



NATIONAL MALL COALITION

*Advancing the Legacy of the National Mall
Through Public Policy and Innovative Ideas*



Photo courtesy Carol Highsmith

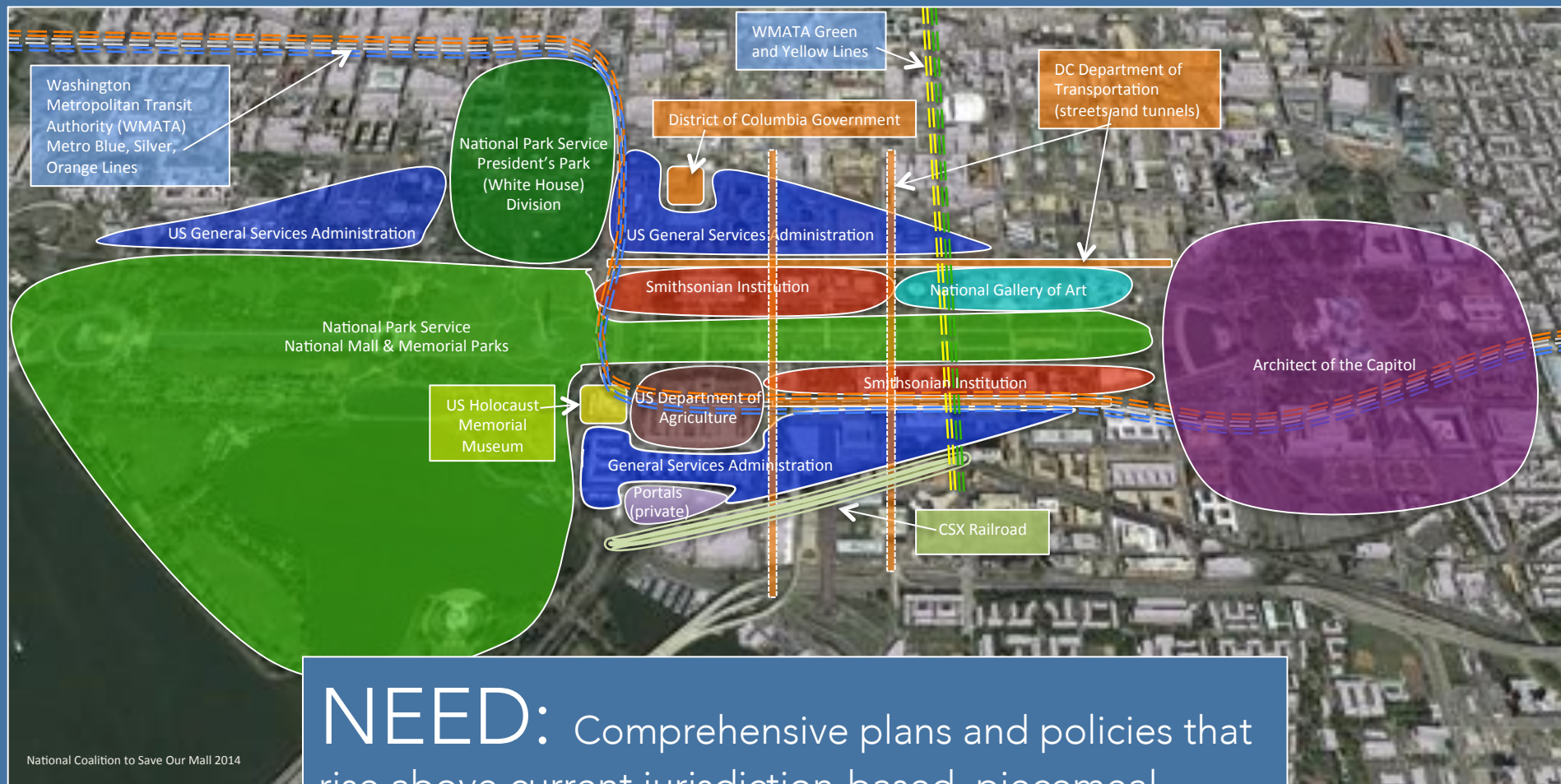


1791 L'Enfant Plan



1901-1902 McMillan Plan

NEED: an updated visionary plan for the 21st century that advances the legacy of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans that are the basis for this landscape symbol of the United States





NEED: Innovative solutions to serious public use and environmental challenges – such as stormwater flooding -- to improve Mall resilience for the long term



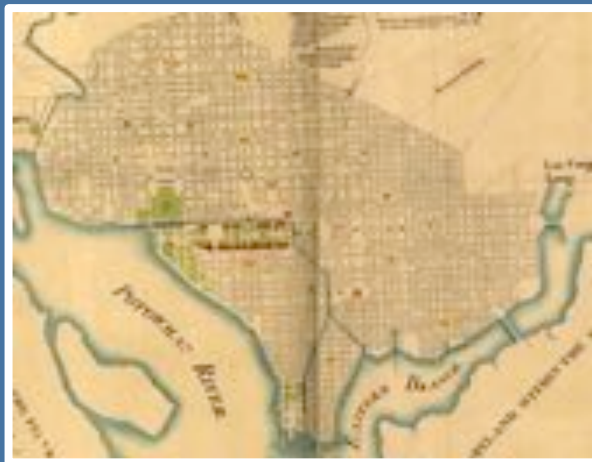
Our vision?

*A new visionary plan for the Mall
in its 3rd century*

How to get there?

1. Advancing the Legacy . . .

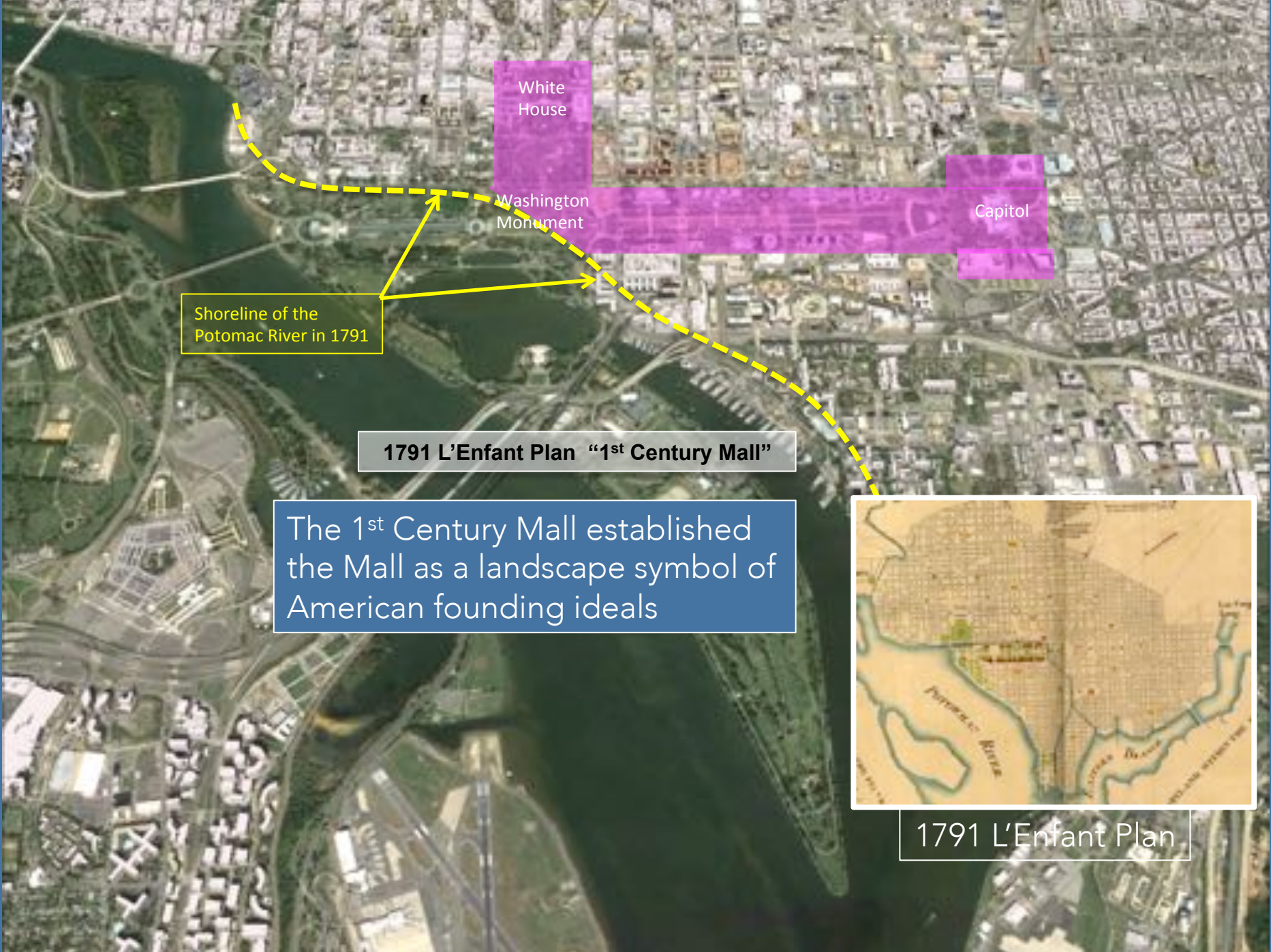
The Mall cannot be “complete” any more than American history is finished. It can grow again



1791 L'Enfant Plan



1901-1902 McMillan Plan



White House

Washington Monument

Capitol

Shoreline of the Potomac River in 1791

1791 L'Enfant Plan "1st Century Mall"

The 1st Century Mall established the Mall as a landscape symbol of American founding ideals



1791 L'Enfant Plan



The 2nd Century Mall expanded the original vision to include the Lincoln Memorial and public buildings for growing government



1901-1902 McMillan Plan



Theodore
Roosevelt
Island

John F.
Kennedy
Center

Lincoln
Memorial

White
House

Washington
Monument

Capitol

Pennsylvania Avenue

Maryland Avenue

Jefferson
Memorial

Private land
surrounded by, but not
part of, Mall expansion

Lyndon Baines
Johnson
Memorial Grove

Expansion areas include
existing Presidential
monuments and federal
land along the Potomac
and Anacostia Rivers

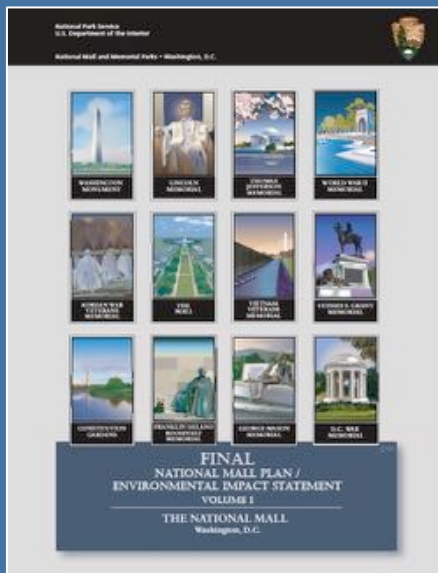
East
Potomac
Park

Fort McNair

“3rd Century Mall”

The 3rd Century Mall can expand again to
open up the Potomac and Anacostia
waterfront to cultural and civic uses as well
as future museums and monuments

2. ... through (unified and transparent) public policy



NPS National Mall Plan



Kennedy Center Expansion



Smithsonian South Mall Plan

Replacing jurisdiction-based, fragmented management and piecemeal development with a **unifying planning and management entity** – such as the McMillan Commission or New York's Central Park Conservancy – to plan and implement a new visionary plan that serves the larger public need.

Comments on the National Capital Planning Commission's
Federal Interest Report and Findings
for the Joint Height Master Plan for Washington, DC
by the
National Coalition to Save Our Mall

October 28, 2013

The National Coalition to Save Our Mall welcomes this opportunity to comment on the "Federal Interest Report and Findings" prepared by the National Capital Planning Commission. In short, we are concerned that the report while beginning a useful inquiry falls short in analyzing and considering the impacts of relaxing the height limits that have preserved the character of the nation's Capital for several generations.

The Coalition is a 13- year old, non-profit citizens' organization working to safeguard and enhance the National Mall as a symbol of America's founding ideas and the stage for our evolving Democracy.

In particular, the Coalition has a significant concern about changes to height limits that would damage the character of the National Mall and other capital historic landmarks, parks and open spaces, major avenues, and other special places that form an essential part of the Capital city.

The Height Act together with the historic L'Enfant and McMillan Plans for Washington, D.C. are a primary reason the planning of the Nation's Capital has been so successful. ~~Congress charged NCPCC with the responsibility for maintaining the federal interests, particularly the two historic plans.~~ Congress reinforced its protections of the historic plans in 1986 with the Commemorative Works Act the purpose of which is "to preserve the integrity of the comprehensive design of the L'Enfant and McMillan plans for the Nation's Capital." The importance of the Height Act in protecting our Capital's planning heritage was not fully understood until Washington developed as an urban center, particularly after the Second World War. Today, taken together, the Height Act and the two historic plans make us what we are. It is NCPCC's responsibility, indeed, obligation, to protect this heritage.

But the Report and Findings on the Height Act prepared by NCPCC fails to take the strong, unequivocal position called for from the federal government's planning agency that is charged with protecting federal interests. The findings repeatedly say raising height limits "may" have an impact when there can be little doubt that taller buildings "will" adversely impact views from the Mall and other federal interest. We believe this position needs to be strengthened.

In the paragraphs below we provide detailed comments on the report and identify instances where this weak language occurs. NCPCC, in our view, should take a fully positive position about the importance of the Height Act to preserve the quality of our city in the years to come.

A. General Comments



Advocating **protection of the L'Enfant Plan** in the face of projects that threaten that legacy – for example, the location of the World War II Memorial that required destruction of part of the Lincoln Reflecting Pool, changes to the Height Act that would allow tall buildings to alter Washington's distinctive open urban character, and the Eisenhower Memorial that would close off a central portion of Maryland Avenue.



Keeping the Mall's vitality is worth the trampled grass

Who decides what the Mall is for? If even the family-friendly, educational, inspirational and just plain fun National Book Festival can be turned away, what's left? The National Park Service announced Jan. 8 that the festival would not return to the Mall because the festival sponsors cannot satisfy new Park Service regulations to protect the grass. Will the Mall become a "national park," where visitors of the future will view the monuments and grass, as at Yellowstone, through the windows of a tour bus?

The Park Service manages the Mall's grassy open space, though not the Smithsonian museums, the National Gallery of Art or other public buildings. To this agency, founded in 1916 to protect our nation's natural and historic resources, the health of natural resources such as grass seems to come first and public use second.

Its 2010 National Mall Plan is setting new limits on public use. The Smithsonian each year struggles to satisfy permit requirements for its Folklife Festival. The Solar Decathlon, sponsored by the Energy Department and top universities, packed up and left. Now even the Library of Congress, which sponsors the book festival, can't meet the strict rules — and steep costs — intended to keep the grass green.

No one is arguing against maintaining the grass. But what about reasonable public use? Who's

standing up for the public? How do we create a fair balance when even our universities and cultural institutions can't seem to meet the Park Service's new rules?

The fundamental issue is the lack of a comprehensive plan that goes beyond the 2010 maintenance plan and takes into account the interests of the historical institutions and public visitors that use the Mall. Management agencies should not dictate the purpose and meaning of the Mall.

The Mall, which runs from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial, is not a national park and was never intended to be. From 1791, when President George Washington enlisted Pierre L'Enfant to plan the capital, the Mall was conceived to symbolize in public architecture and open space our country's founding principles. L'Enfant's plan described it as a "place of general resort" for the enjoyment of the people. After a century of neglect, the 1902 McMillan Plan restored L'Enfant's concept to an open grassy expanse framed by trees and museums. That plan set the stage, so to speak, for the Mall's use today — as a treasured public space for activities from Fourth of July fireworks and inaugurations to cultural events such as the book and folklife festivals.

It is not only buildings such as the Smithsonian and National Gallery that are part of the Mall. The public programs they and other surrounding

institutions promote are also a crucial component of that high purpose.

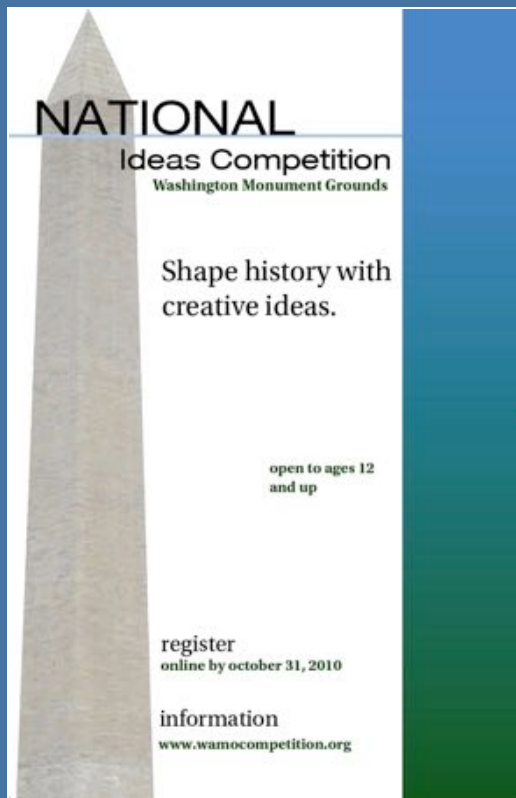
For almost a decade, the National Coalition to Save Our Mall has urged Congress to create an independent McMillan-type commission to provide an updated, unified plan for this nationally significant landscape. The commission, composed of civic and cultural leaders, would invite all parties to the table and include a strong voice for the public.

What can an independent commission accomplish that existing Mall managing agencies can't? The commission can think outside jurisdictional boundaries and plan across them. The commission, for example, can solve the need for new locations for museums and public events by expanding the Mall's overall boundaries, as the McMillan Plan did more than a century ago when it extended the Mall to the Lincoln Memorial. A new plan could include the underutilized waterfront tracts of federal land in East and West Potomac Park. It could also look to create parking, dining and restroom facilities under the Mall.

We need to act before we lose, restriction by restriction, the vitality that gives the Mall so much of its meaning in our democracy.

The writer is founder and chair of the National Coalition to Save Our Mall.

Promoting and supporting policies that advance the Mall's important function as "Stage for America's Democracy" for cultural, recreational, and First Amendment events such as the National Book Festival -- and opposing uses such as the 2003 NFL commercial event that violate that open and public role.



National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds – open to all



National Mall Underground flood reservoir/parking garage and public exhibition



The two-mile-long Mall can feel desert-like for pedestrians



Other possibilities to enhance the Mall include telling more of the American story with **temporary exhibits such as statues**, adding to the tree canopy to **provide more shade**, including more **water features and fountains** as intended in the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, and establishing an entity to **program the open space** with exciting festivals and activities that celebrate what it means to be an American

We welcome your comments and participation in working with us to create an exciting and inspiring 3rd Century Mall

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