

EXTENDING THE LEGACY

CONTRASTING POLITICAL DIMENSIONS IN WASHINGTON'S PLAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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INTRODUCTION

In examining the topic of "building as a political act," few subjects are as fertile as capital cities, particularly those that are specifically planned as such. In a built environment laid out purposefully to house government functions and symbolize a national identity, political content will be unavoidably emphasized to a greater extent than would be found in naturally occurring urban centers. Far from an exception, Washington, DC, capital of the United States since Congress took up residence in 1800, has developed largely under the direction of monumental frameworks dominated by political symbolism, political motivations, and political maneuvering. As the official seat of the world's only remaining "superpower," Washington stands at the outset of several far-reaching planning endeavors intended to bring the city into the 21st century as a prominent world capital. While outwardly these plans, dominated by the National Capital Planning Commission's "Plan for the 21st Century," resemble the overtly political frameworks from previous eras, one can question if these adequately represent the actual political dimensions of the city. Specifically, is the political act of building really reflected in the vaunted priorities of Washington's plans, or has the mundane ethos of a stunted organic community provided the stage for the more vital political building of the city?

Since its inception in 1791, Washington has been infused with (and sometimes handicapped by) political influences, fiats, and symbols. As a generator of form, the original L'Enfant Plan and its subsequent refinements/modifications under the McMillan Commission in 1901 drew on well documented sources as varied as Versailles, baroque London, and the neo-classic republicanism enshrined by both Jefferson and the City Beautiful movement.¹ Besides the intrinsic political connotations connected to the formal plan (which is in the process of being added to the National Register of Historic Places) the siting of the city itself, representing a political compromise between northern and southern states, was an executive decision of the nation's first president, with this specific symbolism later reinforced by memorials to the reunification of north and south after the American Civil War. More directly influencing its development, Washington's governmental structure has been similarly tied to national political imperatives, thrusting even mundane local issues into the national legislative and

executive arenas. The prominent planning role of the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the Commission of Fine Arts is merely the most direct manifestation of this from an architectural point of view. The underlying artificial division of the metropolis into three competing jurisdictions, one of which is under constant threat of federal intervention, is the primary logistical consequence of this political legacy. The recently unveiled monumental core plan of the NCPC not only continues the methodology of the McMillan Plan in its formal characteristics; it also perpetuates this artificial jurisdictional rift in planning, largely due to statutory inertia.

Overlaid upon this context, the city as it exists today, with a metropolitan population approaching four million, is, like any other urban community, a product of the cumulative localized political interactions among its occupants. In addressing the political dimensions of the city, and building as a political act in general, one can then distinguish between two contrasting definitions of politics. The common 20th-century conception of politics in the more narrow sense, emphasizing authority, government, and power relationships as the essence of political action, has formed the framework for the city's historical development. However, when political action is defined in the broader classical sense, derived from Aristotelian political theory, politics encompasses the entire range of mundane social interactions that knit a community into a cohesive social unit, including fundamental issues of common justice and ethics. Under such a definition, the functions of architecture in its most basic form, providing shelter and the manipulation of the physical environment to facilitate human interaction, become inherently political actions concerned with the promotion of social activity.

Washington's development is exceptional in the dominance of the modern conception of politics over the influences of classical political interaction. Unlike 1901, however, the city is now a full-fledged late-20th-century urban conglomeration; do design and building solutions geared for a mere political symbol maintain validity within a self-conscious urban organism? In Washington, at least, the two manifestations of political building appear to coexist, albeit sometimes uneasily, although the appropriateness of the hierarchical dominance of political symbol over political substance can be questioned.

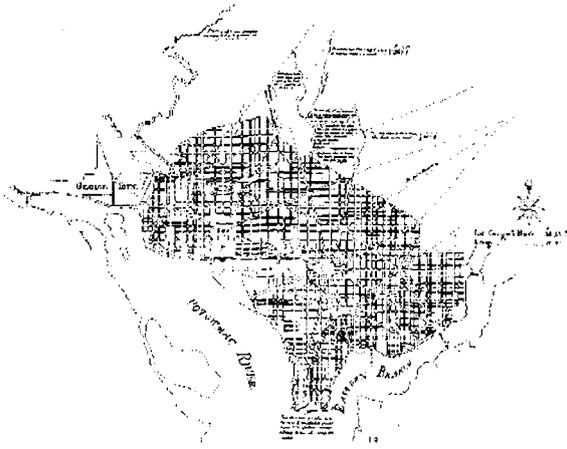


Fig. 1. Pierre Charles L'Enfant's plan for the City of Washington, 1791.

DEFINING POLITICAL ACTS

In order to fully appreciate and intelligently observe the contrasting manifestations of political acts in an urban environment, one must first have a clear understanding of the underlying concept of "politics." The term "politics" has in recent times acquired quite a negative connotation in common parlance. No doubt the hardening of partisan ideological politics over the course of the 20th century has been a primary cause for this phenomenon, though it can be argued that much of the negative feelings held by the general populace stem from perceptions that politicians, while far-removed from day-to-day life, nevertheless have undo influence over how that life can be led.

Modern Liberal Politics

While not always regarded as such a nemesis to the common man, a view of politics defined in terms of power relationships has become particularly dominant in Western political thought. Influenced mainly by the 17th- and 18th-century liberal theories on the nature of man and society, political structure and the rule of law is generally seen as a control on individuals acting against each other. This common understanding of the basis of politics stems largely from the writings of John Locke (primarily his *Second Treatise on Government*), which saw political structure as a shell insulating the individual and individual rights. The individual reigns supreme in the Lockean view of the world; social structure is created through the autonomous will of individuals, and, in a significant departure from previous views of society, there exists a clear separation between politics and morality. This is not to suggest that politics is in any way immoral, but merely that political action stems from biological or "natural" impulses for self-preservation rather than higher moral purposes.²

As developed in the 19th and 20th centuries, politics has increasingly become synonymous with power relationships, particularly in terms of authority and the individual or classes of individuals. Though often conceived in terms of government, politics in the modern sense clearly applies equally to power relationships at

any and every level. In regard to building as a political act, this definition of politics is most plainly seen in symbolic representations of the relationships of the individual with authority as well as the use of the built environment to influence or control these relationships, as is alluded to in several of the categories suggested in the call for submissions for this conference. Manifestations such as "coercive architecture," "symbolic uses of materiality," "representation as a means of social commentary," "poverty, building, and government," "ideology in Western/Eastern architecture," or "meaning, monuments, and memorials," easily fall under this definition. Frequently framed in terms of control and social issues rather than day-to-day social relationships themselves, a more marked characteristic of modern political action may be its ever-present (though sometimes benign) competitiveness, whether for the ascendancy of one's views, one's status, one's cause, or one's ideas.

Classical Politics

In contrast to this modern notion of politics, the original classical concept of politics in Western thought saw man as an inherently social, and hence "political," animal. Stemming from the writings of Plato and especially Aristotle, politics was understood as the central binding concept in civilized human society, centering on the web of social and physical interrelationships forming the *polis*. Unlike modern politics, classical politics is closely bound to ethics and philosophy; indeed, for Plato there was no separation of politics and public morality. The society of the *polis* (the paradigmatic form of community in the classical era) sought to engender the "Good," an ideal where each member of society reached full potential. Refining the constructs articulated by Plato in *The Republic*, Aristotle, in *The Politics*, conceived the polity (*politeia*) as embracing all aspects of human society, including households, families, and other localized communities, although the greater whole of the *polis* was the basic paradigm. By thus encompassing human behavior in totality, Aristotle's view of the polity necessarily included ethics; as with Plato, ethics and political philosophy (*politike*) were inseparable. Rather than merely an individual looking out for his/her rights, Aristotle's citizen, or virtuous man (*spoudaios*), is by nature associated with others seeking the "Good." Establishing man as a "political animal," classical thought also ascribes to mankind a "perception of good and evil, just and unjust." For Aristotle, this capacity for moral choice makes politics inevitable, with political relations honing these moral virtues, resulting in a virtuous society.³

When seen in the classical sense, political action thus encompasses not only power relations, but also much of the mundane social interactions that bind communities into cohesive and living social organisms on a local scale. Just as Aristotle's *politeia* extended to the various smaller social components composing the greater *polis*, in contemporary society the polity applies with equal validity at the scale of the city or nation as it does at the level of interpersonal, family, or neighborhood relations. Most significantly, the classical conception of politics recognizes political action as specifically including relationships and transactions that elevate and amplify general well-being

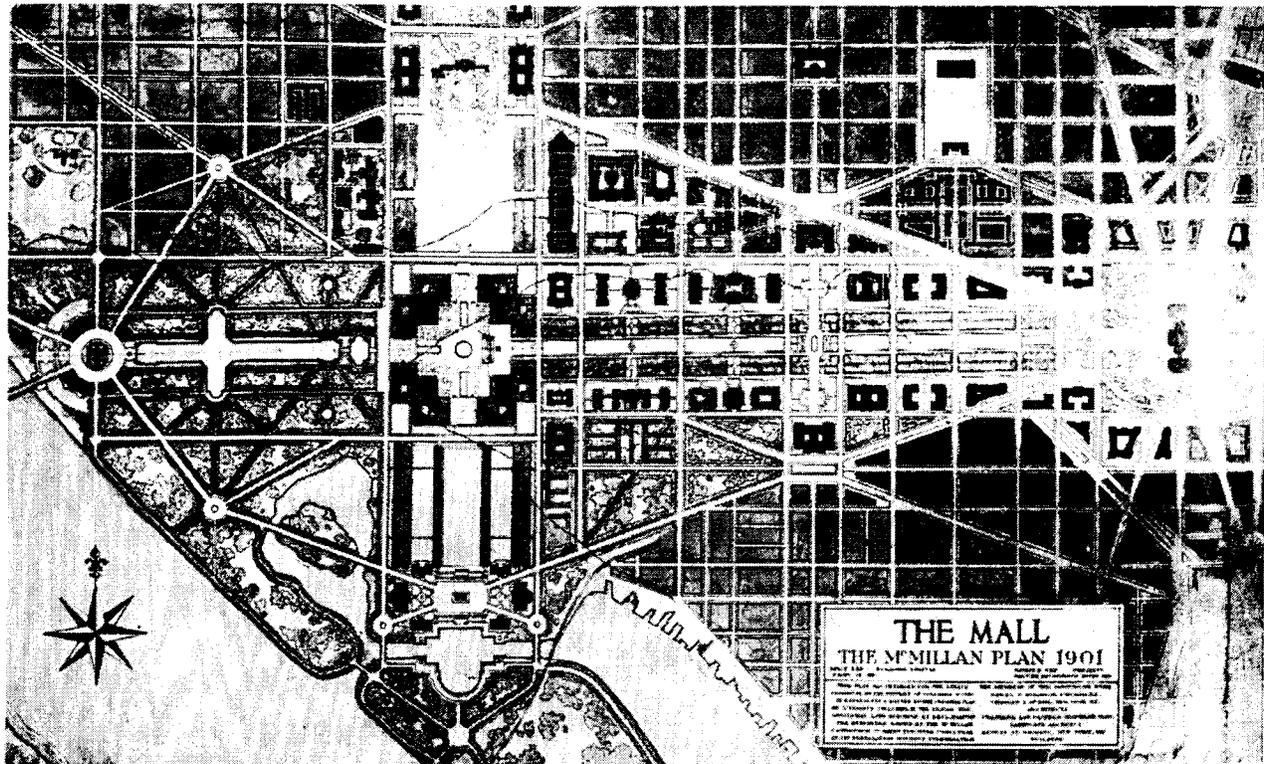


Fig. 2. Detail of the McMillan Commission plan for Washington, 1901.

within a community, regardless of the presence or absence of power, control, or authority issues.

Accordingly, building as a political act, in the classical sense, takes in a wider range of activities and motivations than it would under the conventional definition of politics. The process and object of design or building no longer need overt or underlying “political” motivations (in the modern sense) in order to be characterized as political acts. Rather, building and design that would otherwise be unremarkable but nevertheless contribute in a meaningful way to enhancing the overall physical and social coherence and sense of connection within a community take on the role of positive political action. While the subjects of more conventional political manifestations, such as those described earlier, certainly retain their political character to a significant extent, the specific nature and hierarchical importance of their political dimensions may appear considerably different when viewed through the lens of classical political theory.

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF WASHINGTON

The City as Political Act

In terms of the conventional definition of politics, Washington is one of a handful of existing cities built as a quintessential political act. Physically, governmentally, and even socially to some extent, the development of Washington, like other planned capital cities, has been carefully scripted, with enormous political implications hanging in the balance, at least at the outset. Planned on a grand scale (certainly by 18th-century standards), the city was initially devoid of population; in effect a *polis*

with no polity. Accordingly, it has not developed in the same manner as would a “normal” or naturally occurring urban population center.

Looking at Washington from a particularly narrow political view, its constitutional underpinnings have had an enormous impact on both a social and physical plane. While the US Constitution allows for a federally controlled capital district, the details were subject to protracted negotiation, compromise, and decree. As it affects current planning, the most lasting impact is that the city of Washington, or more properly the District of Columbia, remains essentially under the control of the federal government (though with only token, non-voting representation in that government), while the vast outlying districts of the metropolitan area fall within two different autonomous states, Maryland and Virginia. This situation is further complicated by the fact that the city has been saddled with much of the financial and material responsibilities for its residents that other major cities share with their surrounding suburban and rural jurisdictions. The result is a metropolitan area rigidly divided by historical accident whose economic and social center struggles with disproportionate material burdens without arguably the necessary level of support from a preoccupied federal government, which nevertheless steadfastly retains ultimate control. In terms of the built environment, this situation has resulted in a mind-boggling array of often competing and overlapping planning and regulatory bodies that has made coherent and comprehensive planning (or even common-sense planning) extraordinarily difficult.

Physically, the city has been shaped and constrained

by these same social, economic, and governmental contexts. The basis for the city layout is, of course, the well-documented plan by Pierre Charles L'Enfant of 1791. Largely unmarred by the accoutrements of the industrial revolution, the basic layout of Washington was essentially unchanged, though a little shabbier, when the Senate Parks Commission, under the charge of Sen. James McMillan, took on the city's most significant urban "renovation" in 1901. As has been discussed elsewhere (notably in Elbert Peets' treatise on the formal origins of Washington), the city's design under both L'Enfant and the McMillan Commission displays easily recognizable political meaning and symbolism (in the modern, conventional sense). From the radiating baroque street layout to the incredibly spacious public right-of-way (nearly 60% of the original city's ground area),⁴ from the siting of major structures to the historical connotations of the prevailing architectural scales and styles in the monumental core, the overt message of open democracy, federal governmental structure, the separation of powers, partisan reconciliation, and imperial grandeur resonates throughout official Washington. Interestingly, however, this infusion of overt symbolism does not penetrate far beyond the monumental core, and this division is clearly reflected in the separation of federal, or national, responsibilities from local jurisdiction within the more recent comprehensive plans adopted since the city was granted limited home rule in the 1970s.

The Capital vs. The Polis

Without doubt, there is a valid symbolic role for a national capital, whether planned or unplanned, and the exigencies of power politics in the seat of a country such as the United States can, and in some circumstances should, subsume the apparent manifestation of classical political interaction on a local scale. This was especially true in the earlier periods in Washington's history, when the polity was largely dominated by those directly involved with the federal government. While both political dimensions clearly existed (as is the underlying assumption of this examination), the normal influence of day-to-day political relations and community building was, for the most part, subservient to the city's function of housing the national government and representing the nation's ideals in its urban structure.

Even at the time of the McMillan Commission, over one hundred years after the city's founding, Washington was still a relatively small city dominated by the federal government. True to the tenets of the City Beautiful movement arising from the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, the McMillan Plan focussed specifically on Washington's baroque monumental core and the city's park system. Although influential as a model of hitherto unknown comprehensive city planning, the plan clearly was not overly responsive to the underlying fabric of the city itself. The resulting focus on memorials, parks, government buildings, and the vast sweep of landscaped vistas was not only satisfactory for the time, but was hailed as an ideal and unique manifestation of the City Beautiful. The very lack of the indigenous industry and large working-class population existing in other major cities of the time may well be one reason the plan was so

successful, which was not always the case in other urban centers where the messy realities of modern life were much more prominent issues. The plan itself, like L'Enfant's before it, took for granted that the symbolism embedded in the national shrines and vistas of the monumental core were of primary importance, especially when seen as the built manifestation of a new imperial America that was just then making its entrance as one of the world's great powers. Given the context of its time, such a conception of political building and planning was not inappropriate. Indeed, the fruition of the McMillan Plan in succeeding decades vastly improved the coherence and physical fabric of the monumental core and established the framework for what visitors today appreciate as their national capital. In doing so, however, it entrenched to a great extent the conceptual separation of the living, working city and the monumental core, as Norma Evenson observes:

In a capital city, the monumental center has multiple functions. It embellishes the urban fabric and, ideally, enriches the lives of those who live there. But it does not belong to the city alone. Monumental Washington belongs to the nation, and its self-containment tends to underline this relationship. For the thousands of tourists who visit Washington, the Mall provides a separate city of shrines. Within a single great composition, the legislative, judicial, and executive headquarters are impressively exhibited, accompanied by major cultural institutions and commemorative monuments to national heroes. Thus the Mall functions in some ways like a monumental theme park, enabling the visitor to "do" Washington without extensive exposure to the rest of the city.⁵

Meanwhile, in the "rest of the city," building as a manifestation of classical political action has proceeded largely outside the realm of formal planning. Coordinated only in a haphazard manner (if at all) through a variety of private-sector business and quasi-governmental groups, this "undesigned" fabric of political communities often remained lost in the bureaucracy of the regional planning context (the planning authority in the city with the most prestige and influence, the National Capital Planning Commission, has been able to opt out of addressing most of the localized development issues due to the artificial jurisdictional barriers that continue to result in lavish attention being paid to the monumental core at the expense of the rest of the city).⁶ One notable early exception, the other major physical legacy of the McMillan Plan, grew directly out of Frederick Law Olmsted Sr.'s notion of "commonplace civilization," the phenomenon of "communicativeness" within a society that follows directly from the principles of classical political action.⁷ Largely at the impetus of his son, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. (a McMillan commission member), the 1901 plan included an extensive system of park land throughout the city, which, though rarely celebrated as part of the plan, has arguably had a greater impact on improving residents' lives even to this day.

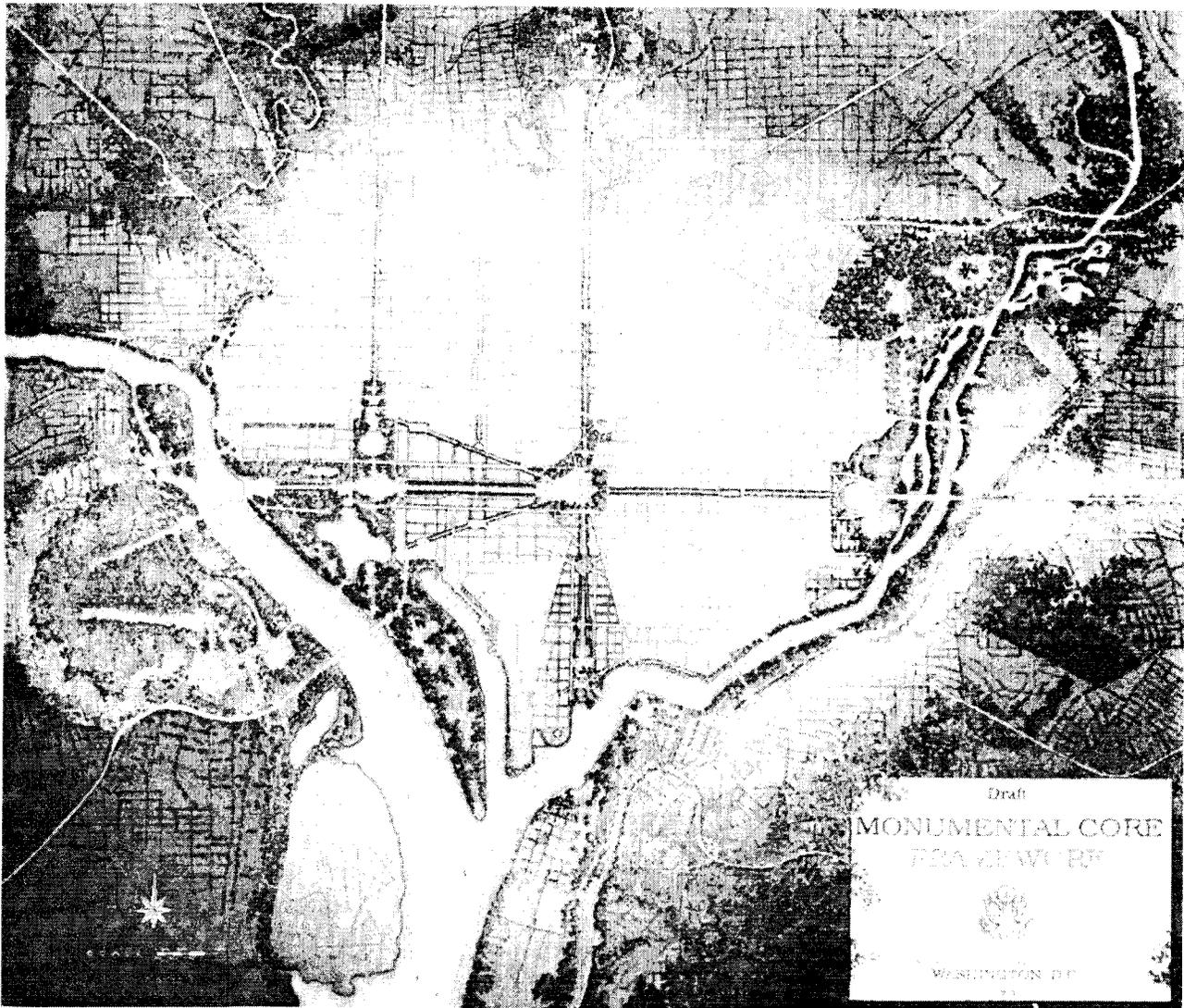


Fig. 3. The National Capital Planning Commission's draft plan for Washington's monumental core, 1996.

For the most part, however, formal planning has ignored much of the "commonplace civilization." This trend was most unfortunately seen in the late 1950s, when, in an effort to put Washington in the vanguard of politically-correct (at the time) urban renewal, entire neighborhoods in Southwest Washington were razed and replaced by modern "planned" residential complexes and artificial urban "places," most of which have never developed the kind of organic community that has grown up in other areas of the city. In contrast, the historically African-American Shaw neighborhood in Northwest Washington can be seen as a prime example of "commonplace civilization" in action, developing indigenously as the physical center of black Washington culture in the first half of the 20th century, with a wide variety of churches, theaters, business strips, and hotels primarily along U Street. Threatened by the same type of urban renewal in the early 1960s that had destroyed Southwest Washington, the Shaw community rallied effectively, creating the Model Inner City Community Organization (MICCO). Under MICCO's guidance, policies

were established resulting in the gradual redevelopment of the area with combinations of new construction and rehabilitation of existing structures.⁸ Not only was the physical integrity of the neighborhood largely retained, but the sense of concerted community action among both developers and users strengthened the area's social integrity (which almost certainly contributed to its ability to address similar challenges in the early 1990s). In other areas, such as the Old Downtown, alliances of local business leaders and the city's Redevelopment Land Authority (RLA) led to physical overhauls of the streetscapes to encourage more integrated use; although the actual physical improvements were executed, results in many of these cases were unsatisfactory due to the lack of follow-through in the social, economic, and behavioral aspects of the projects, unfortunately demonstrating the necessarily integrated nature of sustainably effective political action.

The Plan for the 21st Century

From the outset, the NCPC's latest plan for the

monumental core, "Extending the Legacy," proposes little more than a refurbishment of the pre-existing formal framework of the city. As laid out in the draft version, the plan rests on five key elements:

1. Building on the legacy of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans;
2. Unifying the city with the monumental core;
3. Using new memorials, museums, and public buildings to stimulate economic development;
4. Integrating the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers into the city's public life; and
5. Developing a comprehensive, flexible, and convenient transportation system.

In themselves, these are all reasonable goals. Unfortunately, the proposed translation of these elements into concrete form barely touches on the admirable intentions, and, in some cases, works against them. The physical components of the plan concentrate on a handful of symbolic areas: Mixed-use development on North Capitol Street; turning the riverfronts over in their entirety to parks and recreation lands; beautification of East Capitol Street (which is currently lined with elegant rowhouses ending at Robert F. Kennedy Stadium); removal of the various highways to the south of the central core; and mixed-use development on currently unsightly South Capitol Street into Anacostia. A new supplementary transit system would also link various hubs in the monumental core with the existing Metro system. Although this list represents a very brief overview of the plan, much of the proposed details are intentionally (and to some extent, appropriately) undeveloped since the plan's timeline stretches over 50 or more years.⁹

In general, the NCPC plan sticks conservatively to the monumental core (in keeping with its jurisdictional charge), as well as to the traditional and rather unimaginative accoutrements and understandings of the various plan elements. These facts alone bring into question the usefulness of the work, since a truly comprehensive integration with local or regional planning is absent. At the same time, the plan displays a curious balance between the visionary and the practical bordering on naivete, particularly in regard to areas that would most directly affect local residents. For example, the elimination of the admittedly unsightly Southwest/Southeast Freeway in favor of tree-lined avenues is laudable, but completely avoids addressing the continuing validity of their *raison d'être*, the inevitable increase in crosstown traffic congestion. One can also question the transformation of the entire riverfront to parks in a city already overflowing with public open space; not only is the majority of waterfront already park land, but in keeping with the plan's allusions to Paris, London, and the L'Enfant Plan, the vitality in these antecedents lay in the built fabric of the city directly addressing the river. It is also ironic that in the same month the plan was announced, the capital's principal new monument (the World War II Memorial) was also unveiled, situated in the heart of the monumental core even though a hallmark of the new plan is to use new memorials to spur economic development in outlying areas of the city. More disturbingly, a plan intended to reach into the next century appears to lack insights for changing conceptions of such things as federal facilities

or memorials. In an era obsessed with the transitory, one could argue that a memorial such as the AIDS Memorial Quilt, which transformed the existing Mall quite powerfully for a matter of hours, may be an example of the type of future "monument" that the capital will need to accommodate rather than the traditional marble and granite slabs.

Instead, the NCPC plan relies largely on streetscape beautification, federal office clusters, and traditional complexes of public recreational and cultural structures. By orienting itself so steadfastly to the formal solutions of the nearly century-old McMillan Plan, the current NCPC plan clearly seeks to address the same political exigencies of that earlier framework, which from a Washingtonian's point of view amounts to little more than that of a capital city serving the symbolic and physical needs of an influx of outside visitors. In the process, it also perpetuates an ignorance of both the ongoing non-ideological political building and the potential for development in particularly needy areas of the city. Although one of the key underpinnings of the plan is the use of monumental core extensions to stimulate economic development, past attempts of this nature have met with dubious success, and the actual areas proposed in the plan are extremely limited in the physical impact they would have on depressed sections of the city. Prime areas such as H Street NE or upper New York Avenue, which form the core of once-thriving neighborhoods or prominent gateways to the city, are completely overlooked (or, more accurately, left to the city's planning agencies to deal with separately) while North and South Capitol Streets are included, presumably only because they happen to flow into the Capitol whereas the others do not.

Despite the arguable flaws in the plan and its underlying assumptions, there is little in the current draft that would not be desirable in itself if the details for implementation can be addressed. As the preeminent plan for the city, however, it speaks primarily to political dimensions in the modern sense, allowing building as a classical political act to coexist, though in a tenuous, non-coordinated manner. Near miraculous revitalizations such as occurred along U Street NW, where a once notorious stretch has been restored and rebuilt into a thriving and trendy urban commercial/residential strip, take place almost in spite of the formal planning processes of the city. While the NCPC plan singles out nearly vacant 8th Street NW (one of L'Enfant's principal axes) as the center of a future arts district, popular new community theaters are already opening along once-shunned 14th Street with little help from the planning agencies, and a new opera house is going up in an historic structure downtown, though the city government, incredulously, initially barred the move as contrary to their comprehensive plan. On Capitol Hill, in the shadow of the highways the NCPC plan hopes to eliminate, new low-income housing built to the scale, density, and architectural character of the tightly-knit surrounding community of rowhouses is currently being built, though only a few blocks away, the Architect of the Capitol has razed a similar historic rowhouse (over community objections) under the aegis of political authority. The underlying message seems to

be that the legacy being extended into the 21st century is one of traditional political symbolism with only token acknowledgment of the more organic community building occurring at the local level.

CONCLUSION

Extending the Legacy

In gauging the different political dimensions of Washington, what soon becomes clear is the continuing dominance of the political symbol of the nation's capital despite increasingly apparent evidence of the effects of classical political action on the city's built fabric. This suggests on one level that the continued fascination in official circles with built representations of the relationship between the individual and the state persists almost as an anachronism (though it certainly can be argued that such a political manifestation still has a valid role on other levels). The unfortunate consequence of this phenomenon is that the city's principal manifesto of its built form, the NCPC's plan for the monumental core, largely misses the opportunity to be the vital and influential force in the city's development as it enters its third centenary that the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans were for its first and second. As the city itself experiences the socio-economic and physical growing pains shared by many other large urban centers in the late 20th century, the limits of reality are at once more constraining and more insistent than existed in either 1791 or 1901. Despite many unheralded successes, one cannot assume today that the "commonplace" aspects of a city with Washington's complexity will run unattended, as could have been conceivable one hundred years ago. A framework that aggressively confronts the mundane social and economic realities of urban life while contemplating truly integrated regional and local solutions would arguably make a more lasting contribution, as meaningful for the 21st-century metropolis as the McMillan Plan was for the 20th-century city.

Although such a solution does not seem immediately forthcoming, it remains undeniable that Washington, as a modern city in addition to being the national capital, can no longer afford to proceed as if it is only a political symbol, overlooking the organic aspects of the urban metropolis. Faced with an essentially unworkable constitutional structure (in the long run), severe physical constraints on its resources, and the constant scrutiny of the rest of the country, it is increasingly untenable for the District of Columbia not to adopt an integrated and responsive outlook that addresses both political manifestations. To some extent, this interaction can already be seen, spurred largely by the release of the NCPC plan itself. In the year since the initial announcement of the plan, various forums have sprung up, some grassroots and others officially sponsored, where the juxtaposition of the contrasting political dimensions have been acknowledged, highlighted, and debated.¹⁰ At the same time, evidence of their independent existence persists, as high-level debate over the overwrought World War II Memorial continues on the front pages of the city's press, while buried inside is the half-paragraph notice of the efforts of 3,000 volunteers painting and renovating 43 city public schools under the banner "Hands On DC."¹¹

Ultimately the nature of Washington's legacy can be seen as either the overt and overreaching political symbolism that has defined the city to millions of Americans throughout the country, or, perhaps more astutely, the inevitable adoption of political manifestations appropriate to the unique role the city played, both physically and conceptually, in the course of its first two hundred years. What remains to be seen is whether the legacy's extension merely perpetuates solutions no longer tenable for a self-conscious urban metropolis or rather embraces the diversity in political dimensions appropriate for a 21st century city.

NOTES

¹ See Elbert Peets, "The Genealogy of L'Enfant's Washington," in the *Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, April, May, and June 1927; and "The Monumental City" in Jonathan Barnett, *The Elusive City: Five Centuries of Design, Ambition, and Miscalculation* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986).

² See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, a critical edition with an introduction and apparatus criticus by Peter Laslett (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960). Although the concept of "radical individualism" can trace its roots back to the "autonomous individual" of the York Tracts of 1106, it was not until the carnage of the Thirty Years' War, fought in the name of religion, that political theorists fully developed a philosophical construct of an amoral state acting as a shell to protect mankind from itself. With philosophical antecedents in the works of Jean Bodin, Thomas Hobbes, in *Leviathan* (1651), was the principal theorist emphasizing politics as made up of a collection of separate covenants executed by autonomous individuals in a "state of nature"; autonomous relativity as propounded at this time also led to the discarding of objective morality. In Locke's *Two Treatises* (1698), the social contract between individuals primarily safeguards life, liberty, and property as they existed in the state of nature, binding both government and the individual. It is this foundation of traditional Western liberalism that formed the basis for Jefferson's Declaration of Independence (1776) and much of today's common political culture.

³ See Aristotle, *The Politics*, revised edition, translated by T.A. Sinclair, represented by Trevor J. Saunders (New York: Penguin Books, 1962, 1981), book I chap. ii and translator's introduction, pp. 2426. Also, Garrett Ward Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), pp. 8-12. Aristotle held that political society is composed of those with "true" or "virtuous" friendship (the *spoudaios*), and further that the *spoudaios* was a person displaying excellence in practice (as opposed to the philosopher, displaying excellence in theory). Furthermore, politics was intended to be the mechanism wherein the *spoudaios* cultivated his natural affinity toward the "Good." In striking contrast to the Enlightenment political theory propounded by Locke, Aristotle asserted that the role of political society is not merely to prevent its members from committing injustice against each other and promote transactions of property, but rather to engender virtuous and noble character in its members and thus establish the paradigmatic good life (see *The Politics*, book III chap. ix).

⁴ Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, *The Pennsylvania Avenue Plan 1974* (November 1974), p. VII.

⁵ Norma Evenson, "Monumental Spaces," in *The Mall in Washington*, proceedings of a symposium sponsored by the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, the National Gallery of Art, and the American Architectural Foundation, ed. Richard

Longstreth (Washington: The National Gallery of Art, 1991), p. 33. For a more complete examination of the role and influence of the McMillan Plan in the same compilation, see Jon A. Peterson, "The Mall, the McMillan Plan, and the Origins of American City Planning," pp. 101-115.

- ⁶ As was noted in the article "1939 Chapter Exhibit Challenges Plan of Washington," by architectural historian Kurt Helfrich in the March/April 1997 issue of *AIA/DC News*, as early as 1939 local architects led by Cloethiel Woodard Smith and Alfred Kastner launched an exhibit critical of the National Capital Parks and Planning Commission's handling of the city's planning. Implying that the McMillan Plan for the monumental core was insufficient for the growing metropolis, the exhibition was subsequently condemned by the local AIA chapter that sponsored it.
- ⁷ Adam Gopnik, "Olmsted's Trip," *The New Yorker*, March 31, 1997, pp. 98,100.

⁸ Marcia M. Greenlee, "Shaw: Heart of Black Washington," in *Washington at Home*, ed. Kathryn Schneider-Smith (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988), pp. 127-128. Additional essays in this collection provide cultural and physical histories as well as further examples of grassroots community development in neighborhoods throughout Washington.

⁹ National Capital Planning Commission, *Extending the Legacy: Planning America's Capital for the 21st Century* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1996).

¹⁰ In particular, an ongoing series of public forums, *Critical Choices for Planning Washington*, featuring local civic leaders as well as city and federal planning officials, has been sponsored by the Washington Architectural Foundation and the National Building Museum.

¹¹ "End Notes," *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1997, p. D3.