

# LEGACY THE 3RD CENTURY MALL

*Reinventing L'Enfant's Legacy*

*The City of Washington embodies America's democratic principles as intended by our founders. The Mall is the symbolic heart of our democracy.*



*SIGAL Gallery: August 8 - September 15, 2012  
District Architecture Center  
421 7th Street, NW Washington, DC*

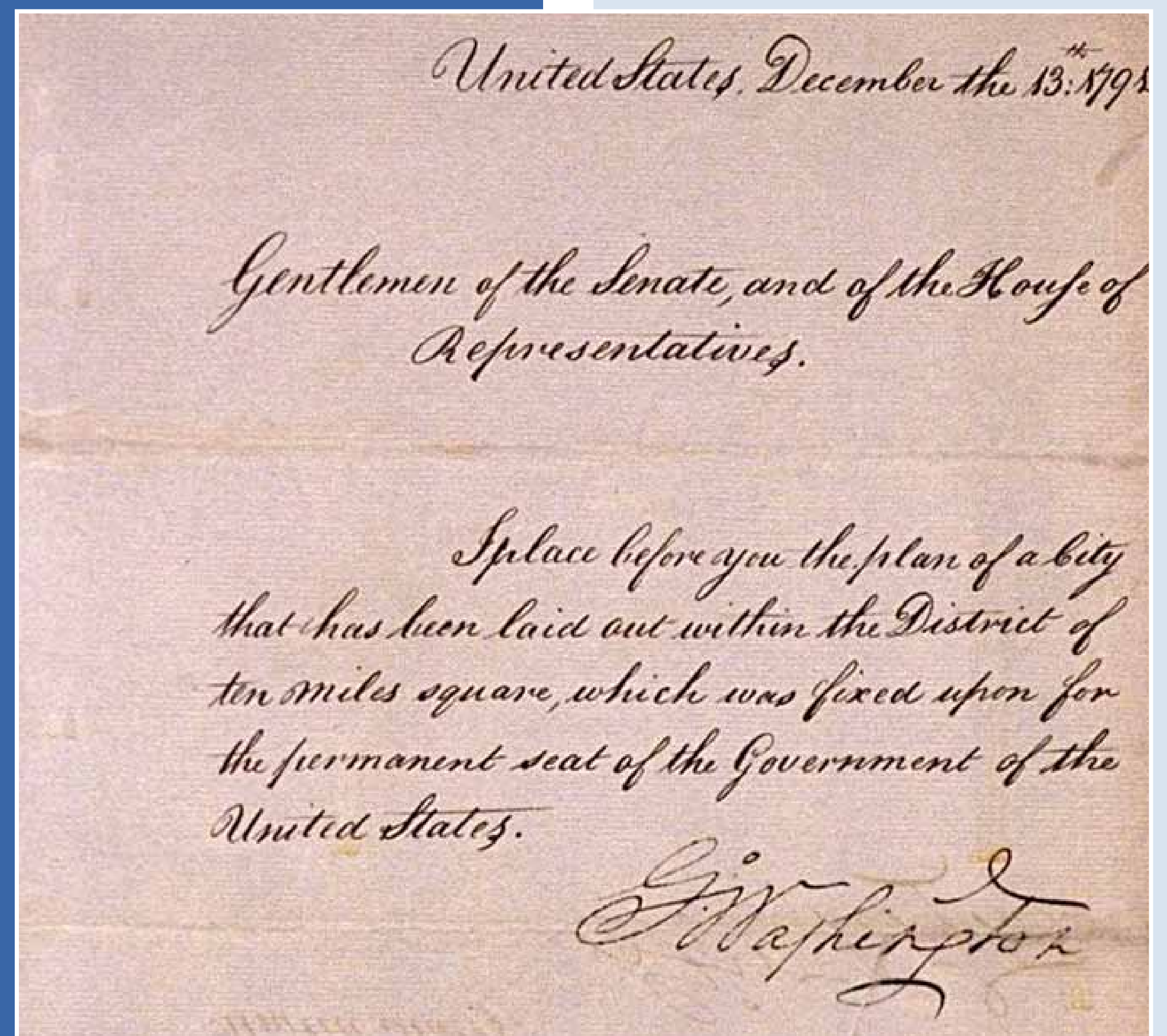
Courtesy of Carol Highsmith

This exhibition explores the challenges facing our National Mall today and some ideas about its future, and ours. We hope to demonstrate that by looking to, restoring, expanding, and reinventing the historic visionary plans for Washington, D.C., America can design the 3rd Century Mall that embraces the enduring vision of our democracy.

The Washington Family 1789-1796 by Edward Savage. Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington



In this family portrait and his letter to Congress, President George Washington proudly conveyed to the young republic his endorsement of the 1791 L'Enfant Plan for the City of Washington, D.C.



Courtesy of Albert H. Small - George Washington University Collection



# CITY AND NATURE

## 1791 L'ENFANT PLAN

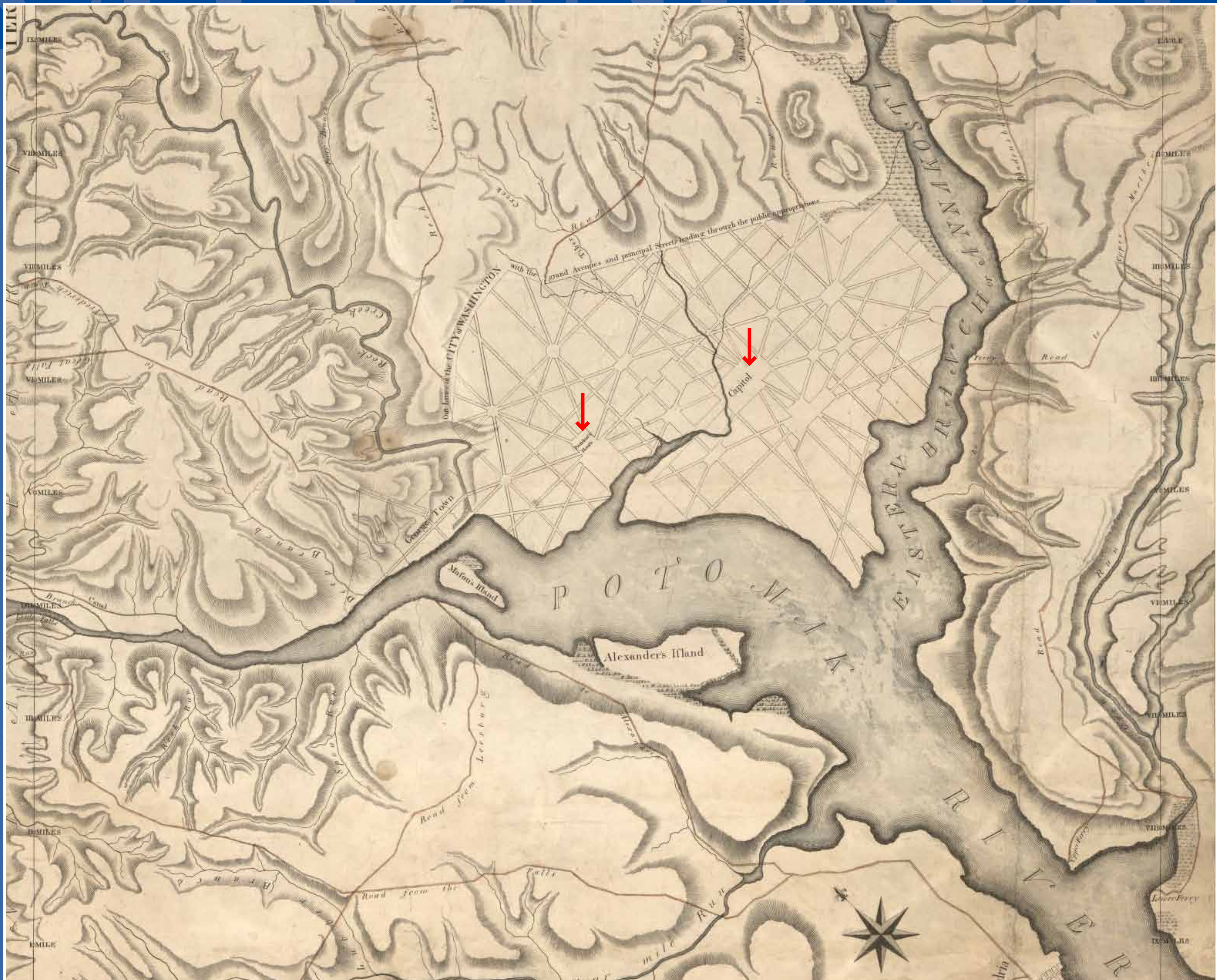
*“The positions for the different Grand Edifices, and for the several Grand Squares or Areas of different shapes as they are laid down were first determined on the most advantageous ground, commanding the most extensive prospects” – Peter Charles L’Enfant*



“I your memorialist -- Peter Charles L’Enfant...” While commonly referred to as “Pierre,” L’Enfant in fact called himself “Peter.” (From L’Enfant’s December 7, 1800 Memorial to Congress.)  
Conceptual portrait of L’Enfant. Courtesy of the Prince George’s County Historical Society and the Hall of Fame of Prince George’s County.

Chosen by President George Washington to design the seat of government on land at the confluence of the Potomac and the Anacostia Rivers, French-born American Peter Charles L’Enfant surveyed the rolling hills for advantageous sites for public buildings.

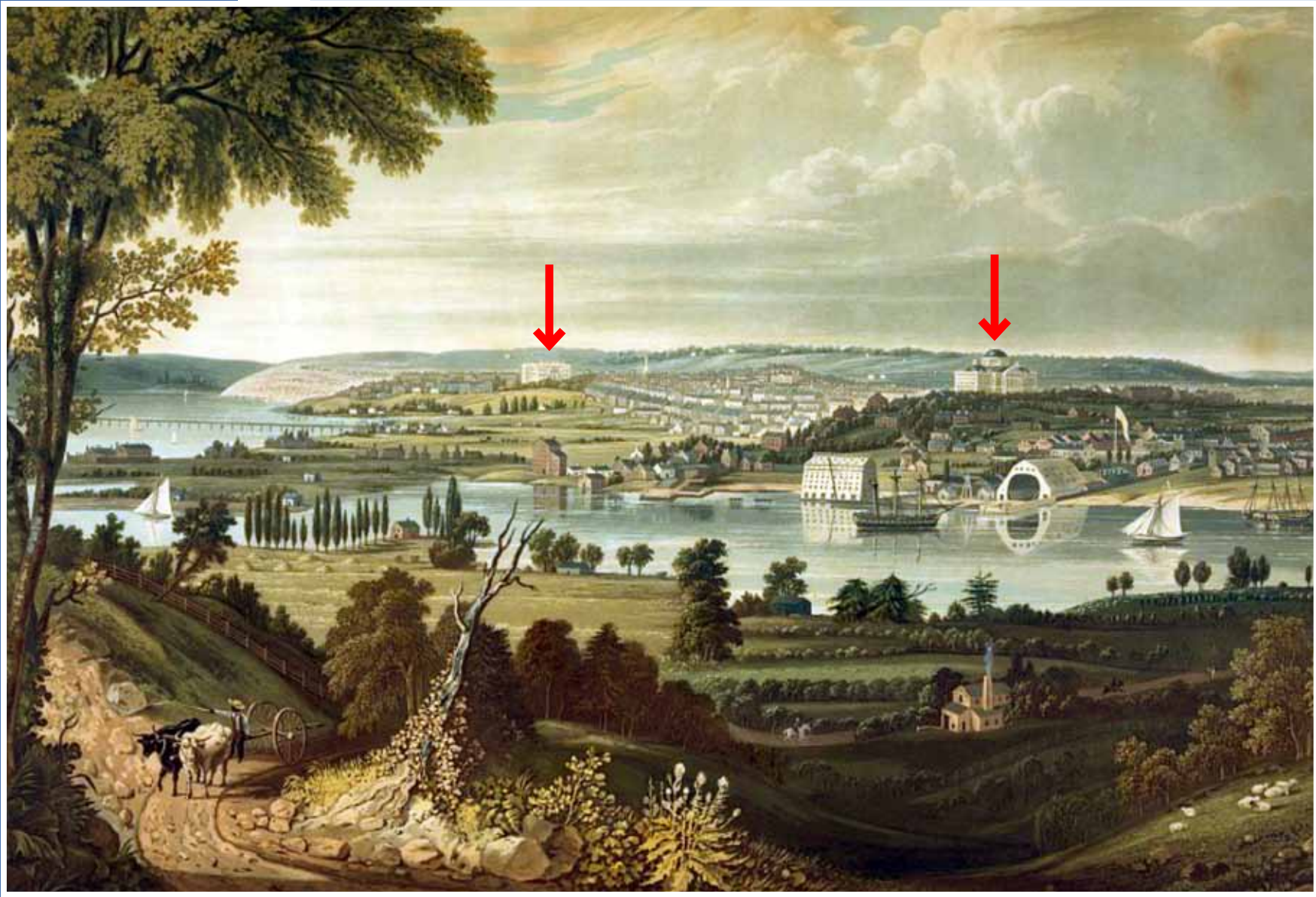
## DESIGN WITH NATURE



L’Enfant proposed to locate the two most prominent buildings of American democracy – the President’s House (White House) and the Capitol – on two hills (at arrows). Andrew Ellicott’s Topographical Map of the Territory of Columbia, 1793. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

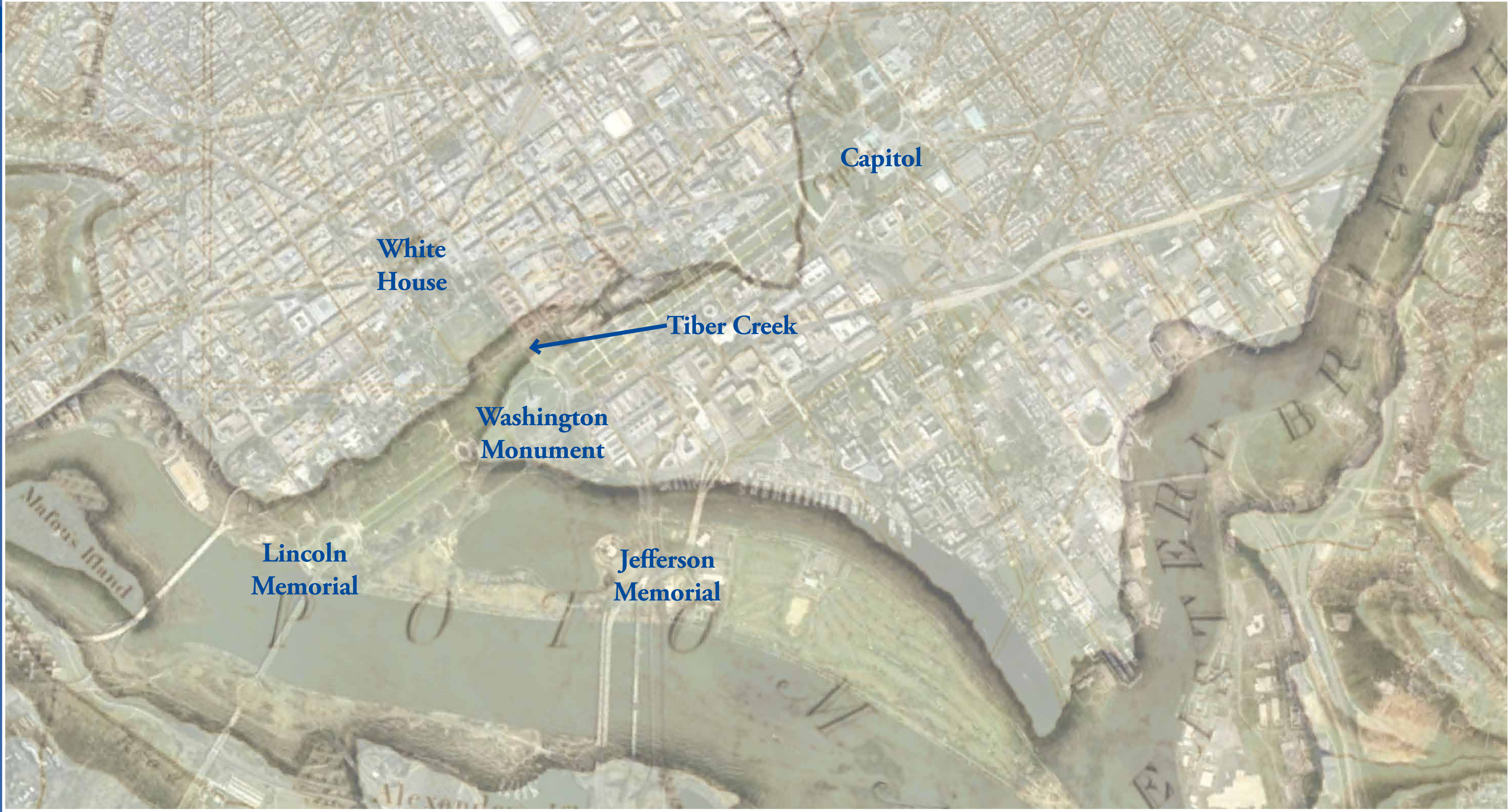


City of Washington. Drawn by George Beck, engraved by T. Cartwright. 1801. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.



City of Washington from beyond the Navy Yard, 1834, engraved by W. J. Bennett. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

## NATURE HELD AT BAY

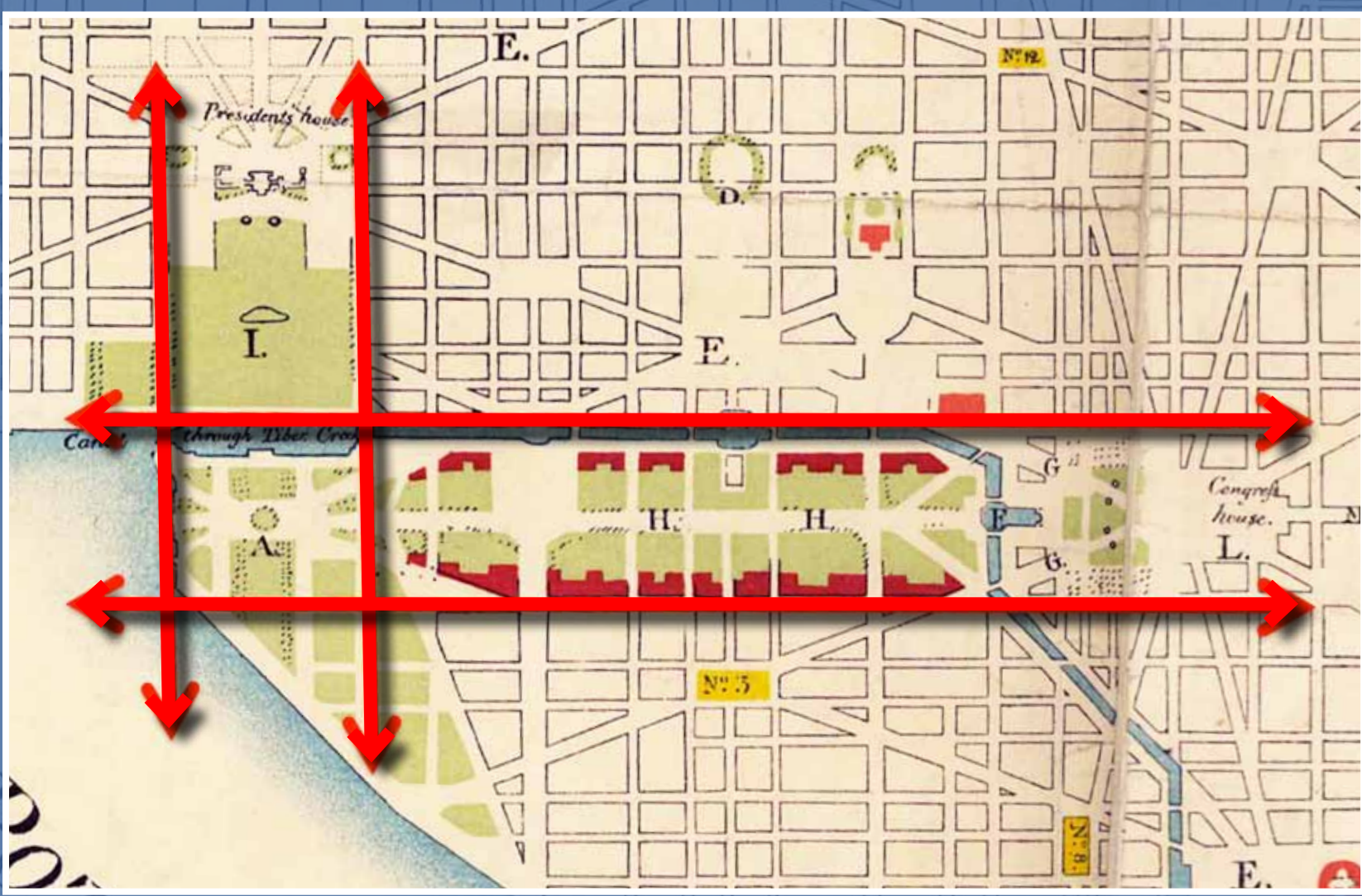


Because the banks of the Potomac have been so altered over two centuries, portions of the Mall are prone to flooding from the old Tiber Creek (now covered over by land near Constitution Avenue) and the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, as shown in this satellite view of modern Washington superimposed on Andrew Ellicott’s 1793 topographical map.



# 1791 L'ENFANT PLAN

*“This mode of taking possession of, and improving the whole district at first, must leave to posterity a grand idea of patriotic interest which promoted it.” – L’Enfant*



The 1791 L’Enfant Plan, which established the design principles for the layout of the nation’s capital, is Washington’s “Planning Constitution.” The centerpiece of the capital and the nation was to be the Mall cross axis: the intersection of the Capitol (“Congress House”) axis and White House (President’s House) axis, punctuated at point “A” by an “equestrian figure of George Washington.”

## WASHINGTON’S “PLANNING CONSTITUTION”

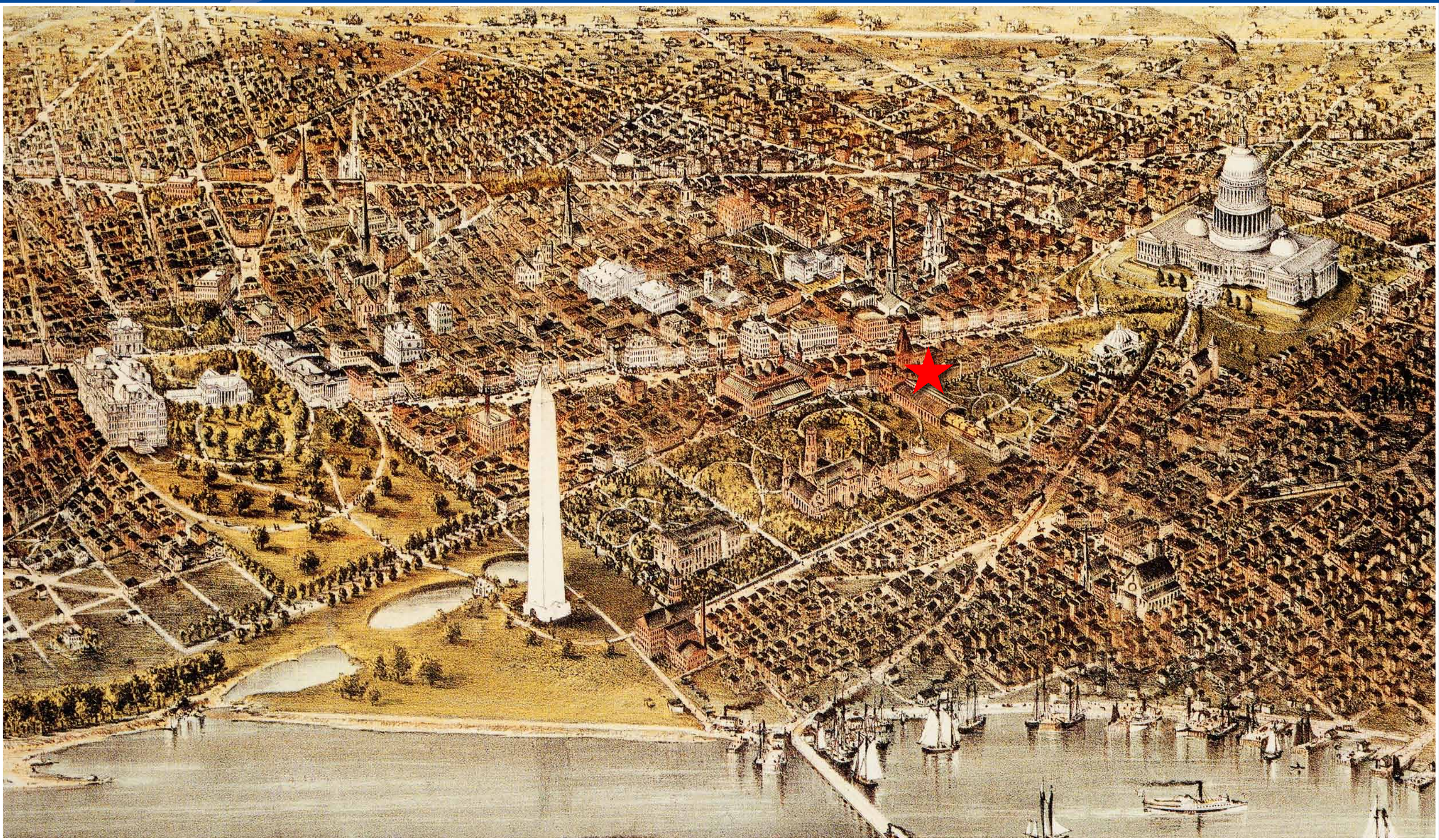


L’Enfant wrote, in the “References” on the plan (blue stars), that he envisioned the open public space connecting these symbols of American government and history to include a “public walk” (G), a “Grand Cascade formed of the water from the sources of the Tiber” (F) and channeled into canals running westward to the Potomac River and southward to the Anacostia River, a “Grand Avenue ...bordered with gardens” (H), and President’s Park (I).

L’Enfant envisioned radiating out from the iconic public buildings, broad diagonal avenues “devised to connect the most distant objects [throughout the city] with the principal” and, at their intersections, squares to hold “Statues, Columns, Obelisks to perpetuate...the memory of such individuals...worthy of general imitation” and “five grand fountains intended with a constant spout of water” (E).

The visionary 1791 L’Enfant Plan laid out the capital’s public buildings, grand avenues, and residential street grid to be a physical embodiment of American Constitutional principles. Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division.

## THE PLANNING CONSTITUTION IGNORED



The L’Enfant Plan design principles were mostly ignored in the 19th century. The Mall was cut up into separate gardens and covered with trees and buildings, including a railroad station (red star), a site now occupied by the National Gallery of Art.



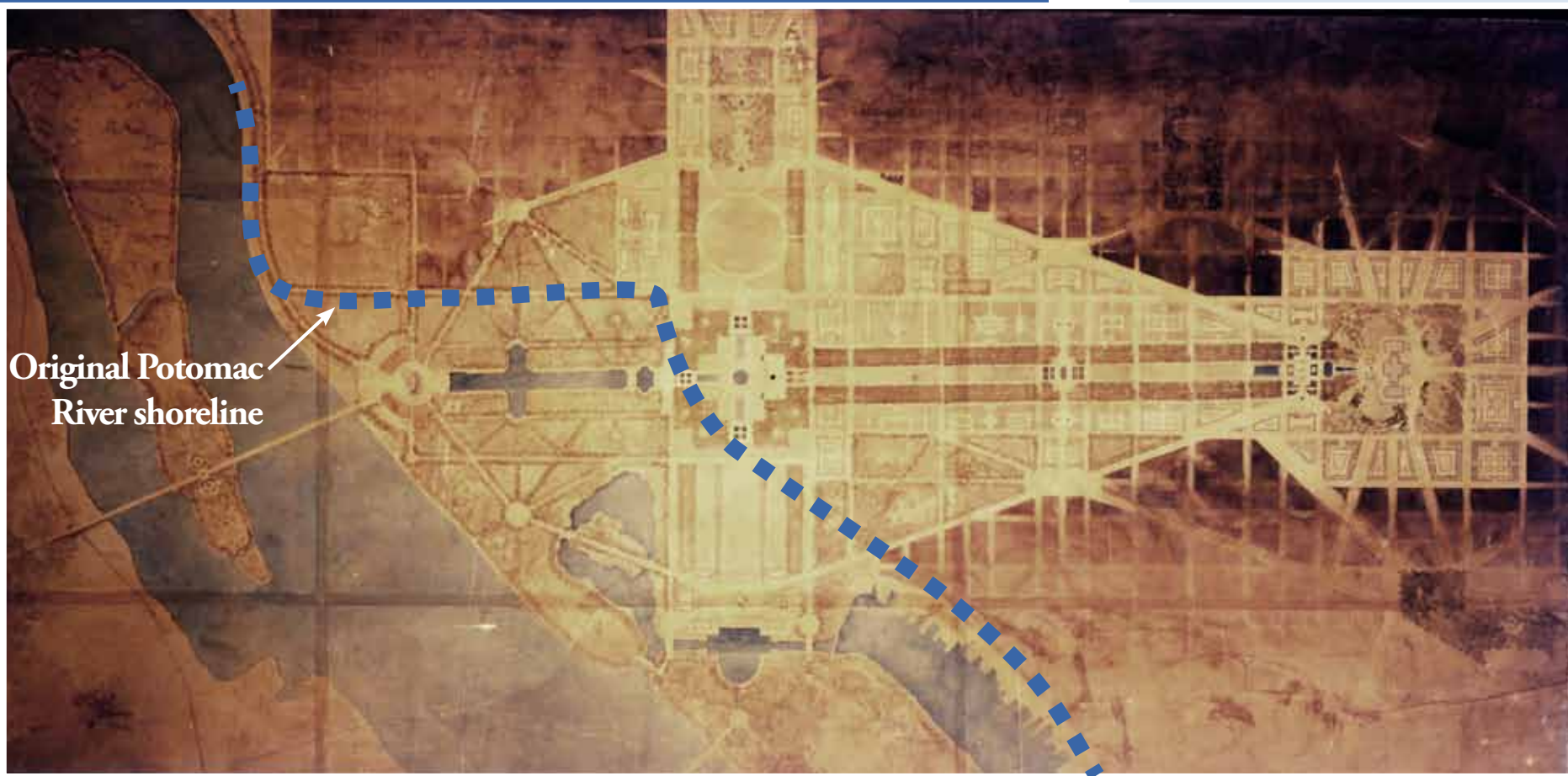
Like L’Enfant’s design, the public buildings were intended to symbolize Constitutional ideals and to inspire civic virtue. William Thornton’s 1793 original neoclassical design for the Capitol is mirrored in the National Gallery of Art and the Jefferson Memorial.

The City of Washington. Birds-eye view from the Potomac. Currier & Ives, 1892. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.



# REINFORCE 1901 McMillan Plan

*“Indeed the more the Commission studied the first plans of the Federal City, the more they became convinced that the greatest service they could perform would be done by carrying to a legitimate conclusion the comprehensive, intelligent, and yet simple and straightforward, scheme under the direction of Washington and Jefferson.” – The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia. Report of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, 1902.*



The designers of the McMillan Commission – also known as the Senate Park Commission – were, from upper left, Daniel Burnham, Charles McKim, Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and Frederick Law Olmsted Jr.

## L'ENFANT'S UNIFIED DESIGN RESTORED & REINVENTED



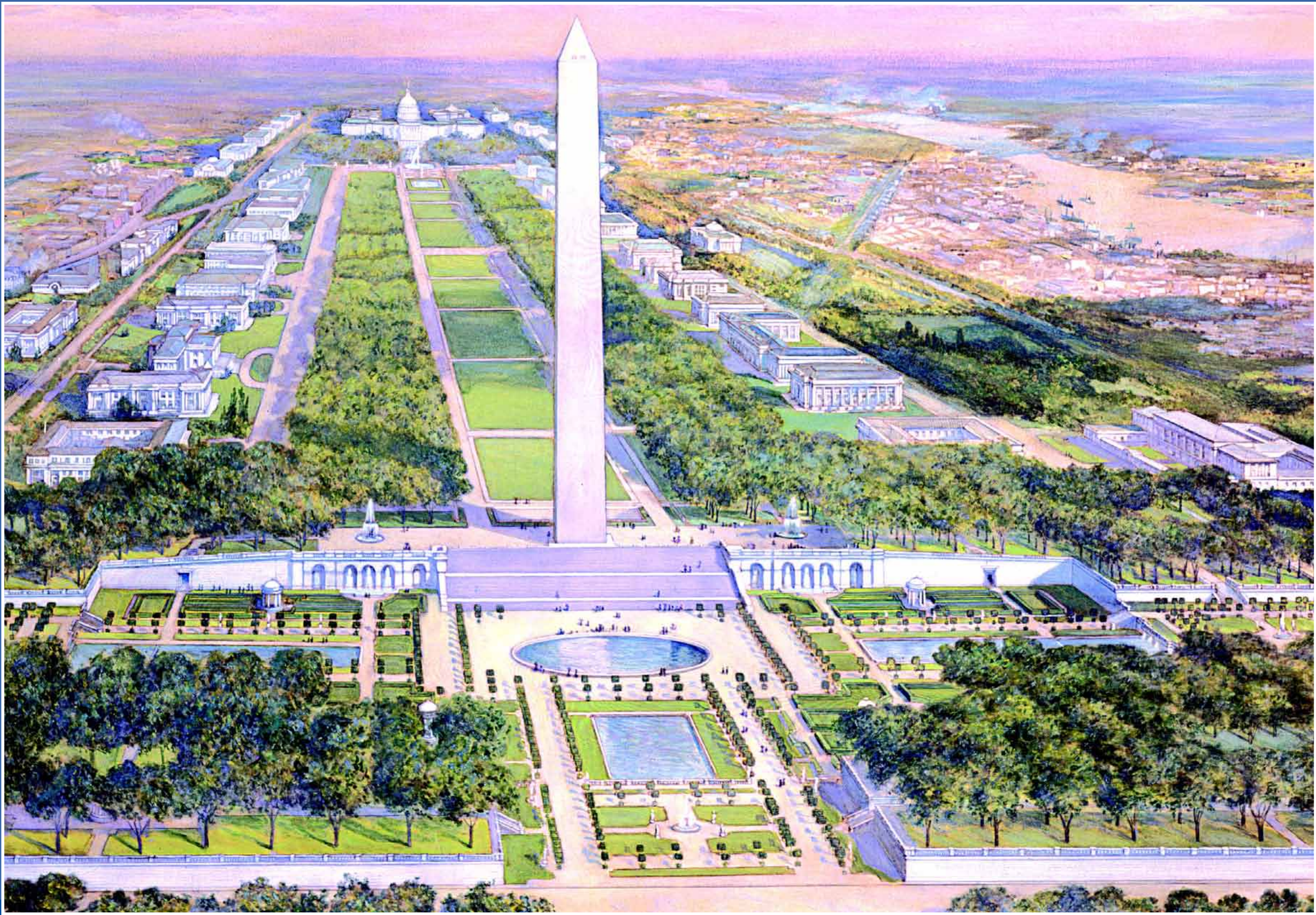
The McMillan design called for the Memorial Bridge to connect, physically and symbolically, the Lincoln Memorial to the Custis-Lee Mansion, former home of Robert E. Lee and since 1864 part of Arlington National Cemetery. Bird's-eye view of the McMillan Plan by Francis L. V. Hoppin, 1902.

Refreshing water elements, including pools and fountains, were critical elements of the Commission's concept of the Mall as a "work of civic art."



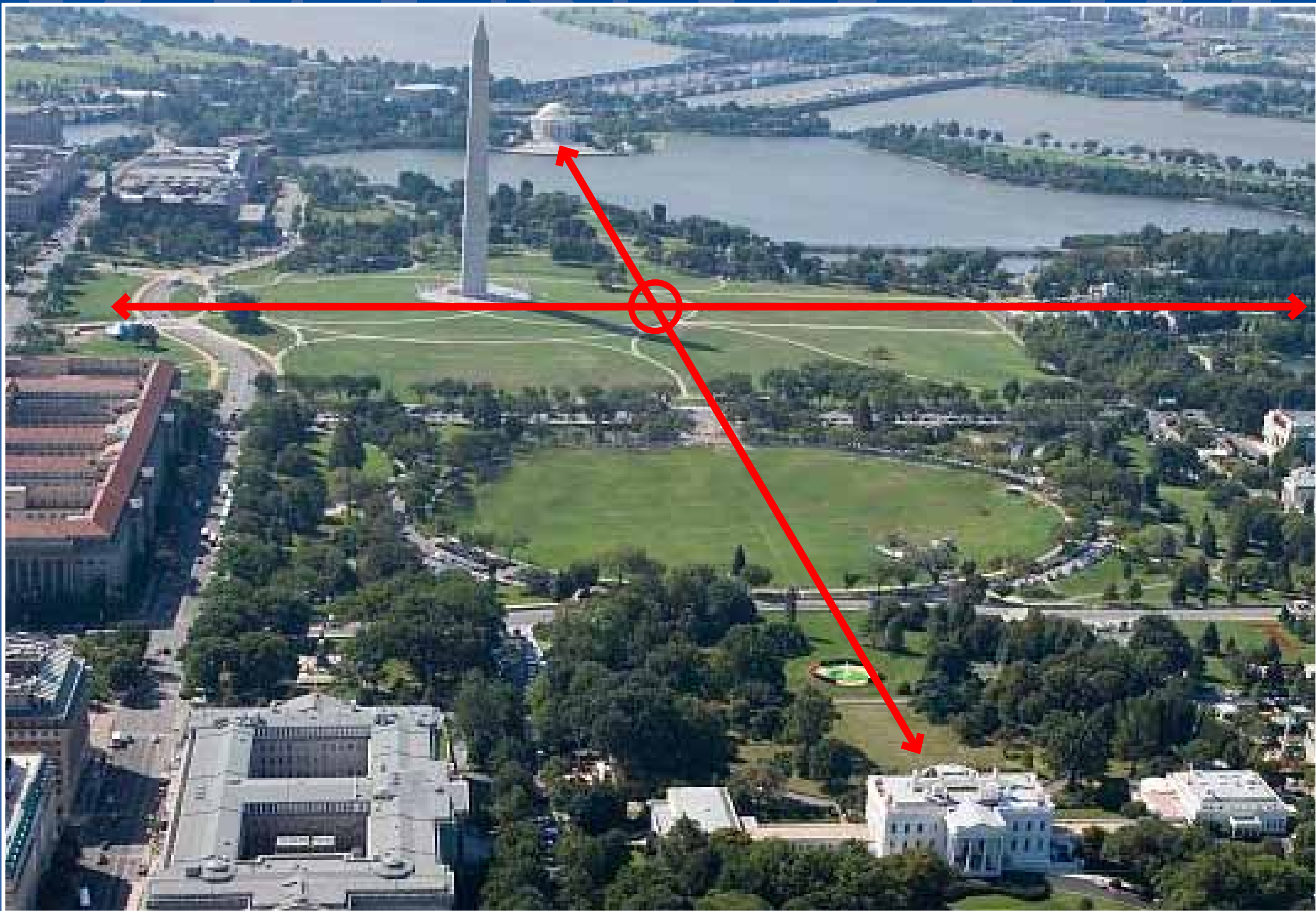
In 1901, Senator James McMillan of Michigan created the independent McMillan Commission, composed of leading designers of the day, to come up with a plan that focused on the neglected, chaotic Mall, L'Enfant's Grand Avenue. The Commission proposed to restore, reinforce, and extend L'Enfant's cross axis. The kite-shaped McMillan Plan incorporated new land on the west and south of the Washington Monument for the Lincoln Memorial, adding to L'Enfant's symbolism of the founding of the government a new chapter about the preservation of the Union. To meet the needs of the growing nation, the Plan created complexes of public buildings around the Capitol and White House, and between them along Pennsylvania Avenue, now the Federal Triangle.

The McMillan Commission reinvented L'Enfant's "Grand Avenue" as a majestic democratic park lined with rows of elms and white neoclassical museums. The Washington Monument, now the centerpiece of the expanded cross axis, was to be the "gem of the Mall system," a veritable oasis of shaded pathways and refreshing water elements.



Courtesy of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts

## AN UNFINISHED VISION



Courtesy of Carol Highsmith



As can be seen in this aerial view at left, the Washington Monument was built off the intended cross axis. Today that spot is marked by the little-known Jefferson Pier (circled), a simple granite block cut off from pedestrian pathways by new security walls. The elaborate Washington Monument Garden was never built.



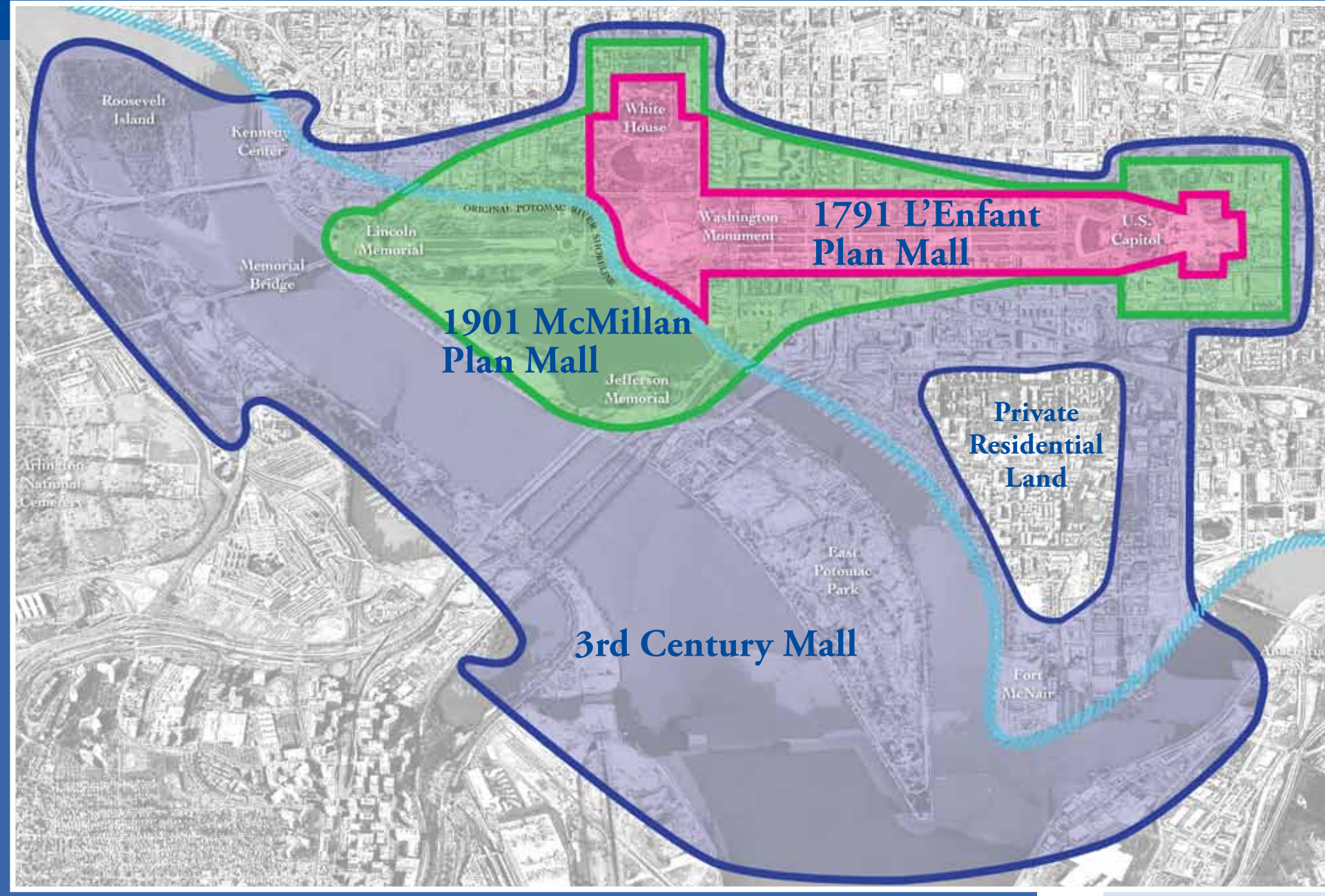




# EXPAND

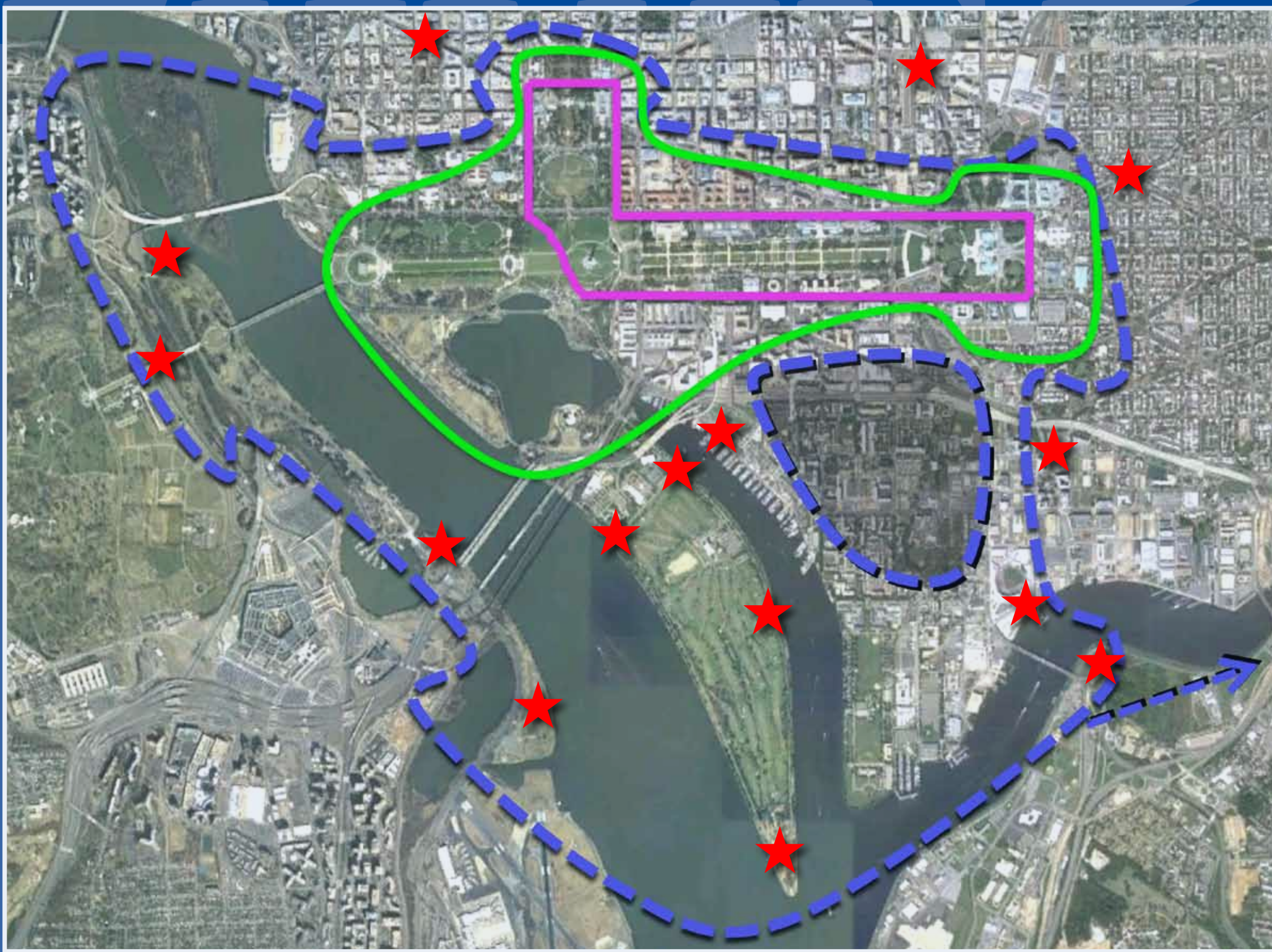
# MALL EXPANSION

*By expanding the Mall we will rededicate our capital to L'Enfant's vision and the McMillan legacy. We can reintegrate the monumental core into the vibrant living city and provide a larger slate on which to tell the ongoing American story.*



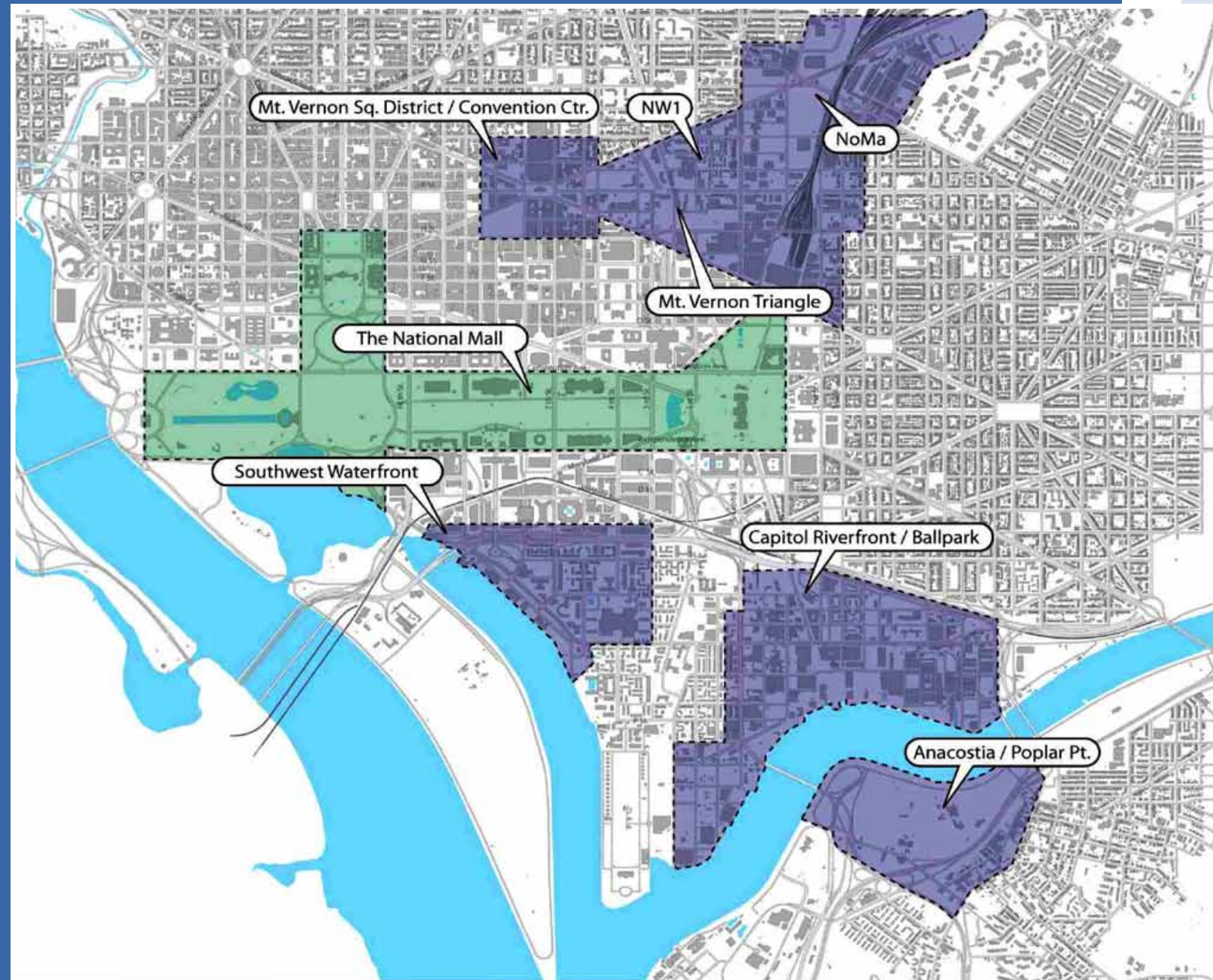
The 3rd Century Mall can incorporate underutilized federal lands on both sides of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers.

## CREATE NEW DESTINATIONS ON WASHINGTON'S RIVERFRONTS



New destinations (red stars) can be created on 3rd Century Mall expansion areas (blue dash line). The 3rd Century Mall can incorporate the Kennedy Center, Theodore Roosevelt Island, the LBJ Memorial Grove along the Virginia side of the Potomac River, and federal parkland on both sides of the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers.

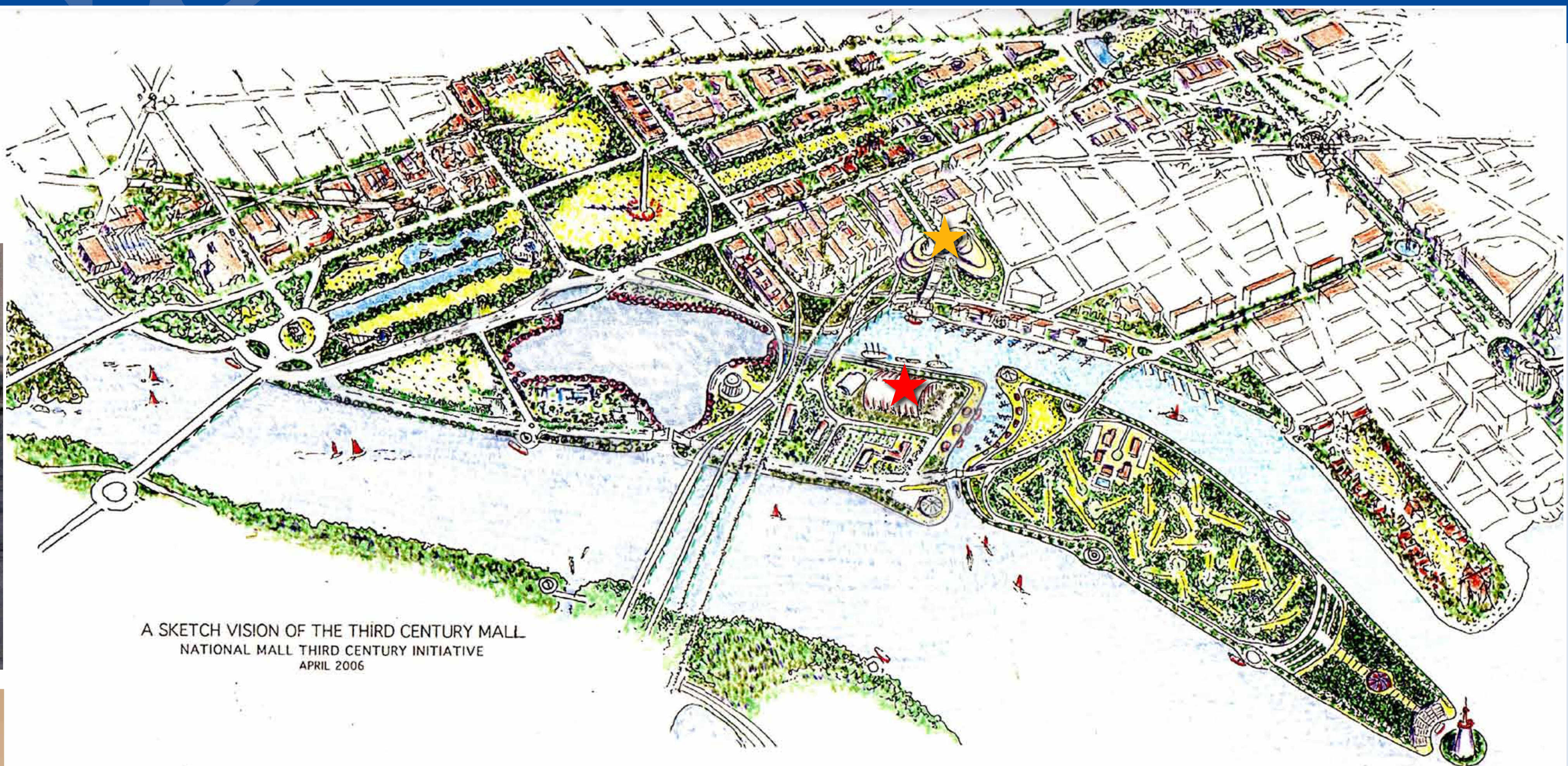
District of Columbia planners have envisioned major waterfront development in three areas: the Southwest Waterfront, Capitol Riverfront/ Ballpark, and Anacostia / Poplar Point



Like other world capitals – London, Paris, Rome – Washington was built on rivers and waterways that offer exciting opportunities for modern development to create lively urban spaces. Creating new destinations for museums, memorials, and public activities and amenities on hundreds of acres of underutilized federal land along the waterfront will complement District of Columbia efforts and create a unified, bustling waterfront.

## REINTEGRATE THE MALL WITH THE LARGER COMMUNITY AND REGION

A prime location for Mall expansion is East Potomac Park. This flood-prone island – all of it new land created by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1880s – can be transformed into a showcase of sustainable planning and design. Courtesy of W. Kent Cooper, FAIA.



The Folklife Festival and Solar Decathlon draw large crowds of people from across the city, the region, and the country.



Popular public events such as the Folklife Festival and the Solar Decathlon can be relocated to prominent and welcoming new locations along 10th Street (yellow star) and on East Potomac Park (red star). These new destinations will draw visitors into the neighboring community and contribute to the economic vitality of the city and the larger region.



Water taxis can ferry passengers between destinations along the waterfront. Courtesy of Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA.



# REINFORCE THE CROSS AXIS

*“The central feature, known as the Washington Monument Gardens...will not be carried out for some years to come... When this time arrives, the plan will be found to be complete and in harmony... giving a requisite finishing touch to a composition that will be as fine and as noble as any ever designed for a city.”*  
– H.P. Caemmerer, Secretary of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts from 1922-1954



A quick visit to the Mall makes clear that something's missing: the embedded geometry of the L'Enfant design. Mall development in the 20th century bypassed the crucial cross axis at the Washington Monument and Tidal Basin areas. The Washington Monument grounds – the centerpiece of the Mall cross axis – remains unfinished. The recently added curve of 15th Street creates an awkward and dangerous pedestrian environment at the site of the National Museum of African American History and Culture now under construction (circled area). The 3rd Century Mall can correct, complete, and reinforce that symbolic axis.

## REINSTATE AND COMPLETE THE GEOMETRY OF THE CROSS AXIS



A new and simple landscape design of trees and round pools could reinforce the focal point of the cross axis and transform the Washington Monument grounds into a welcoming destination as intended by the McMillan Plan.

Construction of the African American Museum is an opportunity to reinstate the cross axis geometry by correcting and straightening 15th Street and continuing the pathways and tree line of the museum-lined eastern Mall into this area. An added benefit would be creation of a potential new museum site on the Mall's south side.

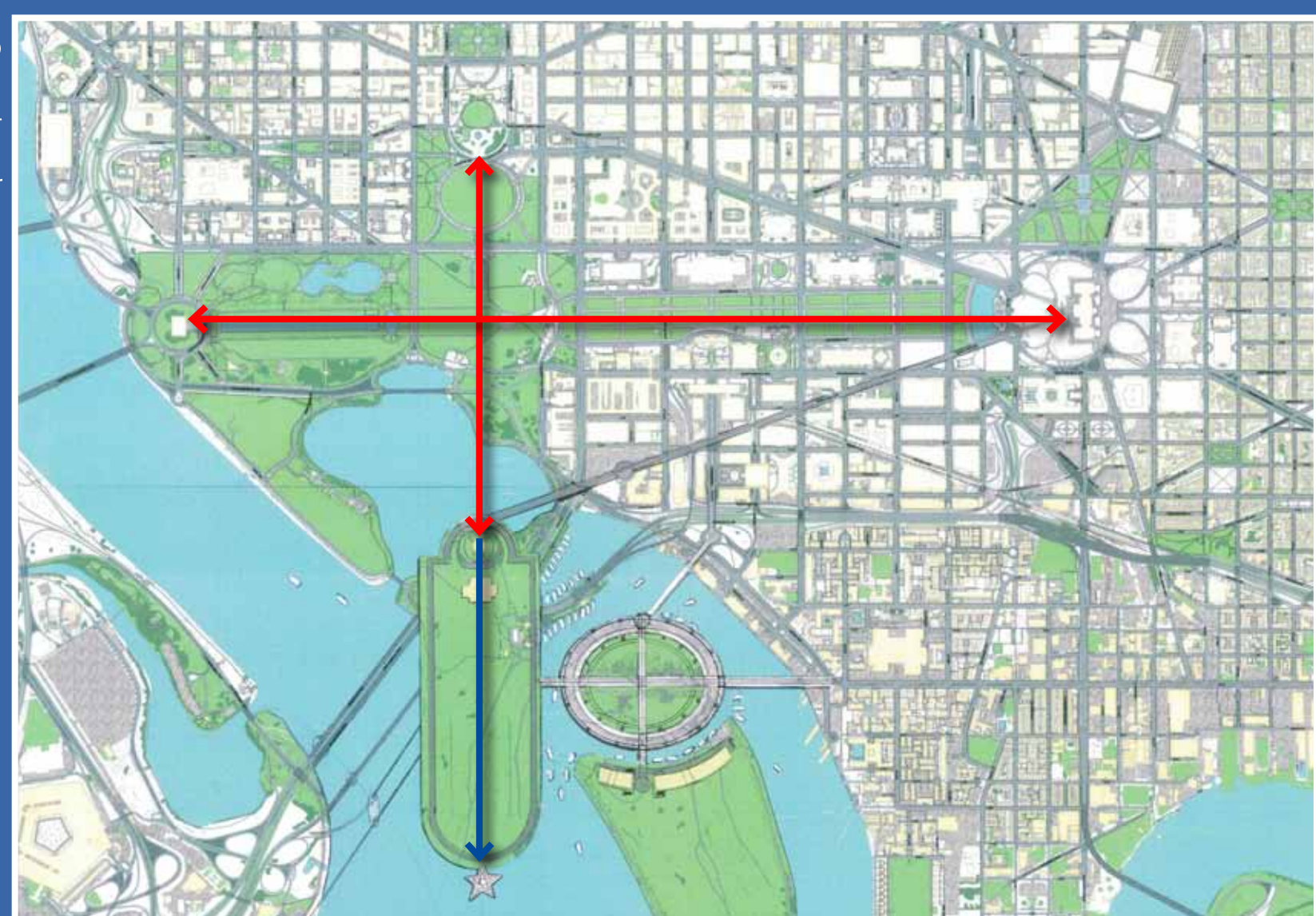


L'Enfant's elegant geometry can be restored at the Mall's centerpiece. A variety of alternative visions are explored by the six winners of the National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds, in the accompanying exhibition.

## REINFORCE EXTEND THE CROSS AXIS

By extending the cross axis once again, as the McMillan Plan did with the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials, we can add a new layer to the Mall's narrative and a special location comparable to the Lincoln Memorial setting. What do you think should go here?

The White House to Jefferson Memorial axis can be extended (blue arrow).



Architect Arthur Cotton Moore, FAIA, proposes to reshape the landfill south of the Jefferson Memorial, and elevate it above the tangle of bridges and highways, to create new Mall areas for future museums and memorials. He proposes to relocate here the Supreme Court, thus completing L'Enfant's concept of the separation of powers embedded in the Mall design.





# REALIZE THE MALL AS THE PEOPLE'S PLACE

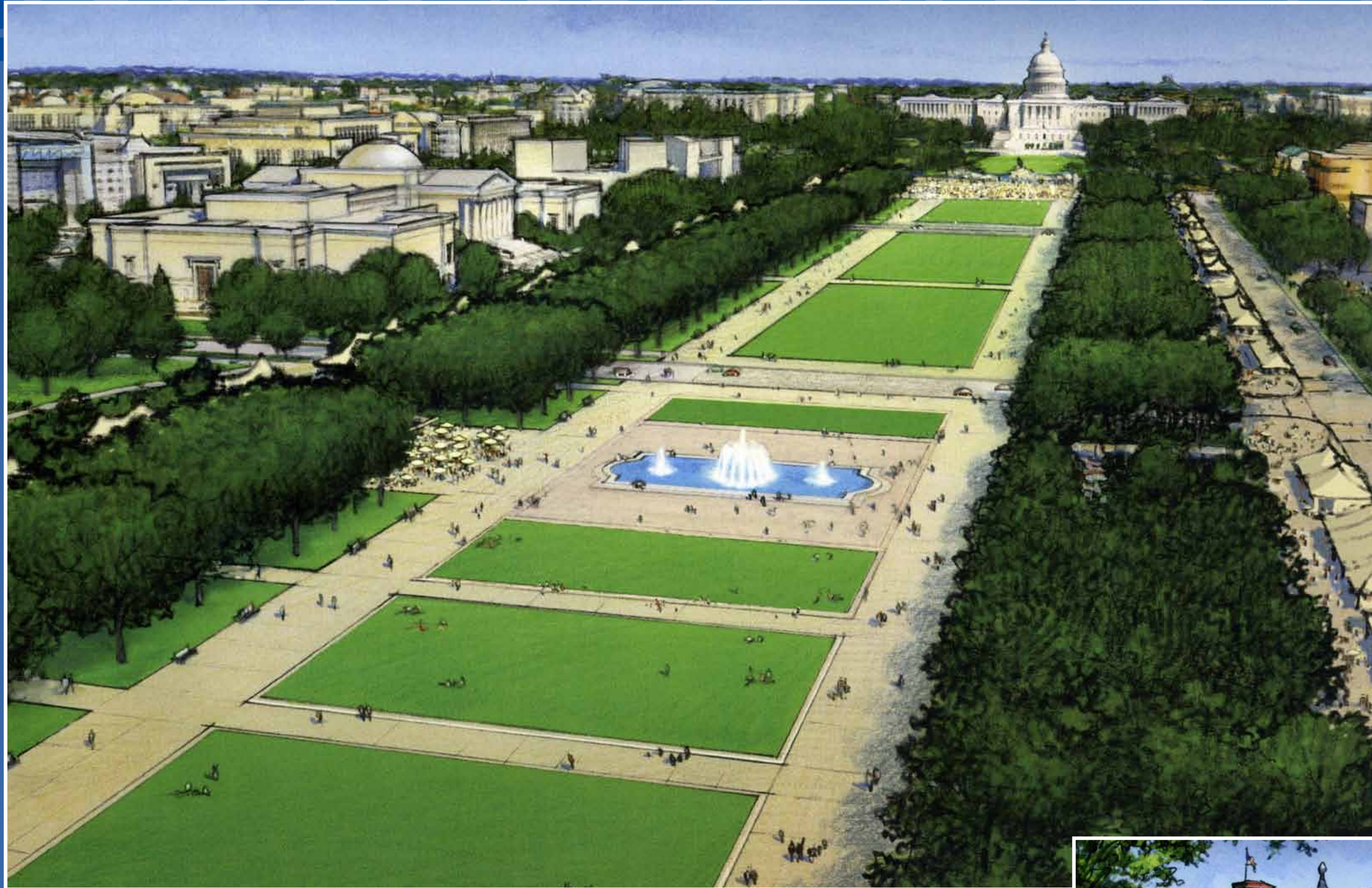
*By returning to L'Enfant's vision of a human-centered, open, tree-filled, pedestrian-friendly urban public space in the heart of the capital, we can build a 3rd Century Mall that draws people together and inspires civic pride.*

Pedestrians see little of L'Enfant's vision on the barren two-mile expanse



Statues of poets, scientists, inventors, and statesmen could animate the open spaces and benches along the two-mile-long Mall promenade, as in this example of Ben Franklin reading the Preamble of the Constitution in Smithfield, Virginia.

## CREATE CIVIC SPACES THAT SUPPORT BROAD PUBLIC USE



A refreshing pool with fountains draws inspiration from the L'Enfant and McMillan visions.

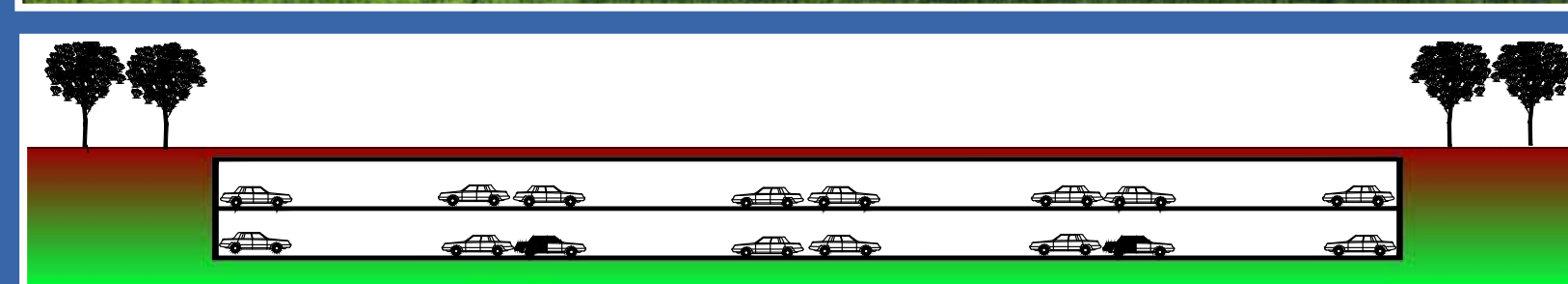
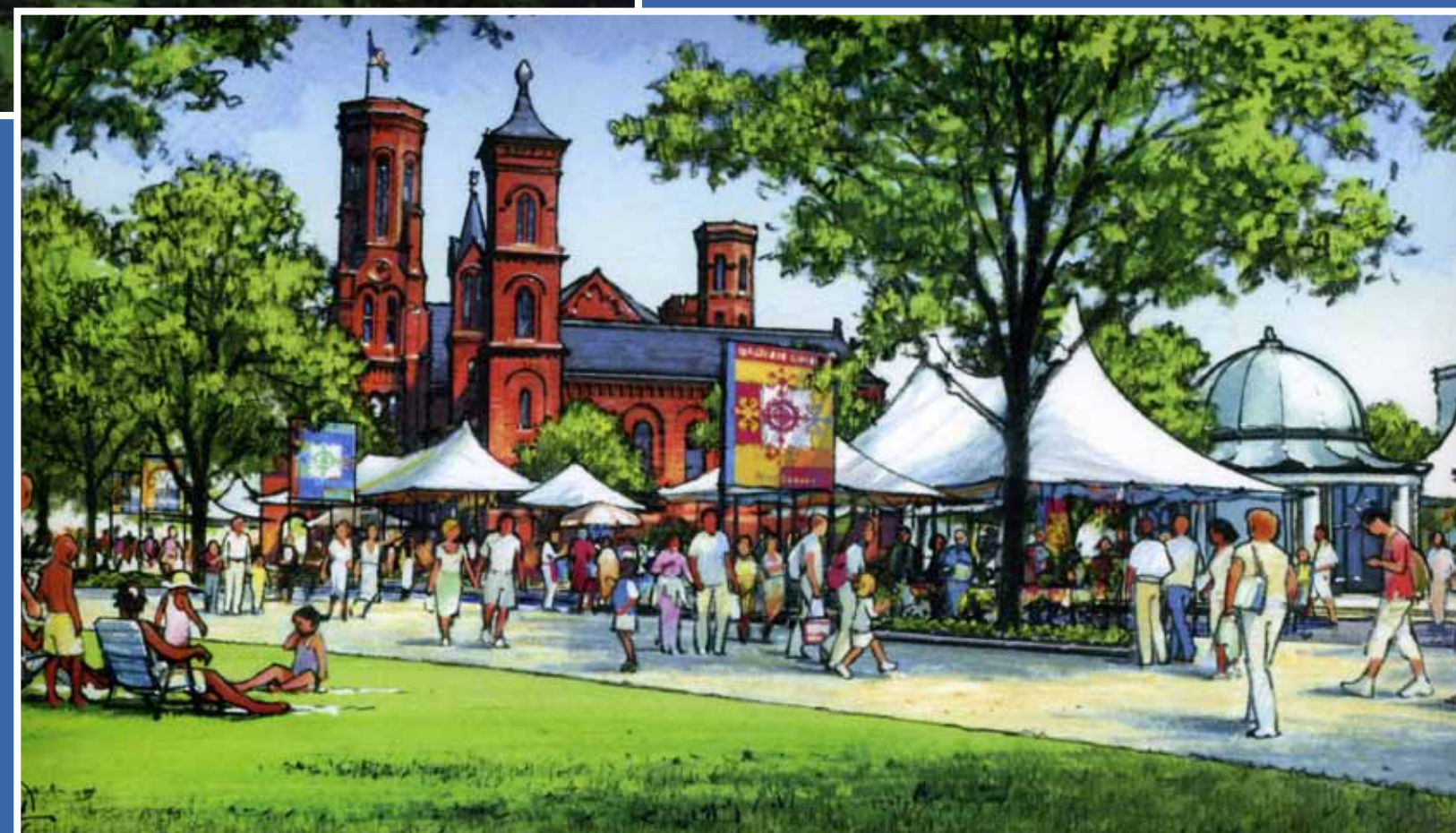
Courtesy of Cy Paumier



Today's landscape can be transformed from sparse to a continuous shaded promenade.



The wide shaded walkways and paved areas on Jefferson and Madison Drives provide more than ten acres of pedestrian space for festivals and other outdoor events. Underground parking will make it more accessible. Courtesy of Cy Paumier



Courtesy of Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA

The 3rd Century Mall can be reinvented to support greater public use and civic activity with water elements and other welcoming public amenities: shade trees, good food, shuttle service, restrooms, parking, pedestrian and cyclist pathways.



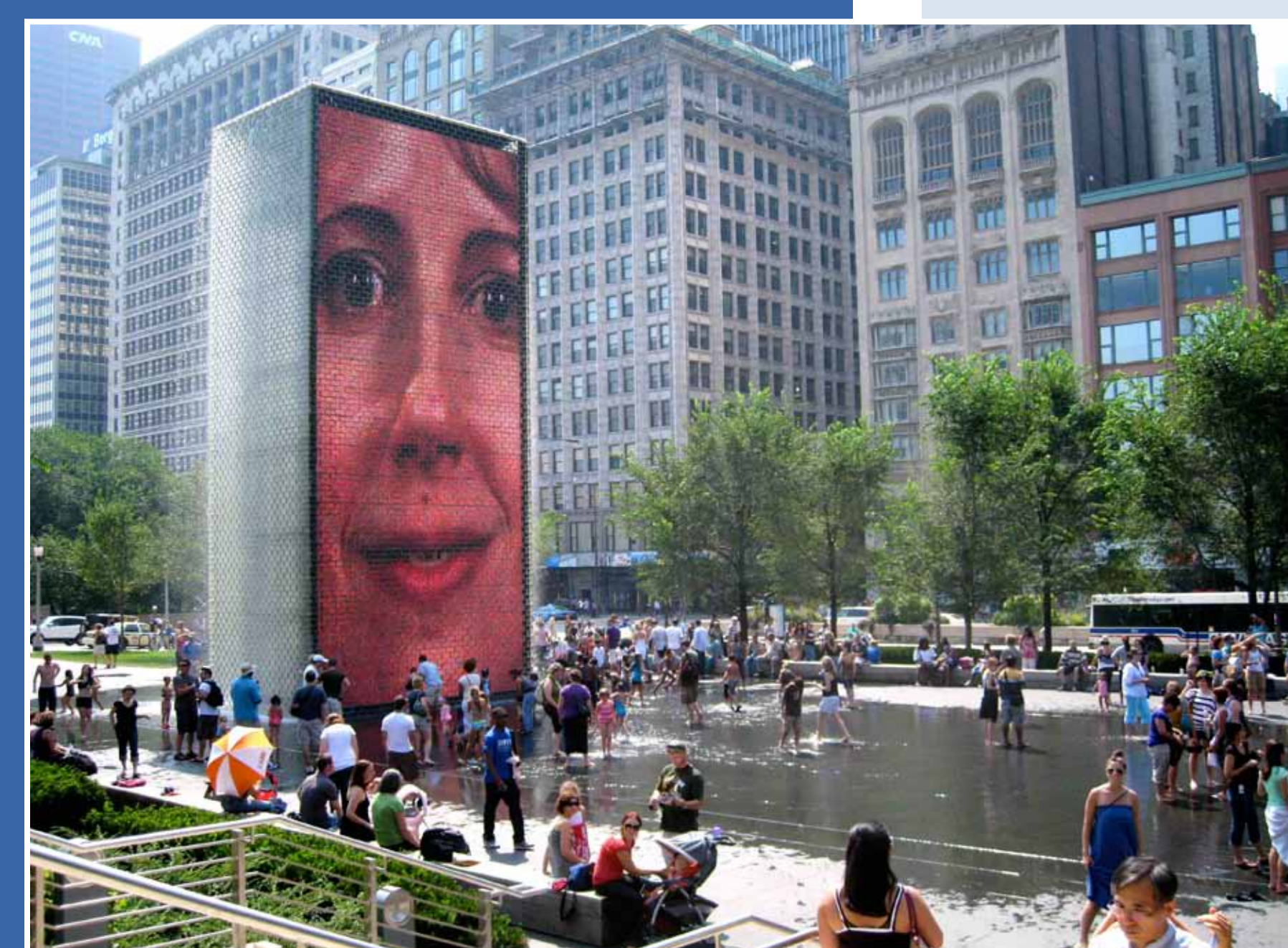
Security concerns closed the grand public entrances to the Supreme Court and the Capitol. The 3rd Century Mall would re-open these great symbols of our democracy to the public as intended, while also keeping them secure.

## TELL THE UNFOLDING AMERICAN STORY



A Museum of the American People, with architecture that celebrates and inspires civic pride, could tell the story of immigrants from all over the world and their embrace of American values and citizenship, instead of the current trend of individual ethnic museums. Courtesy of MTEA Architecture

The story told on the Mall, now limited primarily to presidents and wars, can be enriched with new chapters and in new ways that reinforce the Mall's symbolism of American identity.

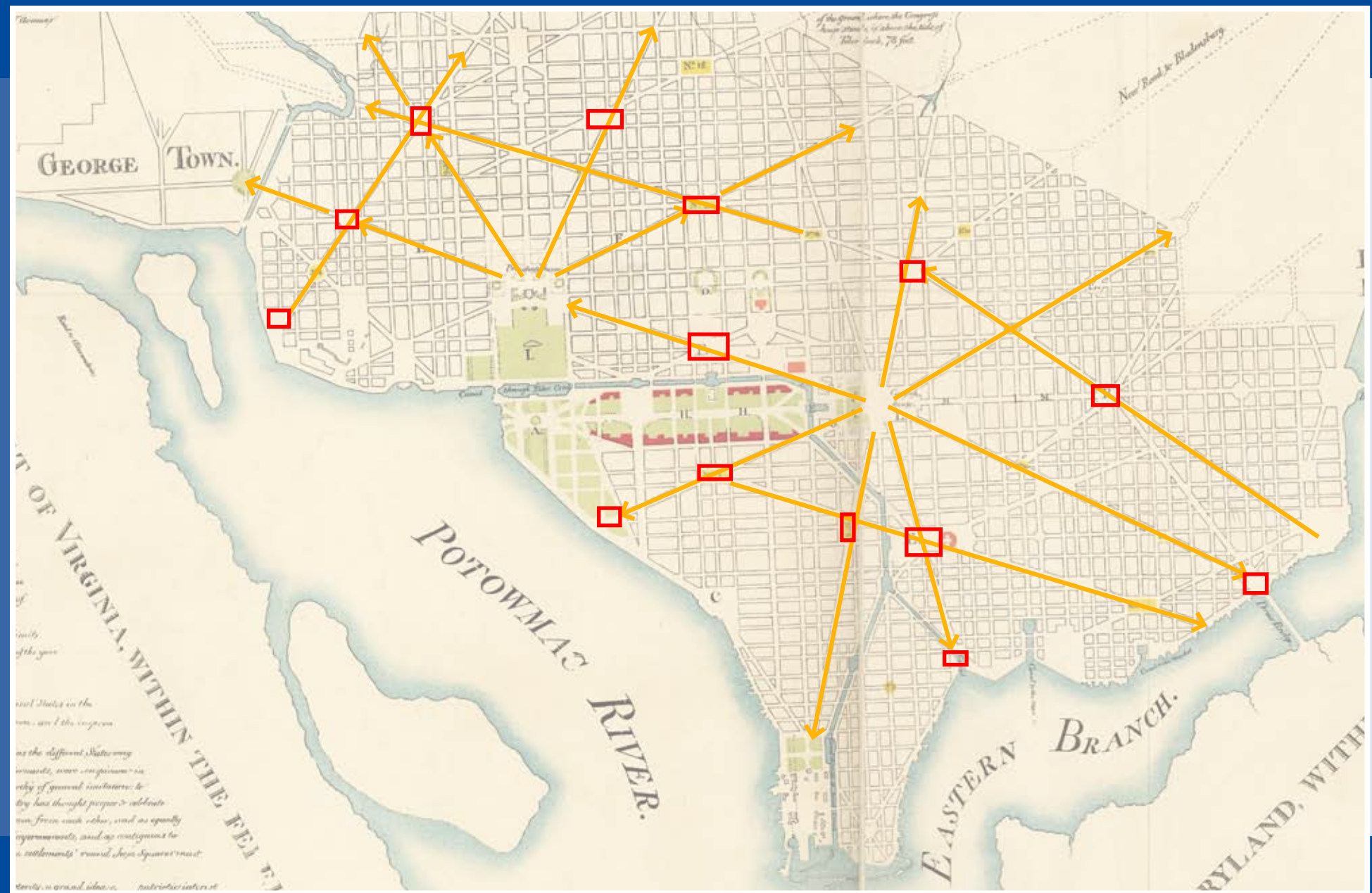


New kinds of monuments and attractions can inspire civic engagement, such as this installation in Millennium Park, Chicago



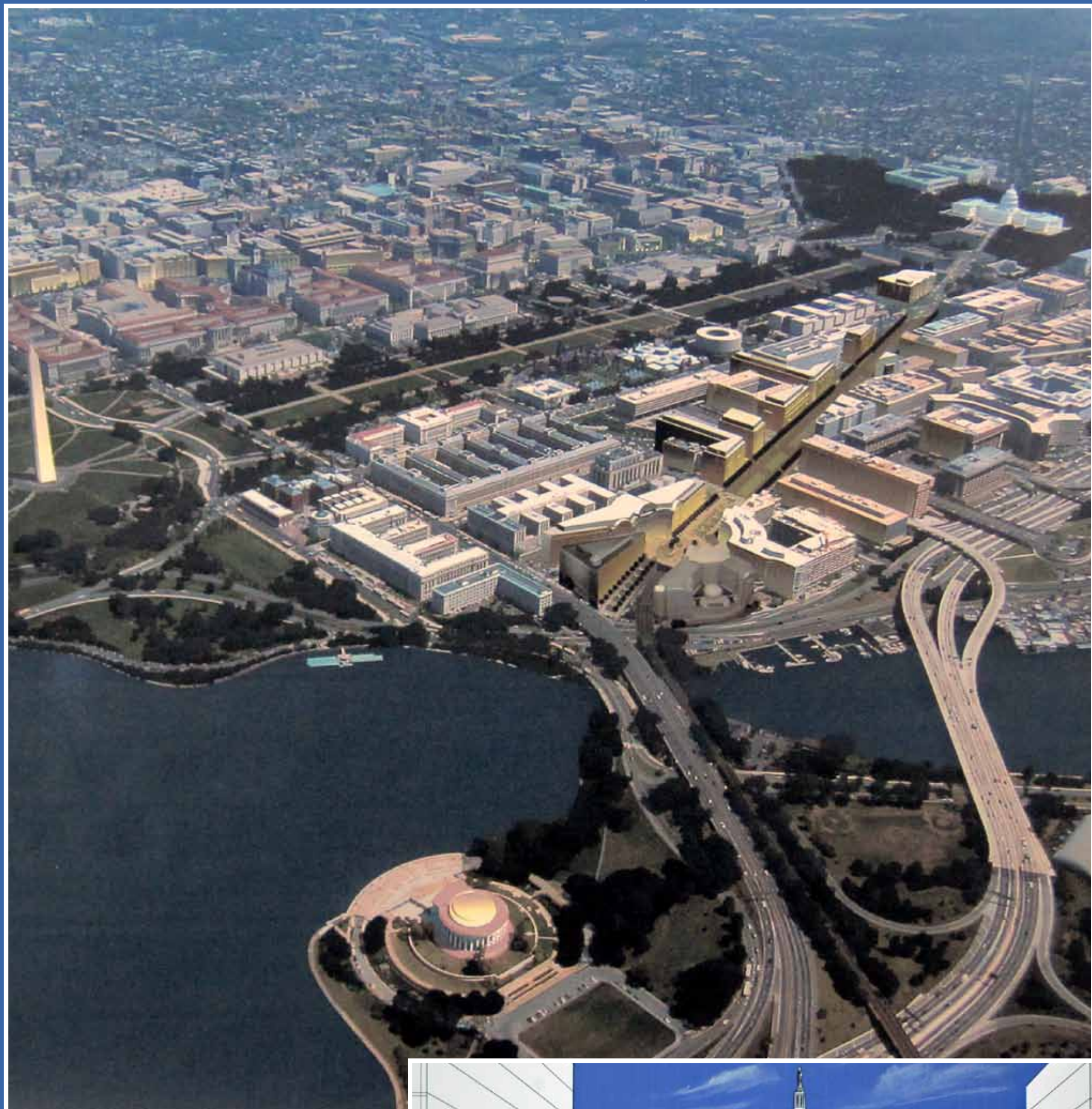
# RECONNECT REINSTATE L'ENFANT'S AVENUES

*L'Enfant's grand avenues, and the squares created at their intersections, were intended to be the connective tissue of the city's design and its symbolism – and can be once again. Reinstating the role of avenues to include destinations for future public spaces, monuments, and other attractions will make new connections to the community, the larger city, and the waterfront.*

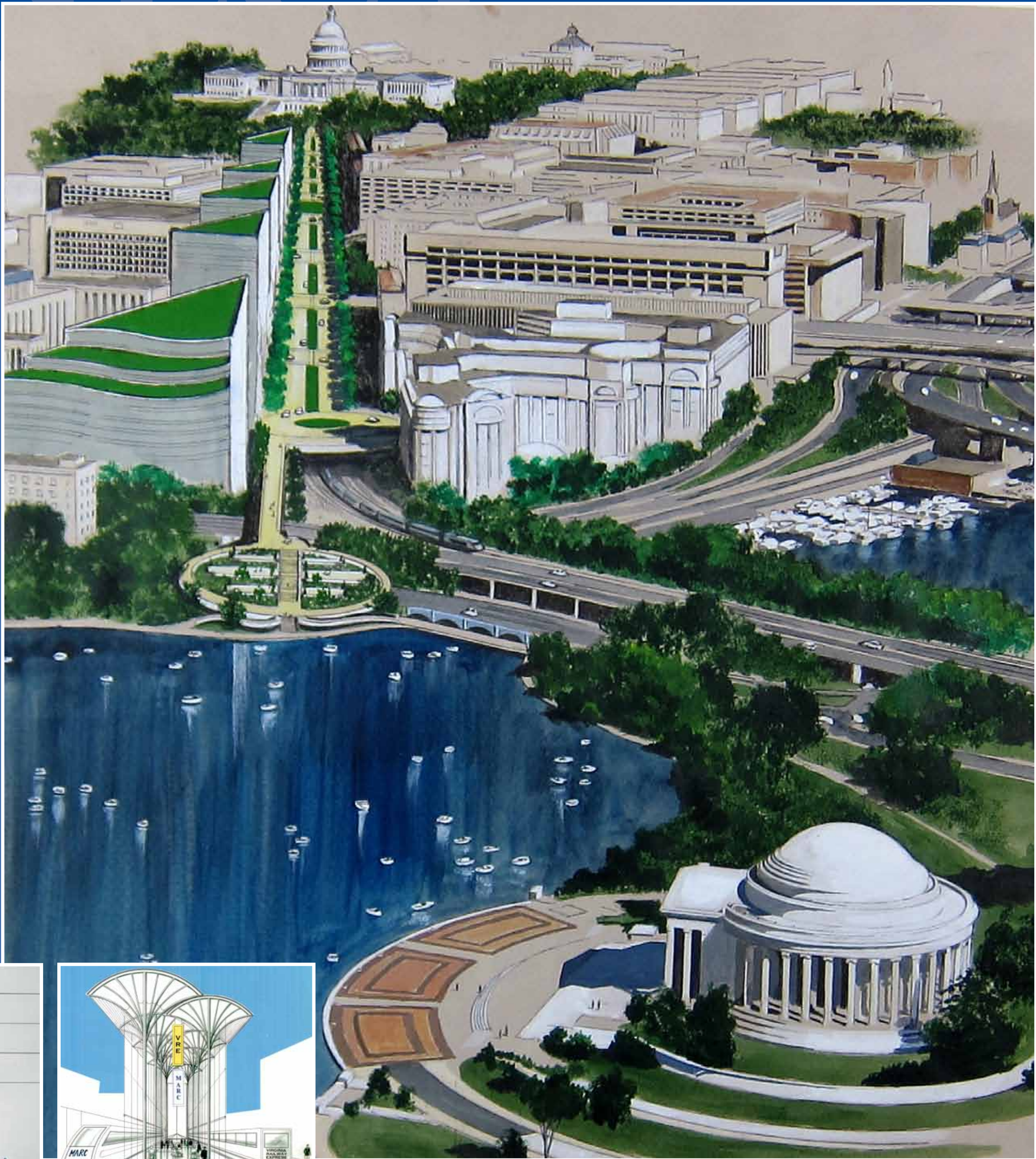
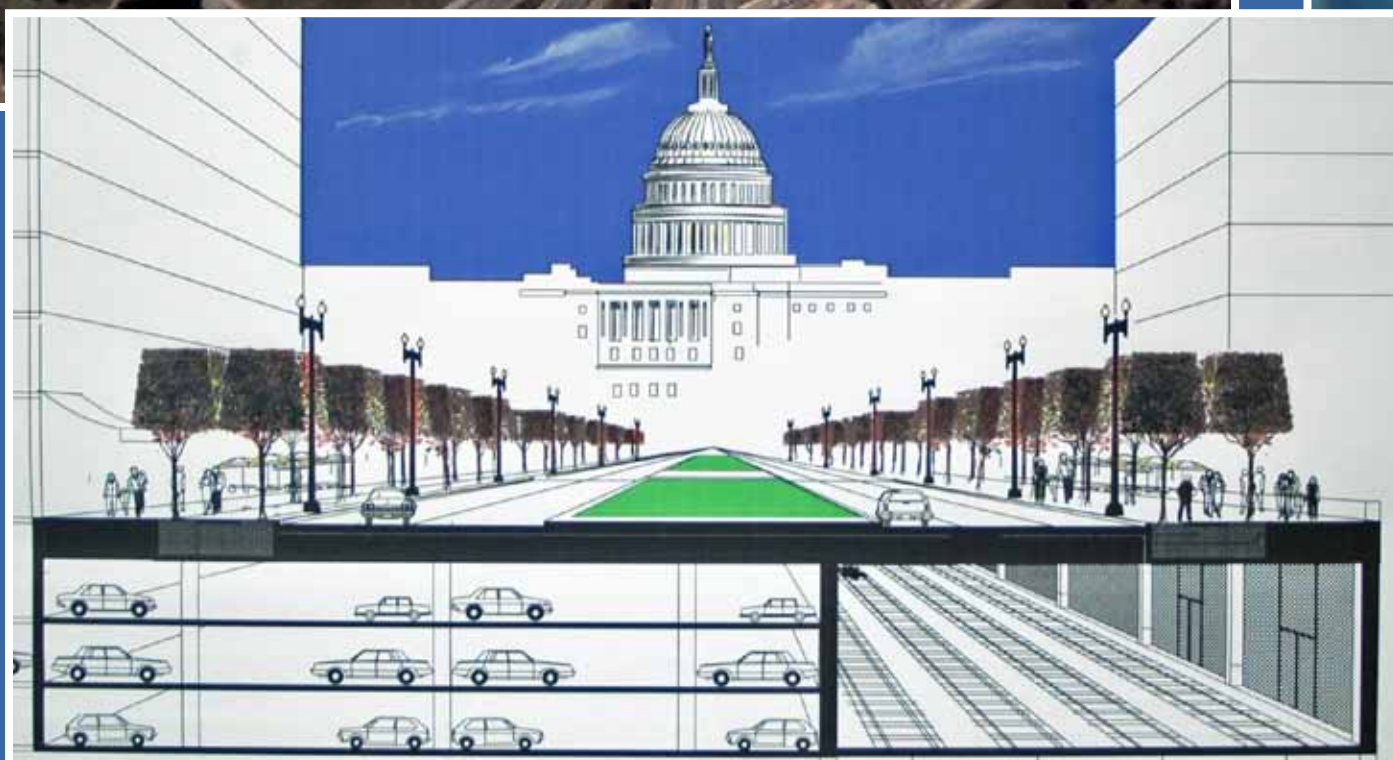


## RECONNECT COMPLETE HISTORIC MARYLAND AVENUE

Maryland Avenue can be completed as the complement to Pennsylvania Avenue, as intended in the 1901 McMillan Plan.  
Courtesy of Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA.



The elevated avenue could accommodate existing railroad lines as well as new underground parking.  
Courtesy of Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA.



The 3rd Century Mall can connect the historic Mall and expansion areas into a unified design and symbolic whole. A key to completing the McMillan Mall and to unlocking the connections with Washington's Southwest Waterfront community to the south is finishing Maryland Avenue by decking over the CSX railroad tracks. This will restore the intended connection between the Capitol and the Jefferson Memorial.

A new, major destination could be created at Maryland Avenue's intersection with the Tidal Basin.  
Courtesy of Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA.



A modern transit center can combine in one location regional rail lines, Metro, bus, and bike rental.  
Courtesy of Arthur Cotton Moore FAIA.

## RECONNECT REINVENT PUBLIC SQUARES



The Eisenhower Memorial being planned for Maryland Avenue (red square) can treat the two parcels north and south of Maryland Avenue as separate design and symbolic components of the Memorial: the small northern parcel could hold a statue or other small element and be linked by an underground passage to an urban plaza on the south side. The intersection of Maryland and Independence Avenues can mirror that of Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues.



While L'Enfant proposed that the themes of the statues in the squares scattered throughout the city would be decided by the states, today those decisions can be made for the benefit of the surrounding community. This allows the national narrative of the Mall to spill out into the neighborhoods and draw visitors from the Mall to enriched destinations throughout the city.

Like many of the public squares and circles of Washington, Dupont Circle once held a statue raised high on a stone plinth. Relocating that statue in the 1920s made way for creation of one of Washington's great neighborhood parks graced by a refreshing fountain, benches, trees, and chess tables.



# RECONNECT

## CREATE NEW GRAND AVENUES

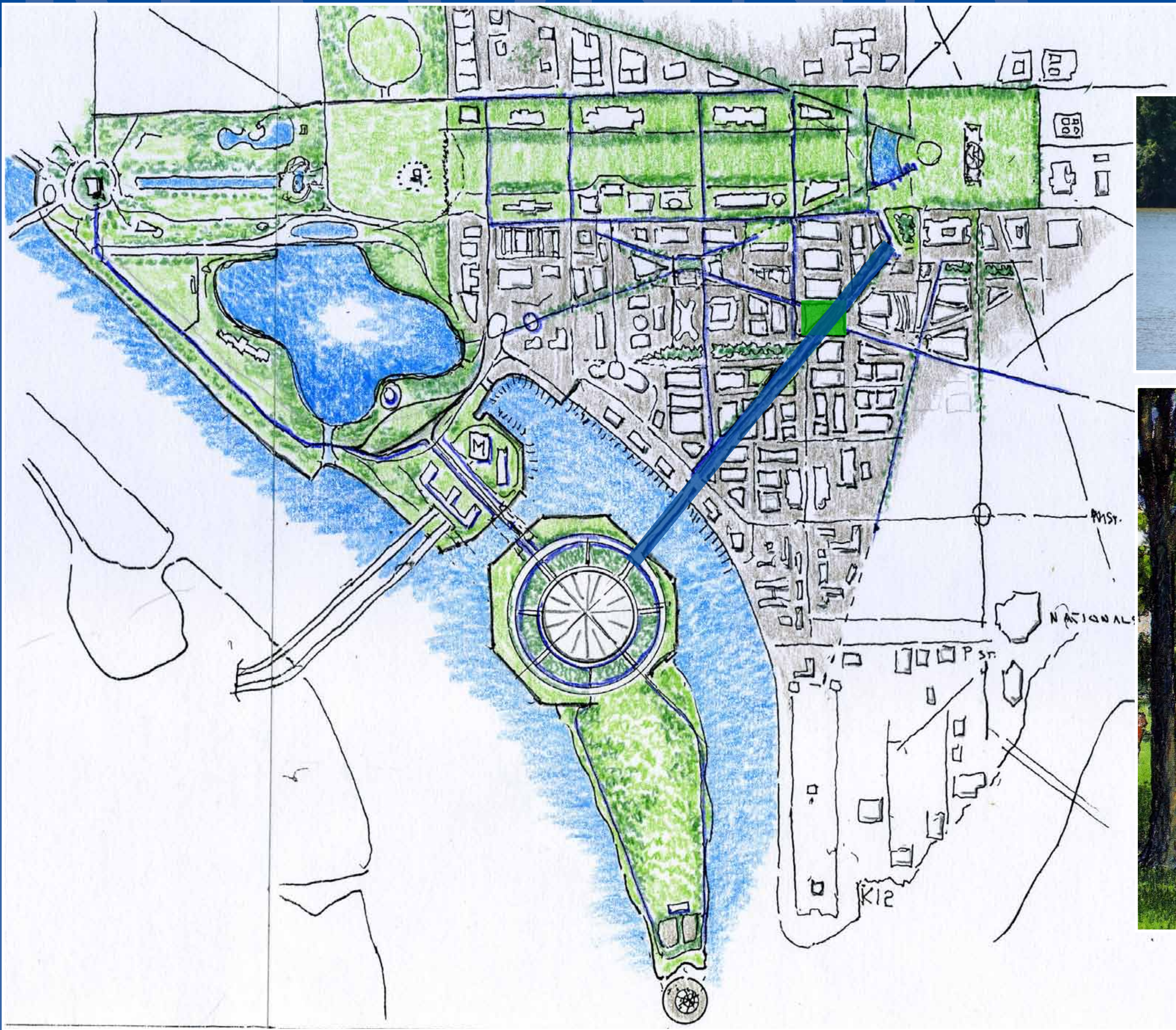
*“When L’Enfant created his Plan in 1791 the riverfront was quite different. There was no Potomac Park then and the whole southern and western parkland around Lincoln and Jefferson did not exist. A century later, the McMillan Commission used the landfill as a park but made no attempt to integrate it into the L’Enfant city design. So my objective was to extend the L’Enfant grid into the Park, have it relate to the Capitol, and make it economically feasible to make it flood-proof – at least partially.”*

*– W. Kent Cooper, FAIA, has given thought to one new grand avenue*



The island of East Potomac Park, site of the Jefferson Memorial, was created from landfill in the 1880s.

## CONNECT TO A NEW RIVERFRONT PARK



A sketch concept for a new L’Enfant avenue (highlighted in blue), and new L’Enfant square where it intersects Virginia Avenue (green), connecting the Southwest Waterfront neighborhood to the island of East Potomac Park. Courtesy of W. Kent Cooper FAIA

New docks would create opportunities for recreation.



Creating a new avenue opens a new route from the Capitol to a major new destination along the Potomac riverfront on flood-protected East Potomac Park. Increased access to the riverfront is a major objective of the plan for expanding the Mall in the 3rd Century.



Courtesy of Cy Paumier

The perspective sketch of East Potomac Park depicts the proposed riverfront promenade, linear green space and bikeway. The existing roadway along the Potomac River facilitates the development of a large park that is connected directly to the riverfront amenities.

## RECONNECT

## AND LIVELY CIVIC STAGE

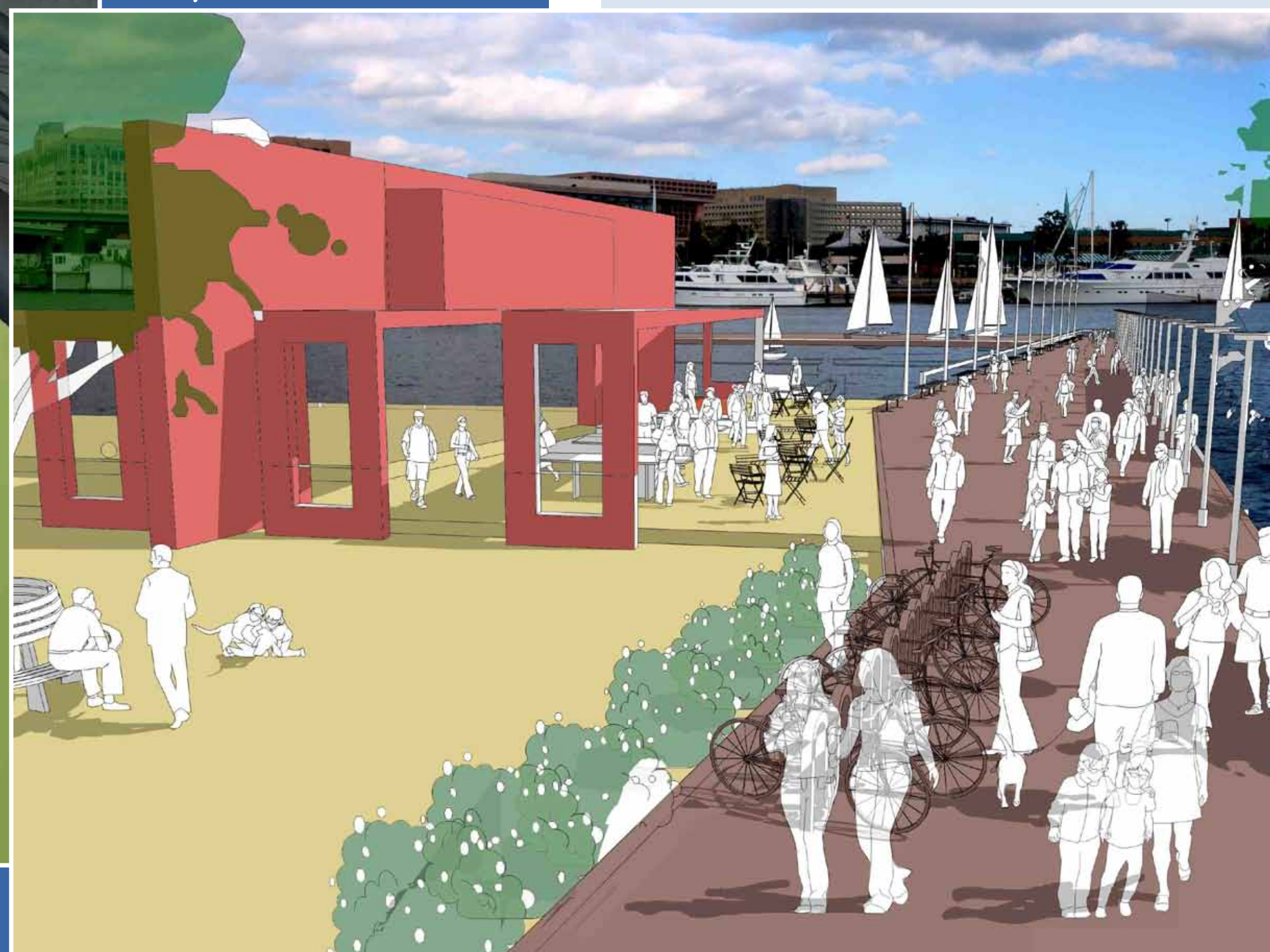


An open-air coliseum would become a major venue for cultural, educational, and recreational spectacles, and showcase our country’s common history, goals, and aspirations.

Courtesy of Rick Harlan Schneider, AIA

Courtesy of Rick Harlan Schneider, AIA

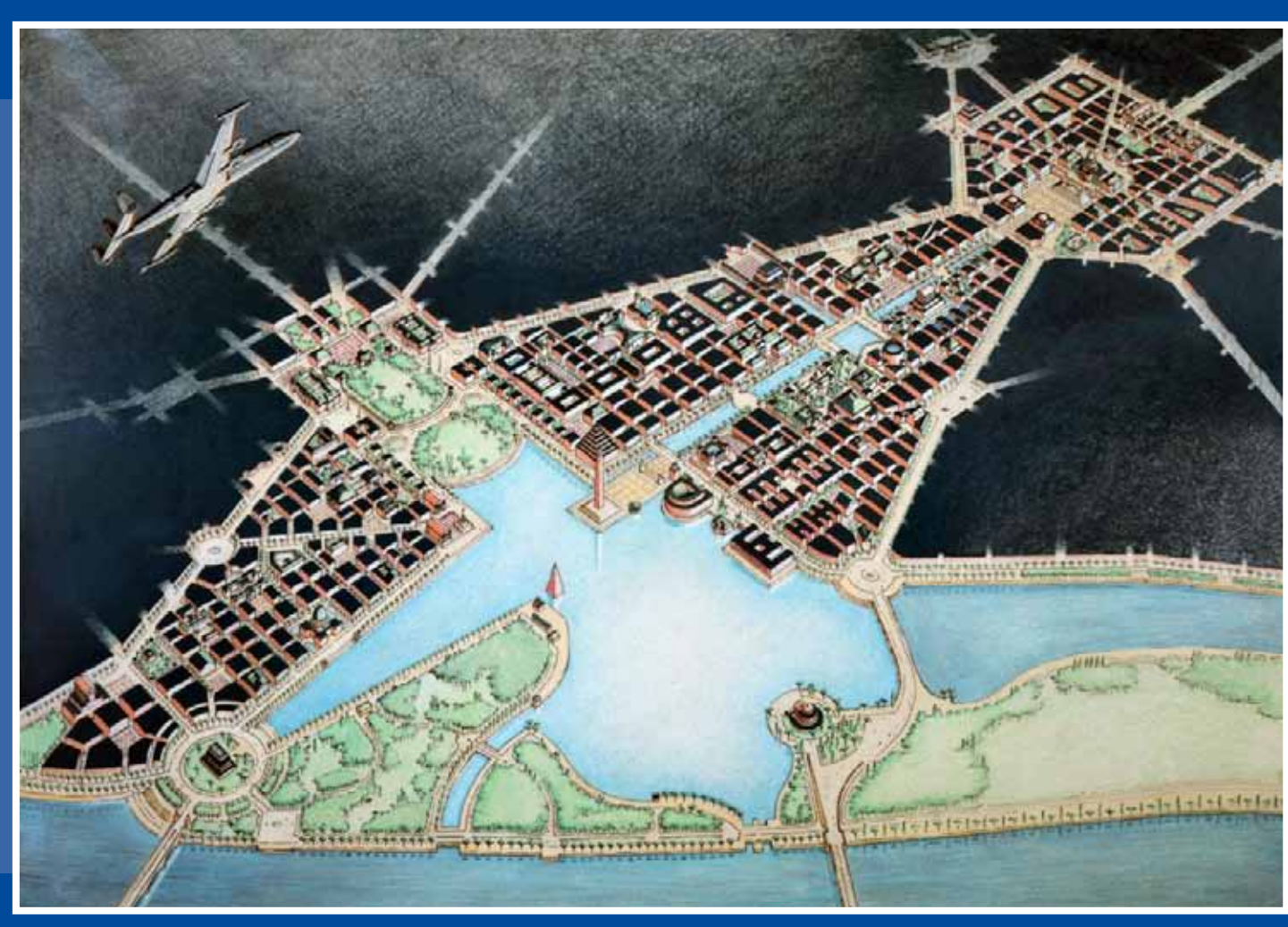
New destinations and attractions can transform this backwater into a vibrant setting for recreation, commemoration, cultural enrichment, innovation, and sustainability.





# FLOODS RESTORE THE ECOLOGICAL BALANCE

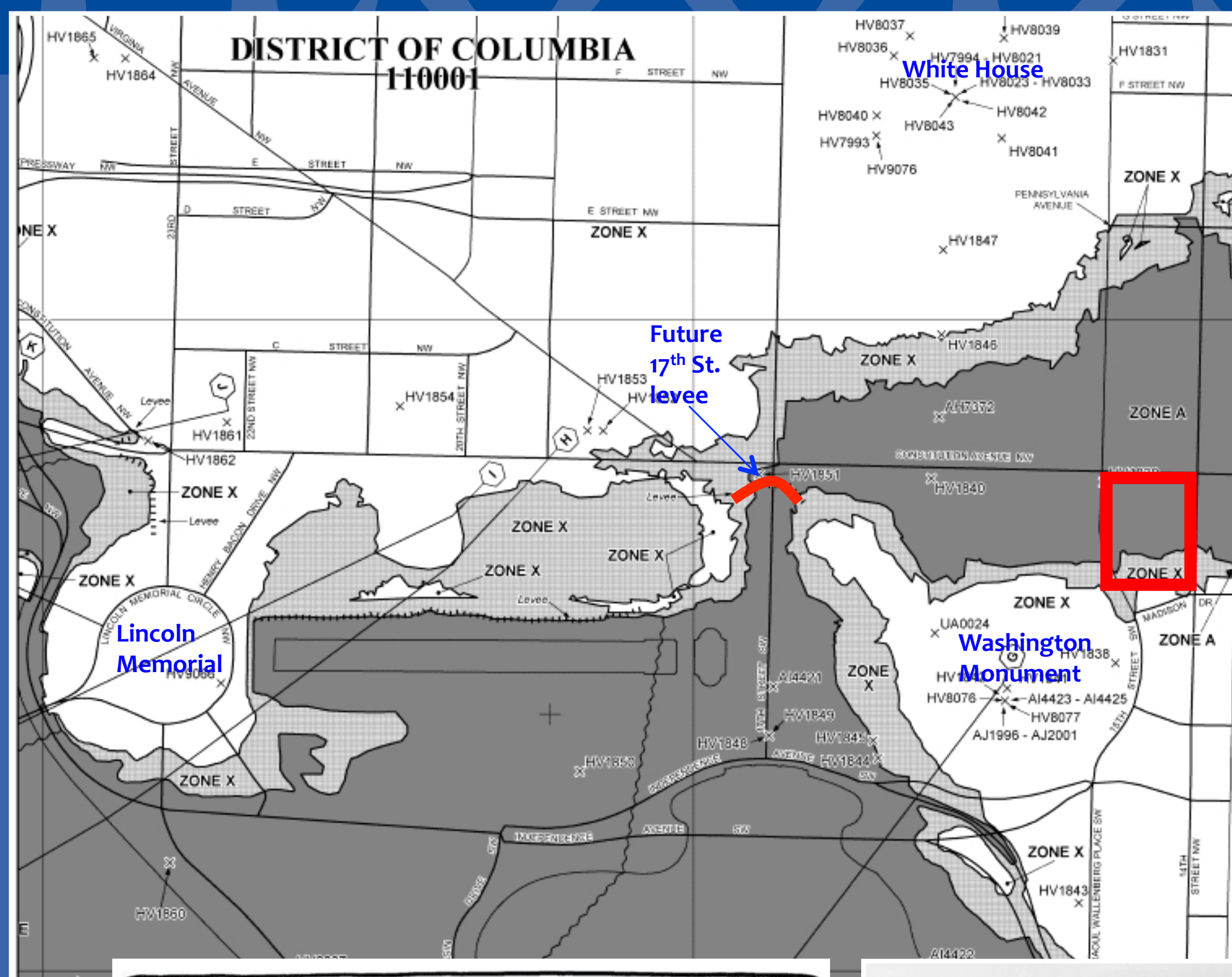
*The challenge and opportunity are to restore ecological balance, creating a 3rd Century Mall that sustains public use and changing climate challenges for the next 100 years. The 3rd Century Mall will be a model to the nation of sustainable planning and management.*



Already in the 1980s architect Leon Krier recognized the challenges and proposed Venice-inspired canals for the Mall cross axis. The Completion of Washington, D.C., Aerial perspective.

by Leon Krier, 1985. Courtesy of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

## A COMPREHENSIVE FLOOD PLAN



The 2010 Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Plain Map shows in dark grey the flood hazard areas. The 17th Street levee, now being built, will protect downtown but not the Mall. Interior flooding such as devastated the Federal Triangle area in 2006 is not addressed by the levee and remains an unresolved threat to federal buildings and lands. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is currently being built at the lowest spot of the Federal Triangle flood zone (red square).



Floods in the 1980s inundated most of East Potomac Park near the Jefferson Memorial (red arrow.)

The crucial first step: a comprehensive, long-range flood plan that addresses Potomac River as well as interior flooding.

“The District of Columbia experienced more than a 200-year storm event from June 24-26, 2006 which overwhelmed the sewer system and caused interior flooding within the Federal Triangle Area...The volume of water from this exceeded the capacity of the sewer system which is designed for a 5 to 15 year storm...The Federal Triangle is at the bottom of a topographic bowl with the land sloping upward in all directions.”

– Federal Triangle Stormwater Drainage Study (July 2011)



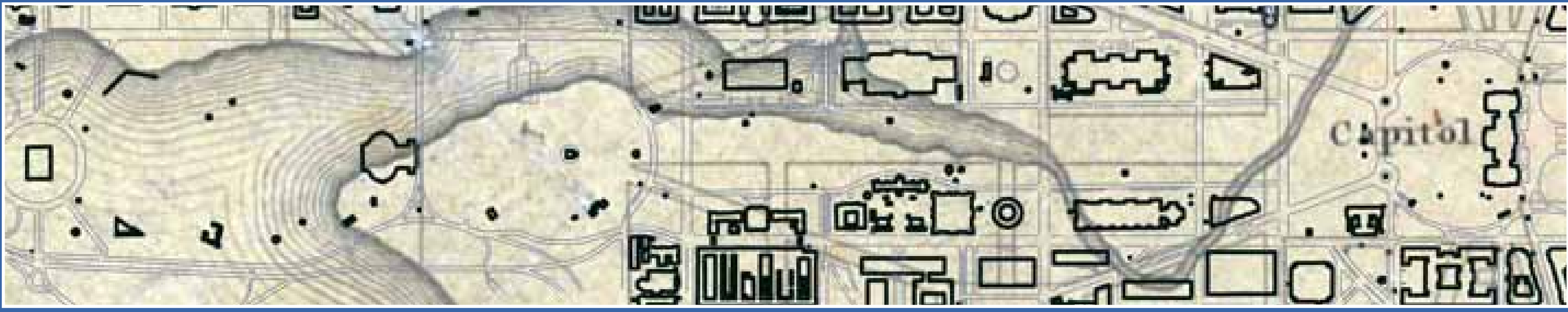
Courtesy of The Washington Post.



1930s flood. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs.

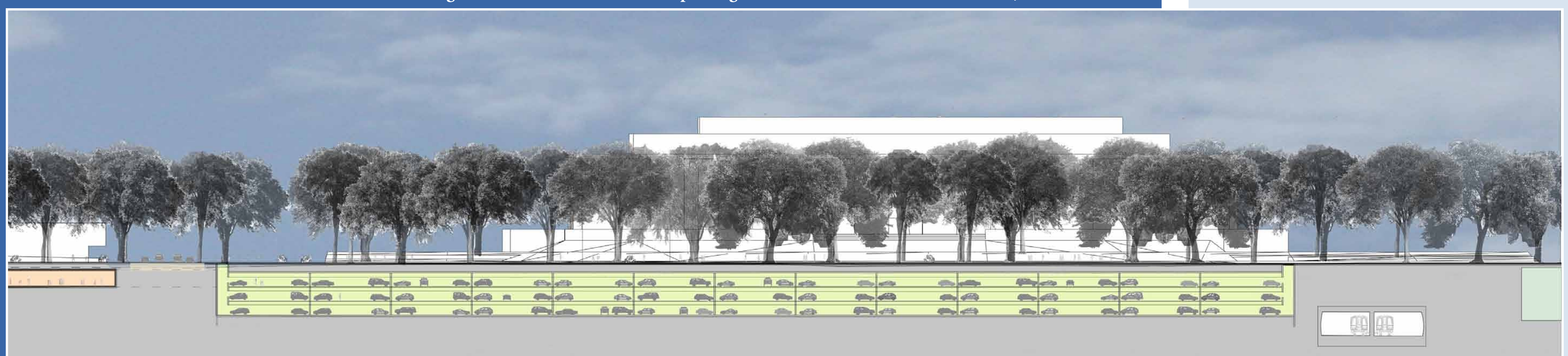
## FLOODS AN UNDERGROUND PROPOSAL

The Mall is located over the original bed of the Tiber Creek, as shown in this overlay of Ellicott's 1793 topographical map of Washington, DC. Courtesy of Karol Kawiaka AIA



Underground areas can accommodate parking as well as flood-water cisterns. Courtesy of Karol Kawiaka AIA

The 2011 Federal Triangle flood report by the National Capital Planning Commission recommends creating large reservoirs and pumping stations buried deep under the Mall's open space to capture and disperse flood waters.

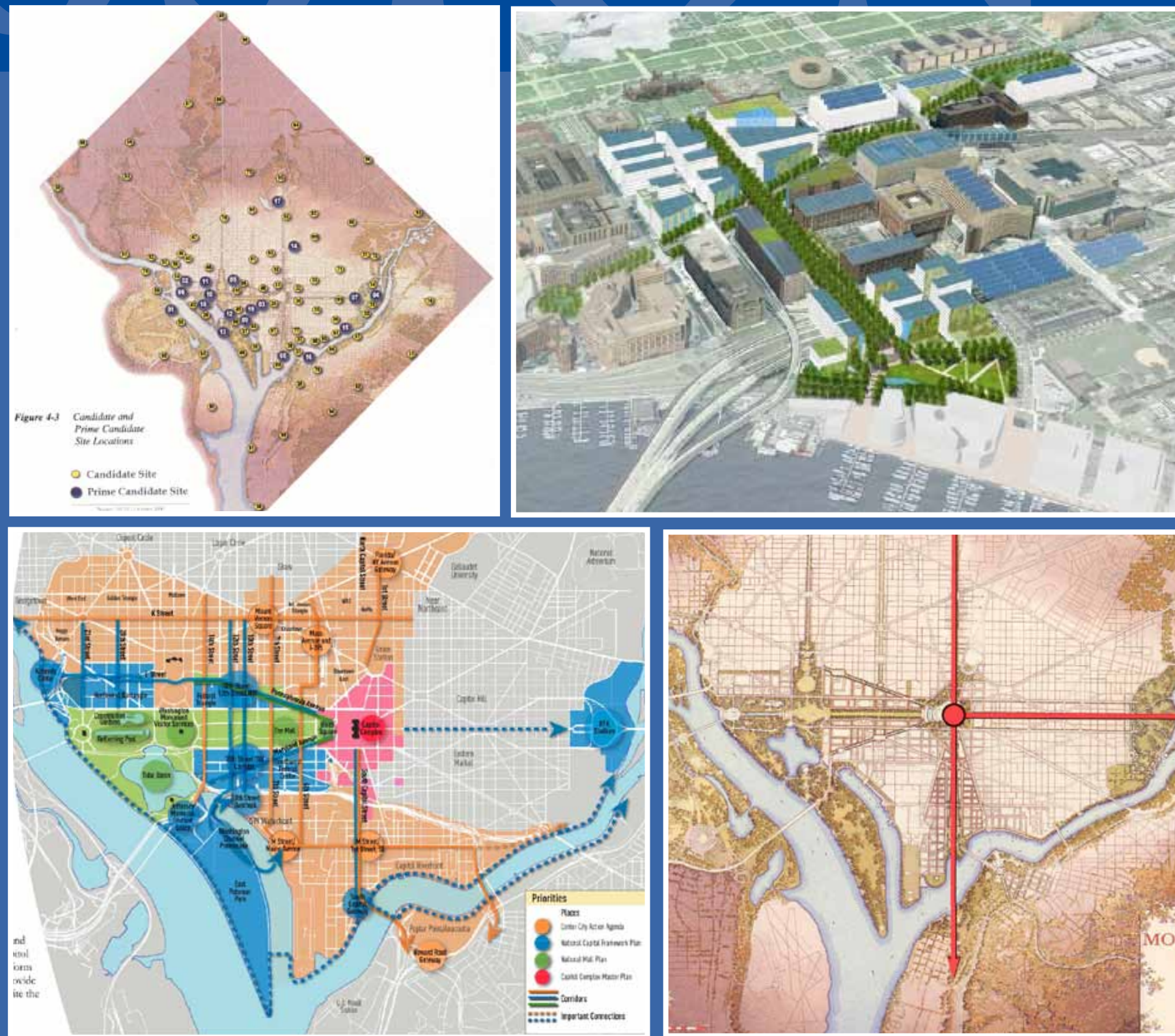




# CREATE A NEW INDEPENDENT COMMISSION

*“Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans: aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty. Think big.”*

— Daniel Burnham, member of the 1901-2 McMillan Commission

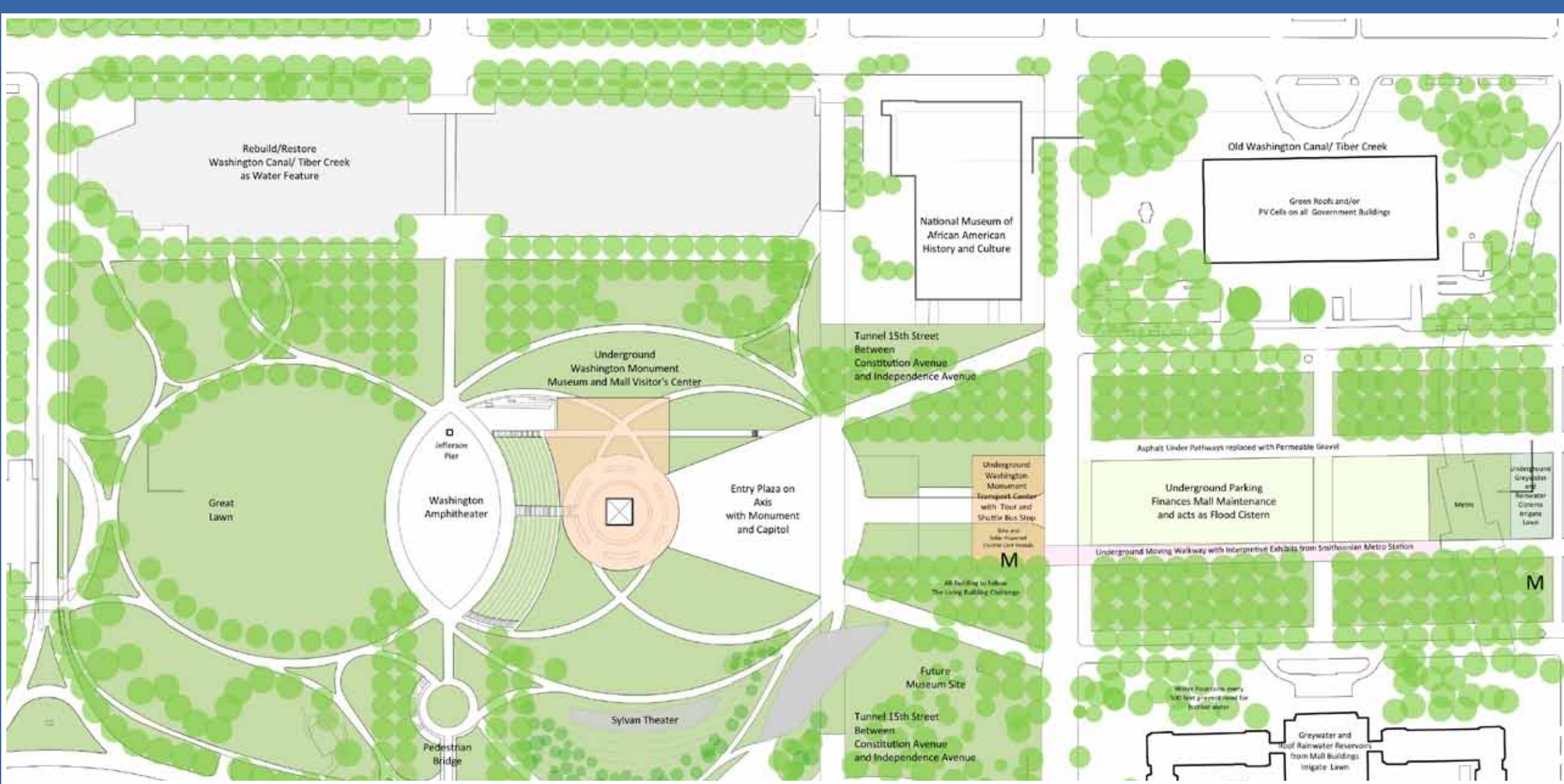


The problem is not that we lack plans for the Mall of the future, there are just too many discrete, disjointed, and sometimes competing and conflicting plans.

Our country needs an independent, McMillan-type Commission of prominent Americans to create the new comprehensive, long-range visionary plan for the Mall in the 21st century – a 3rd Century Mall Plan. Like the 1901 McMillan Commission, this private commission composed of visionary architects, landscape architects, cultural leaders, and statesmen will be unencumbered by narrowly defined missions and fragmented authorities and so be able to think broadly and creatively about the long-range challenges and opportunities.

*“If the nation’s politicians won’t protect it [the National Mall], the public must.”*  
— Los Angeles Times art critic Christopher Knight

## ONE IDEA FOR THE 3RD CENTURY MALL



*“One of the biggest obstacles in the past to realizing the L’Enfant and McMillan legacy was concern about undermining the stability of the Washington Monument’s foundation. If we underpin the foundation to bedrock, the grounds can be redesigned to include a secure, unobtrusive, and accessible entrance, space for a museum for the history of the Monument, and a Mall Visitor’s Center. This will allow us to reinvent the Mall starting at the very heart of the cross axis.”* — Karolina Kawiaka AIA

Architect Karolina Kawiaka, AIA, winner of the People’s Choice for the National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds (see accompanying exhibit), has big ideas for the 3rd Century Mall, as shown in these renderings. Her plan restores the L’Enfant symbolic cross axis, corrects the geometry at 15th Street, and shows how underground access to bus and Metro can welcome visitors to the heart of the Mall, while also keeping at bay the existential threat of flooding.

This exhibition was prepared by the NATIONAL COALITION TO SAVE OUR MALL, a nonprofit citizens organization, founded in 2000 seeking a comprehensive visionary plan for the National Mall in its 3rd Century.

The Coalition owes a special thanks to Lauren Windsor who adapted and developed this exhibition design with incomparable skill and patience.

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*“The National Coalition to Save Our Mall has long called for the convening of an outside commission of brilliant folks... I bet the response would be terrific. I bet a great majority of Americans would say, ‘Yes, we want only the very best for our capital.’”*  
— Former Washington Post architecture critic Benjamin Forgey

We’d like to know what you think. Send your comments and ideas to our website: [www.savethemall.org](http://www.savethemall.org)

