

# A HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL MALL AND PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK

## Contents

---

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>The L’Enfant Plan — 1791 to 1900</b> .....	1
Planning Vision .....	1
Measures to Protect the Planning Vision .....	2
Accomplishments.....	2
Public Uses.....	4
Was the Vision Achieved?.....	4
<b>The McMillan Plan — 1900 to the 1950s</b> .....	4
Planning Vision .....	4
Measures to Protect the Planning Vision .....	6
Accomplishments.....	7
Public Uses.....	7
Was the Vision Achieved?.....	8
<b>NPS Master Plans and Memorials — 1960s to 2000</b> .....	8
Planning Vision .....	8
Measures to Protect the Planning Vision .....	10
Accomplishments.....	10
Public Uses.....	11
Was the Vision Achieved?.....	11
<b>Existing Conditions — 2000 to 2006</b> .....	11
Planning Vision .....	11
Measures to Protect the Planning Vision .....	12
Accomplishments.....	12
Public Uses.....	13
Is the Vision Being Achieved? .....	13

## INTRODUCTION

---

**T**oday the term National Mall includes the area historically referred to as the Mall (which extends from the grounds of the U.S. Capitol to the Washington Monument), the Washington Monument, and West Potomac Park (including the Lincoln, Jefferson, Vietnam Veterans, Korean War Veterans, World War II, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorials). In this discussion of the history of the National Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park, the development history of some adjacent areas is also discussed because of their common history with the National Mall and because they are managed by the National Park Service. The White House and President’s Park,

a unit of the national park system, is within the Reserve (see the “Existing Conditions” section), but it is not within the National Mall. Refer to other papers on “Planning Issues” and “Legal Considerations,” as well as the glossary, for information on what is included in the study area and the adjacent planning area.

## THE L’ENFANT PLAN — 1791 TO 1900

---

**M**ajor Pierre Charles L’Enfant, selected by President George Washington, modeled the new federal city after plans of European capitals and the royal estates of European monarchs. L’Enfant used plans of European cities he borrowed from Thomas Jefferson, and his plan reflected the grand ambitions of the fledgling nation — a showcase capital city to rival those in Europe and reflect the immense promise of the former colonies.

### Planning Vision

L’Enfant envisioned a grand city built around a great open space that would establish the relationship between important functions of government. L’Enfant’s plan shows the “Presidential Palace” and the “Congress House” on two high pieces of ground connected by a broad boulevard, what would become Pennsylvania Avenue. A mile-long Grand Avenue would run west from the Congress House — a great open space lined by the ministries and houses of statesmen, with expanses of plantings and gardens. The central garden of this area, now known as the Mall, would contain a water feature and be bordered by dense groves of trees. An equestrian statue of George Washington would be at the west end of the avenue, near today’s 17th Street, on the axis south of the Presidential Palace and west of the Congress House. Tiber Creek would become the Washington Canal, with a towpath for barges to bring supplies to the city’s commercial establishments.

The plan consisted of a coordinated system of radiating avenues, parks, and vistas overlaid on a grid of streets. Wide diagonal boulevards would

Plan of the City of Washington, 1791-92



This 1792 engraving by Andrew Ellicott is based on Pierre L'Enfant's plan of 1791, with some changes. Andrew Ellicott was hired by Washington in 1791 to survey the site of the future city. L'Enfant was let go from his post in 1792.

create additional visual connections, and squares and circles where the grid system and the diagonal boulevards intersected would become the focus of residential neighborhoods and civic buildings and would provide appropriate sites for monuments to the nation and its heroes.

### Measures to Protect the Planning Vision

During this period in our nation's history, no thought was given to the possible need to protect the planning vision for the nation's capital.

### Accomplishments

L'Enfant's plan was not fully achieved, but it would provide the foundation and point of departure for various designs over the next 200 years.

**The Mall.** The grand public park that L'Enfant envisioned did not immediately become a reality. As late as 1850 the Mall was used for cultivating vegetables and storing lumber, firewood, and trash. By the middle of the 19th century, however, there was a renewed interest in making the Mall the nation's public park. In 1850 a group of businessmen approached President Millard Fillmore about landscaping the Mall, and the following year landscape designer Andrew Jackson Downing was hired. His objectives were threefold:

- form a national park that would be an ornament to the capital city
- provide an example of the natural style of landscape gardening
- form a living museum of trees and shrubs

Downing was killed in a steamship explosion in 1852, and his grand vision for the city was not fully implemented. His plan was followed only at the President's House and the Smithsonian Institution.

The Washington Canal was completed along the northern boundary of the Mall, but within 50 years it was considered a health hazard. In 1872 the canal was filled in as part of an effort to improve the city's infrastructure, and later Constitution Avenue was established on top of the old Washington Canal. Initially Constitution Avenue did not connect to Pennsylvania Avenue.

**Civic Buildings on the Mall.** The Smithsonian Institution, established by Congress in 1847, set the precedent for public educational and cultural institutions on the Mall. The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad terminal was constructed on the Mall near the present location of the National Gallery of Art in 1854. Related sheds and tracks crossing the Mall at about 5th Street were built during the Civil War. Up to 30 deaths occurred annually because of the surface railroad crossing. (The station was also the site of the assassination of President James Garfield in 1881.) An armory was constructed on the Mall near the Smithsonian Institution in 1855, and the National Museum was completed in 1881 (now the Arts and Industries Building).

**Washington Monument.** Planning for a monument to George Washington was begun shortly after Washington took office. Although L'Enfant had called for an equestrian monument to be erected at the cross-axis of lines south from the White House and west from the Capitol, the location was moved to the east to provide better construction footing. The giant stone obelisk was begun in 1848 but not completed until 1884.

**East and West Potomac Parks.** In 1882 Congress allocated money to provide better flood control, to eliminate areas where malaria-spreading mosquitoes bred, and to create land from excessive silt that had built up along the Potomac River. Over the next 20–30 years approximately 740 acres of new land were created, one of the largest civil engineering projects of its time. This project extended the city to its current boundary on the Potomac River. Citizen efforts to protect the new area as



The uncompleted Washington Monument in the mid 1800s.

park land led to President Grover Cleveland signing a Potomac Park law in 1897, which stated that the land was to be “forever held as a public park for the recreation and pleasure of the people.” In 1901 the Potomac Railroad Bridge was constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and subsequently became the boundary between East and West Potomac parks. (East Potomac Park is outside the study area.)

**Pennsylvania Avenue.** The development of Pennsylvania Avenue occurred slowly but generally within the framework of the L'Enfant plan. In 1807 President Jefferson ordered poplar trees planted along the avenue, and by 1848 there were gaslights. In the 1890s Pennsylvania Avenue had two sets of centrally located tram tracks — 10 different streetcar companies serviced the city, crossing the Mall at 14th, 12th, and 7th streets NW/SW. Plans in 1892 referenced over 100 miles of street railway and described a model local rapid transit system.

**The White House & President's Park.** The President's House was an important part of the L'Enfant plan, and construction began in 1792. In November 1800 President John Adams and his wife Abigail moved in, the first family to live in the residence. The White House was burned by the British during the War of 1812.

Lafayette Square, north of the White House and now known as Lafayette Park, was designated a public park in 1805 by President Thomas Jefferson. It was first landscaped in the 1820s for the visit of revolutionary war hero Marquis de Lafayette in 1824.

The south portico of the Treasury Building was completed in 1860, blocking the planned visual connection between the Capitol and the President's House along Pennsylvania Avenue.

## Public Uses

On July 4, 1801, the new federal city celebrated its first Independence Day. In 1805 the tradition of inaugural parades on Pennsylvania Avenue began with President Jefferson's second inauguration. As the symbol of the nation, Washington, D.C., was attacked and burned by the British during the War of 1812. During the Civil War, Union encampments and cattle pens filled open spaces, and the city was again threatened with attack by Confederate forces. In April 1865 the funeral cortege for President Abraham Lincoln traveled along Pennsylvania Avenue, followed one month later by a two-day victory parade for the Grand Army of the Republic. The nation's centennial was celebrated in 1876, and the Easter Egg Roll at the White House began in 1878. In 1894 James Coxey, a businessman and reformer, led a group of unemployed Ohio workers, known as Coxey's Army, to emphasize their plight. This was the first protest group to march on Washington.

Recreational uses of the time included strolling, riding in carriages, and visiting gardens and traveling shows. A large section of a sequoia tree from the Columbian exposition in Chicago was a popular attraction from the 1890s until the 1960s.

## Was the Vision Achieved?

While the various administrators of the City of Washington were careful to preserve the essential design elements of L'Enfant's plan, the vision for the Mall remained unfulfilled. Nearly 50 years after the city was established, work finally began on the Washington Monument, but it was not completed for 36 years as a result of funding problems and the Civil War. Around the middle of the century interest in making the Mall the nation's public park resulted in the hiring of Andrew Jackson Downing to create a unifying landscape design for the center of the city, but his untimely death brought an end to most of his plans. By the end of the 19th century interest in

the City Beautiful movement became the impetus for completing L'Enfant's vision for the Mall.

## THE McMILLAN PLAN — 1900 TO THE 1950s

A century of social change, commercial development, and ad hoc improvements had left the historic city center in need of an overhaul. The success of the City Beautiful movement following the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago led to a growing sentiment that the City of Washington needed to be renewed. In 1898 the American Institute of Architects (AIA) called for a redesign of the capital, whose centennial was approaching. At the 1900 AIA annual meeting, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. stated that a formal character for Washington, D.C., was appropriate and proposed treating the Mall as a compound, or multi-street, boulevard. There was a new appreciation of the vision in L'Enfant's plan, and Major L'Enfant was reinterred as a hero at Arlington National Cemetery in 1908.

In March 1901 the Senate passed a resolution to create the Senate Park Commission, also known as the McMillan Commission. Senator James McMillan was chair of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia. Members included architects Daniel Burnham (appointed chairman) and Charles McKim, and sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens, along with Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. The commission's charge was to study the park system of the city and make recommendations for improvements. The commission began with a tour of European cities to study major examples of landscape architecture and city planning on a monumental scale. The commission's report included not only a printed document, but an exhibition of models, drawings, and paintings.

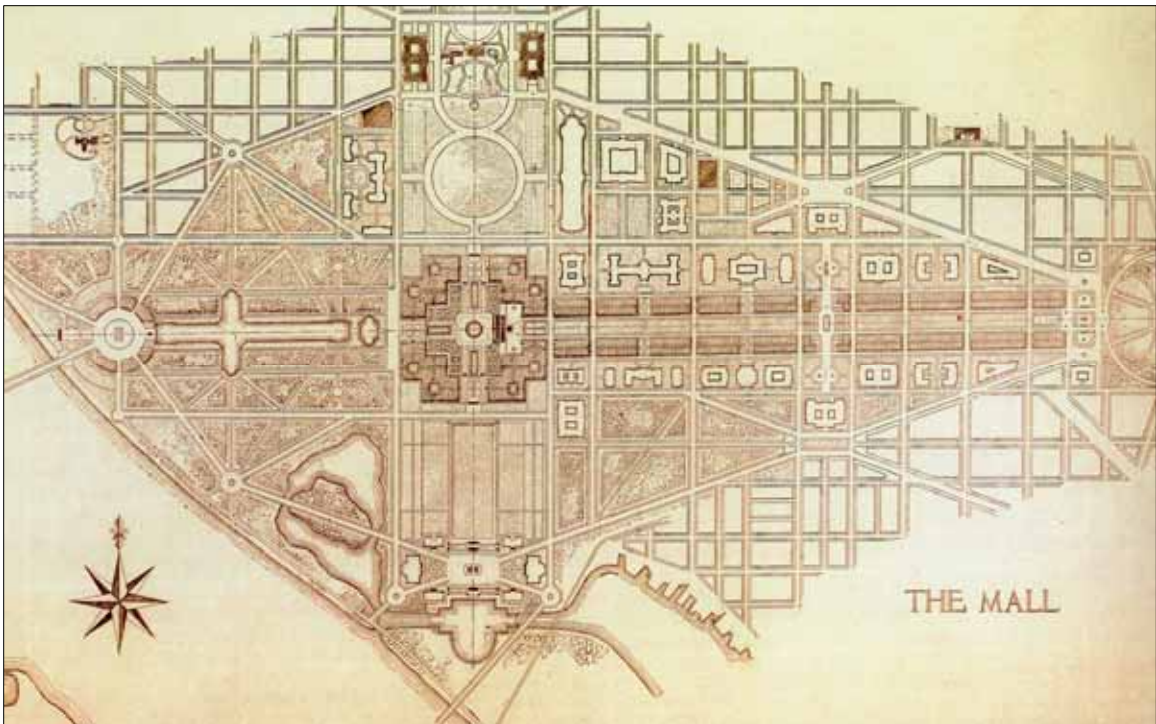
## Planning Vision

The McMillan plan emphasized the Mall as the city's ceremonial core. The plan referenced L'Enfant's vision in its formality, its concept of public spaces, and its concern with spatial relationships and civic art. The McMillan plan called for removing the naturalistic gardens of the Downing plan and creating a more ceremonial, geometric, large-scale landscape, as

### The McMillan Plan, 1901



Oblique view of the McMillan plan, which reflected the tenets of the City Beautiful movement.



McMillan plan view, which shows locations for the future Lincoln and Jefferson memorials to complete the western portion of the National Mall.

avored by L'Enfant. The plan differed from L'Enfant's by replacing the grand processional avenue in the center of the Mall with a 300-foot-wide expanse of grass lined on either side by symmetrical rows of American elms.

The McMillan plan followed the tenets of the City Beautiful movement, which sought to use Beaux Arts classical architecture to improve poverty-stricken urban environments. A cross-shaped plan would extend the monumental area from the Capitol on the east to a proposed Lincoln memorial on west end, and from the White House on the north to a proposed new memorial on the south.

The plan recommended the removal of all government buildings not in the Beaux Arts style. The Mall would be lined with cultural and educational institutions. Major elements of the plan included:

- formal French gardens on the grounds of the Washington Monument
- a new Union Station north of the Capitol to replace the B&O Railroad terminal on the Mall
- a connection of Constitution Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue
- a memorial bridge across the Potomac River to connect the city to Arlington Memorial Cemetery
- a memorial to Abraham Lincoln with a reflecting pool at the west end of the Mall



Cherry trees in bloom around the Tidal Basin.

- double roadways to the north and south on the Mall
- a tidal basin with an anchoring memorial to complete the view from the White House

The plan also recommended renovating the White House to remove the Victorian era additions and improve circulation.

New federal buildings and structures were generally designed in the Beaux Arts style favored by the McMillan Commission.

## Measures to Protect the Planning Vision

To ensure that the visions of the L'Enfant plan and the new McMillan plan were protected, Congress created the United States Commission of Fine Arts in 1910 to advise on the location of statues, fountains, and monuments in the public squares, streets, and parks in the District of Columbia. Later that year President Taft signed an executive order that gave the commission responsibility to review designs for all public federal buildings erected in the District. In 1910 the maximum height for structures was put into law for all buildings within the District of Columbia.

In 1924 the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (later the National Capital Planning Commission) was formed to develop a comprehensive, consistent, and coordinated plan for the parks of the national capital and its environs in Maryland and Virginia. Its mission was expanded to purchase lands for future development and to devise strategies for preventing pollution in Rock Creek and the Anacostia and Potomac rivers.

In 1930 the Shipstead-Luce Act gave the Commission of Fine Arts authority to review the designs of private construction projects within certain areas of the national capital, specifically for construction that fronts or abuts the grounds of the Capitol, the grounds of the White House, the portion of Pennsylvania Avenue extending from the Capitol to the White House, and the Mall park system, as well as Rock Creek Park, the National Zoo, the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway, the southwest waterfront, and Fort McNair.

In 1933 the parks in Washington, D.C., were consolidated under the management of the National Park Service.

## Accomplishments

**The Mall.** The vision of the McMillan plan was generally followed with the planting of American elms and the layout of four boulevards down the Mall, two on either side of the vast lawn. The Department of Agriculture constructed a large building on the south side of the Mall in 1902.

**Washington Monument.** Formal gardens were not built on the monument's grounds. The Sylvan Theatre was constructed south of the monument in 1917 to provide a venue for plays, concerts, and other outdoor presentations.

**West Potomac Park.** Cherry trees that were given to the nation by Japan were planted around the Tidal Basin in 1912, and the area became so popular that the McMillan plan's recommendations for the area were not pursued. In 1913 the Rock Creek and Potomac Parkway was begun, connecting the National Mall with the burgeoning suburbs. The Lincoln Memorial was dedicated in 1922, establishing the west end of the National Mall. However, the proposed cruciform-shaped reflecting pool was modified to a rectangular form to accommodate temporary military buildings that had been erected during the World War. The Thomas Jefferson memorial was completed in 1939, completing the McMillan plan's vision for a memorial to anchor the southern end of the National Mall and complete the view from the White House.

**Pennsylvania Avenue.** By the 1920s the area between the Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue had become run down, a periodic condition. Slums and dilapidated buildings were demolished to allow for the creation of the Federal Triangle, but L'Enfant's street layout plan was altered. Constitution and Pennsylvania avenues were finally connected west of the Capitol in the 1920s, when the B&O Railroad terminal was removed in accordance with the McMillan plan.

**The White House & President's Park.** The McMillan plan's proposals were largely realized. The West Wing was constructed to provide



Temporary military buildings occupied the grounds of the Washington Monument during World Wars I and II. They were finally removed in the 1960s.

additional office space for the presidential staff in 1902; it later became the president's office. Structural damage led to President Truman's renovation of the White House from 1948 to 1952. The 1935 "Report to the President of the United States on Improvements and Policy of Maintenance for the Executive Mansion Grounds," by the Olmsted Brothers, established and continues to guide the landscape character of the White House grounds and gardens.

## Public Uses

The tradition of protest marches on Washington and the Mall that began in 1894 with Coxey's Army grew in number and size. Protests and demonstrations for causes such as women's suffrage, voting rights, war protests, and desegregation followed over the next century. The Lincoln Memorial became an important civil rights landmark with the 1939 concert on its steps by Marian Anderson, who had not been allowed to perform at Constitution Hall because of her race.

Mass production of the automobile gave people unprecedented mobility. More people were able to visit the city and its parks and to participate in activities, public gatherings, and First Amendment demonstrations.

During World Wars I and II temporary military office buildings were constructed on the grounds of the Washington Monument and on

either side of the Lincoln Reflecting Pool. They remained throughout this period.

The Pageant of Peace began in 1923 as a Christmas tree lighting tradition and has become a large event on the Ellipse attended by thousands of visitors, with the president turning on the holiday lights.

The National Cherry Blossom Festival, which began in 1935 to celebrate the spring flowering of the cherry trees, has evolved into a major annual event attended by millions.

Recreational uses of this period included strolling, team sports such as soccer and baseball, swimming, and bicycling.

## Was the Vision Achieved?

The McMillan Commission reanalyzed the tenets of the L'Enfant plan and recommended specific projects and locations to create a ceremonial center for the nation's capital. For the first time steps were taken to ensure that the planning visions would be protected and implemented through the creation of the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. In 1933 the National Park Service was given responsibility for managing national park areas in the capital, continuing the tradition of federal oversight in the city. The planting of Japanese cherry trees around the Tidal Basin, the construction of the Lincoln Memorial and the Reflecting Pool to anchor the west end of the Mall, and the addition of the Jefferson Memorial at the southern axis contributed to a feeling of completion for L'Enfant's vision. Yet temporary structures erected at various places throughout the area continued to detract from the overall vision.

## NPS MASTER PLANS AND MEMORIALS — 1960s TO 2000

The 1976 U.S. Bicentennial Celebration provided the motivation for planning to accommodate large numbers of expected visitors to the nation's capital. Following World War II, metropolitan Washington had grown quickly, with new roads and highways built to provide access to the city. The classical and traditional architectural character espoused by the McMillan plan was no

longer favored, and it was thought that the L'Enfant plan was equally outdated for a modern city. As a result, development from this era often has a modern architectural character.

The Inaugural Parade of President John F. Kennedy on January 20, 1961, focused attention on the blighted condition of Pennsylvania Avenue. Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site was set aside as a unit of the national park system in 1965, and the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation was subsequently established to revitalize the avenue. The area was set aside as a unit of the national park system on June 25, 1987.

A number of major memorials were added to the National Mall throughout this period, further underscoring its importance as the home to the great symbols of our country.

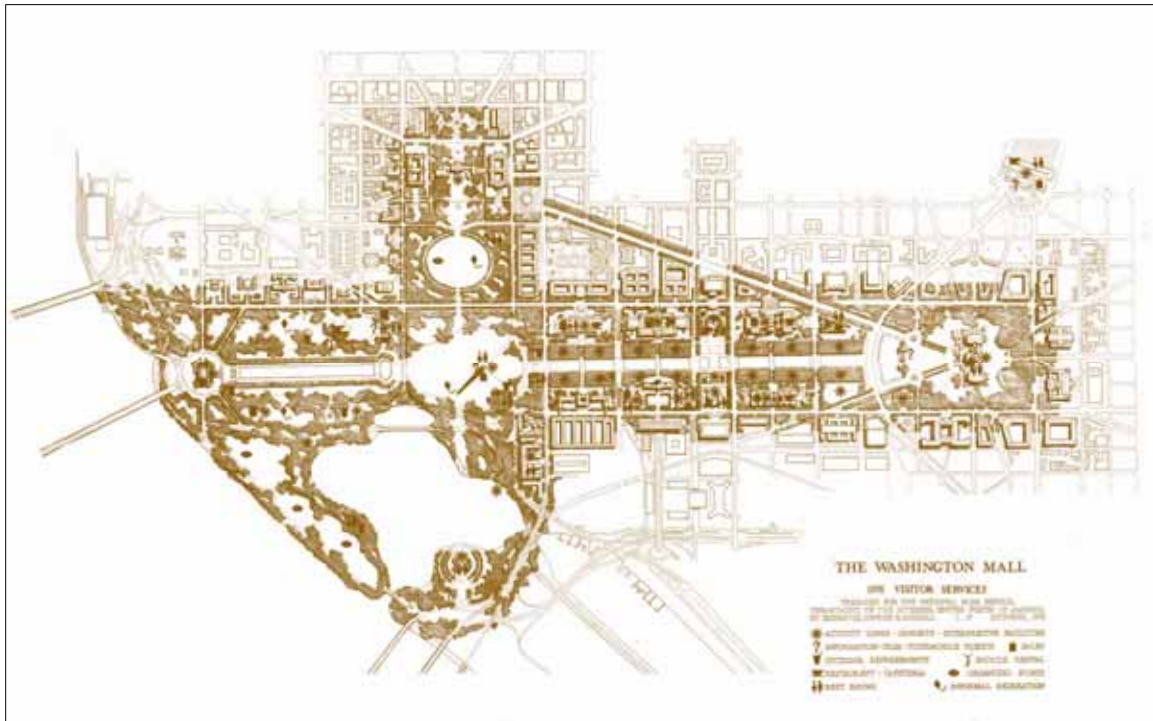
## Planning Vision

Master plans for the Washington Mall area were prepared by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in the 1960s and 1970s. They followed the general layout of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans, while attempting to accommodate national prosperity and address the congestion caused by automobile traffic. In addition to the National Mall, the illustrated master plan included the following proposals:

- plans for Pennsylvania Avenue (1st to 15th streets NW), the White House and President's Park, and the Capitol
- accommodation of freeway access by way of the I-66 and I-395 corridors, reinforcing north and south boundaries on the western edge of the National Mall
- a redesign of the eastern end of the Mall for a Capitol Reflecting Pool, and the relocation of the Botanic Gardens buildings from the east end of the Mall to south of the Mall
- a national visitor center in Union Station to orient and inform visitors
- locations for additional museums and gardens for the Smithsonian Institution and the National Gallery of Art
- a proposal for Constitution Gardens, with a curvilinear lake and small island, on the western end of the Mall as a site for celebration,



### The 1976 NPS Mall Plan



The 1976 plan focused on visitor services for the National Mall.

festivals, and events, as well as visitor services such as restaurants and underground parking garages

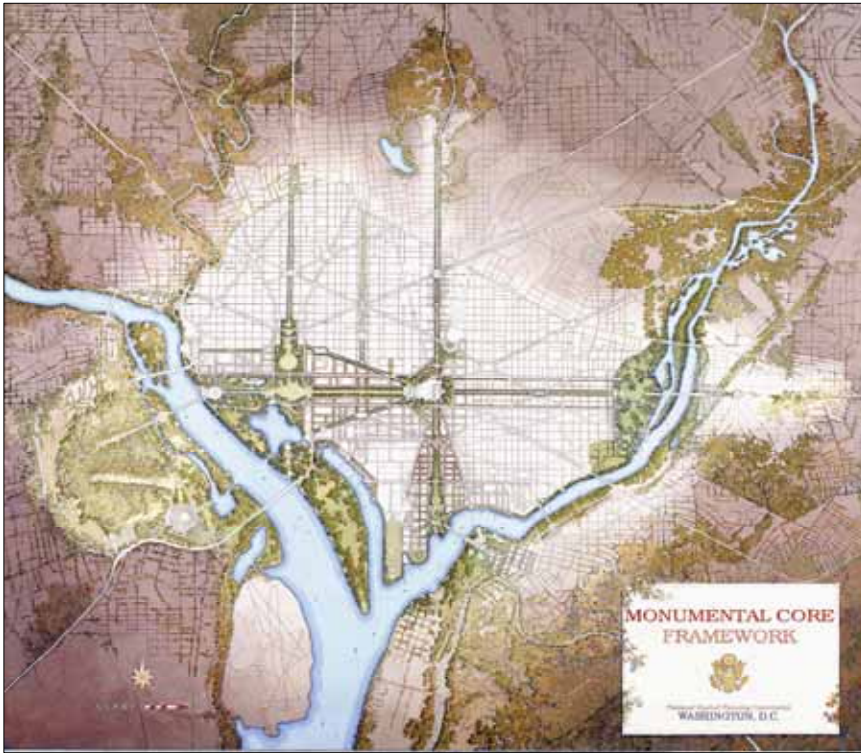
The whole National Mall area would be pedestrian friendly. Commercial and personal vehicle traffic, as well as vehicle parking, would be removed from the Mall, and all north-south roadway crossings would be tunneled under the Mall. Two roads (Washington and Adams drives) would be converted to walkways, and a hop-on and -off visitor bus service would be provided on designated lanes. Bicycle use would be encouraged. Underground parking would be provided at the Ellipse and Constitution Gardens.

Congress established the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation on October 27, 1972, to develop, maintain, and use Pennsylvania Avenue “in a manner suitable to its historical, ceremonial, and physical relationship to the legislative and executive branches of Federal Government and to the governmental buildings, monuments, memorials and parks in or adjacent to the area” (40 USC 871 (1994)). In creating the quasi-governmental agency, Congress granted it broad

powers, which included acquiring property and, with review and approval by the Secretary of the Interior and others, designing and reconstructing the streetscape. The Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation released the *Pennsylvania Avenue Plan* in 1974 to establish a framework for revitalizing the avenue. Goals and objectives of the 1974 plan were to

- reinforce Pennsylvania Avenue’s role as the physical and symbolic link between the White House and the U.S. Capitol
- make Pennsylvania Avenue function as a bridge between the federal core and the city’s downtown area
- encourage residential as well as commercial occupancy of Pennsylvania Avenue
- encourage cultural activities along Pennsylvania Avenue
- maintain a sense of historic continuity and evolution

### The Legacy Plan, 1997



The National Capital Planning Commission's *Legacy Plan* offers proposals for transportation, community revitalization, public building, and open space in the monumental core.

### Measures to Protect the Planning Vision

Congress passed the Commemorative Works Act in 1986 to preserve the integrity of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans, to preserve and protect open space, and to set standards for future commemorative works.

The 1997 National Capital Planning Commission's *Legacy Plan* provides a framework for change that builds on the past, plans for the future, and focuses on the use of transit rather than expanded automobile access.

### Accomplishments

**The Mall.** Efforts to tunnel all traffic under the Mall never materialized; however, roads were tunneled under the Mall at 12th and 9th streets NW/SW and I-395 (between 1st and 3rd street NW/SW). Washington and Adams drives were converted to gravel walkways as planned, but Madison Drive NW and Jefferson Drive SW were not closed to traffic, and parking was not

removed as planned. The Capitol Reflecting Pool was constructed over the I-395 tunnel and the Botanic Gardens were relocated to their current spot south of the Mall. A permanent national visitor center was not built.

### Washington Monument.

The temporary military buildings on the grounds of the monument and on either side of the Lincoln Reflecting Pool were finally removed between 1964 and 1969. A public parking lot with access from Constitution Avenue NW was added but later removed, and 15th Street NW/SW was redesigned as a symmetrical curve. The monument was restored in the 1990s, and security renovations to the landscape were completed in 2005.

**West Potomac Park.** With the addition of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (1982), the Korean War Veterans Memorial (1995), and the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial (1997), West Potomac Park became more commemorative in character and less recreational. Constitution Gardens, dedicated in 1976, is an oasis in the midst of the city, but its proposed function as an area for programmed activities, restaurants, events, concerts, and celebrations was never achieved, nor was underground public parking developed.

**Pennsylvania Avenue.** The L'Enfant plan's vistas along Pennsylvania Avenue were further altered with the addition of two new parks (Freedom Plaza in 1980 and Pershing Park in 1981) between 12th and 15th streets NW. The design facilitated east-west traffic flow on E Street NW (now closed to public traffic) and created additional pedestrian oriented spaces within the small triangular spaces created by the L'Enfant plan. Along Pennsylvania Avenue the

John Marshall Park opened up north-south views toward Judiciary Square. The U.S. Navy Memorial and Naval Heritage Center at 7th Street NW between Pennsylvania Avenue and Indiana Avenue was dedicated in 1987.

**The White House & President’s Park.** Proposed public parking under the Ellipse was not developed. Beginning in the 1980s, security concerns resulted in the installation of concrete bollards and additional restrictions on visitation to the White House. In 1995 the National Park Service opened a new White House Visitor Center in Baldrige Hall in the Commerce Building, across the street from the White House. Also in 1995 security concerns resulted in the closing of Pennsylvania Avenue north of the White House to public vehicular traffic.

## Public Uses

During this period demonstrations became larger in number and size. In 1963 the March on Washington culminated with the “I Have a Dream” speech by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Several one-of-a-kind celebrations such as those for the 1976 Bicentennial occurred. New traditions started, such as the Smithsonian Folklife Festival that began in 1967. Concerts on the Capitol grounds to celebrate Memorial Day, the Fourth of July, and Labor Day were inaugurated in 1990. The National Park Service initiated a visitor hop-on and -off bus service in 1969. Metrorail subway service began in 1976, with one stop directly on the Mall and two within a few blocks to both the north and south, but no stops close to the west end of the National Mall. By the late 1990s the Million Man March and the AIDS Quilt were typical of demonstrations related to social issues.

## Was the Vision Achieved?

The second half of the 20th century saw major steps taken to preserve the legacy of the L’Enfant plan and fulfill the vision of the McMillan plan. Temporary World War I and II military structures were removed, underscoring the formal character of the National Mall and opening up space on much of the west end. Major memorials that would complete the area as the commemorative and ceremonial heart of the capital were completed or planning was started. Overwhelm-

ing public use brought to the forefront the need for developing ways to protect and preserve the National Mall for future generations, and one of the results was the passage of the Commemorative Works Act in 1986.

By the 1990s the transformation of Pennsylvania Avenue under the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation was complete, and Congress transferred its properties and responsibilities to the General Services Administration, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the National Park Service. In creating Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park, Congress explicitly gave the National Park Service responsibility for “management, administration, maintenance, law enforcement, visitor services, resource protection, interpretation, and historic preservation” (40 USC 6702(c)(2)). Congress also authorized the National Park Service to arrange for “special events, festivals, concerts, or other art and cultural programs” (40 USC 6702(c)(3)).

## EXISTING CONDITIONS — 2000 TO 2006

### Planning Vision

The National Capital Planning Commission adopted a *Memorials and Museums Master Plan* in 2001, which stems from the *Legacy Plan* and guides the selection of sites for future memorials and museums. The commission’s 2004 *Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital: Federal Elements* provides guidance that applies to the National Mall (specifically relating to the federal workplace, parks and open space, transportation, federal environment, preservation and historic features, and visitors).

To relieve pressure on the National Mall, the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts have launched the National Capital Framework Plan, an initiative to enhance the areas surrounding the National Mall. This plan will help provide accessible, inviting, and attractive places for public commemoration, participation, and celebration beyond the National Mall. The plan will

### Commemorative Areas, Washington, D.C., and Environs



- provide ways to seamlessly extend desirable qualities of the National Mall to surrounding areas
- reestablish vistas of national importance, and create important new places for cultural and commemorative attractions
- improve access and connections to popular places around the city

### Measures to Protect the Planning Vision

In 2003 Congress decided to protect the National Mall from being overbuilt, so they amended the Commemorative Works Act to strengthen and clarify its purpose. Congress designated the Reserve area, which includes the National Mall and the White House, stating that this area is a “substantially completed work of civic art” and that “no commemorative work or visitor center shall be located within the Reserve.”

The act defines a commemorative work as

any statue, monument, sculpture, memorial, plaque, inscription, or other structure or landscape feature, including a garden or memorial grove, designed to perpetuate in a permanent manner the memory of an individual, group, event or other significant element of American history.

Congress also designated Areas I and II, where additional memorials could be erected in the future (see the “Reserve and Commemorative areas” map).

The 2003 amendments to the Commemorative Works Act affirmed the placement of the final three projects on the National Mall:

- Vietnam Veterans Memorial Center
- Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial
- National Museum of African American History and Culture — to be located on the northeast section of the Washington Monument, the area bounded by Constitution Avenue NW, Madison Drive NW, and 14th and 15th streets NW/SW.

Authorization for a fourth memorial to Black Revolutionary War Patriots expired.

Memorials near the Reserve area that have been authorized include a memorial to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, which will be on the south side of Independence Avenue SW near the National Air and Space Museum and a memorial to President John Adams. A memorial to American Veterans Disabled for Life is planned for Area 2 south of the National Mall.

Language added to the 2004 Interior Appropriations Act prohibits commercial advertising while allowing for donor recognition for special events on the National Mall.

### Accomplishments

The World War II Memorial was dedicated in 2004. Its placement on the east-west axis of the National Mall between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial influenced its construction, architectural design, and symbolism. It was built around a reconstructed rainbow

pool to ensure that historic views between the existing memorials would be retained.

The George Mason Memorial was dedicated in 2002.

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, a new round of security planning and construction was undertaken by the National Park Service, the National Capital Planning Commission, the District of Columbia, and federal agencies. NPS perimeter security projects have been completed or are underway for the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Thomas Jefferson Memorial. Museums lining the Mall also have perimeter security projects underway. Perimeter security for federal buildings along Pennsylvania Avenue will likely change the character of Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Park. The new security climate has resulted in public concerns about achieving an appropriate level of protection while retaining the open access and freedom of movement expected in a democracy.

## Public Uses

Each year there are over 3,000 applications for public gathering permits, resulting in more than 14,000 event-days. These events include

- public demonstrations in connection with First Amendment rights
- annual celebrations, such as the National Cherry Blossom Festival, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, presidential memorial birthday celebrations, the Folklife Festival, Black Family Reunion, and the Fourth of July

- concerts and cultural programs
- hundreds of events such as solar technology displays, book fairs, public employee recognition events, the laying of commemorative wreaths, re-enlistment ceremonies, weddings, or school group musical performances, as well as one-time events, such as a state funeral or home building for Hurricane Katrina victims
- annual marathons and races benefiting various causes, and hundreds of recreational league team sports

## Is the Vision Being Achieved?

The visions of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans still guide the overall preservation and protection of the National Mall. Amendments to the Commemorative Works Act and plans by the National Capital Planning Commission and the Commission of Fine Art are seeking to ensure that new memorials are installed within adjacent areas of the District, not the Reserve.

Major underground public parking structures within the Reserve are no longer consistent with regional transportation plans and would likely cause the capacity of roads to be exceeded.

High levels of public use and resulting wear and tear affect the appearance of the landscape and detract from the quality of the environment envisioned in the L'Enfant and McMillan plans. The comprehensive plan for the National Mall will determine appropriate maintenance and use standards and will seek to ensure that the National Mall remains a fitting setting for the enduring symbols of our country.