

58
City Planning in

WASHINGTON, D.C.

1790 - 1958

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2

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HISTORY OF CITY PLANNING
IN WASHINGTON, D. C.

PRESENTED AT THE COURSE ON
CITY AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING
WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Innumerable forces extending over the span of a century and a half have contributed to the planning and development of Washington. To identify and discuss all of these is well-nigh impossible. The earliest, most significant and the most fortunate was, of course, the magnificent design prepared by Major L'Enfant at the time of the selection of this site as the future capital city. Altogether, there have been eight broad plans, as follows:

- I The L'Enfant Plan of 1791
- II The Highway Commission Plan 1893-1898
- III The McMillan Commission Plan 1901
- IV The Zoning Plan 1920
- V The National Capital Park and Planning Commission Plan 1930
- VI The National Capital Park and Planning Commission Plan 1950
- VII The Revised Zoning Plan 1958
- VIII The Regional Planning Council Plan 1958

These have been the major milestones in the endeavor to create a well-planned capital city. There have been innumerable plans also for individual improvements, plazas, parks and parkways. No plan is ever successfully completed, however, because cities grow and expand, conditions change, new technological devices demand new measures and adjustments.

Each of these planning milestones will be discussed from the standpoint of their influence upon the city's present design, their significant shortcomings as well as some of the failures to carry out the basic concepts.

The preparation of this paper has been immeasurably aided by the considerable volume of material found in certain publications that represent vast study and research. Of special significance is Dr. H. Paul Caemmerer's "A Manual on the Origin and Development of Washington",^{1/} from which liberal quotations will be made, also William T. Partridge's "L'Enfant's Methods and Features of His Plan for the Federal City",^{2/} and others for which I wish to make appreciative acknowledgement.

The question of establishing a permanent Seat of Government arose in the Continental Congress in November 1779. The matter was discussed intermittently for ten years. In September 1783 a committee, of which James Madison was chairman, reported that a federal district of not less than three nor more than six square miles should

1. Caemmerer, H. Paul, A Manual on the Origin and Development of Washington, U. S. Govt. Printing Office 1939
2. Partridge, William T., "L'Enfant's Methods and Features of His Plan for the Federal City" Reports and Plans Washington Region, National Capital Park & Planning Commission, U. S. Govt. Printing Office 1930

be selected, and that Congress should exercise exclusive jurisdiction therein. No final action was taken on this report.

From time to time numerous suggestions were made for selection of a site in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia. Eventually the decision came down to a choice of one of two locations, that is, near the falls of the Susquehanna, at Wrights Ferry, Pennsylvania, 35 miles from tidewater, or at the head of navigation on the Potomac near Georgetown. These two locations were preferred because of the desire to be on a navigable stream sufficiently distant from the sea to be reasonably free from attack, and simultaneously to have the advantage of easy means of access to the west. As would be expected, representatives in Congress from the northern states favored the former location, while southern representatives favored the latter location, especially because of its virtual central location in the area embraced within the boundaries of the thirteen colonies.

The final decision is understood to have been the result of a compromise growing out of the political maneuvering to obtain votes in the great controversy over support of the funding bill which provided for federal assumption of states' debts incurred during the Revolutionary War.

The "Act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the Government of the United States"^{3/} became law on July 16, 1790. It provided:

"Section 1. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That a district or territory, not exceeding ten miles square, to be located as hereafter directed on the river Potomac, at some place between the mouths of the Eastern Branch and Connogochegue, be, and the same is hereby, accepted for the permanent seat of the government of the United States. Provided nevertheless, That the operation of the laws of the state within such district shall not be affected by this acceptance, until the time fixed for the removal of the government thereto, and until Congress shall otherwise by law provide.

"Section 2. And be it further enacted, That the President of the United States be authorized to appoint, and by supplying vacancies happening from refusals to act or other causes, to keep in appointment as long as may be necessary, three commissioners, who, or any two of whom, shall, under the direction of the President, survey, and by proper metes and bounds define and limit a district or territory, under the limitations above mentioned; and the district so defined, limited and located, shall be deemed the district accepted by this act, for the permanent seat of the government of the United States.

"Section 3. And be it further enacted, That the said commissioners, or any two of them, shall have power to purchase or accept such quantity of land on the eastern side of the said river, within the said district, as the President shall approve, the said commissioners, or any two of them, shall, prior to the first Monday in December, in the year one thousand eight hundred, provide suitable buildings for the accommodation of Congress, and of the President, and for the public offices of the government of the United States.

"Section 4. And be it further enacted; That for defraying the expense of such purchases and buildings, the President of the United States be authorized and requested to accept grants of money.

"Section 5. And be it further enacted, That prior to the first Monday in December next, all offices attached to the seat of the government of the United States, shall be removed to, and until the said first Monday in December, in the year one thousand eight hundred, shall remain at the city of Philadelphia, in the state of Pennsylvania, at which place the session of Congress next ensuing the present shall be held.

"Section 6. And be it further enacted, That on the said first Monday in December, in the year one thousand eight hundred, the seat of the government of the United States, shall, by virtue of this act, be transferred to the district and place aforesaid. And all offices attached to the said seat of government, shall accordingly be removed thereto by their respective holders, and shall, after the said day, cease to be exercised elsewhere; and that the necessary expense of such removal shall be defrayed out of the duties on imposts and tonnage, of which a sufficient sum is hereby appropriated. "

Following a survey of the proposed site the previous act of Congress was amended^{4/} (March 3, 1791) as follows:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That so much of the act, entitled 'An act for establishing the temporary and permanent seat of the government of the United States,' as requires that the whole of the district or territory, not exceeding ten miles square, to be located on the river Potomac, for the permanent seat of the government of the United States, shall be located above the mouth of the Eastern Branch be and is hereby repealed, and that it shall be lawful for the President to make any part of the territory below the said limit, and above the

mouth of Hunting Creek, a part of the said district, so as to include a convenient part of the Eastern Branch, and of the lands lying on the lower side thereof and also the town of Alexandria, and the territory so to be included, shall form a part of the district not exceeding ten miles square, for the permanent seat of the government of the United States, in like manner and to all intents and purposes, as if the same had been within the purview of the above recited act: Provided, That nothing herein contained, shall authorize the erection of public buildings otherwise than on the Maryland side of the river Potomac, as required by the aforesaid act. "

The particular significance of these acts so far as the planning of Washington is concerned is the power reposed in President Washington in determining the specific location of the city and to approve the land to be acquired for the use of the United States, as well as to approve plans. In his exercise of this power President Washington exerted a strong influence upon the design of the future capital city. Thomas Jefferson, as Secretary of State, also took special interest in the preparation of plans and their early effectuation.

Even though the amendment of March 3, 1791, permitted the new capital city to include within its boundaries the existing town of Alexandria, note particularly the fact that all Federal buildings were to be constructed on the east side of the Potomac.

Having fixed the city's boundaries, it became necessary to acquire the needed lands. Since no funds had been provided for

this purpose by Congress, for the very good reason that it had no funds, what followed was an agreement with the land owners that is nothing short of pure genius. In brief, it was agreed that the land owners should "convey to the United States Government, free of cost, such portions of their farms as were needed for streets, parks and other public reservations, to sell such land as was needed for Government buildings and public improvements at £ 25 per acre (about \$67), the remaining land to be laid out in building lots and apportioned equally between the Federal Government and the original land owners.

Rufus R. Wilson, in "Washington, the Capital City",^{5/} says:

"In this way, without advancing a dollar and at a total cost of \$36,000, the Government acquired a tract of 600 acres in the heart of the city. The 10,136 building lots assigned to it ultimately proved to be worth \$850,000, and now represent a value of \$70,000,000. Shrewd financier as he was, it is doubtful if George Washington ever made another so good a bargain as that with Burnes and his neighbors. ***

"The land which was being considered for the city proper consisted of about 6,000 acres. In laying out the streets, 3,606 acres were taken, and about 540 acres were bought by the United States as sites for the public buildings and grounds. The lots laid out numbered 20,272. Of these the United States took half and the property owners were given back the remainder. The United States sold its share of the lots from the proceeds paid for the 540 acres on which it was to put the public buildings.

5. Wilson, Rufus R., Washington, the Capital City, Vol. 1, page 20, Phila., J. B. Lippincott Co., 1902

"The United States also took a fee-simple title to the streets and avenues. ***"

Thus, the framework for planning the capital city was set and impressed upon the land.

I. THE L'ENFANT PLAN - 1791

Pierre Charles L'Enfant came from a family of artistic talent, his father having been a painter in the Royal service and a member of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture. The son, with the rank of Lieutenant, came to this country in 1777 with a company of French officers who had volunteered for service with the American forces. Although but 23 years of age, he became a captain of engineers in the American Army in 1778 and, after several years of intensive service, he was made a major in 1783. While in the army he made portrait drawings of leading figures, including one of Washington at Valley Forge, decorated ballrooms and many buildings.^{6/}

He remodeled the New York City Hall to house the Congress which convened in that city in 1789 and there Washington took the oath of office as first President of the United States. When discussion in

6. Caemmerer, H. Paul, A Manual on the Origin and Development of Washington, U.S. Govt. Printing Office, 1939; and The Life of Pierre Charles L'Enfant, Washington, D. C., National Republic Publishing Co., 1950

Congress indicated that the Capital City would be authorized, L'Enfant became interested and wrote General Washington seeking employment as the planner. Because of his known and previously demonstrated talent Washington was sympathetic and L'Enfant was employed sometime after the first of the year in 1791. He arrived in Georgetown on March 9 of that year where Andrew Ellicott was already at work on a survey of the boundaries of the district.

L'Enfant's Plan, in the form of a progress map and a report, was presented to President Washington on June 22, 1791. A subsequent drawing prepared for engraving was submitted to the President in August 1791. President Washington submitted the plan to Congress in December 1791. The plan was broad in scale befitting a great capital city but extraordinarily bold considering the unusually primitive conditions.

Features of the L'Enfant Plan

As you are well aware, the site for the two principal buildings, the Capitol and the President's House were chosen because of their elevation and outlook. The Great Walk (which we now know as the Mall) was to provide an uninterrupted view westward from the Capitol to the Potomac and likewise the park for the President's House looking south. This concept, based on topographical

conditions and logical site planning was then supplemented by a rectangular street pattern to which was added a number of broad diagonal avenues, suggested in part by existing roads or trails, notably that from Georgetown to the ferry on the Anacostia, on the approximate line of what is now Massachusetts Avenue. These avenues gave unusual character and distinction to the plan, not merely providing directness of access and connecting major building sites, but affording what L'Enfant called reciprocity of sight.

Among the more important features of the L'Enfant Plan are:

1. The Great Walk or Mall extending westward from the Capitol to the Potomac.
2. An equestrienne statue of General Washington at the intersection of the axis from the Capitol and that from the President's Palace (White House).
3. Prominent bridge heads and plazas at the entrances to the city.
4. Plazas, squares or circles at prominent street intersections and other important points. The squares were to be named after the various states.

5. A Naval Memorial column at the waterfront on what is now Washington channel.
6. Five grand fountains, the principal one a grand cascade at the base of the hill on the west side of the Capitol.
7. A bridge over the Potomac above Georgetown at "Two Sisters" - currently referred to as "Three Sisters".
8. Sites for numerous public buildings, including markets, a national church, an opera house etc.

Likewise you are familiar with the unique differentiation in street widths, 160 feet for the "grand traverse avenues", 130 feet for the important thoroughfares "leading to public buildings and markets" and 90 or 110 feet for other streets.

A map in the report by Mr. Partridge shows features of the L'Enfant Plan that have been lost or abandoned.

"Mr. Milton B. Medary suggested a comparison of the present plan of Washington with that of the original layout by Major L'Enfant with the idea of restoring or reinstating any of the neglected or forgotten features of the original. To that end a careful comparison has been made and those features of L'Enfant not already carried out have been noted and are shown on the accompanying plan.

"The Washington Monument replaces L'Enfant's proposed

equestrian statue, as we all know. The long-neglected Mall has been redesigned along the lines suggested by the McMillan Commission of 1901.

"The minor features of city entrances or 'outroads', as he calls them, and his scheme for fountains and public squares have been lost sight of in subsequent developments."

Time does not here permit of further description and discussion of this extraordinary design plan. Of special significance, for example, are the very interesting marginal notes and comments shown on the L'Enfant Plan which should be read to gain a full understanding of the design. Certainly it was a magnificent concept skillfully arranged, and with the finest possible adjustment to the contour of the land and the huge scale of the site.

Major L'Enfant, in his zeal to see that his plan was fully respected and enforced, soon became embroiled in several difficulties. Being of a temperamental nature and lacking authority to enforce the plan as he thought it should be enforced, a crisis was soon precipitated with the Commissioners appointed by the President according to the Act of Congress creating the District. Both President Washington and the Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson were considerate and quite loathe to lose Major L'Enfant's services but, as his difficulties

7. Reports and Plans, Washington Region, National Capital Park and Planning Commission, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1930, page 35.

with the Commissioners continued, they regretfully found it necessary to dispense with his services. This was done by letter of Thomas Jefferson in March 1792. Since it was urgent that the plan be carried forward, the necessary work was entrusted to Andrew Ellicott, engineer and surveyor, who was already employed in making the official survey and setting boundary markers. Mr. Ellicott prepared a new plan quite similar to that of Major L'Enfant but with certain revisions and adjustments which did not appreciably alter the basic concept or features of the L'Enfant Plan. In fact, it was most fortunate that a man of Ellicott's ability and sympathetic understanding was available at the crucial time when needed to carry on without doing violence to the L'Enfant concept.

What is known as the Ellicott Plan, prepared in 1792, was generally accepted. Comparison of plans shows the major changes made, the most important being the straightening of Massachusetts Avenue and some changes in design of plazas at certain intersections. L'Enfant protested the changes but later admitted they did not alter his basic design appreciably.

It is hardly possible for us now to imagine the difficulties encountered in attempting to bring the L'Enfant Plan into reality. Even today it would be an extraordinarily bold city planner who would

design a city for several hundred thousand people in a virtual wilderness. To give some idea of the magnitude of the concept and of the undertaking it is particularly interesting to read the following, which is taken from Albert J. Beveridge's "Life of John Marshall" (Vol. III, pp. 1-4):

"A strange sight met the eye of the traveler who, aboard one of the little river sailboats of the time, reached the stretches of the sleepy Potomac separating Alexandria and Georgetown. A wide swamp extended inland from a modest hill on the east to a still lower elevation of land about a mile to the west. Between the river and morass a long flat tract bore clumps of great trees, mostly tulip poplars, giving, when seen from a distance, the appearance of a fine park.

"Upon the hill stood a partly constructed white stone building, mammoth in plan. The slight elevation north of the wide slough was the site of an apparently finished edifice of the same material, noble in its dimensions and with beautiful, simple lines, but 'surrounded with a rough rail fence 5 or 6 feet high unfit for a decent barnyard.' From the river nothing could be seen beyond the groves near the banks of the stream except the two great buildings and the splendid trees which thickened into a seemingly dense forest upon the higher ground to the northward.

"On landing and making one's way through the underbrush to the foot of the eastern hill, and up the gullies that seamed its sides thick with trees and tangled with grapevines, one finally reached the immense unfinished structure that attracted attention from the river. Upon its walls laborers were languidly at work.

"Clustered around it were fifteen or sixteen wooden houses. Seven or eight of these were boarding-houses, each having as many as ten or a dozen rooms all told. The others were little affairs of rough lumber, some of them hardly better than shanties. One was a tailor shop; in another a shoemaker plied his trade; a third contained a printer with his hand press and

types, while a washerwoman occupied another; and in the others were a grocery shop, a pamphlets-and-stationery shop, a little dry-goods shop and an oyster shop. No other human habitation of any kind appeared for three-quarters of a mile.

"A broad and perfectly straight clearing had been made across the swamp between the eastern hill and the big white house more than a mile away to the westward. In the middle of this long opening ran a roadway, full of stumps, broken by deep mud holes in the rainy season, and almost equally deep with dust when the days were dry. On either border was a path or 'wal' made firm at places by pieces of stone; though even this extended but a little way. Alder bushes grew in the unused spaces of this thoroughfare (the present notable Pennsylvania Avenue), and in the depressions stagnant water stood in malarial pools, breeding myriads of mosquitoes. A sluggish stream meandered across this avenue and broadened into the marsh.

"A few small houses, some of brick and some of wood, stood on the edge of this long, broad street. Near the large stone building at its western end were four or five structures of red brick looking much like ungainly warehouses. Farther westward on the Potomac hills was a small but pretentious town with its many capacious brick and stone residences, some of them excellent in their architecture and erected solidly by skilled workmen.

"Other openings in the forest had been cut at various places in the wide area east of the main highway that connected the two principal structures already described. Along these forest avenues were scattered houses of various materials ***. Such was the City of Washington, with Georgetown nearby, when Thomas Jefferson became President and John Marshall Chief Justice of the United States - the Capitol, Pennsylvania Avenue, the 'Executive Mansion' or 'President's Palace', the department buildings near it, the residences, shops, hostelries, and streets."^{8/}

8. Beveridge, Albert J., Life of John Marshall, Vol. III, pp. 1-4, Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919

"As is noticed by reference to the plans a canal extended from the point about where the Lincoln Memorial is located, along B Street, now Constitution Avenue, east to the Capitol; thence along James Creek, known today as Canal Street. In those days Pennsylvania Avenue was a dusty road, lined with poplar trees, and often so flooded that it was not an uncommon sight to see boats floating on it. For a long time an isolated group of buildings known as the Six Buildings at Twenty-first Street and Pennsylvania Avenue stood halfway between the Capitol and Georgetown.

"Newspapers in New York, Philadelphia and New England and satirists everywhere cracked many amusing jokes at the expense of the embryonic city.

"The Capitol was called 'the place in the wilderness' and Pennsylvania Avenue 'the great Serbonian Bog'. Georgetown was declared 'a city of houses without streets' and Washington 'a city of streets without houses'.

"During the administrations of Adams and Jefferson the city improved considerably. Jefferson secured money from Congress for public buildings. In 1803 he appointed Benjamin Latrobe as the Architect of the Capitol, and by him the construction of the Capitol was carried on so energetically that he gave form to the old portion of the Capitol that Thornton had simply planned.

"Thomas Jefferson also secured money from Congress for the improvement of Pennsylvania Avenue, which was then a dusty highway in the summer and a swampy place in winter; planted poplar trees and did what he could to redeem that thoroughfare from its lamentable condition. He applied his artistic taste and skill to the work of beautifying the city."⁹

A Century of Neglect

The XIXth Century was marked more by losses and mistakes

9. Caemmerer, H. Paul, A Manual on the Origin and Development of Washington, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1939, page 35.

rather than significant achievements in carrying out the L'Enfant Plan. Among these were:

1. The East Plaza of the Capitol was not carried out as planned by L'Enfant.
2. The Library of Congress was placed so as to block Pennsylvania Avenue to the northeast of the Capitol.
3. The placement of the Treasury Building in such manner as to interrupt the view of the White House (President's House) from the Capitol.
4. Retrocession of one third of the District of Columbia to Virginia. There was some justification for this. No public buildings were permitted. There were no benefits. The area lacked improvements. The residents felt that they had lost citizenship.
5. Railroad tracks and a station were built on the Mall during the brief period of local government (1874-78).
6. Loss of certain areas and sites for public buildings, small parks, fountains and monuments that

were important features of the L'Enfant Plan.

The Civil War, of course, had a profound influence on the city which, in 1860, had a population of but 61,000. By the early part of 1862 some 262,000 troops were encamped on both sides of the river, with some 30,000 more in hospitals. The fact that such a large additional population could be accommodated gave ~~some evidence of the ability of the city to absorb growth and to expand without abnormal difficulty or marked change.~~

In 1871 Congress enacted legislation providing for a local or territorial form of government with a governor appointed by the President.^{10/} This lasted until 1874 when financial difficulties forced Congress to end this form of government. In June 1874 Congress transferred local authority to three temporary Commissioners to wind up the affairs of the territorial government and to administer the city until a permanent system of government was devised. In 1878 the Commission form of government was made permanent. The most notable achievement during this long century of relatively slow growth was the work of Governor Shepherd, popularly known as Boss Shepherd, a member of the Board of Public Works and later Territorial Governor. His undertakings included paving many streets,

10. 16 U. S. Statutes at Large 419 (Feb. 21, 1871)

building sidewalks, installing street lighting with gas lamps, the filling of Tiber Creek, the construction of sewers, and improvement of the parks. At this time also a special Park Commission was appointed, among the endeavors of which were the planting of some 60,000 trees that have added so much to the beauty of Washington. All of this resulted in a virtual transformation of the struggling ragged community which was just recovering from the effects of war and the large army encampments.

II. HIGHWAY COMMISSION PLAN - 1893-1898

Following the Civil War, growth began to take place beyond Florida Avenue outside the boundaries shown in the L'Enfant Plan. This became a most serious matter since there were no plans or guide lines to control development in this outside area. Subdivisions were laid out at the whim of land developers. This accounts for numerous instances of inadequate or improper adjustment of streets found in certain areas today.

Recognizing the need for control in these outside areas, Congress in 1893 passed an act^{11/} setting up a Highway Commission with authority to create a permanent system of highways within the entire area in the District of Columbia. This Commission was

11. 27 U.S. Statutes at Large 532 (Mar. 2, 1893)

composed entirely of public officials within the District Government. The Surveyor of the District was one of the members of this Commission and his office assumed responsibility for carrying on the work. This Commission performed a most valuable service at a crucial time. The plan which was prepared by the Commission provided for the extension of the main avenues and streets of the L'Enfant Plan, as can be seen by an examination of one of the sheets comprising the plan of the Highway Commission which was completed and adopted in 1898. Unfortunately, the science and art of city planning as we know it today was nonexistent at that time. After providing for the extension of the main avenues and thoroughfares, the Highway Commission delineated a rectangular minor street arrangement on its plan throughout the vast undeveloped territory within the District. This minor street arrangement was put down with little or no regard for the irregular and often steeply sloping terrain.

This Highway Commission Plan appears to have been successfully enforced despite the fact that there was no prohibition of buildings in the bed of mapped streets, the problem that worried L'Enfant and led to his dismissal. The Highway Commission and the District Government apparently exercised the power to refuse sewers, water, paving and other improvements unless there was

conformity with the plan, and used it most effectively. Hesitancy in enforcement, by the way, is one of the great tragedies of our present vast metropolitan area growth, except in those limited political areas where local authorities have been sufficiently alert to prepare a plan and adopt firm land subdivision regulations. We need today more authoritative legislation on this matter.

III. THE McMILLAN COMMISSION PLAN - 1902

"In 1900 a great celebration commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the removal of the seat of government to the District of Columbia was held in Washington. The keynote of the celebration was the improvement of the District of Columbia in a manner and to the extent commensurate with the dignity and the resources of the American Nation. The population was 218,196.

"While the centennial exercises were in progress the American Institute of Architects, in session in Washington, discussed the subject of the development of parks and the placing of public buildings; the tentative ideas of a number of the leading architects, sculptors, and landscape architects of the country were heard; and as a result the Institute appointed a committee on legislation. Consultations between that committee and the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia were followed by the order of the Senate for the preparation and submission of a general plan for the development of the entire park system of the District of Columbia.

"Thus, Hon. James McMillan of Michigan, chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia, submitted the following resolution, which was adopted by the United States Senate on March 8, 1901:

'Resolved, That the Committee on the District of Columbia be, and it is hereby, directed to consider the subject and report to the Senate plans for the

development and improvement of the entire park system of the District of Columbia. For the purpose of preparing such plans the committee may sit during the recess of Congress and may secure the services of such experts as may be necessary for a proper consideration of the subject. The expenses of such investigation shall be paid from the contingent fund of the Senate.

"On March 19, 1901, the subcommittee of the District Committee having the matter in charge met the representatives of the American Institute of Architects and agreed to their proposition that Daniel H. Burnham, architect, and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., landscape architect, be selected as experts, with power to add to their number. These gentlemen accepted, and subsequently invited Charles F. McKim, architect, and Augustus Saint-Gaudens, sculptor, to act with them in the preparation of plans. The services of men who had won the very highest places in their several professions had thus been secured.

"The nature and scope of the work having been outlined to the commission, they entered upon their task, but not without hesitation and misgivings. The problem was both difficult and complex. Much had to be done; much, also, had to be undone. Also the aid and advice of the commission was sought immediately in relation to buildings and memorials under consideration, and thus the importance and usefulness of the commission were enhanced.

"The commission, in order to make a closer study of the practice of landscape architecture as applied to parks and public buildings, made a brief trip to Europe, visiting Rome, Venice, Vienna, Budapest, Paris, London, and their suburbs. Attention was directed principally to ascertaining what arrangement of park areas best adapts them to the uses of the people and what are the elements that give pleasure from generation to generation, and even from century to century. The many and striking results of this study were given in the Park Commission Report, including plans and illustrations. The Committee on the District of Columbia submitted the report to the

Senate on January 15, 1902. It was adopted and ordered to be printed as Senate Report No. 166, Fifty-Seventh Congress, first session."^{12/}

It is interesting to note that the McMillan Commission was a Park Commission and the members gave much study to the city as a whole. It was most fortunate to have as a member of this Commission Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., who, with his father, had planned the park systems of many large American cities. In the course of their work they gained much knowledge of the form and character of cities and thus had occasion to think deeply about what we know today as the science and art of city planning. The McMillan Commission thought in terms of the city as a whole. The Commission made detailed plans for the parks of Washington and for their extension, including such things as the Rock Creek Potomac Parkway. What we enjoy today in our fine park system can be attributed largely to the work of this Commission and the high standard of maintenance which has been provided by the National Park Service.

The McMillan Commission is most widely and favorably known for the splendid revival and up-dating of the L'Enfant

12. Caemmerer, H. Paul, A Manual on the Origin and Development of Washington, U. S. Govt. Printing Office, 1939, page 73.

Plan especially as related to the central area of the city. This came at a much needed time when the city was beginning to experience vigorous physical and economic growth. This the Commission appreciated fully and the vigor and strength of their plan reflected the high degree of skill and judgment of the members of the Commission.

Most of my readers, I am confident, are familiar with the principal recommendations of the Commission, that is, a great grouping of government buildings around the Capitol, the full and complete development of the Mall, new sites for great memorials such as that for President Lincoln, the removal of railroad tracks from the Mall and the building of the Union Station and Plaza, the Arlington Memorial Bridge and the Potomac Park and Anacostia Park Developments.

Of no small significance and value were the splendid drawings and models produced by the McMillan Commission. Not only did these go far to gain the support of Congress and public officials for acceptance of the plan, but it gave the general public a new concept of the magnificence of this their nation's capital. It raised the standard of public understanding and support. Its value and its influence are still great albeit the changed conditions

of half a century may warrant some further revision.

Height of Buildings

President Washington was interested in attempting to preserve a uniform building height on Pennsylvania Avenue, and a regulation was passed providing for a minimum height of three stories on all buildings facing this street. The regulation was not enforced, however. It was not until 1899 that Congress became concerned about the matter of building heights and in that year passed an act specifying higher limits for various types of buildings.

The Act of March 1, 1899, ^{13/}for example, prohibited the use or occupancy as a residence, as an apartment house, or as a hotel of any non-fireproof building exceeding five stories or raised to a height exceeding 60 feet. Buildings for business purposes could be erected to a height of 75 feet. All buildings in excess of 75 feet, however, were required to be fireproofed or noncombustible. In no case could any building exceed 90 feet in height on a residential street, or 110 feet on a business street except that on business streets 160 feet wide the height limitation was placed at 130 feet. All buildings were measured from the level of the sidewalk opposite the middle

of the front of the building to the highest point of the roof. The Congress passed a new height of buildings act in 1910^{14/} which amended the 1899 Act in some particulars but preserved the height limits first established by the earlier act.

The National Commission of Fine Arts - 1910

By Act of Congress May 17, 1910, ^{15/} there was created a National Commission of Fine Arts to be composed of seven persons who were to be well qualified to judge works of art and to be appointed by the President for terms of four years each. The law provided that it would be the "duty of such Commission to advise upon the location of statues, fountains and monuments in the public squares, streets and parks in the District of Columbia, and upon the selection of models for statues, fountains, and monuments, erected under the authority of the United States and upon the selection of artists for the execution of same." The duties of the Commission have been enlarged somewhat since 1910 to include the design of public buildings or other features that in an important way affect the appearance of the city. The Commission has performed a most notable service in preserving the character of design of our many public buildings,

14. 36 U.S. Statutes at Large 452 (June 1, 1910)

15. 36 U.S. Statutes at Large 371

memorials and plazas which contribute so much to the fine appearance of Washington.

The long list of distinguished persons who have served on the Commission of Fine Arts is a guarantee that the high standard of professional advice thus made available to the Federal government on all questions of art will be continued.

IV. THE ZONING PLAN - 1920

Plans for park systems, streets and highways, public buildings and other public improvements generally absorb approximately one-half the land area of a city. The balance is in private ownership. While the public lands and improvements presumably are designed to serve the people and their activities in business, industry, home life and public recreation, there is or should be a close correlation in character and scale of the public and private developments. Otherwise vast distortions, mistakes and waste can readily occur. While European countries had long understood and provided for such correlation through certain control of private development, the validity of such control was doubtful under our system of government with its superior guarantees of freedom to the individual and to his use and enjoyment of his home and his business and industry. It was not until 1916 that New York City

pioneered this field of regulation by the adoption of its zoning plan. St. Louis did likewise in 1918 and Washington, which followed in 1920, became the third large American city to adopt a zoning plan.

Unfortunately, the Act of Congress^{16/} authorizing the preparation of a zoning plan provided that it should be completed and adopted within a period less than four months. The District authorities initiated the work with the aid of a consultant. It was a prodigious undertaking and it is indeed remarkable that the work was done and the plan completed in the time specified. There was very little precedent to follow. There had been no court decisions to point the way and most legal authorities had grave doubts as to whether the courts would approve any such new and extreme departure from past customs and practices. Furthermore, the New York and St. Louis plans were markedly different from each other in character and composition.

With the aid of a devoted staff and much overtime effort and splendid assistance from the District Engineer and his Assistant Engineers, the land use map of the city and numerous other studies as well as the proposed zoning plan map and accompanying regulations were completed by the 1st of August 1920. It is doubtful if the

16. 41 U.S. Statutes at Large 500 (Mar. 1, 1920)

plan would have been accepted by the public and adopted by the District Commissioners within the 30-day period remaining but for a fortuitous circumstance. The draft boards created during the war were still in existence just winding up their arduous duties. There were some 40 of these boards composed of citizens of the highest integrity and in whom the people of each neighborhood throughout the city had the greatest respect and confidence. It was with some reluctance that the several draft boards were persuaded to conduct the public hearing sponsored by the two District Commissioners (the third commission member had failed to receive confirmation by Congress). Fortunately few serious objections arose, minor adjustments were made and the comprehensive zoning plan covering the entire 64 square miles of District territory was adopted and went into effect on August 31, 1920.

Zoning is a framework within which orderly growth can take place without serious restraint and without the excessive distortions that frequently accompany rampant growth. The 1920 zoning plan gave much-needed protection to residential areas, it prevented reckless expansion of commercial activities by providing limited but generous opportunity for expansion which was found in later years to have been too generous. It limited the areas within which apartment construction could take place, and it curtailed the spread of row

houses, then Washington's most prevalent form of residential construction. The latter was achieved not merely by limiting areas for expansion but by prohibiting long continuous rows of small attached houses. It limited industry to existing areas where but few small plants were found to exist. It re-enforced the 1910 heights of buildings regulations act. Despite several court attacks the zoning plan stood up until the United States Supreme Court in 1926 upheld the constitutionality of zoning law in the Euclid Village case.

One significant effect of the 1920 zoning plan was to call attention to the opportunities for development in all parts of the city area. Much of the growth of the city was then taking place in the northwest section. The effect of the zoning plan was to limit row houses and apartment construction in the northwest area and to stimulate new growth to the north, northeast and east.

V. THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND PLANNING COMMISSION PLAN - 1930

The preparation of the zoning plan and regulations revealed the urgent necessity of a modern detailed comprehensive plan for Washington. This should have preceded the zoning plan. The mounting population and the physical spreading of the city which became most apparent by 1930 as individual auto transportation

came into wider use created new problems of traffic and transportation and raised numerous questions about changes that might take place in the form and character of the city. All of this called for more vigorous planning. As a result the Congress was urged to take some action. Since much emphasis had always been given to parks and open spaces, especially in the McMillan Plan, it was but natural for Congress to approach the subject from that viewpoint. In 1924 there was passed an act^{17/} creating a National Capital Park Commission to take over and manage the parks. It soon became evident that this did not meet the city planning needs and requirements. There was then passed an amendment creating the National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 1926.^{18/} This act provided for a permanent Commission, composed of "four (4) eminent citizens well qualified and experienced in city planning, one of whom shall be a bonafide resident of the District of Columbia, and five (5) public officials, the Chief of Engineers of the Army, the Engineer Commissioner of the District of Columbia, the Director of the National Capital Park Service, the Chief of the Forest Service, the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital, and the Chairmen of the Committee on the District of Columbia in the

17. 43 U. S. Statutes at Large 463 (June 6, 1924)

18. 44 U. S. Statutes at Large 374 (April 30, 1926)

Senate and House of Representatives." The Commission was charged with a duty "to develop a comprehensive, consistent and coordinated plan for the National Capital and its environs in the States of Maryland and Virginia ----." This was one of the earliest comprehensive city planning enabling acts being antedated only by that of the State of Ohio which was passed in 1920.

The Commission employed a director, a small staff and consultants. After two years of effort, it produced a report entitled "Plans and Studies of Washington and Vicinity" showing numerous maps and charts. This report demonstrated the significance of the L'Enfant Plan, the McMillan Plan, showed a new plan for a new and extensive development of the Mall (which has since been completed), contained a detailed analysis of land use within the District, a complete major street plan, studies for street traffic, transit and railroads, a plan for neighborhood parks, for parkways along the Potomac River, another extending toward Baltimore, and indicated for future study certain points of historic interest and significant natural history.

In 1930 the Commission published another document entitled "Reports and Plans of the Washington Region". It contains the statements of the Chairman and the Executive Officer of the Commission, the Governors of Maryland and Virginia, and the President of the American Society of Landscape Architects, on the occasion of

the presentation of the Regional Plan of Washington and its Environs at Constitution Hall on January 17, 1930. The meeting was attended by some 3,000 persons, including the General Assembly of the Commission of Virginia which was visiting Washington at that time. This report also showed further studies for street planning with land subdivision regulations, for park maintenance and for a housing program for the District of Columbia. The report also contained reports of two special committees, one on Washington region water supply and one on drainage and sewerage problems.

Time will not permit a discussion of the details of this early comprehensive city plan. It was indeed a pioneer effort, with little precedent to guide the Commission in the making of a modern comprehensive plan for both the City of Washington and the Metropolitan City which was then first envisioned.

Period 1930 - 1950

Following the publication of these two reports the Commission and staff proceeded to keep the plan up-to-date and through regular monthly meetings of the Commission, and the work of its coordinating committee composed of representatives from all government departments concerned, gave continuous direction to the proper planning of the city. This planning became for the first time a function of the daily operation of government - not just a map or

picture to be placed on the wall and which might be referred to as fancy might strike.

Capper-Cramton Act - May 29, 1930

The Regional Plan for parks, for example, showed proposed parkways along both sides of the Potomac from Mt. Vernon to Great Falls, stream valley parks in both Maryland and Virginia, and a complete system of neighborhood parks and playgrounds in the District of Columbia. Such a plan, to be realized, required extensive funds and a long-range program of acquisition.

This was approved by the Congress in what became known as the Capper-Cramton Act of May 29, 1930.^{19/} One section of that act authorized appropriation of \$7,500,000 for the George Washington Memorial Parkway to be matched by a like sum by the States of Maryland and Virginia. Another section authorized the acquisition and development of a stream valley park system in Maryland which is actually an extension of Rock Creek and other stream valleys within the District of Columbia. The Act provided that the United States could contribute \$1,500,000 to the cost of these stream valley lands in Maryland provided the State contributed two thirds of the cost, or \$3,000,000. The lands when acquired are owned and administered by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

19. 46 U. S. Statutes at Large 482

The Act was amended in 1946^{20/} to include additional stream valleys in Maryland, and, in 1952,^{21/} to include certain stream valleys in Virginia. The latter amendment also authorized Federal grants totalling \$4,500,000 for stream valley parks in Virginia to be matched by \$9,000,000 by the State.

The fourth section of the Act authorized an appropriation of \$16,000,000 for the acquisition of lands necessary and desirable for the suitable development of the National Capital Park, Parkway and Playground System. These funds are periodically reimbursed to the United States from the District of Columbia funds.

To date, acquisition of lands for the George Washington Memorial Parkway have been virtually completed in Montgomery County, that is, from the District line to Great Falls; in Virginia from Mount Vernon to the Bureau of Public Roads' property near Langley.

Although not all of the proposed stream valley park lands have been acquired in Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties in Maryland, the original authorization of \$1,500,000 grant money and more than \$2,000,000 of the loan funds have been used and a substantial stream valley park system has been established. Recently,

20. 60 U.S. Statutes at Large 960 (Aug. 8, 1946)

21. 66 U.S. Statutes at Large 960 (July 19, 1952)

requests for funds to develop stream valley parks in Virginia have been received, but no appropriations have been made to date.

In the District of Columbia, the authorization of the sum of \$16,000,000 for the Park, Parkway and Playground System has been almost exhausted and a substantial system has been acquired and developed.

The Shipstead-Luce Act - 1930

Recognizing the desirability of protecting the borders of prominent plazas, parks and strategic open spaces against incongruous design of buildings and structures, the Congress passed the Shipstead-Luce Act on May 16, 1930.^{22/}

This Act imposed on the Commission of Fine Arts the duty of advising the Commissioners of the District of Columbia concerning plans for private buildings facing public buildings and parks in specified areas of Washington, which areas include the Mall and adjacent Federal developments lying between the Capitol and the Potomac to the west and also Rock Creek Park from the District line down to the Georgetown Channel. The advice of the Commission of Fine Arts relates to height, color and texture of materials of exterior construction, in order that the development of the city may proceed along the lines of good order and good taste. From the time of its

22. 46 U. S. Statutes at Large 366

passage to date, there have been more than 2,000 submissions for review by the Commission of Fine Arts. The Act was amended in 1939^{23/} to include properties facing Lafayette Park and Fort McNair.

The Triangle Development

In 1926^{24/} Congress passed a Public Buildings Act authorizing the Secretary of the Treasury to proceed with construction of a much-needed program of public buildings both in the District of Columbia and in the States. Consultants were employed, plans drawn and a great group of public buildings erected in the so-called Triangle, bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., 15th Street and (B Street) Constitution Avenue. This construction had great significance from a city planning standpoint, not merely because of changing a non-descript area to one of monumental aspect and indeed one of the great show places of the city, but more especially because it placed permanently a very large block of governmental employees adjacent to the central business district. It had and will, when entirely completed, continue indefinitely to have a profound influence upon traffic, transit and street plans for the city.

The Municipal Center

Another important aspect of this public building program

23. 53 U. S. Statutes at Large 1144 (July 31, 1939)

24. 44 U. S. Statutes at Large 630 (May 25, 1926)

has been the creation of the Municipal Center group on the north side of Pennsylvania Avenue between Third and Sixth Streets, N. W. The east building only has been completed.

Land Transfer Act and Street Closing Act - 1932

Prior to approval of these acts, on May 20, 1932,^{25/} and December 15, 1932,^{26/} each transfer and street closing required a separate Act of Congress. This sometimes took several years to accomplish and seriously delayed the work of the District Commissioners and of the Park Planning Commission. A large number of highway plan changes were in progress and some could not be accomplished until existing dedicated streets were closed. In addition, the newly acquired parks were being coordinated with the revised highway plan and with other existing public lands, requiring the transfer of jurisdiction to properly assemble these areas. The Planning Commission to date has recommended almost 300 transfers and 400 street and alley closings.

Motor Vehicle Parking Authority Act - 1942

On February 16, 1942,^{27/} Congress passed the Motor Vehicle Parking Authority Act, which requires the approval of the Commission on all locations for public parking facilities.

25. 47 U. S. Statutes at Large 161
26. 47 U. S. Statutes at Large 747
27. 56 U. S. Statutes at Large 90

Housing

Ellen Wilson, wife of President Woodrow Wilson, became much concerned about poor housing conditions, especially in the alley dwellings of Washington. Her interest and activities led to the passage of the Commissioners' Alley Dwelling Act of 1914^{28/} which required their removal. The effective date for this removal was postponed on two occasions due to World War I and it was finally set aside through an adverse court decision in 1926.

On June 12, 1934,^{29/} a new law became effective setting up an Alley Dwelling Authority to acquire and redevelop the notoriously bad alley dwellings. In 1937,^{30/} national legislation for slum clearance and housing was passed and a new National Capital Housing Authority succeeded the former Alley Dwelling Authority. This agency has performed notable service in providing dwellings for low-income families. The total number of public housing units under the management of the National Capital Housing Authority is 5,949, and projects now under construction will bring this total to 7,816 at the end of 1959.

Urban Redevelopment

In 1946,^{31/} Congress passed an act authorizing the creation

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28. 38 U.S. Statutes at Large 716 (Sept. 25, 1914)
 29. 48 U.S. Statutes at Large 930 (June 12, 1934)
 30. 50 U.S. Statutes at Large 888 (Sept. 1, 1937)
 31. 60 U.S. Statutes at Large 790 (Aug. 2, 1946)

of a Redevelopment Land Agency with broad powers to acquire and clear land in slum areas and to sell or lease such land for redevelopment with new structures. It was provided that the National Capital Planning Commission should fix boundaries for such clearances and prepare a comprehensive plan for each redevelopment area, such to be submitted to the District Commissioners for public hearing and official approval. Title I of the National Housing Act of 1949^{32/} granted similar authority for a Federal program and substantial sums of money for loans and grants have been authorized. The five members of the Redevelopment Land Agency were appointed in 1947 and the Agency has instituted proceedings to clear and redevelop Washington's two largest obsolete slum areas, that is, the entire Southwest section of the city, having a total of 600 acres, and the Northwest project area of approximately 900 acres. Additional redevelopment will be needed.

This vast undertaking, involving close cooperation of the local and Federal redevelopment agencies, the Planning Commission, the Housing Authority, the District Government, and numerous other agencies and utility companies as well as private developers, has vast potentialities in bringing about a virtual transformation of the older central sections of Washington.

32. 63 U.S. Statutes at Large 413 (July 15, 1949)

Urban Renewal

In order to prevent the creation of future slums, all housing throughout the city should be maintained at proper standards as recommended in the 1950 Comprehensive Plan. In May 1955, the District of Columbia Office of Urban Renewal was established, and in 1956, the District Commissioners adopted a Minimum Standards Housing Code. An Urban Renewal Council has quite recently been appointed, among the functions of which will be to see that the Housing Code is respected and enforced. The great significance of this field of endeavor cannot be underestimated, not merely in providing better living conditions for all groups of the population, but in the prevention of disease and crime.

Effect of World War II on the City Plan

The War gave enormous stimulus to the growth of Washington and especially to its environs. The population of the Washington Metropolitan Area increased from 967,985 in 1940 to 1,464,000 in 1950 (U.S. Census figures), an approximate 50 percent growth in a single decade. In this same period the population of the District of Columbia increased from 663,091 to 802,178. The Federal civilian employee total increased from 158,587 in January 1941 to 263,126 in January 1943. It has decreased some since then but not to the pre-war level.

Four specific influences of the War on the City Plan

were:

1. The erection of a large number of temporary buildings on public lands, especially in the Mall and immediately adjoining areas.
2. Innumerable housing projects, particularly in suburban areas, thus markedly increasing the urban sprawl.
3. Retarded progress in carrying out various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. For example, funds for park acquisition under the Capper - Cramton Act were necessarily curtailed.
4. Certain permanent new building construction not previously anticipated, such as the Pentagon, with its large highway network and great parking areas, was initiated.

So greatly did the War stimulate population growth in this area that even today Washington is the second most rapidly growing Metropolitan area in the Nation.

VI. THE NATIONAL CAPITAL PARK AND
PLANNING COMMISSION PLAN - 1950

Not merely had Washington grown greatly during World War II, but it soon became evident that its growth would continue to be of substantial proportions for some time thereafter. New problems were arising, especially as a result of marked urban expansion in the Metropolitan area. The Planning Commission found that its Comprehensive Plan should be up-dated and new regional plans prepared. This work was initiated with the aid of consultants in 1948 and completed in 1950. Five reports and a summary volume were published as follows:

People and Land

Open Spaces and Community Services

Housing and Redevelopment

Moving People and Goods

Regional Aspects of the Comprehensive Plan

The result of this work was to give greater precision to various aspects of the Comprehensive Plan. It emphasized the need for completing unfinished parts of the plan. It delineated for the first time specific slum areas needing reconstruction as well as various blighted areas needing rehabilitation in order to prevent creation of new slums. It recognized the danger of over-centralization of the city and of government buildings and employment and

proposed a plan for limited dispersal of federal employment centers.

It contained newly revised street and highway plans both for the District of Columbia and for the Metropolitan Area or Region, including three proposed ring roads, an Inner Belt Highway, an Intermediate Belt, and an Outer Belt Highway. A second Metropolitan Airport in the Southwest section of the Metropolitan area was also proposed.

Due to lack of funds, the Commission was unable to undertake a much-needed revision of the zoning plan and regulations, or a mass transportation plan, both of which it was recommended should be initiated at an early date with sufficient funds to do the necessary research and technical work required.

This 1950 Comprehensive Plan was essentially a revision and up-dating of the 1928 plan, amplified and extended to apply to current conditions. It was an action program with 12 specific recommendations including such important matters as:

Quick and definite decision on dispersal of the Federal establishment and minimum extent of essential new building in the central area.

Prompt demolition of temporary Federal buildings, especially those in and near the Mall and nearby park areas, and restoration of the setting.

Start of redevelopment projects to improve central in-town residential areas.

Construction of a new Potomac River Bridge at Alexandria.

Completion of land acquisition for the George Washington Memorial Parkway and immediate road building.

Progressive construction of the various parts of Fort Drive (Intermediate Belt Highway) as a high-speed circumferential expressway to distribute traffic on various routes.

There were also set forth 11 specific aims or objectives to be accomplished through the medium of a Comprehensive Plan.

Revision of National Capital Park and Planning Commission Act - 1952

The unprecedented growth of the Metropolitan Area created a multitude of new problems. Many of these could not be solved by individual cities and political agencies of government. Greater cooperation and coordination for the area-wide planning on an adequate scale called for the creation of some form of regional planning agency. In response to this demand, the Congress on July 19, 1952, ^{33/} approved a revision of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission basic law. In addition to certain minor changes, such as shortening the title

33. 66 U.S. Statutes at Large 781

to National Capital Planning Commission, adding one additional citizen member to the Commission, and substituting and replacing the Chief of the Forest Service and the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks by the Commissioner of Public Buildings and the Commissioner of Public Roads, there was added a new agency to be known as the National Capital Regional Planning Council, composed of representatives of the planning agencies of the region. Specifically, the Council membership consisted of the Chairman of the National Capital Planning Commission, the Engineer Commissioners of the District of Columbia, and not to exceed eight other members who, with their alternates, are appointed by the Commission pursuant to nominations by the planning agencies and governing bodies in Maryland and Virginia. Funds for the Council were to be provided in the budget of the National Capital Planning Commission and provision was also made that the Council could accept such assistance, services and facilities as might be made available by any State or local governmental authority having jurisdiction in the area.

The Council was authorized to adopt and, from time to time, amend or extend a general plan for the development of the region, to serve as a general framework or guide of development within which each part of the region could be more precisely planned

by the appropriate planning agency or agencies. The regional plan was to include a land-use plan and such other elements of a general plan having overall influence as are required to provide for the proposed major movements of people and goods throughout the region, for the primary facilities for community development and for the conservation and development of natural resources.

Appointments were made promptly and the Regional Planning Council held its first meeting on September 29, 1952.

Inter-State Highway Program

In 1948, Congress adopted the National Highway Act^{34/} which included a 40,000-mile program of interstate highways of expressway type to connect all major centers of population in excess of 100,000 persons. Substantial sums were appropriated for such construction based on the previously adopted formula for matching Federal funds with State funds derived from gasoline taxes. By 1956, it was realized that construction lagged far behind traffic demand, with the result that Congress^{35/} approved a new formula whereby Federal funds would be matched with the State funds on a 90-10 basis to expedite construction of the interstate highway program and with particular emphasis on urban areas. The significance of this program

34. 62 U.S. Statutes at Large 1105 (June 29, 1948)

35. 70 U.S. Statutes at Large 374 (June 29, 1956)

to the comprehensive plans in all cities and to that of the Washington Metropolitan Area in particular is of the greatest import. Transportation is one of the most crucial factors in shaping the form and growth of cities, and in such programs as that of the Interstate Highway System, involving hundreds of millions of dollars, construction within a short period of time is indeed a major planning act.

It is fortunate indeed that funds for undertaking the Mass Transportation Survey were provided by Congress at this same time. It is fortunate also that there had been created a Regional Planning Council to guide, direct and work with the National Capital Planning Commission and other planning agencies throughout the area on the Mass Transportation Survey, thus assuring a thoroughly coordinated undertaking.

Federal Public Buildings
Construction Program - 1956

Continuing pressure for the removal of temporary buildings constructed during the War, many of which occupy prominent positions in the Mall, in the parks and other public lands, prompted the General Services Administration to prepare an extensive new Public Buildings program in 1956. In January of that year it was estimated that 65,800 employees of the Executive Branch of the Government were housed in temporary non-conforming and leased buildings. The proposed program consisted of some 22 new public buildings to house

52,640 employees and to be constructed within a ten-year period. A plan for the location of these buildings was prepared in cooperation with the National Capital Planning Commission, most of which were to be built in the Southwest Redevelopment Area immediately south of the Mall, in the Northwest Rectangle, in the vicinity of Lafayette Park and in the Federal Triangle.

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

The provision of water, sewers, drainage and refuse disposal is a highly important factor in determining the direction, form and growth of cities. Within a large segment of the Maryland portion of the Washington Metropolitan Area this fact has long been known and wisely anticipated. By Act of the Maryland Legislature^{36/} as early as 1918, there was created the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission as an inter-county agency. Its duties include the furnishing of water, sewer and refuse services over an area of 325 square miles in Montgomery and Prince Georges Counties, Maryland. As of January 1958, it has in service 1,484 miles of water mains, 16 pumping stations and two filtration plants, furnishing 42,000,000 gallons per day, two large reservoirs and 1,239 miles of sewer lines. It also constructs and maintains storm drainage facilities.

36. Laws of State of Maryland, page 248, (April 10, 1918)

Comprehensive Plans in Suburban Areas

The need for comprehensive plans to guide and direct the growth of suburban areas in the Maryland and Virginia sectors of the Washington Metropolitan Area was not fully anticipated. The great pressure of burgeoning growth has stimulated early consideration of such plans, however.

In 1926,^{37/} the Maryland Legislature provided for the creation of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission with authority to prepare comprehensive plans for the growth in an area of approximately 690 square miles, comprising all of Montgomery County and parts of Prince Georges County surrounding the District of Columbia. This is a truly regional planning agency, both in its composition, with five members each from Montgomery and from Prince Georges Counties, and in its approach to its work and responsibilities. In November 1956, this Commission published a preliminary general plan for the Maryland-Washington Regional District. The plan was comprehensive in scope, including specific proposals and plans for population, land-use, open space, public buildings (Federal and State), schools, parks, highways and transportation.

37. Laws of State of Maryland, page 833, (April 26, 1926)

The Commission is supported by a special tax of three cents on each \$100 of assessed valuation within its jurisdictional area in both counties. This is a more or less unique and wise provision to assure adequate funds for meeting the ever-growing demands for more effective technical planning.

This Commission is also doing extraordinarily good work as a park commission. Its jurisdictional area for park purposes is somewhat smaller, being some 203 square miles in area. For the acquisition and maintenance of public parks, the Commission levies a tax of ten cents per \$100 of assessed valuation in Montgomery County and eight cents per \$100 of assessed valuation in Prince Georges County, a portion of such funds being used for matching with Federal funds available under the Capper-Cramton Act. The Commission has to date acquired 2,100 acres of stream valley park lands in Montgomery County, and 1,433 acres in Prince Georges County, all under the Capper-Cramton Act. It also has acquired some 600 acres of local park lands for which there has been no Federal aid.

In Virginia there has been less progress in the preparation of overall comprehensive plans although it is growing quite as rapidly as the Maryland sector. Arlington County, the central and most highly developed part of the Virginia portion of the Metropolitan

Area, has grown in total population from 45,000 to 175,000 in the past 20 years. It secured a special act authorizing zoning on April 11, 1927,^{38/} and adopted a zoning plan in 1930. In 1938, a Planning Department was created and land subdivision and off-street parking regulations were adopted. A major street plan was prepared and adopted in 1941, followed by a revised comprehensive zoning plan adopted in 1942. A park plan was adopted in 1944.

Planning Commissions have been appointed in the City of Alexandria and in Fairfax County, in both of which zoning plans have been prepared and adopted.

In 1955, Fairfax County engaged consulting services and proceeded with the preparation of a comprehensive plan. This plan was completed and published some two years later, but there has been only partial adoption to date.

VII. THE REVISED ZONING PLAN

On June 20, 1938,^{39/} there were established the Zoning Advisory Council and the Board of Zoning Adjustment to improve zoning administrative practices. This imposed considerable work upon the staff of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

38. Acts of General Assembly, State of Virginia, p. 26

39. 52 U.S. Statutes at Large 797

Also, on May 20, 1938, ^{40/} by Act of Congress, all Federal buildings were exempted from zoning regulations, but approval of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission was required with respect to location, height of buildings, number of stories, size and open space. On August 5, 1939, ^{41/} by Act of Congress, the sale of Federal land, either by the District Government or by the Secretary of the Interior, was made subject to the approval of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission.

In 1954, the District Commissioners hired a consultant to revise the then existing zoning regulations of the District of Columbia. In 1956, the final report was submitted by the consultant. After public hearings and reports to the Commissioners by the Citizens Zoning Advisory Committee and the Zoning Advisory Council, the Commissioners, on May 12, 1958, adopted the new regulations.

The new zoning code contained provisions which the former had lacked, namely, density controls, such as floor area ratios, more adequate off-street parking requirements and cutting down on the area of land that buildings would be permitted to cover.

40. 52 U. S. Statutes at Large 802

41. 53 U. S. Statutes at Large 1211

VIII. THE REGIONAL PLANNING
COUNCIL PLAN - 1958

. Currently, the National Capital Planning Commission and the National Capital Regional Planning Council are completing a Mass Transportation plan, one of the most important planning undertakings yet attempted for the Washington area. It should be of major significance in determining the future form and character of the newly emerging Metropolitan community. With some \$460,000 made available by the Congress and with the aid of a local staff supplemented by a panel of top-level consultants and several technical firms engaged for special services, there has been produced a land-use plan for 1965 and for 1980, a plan for an estimated population of from three to three and a half million persons by 1980, an economic study and a plan for express highways, major thoroughfares and of mass transportation facilities. The final study for financing and for administrative effectuation is now in the course of completion.

There will soon be published the Mass Transportation Survey Plan and a separate volume on the Regional Plan upon which it is based.

CONCLUSION

The preparation of this paper has indeed been an interesting assignment. It cannot be concluded without expressing regret for the omissions, which I fear are numerous, for the all-too brief reference to several matters that would normally demand fuller description, and without apology for some undoubted errors of fact and of expression.

Despite these shortcomings, it is clear that Washington has had an abundance of planning by many able minds, all of whom have contributed to the creation of what is today considered to be one of the world's finest cities. It is also clear that our planning still leaves much to be desired. The vastly accelerated growth of recent years has produced new problems and new needs of great magnitude and complexity. To keep our plans up-to-date, to make new plans for a city of three to three and a half million persons by 1980, of possibly five million by the year 2000, demands bold vision, statesmanlike leadership and greater funds with which to do the job.