

SPUR GOES TO WASHINGTON D.C.

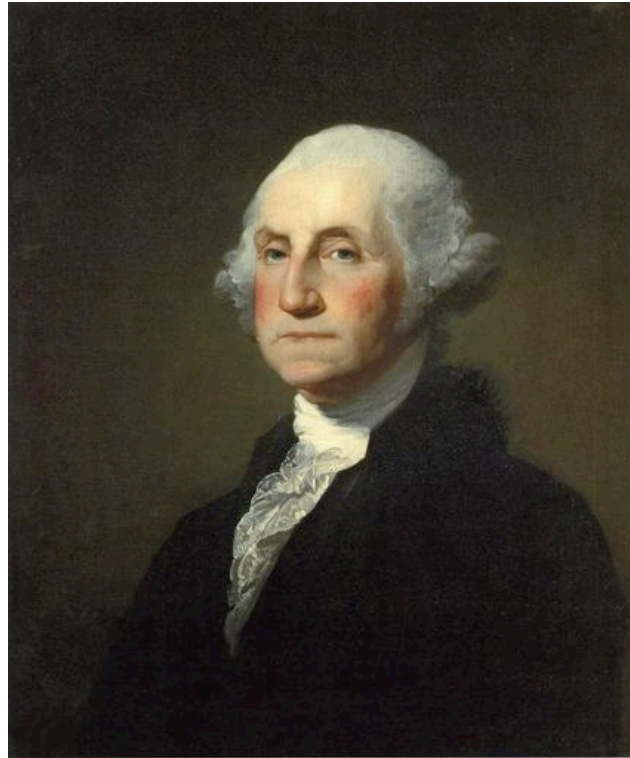
Rod Freebairn-Smith, *Architect, Urban Planner*
SPUR Advisory Council
Principal, Freebairn-Smith & Crane, San Francisco



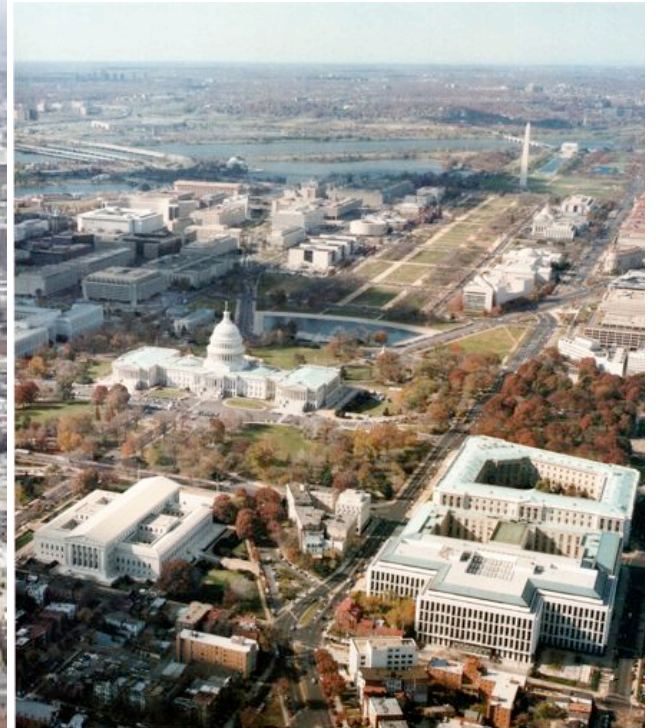
*A sample of images
and ideas, much
abbreviated for
today's
short workshop
program.*



SPUR's crash course reviewed certain of Washington D.C's 300 years of urban planning; from current efforts to protect the citizens, to protect the nation's monuments, to benefits from forward looking transportation plans, back even to G. Washington's one hundred square mile national capital.



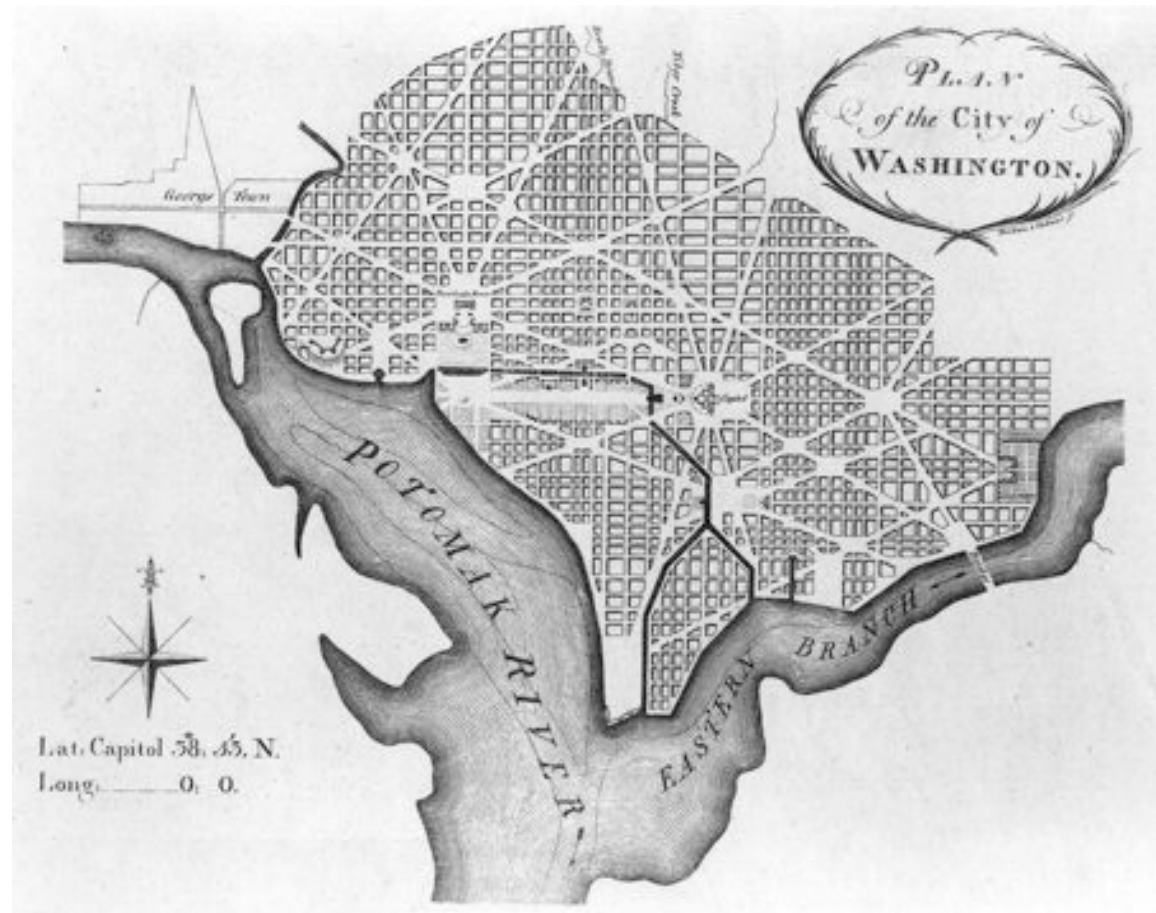
*At the close today,
we could discuss
two or three of the
broad planning
sessions convened
for SPUR, during the
superbly organized
multi-agency
Washington visit.*



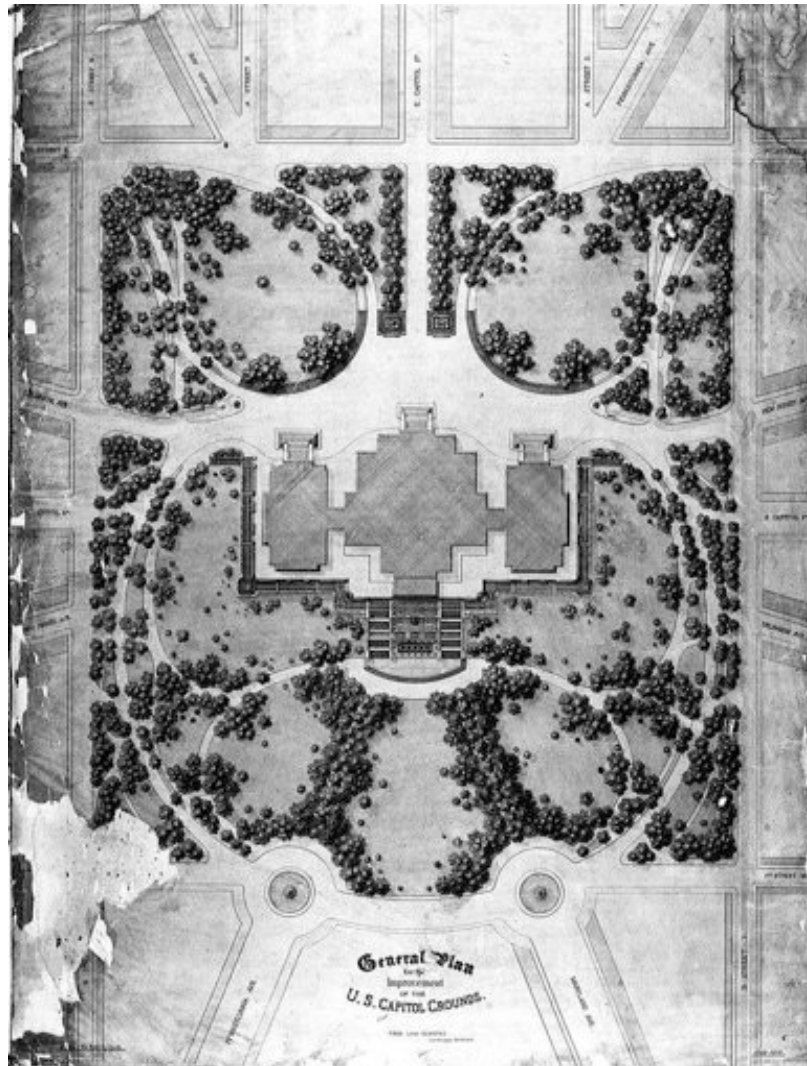
First, a short refresher, some images focused on the Capital's core structure, on its boulevard and open space armature. Sited by Washington the surveyor himself, given early form by L'Enfant, later by the McMillan Commission and by Frederick Law Olmstead and colleagues, and later again by others, including the Pennsylvania Avenue Commission. The city continues today under multiple planning agencies assisted, on important occasions, by Northern California designers including Arthur Brown, Lawrence Halprin and ROMA Associates.



**Here is the vision
Pierre Charles
L'Enfant saw in 1791,
and discussed with
Washington,
Jefferson, others.**



*Here, the plan vision
Olmstead drew,
setting the Capitol
Building on a
reduced Capitol Hill.*



***National Capital
Planning
Commission's
frequently updated
model of the
Federal District,
reviewed at their
headquarters.***

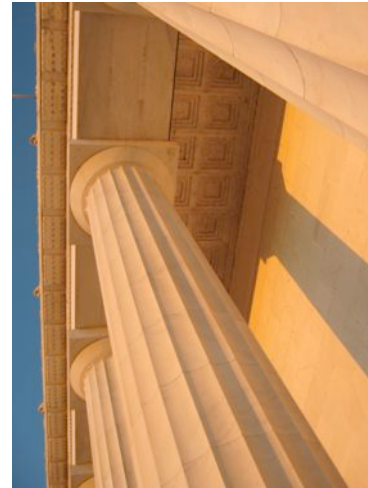


***Fear of losing
L'Enfant's and the
McMillan
Committee's grand
two mile open lawn
to special interest
monuments,
conservationists
have saved the lawn
decade after
decade.***





General Meade, victory, Gettysburg



Refined praise for Lincoln



A recent loss told



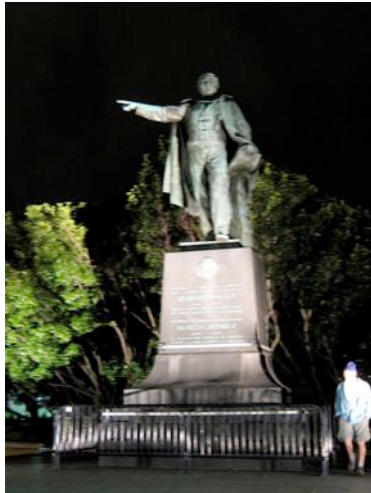
Building Museum's Park Bench



"Pre-digital" memorial



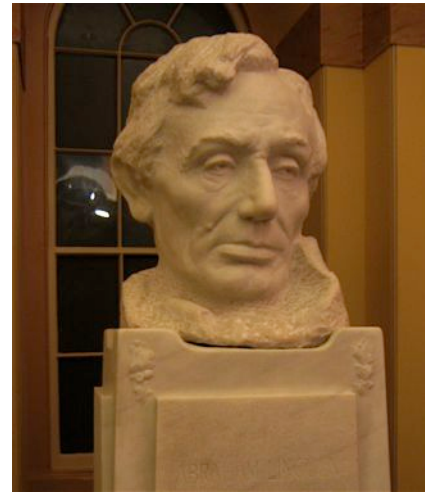
Fallen police, firemen: 50 states



Lafayette in his Square



Men of Building



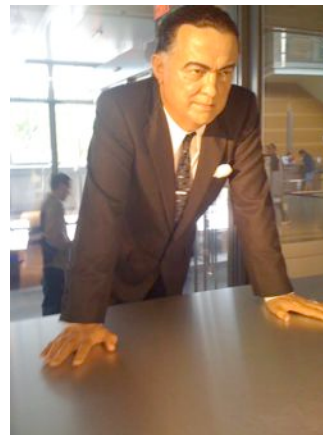
A Woman's Portrait



Mall Street Light



Festival Gate in the Downtown

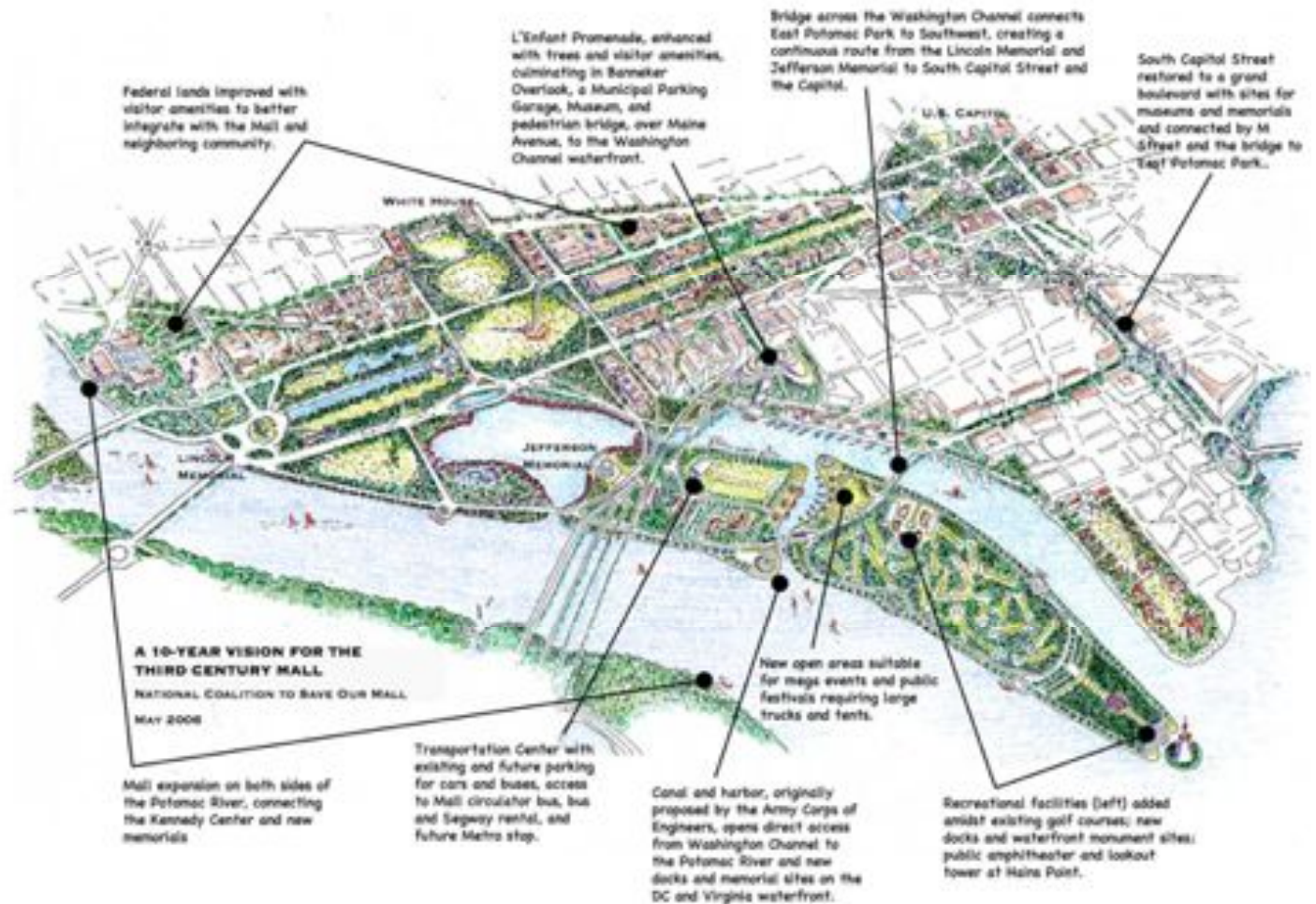


A wax Hoover glares



60' Animated digital memorial

Here, a more recent “Ten Year Vision” of the great central core, one by the “National Coalition to Save Our Mall”, providing us a quick review of the principal urban design elements composing the Capital’s central core.



***The Eastern terminus
of the National Mall:
the Capitol with the
1960 extension
of the East front by J.
George Stewart,
Architect.***



***The Capitol's steep
West façade, famous
for inaugurations;
most recently for the
Obama ceremony...
and yes, we were
told Yo Yo Ma
was synching with a
recorded cello part
due to the chilling
temperatures.
Truck bombers are
presumed deterred
by these fortress
staircases.***



**Near the National
Mall's center: 555'-5"
tall Washington
Memorial by
Architect Robert
Mills. Construction
from 1847-1876. Not
the equestrian
version its honoree
may have hoped for.
An Egyptian
Cenotaph, it is a
tomb without a body
(reportedly at the
request of Mrs.
Washington.)**



***The Mall's refined
Western terminus:
Lincoln Memorial by
Henry Bacon,
architect, in 1922.***



Along Constitution Avenue, forming the wall of the National Mall: the appropriately scaled Mellon Auditorium in the EPA's six acre building by beaux arts trained and San Francisco architect Arthur Brown Jr., 1935.



Connecting major departments of our government on both sides of the Mall, across rivers, and into neighborhoods far beyond in Virginia and Maryland, a full compliment of all modes of urban transportation now exists in the Capital. How can private auto use be further reduced?





A wide variety of transportation exists, some experimental.



In the Metro: trains, ticket dispensers, system designs very much like BART. Vaulted, monumental, advertising-free, well-mapped, graffiti-less, dramatically and indirectly lit stations quite unlike BART.



SPUR visitors saw additions to the Mall and to the Memorial Parks, such as the Korean War Memorial, by Frank Gaylord, new in 1995.

United Nations soldiers from 22 nations contributed the lives of 628,000 soldiers, 12 times a similarly grim American toll at 54,000.





Two portions of the 7 acre FDR Memorial, 1997. Lawrence Halprin, Leonard Baskin, George Segal, and others.

SPUR visitors did notice throughout the downtown and federal area, significant changes following 9-11; especially Homeland Security's response to truck bomber protection for the Capital's buildings and the fortification of certain monuments,



Lucca, in Tuscany:
Fortification of cities
is an old story.
Protections become
obsolete as
weapons change.
Massive human
effort and barely
sustainable public
expenditures relative
to the local
economy were, and
are, still made.
Some fortifications
can later convert to
community use, as in
Lucca's case, and as
in San Francisco's
Presidio.





Fortification of Washington D.C., particularly for this Presidency, could not be of greater concern to city and security officials. Retracting piston bollards at the White House are shown above. The Capital includes memorials to fallen U.S. leaders and to Presidents assassinated. Yet the White House recently saw two uninvited guests enter and shake the President's hand after passing the guard shack above on the right.

**Ground level
truck bombing
barriers
increase
annually,
city-wide
in Washington
D.C.**



At the Capitol Building



At the Supreme Court



At the Washington Monument

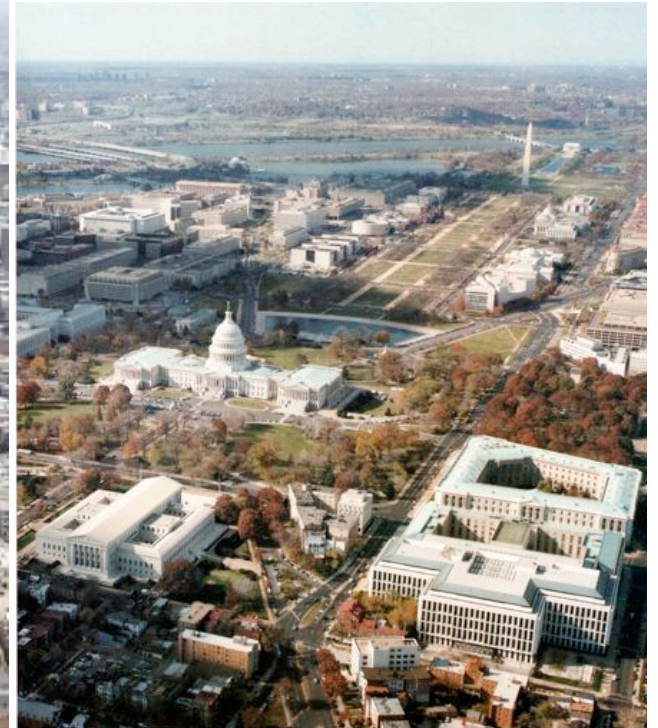


At the Museum of Natural History

***New site of
Department of
Homeland Security's
consolidation.
Variously reported at
\$4 to \$7 billion
dollars of
construction above,
it is to be equal in
area to the
Pentagon. U.S.
citizens are building
another layer of
domestic police who
now receive over
\$50 billion in yearly
allocations and will
have \$2.7 billion in
stimulus funds.***



***Closing this review,
from a San Francisco
perspective, many
benefits rise from
SPUR's investigation
of so many
successful urban
programs in the
federal Capital and
in other cities.
For an example,
three of many study
points follow:***



1. Save urban beauty and significant history at every opportunity. Be careful that radical conservation of unimportant material may force mediocre urban design, and subvert larger and more important citizen and economic needs. For example old shells just one room deep, veneered to facades that mimic materials and building technologies from a bygone era, is clearly risky urban design. Expressive more of cultural confusion than of harmony with the past, this larger building appears to stomp the older delicate façade. The urban core is the major economic engine for a far larger surrounding city and needs careful, full development. Mixed-use development increases the density and economic health of our city cores, just as it has on Pennsylvania Avenue.





2. In terms of terrorists and ground level assaults, we San Franciscans must continue to improve protection for pedestrians at our most important sites just as Washington is doing. Two areas extremely difficult to protect from ground level explosions above: Fisherman's Wharf and Union Square. We need more work on those and on other major public gathering places.

3. The great green armatures of public open spaces and boulevard connections in our own city, just as in Washington D.C., are as fundamental to our realizing “city beautiful” objectives as they are for increasing liveability and economic stability.

