

NATIONAL
IDEAS
COMPETITION
FOR THE
WASHINGTON
MONUMENT
GROUNDS

Someday
in the Park *with*
George

WAMO STEERING COMMITTEE,
ADELE N. ASHKAR
LISA BENTON-SHORT, EDITORS

About the Competition

THE NATIONAL IDEAS COMPETITION FOR THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS

An independent group of university professors, architects and designers, partnering with The George Washington University and community civic leaders, came together in fall 2010 to launch a National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds (WAMO). They hoped that the American public, from design professionals, researchers and history buffs to students, teachers, professors and parents, would see this effort as an opportunity to tap their creativity and engage with history and civics on these historic grounds.

The idea for this competition came out of a realization that while the Washington Monument continues to be the defining feature of the Washington, D.C. skyline – and the centerpiece of the nation’s most symbolic public open space – at ground level its vast open space remains unfinished. While recent work on this cultural landscape by the Olin Studio has brought an unprecedented level of elegance, security and accessibility to the space, Competition leaders asked: *“How can this landscape continue to tell our uniquely American story into the future?”*

The competition unfolded in three stages, attracting two distinguished panels of jurors. The first jury reduced over 500 participants to 24 semi-finalists, who refined and resubmitted their ideas for the second stage. The second jury selected six submissions, which are presented to the American public for a popular vote.

The Competition hopes to heighten public interest in George Washington and other chapters in the larger American story, as well as the role of the Monument grounds in the civic life of our democracy.

The Unbuilt Washington Monument

LISA BENTON-SHORT, PH.D.

We take for granted the power and elegance of the Washington Monument, but it almost wasn't built.

In 1791, Peter L'Enfant planned that the major axis of the new city should be two great parks meeting at a central point, where he placed an equestrian statue of George Washington. Several decades passed without action. In 1836 Robert Mills' design for a monument to Washington proposed a six-hundred-foot obelisk surrounded by an enormous circular temple at the base. On top of the temple was a conspicuously large statue of Washington driving a horse-drawn carriage. Mills also proposed a design for the whole Mall that extended from the grounds around the Monument to the foot of the Capitol. Only the obelisk in Mills' design was completed; the temple and gardens were dismissed as too costly and were never built. In 1901, the Senate Park Commission, commonly known as the McMillan Commission, re-envisioned the Monument sitting on a level plaza more than 20 feet above an enormous formal garden composed of water fountains,

statuary and hundreds of elm trees. A great round pool at the center of the garden marked the Mall cross-axis. The Monument Gardens would, hoped the McMillan Commission, become "the gem of the Mall system." In the end, only some of the elm trees were planted; the plan for the fountains, sunken garden and circular pools was discarded after engineers warned that excavations could undermine the Monument's foundation.

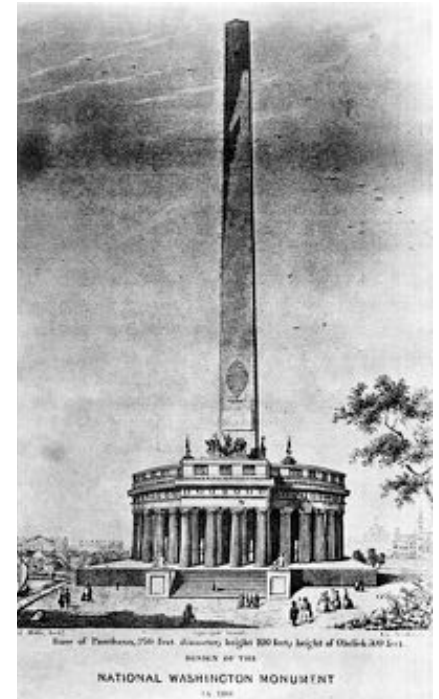
*Many ideas have been proposed for the Washington Monument and its grounds over two centuries, but none was ever fully implemented. Perhaps the assertion that the Washington Monument remains unfinished is not as provocative as it first appears. It is a sad truth: our monument to George Washington has never received its intended landscape setting. **Let's talk about that.***



L'Enfant Plan, 1791: Mall cross-axis is point A



McMillan Plan, 1901



Robert Mills design, 1836

Involving Young People

W. KENT COOPER, FAIA

The Steering Committee was determined to encourage younger people to participate, to hear what Americans of all ages thought about the Washington Monument. Announcements were sent to schools and universities throughout the country. Over 500 individuals registered for the competition, of which 29 teams were under 18 years old, for a total of 66 people under the age of 18. One individual under 18 made the semi-finals.

What can we learn from the participation of the next generation of leaders? After a careful review of the submissions it was clear that those under 18 years are focused on learning, trying to understand their heritage and the world around them. Hearing their ideas is an important part of the conversation about the value of this place.

Many American children visit the National Mall on school trips while in middle or high school. Participating in the competition, and learning about the Mall will, hopefully, make these visits more relevant and powerful. After all, the Mall will shortly be their national stage and it will be their turn to articulate the American story.



Shaping History with Creative Ideas

JAMES P. CLARK, FAIA, AND NOAH C. CLARK

"I want MY idea to be part of history!" is the answer my teenage son, Noah, gave when asked why he wanted to participate in the competition.

Noah thought that I was going to help him find the perfect solution. I told him that he, like any other participant who was over the age of twelve and eligible to participate, could look for inspiration from history, ideas from the past, and his imagination. As chairman of the competition, I was really reluctant to have him participate. I gave him my litany of parental directions: *"Walk the grounds and experience it for yourself. Are the grounds a big empty canvas filled with design potential or is this great green space perfect just the way it is?"*

Then I really frustrated him when I said that I did not believe there was a single, perfect solution and that the competition would result in many winning ideas. I told him that he needed to connect with others to share diverse viewpoints and, thereby, fertilize his idea. Without telling me, he joined with six other classmates at his school to participate in the competition. Although defiant in his insistence to participate, he still listened to my directions!

The idea that Noah's team at school developed is part of the long tradition of generating ideas which create interest in history, art, landscape architecture, and more. They stretched their imaginations into the future and created an idea for the grounds at the cross-axis of our democracy. Noah is a perfectionist and admitted to me, *"I was not entirely happy with our solution, but I learned that nothing is necessarily finished, and the grounds, like our submission, deserve improvement."* Like so many who have been connected to this competition, Noah learned something about himself as well as about the Washington Monument grounds. This special place is a powerful classroom!

A Monument for George Washington

KENNETH R. BOWLING, PH.D.

In August 1783 Congress appropriated money to erect an elegant, bronze equestrian statue of George Washington at the permanent seat of government. It was “calculated to hand down to posterity” the attention of a grateful country “for services that never can be repaid.” The question of the location of that seat proved so contentious that a compromise between the North and the South resulted in two seats, one near Trenton, New Jersey, and the other near Georgetown, Maryland. An op-ed piece proposed a solution to the problem of two seats but only one statue: place the horse on wheels so that it could move with Congress. Indeed, it could be large enough to transport the congressmen from seat to seat, thus saving taxpayers the cost of multiple *per diems*.

Congress finally resolved the issue in 1790 by locating it on the Potomac River. President Washington then chose the precise place on that River and the French-born American, Peter C. L’Enfant, to plan the city. The two spent many hours envisioning a grand capital, as opposed to

merely a seat for the federal government, but only one thing was certain: there would be an equestrian statue of General Washington.

L’Enfant placed it on his plan approximately where the Washington Monument stands today. When Thomas Jefferson assumed the presidency in 1801 he tossed out L’Enfant’s plan and Washington’s vision of a grand capital. With them went the equestrian statue. In 1853 Congress authorized such a statue for a second time, the one designed by Clark Mills and dedicated in 1860; today it sits in Washington Circle at 23rd Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, NW.

Equestrian Statue of George Washington in Washington Circle, Washington, D.C.



Lisa Benton-Short

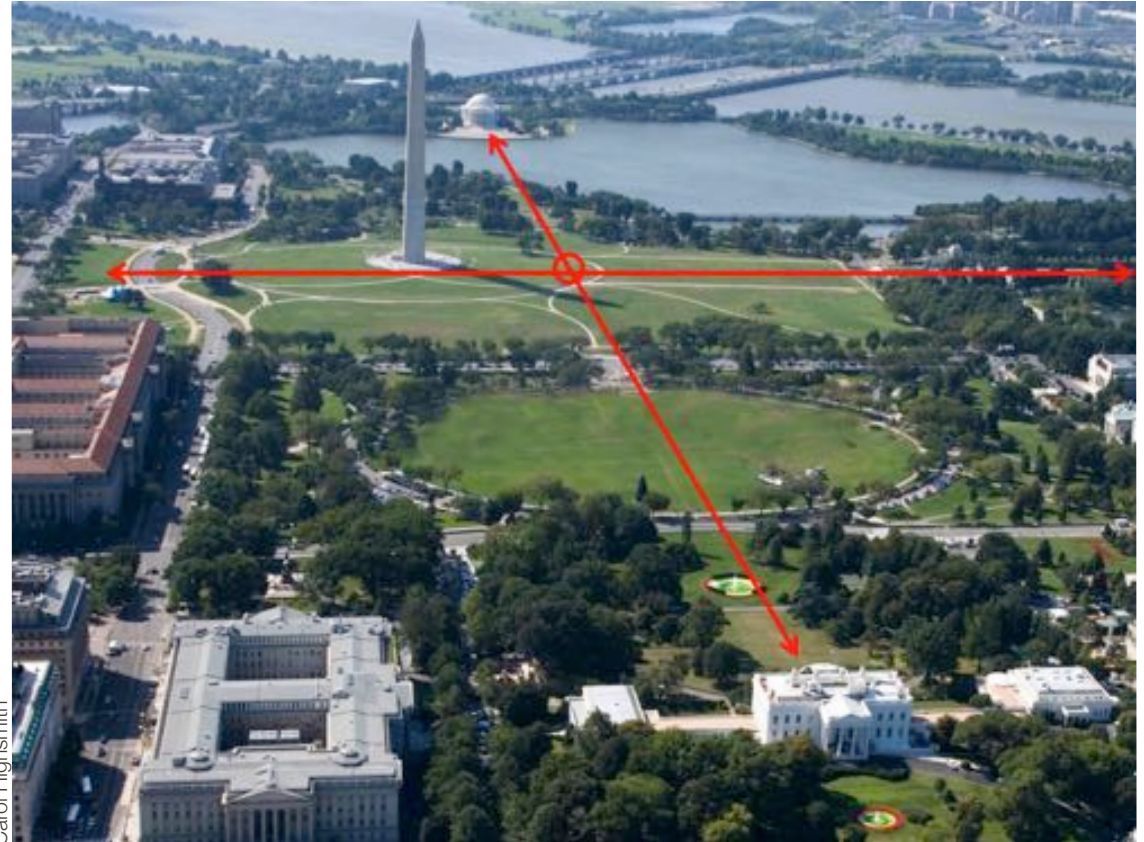
A Place of Grandeur

JUDY SCOTT FELDMAN, PH.D.

Standing at the lonely Jefferson Pier in the vast, treeless expanse of the Washington Monument grounds, a visitor can feel the power of a great idea not yet realized. Views to the White House, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Jefferson Memorial reveal this to be the focal point of the Mall's symbolic cross-axis – where L'Enfant's "Grand Avenue" extending west from the Capitol intersected the public promenade south of the White House. But instead of L'Enfant's equestrian monument marking this powerfully symbolic spot, or the McMillan Commission Plan's grand, round pool set amidst an oasis of shade trees and bubbling fountains, a simple granite block sits in the mud, quarantined behind new security barrier walls. How ironic, but also providential! The legacy of George Washington – L'Enfant's 1791 plan that laid out the capital as a symbol of American democracy – remains unfinished at its very heart. Yet precisely because that plan has not been implemented, we can ponder its significance two centuries later and give the original vision new relevance. The Competition submissions show that the public, given an opportunity to join the conversation, has a wide variety

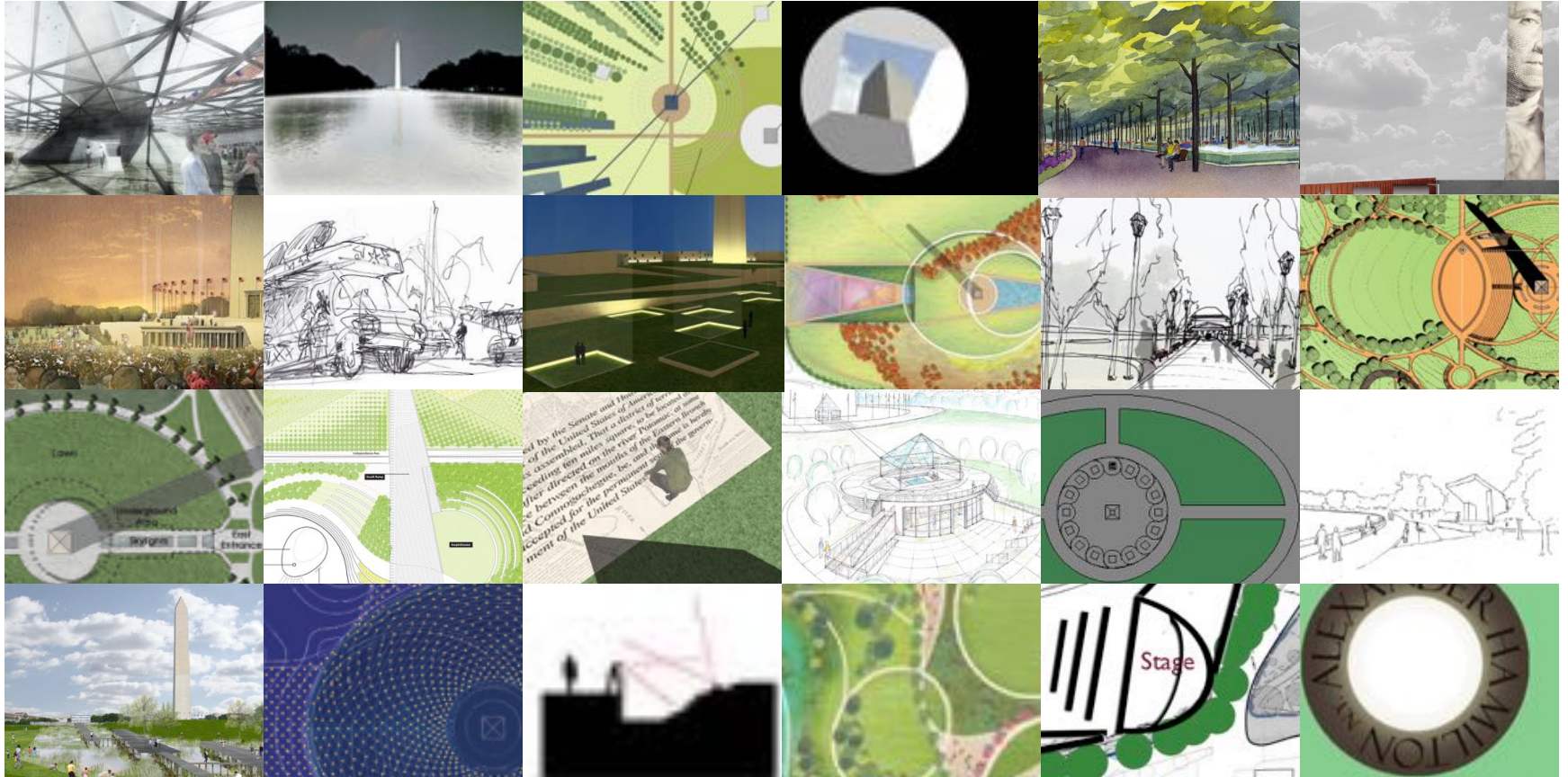
of creative ideas to give new life to this space, and the Mall as a whole, in its modern role as a stage for American democracy.

The granite block known as the Jefferson Pier, marking the focal point of the Mall cross-axis, is evidence of the unrealized quality of the Monument grounds.



Carol Highsmith

Stage Two: Twenty-four Semi-finalists



Juror Perspective

JOY ZINOMAN

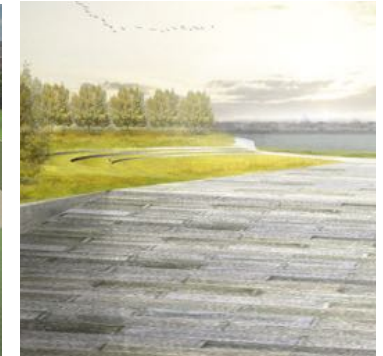
As a theater artist living in Washington, D.C., I view the Mall as a living forum; not only a place of monuments and history, but a living, breathing, gathering space for demonstrations and entertainment, both solemn and exuberant.

I saw the challenge in this competition as mediating between the monumental nature of the obelisk and the human scale; reconciling the grand national image with a connection to the neighborhoods of a revitalizing city. Walking the Monument grounds on an early, icy morning it seemed a wasteland without amenities, the detritus of the old, nearly worthless Sylvan Theater nearby.

As a juror I loved two broad kinds of plans: those that included gathering spaces – particularly sunken amphitheaters – that didn't obstruct the views at public gatherings, indeed enhanced them by breaking up the space and providing some place to sit, and also poetic conceptual plans that used light imaginatively and created pathways allowing us to see the monument freshly both during the day and at night.

Issues of re-identifying the Jefferson Pier, highlighting the axis, respecting past plans, and providing amenities for visitors all require careful thought, but the creativity and freedom of the designs give me hope.

Amphitheaters and performance spaces figured prominently among selected finalists



Leslie Jones

Jurors touring the grounds



Judy Scott Feldman

Sylvan Theater



The Reluctant Juror

BENJAMIN FORGEY

My worry as a juror going into the final round of this competition was that contestants might be encouraged to think that too much change would be a good thing. This also turned out to be my principal concern after the jurying was done. The Washington Monument site does need improvements – in particular modest but high quality visitor amenities, better connections to the water and walkways of the Tidal basin, a total rethinking of the poor old Sylvan Theater and its surround, some thoughtful replanting, better street crossings (or improved street patterns), an off-site location for parking the legions of visiting buses, and nicer, more welcoming edges all around. But it does not need vast underground facilities and reshapings of the kind proposed in many of these final schemes, even those that are elegantly designed. Nor, especially in this age of ever more efficient electronic communications, does the site require a clutter of interpretative materials, above ground or below it. My optimistic hope remains that a public conversation stimulated by this competition will focus attention on the beauty and symbolism of the monument and its grounds, on currently imperfect conditions, and on the legitimate needs of this central, sacred terrain.

Stage Three: Six Winners

Symbol of Togetherness

"Imagine attending a demonstration on the Mall during the day and then returning that night to discover the grounds illuminated like a galaxy of stars - thanks in part to your very footsteps... The beauty of the network of lights links people across time and intention, backgrounds and aspirations, into one enduring yet mutable symbol of togetherness."

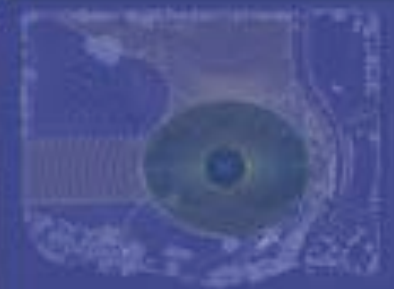
-Catherine Peek

Field of Stars



People moving across a grid of landscaping lights generate piezoelectricity and trigger fragments of historic sound.

At dusk the illumination of each lamp is bright in proportion to the day's foot traffic, symbolic of power that the people wield nationwide.



Light and sound evoke an otherworldly environment.

"Arcs of Shade reforests the edges, walks and large areas of the Washington Monument grounds, keeps both axes open and preserves the Mall's grand design vision. These tree-shaded areas include paved surfaces, benches, low plantings, drinking fountains, bathroom facilities and occasional refreshment stands."

-Stephen Lederach

Reforesting the Edges



A. Mall unified with cascaded cascades, reflecting pool and fountains



B. Uninterrupted pedestrian shade



C. Walks, plazas, seating, underground shade and canopies under tree shade



D. Background visitor center entrance beyond



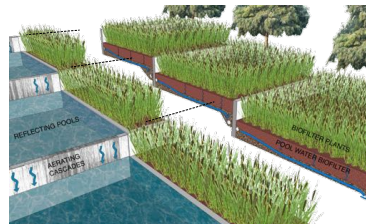
E. Visitors Center with 15th Street recessed, Tiers Riser and enhance views



F. Fountains

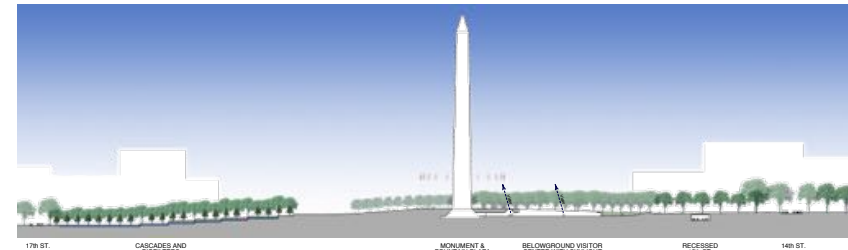
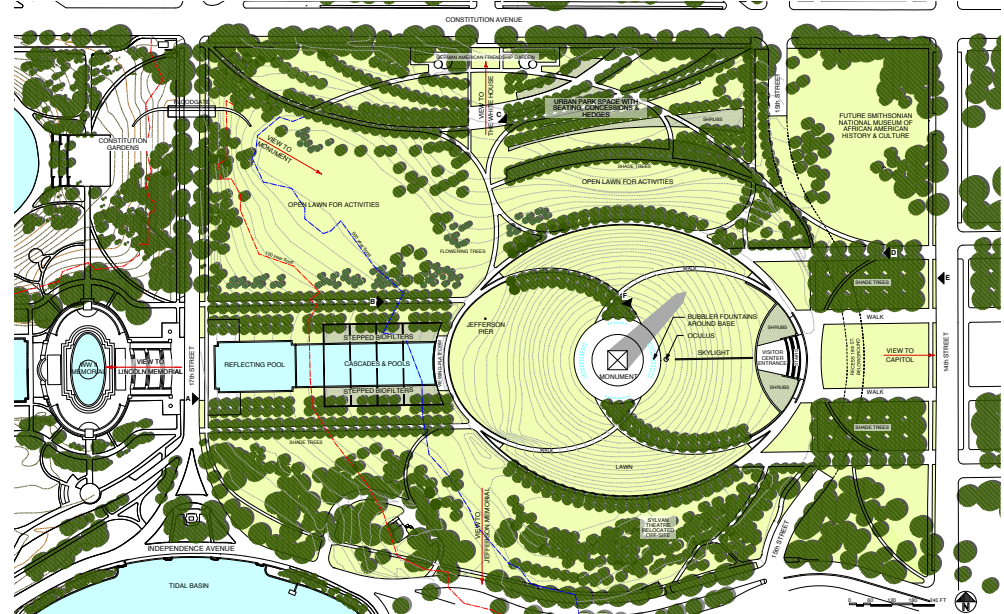


Aerial overlay



Cascades and fountains aerate and filter mineral pool waters

NATIONAL IDEAS COMPETITION - Washington Monument Grounds ARCS OF SHADE



EAST/WEST MALL SECTION

Integrating the Monument and the City

“Why not extend the Mall over the two streets so people could walk to the Monument without having to cross traffic? We realized that our proposal would not only create a great viewing platform for important historic events, but had emerged from deeply embedded cultural practices related to city founding.”

-Julian Hunt, Lucrecia Laudi, Monling Lee and Miguel Angel Maldonado



Circles and Light

"In our proposal, we retain the singular, uncluttered identity of the Washington Monument as the central fixture of the Mall. And we reinforce the circle as the symbol of the United States as one nation...The main design feature in the hall and museum is the interplay of direct and indirect light."

-Jacques Prins, Kevin Battarbee and Egidijus Kasakaitis



-Karolina Kawiaka

A National Gathering Space



A Changing Pathway

"I propose a broad circular pathway that will create new relationships between visitors and the monument, the city and nature as the visitors move around it. Walls, slopes and steps rise and fall along the path, causing visitors to experience the presence of the Monument in different ways at different points."

-Jinwoo Lim



The Conversation Continues: Exhibiting Big Ideas

LAURA B. SCHIAVO, PH.D.

In the world of museums there is some debate about whether the best exhibitions are driven by ideas or objects. That decision is a bit of a foregone conclusion when one is asked to create an exhibition about an ideas competition. And so it was that the team of student curators and designers from The George Washington University Museum Studies program set out in September 2011 to determine how to create an exhibition about the National Ideas Competition, and turn “ideas” into a compelling experience.

Someday in the Park with George opened at the Virginia Center for Architecture on April 12, 2012. A montage of historic images dominates the first gallery, graphically communicating one of the competition’s establishing ideas: the Washington Monument grounds, like the Mall itself, have been under review and redesign for over two centuries. Ideas change, and their expressions are not inevitable. Two large panels of photographs dating from 1909 to 2011 convey another big idea: the meaning of this iconic public place is determined, in part, by those who use it. In the second gallery, amidst large reproductions of competition entries, visitors are invited to vote on their favorites, and pull up a chair at a design table bathed in the light of twelve-foot windows to develop their own ideas.

The message here: the power and possibility of a project like the National Ideas Competition can inspire a diverse public to engage in a conversation about landscape, democracy, history, and civic life. You can’t get much bigger, or more compelling, than that!

Albert H. Small Collection



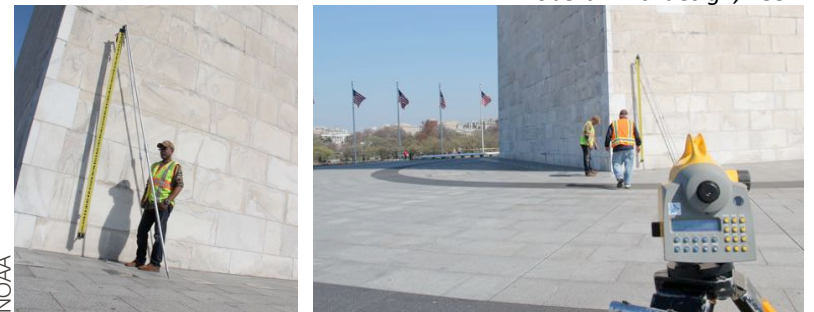
Proposal for World's Fair, 1892

Library of Congress



Robert Mills' design, 1852

NOAA



Assessing earthquake damage, 2012

Credits

Steering Committee

James P. Clark, FAIA, *Chair*
Adele N. Ashkar, ASLA, *Vice Chair*
Ellen Goldstein, *Executive Director*
Kay Murphy, *Project Coordinator*
Lisa Benton-Short, Ph.D. (*Geography*)
Kenneth R. Bowling, Ph.D. (*History*)
W. Kent Cooper, FAIA (*Architecture*)
Judy Scott Feldman, Ph.D. (*History of the National Mall*)
Richard Longstreth, Ph.D. (*American Studies*)

Stage 1 Jury

Raymond Gastil, AICP, *Chair*
David Hackett Fischer, Ph.D., *Historian*
Kathryn Gustafson, ASLA, *Landscape Architect*
Sara Hart, *Architectural Writer*
Mitchell Joachim, Ph.D., *Futurist*
Kirk Savage, Ph.D., *Art Historian*
Joy Zinoman, *Founding Artistic Director, The Studio Theatre*

Stage 2 Jury

Gregory K. Hunt, FAIA, *Chair*
David Hackett Fischer, Ph.D., *Historian*
Benjamin Forgey, *Journalist*
Eric D. Groft, ASLA, *Landscape Architect*
Joy Zinoman, *Founding Artistic Director, The Studio Theatre*

The National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds was made possible through the generous support of the following organizations and individuals.

Lead Sponsors

The George Washington University
Learning Times
Albert H. Small
Virginia Center for Architecture
Virginia Society AIA

Sponsors and Supporters

American University
Anonymous
The Catholic University of America
Howard University
National Cathedral School
National Coalition to Save Our Mall
St. Albans School
University of Delaware
University of Maryland
The University of Texas at Austin
Van Alen Institute
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech)

George Washington University Interns

Leslie Jones
Sarah Siegel

Someday in the Park with George was developed and created by George Washington University Museum Studies graduate students under the direction of Assistant Professor Laura B. Schiavo, Ph.D.

Exhibition Team

Anna Forgeron
Sarah Fuller
Sarah Glass
Mara Kurlandsky
Devora Liss
Meghan Medwid
Vanessa Nagengast
Amanda Rush
Hilary-Morgan Watt

Exhibition Production

Keith Fabry Reprographic Solutions, Richmond, Virginia

Poster Design

Rhea George

Special Thanks to the Virginia Center for Architecture, Richmond Virginia

Editors

Adele N. Ashkar, ASLA
Lisa Benton-Short, Ph.D.

In 2010, a small group of individuals, university professors, historians, architects and designers began planning for the National Ideas Competition for the Washington Monument Grounds, in the hope of starting a national conversation about this highly symbolic civic space. The Steering Committee could not have imagined at the time that the Competition would engage participants of all ages from around the world. Throughout the process the Competition has continued to gain momentum and support. It has received glowing press in *The Washington Post* as well as architectural and landscape design media, and sparked numerous design competitions for other parts of the National Mall.

The website www.wamocompetition.org continues to serve as an educational resource for students, educators and citizens of all ages. Please visit this website for more information about the history and development of the Washington Monument and the National Mall.