



America's 3rd Century National Mall

Visionary Idea, Democratic Reality, and Civic Opportunity

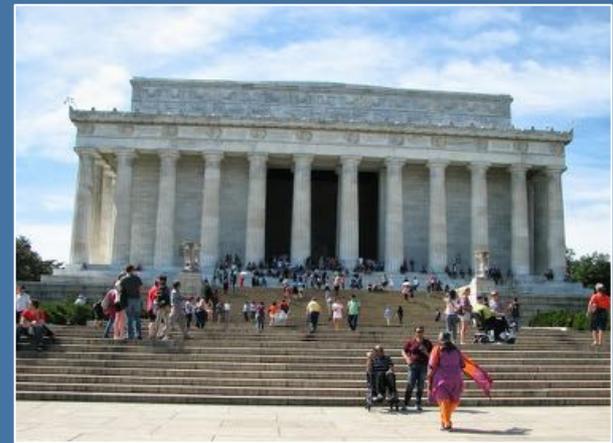
A proposal by the National Mall Coalition
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Honoring war dead



Celebrating literacy, learning, and storytelling



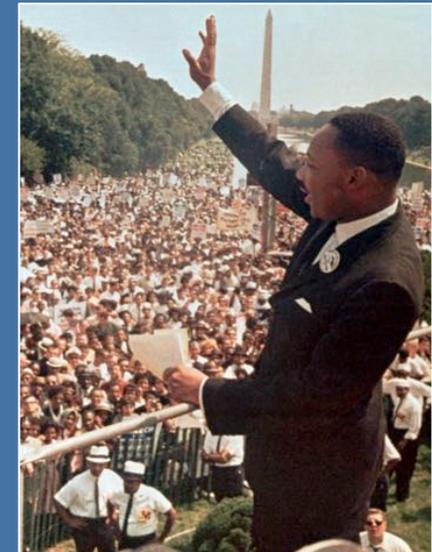
Exploring American history



Playing in the majestic open space



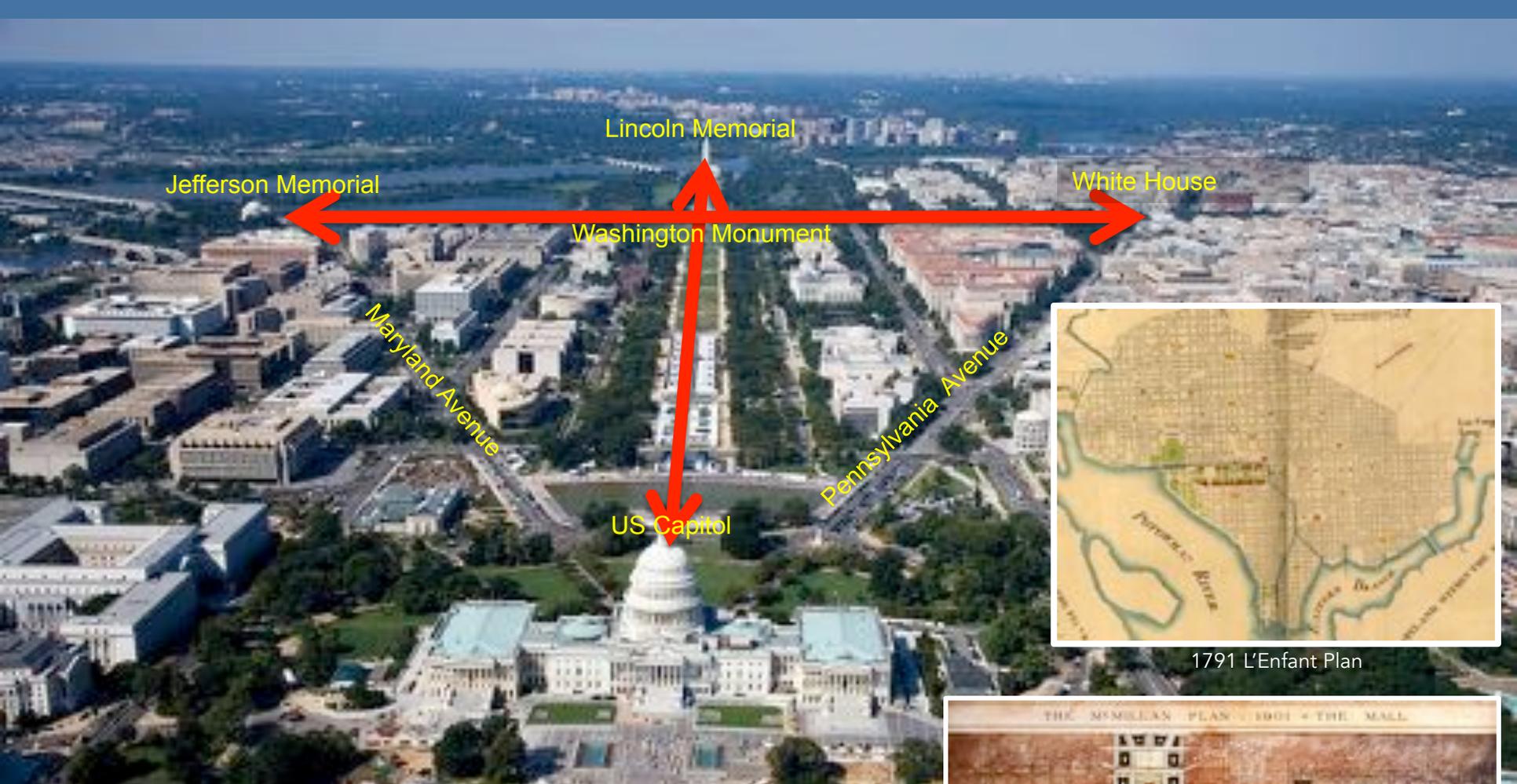
Studying founding documents



Making history

STAGE FOR OUR DEMOCRACY

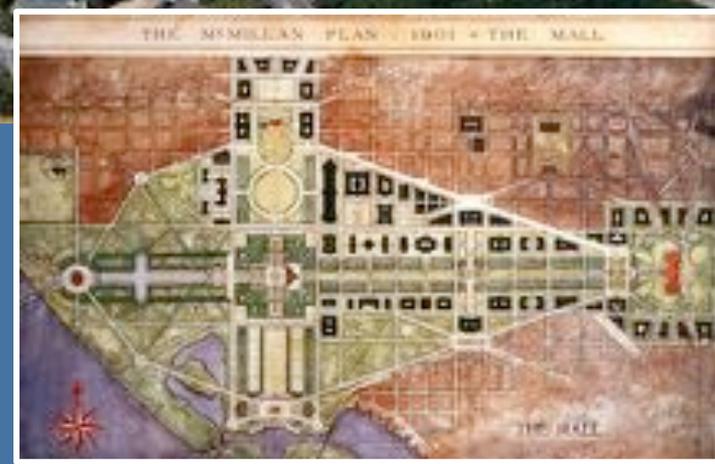
The National Mall is a landscape symbol of America's founding ideals and a stage for our democracy, a special place to experience and participate in celebrating our cultural heritage and common values.



1791 L'Enfant Plan

LEGACY OF TWO VISIONARY PLANS

The inspired design for the Mall is the legacy of two great visionary plans: the 1791 L'Enfant Plan by Peter (Pierre) Charles L'Enfant and the 1901-1902 Senate Park (McMillan) Commission Plan by Daniel Burnham, Frederick Law Olmsted Jr, Charles McKim, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens.



1901-1902 McMillan Commission Plan



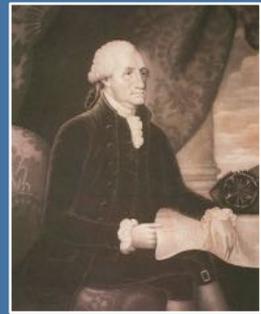
1791 L'Enfant Plan



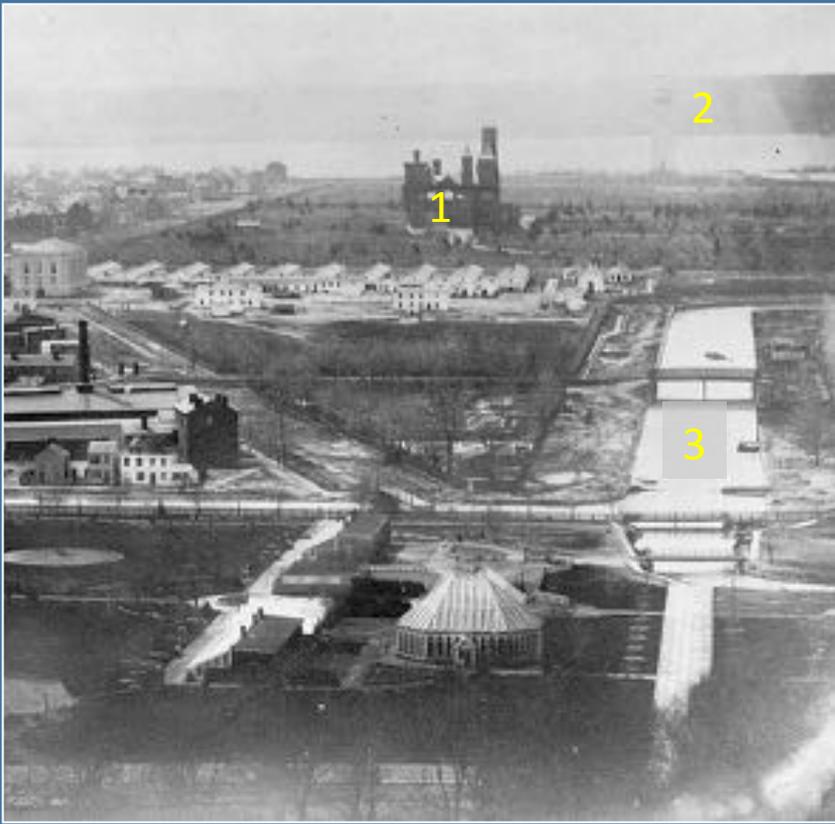
The Mall cross axis

EMBODIMENT OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

In L'Enfant's plan, the Mall was the centerpiece of the capital and of the cross axis that united the symbols of American self-government: a "Grand Avenue" and "place of general resort" for We The People (1) connected the Capitol (2) to a monument to George Washington (3) and to the President's Park (4) and White House (5).



George Washington commissioned L'Enfant to plan the nation's capital.



In 1860, the Smithsonian Castle (1) was in place and the Washington Monument (2) stood partially built on the banks of the Potomac River. The rest was a chaos of buildings, mud, and dirt roads stretching westward from the Capitol. L'Enfant's intended canal was instead a fetid open sewer (3). Photo: Library of Congress



By 1900, instead of L'Enfant's "Grand Avenue" the Mall was mostly covered in trees. The "National Museum," later renamed the Arts & Industries Building (1), stood next to the Smithsonian Castle (2). The 1868 U.S. Department of Agriculture Building (3) was razed in 1930 to make way for the new building. Visible at 6th Street where railroad tracks crossed the Mall is the shed roof over the tracks (3) where the National Gallery of Art is located today. Photo: Library of Congress

A HISTORY OF NEGLECT

But chaotic development throughout the 19th century mostly ignored L'Enfant's vision and design concept.



The kite-shaped 1901-1902 McMillan Commission Plan included areas north of the Mall – today's Federal Triangle -- for new public buildings for the growing government



The blue line is the original Potomac shoreline



The McMillan Commission, whose members included renowned architect Daniel Burnham and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., pictured at right, replaced the tree-covered 19th century Mall with a formal landscape of grass, trees, pools, and classical architecture. The Washington Monument, originally located on the banks of the Potomac, gained new prominence as the centerpiece of the expanded cross axis and was designed to be the "gem of the Mall system"

A RENEWED VISION FOR THE 20TH CENTURY

Confronting the chaos on the Mall in 1901, the McMillan Commission reclaimed the original Mall concept and updated it. The new plan extended L'Enfant's cross axis westward over landfill to the Lincoln Memorial, adding a new chapter to the American story told on the Mall, and southward to the site of the Jefferson Memorial. The plan reconceived L'Enfant's "Grand Avenue" as a lush green landscape lined with rows of elm trees and white neoclassical museums.



This view from the Washington Monument in the 1940s shows the temporary World War I and World War II government buildings that were not all removed until the 1970s. Photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution Archives.



By the 1950s the area between the Capitol and the Washington Monument had been cleared of trees to create the open space framed by rows of elms. The group of government buildings to the north planned by the McMillan Commission – the Federal Triangle – was largely completed in the 1930s. Photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution Archives.

A SLOWLY EMERGING MODERN MALL

A half century after the McMillan Commission, the Mall was still very much a work in progress. Instead of a lush tree-covered landscape, temporary buildings filled the area around the Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument and occupied much of both sides of the Mall near the Capitol. Only three neoclassical buildings were in place: the National Museum of Natural History, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the National Gallery of Art. Development picked up speed after 1960.



Museum of the American Indian



Vietnam Veterans Memorial



World War II Memorial



NEW CHAPTERS TELL MORE OF THE AMERICAN STORY

Starting in the 1940s new museums filled out the Mall towards the Capitol, drawing visitors to explore American history, art, science, and technology. The new architecture of the National Gallery East Building, the Air and Space Building, and the Museum of the American Indian looked more to modern trends than to the McMillan Plan's classical ideal. Meanwhile, the Mall area near the Lincoln Memorial, after the temporary buildings were removed in the 1970s, took on new meaning as a place of pilgrimage for visitors to memorials honoring Vietnam Veterans, Korean War Veterans, FDR, World War II, and Martin Luther King Jr.



AMERICA'S DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

The Mall in the 20th century took on new purpose never imagined by L'Enfant or the McMillan Commission. Every year, the American public – and millions of international visitors -- come to the Mall to explore history and heritage, to exercise their First Amendment rights, and to participate in civic events in a national spotlight. The Mall has become a Stage For American Democracy.

WHAT'S THE FUTURE?

Congress has declared the Mall a “substantially completed work of civic art” but already has made exceptions to the building moratorium. Without an updated, long-term, comprehensive plan (the last plan was in 1902) to guide intelligent development in the 21st century, ongoing piecemeal development by 8 different federal agencies threatens to destroy the unity and integrity of this national treasure and Stage For American Democracy.

The truth is, the Mall cannot be complete any more than American history is complete. Where will future generations find space to tell their story on the Mall? Who can bring all parties – including the American public – to the table to create a comprehensive plan that embodies the needs, and the hopes and aspirations, of all Americans?

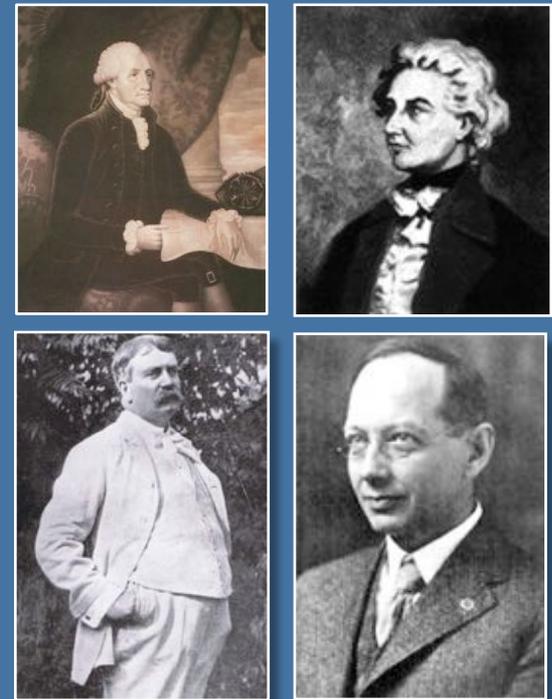
The National Mall Coalition Proposes

THE 3RD CENTURY MALL . . .

1 **EXPAND THE MALL BOUNDARIES**, as was done in 1902, to create new spaces and welcoming destinations, including on hundreds of acres of underutilized federal land along the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers, where future generations can continue to tell the ever-unfolding American story.



2 ESTABLISH A NEW McMILLAN-TYPE COMMISSION to create the **3RD CENTURY MALL PLAN**. This Plan will provide a vision for the Mall in its entirety, including expansion areas along the waterfront; advance the legacy of the L'Enfant and McMillan Plans for the Mall in its 3rd century; and encompass the needs of all the American people as well as the constituencies that manage the Mall. The 3rd Century Mall Plan will ensure the Mall's continued resiliency and vitality in American Democracy throughout the 21st century.



The 3rd Century Plan will rise above current fragmented, jurisdiction-based planning to envision the Mall, in the tradition of the visionary L'Enfant and McMillan Plans, as an ever-evolving landscape symbol of American founding ideals, common identity, and aspirations for our country's future.

Who are the visionary architects and designers of our time who can build on the brilliant legacy of Washington and L'Enfant, and the McMillan Commission, with a plan for the Mall in its 3rd century?

3 IMPLEMENT INNOVATIVE PROJECTS to update and upgrade the historical Mall with its 19th century landscape to support the Mall's modern role as Stage For American Democracy, host to 25 million visitors each year, public park for the local community, and resilient landscape able to support lively public use as well as withstand the effects of climate change.

Some examples . . .



The unfinished landscape at the Washington Monument, never implemented as the oasis of trees and water it was intended to be, can be completed to create a welcoming destination, as demonstrated in the National Mall Coalition's National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds.



The long, two-mile promenade from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial can be enlivened and made more educational with small statues and other attractions, while additional shade trees could shield pedestrians from the hot summer sun.



Courtesy Henry Arnold



Bus and car parking under the Mall can improve access while also functioning during heavy rain events as a stormwater cistern to prevent future flooding of the Mall area such as occurred in June 2006, as proposed in the National Mall Coalition's National Mall Underground project.

The 3rd Century Mall

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