# *Retrofitting the Suburban Landscape:*

*Creating Place Where None Exists*

# ***Buras Architecture:*** *Responsive and Practical*

Buras Architecture is a leader in modern medium and large scale traditional & classical buildings, planning and interiors. The universal preference for traditional environments guarantees human well-being and performance in buildings, plans and interiors we create.

Our proprietary design methods attain functional flexibility and provide clients with a predictable outcome within 10% accuracy regarding use and experience while reducing the requirements for environmental systems. They are based on the benefits of what every person intuitively holds to be true and which we have scientifically established.

Classic Planning and Design increase utility and profit in buildings, plans and development, enhance individual performance at work, study, recreation, or at home; all while offering 100-year sustainability. Surprisingly, construction costs are equal to or less than conventional construction.

Buras Architecture offers you the opportunity to do good while doing well.

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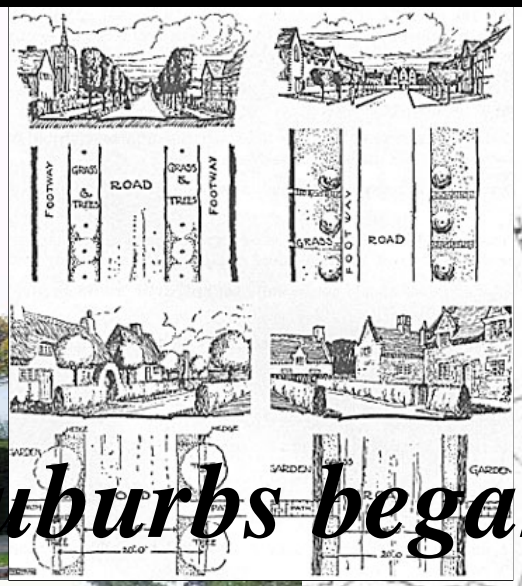
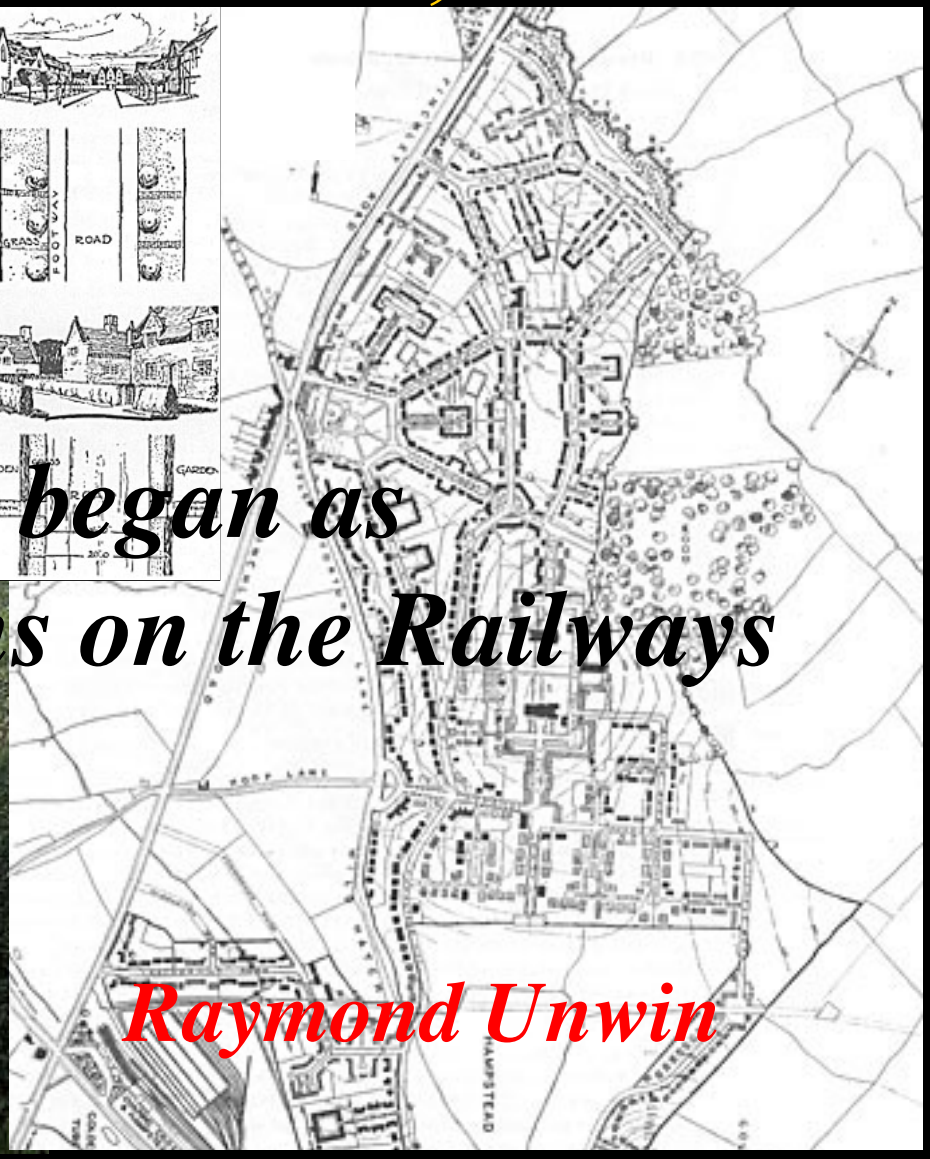
# *Hampstead Garden Suburb, UK*



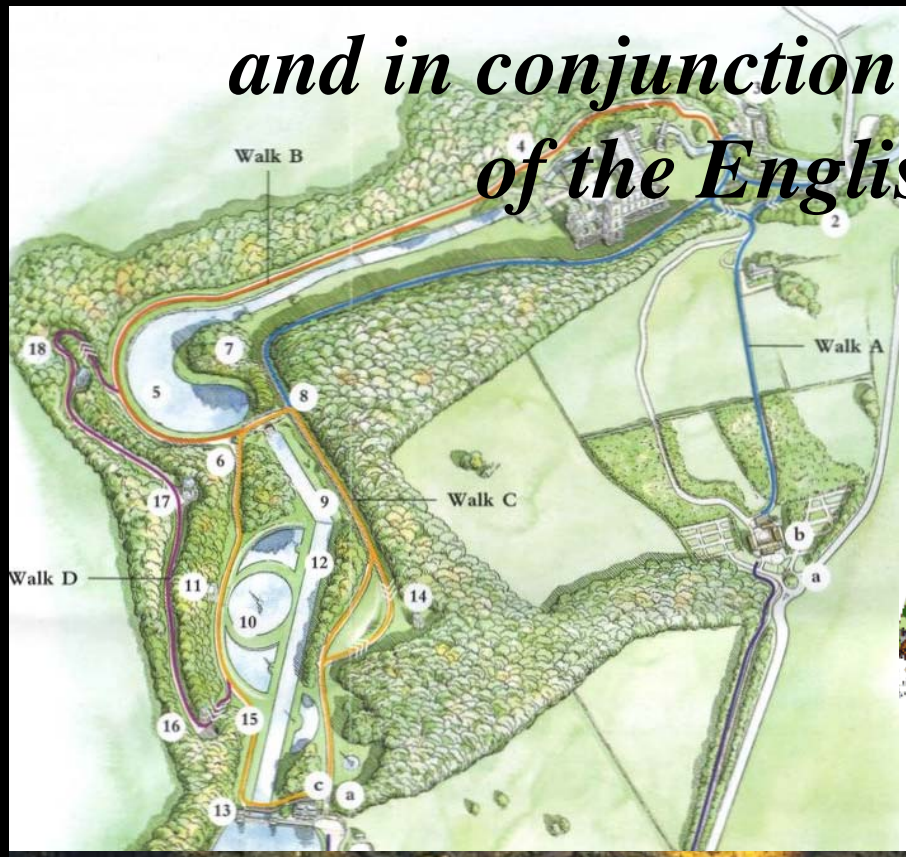


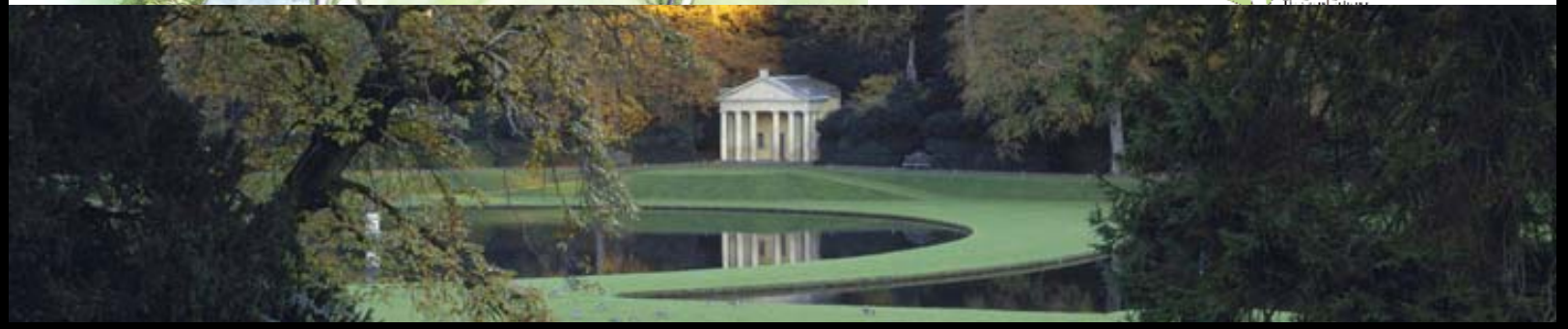

***Suburbs began as full-service towns on the Railways***

***Raymond Unwin***

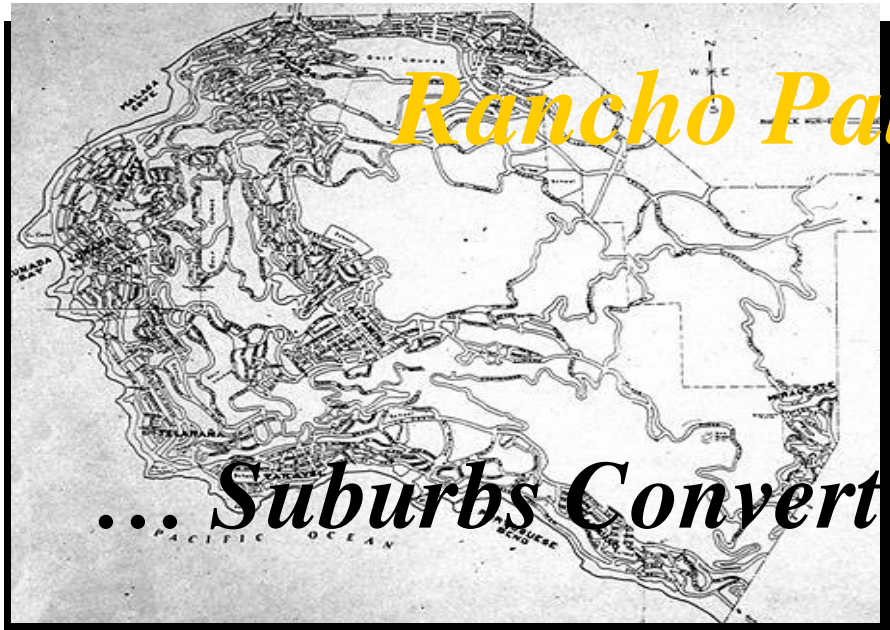
# *But… with the advent of the car*

## *and in conjunction with the idea of the English Park*





# Rancho Palos Verdes, CA



## … Suburbs Converted to Car Suburbs…

## However still complete with the full amenities of a town

# *From the good desire of …*

***A single family home "in the country" on the edge of town***

***… and the car-inspired illusion that …***

***One could drive to fulfill basic shopping, educational, civic, and religious needs***

***Suburban development after World War Two manifested a parallel renunciation of the landscaping and architectural values which had guided the original suburbs, and the surrender of social ideals by the owners and developers.***

***Suburbs consisted almost entirely of conventional houses for sale with little or no attempt to create a beautiful, sustainable, full-service, organic environment.***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# *Thus we came to…*

# *Sub-Urbia,*

## *Unsustainable, Unwalkable, Unserviced, Monoculture, Monofunction.*

## *By 1950, 60% of the US population lived in Sub – Urbia.*

***Fact is that…***

***In an attempt to protect itself from***

***the failure of Modern Planning, decimated cities and sprawl,***

***society put in place Zoning, Regulations and Laws***

***of unprecedented volume and complexity.***

***Newer Urbanisms and Leadership programs***

***offer even more codes, and more complexity.***


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*How many times have you looked at a plan and scratched your head?*

*How many times have you been confronted by an architect or planner telling you to do something in which you found no sense?*

*Well, I'm telling you that your intuition was correct.*

*Planning today seems complicated and appears to have little basis in common sense.*

*Then you have the ephemeralities of soft planning in the attempt to fix the errors in the field.*


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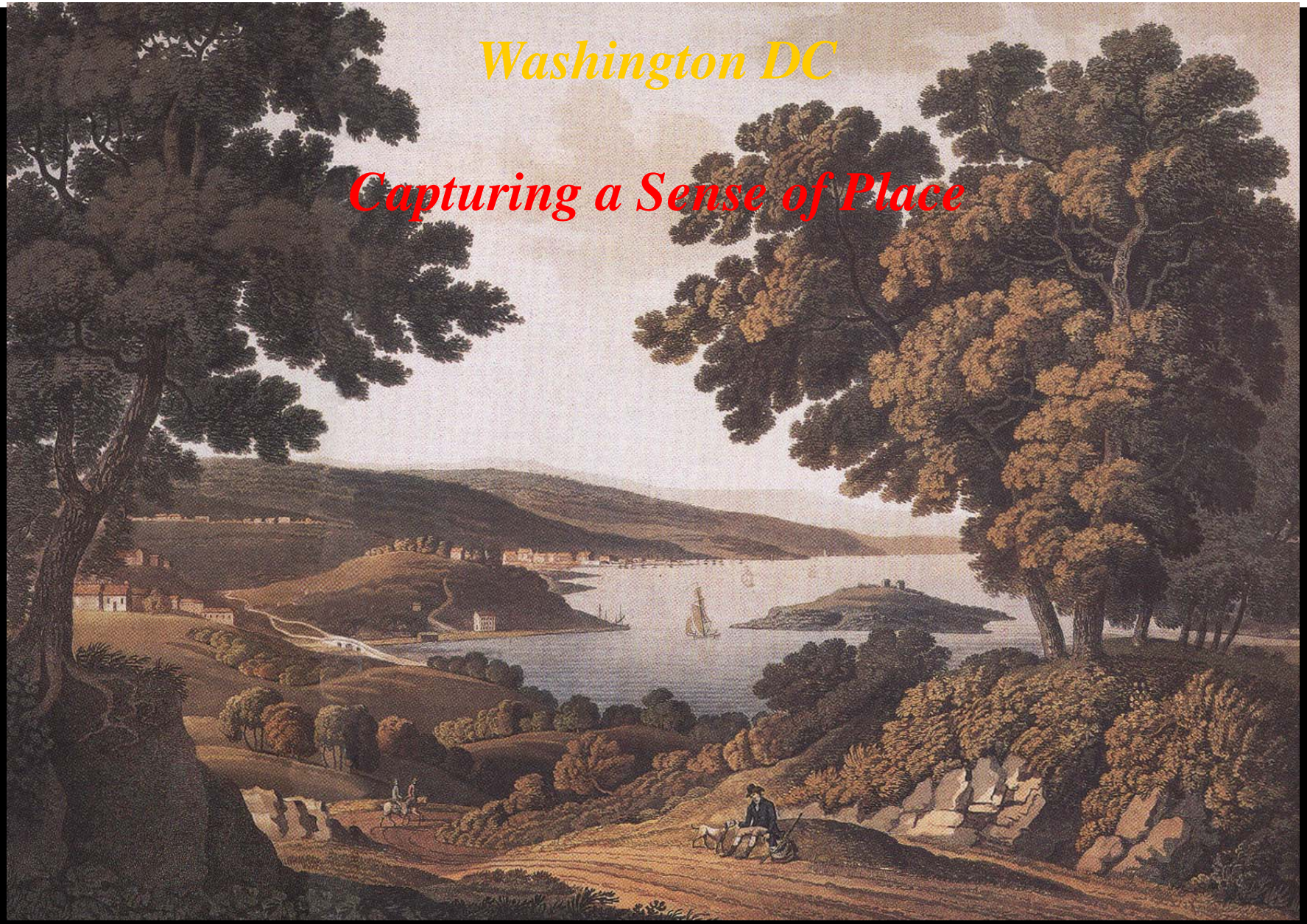
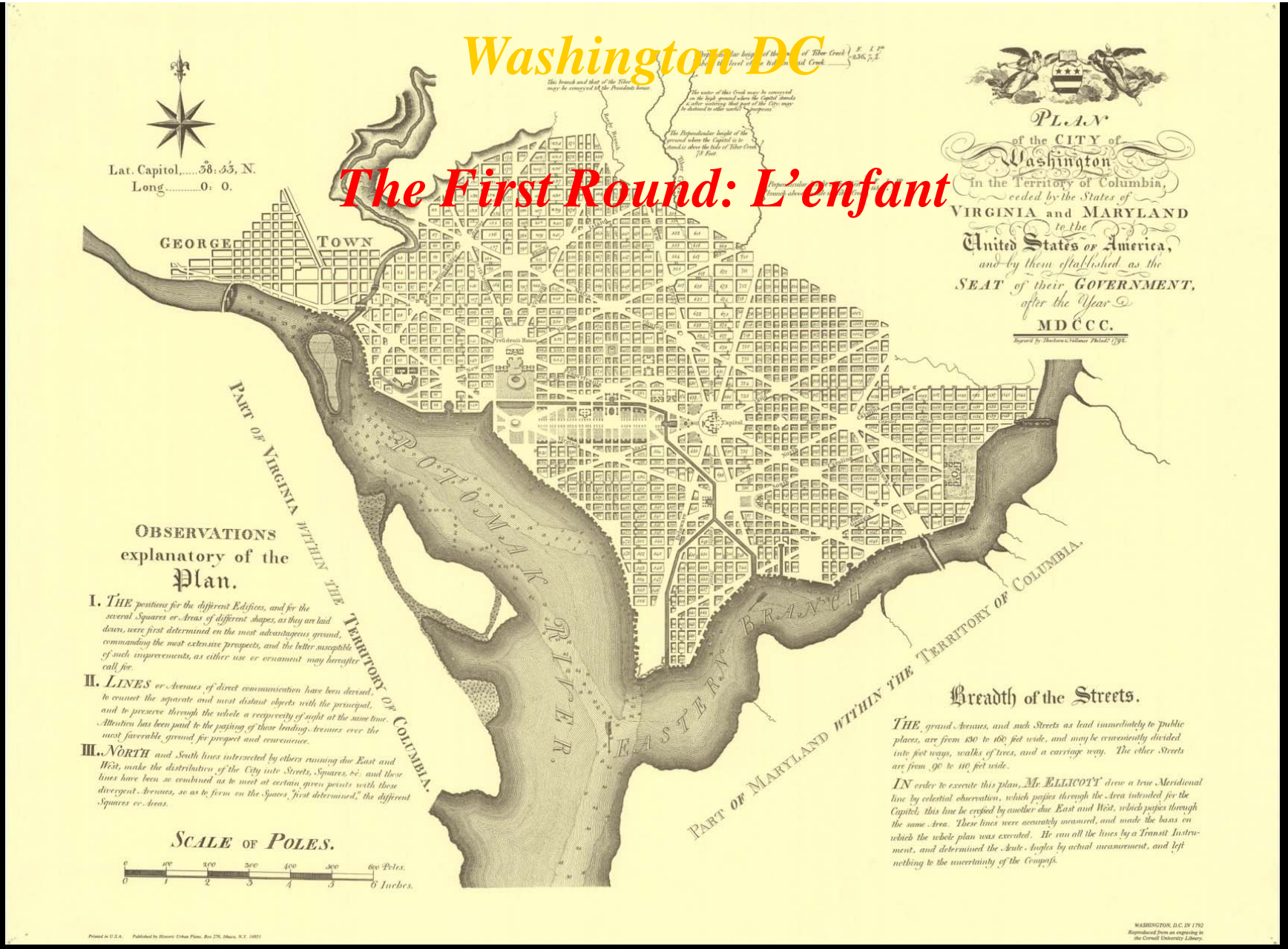
*A Common Sense Approach*

# *Classic Planning*


Washington DC
Capturing a Sense of Place

# Washington DC

## The First Round: L'enfant





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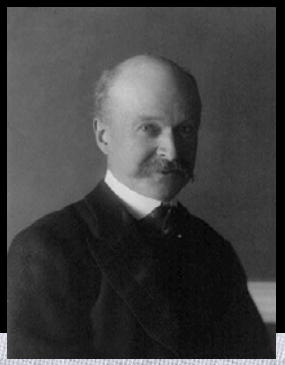
# *Washington DC*



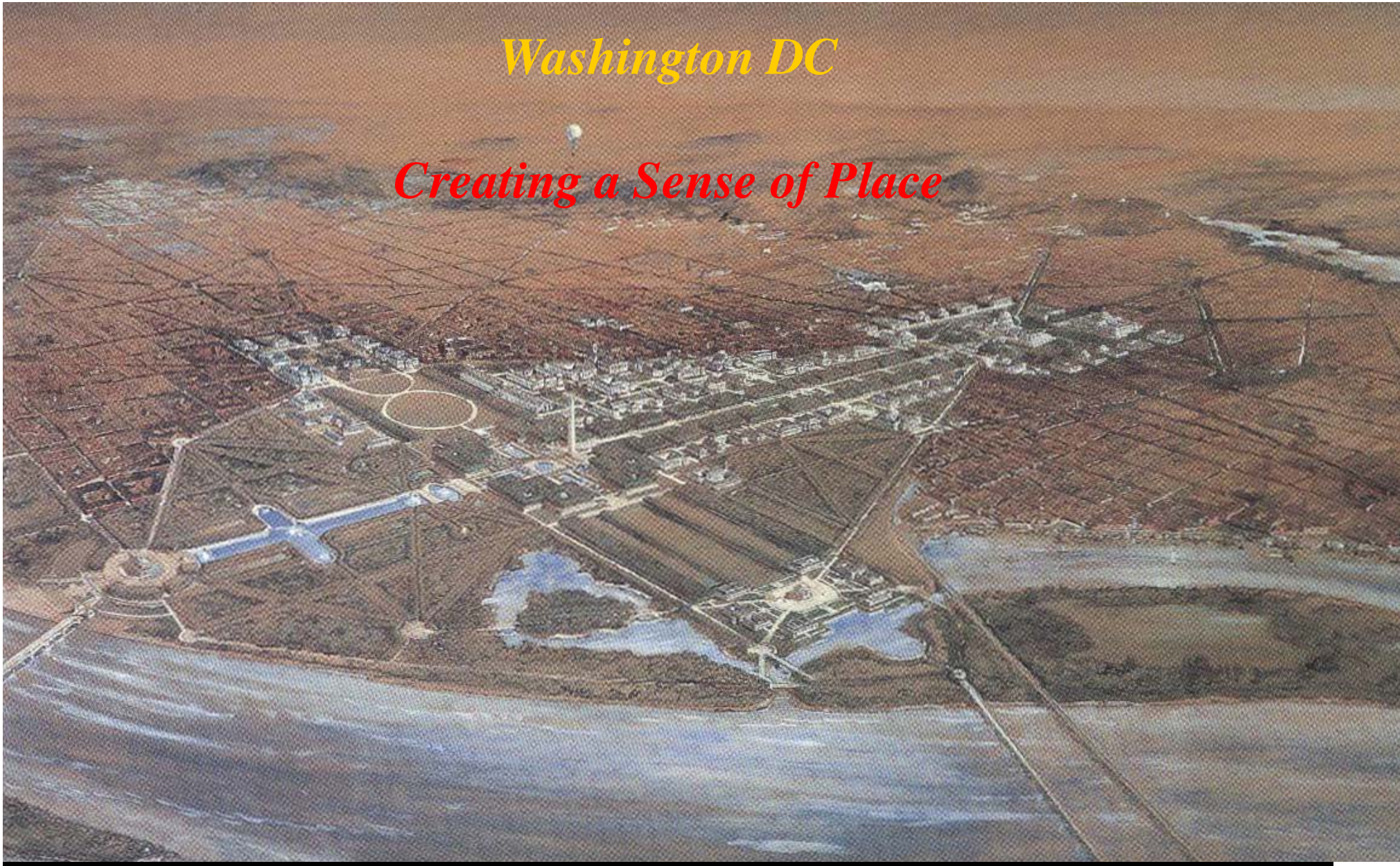
*St. Gaudens* *McKim* *Burnham* *Olmstead*

## *The Second Round: The McMillan Commission*

## *The "French Connection"*

# *Washington DC*

## *Creating a Sense of Place*



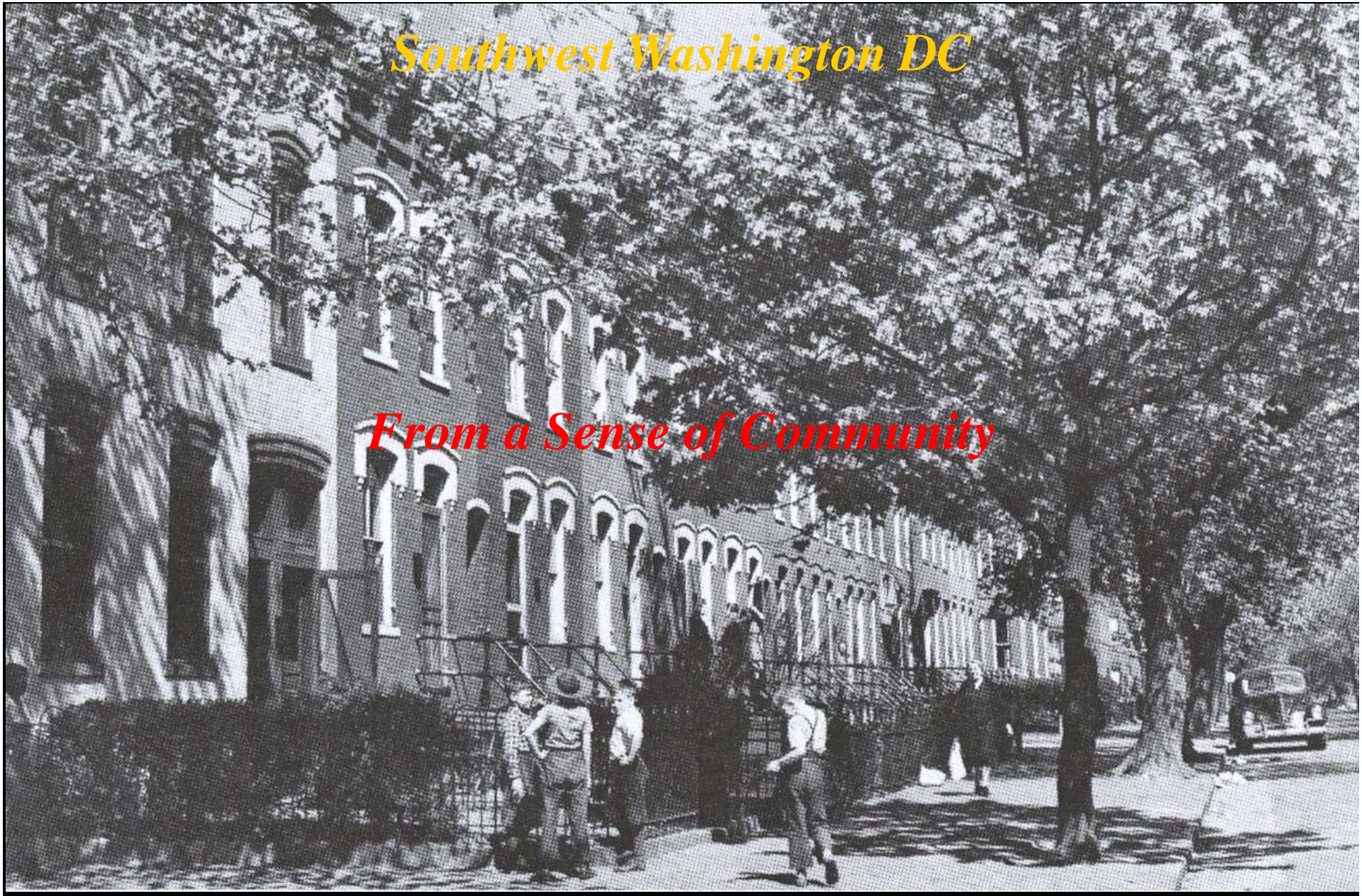
# *Washington DC*

## *A Legacy of Beauty*

Union Station, Washington DC
BEAUTIFUL, FUNCTIONAL, SUSTAINABLE PLACES

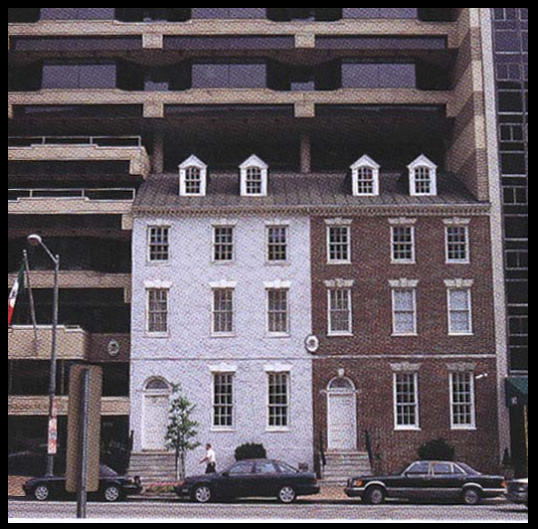
# *Southwest Washington DC*

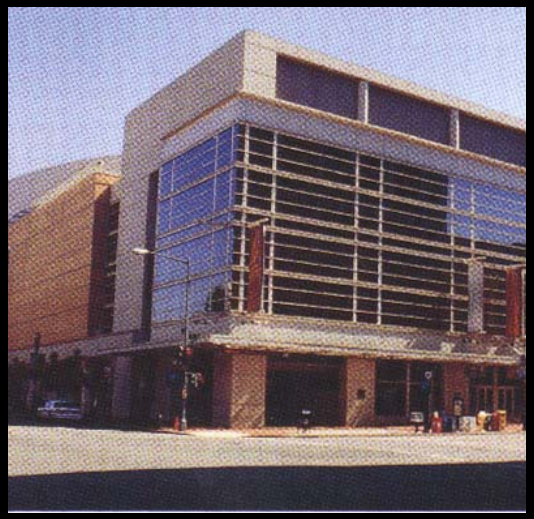
## *From a Sense of Community*



# *We came to This?*

## *What Exactly is This?*





And This?
Order and Cancer (?)

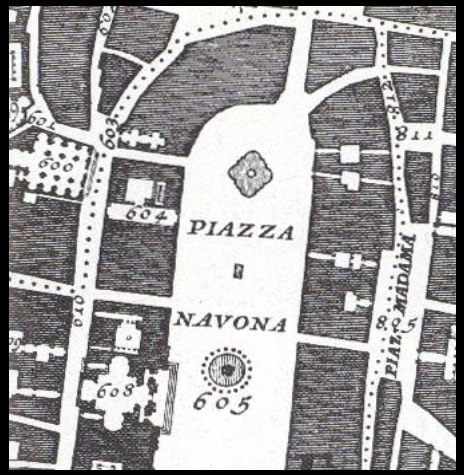
# *Washington DC*

## *The Third Round: McMillan II*

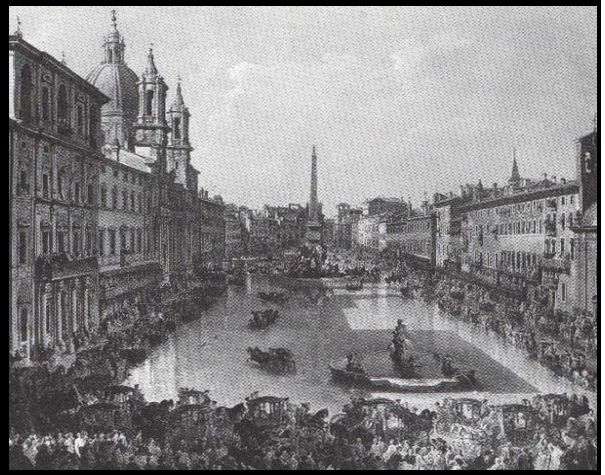
# *Classic Planning Tool Kit*

*Gerash, Jordan*

*Cardo, Gerash*




*Hippodrome, Rome*



*Piazza Navona, Rome*

*New Delhi, India*

# *Classic Planning Principles for Washington*

- We take the 100 year perspective.
- Planning is based on the stability of Humanistic values and the persona of George Washington.
- The Urban DNA of Washington is the L'enfant Plan.
- Continued development of the City follows the McMillan Commission's interpretation of the L'enfant Plan and its own proposals.
- To withstand the test of time, design at any scale will be judged on

  **Firmness** = longevity and sustainability.

  **Commodity** = functional flexibility, easy adaptation and regional appropriateness.

  **Delight** = timelessness and beauty.

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# The Purpose of Urbanism

## is to Design a Legacy of Beautiful Places

- The individual Sense of Beauty is non-intellectual, objective and universal.
- An experience of Beauty is directly related to individual well-being.

***Therefore beautiful places generate individual well-being.***

- When unpenalized, people choose beautiful places over others.

*They are therefore* ***functional and economical.***

- People maintain them for generations.

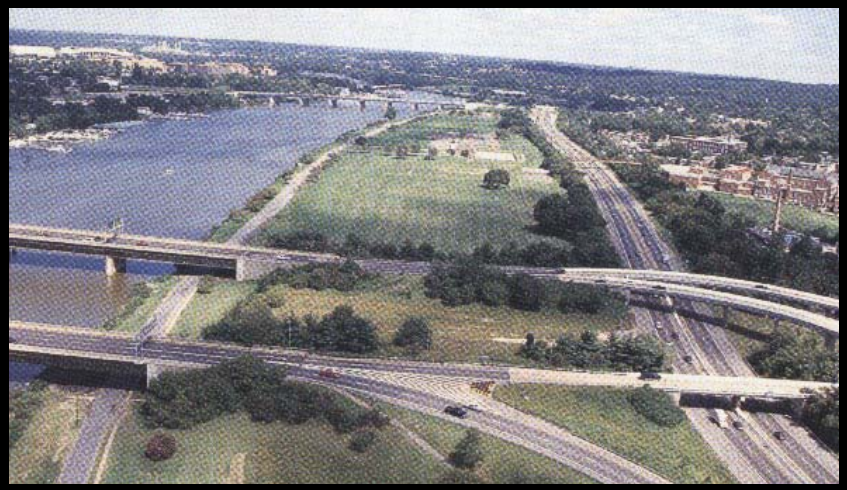
*They are* ***fundamentally sustainable.***

- Users seem generally less prone to aggression and less easy to victimize.

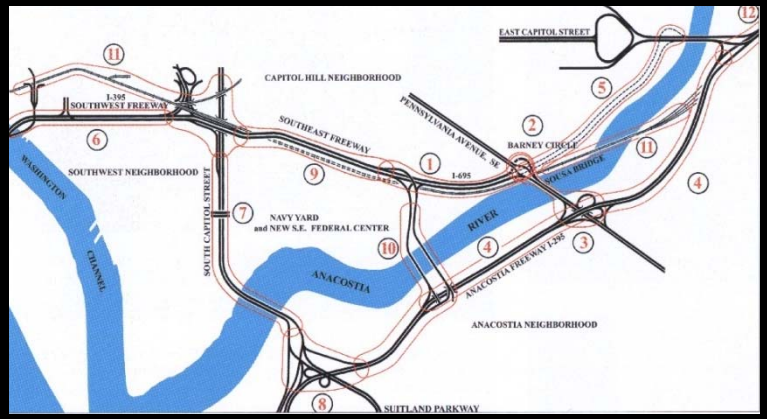
*They are* ***safer and calming, and encourage respect.***

- Beautiful spaces are beautiful regardless of their date of construction.

# *Washington DC*



## *Creating a Sense of Place Where None Exists*



# *The Seine as Precedent and Inspiration*

## *Anacostia and Seine Rivers Compared*

| | Anacostia | Seine |
|---|---|---|
| •Width | 1000 feet | 500 feet |
| •Bridge Frequency | 1 mile | ¼ mile |
| •Pedestrian access | 0 | all |
| •Freeways and RR | mile wide no-man's land | under quays |

•The SW and 295 Freeways literally cut the city up with a mile swath of no-man's land.

•Together they carry less traffic than the Champs Élysées

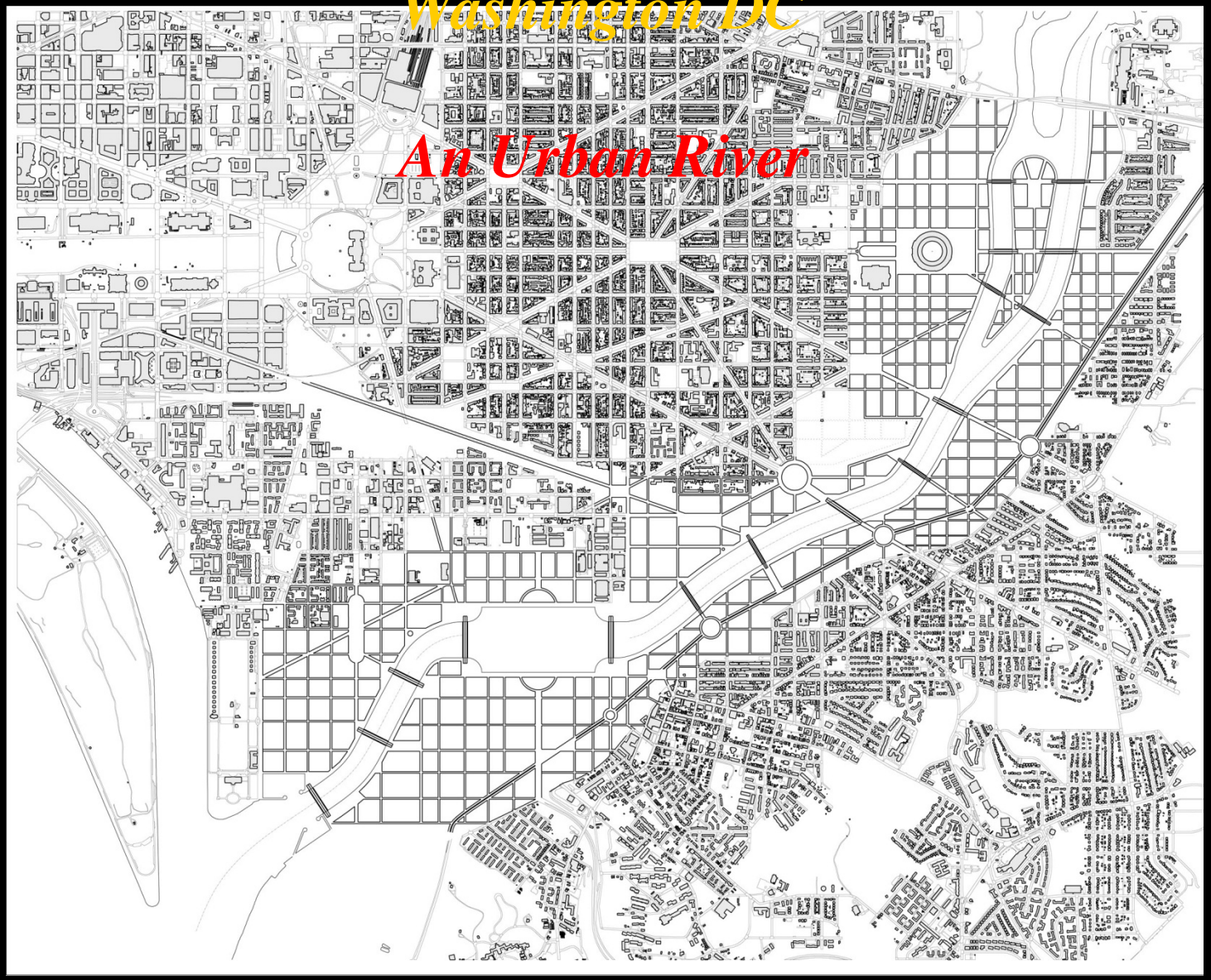
# *Washington DC*

## *Urban Design Goals*

- Not to displace a single citizen.
- Create socio-economic opportunity.
- Fund the project from the development itself.
- Create the types of places that make DC unique.
- Create center-city resources on a scale hitherto unimaginable.
- Be viable from a sustainable, Smart Growth, green point of view.

# Washington DC

## An Urban River





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# *Washington DC*

## *Stitching the Urban Wound*

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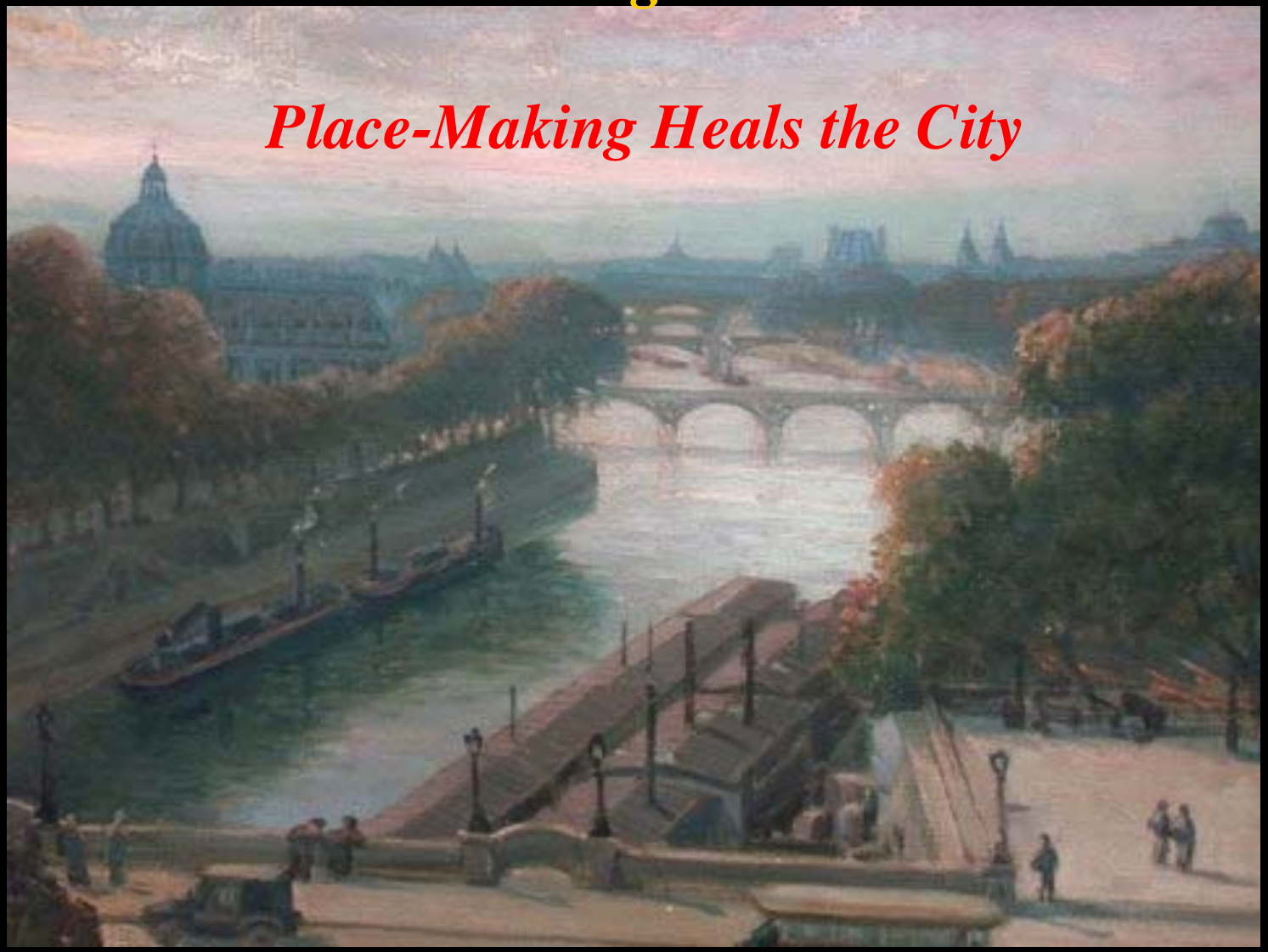
# *Washington DC*






*Copyright 2010*

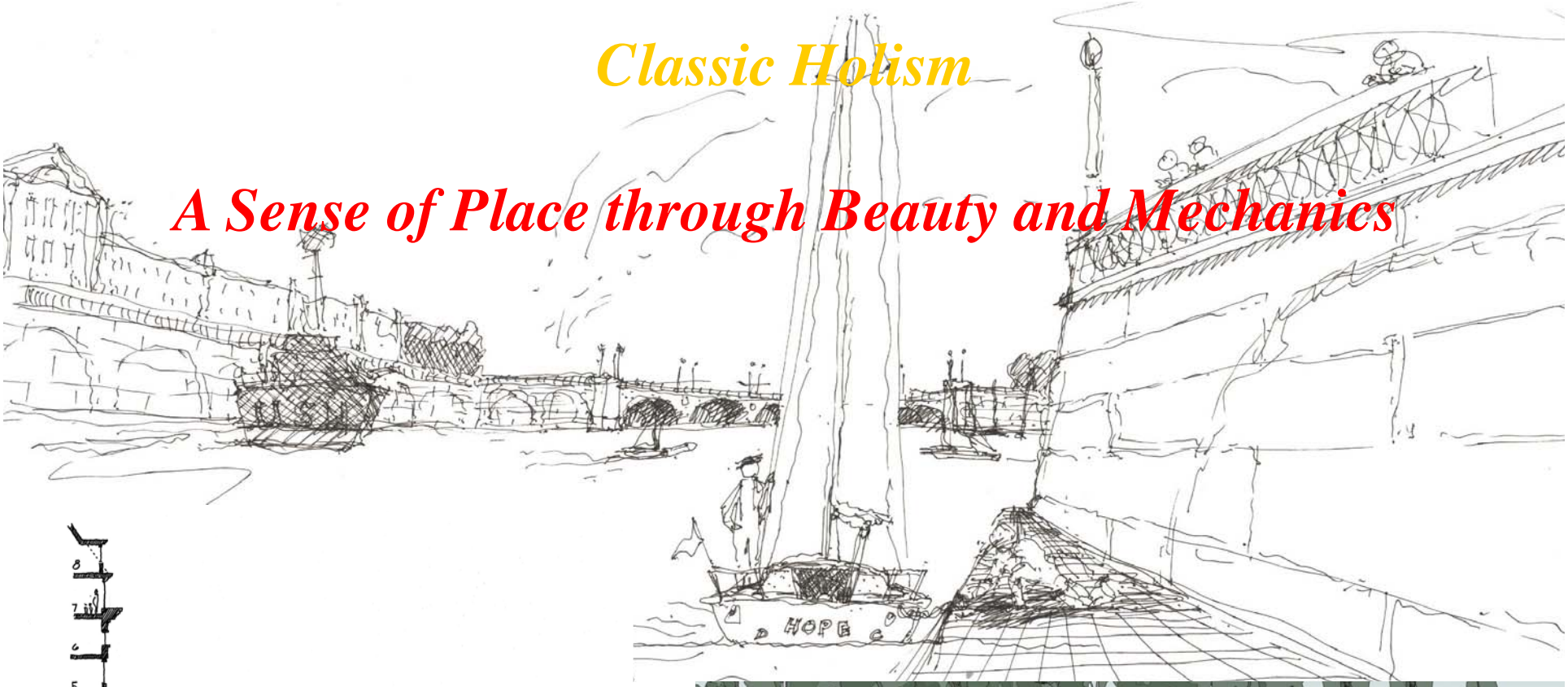
# *Classic Planning Values :*

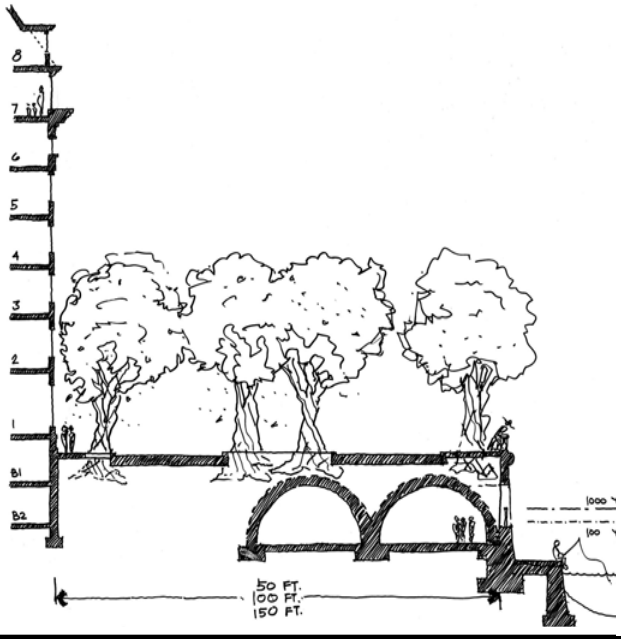
***Common Sense, Simplicity of Plan, Richness of Experience***

1. The common sense approach :
   - » **Simple plan**
   - » **Trad arch styles**
   - » **Do it right; build it right.**
2. Utter simplicity (KISS Principle):
   - » **3 types of BUILDINGS, ROOMS, STREETS:** **S M L**
4. Classic planning is perception-based and experiential:
   - » **Based on universal common instinctive human perceptual responses.**
   - » **Urban Architecture provides appropriate form & the experience of beauty.**
   - » **There is no good urbanism without good architecture.**
   - » **Classical and traditional designs make the best streets and places.**
   - » **An appropriate level of beauty will create a holistic synergetic outcome**
   - » **For well-being limit non-class-trad styles to 10-15% of the total**

# *Classic Holism*

## *A Sense of Place through Beauty and Mechanics*



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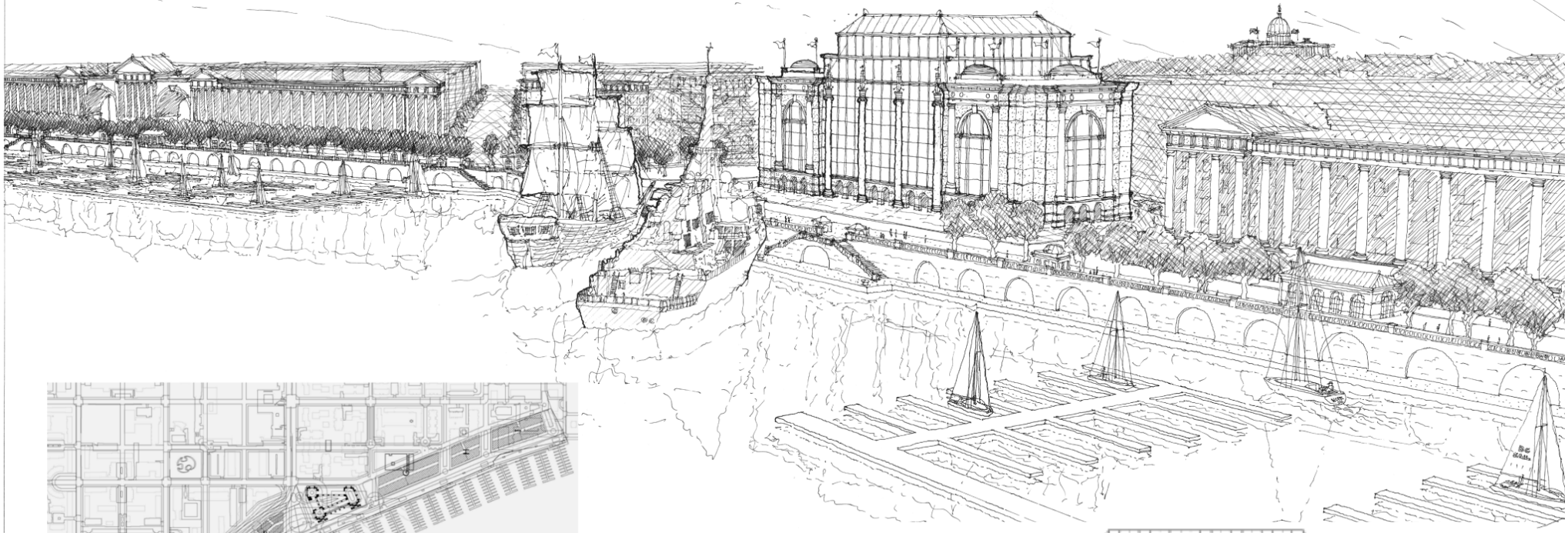
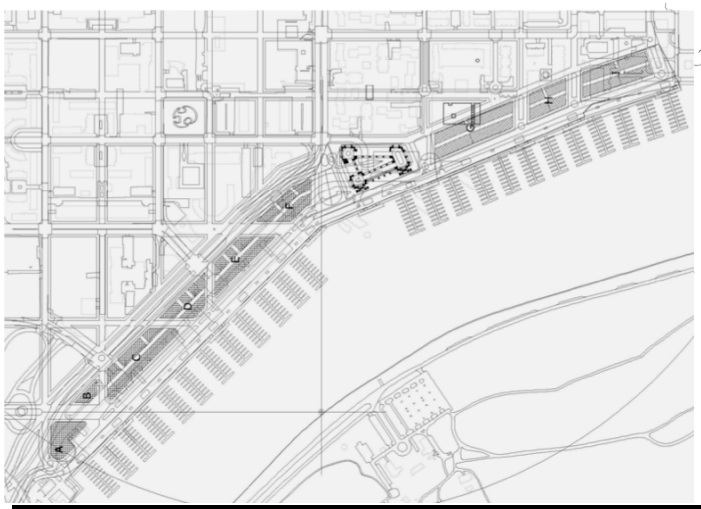
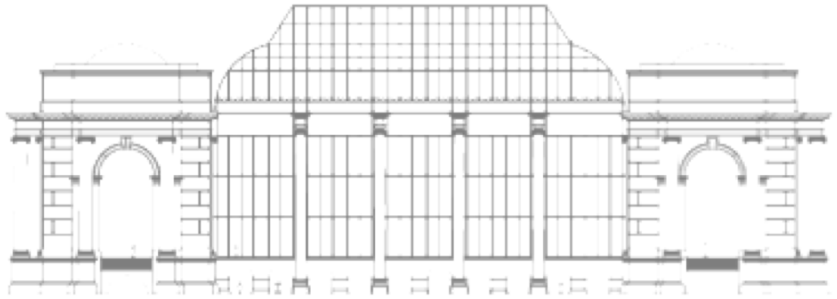
# *Washington DC*

## *Scale is Organic to Classic Planning*







# *Classic Planning Method:* *Simple and Practical*

**1. Intention** — In answer to the question "what is it", decide upon the motif/ theme/ driving feature of the design/ plan. Make do with the least acrobatics but go full-tilt on the "main event". Be consistent.

**2. Invention** — Apply an appropriate precedent dimensionally and adjust plan section and massing to location and circumstance (5% tolerance)

**3. Manifestation** — Elevate and detail fabric in appropriate pre 1927 style and adjust to the right level on the beauty scale.

**4. Execution** — Use modified traditional infrastructure engineering and construction techniques.

Use common sense to judge results. Every aspect must be judged on **Firmness, Commodity, Delight.**

Classic Planning

# *Classic Planning Method:* *Precedents are Practical*

**Precedent** operates like a musical score or movie script: the notes are the same but the production and direction create different results.

**In applying a precedent** you attain all its inherent holistic values including those that were the motivation for it in the first place.

***Be Practical.***
***Focus on experience based on successful precedents.***

# Sub-Urbia: Creating Place Where None Exists

## 3 Strategic Steps_

## I. Triage

## II. Villagization

## III. Classic Planning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# I. Triage: The 100 Year View

*In the 100-year view it is clear that some suburban communities will survive and can be developed, while others will be abandoned.*

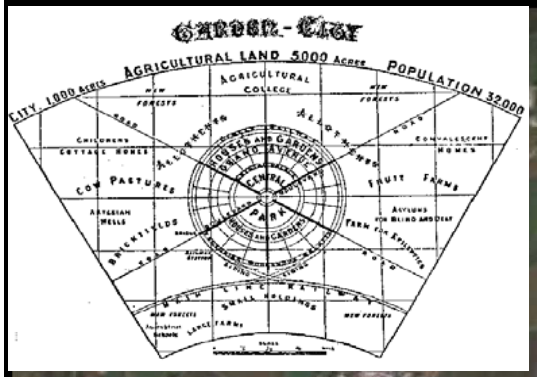
1. *Identify unsustainable locations.*
2. *Create phase out strategies for them.*
3. *Resubdivide to create farms, parks and large holdings*

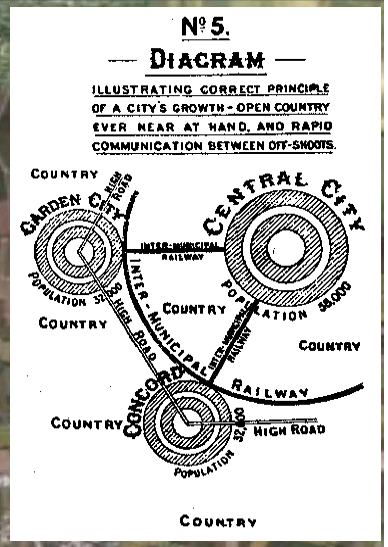
# II. Villagization: *Healing Sprawl*

***Convert Monoculture Sprawl to organic villages and small towns***

| ***Small town – 20 minute walk edge to edge*** | | ***Village – 10 minute walk edge to edge*** |
|---|---|---|
| ***Rural subdivision*** | ***to*** | ***Rural Village and Park*** |
| ***Underperforming Golf/ other*** | ***to*** | ***Village and Park*** |
| ***Single family subdivision*** | ***to*** | ***Village*** |
| ***Multifamily subdivision*** | ***to*** | ***Small Town*** |
| ***Shopping and Strip Centers*** | ***to*** | ***Small Town*** |
| ***Suburban Campuses*** | ***to*** | ***Small Town*** |
| ***Business Parks*** | ***to*** | ***Small Town*** |
| ***Malls*** | ***to*** | ***Small Town*** |

# II. Villagization: *Model and Precedent*




***The product of analysis doesn't necessarily work in synthesis. Apply a Precedent that does.***

Image © 2010 GeoEye
Image © 2010 DigitalGlobe
Google
45°54'12.54" N 13°18'39.21" E
Apr 3, 2006
Eye alt 7.43 km

# *II. Villagization: From Sub-Urbia to Suburbia*

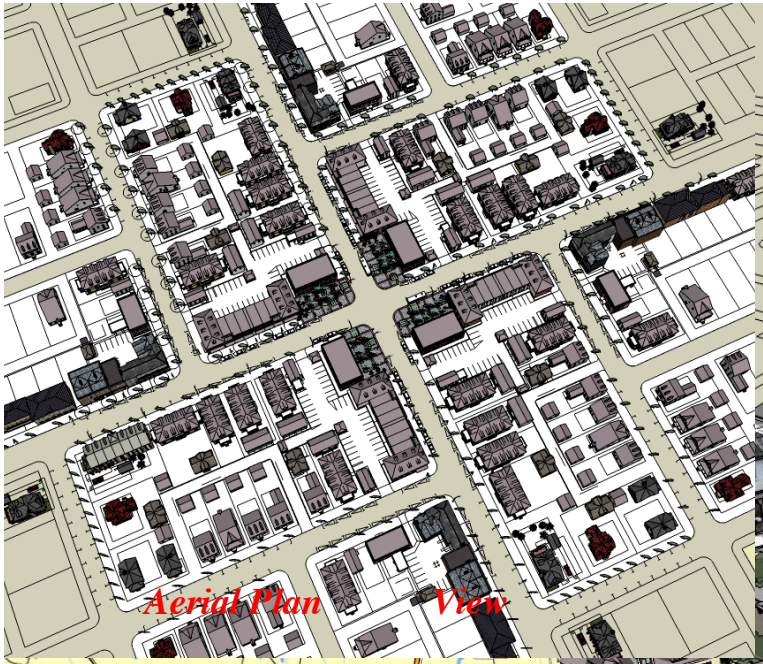
***"Nowhere" people suffer from reduced well-being.***

1. Leave plenty of agricultural, park and green areas between.

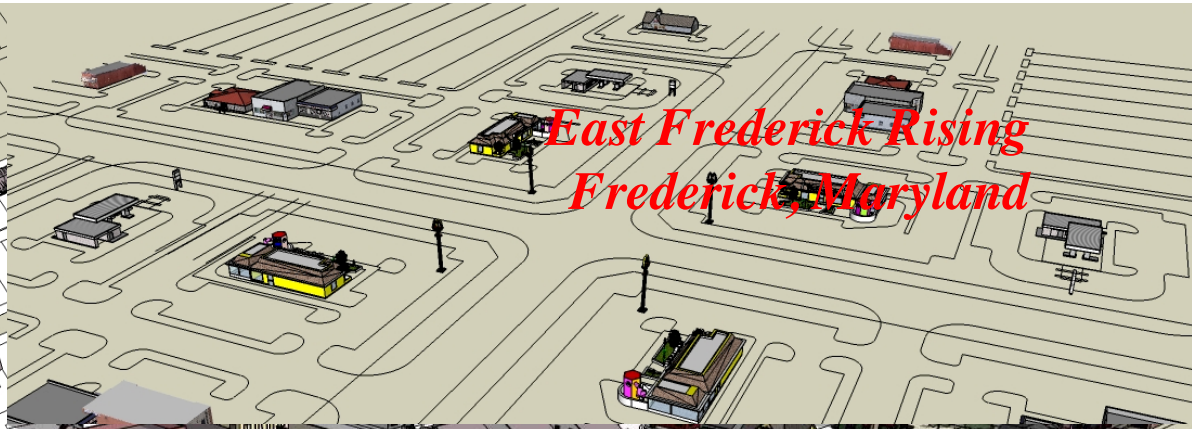
2. Create Identity of Place in "park-once", walkable quarters & neighborhoods.

3. Attain civic viability through enhanced community services by identifying the common interests of All.

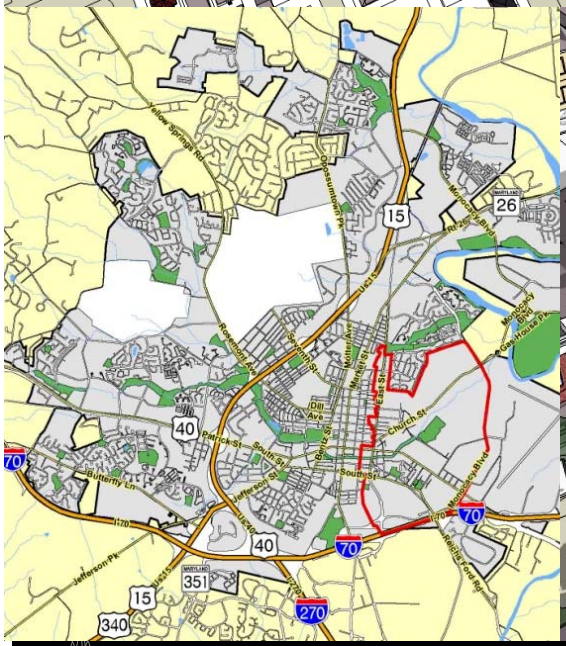
***Be Practical. Discuss PROSPERITY AND SUSTAINABILITY rather than planning or politics. Rely on successful precedents.***



*Aerial Plan View*



# *East Frederick Rising*
# *Frederick, Maryland*



*City Center*

*New Partners for Smart Growth*

## Classic Planning

*Seattle, February 5th, 2*

*Buras Architecture*

*Copyright 2010*

*creating Place where none exists*

*Townscape Design LLC*

# *III.Classic Planning Retrofits Suburbia*

**A. Generate a Simple Plan**

**B. Create a Legacy of Beautiful Places**

**C. Minimize by-laws, zoning, regulations and laws**

# A. Generate a Simple Plan *A Common Sense Approach*

Classic Planning relies on Common-Sense and Reason alone.
If the plan is complex, it won't work.

**Roads**

1. Use a grid and reasonable sized blocks. Plant lots of trees. Avoid aimless wiggles.
2. Reduce street widths to the possible minimum. Density = Sustainability.
3. Create links where there are none. Use boulevards for periodic high levels of traffic.
4. Minimize parking lots. Park on the street or in a "parking piazza" or a "parking park."
5. Use "Dutch streets" for shared space. Virtually eliminate signage other than directional.

**Infrastructure** Upgrade for the next 100 years' service including high speed data infrastructure for flexibility in employment locations and scale.

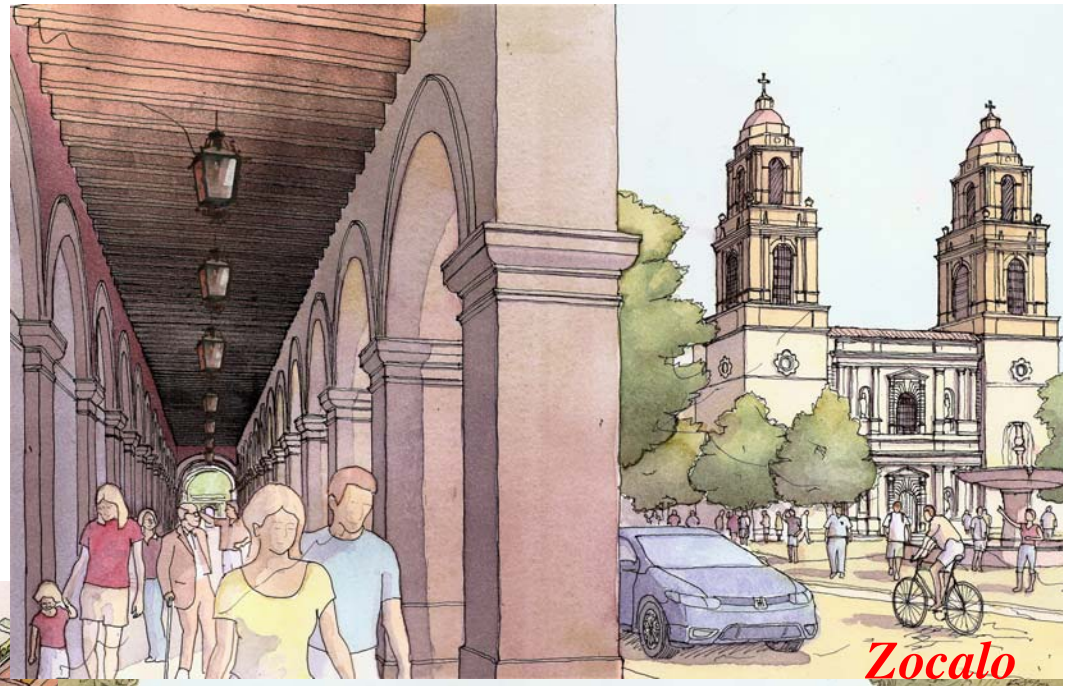
**Durability** Buildings designed for 100 years, houses for 50.

# *Baja Pacifico*

## *Law of the Indies Plan*

## *&*

## *19th Century "City Beautiful" Parks*



*Zocalo*

*Aerial*

*Plaza Maritima*

# *Saint Elizabeth's East Campus, Washington DC*

*Aerial Photo*

*Street Car*

*Master Plan*

*New Partners for Smart Growth*

Classic Planning

*Seattle, February 5th, 20*

*Buras Architecture*

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*creating Place where none exists*

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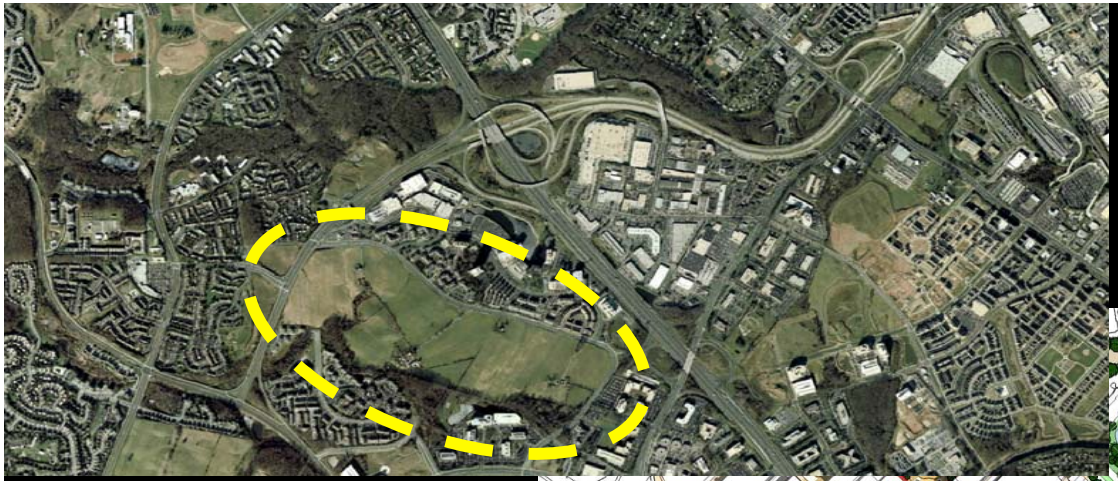
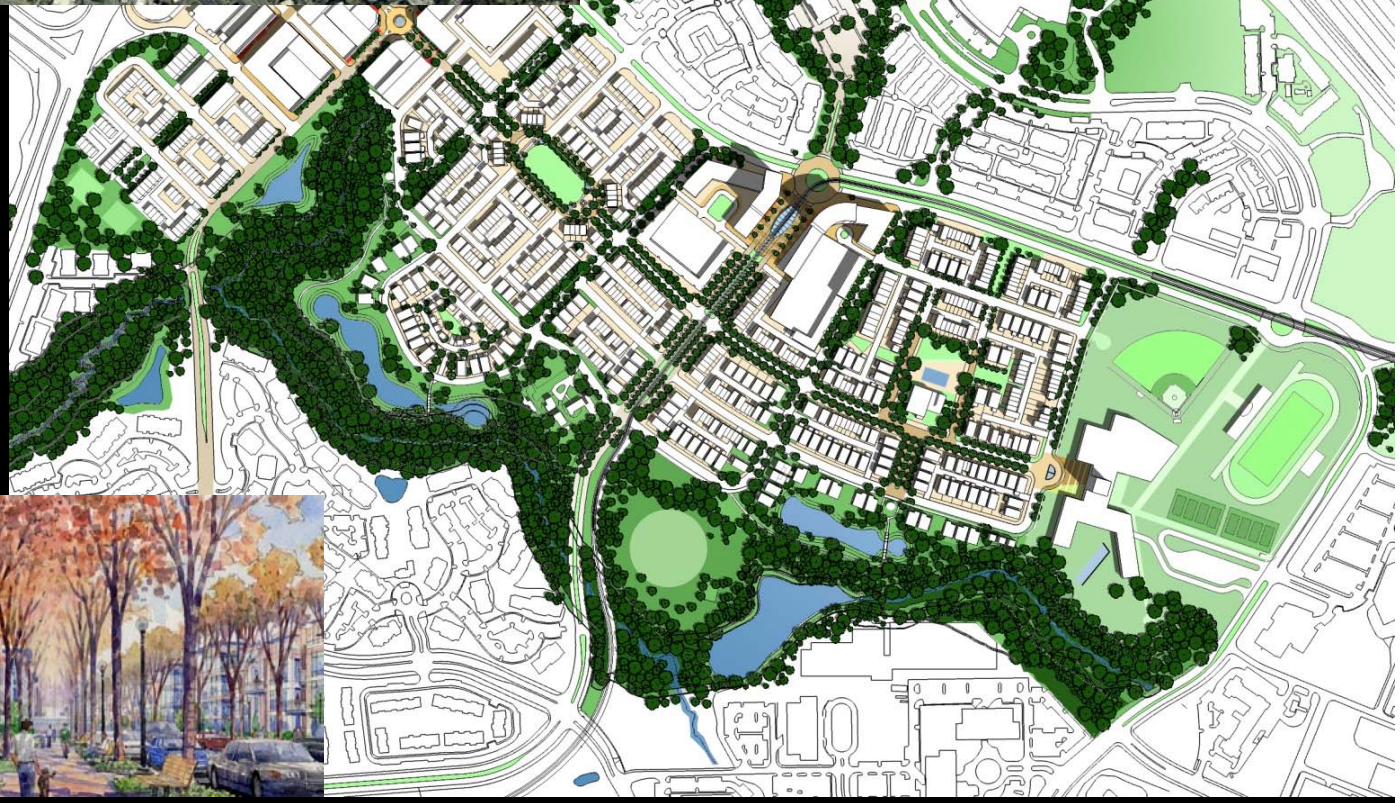


# *Aventine*
# *Gaithersburg, Maryland*



# C. *Minimal soft planning, by-laws, zoning, regulations and laws*

Classic Planning focuses on the essence of place and design, based on a regulatory framework that supports opportunities for real place making.

## Codes

1. Aside from major (“landmark”) buildings, “use” is ephemeral.
2. Smart Codes/ Form Based Codes, LEED and others– too complex.
3. A Classic Plan and Code is 1-2 pages long. Save $$$ in Planning.

## People

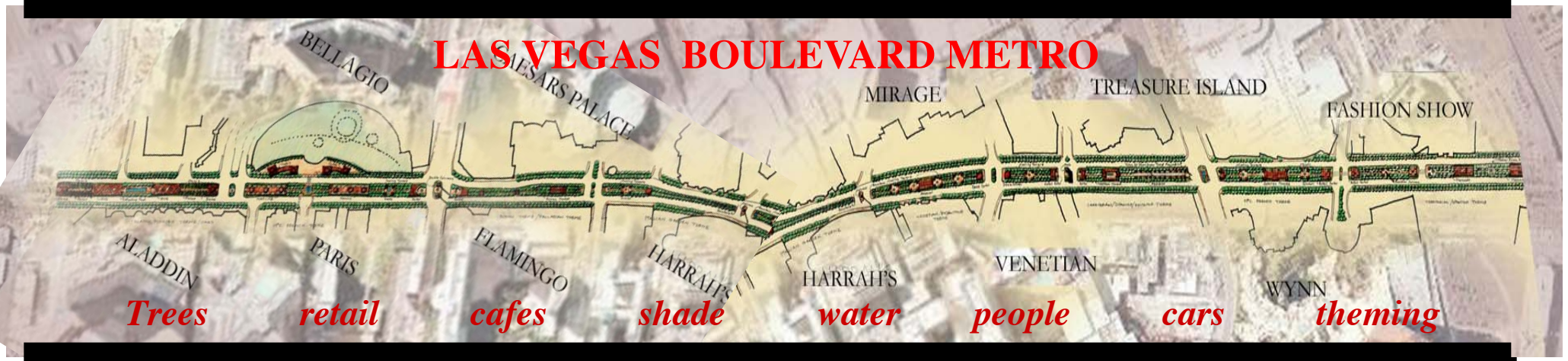
1. Repair or create local institutional and cultural infrastructure.
2. Educate people so they will understand.
3. Apply successful precedents of small towns & villages verbatim.

# *B. Create a Legacy of Beautiful Places*

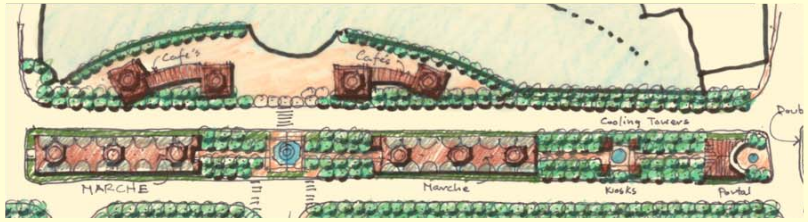
## *Making a Place Where None Exists*

1. Use what you have – focus the design on the dominant feature.
2. Define and limit edges and approaches, gateways and intersections as special places.
3. Be consistent.

# LAS VEGAS BOULEVARD METRO




# BOULEVARDING THE BOULEVARD

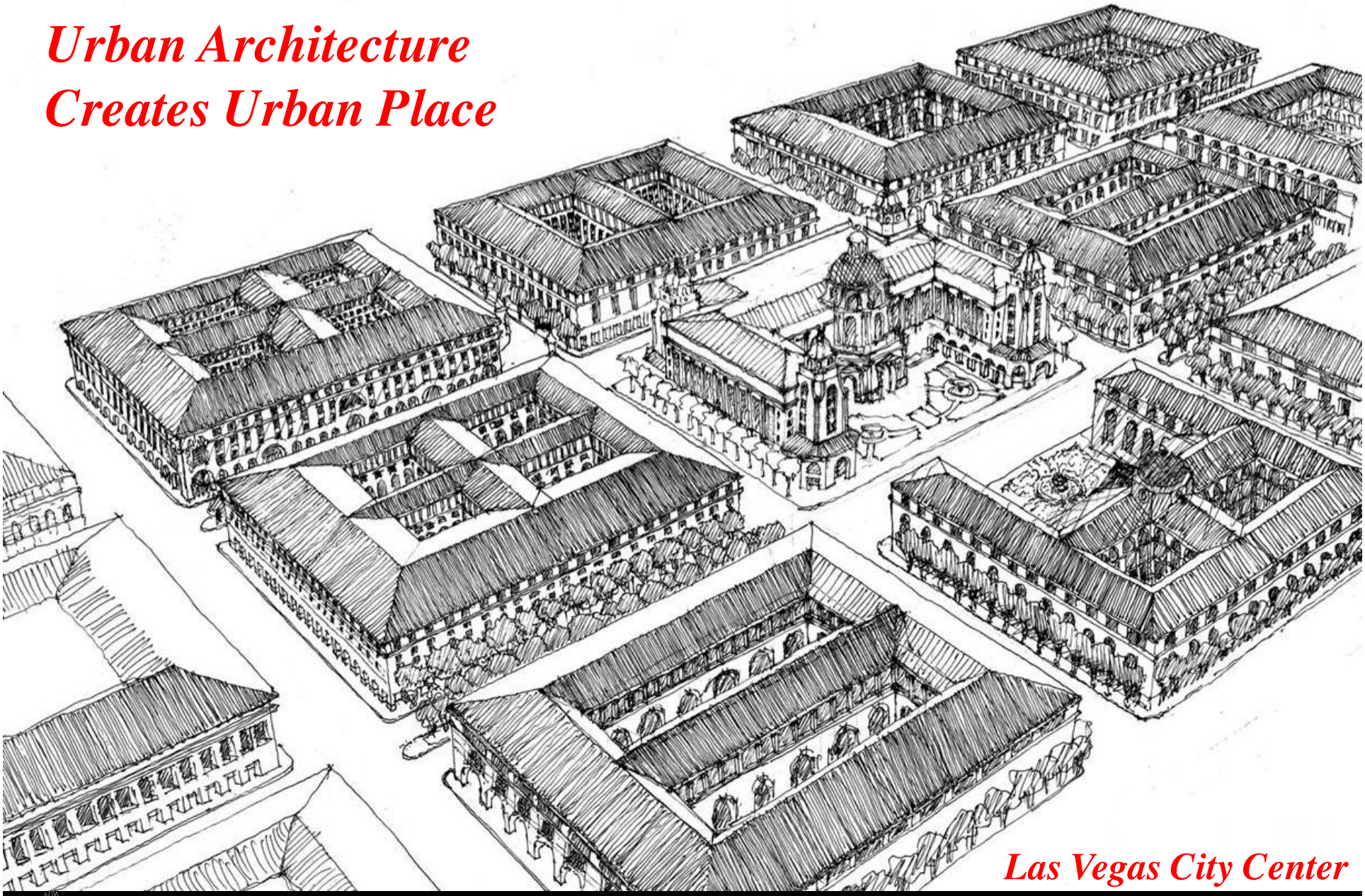


# *B. Create a Legacy of Beautiful Places*

***Urban architecture defines places, streets and outdoor "rooms".***

1. Place-making & individuality come from Urban Architecture, not a Plan.
2. There is no good urbanism without good architecture.
3. Classical and traditional design provides the best streets and places.
4. All Design is to be judged on Firmness Commodity Delight

# *Urban Architecture Creates Urban Place*



*Las Vegas City Center*

# *Urban Architecture Creates Urban Place*

*Poplar Point Marina, Washington DC*

*935 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC*

*City Center Hotel, Washington DC*

*Las Vegas City Hall, Las Vegas NV*

# C. A Legacy of Beautiful Places

## The Center

1. The center (at all scales) fixes and forms the feature of the plan.
2. Locate buildings by their civic and community importance.
3. Provide scaled Civic, Educational, Recreation, Shopping, and Religious institutions.
7. Commerce relies on their place-making character to situate itself.
8. If done right, Place making elements
   Social spaces
   Recreation and entertainment facilities
   Elements to address the needs of an aging population

   will all emerge and find their place organically.

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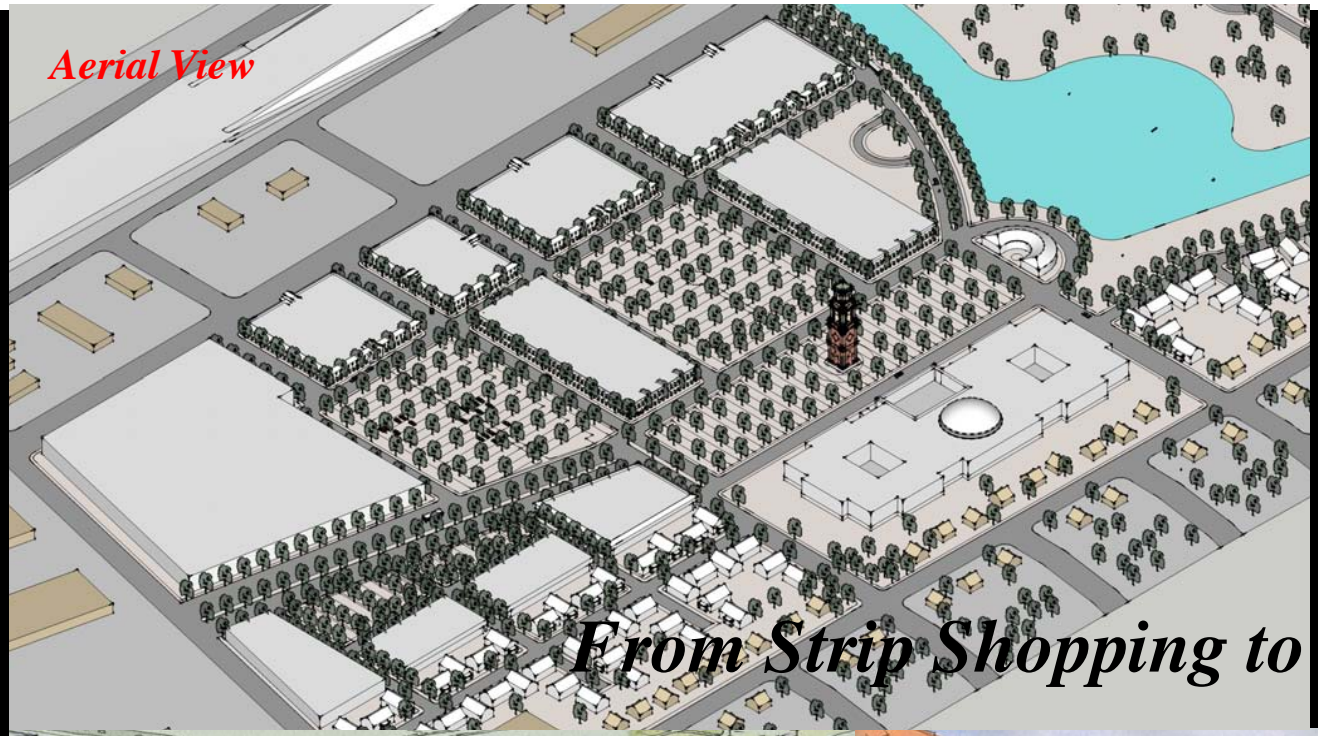
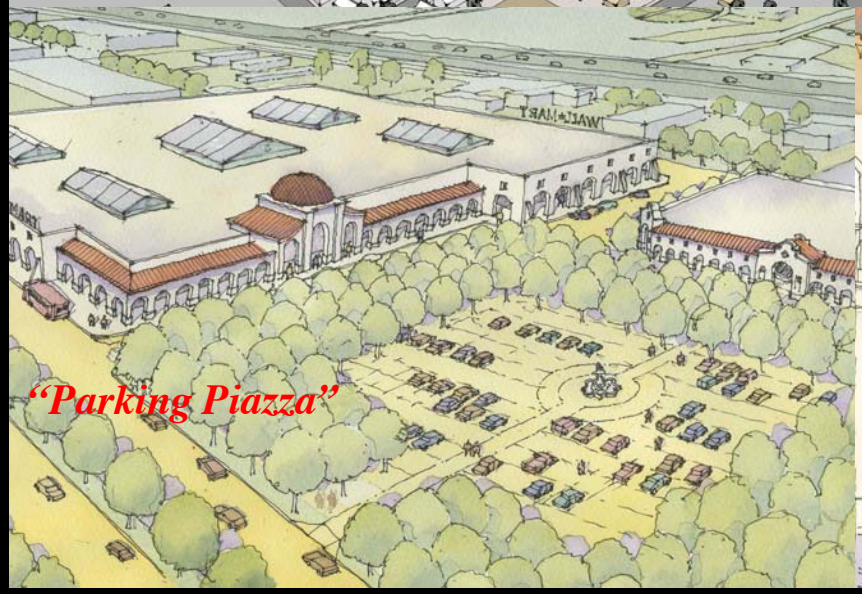
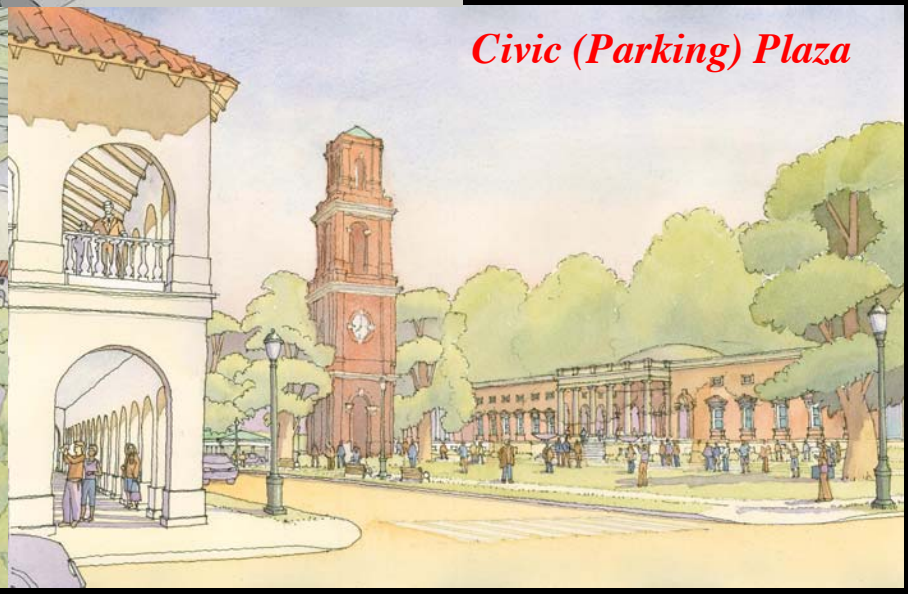



*Civic & Commercial Center*

*Forest Hill, TX*

# *From Strip Shopping to Civic Center*



# Classic Planning

## *The common Sense Approach to Retrofitting Sub-Urbia*

1. **Intention** — Settle on the motif/theme/ driving feature of the design/ plan. Make do with the least acrobatics. Be consistent.

2. **Invention** — Apply dimensionally an appropriate precedent and adjust plan section and massing to the project.

3. **Manifestation** — Elevate and detail fabric in appropriate pre 1927 style .

4. **Execution** — Use traditional engineering & construction techniques.

Use common sense to judge results based on

**Firmness, Commodity and Delight.**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# *In conclusion:*

***"Retrofit" means "To furnish a building or community with elements not part of the original fabric".***

***Retrofitting Sub-Urbia is an act of establishing a life-long community through its realization and fulfillment as a viable village or small town.***

# *Retrofitting the Suburban Landscape*