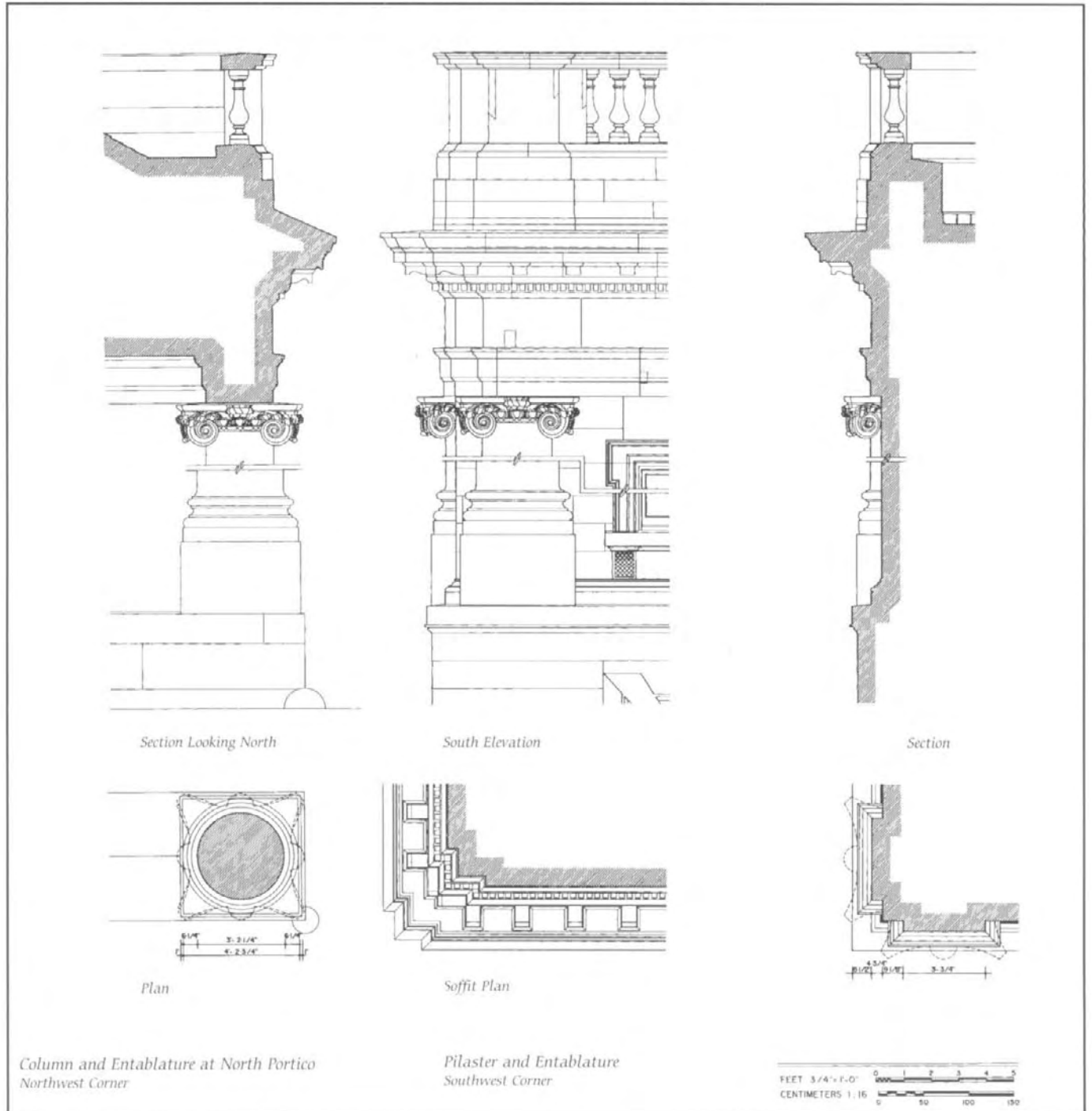


The articulation of detail and attention to rhythm in the placement of dentil elements lends both elegance and substance to the character-defining features of the White House.

White House, North Portico, Column and Entablature



White House, North Portico, Column and Entablature, Pilaster and Entablature



Acanthus motifs and rosettes made up of oak leaves and acorns play on classical allusions, while foliated brackets continue the flowing rhythm from above the fanlight, framing the White House door head.

White House, North Door, Stone Carving Detail

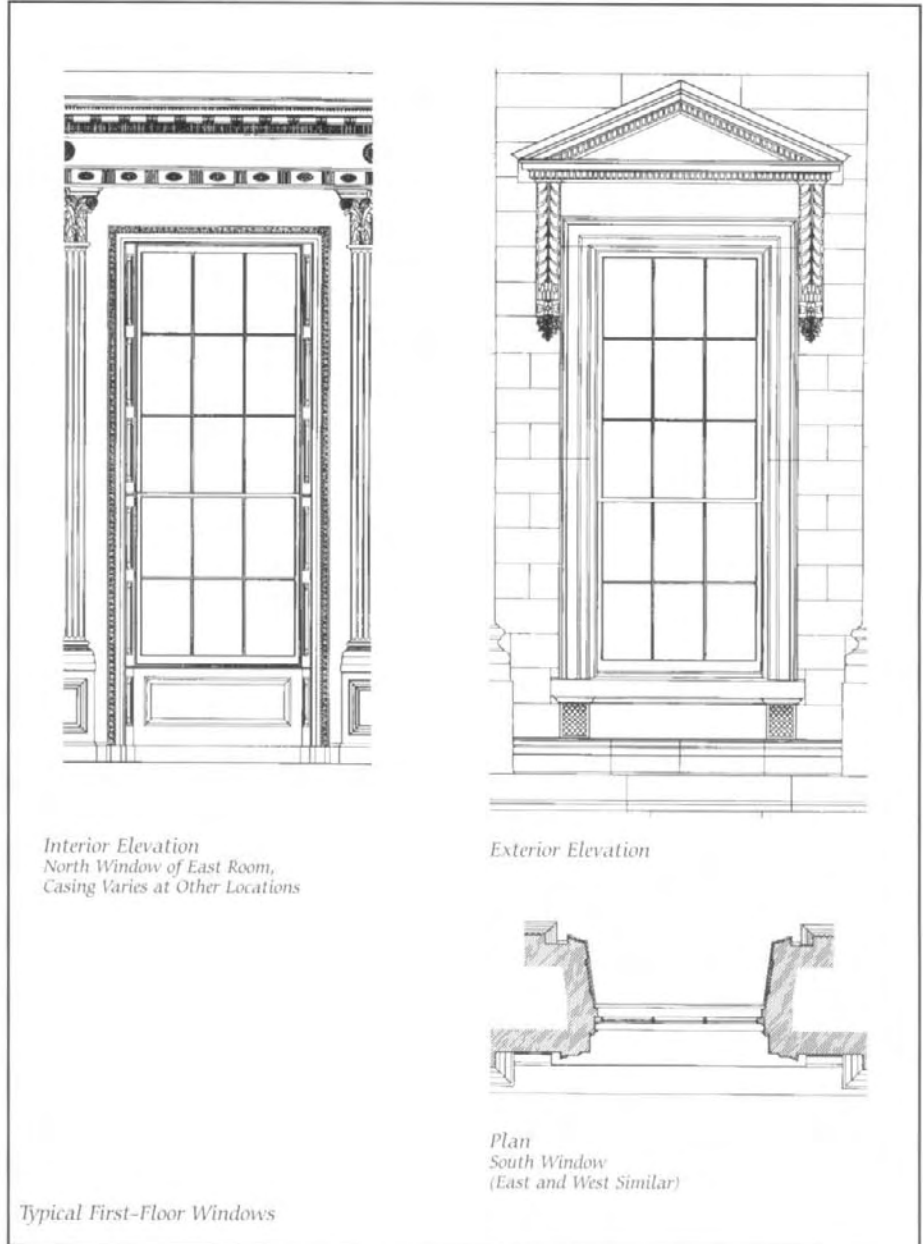


White House, North Door, Stone Carving Detail



Oversized details, including window hoods, dentils, foliate brackets, rosettes, and guilloche, combine to make a monumental White House window.

White House, First-Floor Window Detail



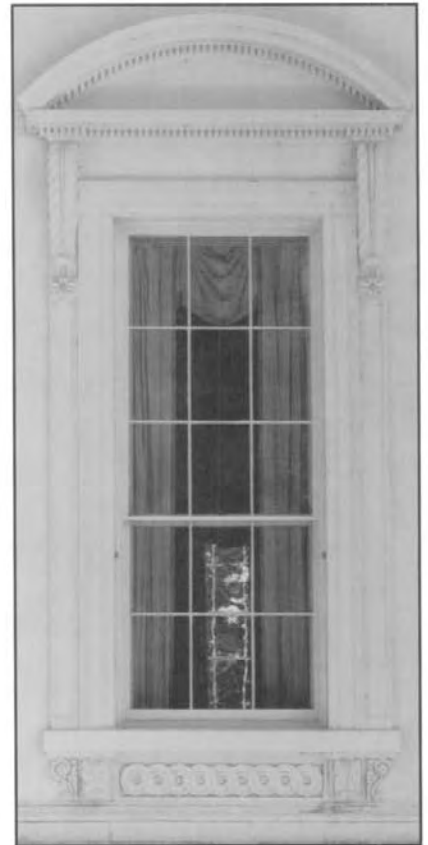
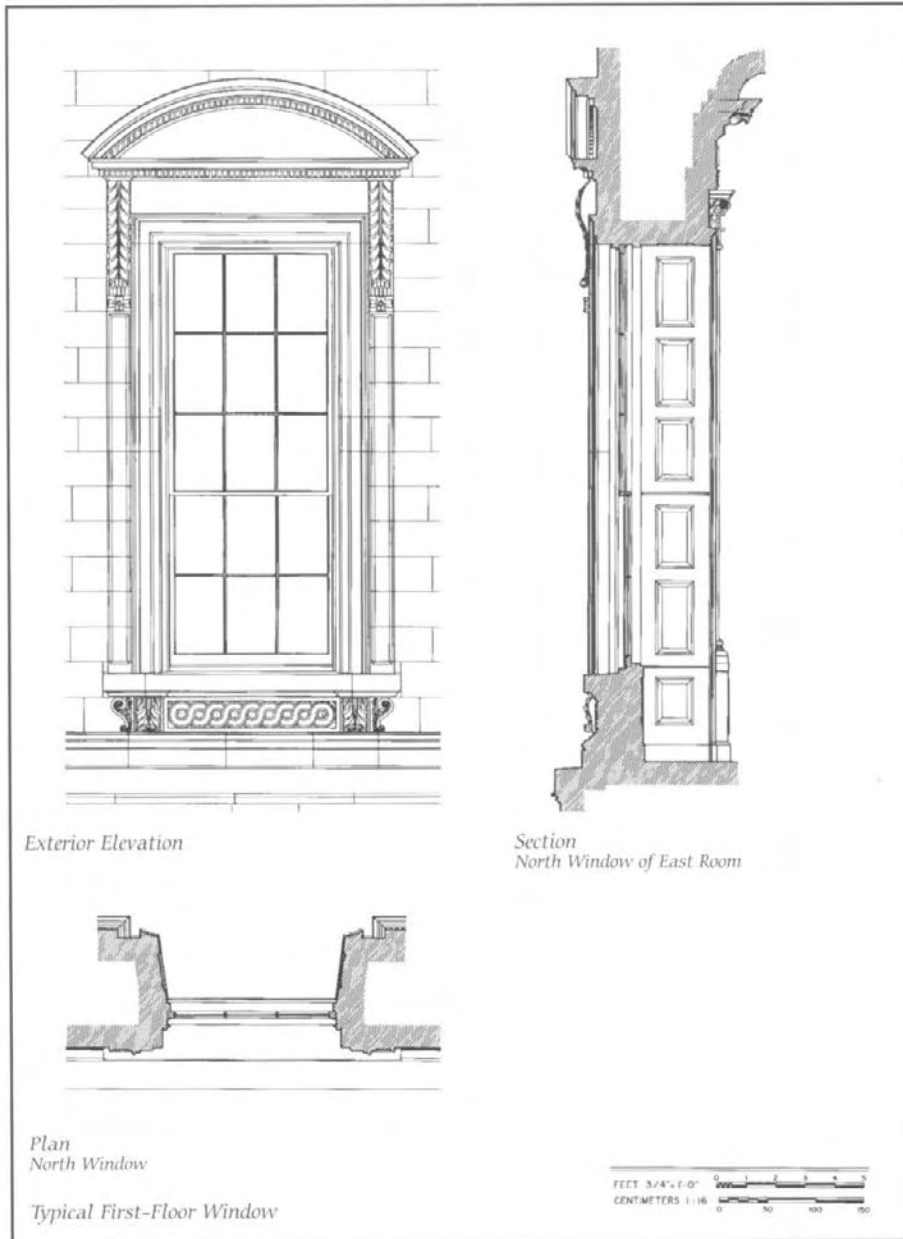
Interior Elevation
North Window of East Room,
Casing Varies at Other Locations

Exterior Elevation

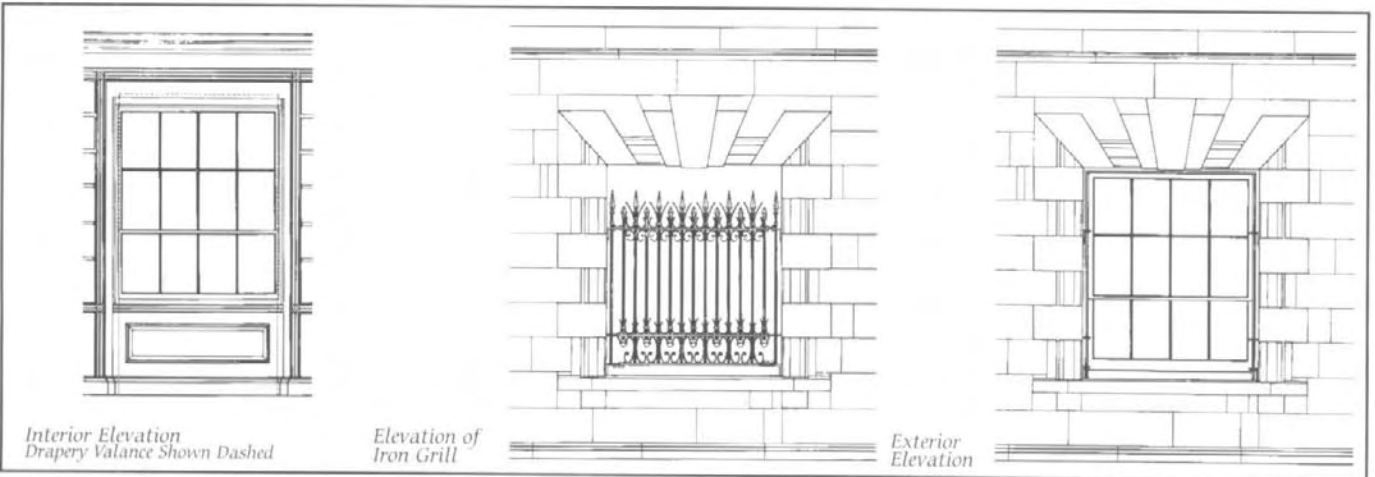
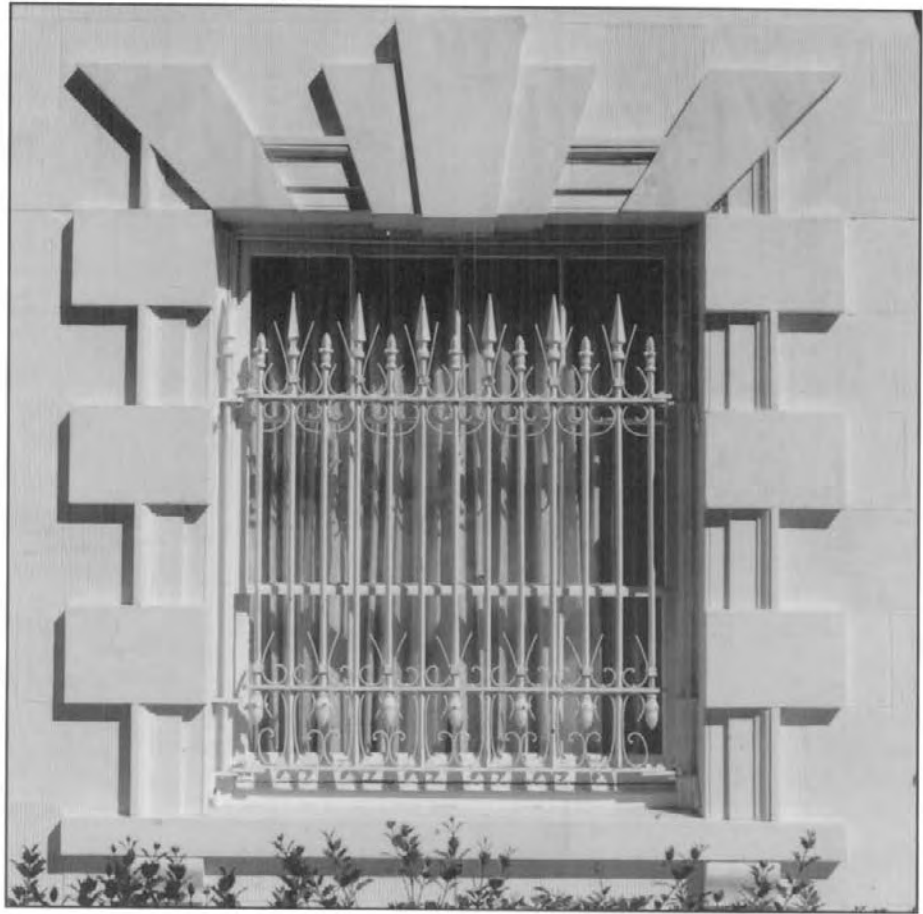
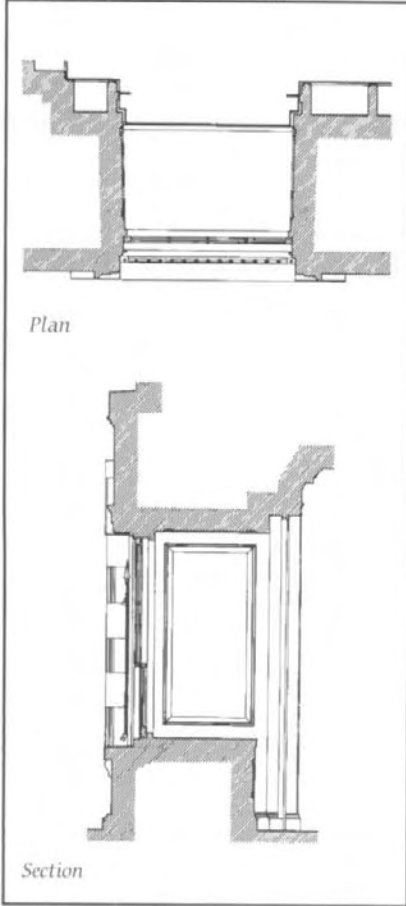
Plan
South Window
(East and West Similar)

Typical First-Floor Windows

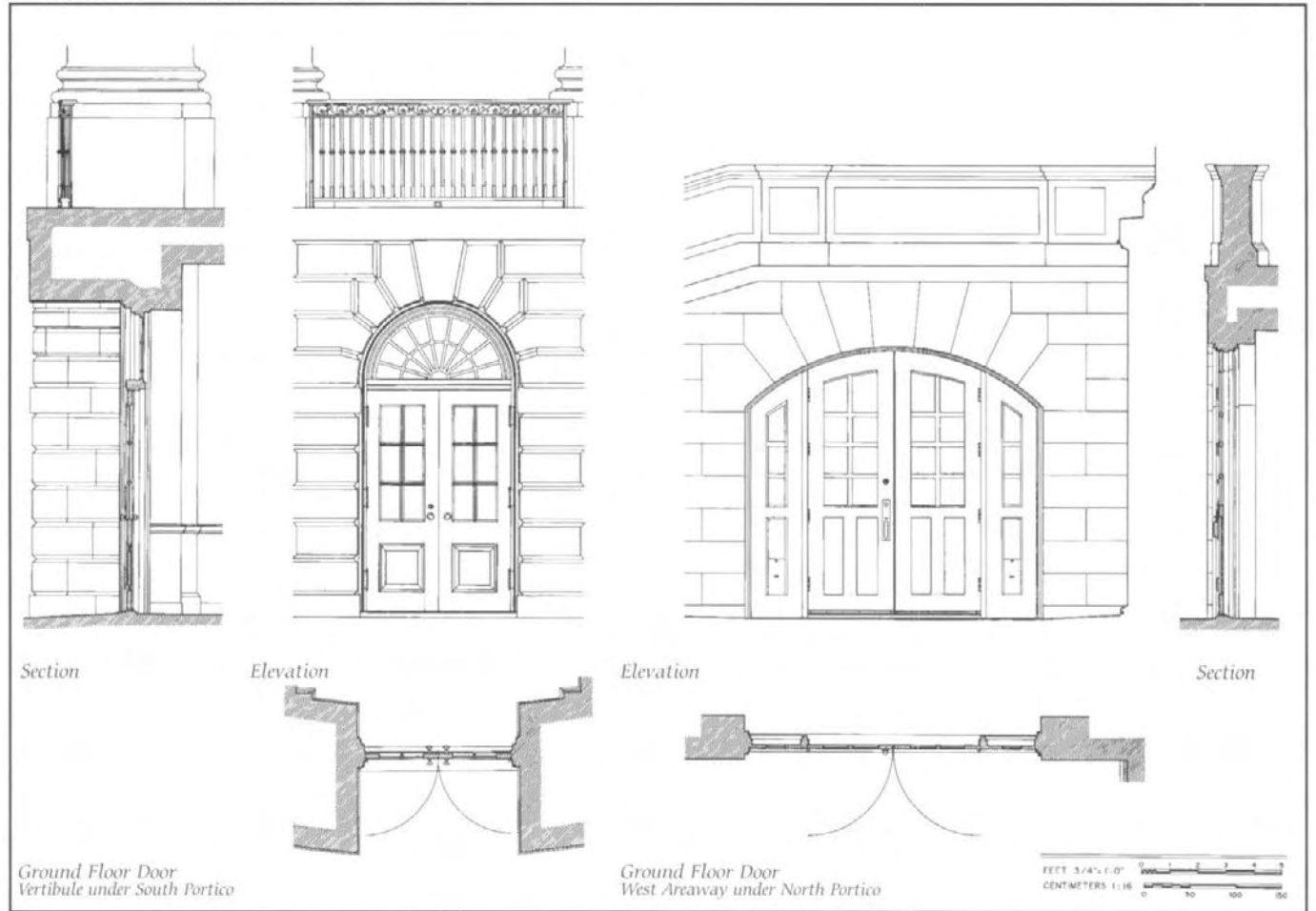
White House, First-Floor Window Detail



White House, At Library, North Wall, Ground-Floor Window Detail



White House, Ground-Floor Door Details



The design of the East Wing entrance by McKim, Mead and White (as redesigned during the Franklin D. Roosevelt and subsequent administrations) continues the use of scale and rhythm to provide a sense of both power and authority. Gate and fence details and a simple fountain reinforce the principle of decorum.

White House, East Wing Entrance



The concept of decorum, combined with site location, scale, and classical detailing, was used to make this visitor entrance facility simple and unobtrusive. The design acknowledges the historical development of the landscape, and the building resembles a late 18th century orangery tucked into a romantic landscape.

White House, Visitor Entrance Building



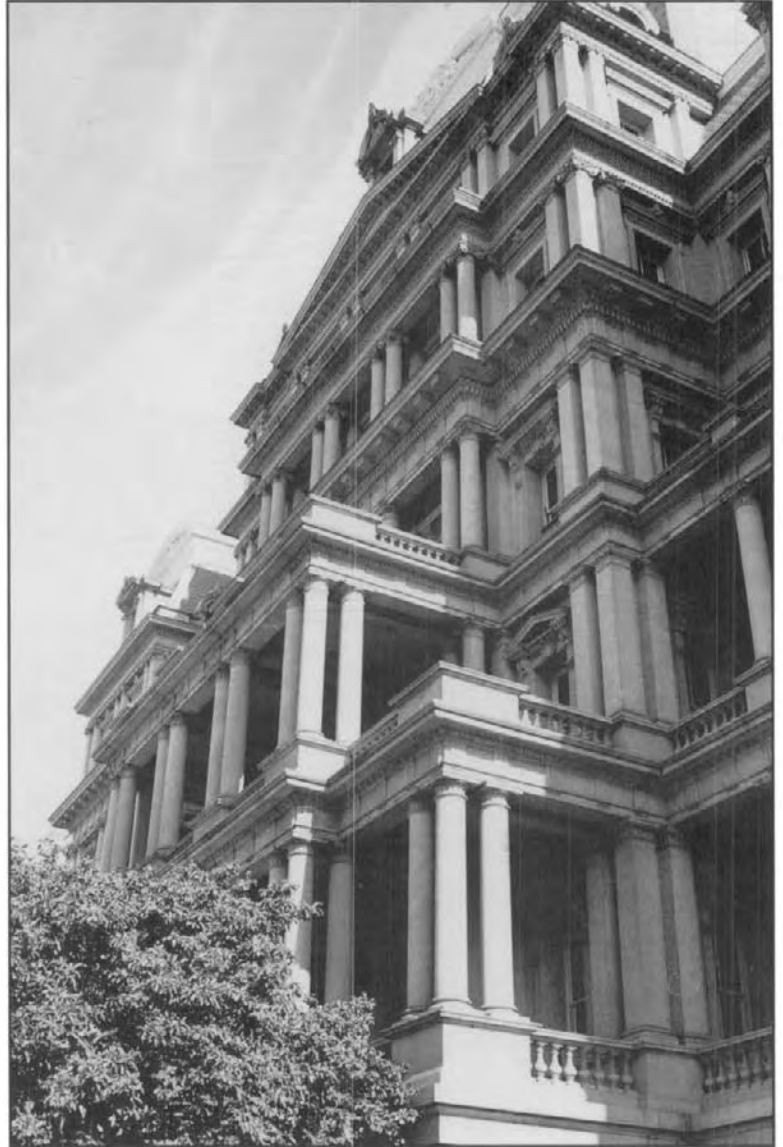
Architecture within President's Park

The architecture of the Old Executive Office Building combines classic detailing with a Second Empire design, reflecting the sensibilities of the United States and its government in the post-Civil War era. Mass and scale combine to impose both power and authority upon the streetscape.

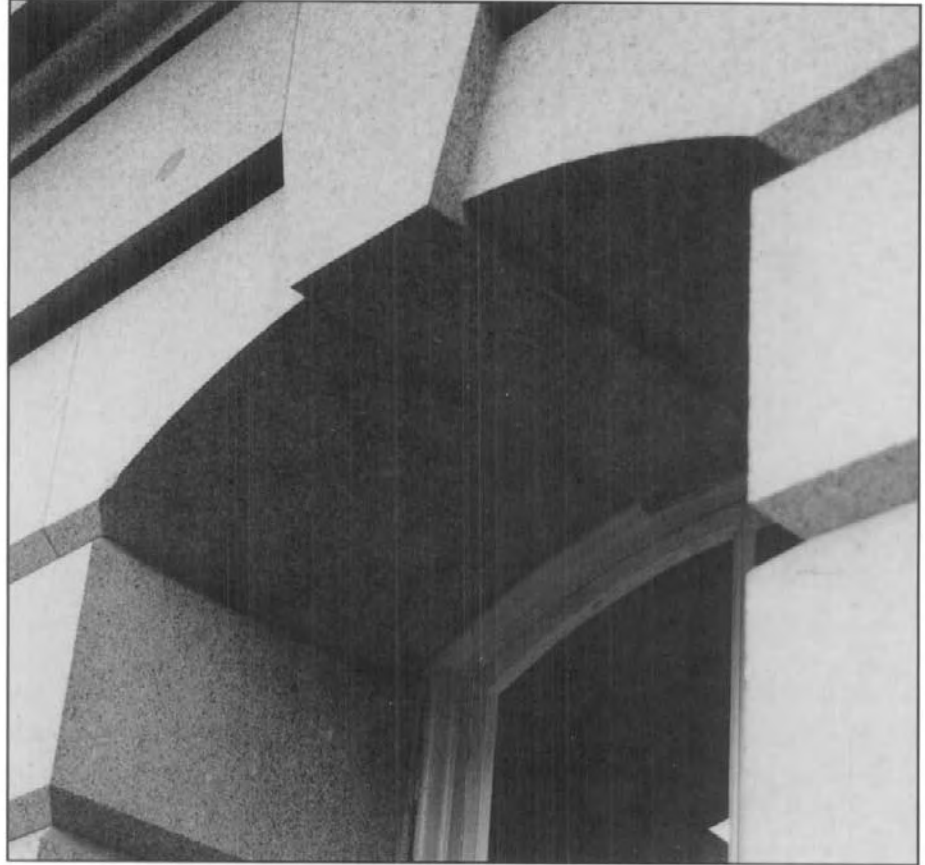
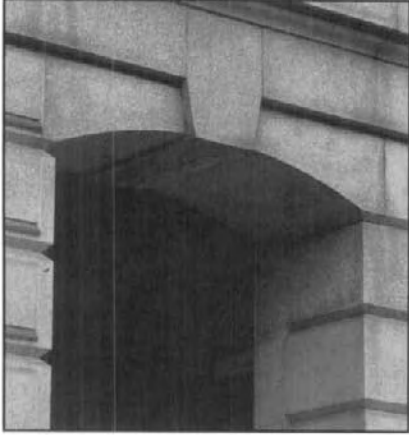
Old Executive Office Building



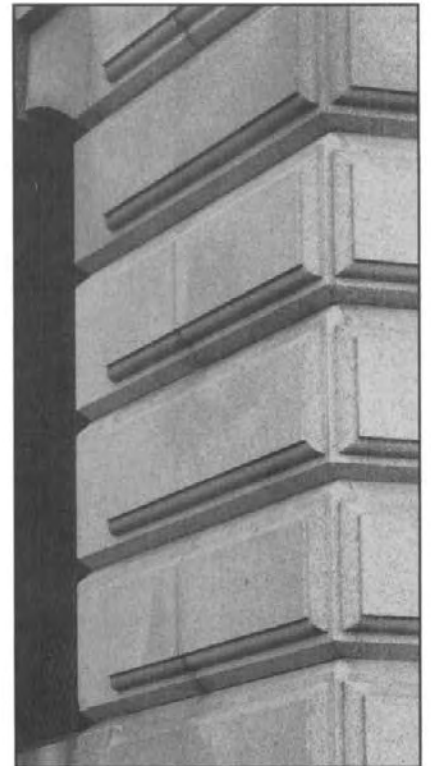
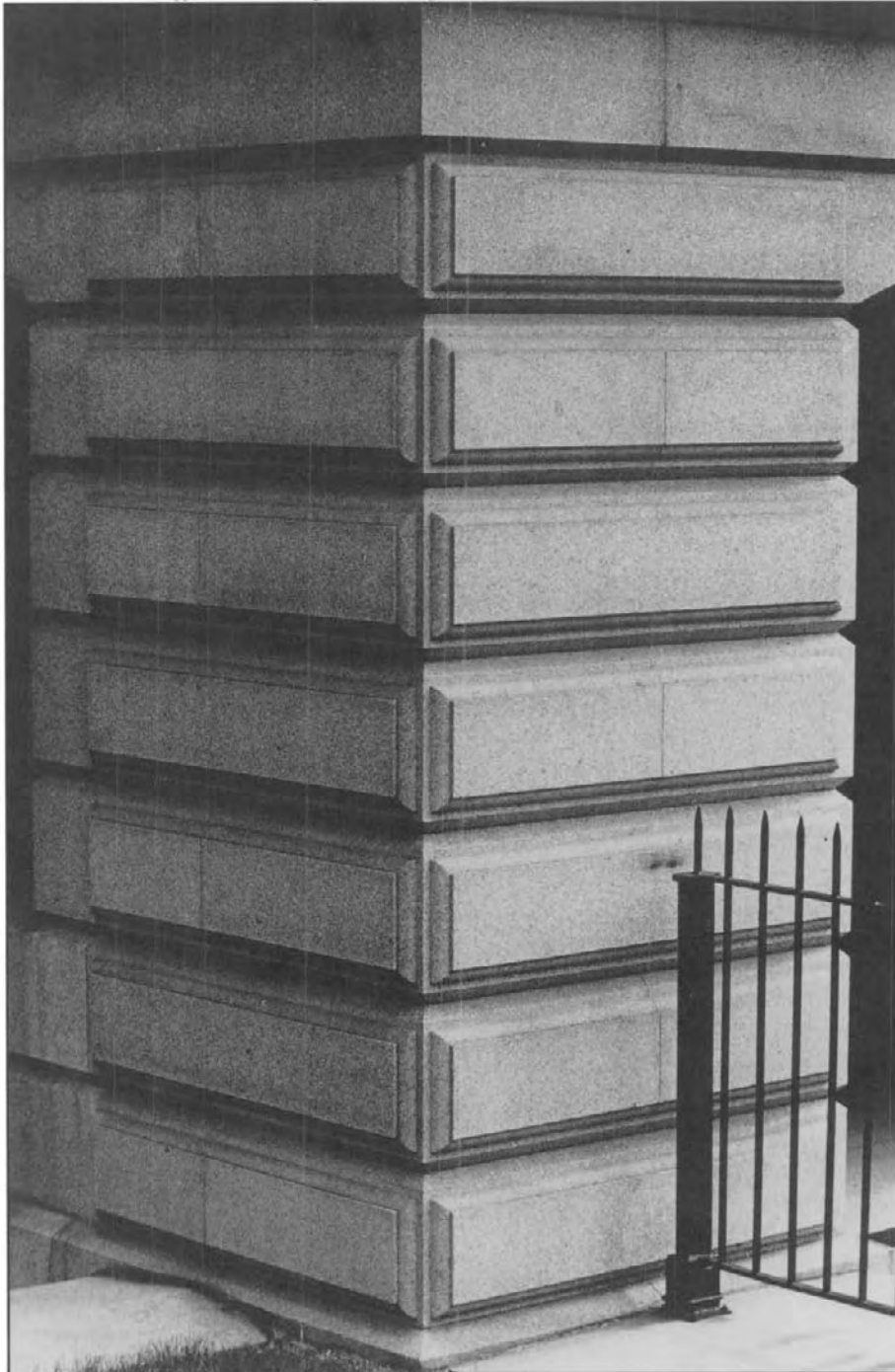
Old Executive Office Building



Old Executive Office Building, Arch Detail



Old Executive Office Building, Quoining Detail



Architecture within President's Park

The classic Greek Revival style of the U.S. Treasury Building expresses power and dignity. Ionic columns, engaged pilasters, and a simplicity of detail illustrate how scale, texture, and continuity combine to create a sense of decorum.

The formal and symmetrical placement of the fountain, plantings, fences, lanterns, and light standards complement the west facade of the Treasury Building (seen from the White House east entrance).

Column Detail



U.S. Treasury Building, North Elevation



U.S. Treasury Building, West Elevation

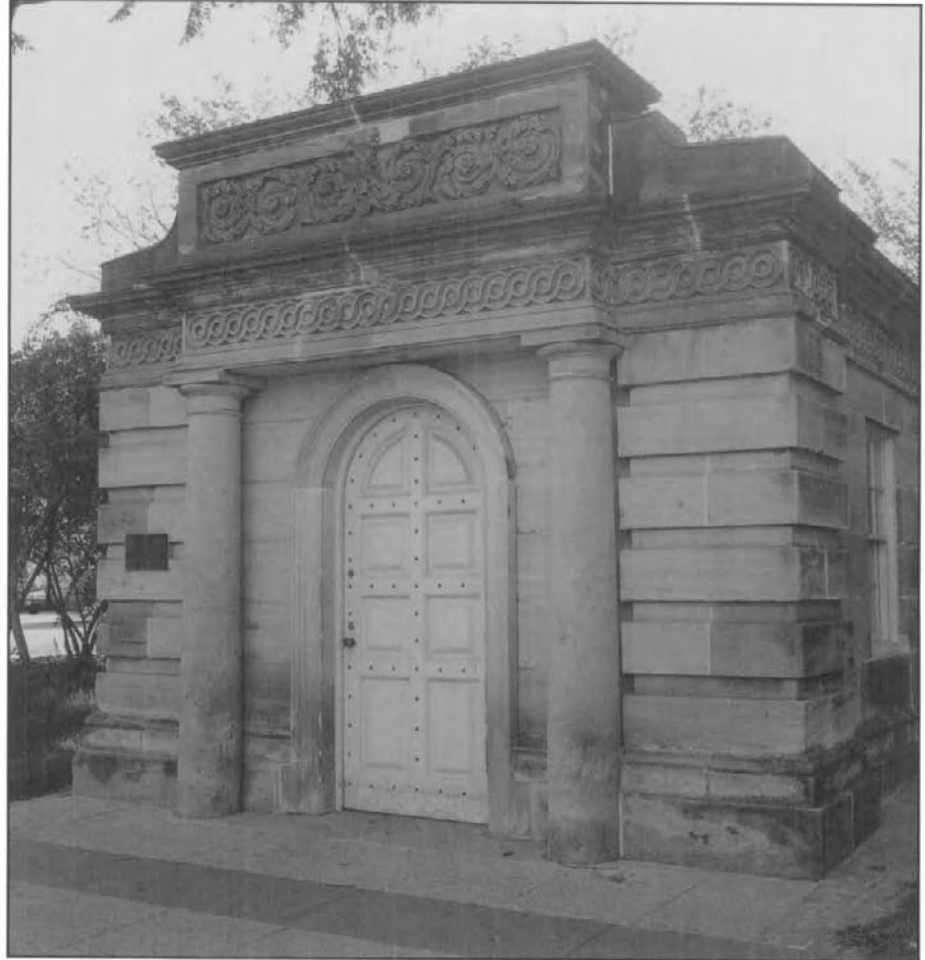
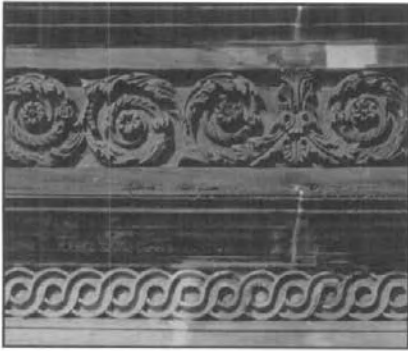


U.S. Treasury Building, North Elevation, Column Detail



The gatehouses, which were designed by Charles Bulfinch and erected for the U.S. Capitol ca. 1828, were moved to the southeast and southwest corners of President's Park in 1880. The structures use a combination of classical motifs, with Tuscan columns, guilloche, foliate details, and overscaled rusticated quoining to emphasize the concept of decorum.

Bulfinch Capitol Gatehouse



Architecture Facing the White House and President's Park

The Organization of American States Building, the Daughters of the American Revolution Memorial Continental Hall, and the American Red Cross National Headquarters all use similar classical motifs to communicate the concept of decorum in public architecture in areas facing President's Park.

Organization of American States Building (Pan-American Union)



The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Memorial Continental Hall



American Red Cross National Headquarters



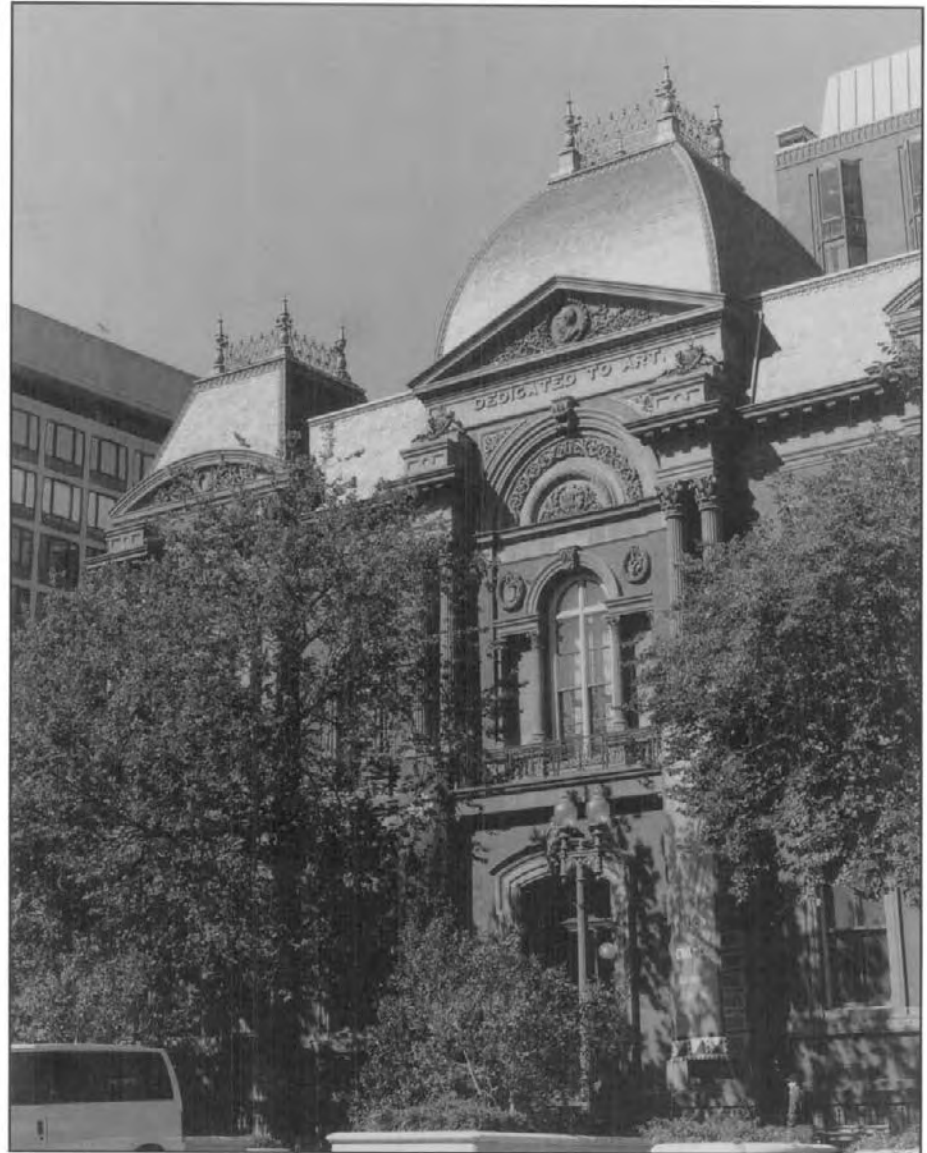
The Corcoran Gallery is an example of the modern application of classical details combined with a sensitivity to its location.

Corcoran Gallery of Art



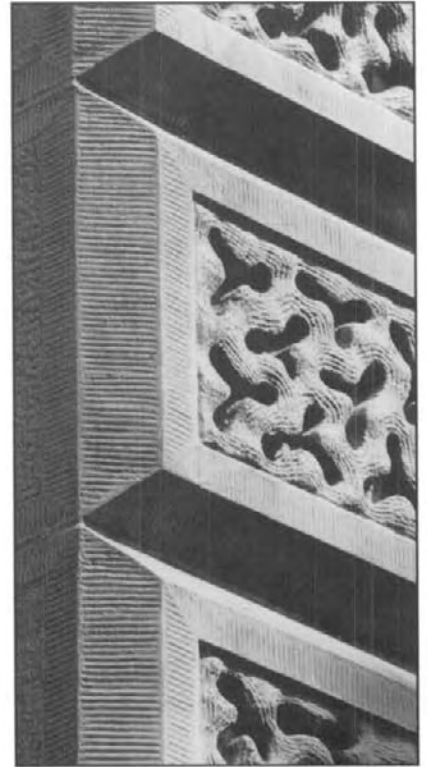
The Second Empire vocabulary of the Renwick Gallery is an expression of the architectural formalism of the mid-Victorian period.

Renwick Gallery



The vermiculation on the Renwick Gallery lightens the monumentality of the detail by breaking up the vertical planes of the individual blocks. The vermiculation lends rhythm and movement to this powerful detail.

Renwick Gallery, Masonry Detail



Architecture Facing the White House and President's Park

The rehabilitated Federal and Italianate townhouse structures adjoining Lafayette Park recall the neighborhood's former 19th century sense of scale and residential context. Buildings such as the Decatur House, the Blair House, and the Dolley Madison House act as key design elements, evoking a somewhat more intimate and exclusive image compared to the large public structures that dominate the immediate skyline.

Blair House



Jackson Place Townhouses



Dolley Madison House



Architect Cass Gilbert's 1925 Beaux Arts details of balustrades, columns, and Corinthian capitals reflect the influence of both the 1901 McMillan plan as well as the City Beautiful movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The monumental scale of such structures forever changed the character of Lafayette Park.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce Building



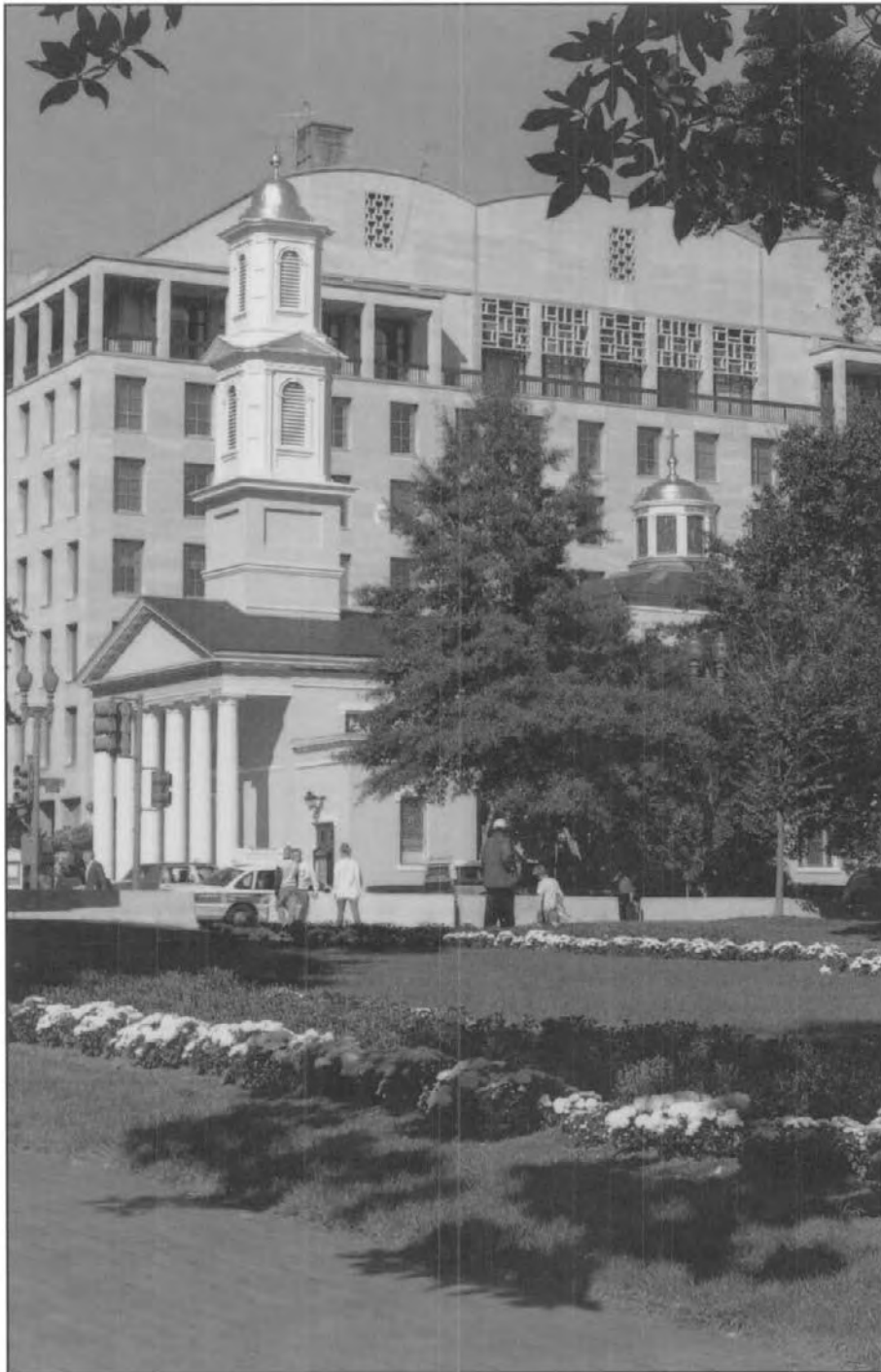
The original John Hay and Henry Adams townhouses were torn down in 1928 and replaced by the Hay-Adams Hotel, underscoring the continuing evolution of the Lafayette Park neighborhood from a 19th century residential enclave to a commercial and governmental center.

Hay-Adams Hotel



Benjamin Henry Latrobe's early 19th century interpretation of an 18th century design respects the concept of decorum, as well as scale and detail.

St. John's Church



The Ashburton House, originally built in a classical revival style as a private residence in 1836, was given a mansard roof and reinterpreted in the 1850s, bringing together Italianate and early Second Empire styles. While its architecture is a mix of styles, the respect for scale, proportion, and detail create a harmonious ensemble.

St. John's Parish House (Ashburton House)



The mass of the Veterans Administration building is designed to convey authority and to dominate its corner location northeast of Lafayette Park. It exemplifies the continuing evolution of 20th century governmental architectural designs in the Lafayette Park neighborhood.

Veterans Administration



Architecture Facing the White House and President's Park

After much discussion, the National Courts Building replaced an earlier theater building on the east side of Lafayette Park. Its construction represented the introduction of a new architectural vernacular into the neighborhood in the 1960s, based on John Carl Warnecke's plans for Lafayette Park and echoing the design of the New Executive Office Building on the west. Designers attempted to reinterpret 19th century detail from the surrounding townhouses within the context of large-scale structures.

National Courts Building



Cass Gilbert's 1919 design for the Treasury Annex reflects the recommendations of the 1901 McMillan plan, announcing the authority of the executive precinct. It contrasts, however, with Lafayette Park's former 19th century residential quality, as exemplified by the scale and character of the tree-lined street.

Treasury Annex



The Treasury Annex represents a Beaux Arts interpretation of the classical details of the Treasury Building on the opposite side of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Treasury Annex, South Elevation



The Riggs National Bank building uses a Beaux Arts interpretation of classical detail with Ionic columns *in antis*.

NationsBank works architecturally as a part of the larger building complex. However, the use of fenestration, classical elements, and subtle manipulation of detail all denote a separate facility, while the concept of decorum is respected.

Riggs National Bank and NationsBank, South Elevation



Architecture Facing the White House and President's Park

The architecture of the Washington and Willard Hotels and the Metropolitan block draw from the same palette as the buildings within President's Park, but they vary in the individual application of detail and execution of design. These structures respect the concept of the monumental and the application of decorum in their massing and scale.

Willard Hotel



Washington Hotel



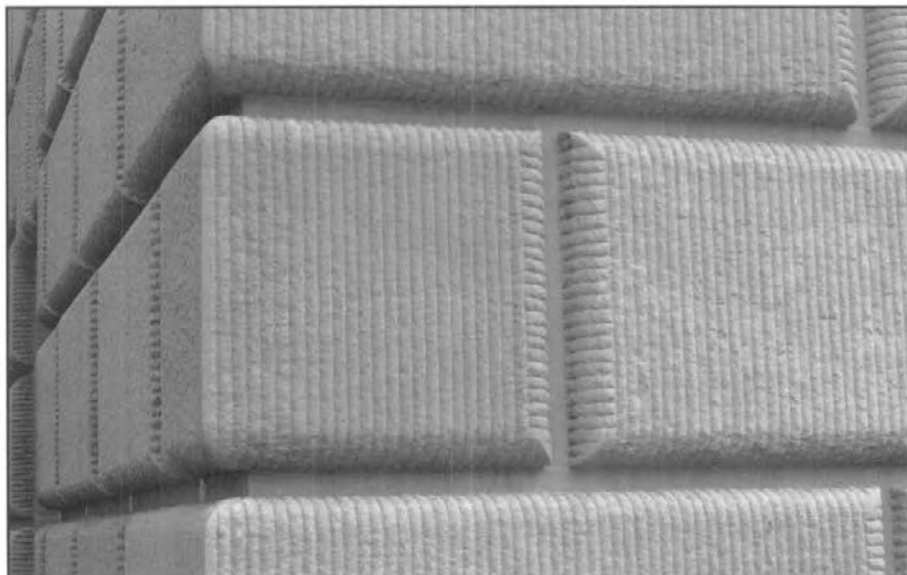
Metropolitan Block



The Commerce Building, constructed 1926–32 as a classical reinterpretation, uses mass and detailing to project authority. The rhythm of column placement and the use of pedimented window hoods and similar detailing tie the building to the federal landscape.

The monumental raked and rusticated blocks of the Commerce Building represent a modern application of a traditional detailing.

U.S. Department of Commerce Building

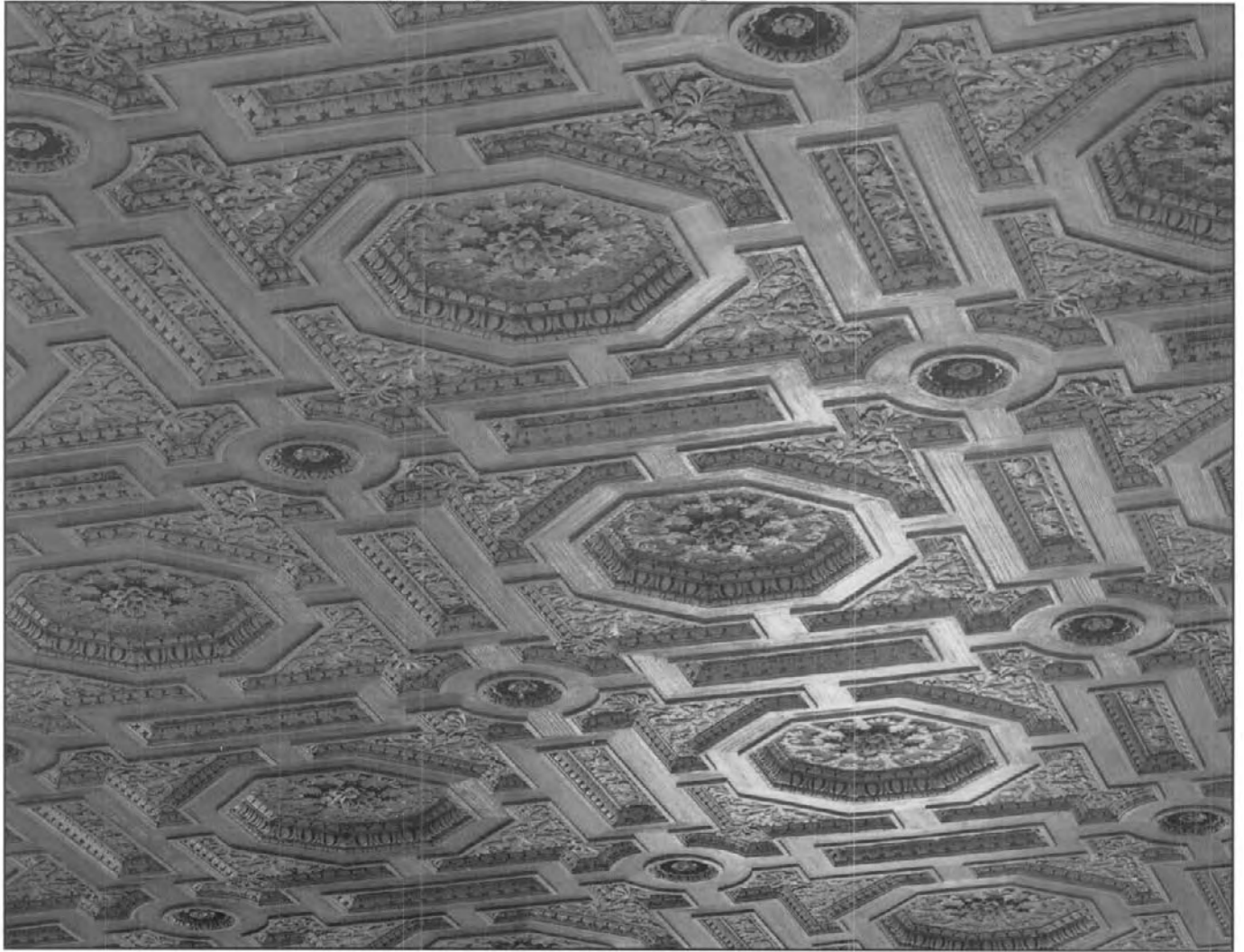


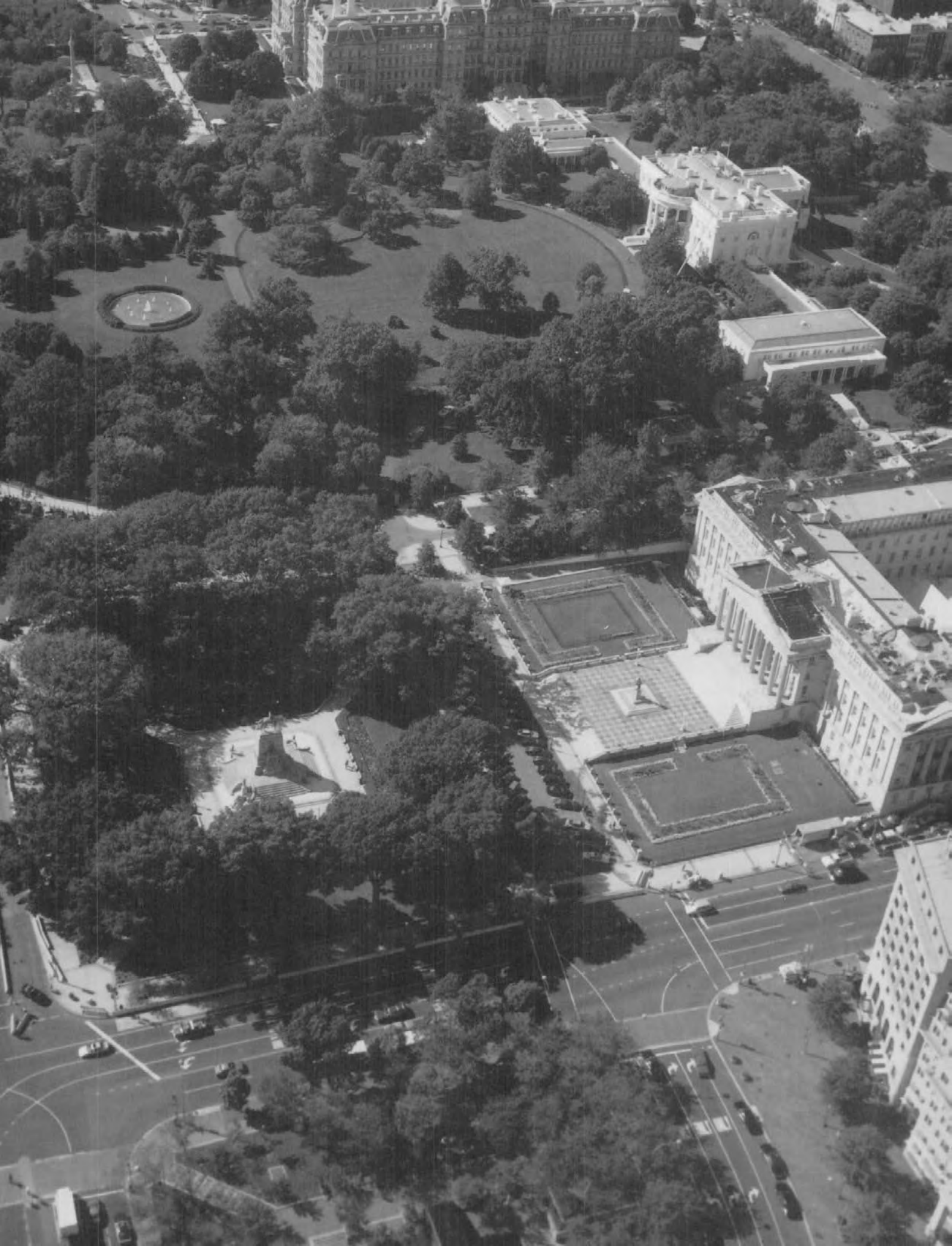
The interior of Baldrige Hall in the Commerce Building uses a 1920s adaptation of an Italian Renaissance model, including octagonal coffering and rosette details, with a running cornice of egg-and-dart, acanthus, and interlocking Greek key motifs. The restored original detailing creates a rich interior. The hall is currently used as the White House visitor center.

U.S. Department of Commerce Building, Baldrige Hall, Interior Arch and Ceiling Detail



U.S. Department of Commerce Building, Baldrige Hall, Interior Ceiling Detail





Landscape Architecture

The character of President's Park is determined by the combination of the cultural and natural resources on the site. These resources reflect how the site has been designed and used for various ceremonial and administrative functions. President's Park retains its original spatial arrangements and purpose as the setting for the official home and office of the president.

Just as the site's architecture strives to convey the importance and dignity of the presidency and to reinforce the classical concept of decorum, so does the landscape design. The decorous landscape envisioned by L'Enfant survives, framing the ceremonial vistas and providing an appropriate frame and setting for federal executive buildings and for national assembly spaces. However, the cumulative effect of the original design has been diluted through the inconsistent use of site details and landscape treatments.

Design Traditions

Various European design traditions are reflected in President's Park. The original landscape design for the White House was based on a combination of French and English traditions. In the manner of the 17th and 18th century French baroque, the Ellipse, the south lawn of the White House, and Lafayette Park act as a "sequence of open spaces," framing the White House and enhancing its grand vistas and axial relationships, as set out by L'Enfant in his plan for Washington.⁴

President's Park also evokes the 19th century English romantic period, where nature was seen as integral to the human environment, "a friendly and equal partner which could provide inexhaustible interest, refreshment and moral uplift."⁵ This philosophy embodied itself in irregular paths and roads, the use of various plant materials, and informal groupings of trees and

Just as the site's architecture strives to convey the importance and dignity of the presidency and to reinforce the classical concept of decorum, so does the landscape design.

The overall spatial arrangement of the landscape in relation to other public open spaces is formal, based on a series of circular and elliptical forms progressing from north to south, widening in size and scale as the landscape opens to what was the original river vista, now occupied by monuments.

shrubs.⁶ The Ellipse, designed in the 1850s by Andrew Jackson Downing, comes from this English romantic tradition and “acts spatially as a fulcrum, tying the north/south axis of President’s Park to the east/west axis of the Mall and the Capitol.”⁷ Downing designed these large open spaces in the center of the city as gathering places and points of assembly for official and unofficial uses — functions they continue to serve.

To this day, the landscape components of President’s Park remain informal and romantic, with the exception of Lafayette Park and the Ellipse Drive. However, the overall spatial arrangement of the landscape in relation to other public open spaces is formal, based on a series of circular and elliptical forms progressing from north to south, widening in size and scale as the landscape opens to what was the original river vista, now occupied by monuments.

To the north, the lawns of the White House and Lafayette Park reflect more formal models based on 19th century interpretations of European precedents. Downing’s design for Lafayette Park in the 1850s, as reinterpreted by the Corps of Engineers in the 1870s, by the National Park Service in the 1930s, and by John Carl Warnecke in the 1960s, bases its walkways on a Victorianized interpretation of a Renaissance pattern of elliptical and circular walkways. The late 19th century’s City Beautiful movement in the United States also had a distinct impact on President’s Park in terms of introducing a number of monuments and statuary into the landscape.

Lafayette Park, the White House grounds, and the Ellipse are all aesthetically linked. Within each major division are separate park areas with distinctive site characters, such as Sherman Park, the First and Second Division Monuments, and the Boy Scout Memorial. It is important that there be continuity between these discrete elements so that they contribute to the overall park environment.

Pennsylvania Avenue is an important ceremonial avenue in the city of Washington. The portion between 15th and 17th Streets gives the White House its street address and public access. Designs in this vicinity should respect the avenue's historical use.

Plant Materials

Early landscape theorists saw the use of native plants on the site as a desirable nationalistic expression of "Americanism." As the nation and its influence expanded both continentally and internationally, later designers came to rely heavily on the use of nonnative species, reflecting the country's much expanded venues and interests in the 19th century. While either philosophy could be adopted as a standard for President's Park, it is probably unreasonable to consider excluding any particular type of plant material based purely on a symbolic or design ethic. However, particular attention should be paid to primary native elements, such as the allée of American elms (many of which have been replaced by cultivars and varieties) on the Ellipse.⁸ Downing's design for the Ellipse also considered heavily vegetated side panels. The vegetation on the White House grounds has historically depended on large numbers of nonnative species and has received a higher degree of maintenance than other areas. This level of intensive maintenance should be a model for all areas of President's Park, as well as surrounding areas.

Offsite Influences

The landscape character of the site is determined by a combination of internal and external features. Landscaping elements of various monumental structures surrounding President's Park are generally elemental and formal, using drives, walks,

The vegetation on the White House grounds has received a higher degree of maintenance than other areas. This level of intensive maintenance should be a model for all areas of President's Park.

Fundamental spatial organization, land use, views, and vistas should respect L'Enfant's urban plan, while site circulation and details should respect the principles of Downing, the Olmsted brothers, and subsequent significant landscape designs.

approaches, and similar elements to emphasize the formal aspect of the buildings they frame. Large formal lawns are the exception. Most of these landscapes have an outward focus, embracing the larger environment of President's Park, with the exception of Pershing Park, which turns its focus inward and provides a haven from the heavily commercialized eastern edge of President's Park.⁹

Rooftop environments also play an important role in how President's Park is perceived. This area may be observed from various offices, hotels, and terraces in ways not always applicable to traditional landscapes. In all cases, however, the scale of the landscape is generally monumental, punctuated by smaller enclaves comprised of plantings, monuments, and structures.

Fundamental spatial organization, land use, views, and vistas should respect L'Enfant's urban plan, while site circulation and details should respect the principles of Downing, the Olmsted brothers, and subsequent significant landscape designs. All designs must also address sustainability concerns, along with access and visitor experience issues.

Landscape Vernacular

Lafayette Park, the White House grounds, and the Ellipse can be viewed as three distinct landscapes, each containing the characteristics of spatial organization, views, vegetation massing, scale, and form. A network of walks, streets, and paths creates the spatial organization, frames the views, establishes the scale, and reinforces the historic forms. These characteristics combine to distinguish the landscape of President's Park from its surrounding urban setting.

Landscape Venacular

An aerial view of Lafayette Park, the White House grounds, and the Ellipse, with the Washington Monument and Jefferson Memorial in the background, shows the formal relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government that was envisioned by L'Enfant. The formal landscape design of President's Park emphasizes the concept of decorum.



This view of Lafayette Park shows its forecourt relationship to the north side of the White House.

Lafayette Park



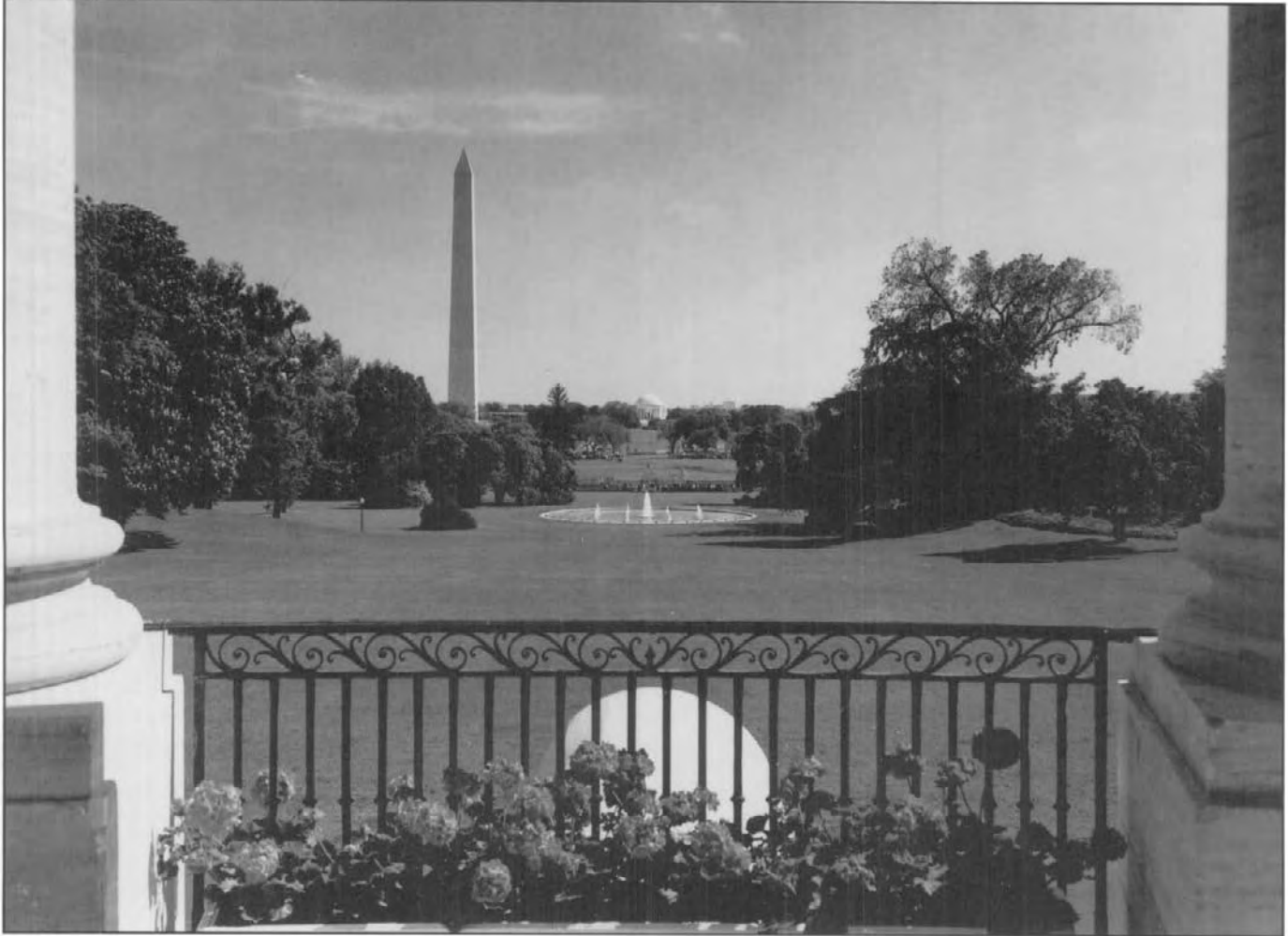
The open area of the Ellipse allows ceremonial vistas to and from the White House, with the landscaping on the south grounds of the White House framing the views. The Ellipse also provides a transition between the White House and President's Park and the National Mall and Monumental Core.

The Ellipse



The view from the Truman balcony of the south grounds of the White House, the Washington Monument, and the Jefferson Memorial captures the essence of what L'Enfant was trying to achieve with grand vistas and illustrates the importance of the north-south axial relationship.

View South from the White House



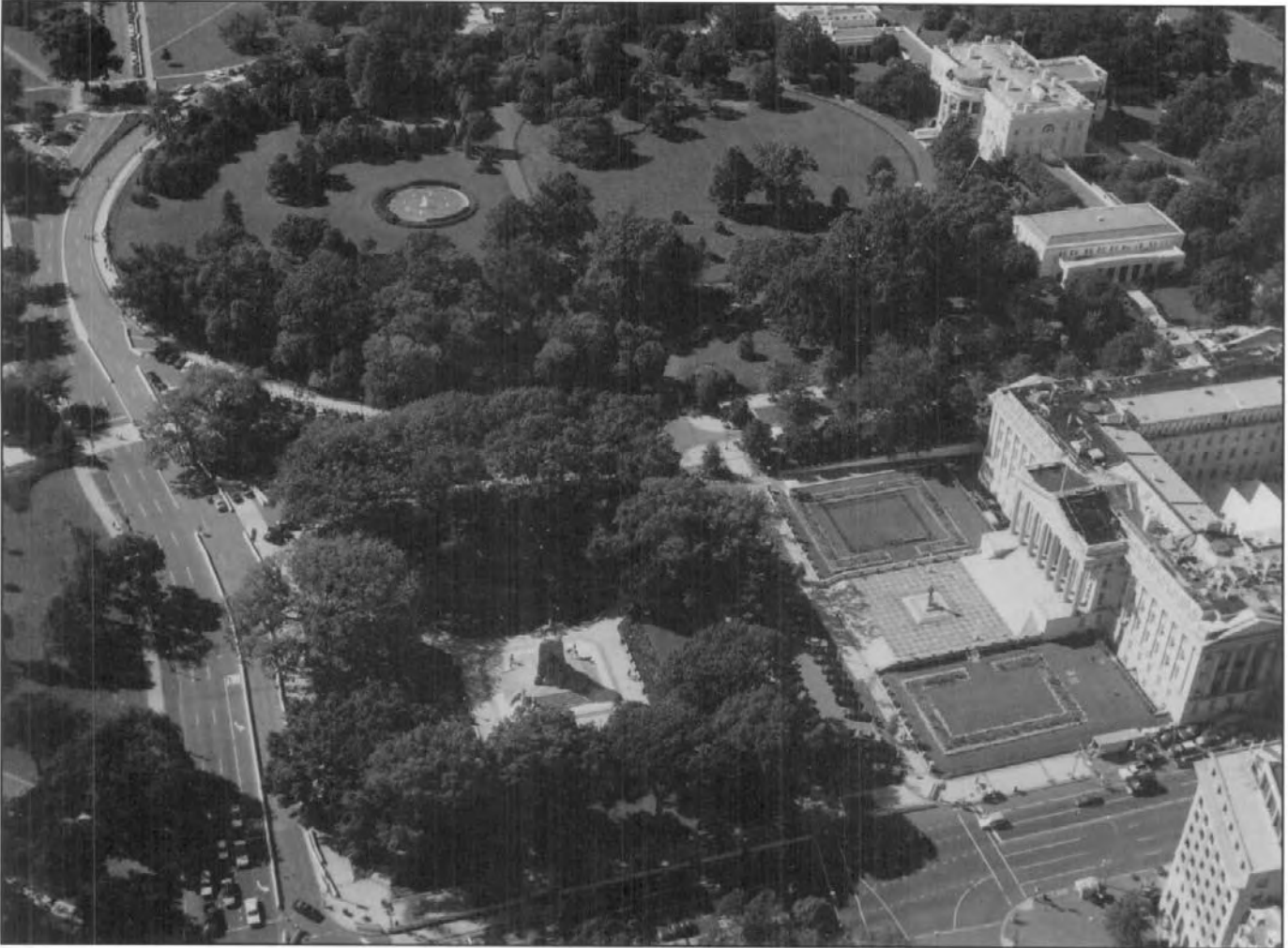
The allée of American elms was planned to accent the circular and curvilinear road and walkway system of the Ellipse; however, Dutch elm disease beginning in the late 1940s decimated the allée trees. The remnants of the allée and other formal elements, combined with the informal landscaped side panels, give the Ellipse its particular sense of place.

President's Park, The Ellipse, 1947



Sherman Park evokes an individual sense of place within President's Park. Vegetation massing and spatial organization contribute to the general park environment.

Sherman Park



Pershing Park, which is just east of President's Park, turns its focus inward, providing a haven from the surrounding urban activities.

Pershing Park



Pennsylvania Avenue illustrates the concept of monumentality and the importance of scale in the neighborhood environment surrounding President's Park.

Pennsylvania Avenue in President's Park



Lafayette Park, the White House grounds, and the Ellipse are framed by monumental structures that form the executive precinct. The original late 18th century formal southern approach to the river is today largely forgotten, while the northern approach reflects how the White House has become part of the city landscape.

Surrounding Influences on President's Park





Design Elements

Design elements make important contributions to the overall site character and should exhibit the sense of decorum specific to the White House and President's Park. The qualities of scale, texture, and continuity for these elements help create the site's sense of place and define it as a special precinct within the city. Primary design elements that are considered as they relate to these qualities include fences, gates, gateposts, lighting, paving, and bollards. Ancillary elements — such as water fountains, tree well and manhole covers, planters, benches, and trash receptacles — also contribute to the site's total appearance and the feeling it creates. Materials to be used in design elements throughout the site should be timeless, durable, and related to historical materials if possible, thereby conveying the dignity of the site, the importance of its resources, and its historical significance.

As with the larger elements on the site, examples already exist that can inspire future designs. Curbing, coping, and paving can draw inspiration from traditional materials, patterns, and styles, primarily from the variety already established on or immediately adjacent to the site. Light posts should use the traditional Millet and Bacon light posts as models. The traditional federal park bench used since the turn of the century has remained a simple and successful design.

As to color, these elements often lend themselves well to accents. Dark bronze greens, dark reds, and pale yellows can be considered to complement the main palette, along with a variety of buff, ecru, brown, and gray accents. While gilding has historically been used on the site to accent fencing and gate details, other harsh metallic finishes such as chromium, aluminum, or anodized metals are discordant and should be avoided.

Materials used in design elements throughout the site should be timeless, durable, and related to historical materials, thereby conveying the dignity of the site, the importance of its resources, and its historical significance.

Fences

This Gothic panel has been worked into the classical fence design, emphasizing the various styles that combine to create the general ambience of the White House environment.

White House, North Fence



The elegant, sinuous bracing on the interior of the White House fence emphasizes the importance of detail to the success of the overall design concept.

White House Fence Detail



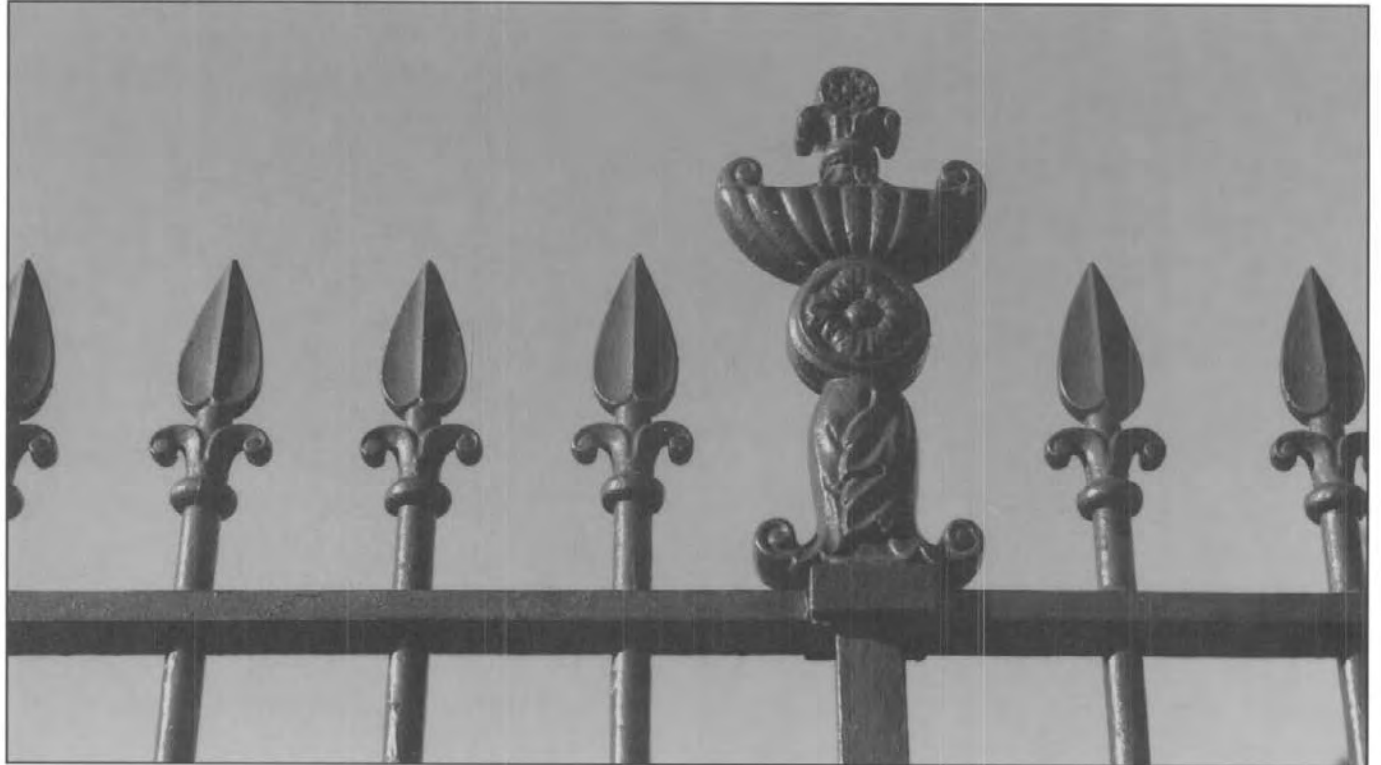
Fence and lighting detail provide design continuity throughout the site.

White House, East Fence



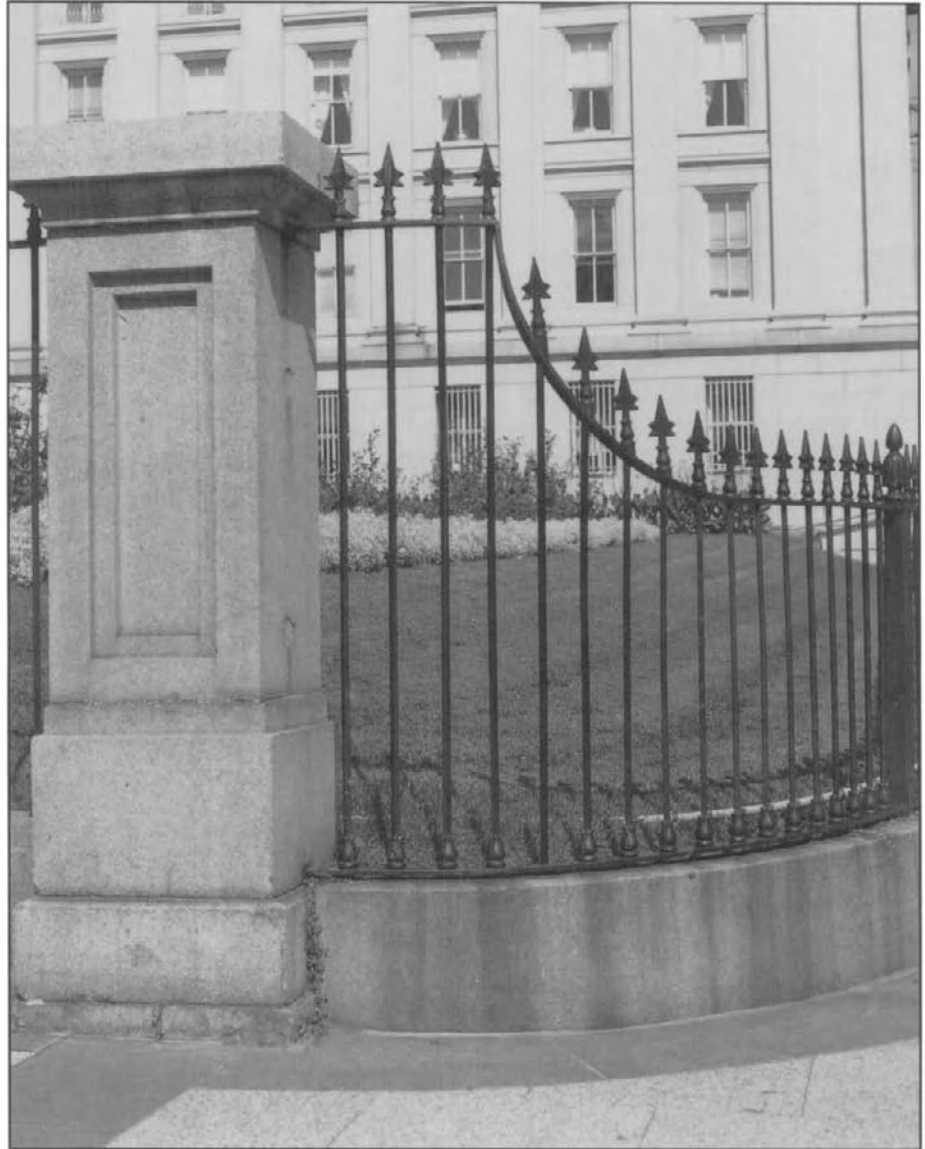
Various classical motifs, both traditional and stylized, combine to create the variety of expression so important to the general design of the White House and President's Park.

White House Fence Detail



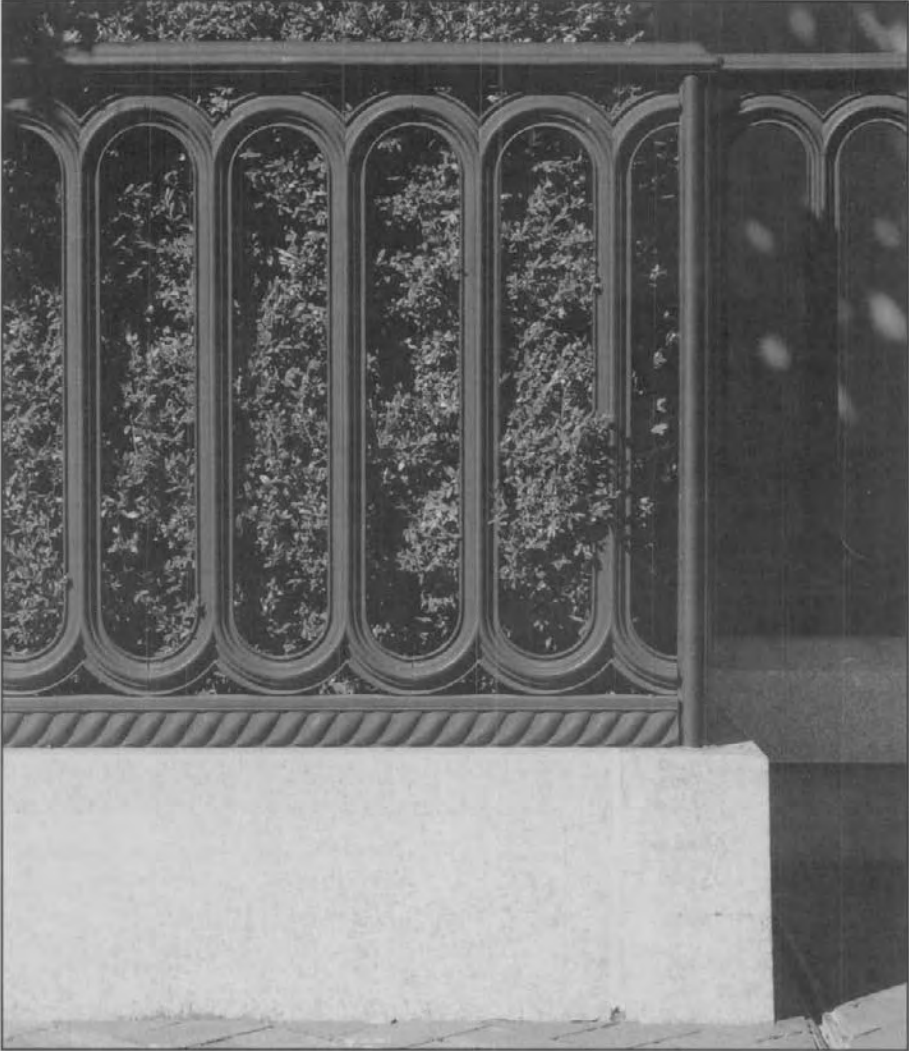
The elegant corner detail serves as a transition from the iron fence to the masonry fencepost.

Treasury Building, South Fence



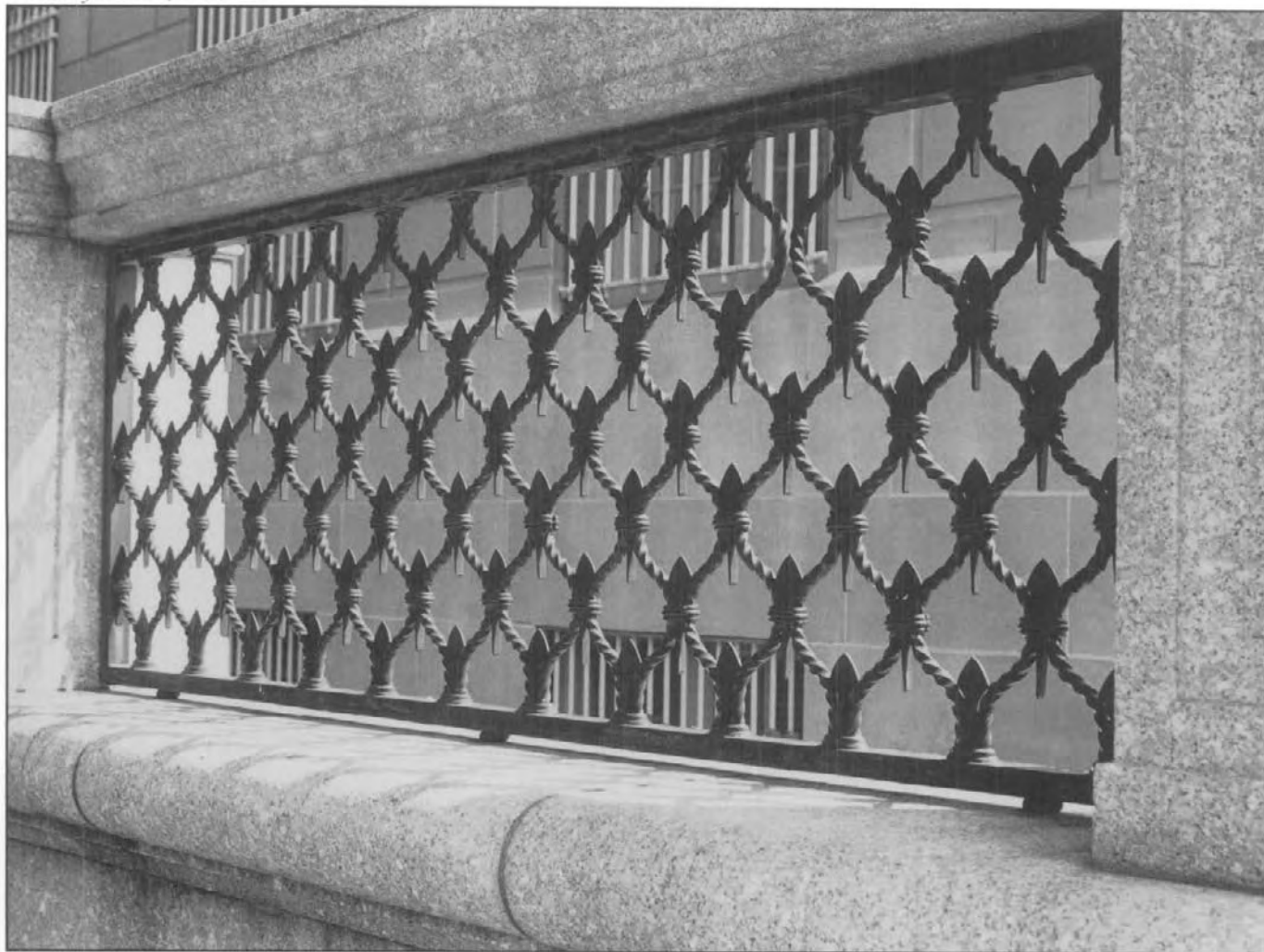
Classical elements have been simplified into a modern expression through the judicious use of scale and detail.

Blair House, Fence Detail



Grillwork provides relief from the mass of the wall and design continuity with similar elements in and around President's Park.

Treasury Annex, West Side



Gates and Gateposts

The rusticated Tuscan gateposts, oversized torchères, gates, fencing, and bluestone ashlar wall work together as symbols of power and authority.

White House, Gateposts



The use of simple Tuscan detailing in the pediment and recessed panel, the large plinth block, and rustication combine to give the White House gateposts strength and stability.

White House, Gatepost Detail



Gatepost designs at secondary entrances use the original Tuscan model but substitute a four-faced coping for the original pedimented cap.

White House, Gatepost Detail



Italian Renaissance details in bronze frame the federal symbols of the wreath and eagle, providing an impressive gateway to an interior courtyard.

U.S. Department of Commerce Building, Gate Detail



Scale, detailing, and the combination of various elements reinforce a timeless message of decorum at President's Park.

Old Executive Office Building, North Side



The guilloche, quoining, and similar details tie the original design of this gatepost to the President's Park area, even though it was originally designed for the Capitol and not moved to this site until 1880.

Bulfinch Capitol Gatepost, Constitution Avenue and 15th Street



Bulfinch Capitol Gatepost, Constitution Avenue and 15th Street



Lighting

This lighting structure announces the dignity and importance of this entrance to the White House while providing continuity with other fixtures.

White House, Gatepost and Torchère



This elegant lantern uses swags, rosettes, foliate motifs, and the general sweep of the bracket to emphasize place as well as the practical need to light an entrance.

White House, South Portico Lantern



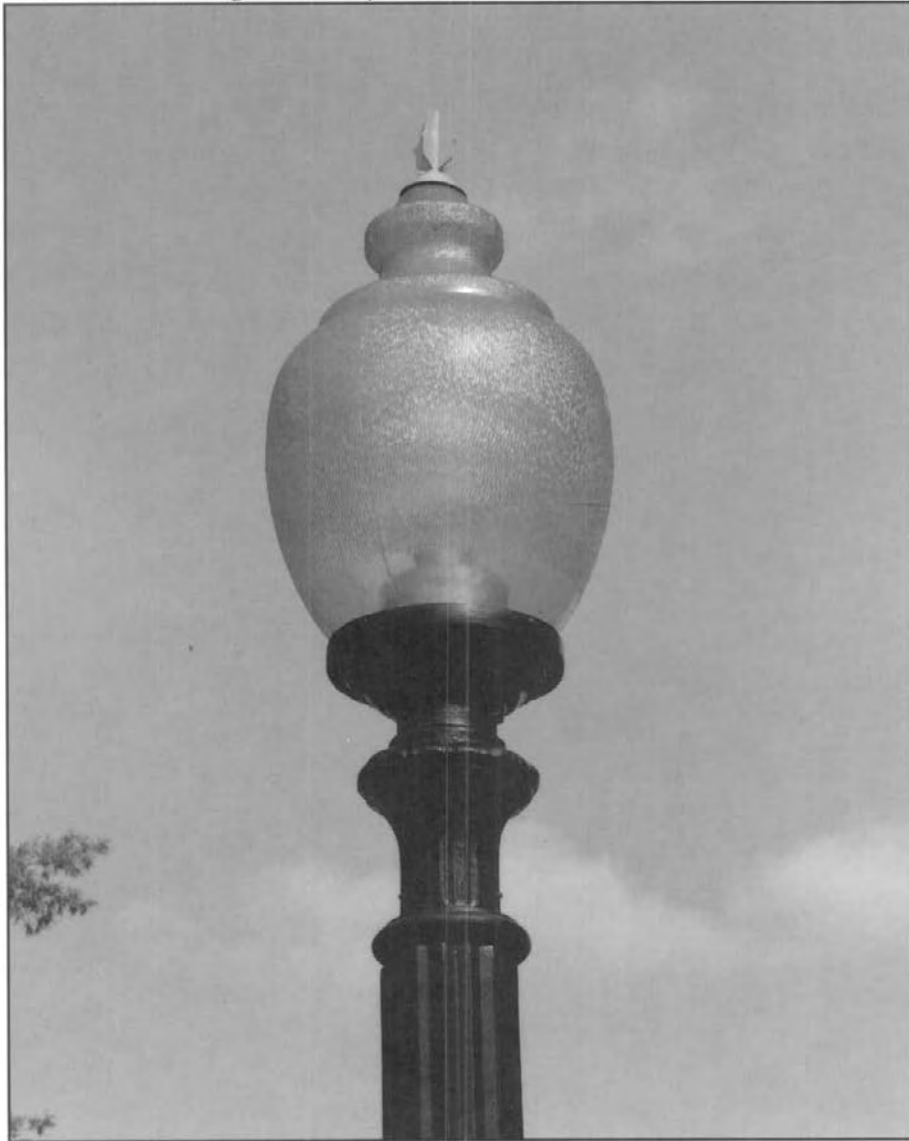
The twin Bacon-style lanterns and light posts can be found in primary areas.

President's Park, Twin Bacon-style Lantern



Single Millet-style lanterns are used in areas of secondary significance.

President's Park, Single Millet-style Lantern



The néo-greque details of the light standards relate them to the Old Executive Office Building while respecting the general classical environment of President's Park.

Old Executive Office Building, Light Post Detail



The lantern design complements the architectural design of the Commerce Building.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Lantern Detail



Lighting

The design of the light post pedestal is echoed in the design of the bollards, providing continuity among various elements.

President's Park, Light Post Pedestals



Paving

The contrasting textures of foliage and flagstone paving, and the scale and massing of plant materials, create a sense of mystery and discovery.

White House, Children's Garden



Flagstone, ashlar walls, and heavy plantings personalize the space and give it a sense of enclosure and intimacy not found in the formal portions of the White House landscape.

White House, President's Patio



The imbricated design of granite pavers provides a more intimate scale and interesting texture, as well as drawing detail from the design history of President's Park.

White House, East Entrance



A primary walkway south of the White House is defined by contrasting edges, the fence base, and bollards. Scale and detail create a sense of both path and enclosure.

President's Park South



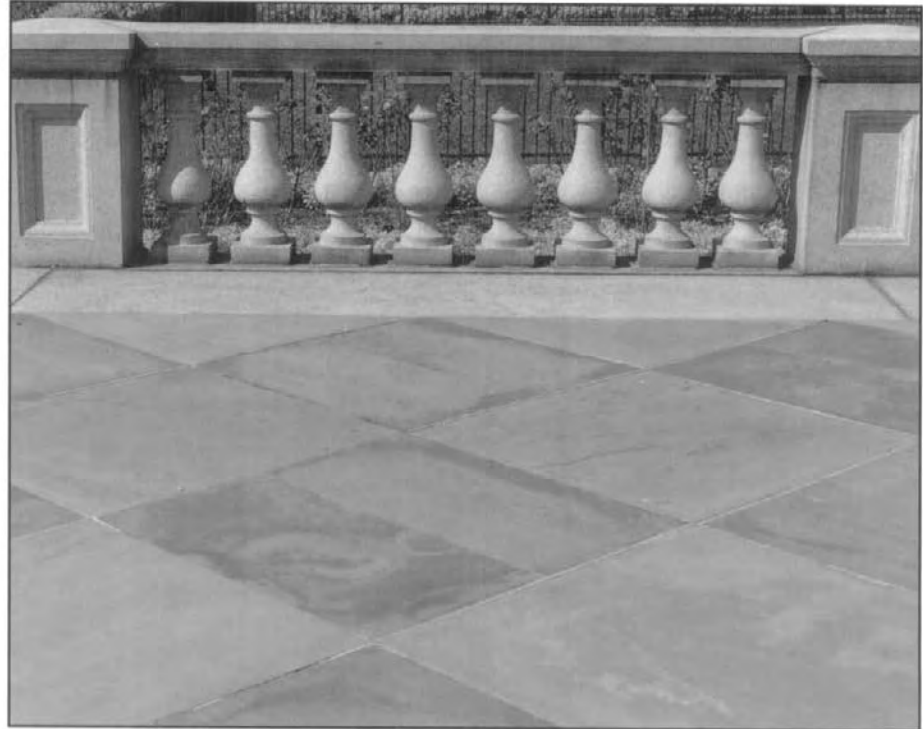
A secondary walkway with the sweep of pavement complements the Ellipse park environment.

Ellipse Walkway



The balustrade and variegated paving blocks are scaled and detailed to complement the classical building environment.

U.S. Treasury Building, South Plaza



The size and variegated glazed finish on these pavers form an appropriate detail for a drive. A wide variety of materials and finishes are found within President's Park.

U.S. Treasury Building, Belgian Block Paver Detail



Paving

The use of contrasting materials on sidewalk edges, around tree wells, and across the sidewalk at intervals defines the edge of the walkway and also breaks the broad plane of pavement with a simple yet bold design.

State Place, Sidewalk



The size and split-faced finish of these paving blocks provide a change in both color and texture appropriate to the many detail finishes within President's Park.

First Division Monument, Granite Paver Detail



Paving

Drain detail in granite remains simple and blends with the foreground threshold, providing a transition to a different paving material.

Pershing Park



Bollards

Bollards recall the scale and details of the adjacent fence and announce the importance of the site.

White House, South Side

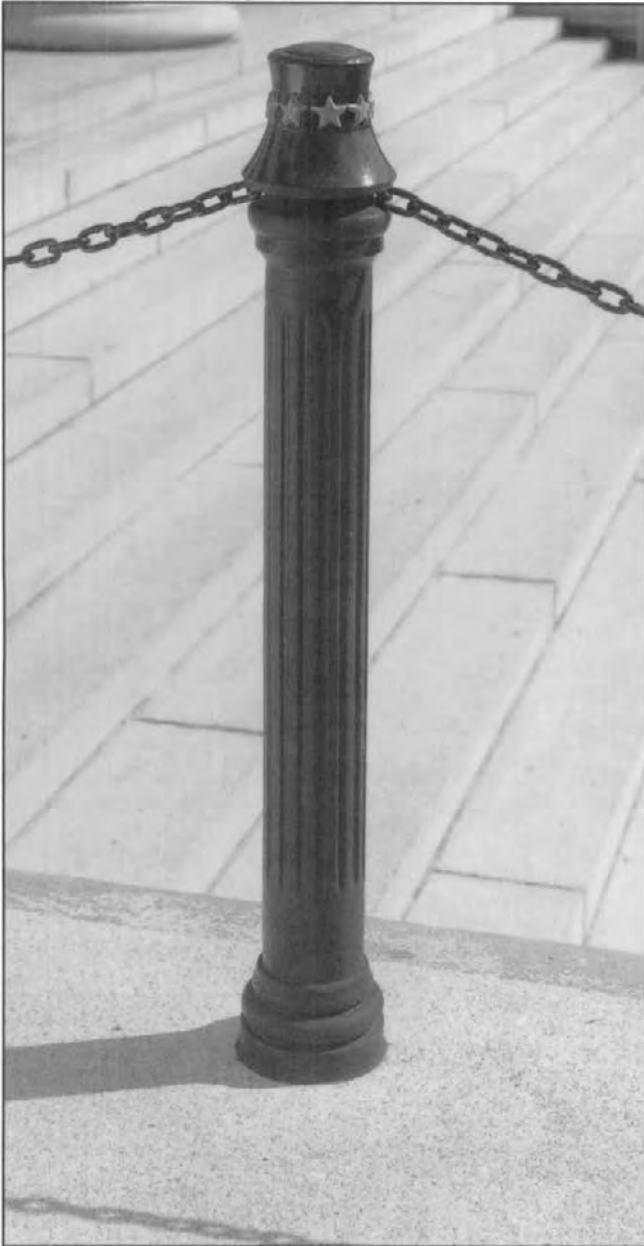


Bollards

The chain-and-bollard motif, accented with federal five-pointed stars, is an appropriate application of both material and scale.

A light in the shape of a bollard uses traditional design elements to announce authority while providing illumination.

U.S. Treasury Building



U.S. Treasury Building



This traditional bollard relies on an earlier hitching-post design and reflects appropriate scale, texture, and material.



Other Design Elements

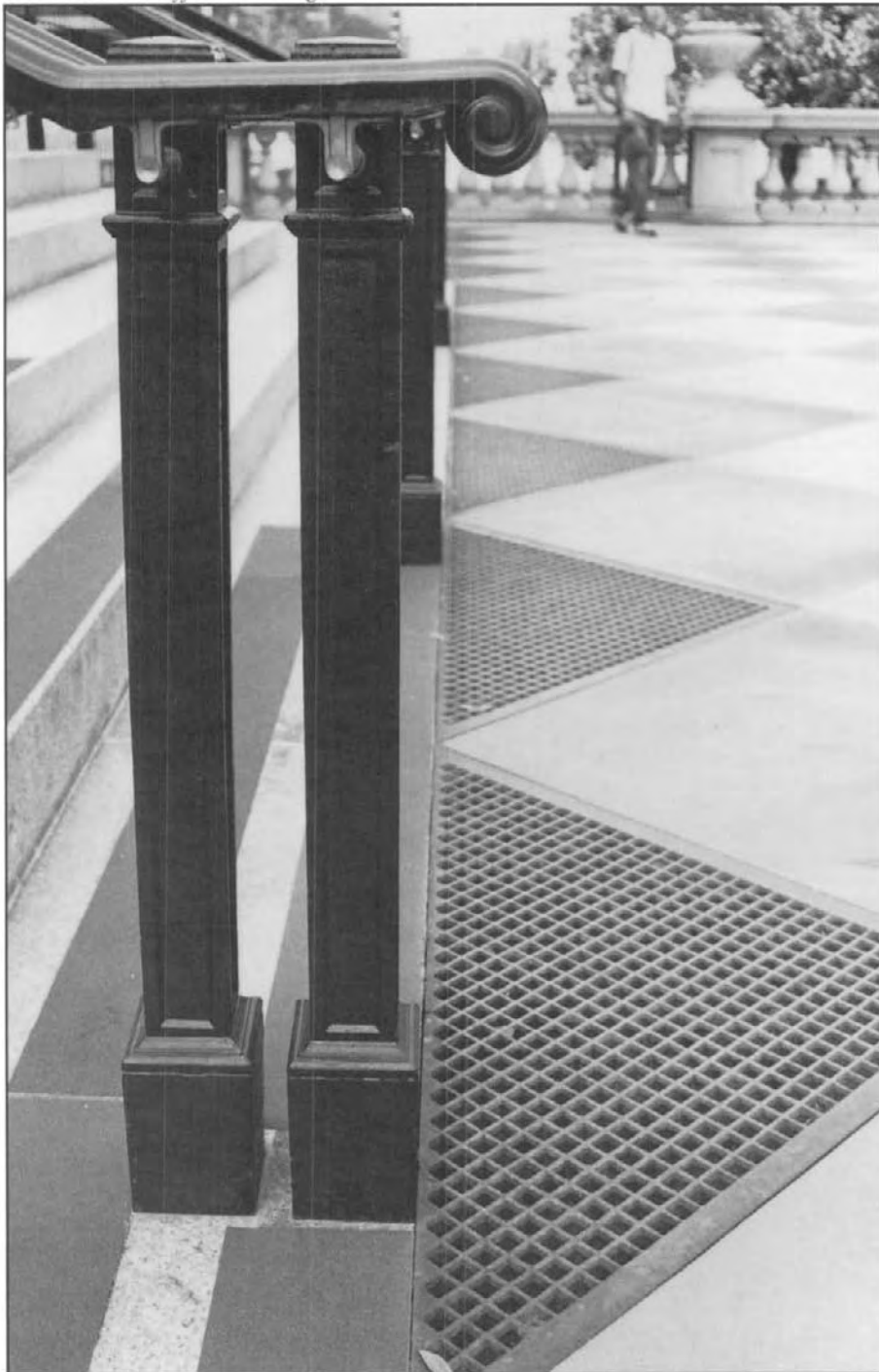
The repetitive detail and rhythm of stairs and rail create an inviting and dignified sense of arrival and entry at the south portico.

White House, South Portico, Stair Detail

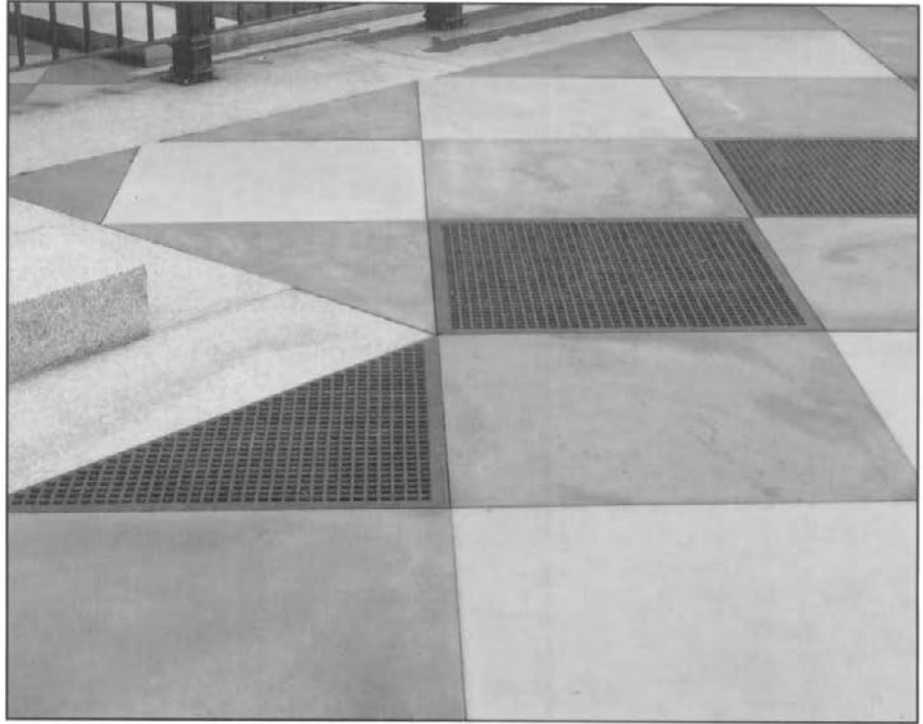


The success of any design relies on attention to detail. The handrails and grates at the Old Executive Office Building and the stairs and terrazzo detailing of the Sherman monument are indicative of the sensitivity to design and the level of finish in the resources in and adjacent to President's Park.

Old Executive Office Building, North Terrace

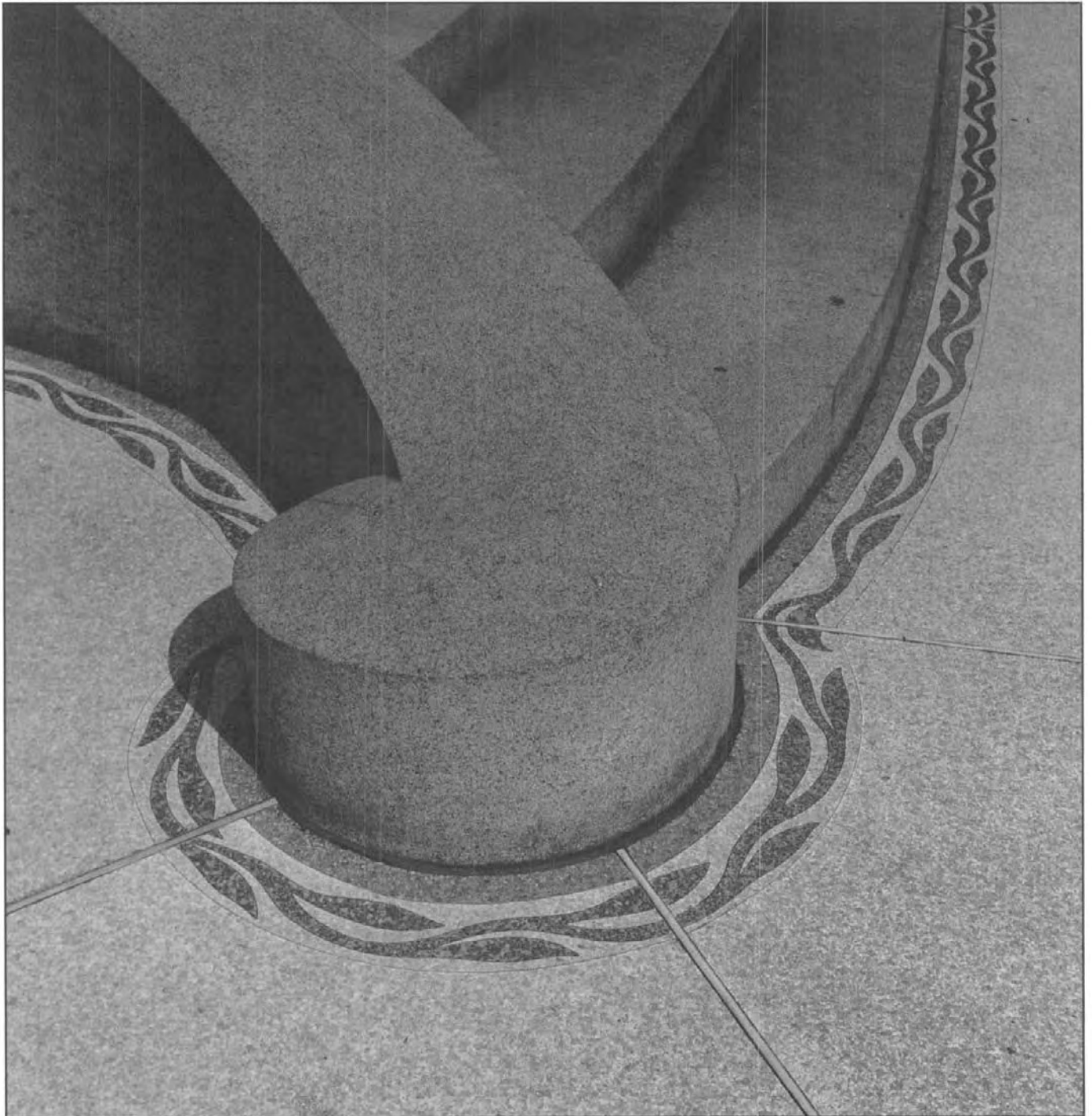


Old Executive Office Building, North Terrace

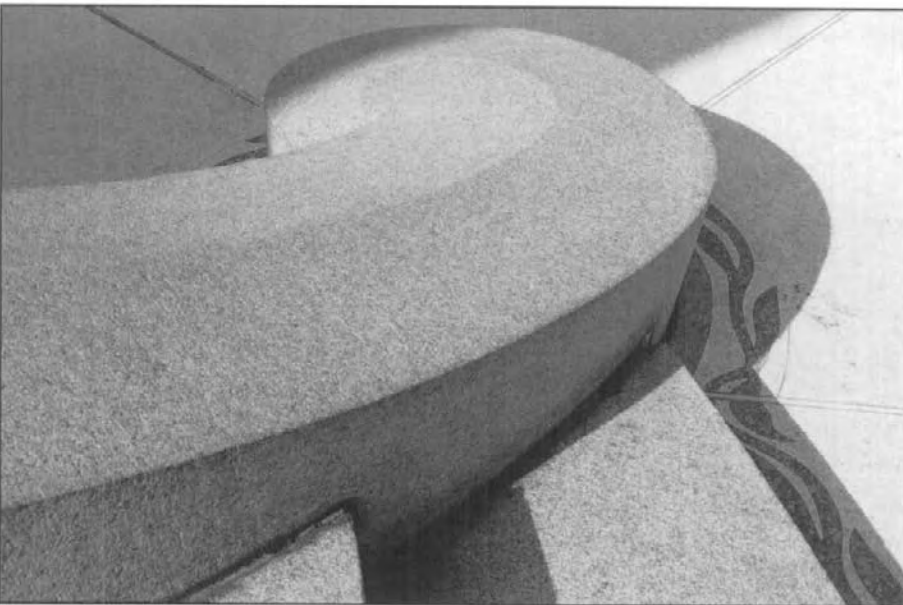


The subtle yet elegant sweep of stairs and edging combined with terrazzo detail create a simple yet powerful statement of entry.

Sherman Park, Stair and Plaza Detail



Sherman Park, Stair and Plaza Detail



Granite urn, with federal symbols, provides an appropriate accent.

U.S. Department of Commerce Building



Other Design Elements

The urn design relies on a classical motif and appropriate scale, color, and texture to complement the building.

Old Executive Office Building



The bronze urns, commissioned by Secretary of the Navy George Robeson in 1872, are designed after Renaissance pieces and are scaled to fit their monumental surroundings.

Lafayette Park



This water fountain provides continuity of scale, texture, and material with nearby light posts and fences.

Water Fountains, President's Park



The traditional park bench found in President's Park (and in all federal park enclaves in the District of Columbia) provides continuity and combines elegance and an understated design with the concepts of sustainability.

Park Bench



Trash Receptacle



Signs and Graphic Design

A variety of sign and graphic schemes is found in President's Park and its immediate neighborhood. Most reflect the styles of when they were created, and there is little consistency in design. Lettering styles range from formal and decorous Roman serif to more modern interpretations such as Helvetica. Graphic illustrations are occasionally used on informational signs.

The concept of decorum should extend to the design of signs and graphics for the White House and President's Park. Street and regulatory signs and lighting should be kept to a minimum. These elements should complement the overall color palette of the White House and President's Park. They should fulfill their function without becoming intrusive.

Lettering styles for permanent signs should remain timeless and draw inspiration from the Roman serif style or similar formal motifs. Jarring, exotic, or contemporary styles should be avoided.

Scale and composition should be primary considerations for the design of signs and graphics. All such designs should consider both the general and particular environments in which signs are to be placed. Permanent signs and graphics should not clutter or overwhelm resources and should be consistent in design. The placement of such items within primary vistas and sight lines should be discouraged.

Interpretive signs and graphics should also take into consideration the concepts of placement, scale, size, composition, color, texture, lettering style, and readability. In all cases, signs and graphics should be kept to a minimum. When necessary, they should be formal, easily readable, and understandable to all visitors. Multiple language signs should be used where appropriate at this international site.

The concept of decorum should extend to the design of signs and graphics for the White House and President's Park.

In the case of corporate installations, such as pay telephones or similar facilities that may already have design and graphic standards, staff should be ready to work with the firm's design personnel to develop compatible designs.

Temporary Facilities

The ceremonial aspects of President's Park make it an area that constantly changes, and the classical concept of decorum should also apply to temporary facilities in both design and placement. Appropriateness should be a major factor in considering which events are suitable near the home and office of the president.

Special events should respect the ceremonial nature of the entire site. They should complement rather than overwhelm the resource. Large temporary installations should not obstruct major sight lines or vistas. Recovery time for the site and clean-up expenses should be factored into each special event. Major landscape features should not be allowed to be abused or appropriated as parking or storage areas for such events. Park resources should be protected at all times during periods of heavy use.

Historically, large special events and media uses have always presented special problems. So that the site may be protected from heavy use during special events, these design guidelines will be discussed with the administrators for each large event and adopted as part of the permitting procedures for those events. Similar discussions concerning the design guidelines should also be held with representatives of the mass media.

The use of temporary facilities such as trailers, fencing, construction yards, traffic controls (sawhorses, cones, plastic mesh), and other similar items should be as inoffensive as possible. Construction yards should be hidden from view by using temporary landscaping and placing them away from the main views. Temporary facilities should be maintained regularly and not be allowed to deteriorate or look dilapidated. They should be removed immediately following the end of their use.

All design considerations of color, texture, scale, graphics, and placement applied to permanent installations should also apply

All design considerations of color, texture, scale, graphics, and placement applied to permanent installations should also apply to temporary ones.

to temporary ones. In general, unless meant to impart a specific safety message, temporary facilities should blend into the general landscape without making any statement.

Notes

1. Paul Philipot, "Historic Preservation: Philosophy, Criteria, Guidelines," in *Preservation and Conservation: Principles and Practices*, ed. Sharon Timmons (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1976), 370.
2. Stephen Calloway and Elizabeth Cromley, *The Elements of Style: A Practical Encyclopedia of Interior Architectural Details from 1485 to the Present* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 40.
3. National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects, with Guidelines for Applying the Standards* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985). These standards provide the general structure for this document. The general guidelines should be consulted whenever design issues are discussed for President's Park.
4. EDAW, et al. "Landscape History of President's Park," in "President's Park, Cultural Landscape Report" (EDAW, Inc., 1995), II-9 (hereafter cited as CLR).
5. Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987), 233.
6. CLR, II-22.
7. CLR, p. II-4.
8. The term *allée* is defined by *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* as "a walk or path between two rows of formally planted trees or shrubs," and by the *American Heritage Dictionary* as a "path between flower beds or trees in a garden or park." Within the discipline of landscape architecture *allée* has been used to connote a linear and axial design and relationship, as in the formal French gardens of Le Notre and others where an *allée* is used to create perspective illusions (i.e., where the entrance is larger than the terminus). For the purposes of this document, *allée* is used in its original context to mean a passageway or path bordered by vegetation, regardless of the shape of the walk.
9. Roger Trancik, *Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), 155-78.

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