

Many of us have observed that recent construction in Washington DC dilutes the character of Washington DC's built environment; that our nation's capitol is on the verge of losing its identity. We believe that the City and its citizens deserve better. We believe that that the City needs to embrace architecture and City Building principles commensurate with its legacy and its world role. We believe that it needs buildings and cityscapes that will weather well, be sustainable and people-oriented; and not be subject to the vicissitudes of fashion. We believe in principles of city building that embody democracy through a public realm that is available to all. We observe that there is no good urbanism without good architecture and that traditional and classical buildings universally make the best streets, places and spaces.

This presentation is about our City's survival. It is about tolerance, it is about values, it is about our children's and their children's quality of life, not about politics today. It is about civilization and memory.

It is about common sense.

1. Since World War Two when the McMillan Plan ceased to be implemented, there has been a void in the urban design of Washington DC. Designers and planners focused on creating a modernist brave new world and actively removed traditional and classical design, architecture and city building from their professional tool kit. This is exemplified by the so-called urban renewal in SW. I will not reiterate the dismal failures of modernism. Nor will I attend to the continued failures of this approach perhaps most evident in the restoration of recently damaged urban fabric in New York and New Orleans.

The failure of Modernist city building – so-called urbanism - is fundamental. It cannot address scale, it eradicates memory and it abstracts sensual experience into geometric or expressionist shapes. What traditionalists refer to as City Building, is referred to by modernists as “urbanism”. This typically abstract term, this “ism”, exemplifies the modernist's inability to address reality in a satisfying and holistic manner, one that withstands the tests of time. Most obviously, it doesn't take people into account.

2. The historic inability of modernism to address scale is legend. There are fundamental philosophical reasons for this. So-called “human scale” often referred to by modernists refers to dimension – 6'-8” for a door or 8'-0” for a ceiling, not to a range of small sizes to medium sizes to large sizes. Modern buildings are typically conceived on a single module that is used un-hierarchically and potentially is extensible ad infinitum as in the Seagram Building or the Twin Towers.
3. Notably, modernist design is based on the notion that the expressionist styles of “starchitects” – embody the leadership of an avant-garde at the fore-front of humanity's progress to a utopian future, the so-called architecture “of our time”. Fact is that on the urban scale this has resulted in repeated catastrophe. The modernist idea of building a new world on a tabula rasa is disastrous for culture and

memory, to say nothing of mental health. Indeed more traditional buildings were destroyed world-wide in urban renewal than in all the wars.

4. Furthermore, we believe it is ethically irresponsible, to experiment in the name of “progress” with untried personal design theories on defenseless communities.
5. Professional urban planning is defined as the science of efficient placement of infrastructure and zoning for the sustainable growth. It typically addresses land use, planning and zoning, transportation, and open space, in a broad and encompassing manner. It speaks to environmental impact, public and human services, economic development, urban heritage, public policy formulation, and administration.
6. However, where planning is about logic, design is about experience: visual imagery, cognition and the senses. Where planners process information in a linear, sequential, logical manner, designers processes it holistically, starting with the big picture, and moving from big to little and back again balancing the parts as they go. Planners produce tables, graphs, maps, codes, and laws. Designers propose and create experience. To illustrate, consider the difference between the 495 freeway (linear problem solving) and the George Washington parkway (enhancing the experience of driving). At Build DC we recognize that efficiency and functionality are ephemeral, while experience is timeless and universally perceived. to that end we believe in an experience-based design process.
7. As for beauty – it is simply not on the agenda. How does beauty connect to Urban Design?
8. Of the numerous purposes and goals attributable to Urban Planning and Design, what do you think is the single overarching value which underlies their successful application? Obviously not, you will say, beauty because “beautiful is not functional” or “beautiful expensive” or “beauty is in the eye of the beholder”. Nonetheless when people identify the urban characteristics of any city they tend to mention beautiful places. Moreover, the streets, plazas, parks, and buildings cited by urbanists as examples of good city building are at the very least attractive, if not clearly beautiful. In fact their single consistent common attribute is their aspect of beauty. Consider the following propositions:
9.
 - When unpenalized, people choose to use beautiful places over others. They are therefore functional and economical more than other spaces.
 - People like Beautiful spaces and therefore choose to maintain them for generations. Such spaces elicit timeless statements of “it’s beautiful” regardless of their date of construction. They are fundamentally sustainable by their very nature.
 - Beautiful spaces are safer because they are calming and incur respect. People in them are on their “best behavior”, seem less prone to aggression and less easy to victimize.

10. So, when people choose to use beautiful places over others, when they inhabit, maintain and care for them, it is those spaces' beauty as much as anything else that engenders peoples' experience of those places' functionality, safety, economy and sustainability. Thus it can be said that the ultimate goal of Urban Planning and Urban Design is not policy, nor graphs neither maps nor codes, but rather to design a legacy of beautiful places for people. People will do the rest.

11. Not surprisingly, for over 50 years modernist planners and designers have been engaged in "urbanism", while entirely lacking the capacity to address urban scale; to think concretely of what something is going to look like; to extend or embellish an existing traditional environment without marring it to say nothing of generating a new one; to avoid being massively destructive; to think in terms other than those of density and FAR; to demonstrate any capacity or interest in creating anything beautiful for our city.

12. As we enter the 21st Century another paradigm is clearly necessary. This paradigm, which has existed for ages and has been forcibly obliterated, is simply that of standard traditional and classical city building. The Romans did it so successfully that most of the major European towns still have that in their hearts; so did great builders like Bernini, Le Notre and Lutyens. Traditional and classical city building is holistic. It resolves the relationship between man and nature, it can be readily used to create beautiful environments of deep cultural significance and it enables even a modest person like myself to "think big" realistically. This heritage is not only formal, but processal as well. In fact DC has been fortunate to have had two extraordinary rounds of such thinking and the proponents were Major Pierre "Peter" L'enfant (1755-1825) and his patron President George Washington; and Senator McMillan of Michigan whose Senate Commission members were the great Burnham, McKim, Olmstead and St. Gaudens and whose patron was President Theodore Roosevelt.

13. On January 24, 1791, President George Washington announced the designated permanent location of the national capital at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers. The area was largely undeveloped, giving the city's founders the unique opportunity to create an entirely new capital city. A survey of the diamond-shaped ten-mile District of Columbia was undertaken and boundary stones at one-mile intervals were laid based on celestial calculations. In March 1791, Major L'enfant a French artist and engineer who had befriended George Washington in the Revolutionary War, began preparing a plan for the city of Washington.

14. L'enfant surveyed the site and identified places that he sensed would be appropriate locations for the President's house, the seat of Congress and the primary commercial space for the city, now Lincoln Park on Capitol Hill. As Don Hawkins has proposed, L'enfant radiated avenues from these focal points creating both a geometric pattern that features ceremonial spaces and grand avenues, as well as defining

lots large enough for in-town estates, similar to the faubourgs of Paris at the time. L'Enfant specified on the plan the width of avenues, boulevards of trees, and visual connections to important structures, monuments, and fountains throughout the city. The open spaces were as integral to the capital as the buildings to be erected around them.

15. Evidently Peter L'Enfant did not invent this template. As Iris Miller illustrated in her writing, L'Enfant originally left home with the idea for the City of Washington in his mind, and it was not the precedent of the grounds at Versailles. L'Enfant was the son of a painter at Gobelin who specialized in battle scenes and the landscape design of large estates. As you well know at that time artists military planners, engineers and officers of the artillery all shared and applied a body of knowledge that included geometry, astronomy natural sciences and physics and, of course, classical design and its proportions.
16. Specifically, Gobelin artists were part of a social circle that included the military, most notably those who aided the Americans. This circle included Charles Cozette, a fellow painter of L'Enfant's father at Gobelin and Colonel Jean Baptiste Berthier, geographical engineer to the King and father of the renowned Alexander Berthier who fought alongside George Washington in America. Back in France, Berthier had supervised the hanging of L'Enfant senior's work in Versailles and Cozette was a regular in the L'Enfant household. L'Enfant apparently applied to Washington a design template best illustrated by Cozette's 1770 map of the Duchy of Choiseul d'Amboise and its environs.¹
17. L'Enfant's holistic process was to survey the site, walk it in its entirety and study it. He sought the "genius Loci", the so-called magic and energy of specific places. In those locations he placed the three primary foci of his plan as well as the intersection of the avenues. None are geometric accident alone. They were subtly adjusted to enable everything from a rich streetscape to a sense of overlying order and symmetry. L'Enfant captured the sense of **place** of the specific locations. Today, knowingly or otherwise, we still sense in the presences of water and the City's numerous trees something of the original genius loci, magic of place.
18. The wonder of L'Enfant's plan is that he applied a landscape paradigm to the urban context. In a sense he elevated the City to the metaphorical level of the sacred grove. The blocks of buildings in Washington are metaphors for stands of trees, the avenues "compass lines" of the New World. Proof of its success lies in the fact that L'Enfant's plan for Washington remains largely intact, unique in its vision, magic and scale among the cities of the world.

¹ "Carte du Duché de Choiseul d'Amboise et de ses Environs, Levee Topographique par Six Lignes pour Cent Toises." By Charles Cozette (military scene), Jean Baptiste Berthier, geographical engineer to King (map); montage: ink de Chine with topographic indications, on paper (map), watercolor gouaches on lead pencil sketch, on paper (military scene); 1.57 by 2.85 m; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours; no. d'inventaire D 11-3-1; provenance Château de Chanteloup; 1770.

19. In order to finance the development of the new capital city, L'enfant was requested to subdivide the city into lots small enough to make them accessible to all economic levels. This expression of democracy enabled the participation of an ever-expanding populace in a communal endeavor underpinned by humanistic values and ideals. His non-performance on that account led to his dismissal by Washington, but that is another story
20. The second benchmark in the development of Washington's urban plan was the 1901-02 McMillan Commission and its recommendations.² As the city approached its centennial, people became interested in developing a comprehensive park system for the city. Among those were Charles Moore, aide to Senator James McMillan of Michigan, chair of the Senate District Committee, and Glenn Brown, architect and secretary of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). They met at the Cosmos Club and often used the Club as a meeting and rallying place for advancing the fine arts in Washington.
21. While doing research for his celebrated *History of the United States Capitol* (1900 and 1903), Brown had discovered information on and become enamored with L'enfant's 1791 plan for Washington. He and others, alarmed at the disregard in Washington for the plan, began lobbying local agencies and the federal government for its reimposition on Washington development.
22. In 1895, Brown, with the support of the AIA Washington Chapter and interested Cosmos Club members, organized the Public Art League, a lobbying body with a national membership. Among its officers and directors were architect Daniel Burnham, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., architect Charles F. McKim, and sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens. They were the visionaries of the 1896 Columbian Exposition in Chicago and members of the Century Club in New York of which future President Theodore Roosevelt was also a member. They had been educated in the Parisian Beaux-Arts or in its methods and manifested those sensibilities in their design. The Public Art League quickly became a national force in lobbying for the fine arts.
23. In the following years groups of architects met and developed plans and concepts for different parts of Washington. Cass Gilbert later recalled Moore and Brown "who, talking to a group of architects one evening at the Cosmos Club, urged that the architects should throw their fullest efforts in favor of the return to the L'Enfant plan, and by their earnest persistence prevailed upon those present to interest themselves in the subject."

² Tony P. Wrenn. *The Eye of Guardianship – Theodore Roosevelt and the American Institute of Architects*. White House History Journal/http://www.whitehousehistory.org/08/subs/08_b11.html

24. In February 1900 a joint Congressional committee first convened to plan for the centennial. Senator James McMillan of Michigan was chairman and Charles Moore was secretary. While they planned for the centennial, leaders of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) envisioned the nation's capital as a perfect place for the application of the ideals of the City Beautiful movement as expressed at the 1896 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. For almost a year the architects planned their presentations, carefully prepared them and had them profusely illustrated.
25. Their work was presented at the December 1900 AIA convention held in Washington. Their papers on the "Improvement of the City of Washington" were read before a national audience of politicians, journalists, and others. It was a resounding success. Senator McMillan had the papers published as a government document with accompanying maps, plans, and photographs. Moore wrote in the publication's introduction, writing that the report will show the ideas of the laity and the plans of the experts."
26. The Senate Parks Commission was formed in 1901 to explore and plan the design of the city and its members were Burnham, Olmsted, McKim and St. Gaudens. The commission received even stronger Presidential backing when Century Club member Theodore Roosevelt succeeded President McKinley in September 1901. Individually and collectively these men defined the fine arts during the Roosevelt administration and shaped the President's ideas about the White House, the L'Enfant plan, and Washington, D.C.
27. Chief in the minds of these men were the prescience and genius of Pierre L'Enfant. They lamented the fragmented landscaping of the Mall and the improbable railroad station placed right before the Capitol. They focused on restoring L'Enfant's vision, opened streets that had been closed and extended the grid in areas nearing development.
28. What McKim, Burnham, St. Gaudens and Olmsted did was to overlay on the original L'enfant Plan a Beaux-Arts City Beautiful sensibility. In a sense it was the overlay of 19th century neo-classical practices on an 18th century humanistic approach. The brilliance of the L'enfant plan and the sympathy between the two methods enabled the McMillan Commission to seamlessly incorporate changes to the plan that amplified its merits and extended its scope.
29. The McMillan Commission plans re-landscaped the ceremonial core, the Capitol Grounds and Mall, extended the Mall to the west and created the Lincoln Memorial, Federal triangle, the House and Senate Office Buildings, the Supreme Court, the National Archives, National Gallery, Arlington Cemetery, Memorial Bridge, the GW Parkway, Circle Fort Parks, the Mt. Vernon Parkway and new monuments and vistas; indeed many if not most of the most beautiful buildings and landscapes of Washington DC as we

know it. This legacy was continued by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, whose art teacher was none other than Dr. Charles Moore.

30. To protect the goals introduced by the McMillan study, Congress established in 1910, the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) which was to review all buildings, bridges, parks, monuments, and other artistic matters in the District. The National Capitol Parks Commission became the National Capitol Planning Commission.³ The charge of the agencies responsible for design review is to provide constant vigilance and to continue the vision of L'Enfant. Two hundred years since its design, the integrity of the plan of Washington is largely unimpaired-boasting landscaped parks, wide avenues, and open vistas. For nearly 100 years, a legal height limit of 160' has preserved the humanistic ambiance of the city, allowing light and air to reach the pedestrian level, and resulting in a picturesque skyline pierced by steeples, domes, towers and monuments.
31. Washington DC is thus heir to the classical tradition in planning and architecture. The geometric order and logical principles of the 1793 L'enfant Plan are the "DNA of the City". The 1901 McMillan (Senate Park Commission) interpretation of the L'enfant Plan and the Commission's own proposals provide a basis for the continued development of Washington DC.
32. With those thoughts in mind, we started the BUILD DC initiative. Our objective is to build on the successes of the L'enfant Plan and McMillan Plans. Our goal is to assist in developing a 100-Year Plan for urbanism and architecture in the District of Columbia and to provide the overarching principles that will be at the heart of District planning to enable healthy growth, provide longevity and promote timeless beauty into the 22nd Century. We intend to collaborate with citizens, professionals and NGOs as well as agencies, universities and preservation groups.
33. The original idea was to have the creative work take place in a series of charrettes and be packaged in the studios of the participants. The Charettes were to liberate the citizens of DC – counter to the preferences of the trained modernist experts - to freely choose traditional and classical architectures for our public buildings and spaces. It was expected that the project would last about 18-24 months and qualify for an exhibit at the Building Museum as well as hanging full-size block-long façade canvases with our proposed elevations at chosen locations in the City. Imagine cladding L'enfant Plaza or K Street with a classical *bekleidung!* We chose to be inclusive and were careful to move slowly on all fronts.
34. In WINTER 2005-2006 we held a series of preliminary meetings where ICA&CA, NCAS and CNU members presented their work. Memorable among these presentations were that of Greg Moore, great-

³ This distinction parallels the abdication of the discipline of planning originally dominated by landscapers whose sensibilities were firmly rooted in the experience of place, and its occupation by organized modernists (CIAM) with their fondness for abstraction and opaque professional jargon.

grandson of Dr. Charles Moore's, Dhiru Thadani's extensive analyses and plans of DC, Rob Goodill of Torti Gallas's innovative work, the architecture and urban design of Franck Lohsen McCrery, the monuments proposed by Michael Curtis, and especially a talk by one of this city's most visionary and capable public servants, Dan Tangherlini, who presented DDOT's Great Streets Initiative.

The initial enthusiasm led us to begin organizing the process and from MARCH 6, 2006 a steering committee began meeting regularly at Restore Media's offices in Georgetown, courtesy of Pete Miller. We studied the L'enfant Plan, read the McMillan Plan and planned the planning. ⁴

35. Week after week after week our energy was consumed by planning and organizing. We made endless lists of organizational tasks. We needed to gather the citizens, experts, politicians. We needed to connect with other organizations, obtain funding and find studio space. But we were volunteers – busy at work, with families, teaching and other obligations. It was frustrating because we never got to do that which we love – to design.
36. A moment of fun in all this was when we toured the Civil War era Circle Forts Parks and some of the major axes leading in and out of the District. We got a sense of the topography, the genius loci of these forts which occupied and commanded the landscape. We observed potential boundaries, gateways and major axes to be defined.
37. We held a charrette launch in late APRIL 2006 at the offices of the Commission of Fine Arts, successor to the McMillan Commission. We were welcomed by Commission Secretary Tom Leubke and we heard three fascinating lectures: Iris Miller spoke about the L'Enfant Plan and maps of DC, Don Hawkins about L'Enfant's Geometry and Tony Simon of the CFA about the McMillan Plan. We had a group dinner in Chinatown and convened the next day at the office of David M. Schwarz for a working session. We agreed upon the **BUILD DC Design Principles**
1. BUILD DC takes the 100 year perspective.
 2. The Federal District was formed around the persona of George Washington. It is based on the stability of humanistic values.
 3. The L'enfant Plan is the urban DNA of the District of Columbia.
 4. The McMillan Commission's interpretation of the L'Enfant Plan and the Commission's own proposals provide a basis for the continued development of the City.
 5. The sustainability and timeless design at any scale will be judged for its Firmness, Commodity and Delight, where:

⁴ Members included: Stephanie Bothwell, Larry Brady, Kalinda Brown, Nir Buras, Michael Curtis, Julia Garza, Iris Miller, Alex Moll, Virendra Rawat, and Everett Schram

- Firmness = longevity and sustainability.
- Commodity = functional flexibility, easy to adapt and regionally appropriate.
- Delight = timelessness and beauty.

38. The planners among us encouraged the team to expand the scope to include the entire region short of Baltimore. We started preparing for a regional charrette and looked to base our work on CNU Charter principles and on ULI's "Reality Check" initiative. We were briefed by Laura Cole of ULI. We discussed regional design vs. regional planning and set up tasks and teams.

39. Building momentum for the regional charette Stephanie Bothwell convened us in early JUNE 2006 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Georgetown to hear Dan Tangherlini discuss regional transportation. We reconvened in late JUNE, 2006 at the Lyceum in Alexandria and heard two presentations. Calder Loth, Senior Architectural Historian of the State of Virginia spoke of Washington's "Spirit of Place" as the "City of Magnificent Intentions." According to Loth, Washington is supposed to set examples of great architecture and urban design. He found in its iconic monuments (Lincoln, museums, National Gallery) to its unique parks (Meridian Hill) Places of Great Spirit which offer inspiration and aspiration, standards of good taste and places of spiritual nourishment.

40. John Bailey, Executive director of the Smart Growth Alliance presented Reality Check, a 2005 regional planning Conference. A diverse group of regional decision makers convened to face the question "where will 2 million new people and 1.6 million jobs to?" The vast majority called for a more intentional pattern of development and envisioned a region that is more convenient and more walkable, one that provides greater access to parks and natural areas, more travel and housing choices. We did, however define some basic design issues which became more detailed design guidelines later in our process, namely

- 1. Rivers Run Through it: From Sandy Bank to Urban Waterfront.**
- 2. Strengthen Network of Green Space and Parkland**
- 3. Convert Freeways into Greenways and Develop a Network of Parkways**
- 4. Introduce a Regional Transit System**
- 5. Develop Regional Gateways and Portals**
- 6. Induce and Strengthen Villagization**
- 7. Feedback to Urban Design Principles**

41. After the presentations the group headed for a nearby Tapas restaurant to enjoy drinks and dinner. The conversation was lively and midway through dinner a Latin band began to play music with an irresistible beat. It was not long before Stephanie Bothwell led the group to the dance floor. In the six months of Build DC the best fun was the dancing.

42. Although at the Lyceum we had a larger turnout than at any other event, we had lost the designers and the first charrette was nowhere in sight. We had never gotten the schedule, the budget, and the connections to work. We didn't have the resources to create a business plan and obtain funding, to create the alliances and make it a truly a community effort. We had a great idea but between the Katrina Charrettes and everyone being busy at work – remember we are volunteers - we simply couldn't prepare a charrette. I was discouraged beyond words and couldn't face another Steering Committee meeting. On the allotted Monday the Committee went to a Georgetown bar, ordered Martinis and changed course.
43. We realized that in the long run, for BUILD DC to be a civic effort rather than an academic one we needed to do it right. For starters we agreed that we were going to do it as a classical / traditional endeavor and damn the torpedoes. More to the point, we were going to have fun. We needed to create, to draw and to attract positive attention that way. We needed results, we needed to be productive and we needed time. We moved from a charrette organization and decided to commence designing in an open design process which promised to be an opportunity to share ideas and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow designers.
44. We took a few weeks off and then convened for the MIDATLANTIC CHAPTER OF THE INSTITUTE OF CLASSICAL ARCHITECTURE AND CLASSICAL AMERICA'S OPEN URBAN DESIGN STUDIO – BUILD DC. The drawing began on a Saturday in July which was generously hosted at Daniel Lee's offices in Alexandria.
45. We already knew our Principles by heart:
1. We take the 100 year perspective.
 2. Planning in the Federal District is based on humanistic values.
 3. The L'enfant Plan is the urban DNA.
 4. The McMillan Commission's proposals provide a basis for continued development.
 5. Design will be judged on Firmness, Commodity and Delight:
 - Firmness = longevity and sustainability.
 - Commodity = loose fit and adaptability.
 - Delight = timelessness and beauty.
46. We gathered around at the map of DC and asked, what is the single greatest challenge facing the City of Washington and the District of Columbia? What could we as a group of people with an inherited body of knowledge that seems to have yielded good results over the last 2000 years or so do for the City?

47. We looked at the map and saw that there was already in place a fantastic grid system and that the National Mall was already in place, albeit incomplete. We saw those great buildings, the Lincoln Memorial, Federal Triangle, The National Gallery, Rock Creek Park as brilliant jewels in the urban setting and beautiful neighborhoods. We saw GW Parkway, Memorial Bridge, Arlington Cemetery, the Senate and House Office Buildings by Carrère and Hastings, Olmstead's Capitol precinct and National Mall, the Grant Memorial.

48. Some of us sitting around the table saw the map upside-down and what they saw was that Anacostia, an enormous part of the City, is not only on the other side of a river which cuts it two, but that it could be on another planet for all practical purposes. What we saw was a gash in the urban fabric. Through it ran the Anacostia River and along both its sides was a mile-wide no-man's land running through the city bounded by freeways and open spaces north and south.

49. The disconnect between the center city and Anacostia is DC's worst urban, social and political problem. We realized that what this city needs both literally and figuratively is a healing act, a stitching together of a rent in the fabric. It was as if we were surgeons about to sew up a gaping wound.

50. Conscious of the context, we knew that whatever we did

- a. Not a single resident should be displaced and
- b. That in the act of City Building we would have to encapsulate the myriad memories linked to the river and its shores and adjacent neighborhoods and commemorate them in monuments and streets rather than in books and minds. Building memory into the fabric, healing the gaping wound with a common heritage with memory and with meaning.
- c. Obviously we are no messianic avant-garde so we rejected the arrogant top-down dictating to people what they needed and what was right for them.

51. We looked at the Anacostia River. As traditionalists we have in our classical quiver no small number of rivers that are successfully integrated in the life, love, commerce and mythology of a town. So what was our paradigm?

52. There is certainly a strong French Connection here. In the first place, L'enfant was French, and the approach of the McMillan Commission was also based on an essentially French Beaux-Arts methodology in which the Commission members were trained.

53. Indeed the McMillan Commission looked at the treatment of the Seine at Paris and the Danube at Vienna and Budapest as viable precedents for designing the urban riverfront in DC. Because of the "French connection" which included Anacostia expatriates in Paris the Seine came to mind as a viable precedent for BDC.

54. Let's compare the two urban river sections:
- The Seine is 500 feet wide; the Anacostia River 1000.
 - Paris has a bridge on the Seine every ¼ mile; Washington has one about every mile along the Anacostia.
 - Most if not all the bridges in Paris are easily crossed by foot; it is virtually impossible for a pedestrian to cross the Anacostia.
 - SW and SE DC have freeways that literally cut the city up so that between the SW Freeway and the 295 is a mile swath much of which is no-man's land.
55. The Anacostia River was discussed in the McMillan report. At the time, it was “a freshwater estuary with a normal depth of 3 feet with reeking mudflats upon which aquatic plants entangle further deposits of mud slime and putrid organic matter.” Above ordinary high water level were broad marshes and meadows flooded at varying intervals which whenever the Potomac rose. Malaria was rampant, severely affecting the people at St. Elizabeth's Mental Hospital, Navy Yard, Washington Barracks, etc.
56. The McMillan Commission proposed to do away with the low amphibious areas adjacent to the City and convert them to commercial water frontage as well as using some reclaimed lands as a park. They proposed to bodily adopt for the commercial section of the river a plan by Colonel Allen who in 1898 called for dredging a channel and reclaiming the mud-flats of the Anacostia up to Benning's Bridge.
57. Col Allen's plan contemplated the dredging of an adequate channel and the filling of the remaining flats and land to a level 14 feet above low water, using the reclaimed land for commercial purposes. The Commission estimated that the development of the city “would increase the waterfront of the city by 143%; or if the Anacostia side be included by 301% - enough to provide for any probable development without further extension.”
58. They proposed that all the flats would be dredged out to 12 feet depth providing deep clean water while the dredging would fill the commercial section. The fragments of flats not excavated were proposed to be filled in to create islands and that some tidal meadows upstream would be retained to preserve this charming feature of the natural scenery.
59. The BUILD DC - OPEN STUDIO took the basic ideas found in the McMillan report and applied them to an urban plan that stitches together this gash in the urban and community fabric of Washington DC. We sought a paradigm which is sufficient to address the City Building needs of DC and maintained Washington's rightful place in the community of Great Cities. It was imperative that the plan

- a. Does not require the displacement of citizens
- b. Can be funded from the project itself
- c. Opens up center-city resources on a scale hitherto unimaginable.
- d. Includes and transcends recently considered plans
- e. Creates truly special places that enhance that which makes DC unique

60. In generating a river alignment we discovered

- That Naval Basin created an opportunity for a great aquatic urban space.
- That City Building and landscaping principles suggested the transformations of tidal islands and mudflats into Arboretum Island and East Capitol Island.
- That the mouth of the Anacostia at the Potomac is an opportunity for a great aquatic gateway to the City at the conjoining of the local Anacostia and the nationally symbolic Potomac.
- That the extension of the L'enfant grid and generated special places that could be naturally inhabited by memorials and monuments.
- That the traditionalist perspective, to say nothing of global warming, led us to take into account not only the 100 year flood, but suggest looking at the implications of a 1000 year flood

61. Looking at the site we saw that

- Numerous bridges would be needed to bind together the urban fabric, to literally stitch the gap in the community
- Freeways had to be eliminated and the mile-wide swath of land on either side of the river reclaimed
- The L'enfant grid could easily be extended to the new river banks
- Local memories, river stories and myths could be memorialized in the streets and plazas of the reclaimed land.
- Easily accessible neighborhood urban parks, boulevards and promenades, required to retain a high percentage of green space in the City, were easy to lay out.
- The Arboretum and the Aquatic Gardens formed continuous parkland reinstating the native landscape of the Anacostia.

62. In looking at the typical sections of the riverfront quays we were once again inspired by the McMillan Plan:

63. The McMillan Commission envisioned for Washington river-front quays for commercial uses on a lower level and a park drive and promenade on an upper level. The park drive and promenade would be “carried through at the landward side of the quay proper, between it and the commercial establishments at a higher level with frequent arched openings underneath for the transfer of goods and possibly also for storage purposes.”

64. They had a detailed vision: “Separated by the difference in level from actual conflict with the pleasure travel, the activity of the waterfront would really add to the interest of the parkway and give a character to it possessed by no other in this country. In several European river cities, notably Paris, Vienna and Budapest there are such combinations of a commercial quay with a promenade at a higher level and they form in many cases the most popular and delightful resorts for the people, but in no case we believe, are the conditions so favorable as at Washington... in the main the project here set forth is unquestionably practiceable, and would provide at once the most convenient and most agreeable treatment ...”

65. We adopted this idea for its functional commodity as well as for its metaphorical meaning. Indeed in the humanistic/ classical world man and nature always meet at a line, be it a garden wall, a city wall or a sea wall. The Seine, Central Park, the National Mall, Ryoan-ji, the Taj Mahal and every other Islamic garden, they all meet nature at a line, much like how our skin meets the exterior world. This is functional and profound. Romantics mistakenly take this metaphor to reflect man’s alienation from nature. In fact it enables the control in proximity to civilization of natural forces occurring, the power of which could obliterate human creation and memory. And isn’t city building an act of creating and maintaining a community both physically and spiritually?

66. Most significantly, an urban river provides at once an interface and a separation, conjoining in one place of the right and left sides of the human experience.

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The traditional approach provides:

- a. Firmness and Sustainability through the
- b. Continuity of fabric accommodating functional and symbolical political and social healing
- c. Continuity of urban development integral to the DNA of the City
- d. Provides innumerable opportunities for delight, not an abstraction that is old before it is unveiled.
- e. Enables the creation and maintenance of public memory – the original reason for City Building.

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Conclusions:

- We need to seek beauty as a healer – socially, in our physical environments and physically in our day-to-day experience.
- We propose that Classical and Traditional paradigms are vitally necessary to create significant buildings, cities and monuments as opposed to just another set of hollow contemporary icons unrelated to the past.
- Our City Building should adopt a 100 year perspective as only the long-term view can eliminate the political pressures which tie the hands of decision-makers.

- This Work has to be done not by technicians and bureaucrats but by designers, trained in the classical tradition who are equipped with the necessary tools for tackling the specific problems and contexts of Washington
- Is there any tried and true successful method other than the classical/ traditional approach for dealing appropriately with a context as rich and as meaningful as DC?

There are Challenges Ahead

- Fundraising.
- The studio is looking for a permanent space.
- Outreach to agencies, NGOs and Universities.
- Production and design - This will be a long term effort.
- Ultimate adoption by the Community, City Council and Congress.

67. Therefore the MA-ICA&CA UDS is at the disposal of Congress, the NCPC, the CFA, DC's City Council, and COG to assist in developing a vision for the city for the next 100 years. Our work will continue to be based on universal values and timeless principles of Liberty, Beauty, Democracy, Humanism, Fraternity, Good Building Practice, Equality, Intelligence, and Common Sense. We will continue our MA-ICA&CA UDS activities and will keep you posted.

Thank you.